

the night dark, it was not mentioned at this place. It has, however, been mentioned in other verses that the darkness of the night is appropriate and conducive to sleep and rest. The divine arrangement is such that humans and animals go to sleep in the darkness of that very night. In fact, the whole world sleeps simultaneously in harmony with its night. Had different people been scheduled to sleep at different timings, the noises made by those awake and those working at jobs would have turned the sleep of the sleeping into a nightmare.

As for the day being bright, it has two elements of wisdom. Firstly, one can earn his living in the light of the day and natural light is needed for jobs, businesses and industries. Secondly, the alternation of night and day helps one know the number of years, for instance, the completion of three hundred and sixty days tells us that a full year has gone by.

Similarly, other calculations are also related to the alternation of night and day. If this variation of night and day were not there, it would have been difficult to fix the wages of the wage earner, the employment of the employee and the time duration of transactions.

The sense of the book of deeds tied to the neck

It means that one's book of deed stays with the doer no matter where or in whatever condition one is. What he or she does continues to get recorded there. When death comes, the 'book' is closed and set aside safely. After that, when comes the Last Day, the Day of Judgement, this book of deeds will be placed in everyone's hand in order that he would himself read it and also decide himself whether he is deserving of reward or deserving of punishment. It has been reported from Qatādah رحمه الله تعالى that it will be a day when even an illiterate person will be able to read his book of deeds. On this occasion, al-Iṣbahānī has reported on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Umamah ؓ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: On the day of Qiyāmah, when the book of deeds belonging to people will be given in their hand, someone will notice that some of his good deeds were not recorded there. He will tell his Lord about the particular deeds missing from there. His Lord will tell him that He had erased those deeds for he used to speak ill of people on their backs. (Maḥḥarī)

Allah does not punish unless He sends a Messenger:

A clarification

On the basis of this verse, some leading Muslim jurists rule that peo-

ple to whom the call of any prophet or messenger did not reach will not be subject to any punishment, despite their disbelief. There are other leading jurists who hold that those who deny the Islamic beliefs that can be understood through reason - such as, the existence of God and His Oneness etc. - will be punished for their disbelief, even if no call from any prophet or messenger has reached them. Of course, there will be no punishment for usual acts of disobedience and sins without prior call and transmission of the divine message by prophets. And there are still others who interpret '*rasūl*' at this place (15) in a general sense, whether he is a messenger or prophet, or whether it is the human reason itself - for, that too, in a way, is a messenger of Allah after all.

There will be no punishment for the children of Mushriks

Commenting on the verse: لَا تَنْزِرُ وَاَزْرَةً (And no bearer of burden shall bear the burden of another - 15), it has been said in Tafsīr Maḥḥarī that this verse proves that the children of Mushriks and disbelievers who die before reaching adulthood will not be punished. The reason is that they will not deserve to be punished on account of the denial and disbelief of their parents. Sayings of leading jurists differ about this issue; its details are unnecessary here.

Verses 16 - 17

وَإِذَا أَرَدْنَا أَنْ نُهْلِكَ قَرْيَةً أَمَرْنَا مُتْرَفِيهَا فَفَسَقُوا فِيهَا فَحَقَّ عَلَيْهَا
الْقَوْلُ فَمَدَرْنَاهَا تَدْمِيرًا ﴿١٦﴾ وَكَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا مِنَ الْقُرُونِ مِنْ بَعْدِ نُوحٍ
وَكَفَى بِرَبِّكَ بِذُنُوبِ عِبَادِهِ خَبِيرًا ۚ بَصِيرًا ﴿١٧﴾

And when We intend to destroy a habitation, We command its affluent people (to do good), then they commit sins therein, and thus the word (of punishment) becomes due against it (habitation) and We annihilate it totally. [16]

And how many a generation We have destroyed after Nūḥ! And enough is your Lord to know, (and) watch the sins of His servants. [17]

Sequence

Previous verses said that it is the customary practice of Allah Ta'ālā that he does not send punishment upon a people until the command-

ments of Allah reach them through the blessed prophets which they still refuse to obey. Given in the verses cited above is what happens on the other side when the messages of Allah and His Messenger do reach a people and they still show contumacy, then, a mass punishment is sent over them.

Commentary

A doubt and its answer

A surface look at the expressions: إِذْ أَرَدْنَا (idhā aradnā: when We intend) and, after that: أَمَرْنَا (amarnā: We command) in verse 12 could have triggered the doubt that destroying those people was the divine purpose from the very beginning. Therefore, they were first commanded to believe and obey through the prophets, then their indulgence in sin was made to be the cause of punishment. All this came from none but Allah Ta'ālā. Is it not? If so, would these innocent people not be just about a helpless and excusable lot? The answer is that Allah Ta'ālā has given man reason and choice and has determined the ways of reward and punishment. Now, if someone elects to do nothing but what brings punishment, then, it is the customary practice of Allah that He would activate the causes that bring the same punishment. Thus, the real cause of punishment they receive is nothing but their own resolve and determination to remain on the side of disbelief and sin. Since this is no simple intention, therefore, they cannot be helpless and excusable.

Another Tafsīr of this verse

The well known sense of the word: أَمَرْنَا (amarnā) is the same as appears above, that is, 'We commanded.' But, the renditions or versions (*qirā'āt*) of this word differ. In one rendition opted for by Abū 'Uthmān an-Nahdi, Abū Raja', Abū al-'Āliyah and Mujāhid, this word has appeared with a double sound on the letter *mīm*. Rendered as: أَمَرْنَا (ammarnā), it means 'We made affluent people leaders and rulers, who then sank in sin, and thus became the cause of punishment for the whole people.'

There is a *qirā'ah* (rendition or version) of this word credited to Sayyidnā 'Alī and Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنهما where it has been recited as: أَمَرْنَا (aamarnā) and which has also been explained by them as having the sense of: أَكْثَرْنَا (aktharnā: We increase the number of). Thus it comes to mean: 'When

Allah Ta'ālā sends punishment on a certain people, its initial sign is that the number of the reckless rich is increased among them and they, through their spate of sins, become the cause of making the punishment descend upon the entire people.'

The outcome of the first *qirā'ah* is that such affluent people are made the rulers of a people. The outcome of the second *qirā'ah* is that the number of such people is increased in that society. Both versions show that the government of the 'affluent' or the abundance of such people in a society is not something to be happy about, rather, is a sign of divine punishment.

Let us recapitulate. When Allah Ta'ālā is angry with a people and intends to make a punishment descend upon them, there appears an initial sign of it. People who love to wallow in wealth and power are made the ruling custodians of their affairs, or, even if they do not become their actual political rulers, the number of such people is increased among a people. In both these cases, the result is the same. Drunk with the pleasures they can buy, acquire or appropriate with their affluence and influence, they start caring less for anything else, disobey the will and command of Allah personally as well as lead the trail for others to follow in their footsteps. In consequence, comes the punishment of Allah Ta'ālā all over them.

The influence of the rich over a people is a natural phenomenon

By particularly mentioning affluent people who use their wealth to pursue a life of luxury, it has been indicated that the masses are naturally affected with the deeds and morals of those rich among them and those who rule over them. When these people get used to misdeeds, the whole nation follows suit and takes to misdeeds (as the only available norm of social survival). Therefore, those who have been blessed with wealth by Allah Ta'ālā should be more concerned with the correction of their deeds and morals - lest they fall into the trap of a luxurious life style, are heedless to self-correction, and make the entire nation go astray because of them. If so, the curse of the misdeeds that issue forth from their nation will fall on them too.

Verses 18 - 21

مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ الْعَاجِلَةَ عَجَّلْنَا لَهُ فِيهَا مَا نَشَاءُ لِمَنْ نُرِيدُ ثُمَّ جَعَلْنَا لَهُ
 جَهَنَّمَ ۖ يَصْلَاهَا مَذْمُومًا مَدْحُورًا ﴿١٨﴾ وَمَنْ أَرَادَ الْآخِرَةَ وَسَعَىٰ لَهَا
 سَعِيهَا وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَأُولَٰئِكَ كَانَ سَعِيهِمْ مَشْكُورًا ﴿١٩﴾ كَلَّا نُمَدِّ
 هَؤُلَاءِ وَهَؤُلَاءِ مِنْ عَطَاءِ رَبِّكَ ۗ وَمَا كَانَ عَطَاءُ رَبِّكَ مَحْظُورًا
 ﴿٢٠﴾ أَنْظِرْ كَيْفَ فَضَّلْنَا بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَىٰ بَعْضٍ ۗ وَلَٰلِآخِرَةِ أَكْبَرُ دَرَجَاتٍ
 وَأَكْبَرُ تَفْضِيلًا ﴿٢١﴾

Whoever opts for the immediate (benefits from) life here-
 in, We give him right here, in this life, as much as We
 will to whomever We intend. Then We assign *Jahannam*
 for him where he shall enter condemned, discarded. [18]
 And whoever opts for the Hereafter and makes efforts
 for it as due, while he is a believer, then, the effort of
 such people is appreciated! [19]

To all of them - both these and those - We extend the
 blessings of your Lord. And the blessing of your Lord is
 not barred (to anyone). [20]

See how We made some of them excel some others (in
 this world) and, of course, the Hereafter is far higher in
 ranks and far greater in degrees of merit. [21]

Commentary

Two behavior models of human beings appear in the cited verses side
 by side. As for those who elect to go for the readily available benefits out
 of their life in this world, and the punishment that comes in its wake,
 the words used were: مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ الْعَاجِلَةَ (Whoever opts for the immediate life
 herein - 18). These words signify continuity and permanence meaning
 that this punishment of Hell will materialize only when one's actions are
 all the time motivated by material interests only, having practically no
 concern for the Hereafter. And as for 'those who desire to have the Here-
 after and its rewards,' the words used were: أَرَادَ الْآخِرَةَ The sense is that as
 soon as a true believer were to form an intention to have the reward of
 the Hereafter in whatever he proposes to do, that deed of his shall stand
 accepted - irrespective of any corruptive element having entered into so-
 mething else he was intending to do.

The first condition can only be that of a denier of the Hereafter, therefore, none of his deeds is acceptable. Then, the second condition is that of a true believer. A particular deed by him that issues forth with sincerity of intention, and is for the Hereafter - along with the presence of other conditions - shall be acceptable. And a deed even from the same person, a deed that has no sincerity, or where other conditions are missing, will not be acceptable.

A self-opinionated deed and an act of religious innovation, no matter how appealing, is not acceptable

In this verse (19), by adding the word: سَعِيهَا (as due), it has been made explicit that every deed and every effort is not necessarily beneficial or acceptable with Allah. Instead, the only deed or effort credible is that which is appropriate to the essential objective (of the Hereafter). And whether or not it is appropriate can only be found out from the statement of Allah Ta'ālā and His Messenger ﷺ. Therefore, even well meaning efforts made by insisting on bland personal opinion and self-invented ways - which includes common customs of Bid'ah (innovations in established religion) - no matter how good and beneficial they may appear at their face, but are not appropriate to the effort made for the Hereafter. Consequently, they are neither acceptable with Allah nor are they of any use in the Hereafter.

Explaining the word: سَعِيهَا (as due), Tafsīr Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī says that the 'effort' should be in accordance with 'sunnah.' Along with it, it adds that this effort or deed should also have uprightness and firmness. In other words, this deed should be beneficial in accordance with the Sunnah as well as it should be upright and constant. Doing it haphazardly or doing it in a cycle of doing and not doing is not good. It never yields the maximum benefit.

Verses 22 - 25

لَا تَجْعَلْ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهًا آخَرَ فَتَقْعُدَ مَذْمُومًا مَّخْذُولًا ﴿٢٢﴾ وَقَضَىٰ رَبُّكَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا ۗ إِمَّا يَبُلُغَنَّ عِنْدَكَ الْكِبَرَ أَحَدُهُمَا أَوْ كِلَيْهِمَا فَلَا تَقُلْ لَهُمَا أَفٍّ ۖ وَلَا تَنْهَرَهُمَا وَقُلْ لَهُمَا قَوْلًا

كَرِيمًا ﴿٢٣﴾ وَأَخْفِضْ لَهُمَا جَنَاحَ الذُّلِّ مِنَ الرَّحْمَةِ وَقُلْ رَبِّ
 أَرْحَمُهُمَا كَمَا رَبَّيْنِي صَغِيرًا ﴿٢٤﴾ رَبُّكُمْ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا فِي نُفُوسِكُمْ ۗ إِنَّ
 تَكُونُوا صَالِحِينَ فَإِنَّهُ كَانَ لِلْأَوَّابِينَ غَفُورًا ﴿٢٥﴾

Do not set up any other god along with Allah, or you will sit condemned, forsaken. [22]

And your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him and do good to parents. If either of them or both reach old age, do not say to them 'uff' (a word of anger or contempt) and do not scold them. And address them with respectful words, [23] and submit yourself before them in humility out of compassion and say, "My Lord, be merciful to them as they have brought me up in my childhood." [24]

Your Lord knows best what is in your hearts. If you are righteous, then He is Most-Forgiving for those who turn to Him in repentance. [25]

Sequence

Previous verses mentioned some conditions attached to the acceptance of deeds. One of the conditions required that no deed is accepted unless it comes with 'Imān (faith, belief) and is in accordance with Shari'ah (Law) and Sunnah (sayings and deeds of the Prophet ﷺ). In the present verses, instructions regarding some of such deeds have been given. These are rules set by the Shari'ah of Islam. Their compliance brings success in the Hereafter and their contravention, ruin. And since the most important of these conditions is that of 'Imān, therefore, the very first injunction given here was that of belief in the Oneness of Allah (*tauḥīd*). After that come injunctions relating to the rights of the servants of Allah (*ḥuqūq al-'ibād*).

Commentary

It is very important to respect and obey parents

Imām al-Qurṭubī says that, in this verse (23), Allah Ta'ālā has made it necessary (*wājib*) to respect and treat parents well by combining it with the command to worship Him. This is similar to what has been said in Sūrah Luqmān where the inevitable need to thank Him has been combined with the need to thank one's parents: *أَنْ أَشْكُرَ لِيْ وَلِوَالِدَيْكَ* (Be grateful

to Me, and to your parents - 31:14). This proves that, after the obligation of worshipping the most exalted Allah, obeying parents is most important and being grateful to parents like being grateful to Allah Ta'ālā is *wājib* (necessary). This has its confirmation in the Ḥadīth of Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī where a person reportedly asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ: "Which is the most favored deed in the sight of Allah?" He said, "Ṣalāh at its (*mustaḥabb*: preferred) time." The person asked again, "Which is the most favored deed after that?" To that he said, "Treating parents well." (Qurṭubī)

The merits of obeying and serving parents in Ḥadīth narratives

1. In the Musnad of Aḥmad, Tirmidhī, Ibn Mājah and Mustadrak Ḥākim, it has been reported on sound authority from Sayyidnā Abū 'd-Dardā' ؓ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "A father is the main gate of Jannah. Now it is up to you to preserve or waste it." (Maḥzarī)

2. According to a report from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar ؓ appearing in Jāmi' al-Tirmidhī and al-Mustadrak of al-Ḥākim (which Ḥākim rates as Ṣaḥīḥ), the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "The pleasure of Allah is in the pleasure of a father and the displeasure of Allah in the displeasure of a father."

3. Ibn Mājah reports on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Umāmah ؓ that a person asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ: "What rights do parents have on their children?" He said, "They both are your Paradise, or Hell." It means that obeying and serving parents take one to Jannah and their disobedience and displeasure, to Jahannam.

4. Al-Baihaqī (in Shu'ab al-Īmān) and Ibn 'Asākir have reported on the authority of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "For one who remained obedient to his parents for the sake of Allah two gates of Paradise shall remain open. And for one who disobeyed them two gates of Hell shall remain open, and if he had just one of the two, either father or mother, then, one gate (of Paradise or Hell shall remain open)." Thereupon, someone asked, "Does it (the warning of Hell) hold good even when the parents have been unjust to this person?" Then he said thrice: **وَإِنْ ظَلَمْنَا وَإِنْ ظَلَمْنَا وَإِنْ ظَلَمْنَا** which means, 'yes, there is that warning of Hell against disobeying and hurting parents even if they were unjust to the son.' (The outcome is that children have no right to settle scores

with parents. If they have been unjust, it does not follow that they too back out from obeying and serving them).

5. Al-Baihaqī has reported on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "An obedient son who looks at his parents with mercy and affection receives the reward of one accepted Ḥajj against every such look cast." People around said, "What if he were to look at them like that a hundred times during the day?" He said, "Yes, a hundred times too (he will keep receiving that reward). Allah is great (His treasures never run short)."

The punishment for depriving parents of their rights comes - much before Ākhirah - right here in this world too

6. In Shu'ab al-'Īmān, al-Baihaqī has reported on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Bakrah رضي الله عنه that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "As for all those other sins, Allah Ta'ālā defers whichever He wills up to the Last Day of Qiyāmah - except the sin of depriving parents of their rights and disobeying them. The punishment for that is given, much before comes the Hereafter, right here in this world as well. (All Ḥadīth reports given here have been taken from Tafsīr Mazḥarī)

Obedience to parents: When necessary and when there is room for opposition

Muslim scholars and jurists unanimously hold that the obedience to parents is *wājib* (necessary) only in what is permissible - and definitely not in what is impermissible or sinful. Says the Ḥadīth:

لا طاعة لمخلوق في معصية الخالق

There is no obedience to the created in the disobedience of the Creator.

To deserve service and good treatment it is not necessary that the parents be Muslims

To support this ruling, Imām al-Qurṭubī has quoted an event related with Sayyidah Asmā' رضي الله عنها from the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī. According to this report, Sayyidah Asmā' asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ, "My mother, a Mushrik, comes to see me. Is it permissible for me to entertain her?" He said, "صليّ أمك" (*ṣilī ummakī*: that is, respect the bond of relationship with your mother and entertain her). And as for disbelieving parents, there is that statement of the Qur'ān itself (Luqmān, 31:15): صَاحِبُهُمَا فِي الدُّنْيَا

مَعْرُوفًا (that is, if the parents of a person are *kāfirs* and order him too to become like them, then, it is not permissible to obey them in this matter. But, while living in this world, they should be treated in the recognized manner). It is obvious that 'recognized manner' means that they should be treated with courtesy.

Rulings

1. As long as Jihād does not become an absolute individual obligation (Farḍ al-'Ain), rather remains within the degree of a collective obligation (Farḍ al-Kifāyah), until then, it is not permissible for any son to participate in Jihād without the consent of parents. It has been reported in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar رضي الله عنه that a person presented himself before the Holy Prophet ﷺ in order to have his permission to participate in Jihād. He asked him, "Are your parents alive?" He submitted, "Yes, they are." He said, "فَفِيهِمَا فَجَاهِدْ" (*fafihiṃā fajāhid*: Then you carry out Jihād in [the service of] them both). The sense is that 'by serving them alone you will get the reward of being in Jihād.' Another report also adds that the person said, "I have come here leaving my parents crying behind." Thereupon, he said, "Go. Make them laugh as you made them cry." In other words, he was to go back home and tell his parents that he would not be going for Jihād without their consent. (Qurṭubī)

2. From the event reported above, we learn the ruling that anything that rates as a collective obligation - and is not an individual obligation, or necessity - then, sons and daughters cannot do that without the permission of parents. Also included here is the injunction to acquire the most perfect knowledge of religion (the *'ilm of dīn*) at the highest level, and to travel to communicate and promote it (the *tablīgh* of *dīn*). It means that anyone who has the knowledge of religion to the measure one is obligated with individually cannot travel in order to become an *'ālim of dīn* (scholar of religion), or travel for the *da'wah* and *tablīgh* of *dīn*, for it is not permissible without the permission of parents.

3. Also included under the injunction of treating parents well appearing in the Qur'ān, and Ḥadīth is good treatment with relatives and friends close to parents, specially when they are dead. In the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī, it has been reported from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar رضي الله عنه that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "The noblest regard one can show to a

father after his death is to treat his friends well." And Sayyidnā Abū Usayd al-Badrī رضي الله عنه reports that he was sitting with the Holy Prophet ﷺ when an Anṣārī came and asked, "Yā Rasūlallah, is it that some right of my parents remains due against me even after they have died?" He said, "Yes. Praying and seeking forgiveness for them, fulfilling the promises they had made to someone, being kind and respectful to their friends and showing mercy and generosity to such relatives who are linked in kinship only through them (*ṣilatū 'r-raḥim*). These are the rights of your parents still due against you, even after them."

It was the blessed habit of the Holy Prophet ﷺ that he used to send gifts to lady friends of Umm al-Mu'minīn Sayyidah Khadijah رضي الله عنها after her demise which was a way of fulfilling the right of Sayyidah Khadijah on him.

Treating parents well: Special consideration in their old age

As for serving and obeying parents, as parents, it is not restricted to any given time or age. In fact, it is necessary (*wājib*) to treat parents well, under all conditions, and in every age. But, there are circumstances that usually impede the fulfillment of what is necessary and obligatory. Under these circumstances, the typical response pattern of the Holy Qur'ān comes into action to suggest ways and means through which acting according to given injunctions becomes easy. With this objective in sight, it grooms and trains minds through different angles and, at the same time, it continues to emphasize that compliance of these injunctions is imperative despite such circumstances.

The old age of parents, when they become helpless, depend on children for everything they need and their life is at the mercy of children, is a terrible condition to be in. The slightest indifference shown by children at such a time breaks their heart. Then, there are those physical infirmities and diseases associated with old age which make one naturally irritation-prone. Furthermore, during the period of extreme old age, when usual reason and comprehension do not seem to be working, some of their wishes and demands assume the kind of proportions which children find difficult to take care of. The Holy Qur'ān takes cognizance of these circumstances, but, while giving children the instruction to comfort them, it reminds them of their own childhood. It tells them that there was a time when they too were far more helpless, far too depending on

their parents than their parents were on them at that point of time. Then, was it not that their parents sacrificed their desires and comforts for them and went on bearing by the unreasonable child talk with love and affection. Now when they have become so helpless, reason and nobility demanded that the past favor done by them should be paid back. When it was said: كَمَا رَبَّيَانِي صَغِيرًا (as they have brought me up in my childhood) in the verse, this is what has been alluded to. Some other important instructions relating to the old age of parents have also been given in the verses under study. They are as follows:

1. Do not say even 'uff' to them. Briefly explained parenthetically in the accompanying translation as 'a word of anger or contempt,' 'uff' covers every word or expression that shows one's displeasure. The limit is that breathing a long breath after having heard what they said and thereby betraying displeasure against them is also included under this very word 'uff.' In a Ḥadīth narrated by Sayyidnā 'Alī عليه السلام, it has been reported that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "Had there been some other degree of hurting lesser than the saying of 'uff,' that too would have certainly been mentioned." (The sense is that even the thing that hurts parents in the lowest of the low degree is forbidden).

2. Do not scold them: وَلَا تَنْهَرُهُمَا. This is the second instruction. The word: نهر (*nahr*) in the text: means 'scold' or 'reproach.' That it causes pain in already obvious.

3. Address them with respectable words - (وَقُلْ لَهُمَا قَوْلًا كَرِيمًا). This is the third instruction. The first two instructions related to the negative aspects where bringing the least emotional pressure on parents has been prohibited. Given in this third instruction is a lesson in the art of conversation with parents - talk to them softly with love, grace and concern for them. Says the revered Tabi'ī, Sa'īd ibn Mussaiyyab, 'like a slave talking to his strict master!'

4. Submit yourself before them in humility out of compassion - (وَاحْفَظْ - لَهُمَا جَنَاحَ الدَّلِّ مِنَ الرَّحْمَةِ). This is the fourth instruction. The word: جناح (*janāh*) in the text literally means 'wings' or 'sides of arms' lending the sense that one should stand in a stance of submission and humility as a mark of respect for parents. The addition of the expression: مِنَ الرَّحْمَةِ (out of compassion) at the end of the sentence is there to warn that this stance of

grace should not be a mere show-off, instead, it should be adopted on the strong foundation of genuine, heart-felt respect and compassion for them. Perhaps, this may also be suggestive of something else as well - that showing humility before parents is practically no disgrace. In fact, it is a prelude to real honor for it is based on concern, compassion and kindness.

5. And say, "My Lord, be merciful to them" - (وَقُلْ رَبِّ ارْحَمُهُمَا). It means, as for the effort to provide maximum comfort for parents, it is humanly not possible. One should do whatever it is possible for him to do in order that they remain comfortable and, then, along with it, he should also keep praying before Allah Ta'ālā that He, in His infinite mercy, removes all their difficulties and makes things easy on them. This last instruction is really so extensive and universal that it still continues to be valid and beneficial even after the death of parents. Through this, one can always keep serving parents.

Ruling

If parents are Muslims, making a prayer for mercy in their favor is obvious. But, if they are not Muslims, making this prayer within their lifetime will be permissible with the intention that they be delivered from worldly distress and that they be blessed with the *taufīq* of 'Īmān. After their death, making a prayer of mercy for them is not permissible. (Abridged from al-Qurtubī)

A remarkable event

Al-Qurtubī has reported from Sayyidnā Jābir ibn 'Abdullāh ؓ that a man came to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and complained that his father was taking away what belonged to him. He said, "Go and ask your father to come here." Right then, came Sayyidnā Jibra'īl and told the Holy Prophet ﷺ, "When his father comes, ask him about the words he has composed in his heart and which his own ears have not heard yet." When this man returned with his father, he said to the father, "Why is it that your son complains against you? Do you wish to take away what belongs to him?" The father said, "You better ask him on whom do I spend other than his paternal or maternal aunts or myself?" The Holy Prophet ﷺ said: *إِنَّهُ* (an expression which denoted that he had understood the reality and there was no need to say anything else). After that, he asked the father of the man, "What are those words that have not yet been heard by your own ears?" The father said, "*Yā Rasūlallah*, Allah Ta'ālā increases our faith in you through everything." Thereby he meant

that he got to know what was not heard by anyone, which was a miracle indeed. Then, he submitted, "It is true that I had composed some lines of poetry within my heart, something not heard even by my own ears." The Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "Let us hear them." Then he recited the following lines of poetry he had composed:

عَدَوْتُكَ مَوْلُودًا وَمُنْتَك يَافِعَا
تُعَلُّ بِمَا أَجَبِي عَلَيْكَ وَتُنْهَلُ

I fed you in childhood and took care of you when young. You lived on my earnings alone.

إِذَا لَيْلَةٌ ضَافَتَكَ بِالسَّقَمِ لَمْ أَبْتَ
لِسَقَمِكَ إِلَّا سَاهَرَا اِتْمَلَمْلَمْ

When on some night, you became sick, I spent the whole night remaining awake and restless because of your sickness

كَأَنِّي أَنَا الْمَطْرُوقُ دُونَكَ بِالذِّي
طَرِقْتَهُ بِهِ دُونِي فَعَيْنِي تَهْمَلُ

As if your sickness was my own and not yours and because of which my eyes kept shedding tears throughout the night

تَخَافُ الرَّذْيَ نَفْسِي عَلَيْكَ وَإِنِّهَا
لَتَعْلَمُ أَنَّ الْمَوْتَ وَقْتُ مَوْجَلُ

My heart kept trembling lest something happens to you, though I knew that the time of death is fixed, being neither early nor late

فَلَمَّا بَلَغْتَ السِّنَّ وَالْغَايَةَ الَّتِي
إِيَّهَا مَدَى مَا كُنْتَ فِيكَ أَوْمِلُ

So, when you reached the age and maturity that I had always been looking forward to

جَعَلْتَ جَزَائِي غِلْظَةً وَفِظَاطَةً
كَأَنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْمُنْعَمُ الْمَتَفَضِّلُ

Then you made hard-heartedness and harshness my return as if you were the one doing me favors and giving me rewards

فَلَيْتَكَ إِذْ لَمْ تَرَعْ حَقَّ أَبُوتِي
فَعَلْتَ كَمَا الْجَارُ الْمَصَاقِبُ يَفْعَلُ

Alas, if it was not possible for you to fulfill my right as a father, you could have at the least done what a good neighbor would have done

فَأَوْلَيْتَنِي حَقَّ الْجَوَارِ وَلَمْ تَكُنْ
عَلَى بَمَالِ دُونَ مَالِكَ تَبْخَلُ

So, you could have given me the least right of a neighbor and

abstained from becoming miserly in my case in my own property.

After having heard these verses of poetry, the Holy Prophet ﷺ held the son by his shirt and said, "انت و مالك لا ييك" meaning that: Go. You and your property, everything belongs to your father. (Tafsīr al-Qurtubī, p. 246, v. 10) These verses have also been reported in Ḥamasah, the famous book of Arabic literature as attributed to the poet, Umayyah ibn Abī aṣ-Ṣult. Others say that 'Abd al-A'la wrote them. Still others attribute them to Abū al-'Abbās al-A'ma. (Al-Qurtubī, marginal notes)

In the last verse quoted above: رَبُّكُمْ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا فِي نُفُوسِكُمْ (Your Lord knows best what is in your hearts - 25), any possible scruple that remains in the hearts of children as to how they were going to comply satisfactorily with divine injunctions relating to consistent observance of etiquette and respect due to parents. They have to live with parents all the time. Then, living conditions of the parties vary. They do not stay the same all the time. May be, on some such occasion, they happen to utter something, something that turns out to be against the norms of due etiquette, then, they stand facing the warning of Hell. Given this probability, it would become extremely difficult for them to wriggle out from this situation. In this verse, it is to remove this doubt and heart-burning that it was said: Should any such word come to be uttered out of sheer anxiety or lack of discretion - but, without intentional disrespectfulness - then, one must repent and resolve not to do that ever again. If so, since Allah Ta'ālā knows the secrets of hearts and knows what was uttered was not to show disrespect or hurt, things will turn out for the better, for He is Most-Merciful. The word: الْأَوَّابِينَ (*al-awwābīn*: those who turn to Him) used here carries the sense of: التَّوَّابِينَ (*at-tawwābīn*: those who repent before Him). The Ḥadīth calls the six *raka'āt* after Maghrib and the *nawāfil* of al-Ishrāq as the Ṣalāh al-Awwābīn. Embedded here is the hint that the *taufīq* (ability) of these prayers is granted only to those who are the Awwābīn and Tawwābīn.

Verses 26 - 27

وَاتِ ذَا الْقُرْبَىٰ حَقَّهُ وَالْمِسْكِينَ وَابْنَ السَّبِيلِ وَلَا تُبَذِّرْ تَبْذِيرًا
﴿٢٦﴾ إِنَّ الْمُبْتَلِينَ كَانُوا إِخْوَانَ الشَّيْطَانِ ط وَكَانَ الشَّيْطَانُ لِرَبِّهِ
كَفُورًا ﴿٢٧﴾

And give the relative his right, and the needy and the wayfarer. And do not squander recklessly. [26] Surely, squanderers are brothers to satans, and the Satan is very ungrateful to his Lord. [27]

Commentary

On fulfilling the rights of relatives vigilantly

Previous verses were devoted to teachings about the rights of parents and how they should be duly respected. In the present verses, the rights of common relatives have been taken up with the guideline that a relative should be given his or her right. The least degree in which this could be done is to share with them the graces of good social living and treat them well. And if they are needy, helping them financially - in accordance with one's personal capacity - is also included therein. From this verse, at least this much stands proved that everyone has also been obligated with the fulfillment of the right of one's common relatives. What is it? How much is it? Those details have not been mentioned here. But, a broad based mercy and generosity for relatives and a good social interaction with them are certainly included there. According to Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, financial help can be extended to two kinds of relatives under this very injunction: (1) A relative, in the category of near blood kinship (*Dhū raḥim*), and in the degree of sanguinity precluding marriage (*maḥram*). A woman or child who neither has the wherewithal to eke out an existence nor has the ability to earn for it. (2) Similar is the case of a relative, in the category of near blood kinship, and in the degree of sanguinity precluding marriage. If handicapped or blind, not having enough money and property in his or her possession to eke out an existence, their relatives who have the necessary means should help them both. Taking care of the essential expenses is a duty enjoined on all of them. If there are several relatives in the same degree of extended means, the expenses will be divided over all of them and the subsistence allowance of the needy will be given in this manner. This rule also has its sanction from the verse of Sūrah al-Baqarah which says: وَعَلَى الْوَارِثِ مِثْلُ ذَلِكَ (and on the heir it falls likewise - 2:233) (Tafsīr Maḥzarī)

In this verse, it has been said that the necessary financial assistance provided to the needy and the wayfarer, and the mercy and generosity practiced in the case of kinsfolk, was their right. The purpose is to point out that the giver has no reason or occasion to harp on the favor done be-

fore or behind them because their right is his duty. The giver is simply doing his duty and not showering favors on anyone.

The prohibition of spending wastefully (*tabdhīr*)

The Qur'ān expresses the sense of spending wastefully through two words: (1) *Tabdhīr* (تَبْذِيرٌ), translated as 'squandering recklessly.' (2) *Iṣrāf* (إِسْرَافٌ) : extravagance. The prohibition of *tabdhīr* is already clear in verse 26 here. The prohibition of *isrāf* has its proof in the verse of Sūrah al-A'rāf: وَلَا تُسْرِفُوا (and do not be extravagant - 7:33). Some commentators say that both words are synonymous. Any spending in sin or disobedience or a wrong occasion or place is called *tabdhīr* and *isrāf*. There are others who refine it by saying that *tabdhīr* is spending in sin or on some totally unsuitable occasion or place, while *isrāf* is spending beyond the level of need on an occasion where it is permissible to spend. Therefore, *tabdhīr* is emphatically worse than *isrāf*. Al-Mubadhhirīn (the squanderers) were called brothers to Shaiṭān and his cohorts.

Of the early Tafsīr authorities, Mujaḥid has said: If someone spends everything he has for the sake of what is *ḥaqq*, (incumbent), it is no *tabdhīr* (squandering recklessly) - and should he spend even one *mudd* (1/2 kilo) for what is false (non-incumbent), then it is *tabdhīr*. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضي الله عنه said: Spending out of place in what one has not been obligated with is *tabdhīr*. (Maḥzarī) Imām Mālik said: *Tabdhīr* is that one acquires wealth and property, lawfully and cleanly, as he has been obligated to do, but spends it off in ways counter to it - and this is also given the name of *isrāf* (extravagance), which is *ḥarām* (unlawful).

Imām al-Qurṭubī said: As for things unlawful and impermissible, spending even one *dirham* for these is *tabdhīr*. And spending limitlessly to fulfill permissible and allowed desires - which exposes one to the danger of becoming a needy beggar in the future - is also included under *tabdhīr*. Yes, if someone keeps his real capital holdings in tact and goes on to spend its profit liberally to fulfill his permissible desires, then, that is not included under *tabdhīr*. (Al-Qurṭubī, v. 10, p. 248)

Verse 28

وَأَمَّا تُعْرَضْنَ عَنْهُمْ إِبْتِغَاءَ رَحْمَةٍ مِّنْ رَبِّكَ تَرْجُوهَا فَقُلْ لَهُمْ قَوْلًا

میسوراً ﴿٢٨﴾

And if you turn away from them while seeking a bounty from your Lord you are expecting, then speak to them in polite words. [28]

Commentary

What an unusual moral training is being given here in this verse through the Holy Prophet ﷺ to the entire Muslim community! It is being said to them: If people needing help come to you and you have nothing to give to them, and for that reason you are compelled to turn away from them, even then, this act of turning away or excusing yourself should not be with an air of indifference, or with an attitude that could be insulting for the addressee. In fact, this turning away or seeking of excuse should be coupled with an expression of your inability or constraint.

Regarding the background of the revelation of this verse, a report from Sayyidnā Ibn Zaid ؓ says that some people used to ask for financial help from the Holy Prophet ﷺ and he knew what would be given to them would be spent in the spreading of disorder. Therefore, he refused to give it to them, for this refusal was a device to stop them from indulging in disorder. Thereupon, this verse was revealed. (Qurṭubī)

In the Musnad of Sa'īd ibn Mansūr, it has been mentioned on the authority of Sayyidnā Saba' ibn Ḥakam ؓ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ had received some supply of cloth. He distributed it over those deserving. After that came some others when the supply was finished and he had nothing to give. It was about the later that this verse was revealed.

Verses 29 - 30

وَلَا تَجْعَلْ يَدَكَ مَغْلُولَةً إِلَىٰ عُنُقِكَ وَلَا تَبْسُطْهَا كُلَّ الْبَسْطِ فَتَقْعُدَ
مَلُومًا مَّحْسُورًا ﴿٢٩﴾ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَن يَشَاءُ وَيَقْدِرُ إِنَّهُ
كَانَ بِعِبَادِهِ خَبِيرًا بَصِيرًا ﴿٣٠﴾

And do not keep your hand tied to your neck, nor extend it to the full extent, lest you should be sitting reproached, empty-handed. [29]

Indeed, your Lord expands sustenance for whomsoever He wills, and constricts (for whom He wills). Surely, He is All Aware of His servants, All-Seeing. [30]

Commentary

The instruction for moderation in spending

In this verse, the Holy Prophet ﷺ is the direct addressee while the entire Muslim *ummah* is being addressed through him. The purpose is to teach a just and moderate course in spending which does not prevent one from helping others nor does it end up in a lot of trouble for him. There is an event in the background of the revelation of this verse. Ibn Marduwayh has reported it on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd ؓ and al-Baghawī, on the authority of Sayyidnā Jābir ؓ. According to this report, a boy came to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and said, "My mother asks of you a shirt." At that time, the Holy Prophet ﷺ had no shirt except the one that was on his blessed body. He told the boy, "Come some other time when we have enough means to respond to what your mother is asking for." The boy went back home, and returned and said, "My mother says that you kindly give her the very shirt you have on your blessed body." Hearing this, the Holy Prophet ﷺ took the shirt off and let him have it. His body was left bare. Came the time for Ṣalāh. Sayyidnā Bilāl ؓ called the Adhān. But, when he did not come out as usual, people were worried. When some of them went in, they saw that he was sitting bare-bodied without the shirt. Thereupon, this verse was revealed.

Spending in the way of Allah so liberally as would throw one in trouble: The pros and cons of it

The verse, given the outer view, seems to prohibit the kind of spending following which the spender himself ends up becoming poor and needy, a prey of all sorts of hardships and anxieties. Tafsīr authority, al-Qurṭubī has said that this injunction covers the general condition of Muslims who would, after such spending, find the resulting hardships distressing and the whole thing would make them contrite over past give-outs and grieve about it. The word: *مَحْضُورًا* (*maḥṣūrā*: empty-handed - 29) of the Holy Qur'ān provides a hint in this direction. (As in Tafsīr Maḥzarī) As for the people of high determination, who would not be emotionally disturbed by hardships that may come later and would still go on fulfilling rights of those who hold such rights, this restriction does not

apply to them. This is the reason that it was the customary practice of the Holy Prophet ﷺ that he would not store anything for tomorrow. What came today was spent out today. And there were occasions when he would remain hungry reaching the outer limits of having to tie a piece of rock against his stomach (to simulate the weight of food). Then there were many among the noble Ṣaḥābah who had spent their entire wealth and property in the way of Allah during the blessed period of the Holy Prophet ﷺ who did not categorically prohibit it nor did he blame them for it. This tells us that the prohibition contained in this verse is for those who cannot brave the hardships of poverty and hunger and they would start to rue after spending that they would have been better off if they had not spent in the way of Allah. If so, this attitude would nullify the good they had done in the past. Hence, the prohibition.

Poorly managed spending is prohibited

And the main thing in the verse is that it prohibits spending haphazardly in the sense that one would ignore what may happen in the near future and spend on the spot. The result is that comes tomorrow, other needy people show up or one is required to take care of a major religious exigency and he would, then, be in no position to help out. (Qurṭubī) Or, he may be rendered equally incapable of fulfilling the rights of his family, something he is duty-bound to fulfill. (Maḏharī) Explaining the words: *مَلُومًا مَّحْسُورًا* (reproached, empty-handed - 29), Tafsīr Maḏharī says that the first word: *مَلُومٌ* (*malūm*) relates to the first condition, that is, miserliness - meaning 'if he were to hold back on giving out of miserliness, people would reproach him.' And the word: *مَّحْسُورًا* (*mahsūrā*) relates to some condition other than this - meaning that 'one should not exaggerate in spending to the extent that he himself becomes a pauper. If so, he will turn empty-handed, defeated and rueful.

Verse 31

وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا أَوْلَادَكُمْ خَشْيَةَ إِمْلَاقٍ ۖ نَحْنُ نَرْزُقُهُمْ وَإِيَّاكُمْ ۖ إِنَّ قَتْلَهُمْ كَانَ خِطَاً كَبِيرًا ﴿٣١﴾

And do not kill your children for fear of poverty. We provide sustenance to them and to you, too. Killing them is a great sin indeed. [31]

Commentary

Previous verses carried a series of instructions regarding human rights. The sixth injunction appearing here is to correct a cruel custom prevailing among the people of Arabs of Jāhiliyyah. During that period of time, some people used to kill their children, particularly daughters, at birth in fear of having to face the expenses on their maintenance. In the verse cited above, Allah Ta'ālā has admonished them for their ignorance in assuming the responsibility of providing sustenance - 'who are you to do that?' This is the exclusive domain of Allah Ta'ālā. He is the One who gives you your sustenance. Now, He who gives it to you shall be the One who would give it to them as well. Why then, do you have to take the onus of killing children on yourselves because of this concern? In fact, by making the children precede as recipients of sustenance at this place, Allah Ta'ālā has subtly indicated that He shall give to the children first, then give it to the parents. It really means that Allah Ta'ālā, when He sees His servant supporting his family or helping others poor and weak, He gives him liberally in proportion to enable him to meet his needs as well as help others. In a Ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been reported to have said, "إِنَّمَا تُنصَرُونَ وَتُرزَقُونَ بِضَعْفَائِكُمْ" which means: 'It is because of the poor and weak among you that you are provided by Allah with your sustenance.' This tells us that parents who support their family get, whatever they do, for the sake of weak women and children alone.

Ruling

This statement of the Qur'an also sheds light on an issue which holds the modern world in its grip. Its movers and shakers are so scared of what they call 'population explosion' that they are frantically promoting birth control and planned parent-hood. This is also based on the same false assumption that they are the ones responsible for sustenance. May be, this approach is not a sin equal in gravity to that of the killing of children, but there is no doubt about its being blameworthy.

Verse 32

وَلَا تَقْرَبُوا الزَّانِيَ إِنَّهُ كَانَ فَاحِشَةً وَسَاءَ سَبِيلًا ﴿٣٢﴾

And do not even go near fornication. It is indeed a

shame and an evil way to follow. [32]

Commentary

The seventh injunction given here relates to the forbiddance of *zinā* (fornication, adultery). Given here are two reasons as to why it has been forbidden: (1) This is a shame, gross and immodest. Whoever is denuded of modesty is denuded of human nobility itself and is rendered incapable of distinguishing the good from the bad. This is more succinctly said in a Ḥadīth:

إذا فاتك الحياء فافعل ما شئت

When goes your sense of shame (that could become a barrier against evil), so then, you will do what you will.

Therefore, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has declared sense of shame (*ḥayā*) as a division of faith (‘Imān): 'والحياء شعبة من الإيمان' (al-Bukhārī) (2) It generates limitless social disorder the consequences of which sometimes destroy whole groups of people. In our day all sorts of crimes have increased. If investigated, the reason behind a lot of them would turn out to be some man or woman who did it. Though, this crime is not directly related to the rights of the servants of Allah but it may have been mentioned here as part of other rights taken up at this place for the reason that this crime is contagious. It brings other crimes along which disturb the rights of the servants of Allah through loss of lives and properties. Therefore, Islam has declared this crime to be more serious than any other crime. Then, it has also fixed its punishment as the harshest of all crimes because this one is a carrier of hundreds of these.

It appears in Ḥadīth that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "The heavens and the earth, the seven of them each, curse the married person who commits adultery. And the strong stench which spreads out from the private parts of such people will embarrass even the people condemned to Hell and thus there in Hell they will be suffering from the punishment of fire and disgrace both." (Reported by al-Bazzār on the authority of Sayyidnā Buraidah ؓ - Maḥzarī) In another Ḥadīth from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ؓ, it has been reported that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "A fornicator when fornicating is not a believer. A thief when stealing is not a believer. And a drunkard while drinking is not a believer." This Ḥadīth is there in al-Bukhārī and Muslim. Its explanation, as it appears in the report of

Abū Dāwūd, says: At the time those committing such crimes are practically involved in it, 'Imān (faith) leaves their heart and comes out, and when they turn away from it, 'Imān returns back in. (Maḏharī)

Verse 33

وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا النَّفْسَ الَّتِي حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ ۗ وَمَنْ قُتِلَ مَظْلُومًا فَقَدْ جَعَلْنَا لِرِوَيْهِ سُلْطَانًا فَلَا يُسْرِفُ فِي الْقَتْلِ ۗ إِنَّهُ كَانَ مَنْصُورًا ﴿٣٣﴾

And do not kill a person whom Allah has given sanctity, except for a just reason. And whoever is killed unjustly, We have given his *waliy* (legal heir) authority, but he shall not cross the limit in the matter of taking life. He is surely supported. [33]

Commentary

This eighth injunction is about the prohibition of killing unjustly. Virtually all groups, religions and sects of the world take it to be a grave crime. In Ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "The destruction of the entire world is lighter in the sight of Allah than the unjust killing of a believer." In addition to this, some reports also carry the words: "Even if the inhabitants of Allah's seven heavens and seven earths were to join in the killing of a believer unjustly, He will put all of them into the Hell." (Ibn Mājah with a chain classified as Ḥasan and al-Baihaqī - from Maḏharī)

And in another Ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been reported to have said, "Whoever abets in the killing of a believer by assisting the killer even with one word will be brought before Allah Ta'ālā on the day of Resurrection. And written on his forehead shall be: آيس من رحمة الله (Deprived of the mercy of Allah). (Maḏharī from Ibn Mājah and Iṣbahānī)

And al-Baihaqī reports on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās and Sayyidnā Mu'āwiyah ؓ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "Hopefully, Allah Ta'ālā may forgive every sin except that of the person who died in the state of disbelief (*kufr*) or who killed a believer intentionally and unjustly."

The meaning of Unjust Killing

Imām al-Bukhārī and Muslim have reported on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd ؓ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "The blood

of any Muslim who bears testimony that Allah is one and I am His Messenger is not *ḥalāl* (lawful) except under three situations. (1) He has, despite being married, committed adultery (for his legal punishment is that he should be stoned to death). (2) He who has killed a person unjustly [for his punishment is that the *walīyy* (legal heir) of the person killed can get him killed under the law of *qiṣāṣ* (even retaliation)]. (3) A person who has reneged [as an apostate: *murtadd*] from the religion of Islam (for he too is killed in punishment).

Who has the right to take Qiṣāṣ?

It has been said in this verse that this is the right of the *walīyy* (legal heir) of the person killed. In the absence of a lineal *walīyy*, the head of the Islamic government will have this right - for, he too, in a way, is the *walīyy* of all Muslims. Therefore, in Islamic juristic terminology, the former is called real and the later, legal.

Injustice is not answered by injustice, but by justice: So, be just even when punishing criminals

The statement: *فَلَا يُسْرِفُ فِي الْقَتْلِ* ('*falā yusrif fi al-qatl*': but he shall not cross the limit in the matter of taking life) is a special provision of Islamic law the outcome of which is that it is not permissible to avenge injustice by counter injustice. Even when retaliating, it is necessary to uphold the demand of justice. Until such time that the legal heir (*walīyy*) of the person killed upholds justice and seeks an even retaliation in favor of the person killed represented by him, through the legal provisions of *Qiṣāṣ*, then, the law of the Shari'ah stands in his favor. The reason is that he is surely supported, and Allah Ta'ālā is the supporter. And in case, he is all blinded by the desire of revenge and exceeds the limits of Islamic legal retaliation, then he, instead of being the one oppressed (*mazlūm*), became the oppressor (*ẓālim*) while the oppressor (*ẓālim*) became the one oppressed by him (*mazlūm*). Now things will stand reversed. Allah Ta'ālā and His Law will not support him. Instead, it will support the other party and shield him from injustice.

During the days of the Jāhiliyyah, it was common practice of the Arabs that, in retaliation of a person killed, they would avenge him by killing anyone they could lay their hands on from among the family or friends of the killer. There were occasions when it would turn out that the person killed was someone notable among them. In that case, they

would not take it as sufficient to kill only the killer in even retaliation for their man. In fact, to avenge one life, they would take the lives of two, three or many more men. Some of them would become so crazy in the heat of their passion for revenge that they would not be simply satisfied after having killed the killer. They went on to commit the horror of cutting off body parts such as the nose, ears etc. to serve as deterrents. All such actions are extra to the limits set by the Islamic Law of Even Retaliation (*al-qīṣāṣ*), and are patently *ḥarām* (unlawful). Therefore, such activities have been stopped by the proviso: *فَلَا يُسْرِفُ فِي الْقَتْلِ* (but he shall not cross the limit in the matter of taking life).

An anecdote worth remembering

Someone accused Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf before certain Mujtahid Imāms. Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf is the most notorious tyrant of Islamic history. Since, he has killed thousands of Ṣaḥābah and Ṭabi'īn unjustly, therefore, it generally happens that people tend to overlook the evil lurking behind calling him evil. The pious elder before whom this accusation was leveled against Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf asked the accusers, "Do you have any authority or evidence to support your accusation?" They said, "No." Then he said, "If Allah Ta'ālā will avenge the unjust killing of thousands of innocent people by Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf, remember that anyone who is unjust to Ḥajjāj will also not be allowed to escape from that revenge. Allah Ta'ālā will wreak vengeance of Ḥajjāj from him too. There is no partisanship in the justice of Allah Ta'ālā, therefore, it is not possible that He would release others to go about maligning His sinning servants by giving them a free hand to accuse and blame them at will.

Verses 34 - 35

وَلَا تَقْرُبُوا مَالَ الْيَتِيمِ إِلَّا بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ حَتَّىٰ يَبْلُغَ أَشُدَّهُ ۖ وَأَوْفُوا
بِالْعَهْدِ ۚ إِنَّ الْعَهْدَ كَانَ مَسْئُولًا ﴿٣٤﴾ وَأَوْفُوا الْكَيْلَ إِذَا كِلْتُمْ وَزِنُوا
بِالْقِسْطَاسِ الْمُسْتَقِيمِ ۗ ذَٰلِكَ خَيْرٌ وَأَحْسَنُ تَأْوِيلًا ﴿٣٥﴾

And do not go near the property of an orphan except in a manner that is good, until he comes to his maturity. And fulfill the covenant. Surely, the covenant shall be asked about. [34]

And give full measure when you measure, and weigh with a straight balance. That is good, and better in the end. [35]

Commentary

Mentioned in the two verses cited above, there are three injunctions: the ninth, the tenth and the eleventh. They relate to financial rights. It will be recalled that previous verses dealt with physical rights while the financial ones appear here.

Caution in handling the property of orphans

The ninth injunction given in the first verse (34) concerns the protection of properties owned by orphans and the observation of caution in their handling. Laying emphasis on it, it was said: 'And do not go (even) near the property of orphans.' It means that there should be no free use of their property counter to the provisions of the Shari'ah or the interest and advantage of the children. Those who are charged with the protection and management of the properties of orphans are duty-bound to observe utmost caution therein. When spending, they must spend only in the interest and to the advantage of orphans - and definitely not as based on their whim or lack of concern. And this pattern of management is to continue until such time when the orphaned children grow up and become capable of protecting their property themselves - the lower limit is when they attain to the age of fifteen years while the higher is eighteen years.

The fact is that it is just not permissible to spend from anyone's property through false means. But, it has been mentioned here in the case of orphans particularly because they themselves are incapable of keeping or taking account and no one is expected to know about it. So, a place where no one is present to demand one's right is exactly the place where the demand of Allah Ta'ālā becomes stronger and harder. Any shortfall in disbursing such rights becomes more sinful as compared to the rights of common people.

Fulfillment of Covenants and Implementation of Contracts

The tenth injunction enjoins the fulfillment of the covenant. There are two forms of the covenant. The first form has two aspects to it: (1) Between Allah and His servant, like the covenant of the servant in eternity that Allah is their Lord. This covenant necessarily results in

obedience to His injunctions and the seeking of His pleasure. This is a covenant every human being has made in eternity irrespective of whether he or she is a believer or a disbeliever. (2) The second covenant is the covenant of a believer made through *shahādah* or professing of the *kalimah*: لا اله الا الله (*lā ilāha illallāh*: there is no god but Allah) the outcome of which is a perfect following of Divine injunctions and the seeking of His pleasure.

The second form of the covenant takes effect between human beings themselves. This includes all treaties, pacts, agreements, pledges and contracts - political, commercial, or transactional - that are made between individuals or groups or institutions all over the world.

The fulfillment of all covenants identified in the first form is obligatory on human beings. As for the other kind of covenants or contracts, it is also obligatory to fulfill them subject to the condition that they should not be against the Islamic Law. As for those that are against the Islamic Law, it is obligatory to terminate them - after having first served a notice on the other party. If one of the parties does not fulfill, the other party has the right to go to the court and make them fulfill it. Essentially, a contract is an agreement between two parties that they would do or not do something. And in case, someone unilaterally promises to someone else that he would give him a certain thing or meet him at a certain time or take care of a certain task for him, then, it is also obligatory to fulfill this promise. There are commentators who include this too under the sense of covenant, but they do so with a slight difference. We know when two parties are bound by a contract, any contravention by one of them can be challenged in the court and the other party can force its completion. But, the fulfillment of a unilateral promise cannot be enforced through the court. Of course, if someone were to go back on the promise made to someone else - without any valid legal excuse permitted by the Shari'ah - he will be committing a sin. In Ḥadīth, this has been called hypocrisy in acts.

At the end of this verse, it was said: إِنَّ الْعَهْدَ كَانَ مَسْئُولًا (Surely, the covenant shall be asked about). It means: 'On the day of Qiyāmah, the way questions shall be asked about the fulfillment or non-fulfillment of obligatory divine injunctions, so it will be with mutual contracts - these too

will be asked about.' Here, it has been left at that only: 'it will be asked about.' What is going to happen next after the questioning? This has been left untold. Perhaps, intended as such, it may be signaling towards the danger being great!

The eleventh injunction enjoins fulfillment of weights and measures in transactions of buying and selling and forbids any short measuring. Full details appear in Sūrah al-Muṭaffifīn (83).

Ruling

Respected jurists of Islam say that the outcome of the injunction against shortening weights and measures is that it is *ḥarām* (unlawful) to give less than whatever is the due of whoever it may be. Therefore, it is also included therein that an employee curtails the assigned duty entrusted with him or gives a time that is less than what should actually be given to it, or that a worker shirks work and fails to deliver what is due out of it.

The prohibition of giving weights and measures short:

Ruling

Regarding the verse: *أَوْفُوا الْكَيْلَ إِذَا كِلْتُمْ* (And give full measure when you measure - 35), Abū Ḥayyān says in *Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ* that the responsibility of giving full weight and measure in this verse has been placed on the seller (*بائع* : *bā'i'*) which tells us that it is the seller who is responsible for weighing, measuring and seeing that it is full as due.

At the end of verse 35, it was said about the fulfillment of weight and measure: *ذَلِكَ خَيْرٌ وَأَحْسَنُ تَأْوِيلًا* (That is good, and better in the end). As for making the weight and measure correct and even, two things have been said here: (1) Firstly, the rule is good. It means that it is intrinsically good. No normal and decent person is going to take weighing less and measuring short as something nice, neither religiously, nor rationally, nor naturally. (2) Secondly, it is better in the end. The end includes the consequent success of the Hereafter, reward of deeds and the blessing of Paradise as well as the happy outcome of the very life in this world. This is suggestive of the fact that no business can prosper until its goodwill stands recognized in the market - and that cannot happen without this commercial honesty.

Verses 36 - 38

وَلَا تَقْفُ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ ۗ إِنَّ السَّمْعَ وَالْبَصَرَ وَالْفُؤَادَ كُلُّهُ
 أُولَئِكَ كَانَ عَنْهُ مَسْئُولًا ﴿٣٦﴾ وَلَا تَمْشِ فِي الْأَرْضِ مَرَحًا ۚ إِنَّكَ لَن
 تَخْرِقَ الْأَرْضَ وَلَن تَبْلُغَ الْجِبَالَ طُولًا ﴿٣٧﴾ كُلُّ ذَلِكَ كَانَ سَيِّئُهُ
 عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ مَكْرُوهًا ﴿٣٨﴾

And do not pursue that which you have no knowledge of. Surely, the ear, the eye and the heart - each one of them shall be interrogated about. [36]

And do not walk on the earth haughtily. You can neither tear the earth apart, nor can you match the mountains in height. [37]

That which is evil, of all these, is detestable in the sight of your Lord. [38]

Commentary

Two injunctions in these verses, the twelfth and the thirteenth, relate to mores of common social living. The twelfth injunction forbids doing something without having become certain about it.

At this stage, we should not lose sight of the fact that certainty has different degrees. There is a degree of certainty that reaches the level of perfect certitude, a state that leaves no room of even the slightest doubt contrary to it. Then, it could descend to the degree of strong likelihood - even though, there does exist the probability of a contrary aspect. Similarly, divine injunctions are also of two kinds: (1) Absolutes and Certainties, such as, Articles and Principles of Religion. These require certainty of the first degree. Acting without it is not permissible. (2) Strong Likelihood or Overwhelming Probability, the example of which are injunctions relating to subsidiary deeds. After having given these details, we can state the objective of the cited verse by saying that the element of certainty in injunctions that are Certain and Absolute should also be of the first degree. In other words, it should have attained the degree of perfect certitude and absolute category. And until this happens, this pseudo certainty is not trustworthy in the matter of the basic Articles and Principles of Islam. Acting on its dictates is not permissible. As for the subsidi-

ary injunctions, a certainty of the second degree, that is, of Overwhelming Probability is sufficient. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

Questions will be asked on the day of Qiyāmah about the ear, the eye and the heart

This is what we have been told in verse 36: إِنَّ السَّمْعَ وَالْبَصَرَ وَالْفُؤَادَ كُلُّ أُولَئِكَ : كَانَ عَنْهُ مَسْئُولًا : It means that the ear will be asked as to what did it keep hearing throughout its life. The eye will be asked as to what did it keep seeing throughout its life. The heart will be asked as to what did it keep cooking in its chambers and what was it that it believed in throughout its life. If things were heard through the ears, the hearing of which was not permissible in Shari'ah, such as hearing ill of someone behind his back (*ghībah*) or hearing unlawful vocal and instrumental music etc., then, punishment will follow the question. If things were seen through the eyes, the seeing of which was not permissible, such as casting an evil eye on a non-Maḥram woman or a beardless, handsome youth etc. then, punishment will follow the question. Or, planted a belief in the heart contrary to the Qur'ān, and Sunnah, or nursed a baseless blame in the heart regarding someone, then, punishment will follow the question. The fact is that, on that fateful day of Qiyāmah, questions will be asked about virtually all blessings given by Allah Ta'ālā. It was said in Sūrah at-Takāthur: لَتَسْأَلَنَّ يَوْمَئِذٍ عَنِ النَّعِيمِ : "And you shall certainly be asked on that day [of Qiyāmah] about all blessings [of Allah Ta'ālā] - 102:8." Since, the ear, the eye and the heart are more important and significant out of these blessings, these were mentioned here particularly.

Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī and Mazḥarī give yet another sense of the verse in terms of the close proximity of the statement in the first sentence and the next. In the first sentence, it was said: لَا تَقْفُ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ (And do not pursue that which you have no knowledge of - 36). Adjacent to it follows the statement that the ear, the eye and the heart - each one of them shall be interrogated about. The sense that emerges from this proximity is that a person who blamed someone without first ascertaining and becoming certain about it, or did something impulsively without doing that first, then, should this thing be related to what is heard through ears, the ears shall be questioned. And if this is 'seen', the eyes shall be questioned. And if comprehended through the heart, the heart shall be questioned to determine whether this person is true or false in his blame or

in the belief he has allowed to become rooted in his heart. Thereupon, these very body parts shall speak up as witnesses on the day of Resurrection. It will be a cause of disgrace for those who accuse others without being certain and those who do things the truth of which has not been ascertained first. This is as it appears in Sūrah Yā Sīn: **الْيَوْمَ نَخْتِمُ عَلَىٰ أَفْوَاهِهِمْ** **وَتُكَلِّمُنَا أَيْدِيهِمْ وَتَشْهَدُ أَرْجُلُهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ** "Today [on the day of Qiyāmah] We shall set a seal on their mouths and their hands shall speak and their feet shall bear witness as to what they have been earning [by making these limbs of their body do whatever of good or bad they chose] - 36:65".

Perhaps, the ears, the eyes and the heart have been particularized here on the basis that Allah Ta'ālā has blessed man with sense and consciousness through them. The purpose is to let him first ascertain, examine, and test a thought or belief that crosses his heart. If he finds it true, and sound, let him, then, put it in practice. And should it turn out to be false, let him, then, stay away from it. Anyone who does not use these faculties and goes about following things he has no knowledge of, things the truth of which he has not ascertained first, then, this person is guilty of being ungrateful to these blessings of Allah Ta'ālā.

Now, the senses through which man becomes aware of different things are five: the ears, the eyes, the nose, the faculty of speech and the sensation in the whole body that tells one about something being hot or cold. But, habitually man finds out more through the ears and eyes. Awareness about things acquired through the senses of smell, taste and touch is fairly lower in frequency as compared to things heard or seen. That it has been considered sufficient to mention only two of the five senses at this place may, perhaps, be because of this very reason. Then, even from among these two, it is the ear that has been made to precede the eye - and on other occasions of the Holy Qur'ān as well, wherever these two has been mentioned, it is the ear that has been mentioned first. In all likelihood, the reason for it is that the major part of man's information is comprised of things heard through the ears. Things seen through the eyes happen to be comparatively much less.

The thirteenth injunction appearing in the second of the two cited verses (37) is: **وَلَا تَمْشِ فِي الْأَرْضِ مَرَحًا** (And do not walk on the earth haughtily). It means that one should not walk in a way that shows arrogance, pride and exultation, for this is an idiotic act. It is as if one would like to

tear the earth apart just by walking on it - something not in his power to accomplish. Or, as if by walking with a challenging gait, he would like to rise much higher - but the mountains of Allah rise far higher than he could ever beat anatomically. In reality, arrogance as such is a major sin that can afflict human heart mortally. Therefore, one must guard against even signs of arrogance exhibited through the way one goes about in life, for they too are impermissible, after all. Walking haughtily, even though one may not be walking by exerting force on the earth, and assuming airs and posing high are impermissible under all conditions. Arrogance is to take yourself superior to others and rate others to be inferior to you. Severe warnings against it appear in Ḥadīth.

Imām Muslim has reported on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Iyād ibn 'Ammār ؓ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "Allah Ta'ālā has sent this command to me through revelation: Take to humility. Let no man pride on another man, nor adopt an attitude of self-eminence and let no one be unjust to anyone." (Maḏharī)

And Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd ؓ narrates that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "Not to enter Paradise is he who has arrogance in his heart even to the measure of a particle" (Maḏharī with reference to the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim).

And it has been reported in Ḥadīth Qudsī on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ؓ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "Allah Ta'ālā says that grandeur is My mantle and greatness is My breech. Whoever tries to snatch these from Me, him I shall put in Jahannam (The words *ridā'* and *izār* signify dress and Allah Ta'ālā has no mass or body that would need a dress. Therefore, at this place, it means the attribute of divine glory. So, whoever betrays the wish to become associated with Allah Ta'ālā in this attribute belongs to Hell).

And in another Ḥadīth the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been reported to have said, "On the day of Qiyāmah, arrogant people will be raised as humans scaled down to the size of tiny ants under the shadow of disgrace descending from all sides. They will be driven to a prison of Hell called Bulas. It will be surrounded with blazing fire, the highest around, and they will be drinking pus and blood excreted by the inmates of Hell to quench their thirst." (Tirmidhī on the authority of 'Amr ibn Shu'aib, he from his

father, he from his grandfather - Maḏharī)

And speaking from the pulpit, Sayyidnā 'Umar رضي الله عنه said, "I have heard from the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم that a person who takes to humility, Allah Ta'ālā elevates him to higher ranks following which he is, though, insignificant in his own sight, but he is great in the sight of everybody else. And whoever waxes proud, him Allah Ta'ālā puts to disgrace following which he is, though, great in his own sight but he is, in the sight of people, worse than a dog and pig." (Maḏharī)

After having described details of the injunctions appearing above, it was said in the last verse: **كُلُّ ذَلِكَ كَانَ سَيِّئُهُ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ مَكْرُوهًا** (That which is evil, of all these, is detestable in the sight of your Lord - 38).

As for what has been forbidden in the said injunctions, their repugnance is obvious. But, within these there are some commandments where rights of parents and relatives have been enjoined or fulfillment of promises has been made mandatory. Here too, the purpose is to avoid doing the opposite of it, like hurting parents, breaking off from relatives and going back on solemn promises. Since all these things are *ḥarām* or reprehensible, therefore, it has been called '*makrūh*' in a general sense of 'detestable' which includes the *ḥarām* and *makrūh* both. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

Note

The injunctions described in the fifteen verses cited above are, in a way, the explanation of the effort acceptable in the sight of Allah mentioned in: **وَسَعَى لَهَا سَعْيَهَا** (and makes effort for it as due - 19). There it was said that not every effort is acceptable with Allah. Instead, the effort made in accordance with the Sunnah and teaching of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is the only one acceptable with Him. Main divisions of such acceptable effort have been mentioned in these injunctions which take up the rights of Allah first and then the rights of the servants of Allah.

A gist of Torah in fifteen verses

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه said that the commandments of the entire Torah have been reduced to fifteen verses of Sūrah Banī

Isrā'īl. (Mazhari)

Verses 39 - 44

ذَلِكَ مِمَّا أَوْحَىٰ إِلَيْكَ رَبُّكَ مِنَ الْحِكْمَةِ ۗ وَلَا تَجْعَلْ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهًا
 آخَرَ فَتُلْقَىٰ فِي جَهَنَّمَ مَلُومًا مَّدْحُورًا ﴿٣٩﴾ أَفَأَصْفُكُمْ رَبُّكُم بِالْبَنِينَ
 وَاتَّخَذَ مِنَ الْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنَاثًا ۗ إِنَّكُمْ لَتَقُولُونَ قَوْلًا عَظِيمًا ﴿٤٠﴾ وَلَقَدْ
 صَرَّفْنَا فِي هَذَا الْقُرْآنِ لِيَذَكَّرُوا ۗ وَمَا يَزِيدُهُمْ إِلَّا نُفُورًا ﴿٤١﴾ قُلْ
 لَوْ كَانَ مَعَهُ آلِهَةٌ كَمَا يَقُولُونَ إِذًا لَآتَوَعُوا إِلَىٰ ذِي الْعَرْشِ سَبِيلًا
 ﴿٤٢﴾ سُبْحٰنَهُ وَتَعَالَىٰ عَمَّا يُقُولُونَ ۗ عَلُوًّا كَبِيرًا ﴿٤٣﴾ تُسَبِّحُ لَهُ
 السَّمَوَاتُ السَّبْعُ وَالْأَرْضُ وَمَنْ فِيهِنَّ ۗ وَإِنْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِلَّا يُسَبِّحُ
 بِحَمْدِهِ وَلَكِنْ لَا تَفْقَهُونَ تَسْبِيحَهُمْ ۗ إِنَّهُ كَانَ حَلِيمًا غَفُورًا ﴿٤٤﴾

This is part of the Wisdom your Lord has revealed to you. And do not set up any other god along with Allah, lest you should be thrown into Jahannam, blamed, rejected. [39]

Is it, then, that your Lord has chosen you to have sons and has Himself taken females from among the angels? Surely, you are saying something terrible. [40]

And surely, We have explained things in various ways in this Qur'an, so that they may take advice - and it increases nothing in them but aversion. [41]

Say, 'Had there been other gods along with Him', as they say, 'then they would have found out a way to the Lord of the Throne'. [42] Pure is He, and Exalted, immensely above what they say. [43]

All the seven skies and the earth and all those therein extol His purity. And there is not a single thing that does not extol His purity and praise, but you do not understand their extolling. Surely He is Forbearing, Most-Forgiving. [44]

Commentary

According to the proof of Tauḥīd (the Oneness of Allah) given in the verse: إِذَا لَا يَتَّعَوْنَ إِلَى ذِي الْعَرْشِ سَبِيلًا (then they would have found out a way to the Lord of the Throne - 42), Allah alone is the creator, owner and master of the entire universe. The argument is if it was not so and He had other partners in this godhead, differences would have necessarily emerged among them. And, in the eventuality of a difference, the whole universal system would have gone to ruins - because, ever abiding peace among them is habitually impossible. Though, this argument has been enunciated here in a prohibitive manner, but there are books of Scholastic Theology ('Ilm al-Kalām) where the logical rationale behind this argument has also been described in great details. The learned may consult these at their discretion.

The meaning of Tasbīḥ (glorification of Allah) said by the heavens and the earth and everything present therein

Among these, the Tasbīḥ of Allah said by all angels and believing *jinn* and human beings is self-evident. Everyone knows that. As for disbelieving human beings and the *jinn*, they obviously do not say it. Similarly, there are other things in this universe about which it is said that they are insensate, devoid of reason and intelligence. How do we rationalize their act of saying Tasbīḥ? Some 'Ulamā' say that their Tasbīḥ is circumstantial, state-articulated, the testimony of their state of being - because, the collective condition of everything other than Allah Ta'ālā is telling us that it is neither permanent existence-wise nor survival-wise. This whole ongoing condition has been activated under the power and control of some supreme power - this testimony is its Tasbīḥ.

But, other investigative scholars say that volitional Tasbīḥ of Allah is particular with angels and believing *jinn*s and human beings. But, in terms of the state of His orientation towards what He has created, Allah Ta'ālā has cast every particle of this universe into the mould of a chanter of His glory. As regards those who do not believe, or do not believe in institutional religion, they too generally subscribe to God and His greatness. Then, there are materialists, atheists, and modern-day communists who do not obviously subscribe to the existence of God. But, the

truth of the matter is that the very existence of theirs, inclusive of all that constitutes it, is compulsively busy glorifying Allah - just as trees, rocks and dust and a zillion other things are busy recounting the glory of the most true Allah. But, this act of glorification, this *Tasbīḥ* they are all engaged in, is built-in, compulsively ingrained and is responding to the call of the creational imperative. Common people do not hear it. The statement of the Qur'ān: وَلَكِنْ لَا تَفْقَهُونَ تَسْبِيحَهُمْ (but you do not understand their extolling [the act of glorifying Allah] - 17:44) proves that this originally and elementally ingrained act of extolling Allah performed by everything en masse is something common people cannot understand. As far as circumstantially discernable act of extolling is concerned, intelligent people can identify it readily. This tells us that the act of extolling we are talking about is not simply a testimony of the incumbent's state of existence in the universe. It is real - though, beyond our comprehension. (As mentioned by al-Qurṭubī)

As for the phenomenon of pebbles saying *tasbīḥ* (glory be to Allah) in the blessed hand of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and which was clearly heard by the noble Ṣaḥābah, it is obviously a miracle. But, Shaykh Jalāluddīn as-Suyūṭī while explaining this Ḥadīth in al-Khaṣāiṣ al-Kubrā has said that pebbles saying *tasbīḥ* is not the miracle of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. As regards pebbles, they say *tasbīḥ* wherever they are. In fact, what is his miracle is that once the pebbles were in his blessed hand that *tasbīḥ* said by them became audible.

Imām al-Qurṭubī has declared this refinement as weightier and has supported it with many proofs from the Qur'ān, and Sunnah. For example, it was said about Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام in Sūrah Ṣād: إِنَّا سَخَّرْنَا الْجِبَالَ مَعَهُ يُسَبِّحُنَ بِالْعَشِيِّ وَالْإِشْرَاقِ (We subjugated the mountains with him which used to glorify Allah, evening and morning - 48:18). And it was said about rocks in a verse of Sūrah al-Baqarah: وَإِنَّ مِنْهَا لَمَا يَهْبِطُ مِنْ خَشْيَةِ اللَّهِ (and there are still others [rocks] which fall down in fear of Allah - 2:74). This proves that rocks have consciousness, sense and the fear of Allah. Then, refuting Christians calling Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام Son of God, it was said in a verse of Sūrah Maryam: وَتَخِرُّ الْجِبَالَ هَدًا أَنْ دَعَوْا لِلرَّحْمَنِ وَكَذًا (and the mountains fall down crumbling that they attribute to the Rahmān [Most-Merciful

Allah] a son - 19:90,91). Again, it is evident that mountains crumbling in fear are indicative of their consciousness and sense. And once it is conceded that they have sense and consciousness, the saying of *tasbīḥ* by them should not be considered something improbable.

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضي الله عنه said, "a mountain says to the other mountain, 'say, O brother, has a man ever gone across you, someone who was good at remembering Allah?' If it says, 'yes,' this mountain is pleased with him." For his proof, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd recited the verse: وَقَالُوا اتَّخَذَ الرَّحْمَنُ وَلَدًا (And they say, "the Raḥmān [Most-Merciful Allah] has taken a son" - 19:88). After that, he said, "this verse proves it that mountains are affected by listening to words of blasphemy (*kufr*) and are, thereupon, seized by fear. This being the truth, do you think that they listen to what is false and do not listen to what is true (*ḥaqq*), do not hear Allah being remembered (*dhikr*) and are not affected by it?" (Qurtubī with reference to Raqā'iq ibn Mubārak) And the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, "there is no *jinn*, man, tree, rock and common clod of earth that hears the call of the Muezzin (*mu'adhdhin*), and does not bear witness to his faith and righteousness on the day of Qiyāmah." (Mu'aṭṭā Imām Mālik and Sunan Ibn Mājah on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī رضي الله عنه).

Imām al-Bukhārī رحمه الله عليه has reported on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضي الله عنه, who said, "we used to hear the sound of *tasbīḥ* (glory to Allah) said by the food when it was being eaten." And a variant appears in another report where it is said, "when we ate with the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, we used to hear the sound of *tasbīḥ* said by the food." And as narrated by Sayyidnā Jābir ibn Samurah رضي الله عنه, it appears in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, "I know the rock of Makkah al-Mukarramah that used to say '*salām*' to me before the call of prophet-hood - and I know it even now." Some say, 'the reference is to al-Ḥajar al-Aswad.' Allah knows best.

Imām al-Qurtubī رحمه الله عليه has said that Ḥadīth reports relating to such matters abound. As for the story of Uṣṭuwanah Hannānah (the dried tree serving as a column for support when the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم

gave his Khuṭbah in the Masjid), it is common knowledge among Muslims all over the world. When the Holy Prophet ﷺ bypassed it while starting to deliver his Khuṭbah from a regular *mimbar* (stepped-platform), the noble Ṣaḥābah heard the sound of wailing coming from it.

After all these reports, why should it remain so far out to realize that everything in the heavens and the earth has consciousness and sense and that everything really glorifies Allah. Ibrāhīm رحمه الله تعالى says that this *tasbīḥ* is universal. It includes the animate and the inanimate both. So much so that the least sound made by the panels of doors are not devoid of *tasbīḥ*. Imām al-Qurṭubī has said, 'If this glorification of Allah was a state-articulated *tasbīḥ*, why was it made so particular to Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام in the verse referred to a little earlier? A state-articulated *tasbīḥ* is something every discerning human being can sense out from everything. This makes it obvious that this *tasbīḥ* was spoken, verbally and audibly.

Verses 45 - 48

وَإِذَا قَرَأْتَ الْقُرْآنَ جَعَلْنَا بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ
حِجَابًا مَّسْتُورًا ﴿٤٥﴾ وَجَعَلْنَا عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ أَكِنَّةً أَنْ يَفْقَهُوهُ وَفِي
أَذَانِهِمْ وَقْرًا وَإِذَا ذَكَرْتَ رَبَّكَ فِي الْقُرْآنِ وَحْدَهُ، وَلَوُوا عَلَى آدْبَارِهِمْ
نُفُورًا ﴿٤٦﴾ نَحْنُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا يَسْتَمِعُونَ بِهِ إِذْ يَسْتَمِعُونَ إِلَيْكَ وَإِذْ هُمْ
نَجْوَى إِذْ يَقُولُ الظَّالِمُونَ إِنْ تَتَّبِعُونَ إِلَّا رَجُلًا مَّسْحُورًا ﴿٤٧﴾ أَنْظِرْ
كَيْفَ ضَرَبُوا لَكَ الْأَمْثَالَ فَضَلُّوا فَلَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ سَبِيلًا ﴿٤٨﴾

And when you recite the Qur'an, We place an invisible curtain between you and those who do not believe in the Hereafter. [45] And We put covers on their hearts, so that they do not understand it, and deafness in their ears. And when you refer to your Lord alone in the Qur'an, they turn their backs in aversion. [46]

We are fully aware of what they listen for, when they lis-

ten to you, and when they are in secret consultation: when the transgressors say, "you are following none but a bewitched man." [47]

See how they have coined similes for you, so they have gone astray and cannot find a way. [48]

Commentary

Can Magic affect a Prophet?

A prophet being affected by magic is as possible as being affected by sickness. Therefore, blessed prophets are not devoid of or detached from human characteristics. For instance, they could be wounded, run temperature or feel pain. Similarly, they could also be affected by magic because, that too, is triggered by the influence of physical causes, such as those of the Jinn. And it also stands proved from Ḥadīth that there was an occasion when the Holy Prophet ﷺ was affected by magic. As for the disbelievers calling him 'bewitched' ('*mashūr*') in verse 47 which the Qur'ān has refuted for the reason that they really meant to call him 'insane.' (Bayān al-Qur'ān) Therefore, the Ḥadīth of magic is not contradictory.¹

The subject taken up in the first two verses (45, 46) has a particular event as a background. According to al-Qurṭubī reporting on the authority of Sayyidnā Sa'īd ibn Jubayr ؓ, when Sūrah al-Masad/al-Lahab (111) beginning with: **تَبَّتْ يَدَا أَبِي لَهَبٍ** was revealed in the Qur'ān, it also condemned the wife of Abū Lahab. She went to the place where the Holy Prophet ﷺ used to sit with his Companions. At that time, Sayyidnā Abū Bakr ؓ was present there. Noticing her coming well ahead of her arrival, he said to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, "if you move away from here, it will be better. This woman has a sharp tongue. She will say things which may cause you pain." He said, "no, Allah Ta'ālā will put a curtain between me and her." So, she reached there but when she could not see the Holy Prophet ﷺ anywhere around, she turned towards Sayyidnā

1. Moreover, the magic or sorcery can affect a prophet only to cause a physical illness. It can never have an adverse effect on performing their functions as prophets. The disbelievers used to call the Holy Prophet ﷺ 'bewitched person' in this later sense which was totally impossible in his case, while the ḥadīth refers to the physical illness suffered by the Holy Prophet ﷺ which was caused by an act of magic. (Muhammad Taqi Usmani)

Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه and said, "your companion has satirized us in poetry." Sayyidnā Abū Bakr said, "By Allah, he is no composer of poetry, much less that of the kind in which people are satirized (*hajw*)." Thereupon, she left in a huff saying, "you are no more than a verifier for him." After she was gone, Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه submitted, "didn't she see you?" He said, "as long as she was here, an angel kept obstructing the view between me and her."

A Qur'anic formula of remaining hidden from enemy sight

'On occasions when the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم wished to remain hidden from the sight of the Mushriks,' says Sayyidnā Ka'b رضي الله عنه, 'he would recite three verses of the Holy Qur'ān. Such was its effect that the disbelievers were unable to see him.' Those three verses are:

1. **إِنَّا جَعَلْنَا عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ أَكِنَّةً أَنْ يَفْقَهُوهُ وَفِي آذَانِهِمْ وَقْرًا** (Surely, We have put covers on their hearts, so that they do not understand it, and deafness in their ears - Sūrah al-Kahf, 18:57).
2. **أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ طَبَعَ اللَّهُ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ وَسَمْعِهِمْ وَأَبْصَارِهِمْ** (Those are the ones Allah has put a seal on whose hearts and hearing and vision - Sūrah an-Naḥl, 16:108).
3. **أَفَرَأَيْتَ مَنِ اتَّخَذَ إِلَهَهُ هَوَاهُ وَأَضَلَّهُ اللَّهُ عَلَى عِلْمٍ وَخَتَمَ عَلَى سَمْعِهِ وَقَلْبِهِ وَجَعَلَ عَلَى بَصَرِهِ غِشَاوَةً** (Have you seen the one who has taken his own desire as god while Allah has let him go astray because of knowledge [his or His] and has set a seal upon his hearing and his heart and placed over his vision a veil - Sūrah al-Jāthiyah, 45:23).

Sayyidnā Ka'b رضي الله عنه says that he related this thing about the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to a Syrian who had to go to adjoining Byzantium on a certain business. He went there and stayed for a long time until the local disbelievers started harassing him. When he escaped from there, they pursued him. At that time, he remembered that narrative and recited the three verses identified there. It so happened as if a screen was placed on their eyes why they could not see this person who was walking on the same pathway the enemies were passing by.

Imām Tha'labī says that he related this narrative of Sayyidnā Ka'b رضي الله عنه to a resident of the town of R'ay. It so happened that he was put under arrest by the disbelievers of Dailam. For some time he remained under detention with them. One day he got his chance to escape. They

pursued him, but this person also recited those three verses. The effect was immediate. Allah Ta'ālā screened their eyes in a manner that they were unable to see him - though, they were walking side by side with their clothes touching his clothes.

Imām al-Qurṭubī says that the verses from Sūrah Yā Sīn which were recited by the Holy Prophet ﷺ at the time of Hijrah may also be added to the three verses cited above. This was when the Mushsriks of Makkah had besieged his house. He recited those verses and went right through them. In fact, he went by throwing dust on their heads and none of them knew anything about it. Those verses of Sūrah Yā Sīn are:

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

يَسَّ ﴿١﴾ وَالْقُرْآنَ الْحَكِيمَ ﴿٢﴾ إِنَّكَ لَمِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿٣﴾ عَلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿٤﴾ تَنْزِيلَ الْعَزِيزِ الرَّحِيمِ ﴿٥﴾ لِتُنذِرَ قَوْمًا مَّا أُنذِرَ آبَاؤَهُمْ فَهُمْ غٰفِلُونَ ﴿٦﴾ لَقَدْ حَقَّ الْقَوْلُ عَلَىٰ أَكْثَرِهِمْ فَهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٧﴾ إِنَّا جَعَلْنَا فِيْ أَعْنَاقِهِمْ أَغْلَالًا فَهِيَ إِلَى الْأَذْقَانِ فَهُمْ مُّقْمَحُونَ ﴿٨﴾ وَجَعَلْنَا مِنْ بَيْنِ أَيْدِيهِمْ سَدًّا وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ سَدًّا فَأَعْشَيْنَهُمُ فَهُمْ لَا يُبْصِرُونَ ﴿٩﴾

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

Yā Sīn. By the wise Qur'ān, surely you [O Muhammad] are from among the messengers, on a straight path. [This is] a revelation of the Mighty, the Very Merciful, that you may warn a people whose forefathers were not warned, so they are unaware. The word has already taken effect against most of them, so they do not believe. Surely, We have placed shackles on their necks reaching down to their chins, so they are with heads forced high up. And We have placed before them an obstruction and behind them an obstruction and covered them, so they do not see - Sūrah Yā Sīn, 36: 1-9)

Imām al-Qurṭubī says that he himself went through an incident in the Manthūr Castle of al-Qarṭubah in his own country of al-Andalūs (Spain). I ran in front of the enemy and sat in a corner. The enemy sent two horsemen after me. I was on open grounds. There was nothing to obstruct the view between us. But, I was reciting these verses of Sūrah Yā Sīn. Both these horsemen passed by me. Then they went back towards where they had come from, saying, 'this person must be some devil,' be-

cause they could not see me. Allah Ta'ālā had turned them blind as far as I was concerned. (Qurṭubī)

Verses 49 - 52

وَقَالُوا إِذَا كُنَّا عِظَامًا وَرَفَاتًا إِنَّا لَمَبْعُوثُونَ خَلْقًا جَدِيدًا ﴿٤٩﴾ قُلْ كُونُوا حِجَارَةً أَوْ حَدِيدًا ﴿٥٠﴾ أَوْ خَلْقًا مِّمَّا يَكْبُرُ فِي صُدُورِكُمْ ۖ فَسَيَقُولُونَ مَنْ يُعِيدُنَا قُلِ الَّذِي فَطَرَكُمْ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ ۖ فَسَيُنْغِضُونَ إِلَيْكَ رُءُوسَهُمْ وَيَقُولُونَ مَتَى هُوَ ۖ قُلْ عَسَىٰ أَنْ يَكُونَ قَرِيبًا ﴿٥١﴾ يَوْمَ يَدْعُوكُمْ فَتَسْتَجِيبُونَ بِحَمْدِهِ وَتَظُنُّونَ إِن لَّبِثْتُمْ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا ﴿٥٢﴾

And they say, "Once we are reduced to bones and dust, is it then that we shall be raised, created anew?" [49] Say, "Be you stones or iron [50] or any creation you deem harder in your hearts." Thereupon they will ask, "Who will bring us back?" Say, "The One who created you the first time." So, they will shake their heads before you and say, "When shall that be?" Say, "May be, it is near." [51] (It will be) on a day when He will call you, and you will respond praising Him and you will think you did not stay (on the earth) but for a short while. [52]

Commentary

The word: يَوْمَ يَدْعُوكُمْ (He will call you) in: يَوْمَ يَدْعُوكُمْ فَتَسْتَجِيبُونَ بِحَمْدِهِ (on a day when He will call you, and you will respond praising Him - 52) is a derivation from: دُعَاءُ (*du'ā'*) which means to call out for someone by announcing it vocally. The sense is that the day when Allah Ta'ālā will call everyone to come to the plains of Resurrection, this calling will be through Angel Isrāfīl. When he sounds the second trumpet, the dead will come alive and assemble on the plains of Resurrection. It is also possible that, once alive, a call goes through to all of them to assemble there. (Qurṭubī)

In a Ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "On the day of Qiyāmah, you will be called out with your name and the name of your father, therefore, give yourself good names (avoiding the absurd ones)." (Qurṭubī)

Even disbelievers will rise praising Allah on the day of Resurrection

The word: *إِسْتِجَابَةٌ* (*istijābah*) in: *فَتَسْتَجِيبُونَ بِحَمْدِهِ* (and you will respond praising Him - 52) means to respond on being called by someone and be present before him. The sense is 'when you will be called to present yourselves on the plains of Resurrection, all of you will obey that call and assemble there. The word: *بِحَمْدِهِ* (*biḥamdihī*: praising Him) is the state of the nominative pronoun in: *تَسْتَجِيبُونَ* (*tastajībūn*: you will respond) which releases the sense of *ḥāmidīn* (حَامِدِينَ) that is, those praising Him. Thus, the outcome is that all of them will present themselves praising Allah while coming to those fateful plains.

As outwardly obvious, the verse does seem to indicate that this will be the state of all, believers or disbelievers - they both will rise praising Allah. But, the real addressees here are the disbelievers. It is about them that it is being said they all will rise praising Allah. From among Tafsīr authorities, Sayyidnā Sa'īd ibn Jubayr رحمه الله has said that the disbelievers too will rise from their graves saying: *سُبْحَانَكَ وَبِحَمْدِكَ* (Pure are You and to You belong all praises), but their act of praising at that hour will be of no use to them. (Qurtūbī) The reason is not far to see. When these people see life after death, the words of praise for Allah will escape their mouth involuntarily. This will be no deed deserving recompense.

Some commentators have said that this state has been particularized with believers. They argue that, regarding the disbelievers, the Qur'ān has only this to say: (1) When they rise, they will say, 'يَوْلَانَا مَنْ بَعَثَنَا' (Woe be to us! Who made us rise from our resting-place? - Sūrah Yā Sīn, 36:52). (2) And according to another verse, they will say, 'يُحَسِرُنِي عَلَىٰ' (O my remorse [is boundless] over what I have neglected on the side of [obedience to] Allah! - Sūrah az-Zumar, 39:56).

But, the truth of the matter is that there is no likelihood of a contradiction between these two sayings. May be, in the beginning, all rise praising. Later, when disbelievers are separated from believers as said in Sūrah Yā Sīn: *وَأَمَّا زُورًا الْيَوْمَ أَيُّهَا الْمُجْرِمُونَ* (But today, O criminals, you stand out distinctly apart - 36:59), they will also say what appears in the cited

verses. Then, it stands proved from many explications of the Qur'ān, and Sunnah that stations of Resurrection will be different with a corresponding difference in the states and conditions of people in each of these. Imām al-Qurṭubī has said that rising in Resurrection will begin with the praise of Allah with everyone doing it when rising and on it will end all matters. This is as it was already said: وَقُضِيَ بَيْنَهُم بِالْحَقِّ وَقِيلَ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (And matters between them have been settled in accordance with the truth and it was said: All praise belongs to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds - az-Zumar, 39:75)

Verses 53 - 55

وَقُلْ لِعِبَادِي يَقُولُوا الَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ يَنْزِعُ بَيْنَهُمْ ط إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ كَانَ لِلْإِنْسَانِ عَدُوًّا مُّبِينًا ﴿٥٣﴾ رَبُّكُمْ أَعْلَمُ بِكُمْ ط إِنَّ يَشَأْ يَرْحَمَكُمُ أَوْ إِنَّ يَشَأْ يُعَذِّبِكُمْ ط وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ عَلَيْهِمْ وَكَيْلًا ﴿٥٤﴾ وَرَبُّكَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ط وَلَقَدْ فَضَّلْنَا بَعْضَ النَّبِيِّينَ عَلَى بَعْضٍ وَأَتَيْنَا دَاوُدَ زُبُورًا ﴿٥٥﴾

And tell My servants that they should speak that which is best. Surely, Satan creates discord among them. Indeed, Satan is an open enemy to mankind. [53]

Your Lord knows you best. If He so wills, He will have mercy on you and if He so wills, He will punish you. And We have not sent you to be responsible for them. [54]

And your Lord knows best about all those in the heavens and the earth. And We have certainly granted excellence to some prophets over the others. And We gave Dāwūd the Zabūr (the Psalms). [55]

Commentary

Using foul or harsh language is not correct, even against infidels

The first verse (53) prohibits Muslims from talking harshly to disbelievers. It means that a hard line should not be taken unnecessarily, and should there be the need, even killing would be in order - as succinctly

put in two lines of Persian poetry:

وگر خون بفتوی بریزی رواست که بے حکم شرع آب خوردن خطاست

Whereas, without an injunction of the Sharī'ah, to drink water is a sin,

In another case, to shed blood under Fatwā is permissible!

Since it is possible to suppress the aggressive might of disbelievers and their hostility to Islām through fighting and killing (as an inevitable measure of defense), therefore, it is allowed. However, by using foul language and harsh words, neither a castle stands conquered nor anyone guided right, therefore, it has been prohibited. Imām al-Qurṭubī said that this verse was revealed in the background of an event relating to Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ. It so happened that someone used foul language against Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ who retaliated harshly and wanted to kill him. This posed the danger of a war breaking out between their two tribes. Thereupon, this verse was revealed.

And according to the interpretation of Imām al-Qurṭubī, this verse contains a guideline for Muslims as to how they should address each other. It suggests that they should not speak harshly at the time of mutual difference, for this is a trap door through which the Shaitān pushes them into mutual infighting and disorder.

That Zabūr (the Psalms) has been mentioned particularly in the last sentence of verse 55: *وَآتَيْنَا دَاوُدَ زَبُورًا* (And We gave Dāwūd the Zabūr) has been done, perhaps, because Zabūr reports that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم will be a ruler along with being a messenger and prophet. This is as it appears in the Qur'an: *وَلَقَدْ كَتَبْنَا فِي الزَّبُورِ مِنْ بَعْدِ الذِّكْرِ أَنَّ الْأَرْضَ يَرِثُهَا عِبَادِيَ الصَّالِحُونَ* (And We have already written in the Zabūr, after the [previous] mention, that the land is inherited by My righteous servants - al-Anbiyā', 21:105).

At this stage, Imām al-Baghawī says in his Tafsīr that Zabūr is a book of Allah revealed to Sayyidnā Dāwūd رضی اللہ عنہ. It has one hundred and fifty *sūrahs* or chapters and all *sūrahs* are restricted to praises of Allah and prayers to Him. The areas of lawful and unlawful, obligations and limits have not been taken up there.

Verses 56 - 58

قُلِ ادْعُوا الَّذِينَ زَعَمْتُمْ مِنْ دُونِهِ فَلَا يَمْلِكُونَ كَشْفَ الضَّرِّ عَنْكُمْ
وَلَا تَحْوِيلًا ﴿٥٦﴾ أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ يَبْتَغُونَ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمُ الْوَسِيلَةَ
أَيْهِمْ أَقْرَبُ وَيَرْجُونَ رَحْمَتَهُ وَيَخَافُونَ عَذَابَهُ، ط إِنَّ عَذَابَ رَبِّكَ
كَانَ مَحْدُورًا ﴿٥٧﴾ وَإِنْ مِنْ قَرْيَةٍ إِلَّا نَحْنُ مُهْلِكُوهَا قَبْلَ يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ
أَوْ مُعَذِّبُوهَا عَذَابًا شَدِيدًا ط كَانَ ذَلِكَ فِي الْكِتَابِ مَسْطُورًا ﴿٥٨﴾

Say, "Call those whom you assume (to be gods), besides Him, while they have no power to remove distress from you nor to shift it." [56]

And those whom they invoke, do themselves seek the means of closeness to their Lord as to which of them is the closest, and they hope for His Mercy and fear His punishment. Indeed, the punishment of your Lord is to be feared. [57]

And there is no town but We are to destroy it before the Doomsday or punish it with severe punishment. That is what stands written in the Book. [58]

Commentary

The word '*al-wasīlah*' in: يَبْتَغُونَ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمُ الْوَسِيلَةَ (seek the means of closeness to their Lord - 57) conveys the sense of that which is used as a means of reaching someone. As for reaching Allah, the *wasīlah* or means is to always keep the pleasure of Allah in sight when learning or doing anything while adhering to the injunctions of the *Sharī'ah* strictly. Thus, the sense of the sentence is that all of them are seeking the closeness of Allah Ta'ālā through their righteous deeds.

About the sentence which follows immediately after: يَرْجُونَ رَحْمَتَهُ وَيَخَافُونَ عَذَابَهُ (hope for His Mercy and fear His punishment - 57), Sahl ibn 'Abdullāh said: Hope and Fear, that is, hoping for mercy from Allah as well as fearing Him are two different states one is in. When they stay at par, one keeps on course, correct and stable. And if any one of the two overcomes the other, one finds the equilibrium of his spiritual state subjected to disorder to the measure of that imbalance. (Qurṭubī)

Verses 59 - 60

وَمَا مَنَعَنَا أَنْ نُرْسِلَ بِالْآيَاتِ إِلَّا أَنْ كَذَّبَ بِهَا الْأَوَّلُونَ ط وَآتَيْنَا ثَمُودَ
النَّاقَةَ مُبْصِرَةً فَظَلَمُوا بِهَا ط وَمَا نُرْسِلُ بِالْآيَاتِ إِلَّا تَخْوِيفًا ﴿٥٩﴾ وَإِذْ
قُلْنَا لَكَ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ أَحَاطَ بِالنَّاسِ ط وَمَا جَعَلْنَا الرَّءْيَا الَّتِي أَرَيْنِكَ إِلَّا
فِتْنَةً لِلنَّاسِ وَالشَّجَرَةَ الْمَلْعُونَةَ فِي الْقُرْآنِ ط وَنُحَوِّفُهُمْ ۗ فَمَا يَزِيدُهُمْ
إِلَّا طُغْيَانًا كَبِيرًا ﴿٦٠﴾ ع

And nothing made us refrain from sending the signs except that the earlier people had belied them. And We gave Thamūd the she-camel, an eye-opener, then they did wrong to her. And We do not send signs but to warn.

[59]

And (remember) when We said to you that your Lord encompasses all humans. And We did not make the scene but We showed to you a test for the people - and the tree cursed in the Qur'ān also. And We warn them, yet it adds to nothing but their enormous rebellion. [60]

Commentary

The word '*fitnah*' (فِتْنَةً) appearing in verse 60: وَمَا جَعَلْنَا الرَّءْيَا الَّتِي أَرَيْنِكَ إِلَّا فِتْنَةً (And We showed you the scene [in the Night of Ascent - al-Mi'rāj] only to make it a test for the people) is used in the Arabic language to convey many different meanings. It could mean falling into error and going astray, or trial or test or some disorder or upheaval as well. At this place, the probability of all these meanings exists. Early Tafsīr authorities - Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah, Sayyidnā Mu'āwiyah, Ḥasan, Mujāhid and others - have taken '*fitnah*' as carrying the last sense given above. They have said that this '*fitnah*' was that of apostacy (*Irtidād*) which relates to the time when the Holy Prophet ﷺ told people about Mi'rāj, how he went on his nocturnal journey to Bāit-ul-Maqdis, to the heavens from there and his return to Makkah al-Mukarramah before dawn. There were many neo-Muslims who had yet to become staunch in their faith fell into the error of belying his statement and turned apostates. (Qurṭubī)

It also stands proved from this event that the word 'رُءْيَا' (*ru'ya*) is though also used in the Arabic language in the sense of dream but, at

this place, what is being recounted is no matter of some dream. Had that been the case, there was no reason why people would become apostates. Dreams are dreams. Everyone can see such dreams. In fact, the purpose of employing the word: رُءْيَا (*ru'ya*) at this place is to show that the marvel was witnessed while awake. While commenting on this verse, some commentators have interpreted it to be referring to other events too besides the event of Mi'rāj. But, they do not apply here as a whole. Therefore, the majority of commentators have declared the event of Mi'rāj alone as the relevant subject of this verse. (As described in detail by al-Qurtūbī)

Verses 61- 65

وَإِذْ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ اسْجُدُوا لِآدَمَ فَسَجَدُوا إِلَّا إِبْلِيسَ ۖ قَالَ ءَأَسْجُدُ
لِمَنْ خَلَقْتُ طِينًا ﴿٦١﴾ قَالَ أَرَأَيْتَكَ هَذَا الَّذِي كَرَّمْتَ عَلَيَّ لَنْ يَكُنْ
أَخْرَجْتَنِي إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ لِأَحْتَنِكَنَّ ذُرِّيَّتَهُ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا ﴿٦٢﴾ قَالَ اذْهَبْ
فَمَنْ تَبِعَكَ مِنْهُمْ فَإِنَّ جَهَنَّمَ جَزَاءُكُمْ جَزَاءً مَوْفُورًا ﴿٦٣﴾
وَاسْتَفْزِزْ مَنِ اسْتَطَعْتَ مِنْهُمْ بِصَوْتِكَ وَأَجْلِبْ عَلَيْهِمُ بِخَيْلِكَ وَرَجِلِكَ
وَشَارِكُهُمْ فِي الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَوْلَادِ وَعَدَّهُمْ ۖ وَمَا يَعِدُهُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ إِلَّا
غُرُورًا ﴿٦٤﴾ إِنَّ عِبَادِي لَيْسَ لَكَ عَلَيْهِمْ سُلْطَانٌ ۖ وَكَفَىٰ بِرَبِّكَ
وَكَيْلًا ﴿٦٥﴾

And (remember) when We said to the angels, "Prostrate before 'Adam." So, they prostrated, except Iblis (Satan). He said, "Shall I prostrate before the one You have created from mud?" [61] He added, "Tell me, this one whom You have honoured above me; if You give me respite till the Doomsday, I shall subdue his progeny, except a few of them." [62] He (Allah) said, " Go then, for whoever of them follows you, the Hell shall be the recompense of you all - a full recompense. [63] And entice with your voice those of them you can, and rally against them your horsemen and your footmen, and share with them in their wealth and their children, and make promises to them" - and Satan promises them nothing but delusion -

[64] "As for My servants, you have no control over them.
And your Lord is enough to look after (everything)." [65]

Commentary

The word: لَأَحْتَنِكَنَّ (subdue) in verse 62 is from: اِحْتَاكَ (*ihtināk*) which means to exterminate or uproot something, or to subdue and overpower it completely. (Qurtubī) The word: وَاسْتَفْزَزُ (and entice) in verse 64 is from اسْتَفْزَزَ (*istifzāz*) which basically means to cut off or to tear away from and at this place it means to tear away from the path of truth. This is followed by صَوْتُ (with your voice). Şawt (صَوْتُ), the Arabic word for voice is well known. What is the voice of Satan? Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās says: The voices of songs, musical instruments and the hullabaloo of fun and games are the voices of Satan that he employs to tear people away from the path of truth. (Qurtubī) This tells us that (singing or listening to) music and (playing or listening to) musical instruments are prohibited. (Qurtubī)

While refusing to prostrate before Sayyidnā 'Ādam عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ, Iblīs (the Satan) had said two things:

(1) That 'Ādam was created from mud and he was from fire and that there was no reason why mud was given precedence over fire. This question was an effort to find out the wisdom of the order given to him before he could comply with the Divine command - something the one so commanded has no right to ask. That Allah, the Exalted, would let the commanded one have the right to demand the wisdom of His command is far out specially when we see in our everyday life that human beings themselves would not give their servant the right to say no to them. Think of a master asking his servants to do something and the servant demanding the master that he should first explain the wisdom of that assignment. Therefore, this question was considered unworthy of an answer and no answer was given. In addition to that, the answer is already obvious. Giving precedence to something over the other is the prerogative of the Being that created and nurtured everyone. Whenever and whatever He declares to be superior becomes exactly so.

(2) Secondly, he had said if he was given respite till the day of Qiyāmah, he will mislead the entire progeny of 'Ādam, except a few of them. That Allah Ta'ālā has elected to answer in the later verses. He

said that the Satan will have no control over His sincere servants even if he were to rally his entire forces against them and as for the insincere who fall into his trap, they will meet the same fate as his, all consigned to Hell. When this verse (64) mentions the horsemen and footmen of the Satanic army, it does not necessarily mean that the Satan actually has combat support in that formation. In fact, this is a manner of referring to the full force and power of the Satan. And if the Satan does have horsemen and footmen actually, even that too cannot be denied. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه said: Those who come out in support of disbelief and sin, horsemen or footmen, they are nothing but the army of the Satan. Now remains the question as to how the Satan came to know that he would succeed in enticing and misleading the progeny of 'Ādam, the basis on which he claimed that he will subdue them. There are two possibilities. Perhaps, by looking at the ingredients that went into the making of man, he had gathered that man would be desire-prone and it would not be difficult to entice him successfully. And then, it is also not far out to believe that his very claim was nothing but a bland lie.

As for the sense of: *وَشَارِكُهُمْ فِي الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَوْلَادِ* (and share with them in their wealth and their children - 64), Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه said: Wealth and property acquired by false, impermissible and unlawful means or spent on what is *ḥarām* is the sharing of the Satan in it. As for the sharing of the Satan in children, it could either be through illegitimacy, or by naming them like disbelievers and polytheists, or by indulging in polytheistic customs to ensure their security, or by taking to *ḥarām* sources of income to bring them up. (Qurṭubī)

Verses 66 - 70

رَبُّكُمْ الَّذِي يُزْجِي لَكُمْ الْفُلْكَ فِي الْبَحْرِ لِتَبْتَغُوا مِنْ فَضْلِهِ ۗ إِنَّهُ
 كَانَ بِكُمْ رَحِيمًا ﴿٦٦﴾ وَإِذَا مَسَّكُمُ الضُّرُّ فِي الْبَحْرِ ضَلَّ مَنْ تَدْعُونَ
 إِلَّا إِلَاهَ ۗ فَلَمَّا نَجَّكُم إِلَى الْبَرِّ أَعْرَضْتُمْ ۗ وَكَانَ الْإِنْسَانُ كَفُورًا ﴿٦٧﴾
 أَفَأَمِنْتُمْ أَنْ يَخْسِفَ بِكُمْ جَانِبَ الْبَرِّ أَوْ يُرْسِلَ عَلَيْكُمْ حَاصِبًا ثُمَّ

لَا تَجِدُوا لَكُمْ وَكَيْلًا ﴿٦٨﴾ أَمْ أَمِنتُمْ أَنْ يُعِيدَكُمْ فِيهِ تَارَةً أُخْرَى
فَيُرْسِلَ عَلَيْكُمْ قَاصِفًا مِّنَ الرِّيحِ فَيَغْرِقَكُمْ بِمَا كَفَرْتُمْ ۗ ثُمَّ لَا تَجِدُوا
لَكُمْ عَلَيْنَا بِهِ تَبِيعًا ﴿٦٩﴾ وَلَقَدْ كَرَّمْنَا بَنِي آدَمَ وَحَمَلْنَهُمْ فِي
الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ وَرَزَقْنَهُم مِّنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَفَضَّلْنَهُمْ عَلَىٰ كَثِيرٍ مِّمَّنْ خَلَقْنَا
تَفْضِيلًا ﴿٧٠﴾

Your Lord is the One who causes ships to sail for you through the sea, so that you may go in quest of His bounty; surely, He is Ever Merciful for you. [66]

And when you face a hardship at sea, forgotten are those whom you used to invoke, except Him (Allah). Then, once He brings you safe to the land, you turn away (from Him). And man is so ungrateful. [67] Do you, then, feel secure from that He makes a part of the land sink down along with you, or that He sends down a rain of stones on you, whereupon you will find no one to protect you? [68] Or, do you feel secure from that He takes you back to it (the sea) once again, and sends a heavy storm of wind upon you which drowns you for your disbelief, whereupon you will find no one to pursue your case against Us? [69]

And We bestowed dignity on the children of 'Ādam and provided them with rides on the land and in the sea, and provided them with a variety of good things and made them much superior to many of those We created.

[70]

Commentary

Why are the children of 'Ādam superior?

The last of the verses cited above mentions the superiority of the children of 'Ādam over most of the Divine creation. Here, we have to consider two things: (1) What are the attributes and reasons of this superiority? (2) What is the sense of the statement in the verse: 'made them much superior to many of those We created'?

(1) The first question can be answered in detail by saying that Allah Ta'ālā has blessed the children of 'Ādam with such multi-dimensional attributes as are not found in many of those He has created. The beauty of

form and features, the balance of body, the balance of temperament and the balance of height and built are good examples. These attributes bestowed on human beings are not found in other living forms in that balanced measure. In addition to that, they have been endowed with distinct reason and intelligence through which they get things done up and down in the universe of their experience. Allah Ta'ālā has given them the built-in capability to compound and manufacture, from out of what has been Divinely created, materials and things which serve them in living, moving, eating and wearing in all sorts of ways.

No less is their gift of communication, speech, comprehension, understanding and explanation. This remains unmatched by other living forms. Using signs and symbols to communicate what lies in one's heart and telling others what one thinks and feels through letters and writings are all manifestations of the signal human distinction. Some scholars have said that eating with the fingers of the hand is also a particular human attribute. Other than man, all animals eat with their mouth. The practice of compounding edibles with different things in order to make these delicious and beneficial is the way of human beings alone. Animals eat things that are single and simple. Some would eat raw meat, others would go by grass or some fruit. However, they all eat simple. It is man alone who prepares food through compounding all sorts of solids, liquids, spices and herbs (which has, in our day, assumed the status of the highly publicized art of cuisine). Then, there is the most pronounced superiority of reason and intelligence through which human beings are supposed to recognize their Creator and Master, find out what He likes and dislikes and do what He likes and avoid what He dislikes. Thus, in terms of reason and intelligence, the created have three kinds. Common animals have desires but no reason and intelligence (as we understand it). The angels have reason and intelligence, but do not have desires. Human beings have both. They have reason and intelligence as well as desires. This is the reason why, when he suppresses his desires through reason and intelligence and succeeds in saving himself from indulging in things disliked by Allah Ta'ālā, he reaches a station which is even higher than that of many angels.

(2) We can now turn to the sense of the statement that the children of 'Ādam were made much superior than many of those Allah created. As

for the superiority of the children of 'Ādam over all created forms in the world, higher and lower, and all animals, it cannot be disputed by anyone. Similarly, the Jinn are like human beings in terms of reason and intelligence. That human beings are superior to them as well is accepted by all. What remains now is the case of angels. Who is superior, man or angel? What can be authentically said about it is that common righteous believers among human beings, such as the men of Allah, are superior to angels in general. But, special angels, such as Jibrā'īl and Mikā'īl and others, are superior to the common righteous believers while special believers, such as the blessed prophets عليهم السلام, are superior even to special angels. As far as disbelievers and sinners among human beings are concerned, they just cannot be compared with angels. In fact, they are not even superior to animals in terms of the real purpose of life, that of seeking success through righteousness. About them, the Holy Qur'ān has already given its verdict: **أُولَئِكَ كَالْأَنْعَامِ بَلْ هُمْ أَضَلُّ** (They are like cattle. Rather, they are much more misled - 7:179) (Tafsīr Maḥzarī). Allah knows best.

Verses 71 - 72

يَوْمَ نَدْعُوا كُلَّ أُنَاسٍ بِإِمَامِهِمْ ۗ فَمَنْ أُوتِيَ كِتَابَهُ بِيَمِينِهِ فَأُولَئِكَ يَقْرَءُ وَنَ كِتَابَهُمْ وَلَا يُظْلَمُونَ فَتِيلًا ﴿٧١﴾ وَمَنْ كَانَ فِي هَذِهِ أَعْمَى فَهُوَ فِي الْآخِرَةِ أَعْمَى وَأَضَلُّ سَبِيلًا ﴿٧٢﴾

(Think of) the Day We will call every people with their books of deeds. So, whoever is given his book in his right hand, then, such people will read their book and they shall not be wronged even a bit. [71]

And whoever is blind in this (world) will be blind in the Hereafter and far more astray from the path. [72]

Commentary

The word: **إِمَام** (Imām) in the first sentence of verse 71: **يَوْمَ نَدْعُوا كُلَّ أُنَاسٍ بِإِمَامِهِمْ** translated as '(Think of) the Day We will call every people with their book of deeds' appears here in the sense of 'book' as in Sūrah Yā Sīn: **وَكُلَّ شَيْءٍ أَحْصَيْنَاهُ فِي إِمَامٍ مُّبِينٍ** (and We have enumerated everything in a clear book - 36:12). Here, **إِمَامٍ مُّبِينٍ** means a clear book. Then, '*kitāb*' is called '*imām*' for the reason that, in the event of some error or difference, one

turns to the book very much like turning to a religious leader who is followed. (Qurṭubī)

And it also appears from a Ḥadīth of Tirmidhī as narrated by Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضي الله عنه (Tirmidhī calls it Ḥasan Gharīb) that, 'imām' in this verse means 'kitāb.' The words of the Ḥadīth are given below:

يَوْمَ نَدْعُوا كُلَّ أُنَاسٍ بِإِمَامِهِمْ قَالَ يَدْعَى أَحَدُهُمْ فَيُعْطَى كِتَابَهُ بِرَيْسَتِهِ

Explaining the verse يَوْمَ نَدْعُوا كُلَّ أُنَاسٍ بِإِمَامِهِمْ (71), the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself said: One of them will be called and his book of deeds will be given in his right hand. (From a lengthy Ḥadīth)

It also stands established from this Ḥadīth that 'imām' has been used here in the sense of 'book', and that 'kitāb' signifies the 'book of deeds.' (Maulanā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī has, therefore, translated 'imām' as the 'book of deeds')

Also reported from some commentators, including Sayyidnā 'Alī al-Murtaḍā رضي الله عنه and Mujāhid, is the meaning of 'imām' as religious leader. It means that everyone is to be called as the follower of a certain leader - whether they be blessed prophets or their deputies, the Shaykhs and the 'Ulamā', or leaders who have been inviting people to error and sin. (Qurṭubī)

Given this meaning, the sense of the verse would be that everyone will be called by the name of his or her leader and all those so called will be assembled at one place. For example, there will be the followers of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام, the followers of Sayyidnā Mūsā and Sayyidnā 'Isā عليهما السلام and the followers of Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā ﷺ. Then, possibly the names of those will also be called out who are their direct instructors or leaders (such as 'Ulamā' and religious guides).

The Book of Deeds

As it appears from several verses of the Holy Qur'ān, only disbelievers will be given the book of deeds in the left hand. This is as it is said in the verse: إِنَّهُ كَانَ لَا يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ الْعَظِيمِ (Indeed, he was not used to believing in Allah, the Great - al-Ḥāqqah, 69:33) and also in another verse: إِنَّهُ ظَنَّ أَنْ لَنْ يَحُورَ (Indeed, he surmised that he would never return - al-Inshiqāq, 84:14). In the first verse quoted above, faith has been negated explicitly while the second carries a denial of the Hereafter - which too is disbelief after all.

This comparative look tells us that those who shall get their book of deeds in the right hand will be the people of faith, pious or sinner. The believer will read his or her book of deeds in delight. In fact, the happy believer will have others read it too. This happiness will be because of having one's 'Imān (faith) intact and because of deliverance from eternal punishment - though, punishment may also come for some deeds.

How the book of deeds will be given in the right or the left hand is something not mentioned in the Holy Qur'an. But, the expression: *تَطِيرُ الْكُتُبَ* (causing the books fly) has appeared in some Aḥādīth (reported by Aḥmad on the authority of Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها ascending to the Holy Prophet ﷺ). And in some narrations of Ḥadīth, it appears that all books of deeds will be there at one place under the 'Arsh (Throne). Then a wind will blow and cause these to fly and reach the hands of people in a manner that some will get it in their right hand and some others in the left. (Reported by al-'Uqailī on the authority of Sayyidnā Anas ؓ ascending to the Holy Prophet ﷺ) (Bayān al-Qur'an from Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

Verses 73 - 77

وَإِنْ كَادُوا لَيَفْتِنُونَكَ عَنِ الَّذِي أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ لِتَفْتَرِيَ عَلَيْنَا غَيْرَهُ،^{٧٣}
 وَإِذَا لَا تَأْخُذُوكَ خَلِيلًا ﴿٧٤﴾ وَلَوْ لَا أَنْ تَبْتُكَ لَقَدْ كِدْتَ تَرْكَنُ
 إِلَيْهِمْ شَيْئًا قَلِيلًا ﴿٧٥﴾ إِذَا لَا ذُقْنَا ضِعْفَ الْحَيَوةِ وَضِعْفَ الْمَمَاتِ
 ثُمَّ لَا تَجِدُ لَكَ عَلَيْنَا نَصِيرًا ﴿٧٥﴾ وَإِنْ كَادُوا لَيَسْتَفِزُّوكَ مِنَ الْأَرْضِ
 لَيُخْرِجُوكَ مِنْهَا وَإِذَا لَا يَلْبُثُونَ خِلْفَكَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا ﴿٧٦﴾ سَنَّةً مَنْ قَدْ
 أَرْسَلْنَا قَبْلَكَ مِنْ رُسُلِنَا وَلَا تَجِدُ لِسُنَّتِنَا تَحْوِيلًا ﴿٧٧﴾^ع

And surely, they were about to tempt you away from what We have revealed to you, so that you forge something else in Our name, and in that case they would have certainly made you a friend. [73]

And had We not made you firm, it was likely that you would have inclined towards them a little. [74]

In that case, We would have surely made you taste a double (punishment) in life and a double (punishment) after

death, then you would not have found anyone to help you against Us. [75]

And they were likely to harass you in the land, so that they could expel you from there. And in that case, they would have not lived (there) after you, but a little. [76] Such has been Our way with the messengers We sent before you. And you will find no reversal in Our way. [77]

Commentary

Out of the verses appearing above, the first three relate to a particular event. To determine it precisely, Tafsīr Maẓharī carries some relevant reports. The event which is closer and more supportive in terms of the indicators set in the Qur'ān is what has been reported by Ibn Abī Ḥātim as based on a narrative of Sayyidnā Jubayr ibn Nufayr ؓ. According to this report, some chiefs of the Quraysh of Makkah came to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and said: 'If you have been really sent to us, you should remove these poor and broken down people from around you, for sitting with such people is a matter of insult for us. If you do that, we too will become your companions and friends.' When they said this, the Holy Prophet ﷺ somewhat leaned towards the idea that he might do something like that as suggested by them in the hope that they may, perhaps, become Muslims. Thereupon, this verse was revealed.

Through this verse, the Holy Prophet ﷺ was sounded that their suggestion was a *fitnah* and the friendship they were talking about was also a *fitnah* (a trial or test or a ruse to tempt him into creating discord in his ranks). Therefore, he should not accept it. After that, the text says: Had your Lord not been particular about your grooming and fortitude, it was not too far out that you could have come somewhat closer to tilting towards their proposal.

From this verse, says Tafsīr Maẓharī, it is clearly understood that there was just no probability of the Holy Prophet ﷺ ever tilting towards such absurd demands from the Quraysh disbelievers. Yes, coming close to tilting, and that too within a very insignificant limit, was probable. But, by making him *ma'ṣūm* (protected, infallible), Allah Ta'ālā saved him from drifting even to that limit. If we were to think about it, this verse provides a great proof of the highest moral disposition with which all prophets عليهم السلام were blessed. So, had there been even no shield of

prophetic infallibility, still such was the natural disposition of the Prophet of Islam that tilting towards the absurd proposal of disbelievers would have never been possible for him. However, there did exist the probability of his coming somewhat closer, in an insignificant measure, towards the act of tilting - something terminated by the prophetic infallibility.

After that, it was said: إِذَا لَادَفْتِكَ ضِعْفَ الْحَيَاةِ وَضِعْفَ الْمَمَاتِ It means: Supposing the impossible, if you would have come closer to tilting towards their wrong move, your punishment would have been double in life and double after death (in the grave or the Hereafter, because even an insignificant error made by those close to Allah is considered to be very grave). What has been said here is almost the same as was said about the blessed wives of the Holy Prophet ﷺ in Sūrah al-Aḥzāb: نِسَاءَ النَّبِيِّ مَنِ يَأْتِ مِنْكُنَّ بِفَاحِشَةٍ مُّبِينَةٍ يُضَعَفْ لَهَا الْعَذَابُ ضِعْفَيْنِ (O wives of the Prophet, whoever of you should commit a clear act of immodesty, the punishment for her will be multiplied doubly - 33:30).

Istifzāz in: وَإِنْ كَادُوا لَيَسْتَفْرِزُوا نَكَ (And they were likely to harass you - 76) literally means to cut off, or tear away from, or to provoke into moving from a place. At this place, the sense is to expel the Holy Prophet ﷺ from his station at Makkah or Madīnah. The verse means: Had they done that, their punishment would have been that they themselves would have not been able to live there much longer after you. This is the description of another event. There are two reports about it. One event relates to Madīnah al-Ṭayyibah. The Jews of the city came to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. They told him: 'O Abū al-Qāsim ﷺ, if you are true in your claim to be a prophet, you should go and live in Syria because the land of Syria is the land of al-Maḥshar (the Resurrection) and the land of prophets too.' The Holy Prophet ﷺ was somewhat impressed by what they said and when he traveled to Syria at the time of the battle of Tabūk, the idea of taking up residence in Syria was still on his mind. But, the revelation of the verse: وَإِنْ كَادُوا لَيَسْتَفْرِزُوا نَكَ (And they were likely to harass you - 76) at that time stopped him from doing so. After presenting this report, Ibn Kathīr has, however, declared it to be unsatisfactory.

As an alternate, he points out to another event which transpired in Makkah al-Mukarramah and which, according to him, is the point of reference in this verse for the fact that this Sūrah was Makki provided a strong coherence for it. As the event goes, once the Quraysh disbelievers