

مَعَنَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ وَلَا تَعَدِّبْهُمْ قَدْ جِئْنَاكَ بِآيَةٍ مِنْ رَبِّكَ وَالسَّلَامُ
 عَلَىٰ مَنْ اتَّبَعَ الْهُدَىٰ ﴿٤٧﴾ إِنَّا قَدْ أُوحِيَ إِلَيْنَا أَنَّ الْعَذَابَ عَلَىٰ مَنْ
 كَذَّبَ وَتَوَلَّىٰ ﴿٤٨﴾ قَالَ فَمَنْ رَبُّكُمَا يُمُوسَىٰ ﴿٤٩﴾ قَالَ رَبُّنَا الَّذِي
 أَعْطَىٰ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلْقَهُ ثُمَّ هَدَىٰ ﴿٥٠﴾

They said, "Our Lord, we are afraid he will hasten to commit excess against us, or will cross all bounds." [45]

He said, "Do not be afraid. I am surely with you both. I hear and I see. [46] So, come to him and say, 'We are the messengers of your Lord. So, let the children of Isrā'īl go with us, and do not torment them. We have come to you with a sign from your Lord. And peace be upon the one who follows the guidance. [47] Verily, it has been revealed to us that the punishment is for the one who denies and turns away.'" [48]

He (the Pharaoh) said, "Who then is the Lord of you two, O Mūsā?" [49] He (Mūsā) said, "Our Lord is He who gave everything its shape, then guidance." [50]

Commentary

Why was Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام afraid?

The words *إِنَّا نَخَافُ* (We are afraid) signifies that here Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام expressed twofold fear before Allah. The first fear is pointed out by the word *أَنْ يَفْرُطَ* which means to cross all boundaries. So the meaning of the sentence is 'perhaps the Pharaoh would attack even before listening to us'. The other fear is mentioned with the words *أَنْ يَطْفِي* - which means that Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was apprehensive that the Pharaoh might, after listening to his demands, become so refractory and perverse that he might speak about Allah in disrespectful terms.

It will be recalled that when prophethood was bestowed upon Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, he had prayed to Allah to depute Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام also to assist him in his mission, and Allah had accepted his prayer. At the same time Allah informed him *فَلَا تَجْعَلْ لَكُمْ سُلْطَانًا فَلَا تَسْتَشِدُّ عَضُدَكَ بِأَخِيكَ وَنَجْعَلُ لَكُمْ سُلْطَانًا فَلَا تَصِلُونَ إِلَيْكُمَا* ("We make your arm stronger through (the help of) your

brother and will make for you the upper hand so they will not reach you (with any harm)" - 28:35) and that whatever else he asked for was granted to him (قَدْ أُوتِيَْتَ سُؤْلَكَ يَا مُوسَى) - "You have been granted your request O Mūsā" - 20:36. Among the things granted to him was شرح صدر (heart at peace) which means that he was made immune to fear. So, when he had received such firm assurances from Allah, how does one explain the fear expressed by him in this verse. One answer to this question is that the promise of victory and security from harm is rather vague in that victory may refer to success in debate with the Pharaoh and his men. It can also be argued that victory could come only if the Egyptians heard his arguments and reasonings, and saw his miracles but there was this possibility also that they might attack him before he had laid his arguments before them. Besides, شرح صدر does not mean elimination of natural fear.

The second point is that fear of fearsome things is a natural instinct and even prophets are not free from it in spite of their complete faith in the promises of Allah. Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام himself was afraid to pick up his staff when it turned into a snake therefore Allah re-assured him with the word لَا تَخَفْ (do not be afraid). On all such occasions Allah removed their fears by propitious tidings. Three other verses: فَخَرَجَ مِنْهَا خَائِفًا يَتَرَقَّبُ (So, he went out of it (the city) in a state of fear, waiting (for what comes next) - 28:21) and فَاصْبِرْ فِي الْمَدِينَةِ خَائِفًا (Then, next morning he was fearful, waiting [for what comes next] - 28:18) and فَأَوْجَسَ فِي نَفْسِهِ خِيفَةً مُوسَى (So Mūsā concealed some fear in his heart - 20:67) can also be quoted expressing the same fear. It was this natural fear which persuaded the Holy Prophet ﷺ to migrate to Madīnah and some of his Companions to migrate first to Abyssinia and later to Madīnah. In the Battle of Aḥzāb the Muslims were so overawed by the strength of their enemies that they dug a trench as a protective measure even though Allah had promised them victory on numerous occasions. The truth is that while they did not have the least doubt about their ultimate victory, the fear which they felt was the result of a spontaneous human impulse in the face of danger, and the prophets being human are not immune to this impulse.

Allah said, إِنِّي مَعَكُمْ أَسْمَعُ وَأَرَى ("I am surely with you both. I hear and I see." - 20:46) Here the word "with you" is used in the sense of divine help and support which human senses cannot perceive.

Sayyidnā Mūsā (عليه السلام) called upon the Pharaoh to embrace the True Faith and also to deliver the Banī Isrā'īl from bondage

This shows that the prophets have the duty of guiding mankind towards their salvation as well as to liberate their people from worldly and economic bondages. Therefore, in this verse Sayyidnā Mūsā (عليه السلام) is reminded of both these duties.

God created everything; and everything is performing the functions assigned to it by Him

This point calls for some elucidation which is given in the following lines. The guidance which Allah gives to the prophets and which is in the nature of a duty imposed upon them is a special kind of guidance which is addressed only to human beings and Jinns who are gifted with intellect. There is also another kind of guidance known as guidance of Takwīn (creation) which every created thing possesses. Allah has given to fire, water, earth and air, and their compounds a special kind of feeling and perception which are not of the same nature as given to human beings and Jinns. This is the reason why the laws governing things which are permissible and those which are forbidden do not apply to them. Through this feeling and perception Allah has assigned duties to all created things and in obedience to this command of Takwīn and guidance, the earth, the sky and every other created thing is busy performing its allotted tasks. Air, water, fire and earth are all fulfilling the purpose for which they were created. They do not deviate from their destined course except by the command of Allah. And when He so commands the fire turns into a bed of flowers (as for Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm (عليه السلام)), and water acts as fire as for the people of Sayyidnā Nūḥ (عليه السلام) (أُغْرِقُوا فَأَدْخَلُوا نَارًا) - 71:25). Who has taught a newly born baby to draw milk from its mother's breast or to cry when hungry or in pain? It is this same Divine guidance which every created thing receives without any formal training.

In brief, every created thing has been programmed, by Allah, with a guidance of Takwīn (creation) which it is genetically bound to follow and deviating from the same is beyond its power. The other kind of guidance which is given to the human beings and to Jinns is not inherent in the nature and thus, is not compulsory but optional. It is this freedom of choice which renders them liable to reward for good deeds and to punishment for their sins. The verse أَعْطَى كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلْقَهُ ثُمَّ هَدَى (who gave

everything its shape then guidance - 20:50) refers to the guidance of Takwīn (تكويني هدايت).

Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام reminded the Pharaoh, at the first place, of those acts of Allah Ta'ālā which are obviously done by Him alone and about which no one else could claim that he has performed them. The Pharaoh totally unable to refute this argument, and in his confusion asked Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام a question which was designed to entangle him into giving a reply that would greatly offend the Egyptians. The question was: how did the people of bygone ages stand who all worshipped idols, and what was their fate? The Pharaoh's purpose was that if Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام replied (as the Pharaoh surmised he would) that they were all misguided and deserving of Hell, then he could instigate his people against the latter. But the reply which Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام gave was so wise and discreet that the Pharaoh's evil design was completely frustrated.

Verses 51 - 59

قَالَ فَمَا بَالُ الْقُرُونِ الْأُولَى ﴿٥١﴾ قَالَ عَلِمَهَا عِنْدَ رَبِّي فِي كِتَابٍ
لَا يَضِلُّ رَبِّي وَلَا يَنْسَى ﴿٥٢﴾ الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْأَرْضَ مَهْدًا
وَسَلَكَ لَكُمْ فِيهَا سُبُلًا وَأَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَخْرَجْنَا بِهِ أَزْوَاجًا
مِّنْ نَّبَاتٍ شَتَّى ﴿٥٣﴾ كُلُوا وَارْعَوْا أَنْعَامَكُمْ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ
لِّأُولِي النُّهَى ﴿٥٤﴾ مِنْهَا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ وَفِيهَا نُعِيدُكُمْ وَمِنْهَا نُخْرِجُكُمْ
تَارَةً أُخْرَى ﴿٥٥﴾ وَقَدْ أَرَيْنَاهُ آيَاتِنَا كُلَّهَا فَكَذَّبَ وَأَبَى ﴿٥٦﴾ قَالَ
أَجِئْتَنَا لِتُخْرِجَنَا مِنْ أَرْضِنَا بِسِحْرِكَ يَا مُوسَى ﴿٥٧﴾ فَلَنَأْتِيَنَّكَ
بِسِحْرِ مِثْلِهِ فَأَجْعَلْ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكَ مَوْعِدًا لَا نُخْلِفُهُ نَحْنُ وَلَا أَنْتَ
مَكَانًا سُوًى ﴿٥٨﴾ قَالَ مَوْعِدُكُمْ يَوْمَ الزَّيْنَةِ وَأَنْ يُحَشِّرَ النَّاسَ
ضُحًى ﴿٥٩﴾

He replied, "The knowledge about those is, in a book, with my Lord. My Lord does neither err nor forget. [52] (He is) the One who made the earth a cradle for you and made for you therein pathways to move, and sent down water from the heavens and brought out, with it, pairs of different vegetations: [53] Eat, and graze your cattle. Surely, in that there are signs for the people of understanding." [54]

From this (earth) We created you and in this we shall put you back and from this We shall raise you up once again. [55]

And We showed him (the Pharaoh) all Our signs, yet he belied and refused. [56] Said he, "Have you come to us to drive us out of our land with your sorcery, O Mūsā? [57] We will, then, bring to you a similar sorcery. So, make, between you and us, an appointment not to be backed out, neither by us nor from you - at an even place." [58]

He (Mūsā) said, "Your appointment is the festival day and that the people are assembled at forenoon." [59]

Commentary

Verse 51 tells us that the Pharaoh had asked the question regarding the end of earlier people. If Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام had given a straightforward answer that they were misled and will go to Jahannam, then the Pharaoh would have got a chance to scorn that it was not just him whom Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was blaming but all their ancestors as well. Naturally such a situation would have created doubts in the minds of people. Therefore Sayyidna Musa عليه السلام gave such an answer which was full of wisdom and did not give any chance to the Pharaoh for misleading the people. He said (as mentioned in verse 52) that only Allah knows their end. He never makes a mistake nor does He forget things. The words "My Lord does neither err" mean that it is inconceivable that Allah wills one thing and something different should happen.

The word أَزْوَاجٍ (pairs) used in verse 53 is used here in the sense of "Kinds" or "Species", and the word شَتَّى is the plural of the word شَيْئٍ which means "different" or "diverse". The verse means that Allah has created so many kinds of plants that they are beyond human reckoning and each of them contains special properties which make them invaluable to man for

his well-being. It is impossible for man to comprehend completely all the properties and uses of all the plants created by Allah Ta'ālā. For centuries scientists have been working to find out all about them and researches have revealed a great deal about their properties. However it is impossible to claim that whatever we know at present is the last word.

The next verse (54) says *إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّأُولِي النُّهْيِ* (Surely, in that there are signs for the people of understanding. (20:54). The word *النُّهْيِ* is the plural of *نُهْيَةٌ* (*nuhyah*) which is used in the same sense as *عَقْلٌ* ('*aql*: Intelligence) because it enables wise and intelligent persons to avoid harmful acts.

The composition of every human being contains, together with the seed, the earth of the place when he will be buried

The words *مِنْهَا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ* (From this We created you) in verse 55 means that Allah created you from the earth. This verse is addressed to all mankind although it is known that man is created from seed and not from earth, except Sayyidnā 'Ādam *عليه السلام* who was created directly from earth. One possible explanation for this is that since Sayyidnā 'Ādam *عليه السلام* is the father of all mankind and was himself created from earth, therefore all his descendants have been similarly described. Others have said that the seed itself is made of earth therefore anything created from the seed is in fact created from the earth. According to Imam al-Qurṭubī رحمه الله تعالى the text of the Qur'an clearly indicates that man is created from the earth.

By words *مَكَانًا سَوِيًّا* (at an even place) in verse 58 the Pharaoh proposed that the contest between Sayyidnā Mūsā *عليه السلام* and his own magicians should be held at a place which should, as far as possible, be within easy access of the Egyptians, Sayyidnā Mūsā *عليه السلام* and the Banī Isrā'īl. The latter readily accepted this proposal and fixed the day and the time for the contest by suggesting *مَوْعِدُكُمْ يَوْمَ الزَّيْنَةِ وَأَنْ يُحَشَّرَ النَّاسُ ضُحَى* (Your appointment is the festival day and that the people are assembled at forenoon - 20:59). *يَوْمَ الزَّيْنَةِ* has been explained differently by different authorities. Some say it was a special festival when the Egyptians, attired in beautiful dresses, gathered outside the towns, while others say that it was a Saturday (*يَوْمُ السَّبْتِ*), and according to some others it was the tenth day of Muḥarram (*عَاشُورَا*).

The great advantage in fixing for the contest

It was a wise move on the part of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام to fix festival day as the day of contest when all Egyptians, high and low, were expected to assemble at an appointed place. There was also a point in fixing early forenoon as the time for the contest because this is the time when people, having finished their daily chores, are free to engage in other things. Also daylight and visibility are at their best in the early forenoon and people, while dispersing after witnessing a momentous event, spread the news far and wide. Thus when, with Allah's help, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام inflicted a crushing defeat on the Egyptian magicians, the story became known the same day to people living in far flung places.

Magic - its truth, forms and the rules governing it

For a detailed discussion on this subject reference may be made to the story of Hārūt and Mārūt in Sūrah Al-Baqarah at page 265 to 278 of Ma'ariful Qur'an vol. I.

Verses 60 - 76

فَتَوَلَّىٰ فِرْعَوْنُ فَجَمَعَ كَيْدَهُ، ثُمَّ اتَىٰ ﴿٦٠﴾ قَالَ لَهُمْ مُوسَىٰ وَيْلَكُمْ
لَاتَتَفَتَرُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا فَيُسْحِتَكُمْ بِعَذَابٍ ۚ وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنِ افْتَرَىٰ
﴿٦١﴾ فَتَنَازَعُوا أَمْرَهُم بَيْنَهُمْ وَأَسْرُوا النَّجْوَىٰ ﴿٦٢﴾ قَالُوا إِنَّ هَٰذِهِ
لَسِحْرَانِ يُرِيدَانِ أَنْ يُخْرِجَكُم مِّنْ أَرْضِكُمْ بِسِحْرِهِمَا وَيَذْهَبَا
بَطْرِيقَتِكُمُ الْمَثَلَىٰ ﴿٦٣﴾ فَاجْمِعُوا كَيْدَكُمْ ثُمَّ اتُّوْا صَفًّا ۚ وَقَدْ
أَفْلَحَ الْيَوْمَ مَنِ اسْتَعْلَىٰ ﴿٦٤﴾ قَالُوا يُمُوسَىٰ إِمَّا أَنْ تُلْقَىٰ وَإِمَّا أَنْ
نَكُونَ أَوَّلَ مَنْ أَلْقَىٰ ﴿٦٥﴾ قَالَ بَلْ أَلْقُوا ۚ فَإِذَا حِبَالُهُمْ وَعِصِيُّهُمْ
يُخَيَّلُ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ سِحْرِهِمْ أَنَّهَا تَسْعَىٰ ﴿٦٦﴾ فَأَوْجَسَ فِي نَفْسِهِ خِيفَةً
مُّوسَىٰ ﴿٦٧﴾ قُلْنَا لَا تَخَفْ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْأَعْلَىٰ ﴿٦٨﴾ وَأَلْقِ مَا فِي
يَمِينِكَ تَلْقَفْ مَا صَنَعُوا ۗ إِنَّمَا صَنَعُوا كَيْدٌ سِحْرٍ ۗ وَلَا يُفْلِحُ

السِّحْرِ حَيْثُ آتَى ﴿٦٩﴾ فَأَلْقَى السَّحْرَةَ سُجَّدًا قَالُوا أَمَّا بَرِّ هُرُونَ وِ مُوسَى ﴿٧٠﴾ قَالَ أَمْتُمْ لَهُ، قَبْلَ أَنْ أَدْنَ لَكُمْ ط إِنَّهُ لَكَبِيرُكُمْ الَّذِي عَلَّمَكُمُ السِّحْرَ فَلَا قَطْعَنَ أَيْدِيكُمْ وَأَرْجُلَكُمْ مِنْ خِلَافٍ وَلَا أُصَلِّبَنَّكُمْ فِي جُدُوعِ النَّخْلِ ز وَتَعْلَمَنَّ إِنَّا أَشَدُّ عَذَابًا وَأَبْقَى ﴿٧١﴾ قَالُوا لَنْ نُؤْتِرَكَ عَلَى مَا جَاءَنَا مِنَ الْبَيْتِ وَالَّذِي فَطَرَنَا فَاقْضِ مَا أَنْتَ قَاضٍ ط إِنَّمَا تَقْضِي هَذِهِ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا ﴿٧٢﴾ إِنَّا أَمَّا بَرِّبْنَا لِيُغْفِرَ لَنَا خَطِيئَنَا وَمَا أَكْرَهْتَنَا عَلَيْهِ مِنَ السِّحْرِ ط وَاللَّهُ خَيْرٌ وَأَبْقَى ﴿٧٣﴾ إِنَّهُ مَنْ يَأْتِ رَبَّهُ مُجْرِمًا فَإِنَّ لَهُ جَهَنَّمَ ط لَا يَمُوتُ فِيهَا وَلَا يَحْيَى ﴿٧٤﴾ وَمَنْ يَأْتِهِ مُؤْمِنًا قَدْ عَمِلَ الصَّالِحَاتِ فَأُولَئِكَ لَهُمُ الدَّرَجَاتُ الْعُلَى ﴿٧٥﴾ جَنَّتٌ عَدْنٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خُلِدِينَ فِيهَا ط وَذَلِكَ جَزَاءُ مَنْ تَزَكَّى ﴿٧٦﴾

So, the Pharaoh turned back, and put his plot together, then came. [60] Mūsā said to them, "Pity on you, do not fabricate a lie against Allah, lest He uproots you with a punishment. And loser is he who fabricates a lie." [61]

Then, they disputed among themselves in their matter and kept their talk secret. [62] Said they, "Certainly, these two are sorcerers who wish to drive you out from your land and do away with your excellent way of life. [63] So, make your plot firm and come forth in one row. And successful today is he who stands high." [64]

They said, "O Mūsā, either you throw, or shall we be the first to throw?" [65] He said, "Rather, you throw." Then, suddenly their ropes and sticks seemed to him, due to their magic, as if they were running. [66] So, Mūsā concealed some fear in his heart. [67] We said, "Do not be scared. Certainly, you are to be the upper most. [68] And throw what is in your right hand, and it will devour what they have concocted. What they have concocted is but a sleight of a magician. And the magician does not

succeed wherever he comes from." [69]

So, the magicians were led (by the truth) to fall in prostration. They said, "We have (now) believed in the Lord of Hārūn and Mūsā." [70] He (the Pharaoh) said, "You have believed in him before I permit you. He is, in fact your chief who has taught you the magic. So I will certainly cut apart your hands and your legs from opposite sides and will crucify you on the trunks of palm-trees, and you shall know who of us is more severe in punishment, and more lasting." [71]

They said, "We will never prefer you over the clear signs that have come to us and over Him who has created us. So, do whatever you are to do. You will do only for this worldly life. [72] We have believed in our Lord, so that He forgives us from our sins and from the magic you had compelled us on. And Allah is the best and everlasting." [73]

Surely whoever comes to his Lord as a sinner, for him there is Jahannam wherein he neither dies nor lives. [74] And whoever comes to Him as a believer having done righteous deeds, for such people there are the highest ranks, [75] the eternal gardens beneath which rivers flow, where they shall live for ever. And that is the reward for one who has purified himself. [76]

Commentary

The words **فَجَمَعَ كَيْدَهُ** (and put his plot together) in verse 60 indicate that the Pharaoh assembled his magicians and their tools. According to Sayyidnā Ibn ‘Abbās **رضي الله عنه** there were seventy two magicians but others have put their number at figures which vary from four hundred to nine hundred thousand. Their leader was a blind man whose name was Sham‘ūn (شمعون).

Sayyidnā Mūsā's **عليه السلام** prophetic address to the magicians

Before the start of the contest Sayyidnā Mūsā **عليه السلام** addressed some words of friendly advice to the magicians to warn them of divine punishment if they persisted in denying God's miracles and other manifestations of His power. His actual words were:

وَيَلِكُمْ لَا تَقْتَرُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا فَيُسْحِتْكُمْ بِعَذَابٍ وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنِ افْتَرَى

Pity on you, do not fabricate a lie against Allah, lest He uproots you with a punishment. And loser is he who fabricates a lie - 20:61.

It was hardly to be expected that the magicians who had entered the field with all the might of the Pharaoh behind them would pay any heed to Sayyidnā Mūsā's ﷺ words of advice. However, the prophets and their followers possess a hidden power so that their plain and simple words penetrate the most unruly and perverse minds, and the address of Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ caused discord and dissensions among the magicians, some of whom thought that these could not be the words of a magician but of a higher being and were therefore, against the contest. But others were adamant, فَتَنَازَعُوا أَمْرَهُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ (then, they disputed among themselves in their matter - 20:62), وَأَسْرُوا النَّجْوَى (and kept their talk secret - 20:62). Ultimately their unanimous decision was to proceed with the contest because, in their opinion, Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ and Sayyidnā Hārūn ﷺ were both magicians who wished to drive away the Pharaoh and his men from Egypt by their magic and to eradicate their ideal way of life. This decision of theirs is mentioned in verse 63 in the following words:

إِنَّ هَذَيْنِ لَسَاحِرِينَ يُرِيدَانِ أَنْ يُخْرِجَاكَ مِنْ أَرْضِكَ بِسِحْرِهِمَا وَيَذْهَبَا بِطَرِيقَتِكَ
الْمُنَى

Said they, "Certainly, these two are sorcerers who wish to drive you out from your land and do away with your excellent way of life. (20:63)

The word مُنَى is the feminine of أَمْلٌ which means "most excellent". The meaning is that the Egyptians believed that their religion which regarded the Pharaoh as god was the best and Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ and Sayyidnā Hārūn ﷺ wanted to destroy it and supplant their own religion in its place. The word طَرِيقَهُ (translated in the text as 'way of life') is also used to describe the chiefs and leading citizens and according to Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbas ؓ and Sayyidnā 'Alī ؓ the word has been used here in this sense namely that these two men wished to finish off all their leaders and important citizens and it was therefore, the duty of the Egyptian magicians to unite and use their best endeavours to defeat the enemy Formation of troops in ranks in battle has an unsettling effect on the enemy, so the Egyptian magicians arranged themselves in ranks for

the contest.

The Egyptians were confident of their success and in a mood of complacency asked Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام whether he would like to make the first move or whether they should initiate the contest. Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام invited them to start the contest (Rather, you throw - 20:66) and there were several reasons for this. In the first place the Egyptians showed courage when they invited Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام to open the battle and this offer called for an equally generous and chivalrous response. Secondly by making the offer the Egyptians showed their confidence in the outcome of the contest and implied as if they had already won it. On his side Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, by his counter-offer, sought to convey to the Egyptians that he regarded the result of the game as a foregone conclusion in his own favour. And finally he wished to see the tricks of the Egyptians before he planned his own strategy. So, with these preliminaries over, the Egyptians cast their staffs and ropes on the ground and it appeared to the onlookers as if they had turned into snakes and were running about.

يُخَيَّلُ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ سِحْرِهِمْ أَنَّهَا تَسْعَى (Their ropes and sticks seemed to him, due to their magic, as if they were running - 20:66). The verse shows that the Egyptian magicians had cast a hypnotic spell on the onlookers to whom it appeared that the staffs and the ropes had turned into snakes and were running about on the ground, whereas in fact no such transformation had taken place.

فَأَوْجَسَ فِي نَفْسِهِ خِيفَةً مُوسَى (So Mūsā concealed some fear in his heart - 20:67.). The sight of so many snakes crawling around evoked a sense of fear in Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام which he did not reveal to anyone. Even if this fear was for his own personal safety then it can be regarded as a natural human reaction to a dangerous situation and does not conflict with the mission of prophethood. It is clear, however, that the fear which he felt was not for his own life. His apprehension was that if the immense crowd, which had assembled to see the contest, sensed that the Egyptian magicians had the upper hand then the purpose of his mission would be frustrated. These doubts and fears were dispelled when in the next verse Allah assured him لَا تَخَفْ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْأَعْلَى (do not be scared. Certainly, you are to be the upper most - 20:68).

وَأَلْقِ مَا فِي يَمِينِكَ (And throw what is in your right hand - 20:69). Allah commanded Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام by means of a revelation (وحى) to cast down what he held in his right hand, and when he threw down his staff it turned into a huge snake and ate up all the imaginary snakes which the Egyptian magicians had produced by their magic.

Conversion to Islam and bowing in prostration by the Pharaoh's magicians

The Egyptian magicians who were masters of their art realized at once that what they had just witnessed was not magic but a miracle brought about by a Supreme Power. Consequently they fell in prostration and declared openly their faith in Allah - the God of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and Sayyidnā Harūn عليه السلام. According to some traditions these magicians did not raise their heads until they had seen a glimpse of heaven and hell. (رواه عبد بن حميد وابن ابى حاتم وابن المنذر عن عكرمه - روح)

قَالَ أَمُتُّمْ لَهُ، قَبْلَ أَنْ أَدْنُ لَكُمْ (He [the Pharaoh] said, "You have believed in him before I permit you" - 20:71). The Pharaoh, thus disgraced before a vast multitude, was furious and he stormed at the magicians how they dared accept the religion brought by Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام without his prior permission. He suspected that they all were Sayyidnā Mūsā's عليه السلام pupils who taught them the magic and had accepted defeat in connivance with him.

فَلَا قَطَعَنَّ أَيْدِيَكُمْ وَأَرْجُلَكُمْ مِنْ خِلَافٍ (I will certainly cut apart your hands and your legs from opposite sides - 20:71). The Pharaoh thus threatened his magicians with dire punishment. He said he would cut off their hands and feet from opposite sides i.e. first the right hand, then the left foot. This apparently was the mode of inflicting punishment under the laws of the Pharaoh. وَأَلْوَصِّبَنَّكُمْ فِي جُذُوعِ النَّخْلِ (And will crucify you on the trunks of palm-trees - 20:71) He also said that after cutting off their hands and feet he would crucify them on the trunks of palm-trees where they would remain suspended until they died of starvation.

قَالُوا لَنْ نُؤْتِيَنَّكَ عَلَى مَا جَاءَنَا مِنَ الْبَيِّنَاتِ وَالَّذِي فَطَرَنَا (They said, "We will never prefer you over the clear signs that have come to us, and over Him who created us." - 20:72). The magicians, however, stood firm and did not waver in the face of the Pharaoh's threats. They told him plainly that they would not give him, nor anything he said, preference over the clear proofs and the

miracles which Allah had shown to them. Sayyidnā 'Ikrimah رضي الله عنه says that when the magicians prostrated themselves before Allah, He gave them a glimpse of the eminent places and the gifts which were to be their reward in Paradise. They confirmed their belief in the one God Who created the earth and the skies and rejected Pharaoh's claim to divinity. While neglecting the threats of the Pharaoh they further said: "So you do what you want and punish us in whatever manner you choose. And, "You can punish us as long as we live but when we die we will be out of your reach. On the other hand we are in the power of Allah both in this and after death, and His punishment is of greater concern to us".

وَمَا أَكْرَهْتَنَا عَلَيْهِ مِنَ السِّحْرِ (And the magic you had compelled us on - 20:73). The magicians now accused the Pharaoh of having forced them to practice magic else they would not have taken it up. Here a question may arise that the magicians came to the contest of their own free choice and had even negotiated before hand their reward if they were victorious. How, then, could they justify their accusation that the Pharaoh had forced them to practice magic? A possible answer can be that whereas the magicians, to begin with, were tempted by promises of generous rewards for taking part in the contest they soon realized that they stood no chance against miracles and wanted to withdraw from the contest. It was then that the Pharaoh forced them to take up the challenge of Mūsā عليه السلام. Another explanation is that under a law passed by the Pharaoh everybody was compelled to learn magic.

The propitious end of 'Āsiyah, the Pharaoh's wife

Qurṭubī has mentioned in his commentary that while the contest between vice and virtue was in progress, the Pharaoh's wife kept herself informed of the minute to minute developments and when she learned that Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام had emerged victorious, she at once declared her adherence to the True Faith. When the Pharaoh was informed of his wife's defection, he ordered that a huge rock be thrown upon her. When 'Āsiyah saw the rock coming, she raised her eyes in supplication to Allah who took away her soul so that the rock fell on her lifeless body.

Revolutionary change in the lives of the magicians

إِنَّهُ مَنْ يَأْتِ رَبَّهُ مُجْرِمًا وَذَلِكَ جَزَاءُ مَنْ تَزَلَّى

Surely whoever comes to his Lord as a sinner, for him there is

Jahannam ... And whoever comes to Him as a believer ... for such people there are the highest ranks.... (20:74-76)

These words which refer to the Islamic beliefs and the hereafter have been spoken by the magician who only recently became Muslims and who had not yet been instructed about the principles and the obligations of the new faith.

It was the result of their brief association with Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام that Allah, in an instant, revealed to them the mysteries of their new faith so that they gave scarce heed to Pharaoh's threats. Thus with the adoption of the religion of Allah they attained a state of sainthood which is given to others after long and assiduous exertions. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbas رضي الله عنه and 'Ubaid Ibn 'Umair رضي الله عنه said it was a divine marvel that the magicians who started the day as infidels became saints before it ended. (Ibn Kathīr)

Verses 77 - 82

وَلَقَدْ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ مُوسَىٰ أَنْ أَسْرِ بِعِبَادِي فَاصْرِبْ لَهُمْ طَرِيقًا فِي
 الْبَحْرِ يَبَسًا لَا تَخَفْ دَرَكًا وَلَا تَخْشَى ﴿٧٧﴾ فَاتَّبَعَهُمْ فِرْعَوْنُ
 بِجُنُودِهِ فَغَشِيَهُمْ مِنَ الْيَمِّ مَا غَشِيَهُمْ ﴿٧٨﴾ وَأَضَلَّ فِرْعَوْنُ قَوْمَهُ
 وَمَا هَدَىٰ ﴿٧٩﴾ يَبْنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ قَدْ أَنْجَيْنَاكَ مِنْ عَدُوِّكَ
 وَوَعَدْنَاكَ جَانِبَ الطُّورِ الْأَيْمَنِ وَنَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْمَنَّاءَ وَالسَّلْوَى
 ﴿٨٠﴾ كُلُوا مِنْ طَيِّبَاتِ مَا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ وَلَا تَطْغَوْا فِيهِ فَيَحِلَّ عَلَيْكُمْ
 غَضَبِي ۗ وَمَنْ يَحِلِّلْ عَلَيْهِ غَضَبِي فَقَدْ هَوَىٰ ﴿٨١﴾ وَإِنِّي لَغَفَّارٌ
 لِّمَنْ تَابَ وَآمَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا ثُمَّ اهْتَدَىٰ ﴿٨٢﴾

And We revealed to Mūsā saying, "Move out with my servants at night, then make for them a dry path in the sea (with the strike of your staff), neither fearing to be caught up nor being scared (of anything else)." [77]

Then the Pharaoh chased them with his troops. So covered they were, by that which covered them from

the sea. [78] And the Pharaoh led his people astray and did not show them the right path. [79]

O children of Isrā'īl, We delivered you from your enemy and appointed for you the right side of the mount Ṭūr (Sinai) and sent down for you the Mann and Salwā: [80] Eat from the good things We have provided you with, and do not transgress in respect thereof, lest My wrath befalls upon you. And the one upon whom befalls My wrath certainly falls into destruction. [81]

And surely I am the Most-Forgiving for him who repents and believes and acts righteously, then takes to the right path. [82]

Commentary

The decisive defeat which he suffered in the contest between the right and wrong and between miracle and magic broke the power of the Pharaoh, and the Banī Isrā'īle stood united under the leadership of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام. Allah now commanded Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام to take his men out of Egypt. But this move was full of danger. First there was the risk of pursuit by the Pharaoh, and second the river, which they had no means of crossing, barred their flight. Allah dispelled both these fears from Sayyidnā Mūsā's عليه السلام mind and told him to strike his staff on the surface of the water, and dry passageways would appear in the bed of the river over which they could all escape, thus frustrating Pharaoh's pursuit. This story has been narrated earlier under Ḥadīth ul-Futūn in this very Surah.

When the time came, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام struck the surface of water with his staff and masses of water stood asunder revealing twelve dry paths, as mentioned in Surah Ash-Shu'arā' فَكَانَ كُلُّ فِرْقٍ كَالطُّورِ الْعَظِيمِ (And each part became like a big mountain- 26:63). The walls of water which divided the passages were so formed that those going on one road could see and talk to those travelling on other roads, thus imparting to them all a sense of security.

The number of the Banī Isrā'īl who fled Egypt and the strength of the Pharaoh's army

According to Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام embarked on his journey towards the Red Sea with the Banī Isrā'īl soon after sunset.

Earlier they had announced that one of their festivals was approaching which they would celebrate outside the city, and on this excuse, as well as to allay the suspicions of the Egyptians, they borrowed some jewellery from the Copts promising to return it after the festival. At that time Banī Isrā'īl numbered six hundred and three thousand, while another version puts their number at six hundred and seventy thousand. These figures, which may be exaggerated, have been taken from Isrā'īlite traditions, but one thing appears certain, namely that they were divided into twelve very populous tribes. These large numbers were also a gift from Allah because the first arrivals in Egypt in the days of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام were just the twelve brothers. Now the twelve tribes of those twelve brothers which fled Egypt numbered well over six hundred thousand.

When the Pharaoh learned that the Banī Isrā'īl had taken flight, he assembled a large army of which the advance units consisted of seven hundred thousand horsemen and started off in pursuit. When the Banī Isrā'īl saw the river barring their way ahead and the Pharaoh hot on their heels, they cried out in despair. "Surely! We are caught". Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام consoled them with the words إِنَّ مَعِيَ رَبِّي سَيَهْدِينِ (With me is my Lord indeed. He will guide me - 26:62). Then by the command of Allah he struck his staff on the water and twelve dry passageways appeared on which the twelve tribes of Banī Isrā'īl crossed over to the other side in safety. The Pharaoh who saw all this was frightened but he urged his men on by declaring that the dry paths were formed because the river stopped flowing on account of the awe which it felt in his presence. Saying so, he spurred his horse into the river ordering his army to follow him. When they were all in the middle, Allah commanded the river to resume its flow and water covered them over. (Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī)

وَوَاعَدْنَاكُمْ جَانِبَ الطُّورِ الْأَيْمَنِ (And appointed for you the right side of the mount Ṭūr. (20:80)) After their deliverance from the threat of the Pharaoh, and when they were safe across the river, Allah made a promise to Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and through him to the Banī Isrā'īl that they should move to the right side of the mount of Ṭūr so that Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام might be given the Torah and so that they might witness him speak with Allah.

وَنَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَنَّ وَالسَّلْوَى (And sent down for you the Mann and Salwā. - 20:80) This incident occurred when, having crossed the river, they were

commanded to enter a sacred city, but they refused and as punishment they were confined to a valley which is known as the valley of Tīh (Sinai). They stayed there for forty years and in spite of the punishment which they were undergoing they continued to receive gifts from Allah, and the Mann and Salwā (a special kind of food) was one such gifts which was given to them for their sustenance.

Verses 83 - 89

وَمَا أَعْجَلَكَ عَنْ قَوْمِكَ يَا مُوسَى ﴿٨٣﴾ قَالَ هُمْ أَوْلَاءٌ عَلَيَّ أَنْزِلْنِي
وَعَجِلْتُ إِلَيْكَ رَبِّ لِتَرْضَى ﴿٨٤﴾ قَالَ فَإِنَّا كَدَّفَتْنَا قَوْمَكَ مِن
بَعْدِكَ وَأَضَلَّهُمُ السَّامِرِيُّ ﴿٨٥﴾ فَرَجَعَ مُوسَى إِلَى قَوْمِهِ غَضْبَانَ
أَسْفًا ۚ قَالَ يَقَوْمِ أَلَمْ يَعِدْكُمْ رَبُّكُمْ وَعَدًّا حَسَنًا أَ أَفْطَالَ عَلَيَّكُمْ
الْعَهْدُ أَمْ أَرَدْتُمْ أَنْ يَحِلَّ عَلَيَّكُمْ غَضَبٌ مِّنْ رَبِّكُمْ فَأَخْلَفْتُمْ مَوْعِدِي
﴿٨٦﴾ قَالُوا مَا أَخْلَفْنَا مَوْعِدَكَ بِمَلِكِنَا وَلَكِنَّا حَمِلْنَا أَوْزَارًا مِّنْ زِينَةِ
الْقَوْمِ فَقَدَفْنَاهَا فَكَذَلِكَ أَلْقَى السَّامِرِيُّ ﴿٨٧﴾ فَأَخْرَجَ لَهُمْ عِجْلًا
جَسَدًا لَهُ خُورٌ فَقَالُوا هَذَا إِلَهُكُمْ وَإِلَهُ مُوسَى ۚ فَنَسِيَ ﴿٨٨﴾ أَفَلَا
يَرَوْنَ إِلَّا يَرْجِعُ إِلَيْهِمْ قَوْلًا ۚ وَلَا يَمْلِكُ لَهُمْ ضَرًّا وَلَا نَفْعًا ﴿٨٩﴾

"And what has caused you to hurry before your people, O Mūsā?" [83] He said, "Here they are just behind me, and I hurried towards You, O my Lord, so that You be pleased." [84]

He said, "We have then put your people to test after you (left them) and Sāmiri has misguided them." [85]

So, Mūsā went back to his people in anger and sorrow. He said, "O my people, did your Lord not promise you a good promise? Did then the time become too long for you, or did you wish that wrath from your Lord befalls you, and hence you backed out from the promise made to me?" [86]

They said, "We did not back out, of our own volition, of

the promise made to you, but we were burdened with loads from the ornaments of the people; so we threw them and so did throw Sāmīrī." [87] Then he brought forth for them a calf, a body with a lowing sound. Then they said, "This is your god and the god of Mūsā, and he (Mūsā) erred." [88]

Do they not then see that it does not respond to them with a word, nor does it have power to harm or benefit them? [89]

Commentary

Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and the Banī Isrā'īl, having escaped the Pharaoh's wrath and having crossed the river in safety, proceeded on their journey. Soon they came upon a people who worshipped idols. They said to Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, "These people have adopted the idols as their gods who are visible as well as tangible. Do give us also a god whom we can see and touch." Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام replied, "إِنَّكُمْ قَوْمٌ تَجْهَلُونَ إِنَّ هَؤُلَاءِ مُتَّبِعُونَ" ("You are really an ignorant people. What these people are in, is sure to be destroyed; and false is what they are doing." - 78:139.)

It was then that Allah commanded Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام to bring his people to the mount of Ṭūr where he would receive the Book Torah which would be a code and a policy document for all of them. However, he would have to prepare himself to receive the Torah by observing a fast for thirty days and thirty nights continuously. This period was later extended by a further ten days so that the total period of fasting was forty days and forty nights. Then Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام led his people towards the mount of Ṭūr, but in his eagerness to receive the Torah he hastened ahead so that he could complete his prayers and fasts for the prescribed period of thirty days as early as possible. He appointed Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام to be his deputy during his absence. The Banī Isrā'īl continued the journey at their leisurely pace while he pushed on hoping that they would join him in due course near the mount of Ṭūr. In the meanwhile Sāmīrī, by his wiles, seduced them into adopting the calf as the object of their worship and thus divided them into three factions. This unfortunate development seriously impeded their progress towards the Ṭūr.

Allah questioned Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام about his haste and the wisdom behind the question

When Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام appeared before Divine Presence, Allah questioned him as to why he had hastened ahead of his people. The obvious purpose of the question was to inform Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام of the mischief into which his people had fallen while he himself, unaware of what had happened in his absence, was expecting their arrival at the Ṭūr (Ibn Kathīr). On the other hand, according to Rūḥ ul-Maʿānī, the question contained an implied rebuke to Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام on his haste which deprived his people of his supervision and enabled Sāmīrī to mislead them. His position as a prophet made it incumbent on him to stay with his people and keep a watchful eye on them and their activities. The learned commentator has further observed that this question implied an indication that a leader should remain behind his people when travelling with them, as Allah Taʿālā had ordered Lūṭ عليه السلام to bring his people out of the city and to remain at their back وَاتَّبِعْ أَذْيَارَهُمْ (follow them at the rear -15:65)

Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, ignorant of Sāmīrī's mischief, answered the question put to him by Allah that his haste was the result of his ardent desire to fulfill Allah's command without loss of time so as to deserve His greater favour, and that his people were close behind him and might arrive at any time. It was at that moment that Allah informed him of the evil that had befallen his people and the part played by Sāmīrī in bringing it about.

Who was Sāmīrī?

Some people have said that Sāmīrī was an Egyptian Copt who lived next door to Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and had accepted the True Faith. When Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام took the Banī Isrāʾīl out of Egypt he also joined the exodus. Others have said that he was the chief of one of the clans of Banī Isrāʾīl called Samira which is still well-known in Syria. According to Sayyidnā Saʿīd Ibn Jubair رضي الله عنه he was a Persian from the Kirman province. Sayyidnā Ibn ʿAbbās رضي الله عنه says that he belonged to a nation of cow-worshippers who somehow reached Egypt and pretended to join the religion of Banī Isrāʾīl whereas in actual fact he was an hypocrite (Qurtubī). Another version is that he was a Hindu from India who worshipped cows, adopted the religion of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام truly, and later returned to his infidel faith, or had accepted the true faith in

hypocrisy. Sāmīrī's name, as generally believed, was Mūsā Ibn Zafar. Ibn Jarīr has related from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه that Sāmīrī was born in the year when under the orders of the Pharaoh all male Isrā'īli children were to be killed. His mother, fearing the worst, put him in the hallow of a cave and covered its mouth. She would visit him from time to time and feed him as best as she could. On the other hand Allah appointed Jibra'īl عليه السلام to look after the child and provide him nourishment. Jibra'īl عليه السلام brought honey on one finger, butter on the second finger and milk on the third finger which he fed to the child. He lived in the cave until he grew to manhood and, as has already been narrated above, became an unbeliever, involved the Banī Isrā'īl in a great disaster and himself suffered a terrible fate as a punishment from Allah. A poet has made a reference to this story in the following two couplets:

إذا المرء لم يخلق سعيدا تحيرت عقول مربيه وخاب المؤمن'
 فموسى الذى رباه جبريل كافر وموسى الذى رباه فرعون مرسل'

If a person is not fortunate in his birth then the minds of those who bring him up are bewildered and those who attach high hopes on him are disillusioned. Lo! The Mūsā whom Jibra'īl brought up became an infidel and the Musa who was raised by the Pharaoh became the Prophet of Allah.

ألم يعدّكم ربكم وعدًا حسنًا (Did your Lord not promise you a good promise? - 20:86) Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام returned to his people full of sorrow and anger. First of all he reminded them of the promise which Allah had made to them that He would give them a Book for their guidance by adhering to which they could achieve all their worldly and religious objectives. He said that it was for the purpose of receiving the Book that he had started out with them for the mount of Ṭūr.

أفطالَ عليكمُ العهدُ (Did then the time become too long for you? - 20:86) Not much time had elapsed on Allah's promise and it is inconceivable that the Banī Isrā'īl could have forgotten it, or if they remembered it, there was no reason for them to despair of its fulfillment on account of delay, thus providing for themselves justification for the worship of the calf.

أم أزدتم أن يحلّ عليكم غضب من ربكم (Or did you wish that wrath from your Lord befalls you? - 20:86) But since neither of the two eventualities mentioned above could be contemplated, the only conclusion was that

they knowingly and of their own choice invited the wrath of Allah.

قَالُوا مَا أَخْلَفْنَا مَوْعِدَكَ بِمَلِكِنَا (They said, "We did not back out of our own volition, of the promise made to you". - 20:87) The excuse which the Banī Isrā'īl offered for adopting the worship of the calf was that they did not do so of their own choice but merely followed Sāmiri's example.

وَلَكِنَّا حُمِّلْنَا أَوْزَارًا مِّنْ زِينَةِ الْقَوْمِ (But we were burdened with loads from the ornaments of the people. - 20:87) The word *أَوْزَارٌ* (*awzār*) is the plural of *وِزْرٌ* (*wizr*) which means "burden". On the Day of Judgment everybody will carry his bundle of sins on his shoulders just as one carries a load; therefore the sin is also termed as '*wizr*' (load). The word *زينة* means ornament and *قَوْمٌ* (the people) refers to the Egyptians from whom Banī Isrā'īl had borrowed the ornaments on the pretext of wearing them on their festival day, but which they did not return to their owners and carried with them on their flight from Egypt. These ornaments have been described as *أَوْزَارٌ* in the sense of "sins" because these were borrowed articles and by not returning them to their lawful owners the Banī Isrā'īl had committed a sin. From the *ḥadīth ul-futun* which has been reproduced in detail in the earlier pages it would appear that Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام warned them about their guilt and directed them to throw all the ornaments in a pit. According to some other versions it was Sāmiri who told them that by holding on to something which did not belong to them they were committing a sin and advised them to throw all the ornaments in a pit, which they did.

When does the property of infidels become lawful for the Muslims?

The non-Muslims who live in a Muslim state and abide by its laws they are known as *Dhimmi* ذمى. Such people as well as those infidels who have entered into a treaty with the Muslims remain in full control of their properties and it is not lawful for the Muslims to deprive them of any part of it. However, the properties of those infidels who are neither *Dhimmi* nor have any treaty with the Muslims, and who are described by the jurists as *كافرٌ حربى* (an infidel belonging to enemy country) are lawful for the Muslims.

That being so why did Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام describe the ornaments

borrowed by the Banī Isrā'īl from the Egyptians as a burden, meaning sin, and ordered them to throw everything in a pit? One explanation, which a majority of commentators have given is that the properties of infidels of an enemy state carried the same status as that of spoils of war. The law governing the spoils of war before the promulgation of the Islamic code was that while the Muslims could forcibly dispossess the infidels of their properties, they were forbidden to use them for their personal benefits. All the spoils of war (مال غنيمت) thus acquired were collected and placed on a mound as offering where a fire from the sky – such as lightning - consumed them and this was a sign that Allah approved their war against the unbelievers. On the other hand if the fire did not consume offering (the spoils of war) it was considered that Allah did not approve their war so that the spoils were regarded as inauspicious and nobody ever approached them. Under the Islamic Shari'ah some of the old laws were relaxed and as a result Muslims were permitted to use the spoils of war for their own benefit. A Ḥadīth on this issue appears in Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim. According to the laws, in force then, even if the ornaments borrowed by the Banī Isrā'īl from the Egyptians were considered as spoils of war, those could not have been allowed for the personal benefit of Banī Isrā'īl. That is why everything was thrown into the pit under the orders of Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام.

The research conducted by Imām Muḥammad رحمه الله تعالى on this issue from a Juristic point of view is given in his book سير and its commentary by Sarakhsi. His conclusions are very weighty and closest to the truth, namely that the property of a *ḥarbī* (infidel belonging to an enemy country) cannot be treated as spoils of war in every case. In order to be so treated, and thereby become lawful for the Muslims, it must have been acquired by sword in the course of a proper religious war (*jihād*). On the other hand the property of a *ḥarbī* (a citizen of an enemy state) which has been acquired otherwise than in a religious war cannot be treated as spoils of war. Such properties are however termed as فئى (*fai'*) which can be used lawfully by the Muslims only with the consent of the owner. Taxes imposed by an Islamic state and paid by the infidels voluntarily fall in the definition of *fai'* and their use is permissible even though they have not been acquired in the course of a religious war.

The ornaments borrowed by the Banī Isrā'īl did not fall in either of

these two categories. They could not be described as *fai'* because they were borrowed from the Egyptians who did not transfer their ownership to Banī Isrā'īl, nor could they be considered as spoils of war because they were not taken in the course of a religious war. Thus according to the Islamic Shari'ah the Banī Isrā'īl could not have lawfully used the ornaments for their personal benefit.

It is well-known that when the Holy Prophet ﷺ decided to migrate to Madīnah, he had with him many valuables which the infidels of Arabia had entrusted to him for safe custody because they had full faith in his honesty and integrity and had, in recognition of these qualities, bestowed upon him the title of Amīn (أَمِين - honest). He was so solicitous about these deposits that he placed them in the hands of Sayyidnā 'Alī ؑ and specifically directed him to restore them to their rightful owners before migrating to Madīnah. This clearly shows that it is not lawful for Muslims to appropriate, for their personal use, the valuables belonging to non-Muslims.

The word فَكَذَّبْنَاهَا - means, "we cast away the ornaments". According to the *ḥadīth-ul-futūn* (narrated earlier in detail) this was done under the orders of Sayyidnā Hārūn ؑ while some other versions say that Sāmīrī cajoled the Banī Isrā'īl into throwing the ornaments in the pit. It is quite possible that both these versions are true (as appears below).

فَكَذَّبَكَ الْقَى السَّامِرِيُّ (So did throw Sāmīrī - 20:87) It appears from the *ḥadīth-ul-futūn* related by Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Abbās ؑ (reported in earlier pages) that after the Banī Isrā'īl had thrown away all the ornaments, Sayyidnā Hārūn ؑ ordered a big fire to be lit in the pit which melted them and left them in one solid piece. The decision as to the disposal of this precious metal was deferred till the return of Sayyidnā Mūsā ؑ. After all this had happened Sāmīrī approached Sayyidnā Hārūn ؑ. He had something in his closed fists and sought permission to throw it in the pit. Sayyidnā Hārūn ؑ thinking that he held some ornaments in his fists permitted him to cast them in the pit. Then Sāmīrī said, "I will certainly throw it, but first I want you to pray to God that a wish which I have may be granted." Sayyidnā Hārūn ؑ, unaware of the evil which he planned, prayed to Allah in his behalf, and Sāmīrī opened his hands and threw what he held in the pit. It was not

ornaments but only dust from under the hoof marks of the horse of Jibra'īl عليه السلام which Sāmīrī had collected after he observed that signs of life appeared in the dust under the hoof marks of the horse. Aided by Satan he now wished to put life into a calf by means of this dust. Nevertheless, whether it was the result of the miraculous property of the dust or whether it was a consequence of the prayer of Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام in behalf of Sāmīrī, the molten lump of gold and silver assumed the form of a calf and started making bovine sounds. There are other traditions also which relate that it was Sāmīrī himself who persuaded the Banī Isrā'īl to throw the ornaments in the pit after which he carved the molten metal in the shape of a calf which had no life. He then sprinkled on it the dust from the hoof marks of the mount of Sayyidnā Jibra'īl عليه السلام and it became a living calf. All these and similar stories which are based on Isrā'īlite traditions have been related by Qurṭubī in his commentary and by other writers as well. These traditions cannot be wholly relied upon, yet at the same time we do not possess sufficient ground to disprove them either.

فَأَخْرَجَ لَهُمْ عِجْلًا جَسَدًا لَهُ خُورًا (So he brought forth for them a calf, a body with a lowing sound. - 20:88) Some Commentators maintain that it was only a body without life and that the sound was produced by a special contrivance. But the majority of commentators believe that the calf in fact possessed signs of life.

فَقَالُوا هَذَا إِلَهُكُمْ وَإِلَهُ مُوسَىٰ فَنسَىٰ (Then they said, "This is your god and the god of Mūsā, and he erred." - 20:88) Having carved a calf which could also produce a sound, Sāmīrī and his friends said to the Banī Isrā'īl, "Here is your god and the god of Mūsā. It seems Musa has forgotten, that is why he has gone elsewhere in search of god".

أَفَلَا يَرَوْنَ أَلَّا يَرْجِعُ إِلَيْهِمْ قَوْلًا وَلَا يَمْلِكُ لَهُمْ ضَرًّا وَلَا نَفْعًا (Do they not then see that it does not respond to them with a word, nor does it have power to harm or benefit them? - 20:89) The excuses put forward by the Banī Isrā'īl before Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام for the evil deeds end with the previous verse. In this verse Allah reminds them of their folly by pointing out to them that even if the calf had life and made bovine noises would that be sufficient reason to adopt it as the object of their worship? They were well aware that it could not answer their prayers nor had it the power to harm them or to benefit them.

Verses 90 - 94

وَلَقَدْ قَالَ لَهُمْ هَارُونُ مِنْ قَبْلُ يَقَوْمُ إِنَّمَا فُتِنْتُمْ بِهِ وَإِنَّ رَبَّكُمُ
الرَّحْمَنُ فَاتَّبِعُونِي وَأَطِيعُوا أَمْرِي ﴿٩٠﴾ قَالُوا لَنْ نَبْرَحَ عَلَيْهِ
عُكُفَيْنَ حَتَّىٰ يَرْجِعَ إِلَيْنَا مُوسَىٰ ﴿٩١﴾ قَالَ يَهْرُونَ مَا مَنَعَكَ إِذْ
رَأَيْتَهُمْ ضَلُّوا ﴿٩٢﴾ أَلَا تَتَّبِعَنِ أَفَعَصَيْتَ أَمْرِي ﴿٩٣﴾ قَالَ يَا بَنُوَّ
إِسْرَائِيلَ لَا تَأْخُذْ بِلِحْيَتِي وَلَا بِرَأْسِي إِنِّي خَشِيتُ أَنْ تَقُولَ فَرَّقْتَ بَيْنَ بَنِيَّ
إِسْرَائِيلَ وَلَمْ تَرْقُبْ قَوْلِي ﴿٩٤﴾

And Hārūn had already said to them, "O my people, you have only been led astray with it, and your Lord is the Raḥmān (All-Merciful). So follow me and obey my command." [90] They said, "We will never discontinue staying with it, until Mūsā returns to us." [91] He (Mūsā) said, "O Hārūn what did prevent you from following me when you saw them going astray? [92] Did you then disobey my command?" [93] He said, "O son of my mother, do not hold me by my beard, nor by my head. I feared that you would say, 'You have caused discord among the children of Isrā'īl and did not observe my advice.'" [94]

Commentary

When the Banī Isrā'īl were smitten with the mischief of calf-worship Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام as the deputy of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام remonstrated with them but to no avail. They split into three factions. Those who remained loyal to Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام and refused to be misled by Sāmīrī and who numbered, according to Qurṭubī, twelve thousand. The second faction adopted calf-worship with the reservation that if Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, on his return, forbade them they would give it up. The third faction consisted of zealots who believed that Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام would approve of their action and would himself join them in calf-worship but even if he did not, they themselves would never give up their new faith. When Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام returned to his people he rebuked them for the mischief they had caused (as related in the earlier

verses). Then he turned to Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام and in a rage seized him by his beard and the hair of his head. He asked him that when the unbelief (كفر) of the Banī Isrā'īl had become obvious, why he did not follow him to the Ṭūr mountain and why he disobeyed his orders.

مَا مَنَعَكَ إِذْ رَأَيْتَهُمْ ضَلُّوا أَلَّا تَتَّبِعَنِ (What did prevent you from following me when you saw them going astray. - 20:92) One meaning of *ittibā'* (following) referred to in this verse is that when Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام discovered that the Banī Isrā'īl had strayed from the righteous path, and were beyond recall, he should have abandoned them and joined Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام at the Ṭūr mountain. The other meaning of the word 'follow', as adopted by some commentators is that when the Banī Isrā'īl had forsaken the True Faith, Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام should have fought them as Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام would have done had he been present there. In any case Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام blamed Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام that he should either have fought the Banī Isrā'īl or should have parted company with them and joined Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام at the Ṭūr mountain, and that his continuing to live with them was an unwise act. Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام addressed him as يَا ابْنَ أُمَّ (O my mother's son!) which implied a plea not to judge him too harshly. His excuse was that if he had fought the Banī Isrā'īl or abandoned them with his twelve thousand men, it would have caused discord and strife among them. He said that he had understood the parting advice of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام أُخْلِفْنِي فِي قَوْمِي وَأَصْلِحْ عليه السلام (Take my place among my people and keep things right - 7:142) to mean that he should maintain harmony among the people and prevent differences at all cost. Besides, he said, he had hoped that when he (Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام) would return, he would be able to handle the situation satisfactorily. A further excuse which he offered and which is reported elsewhere in the Qur'an was إِنَّ الْقَوْمَ اسْتَضَعُّوْنِي وَكَادُوا يَقْتُلُونِي (7:150) which means that the Banī Isrā'īl have taken me as weak because of the small number of my supporters and were about to kill me. Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام did not press the matter any further with his brother. He then turned to Sāmīrī and asked him to explain his conduct in this whole affair. Qur'an does not indicate whether he accepted the excuses offered by Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام or whether he considered the latter's mistake as one of *ijtihad* (assessment) and dropped the matter.

Differences between two prophets when the opinions of both could be right

In this affair the considered opinion of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, by way of *ijtihād* was that in the situation as it took shape Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام should have totally dissociated himself from the Banī Isrā'īl by removing himself and his followers from their company, and that by continuing to stay with them he had compromised his position. On the other hand Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام felt, by way of *ijtihād*, that such an action would have caused a permanent split among the Banī Isrā'īl and divided them into factions, and since there was hope that they would see the error of their way when Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام returned, he thought it wise to adopt a conciliatory attitude towards them. The purpose of both the prophets was a strict adherence to the commands of Allah and to ensure that the Banī Isrā'īl remained steadfast in the observance of the True Faith and in their belief in the Oneness of Allah. Where they differed, however, was the manner in which these objectives could be achieved whether to make a complete break with the dissidents or to bear with them in the hope that things would improve ultimately. Both these views have merit and it is not possible to pass a firm and final judgment on them. The differences among the jurists based on *ijtihād* are of a similar nature and those holding different opinions cannot be charged of having broken any religious laws. As regards Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام seizing his brother by the hairs, it only shows his anger and frustration with the situation which had developed during his absence, but on hearing his explanation, he prayed to Allah to forgive them both.

Verses 95 - 98

قَالَ فَمَا خَطْبُكَ يَا سَامِرِيُّ ﴿٩٥﴾ قَالَ بَصُرْتُ بِمَا لَمْ يَبْصُرُوا بِهِ
فَقَبَضْتُ قَبْضَةً مِّنْ أَثَرِ الرَّسُولِ فَنَبَذْتُهَا وَكَذَلِكَ سَوَّلَتْ لِي نَفْسِي
﴿٩٦﴾ قَالَ فَادْهَبْ فَإِنَّ لَكَ فِي الْحَيَاةِ أَنْ تَقُولَ لَا مِسَاسَ ۖ وَإِنَّ
لَكَ مَوْعِدًا لَّنْ تُخْلَفَهُ ۗ^٤ وَانظُرْ إِلَى إِلٰهِكَ الَّذِي ظَلْتَ عَلَيْهِ عَاكِفًا
لَّنْحَرِقَنَّهُ ۗ نُمَّ لَنَنْسِفَنَّهُ ۗ فِي الْيَمِّ نَسْفًا ﴿٩٧﴾ إِنَّمَا إِلٰهُكُمُ اللَّهُ الَّذِي لَا

إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ وَسِعَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ عِلْمًا ﴿٩٨﴾

He (Mūsā) said, "What then is your case, O Sāmīrī?" [95]
He said, "I perceived something they perceived not. So I picked up a handful of dust from under the foot of the messenger (the angel). Then, I cast it. And thus my inner self tempted me." [96]

He (Mūsā) said, "Then go away, for your fate in this life is to say: 'Do not touch me'. And, of course, you have another promise, never to be held back from you. And look at your god to which you stayed devoted. We will certainly burn it, then we will scatter it thoroughly in the sea. [97] Your God is Allah other than whom there is no god. He encompasses everything with knowledge." [98]

Commentary

بَصُرْتُ بِمَا لَمْ يَبْصُرُوا بِهِ (I perceived something they perceived not - 20:96)
The reference here is to Jibra'il عليه السلام. There is a tradition that he was present on his horse at the river crossing when, the Banī Isrā'īl having crossed it safely to the other side, the Pharaoh and his army entered the river in pursuit of the fugitives. There is another tradition that after Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام had crossed the river Sayyidnā Jibra'il عليه السلام came to him riding a horse to invite him to go to the Ṭūr mountain. At that time Sāmīrī alone, and no one else, saw him and the reason, according to a tradition of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه, was that he was nourished by Jibra'il when his mother had left him in the cave, and knew him well.
(Bayān ul-Qur'ān)

فَقَبَضْتُ قَبْضَةً مِّنْ أَثَرِ الرَّسُولِ (So I picked up a handful of dust from under the foot of the messenger.- 20:96) The word رَسُول (messenger) refers to Jibra'il عليه السلام. The Satan planted the idea in the heart of Sāmīrī that the earth under the hoofs of the mount of Jibra'il عليه السلام must somehow contain signs of life and he should pick up some of it - which he did. According to the tradition of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه

القي في روعه أنه لا يليقها على شيء فيقول كن كذا، إلا كان

(The thought occurred to Sāmīrī was that if he sprinkled this earth on something and uttered the words, "You become so and so", it will change its original form and become "so and so.")

It is also related by some exegetes that Sāmīrī observed that grass sprouted unfailingly in the earth under the hoofs of the horse of Jibra'īl عليه السلام from which he deduced that it contained traces of life. (كذا في الكمالين). The same explanation is adopted by Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī on the authority of Tabi'in and majority of commentators, and it includes comments on doubts expressed by some skeptics فجزأه الله خيرا الجزاء. (Bayān ul-Qur'ān)

Later on he moulded the ornaments, which the Banī Isrā'īl had thrown in the pit, in the shape of a calf and sprinkled the earth on it. By a miracle of Allah it developed signs of life and could even make a sound. The detailed story of Sāmīrī and his calf has been given in (*ḥadīth ul-futūn*) in earlier pages of this volume.

فَإِنَّ لَكَ فِي الْحَيَاةِ أَنْ تَقُولَ لَا مِسَاسَ

For your fate in this life is to say: 'Do not touch me'. - 20:97

The punishment proposed by Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام for Sāmīrī in this world was that everyone should sever all contacts with him and not to come near him, and he too was commanded not to touch anyone. Thus he was condemned to spend the rest of his life away from all social contacts - like a wild animal. Whether this punishment was awarded to him by Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام by means of a law which was binding on Sāmīrī as well as on the Banī Isrā'īl, or whether Sāmīrī was smitten by some peculiar affliction which deterred people from making any physical contact with him, is not known. Some traditions have it that Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام had laid a curse on Sāmīrī so that if anyone touched him then both the parties came down with fever (Ma'ālim). Thus he spent all his life hiding from people and whenever he saw someone approaching him, he would call out لَا مِسَاسَ (Don't touch me). It is mentioned in Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī on the authority of Al-Baḥr ul-Muḥīṭ that initially Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام had intended to execute Sāmīrī but Allah stopped him because Sāmīrī was a very generous person and helped people who were in distress.

The word لَنُحَرِّقَنَّهُ means "we will certainly burn it". Here the question arises: how could the calf which was carved from gold and silver be burnt, because these metals when subjected to extreme heat are melted but are not reduced to ashes. Several possibilities have been advanced. The first is that after signs of life appeared in it, the calf ceased to be a figure of gold

and silver and became an animal of flesh and blood in which case it could be slaughtered and burnt. The second explanation is that it could be filed with a rasp into very minute particles of dust (Ad- Dur al-Manthūr). A third explanation is that it could be burnt by means of some chemical device (Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī). There is yet a fourth explanation, namely that the calf could be burnt by some miracle (Bayān ul-Qur'ān).

Verses 99 - 114

كَذَلِكَ نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ مِنْ أَنْبَاءِ مَا قَدْ سَبَقَ ۚ وَقَدْ آتَيْنَاكَ مِنْ لَدُنَّا
ذِكْرًا ﴿٩٩﴾ مَنْ أَعْرَضَ عَنْهُ فَإِنَّهُ يَحْمِلُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ وِزْرًا ﴿١٠٠﴾
خَلِيدَيْنِ فِيهِ ۖ وَسَاءَ لَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ حِمْلًا ﴿١٠١﴾ يَوْمَ يُنْفَخُ فِي
الصُّورِ وَنَحْشُرُ الْمُجْرِمِينَ يَوْمَئِذٍ زُرْقًا ﴿١٠٢﴾ يَتَخَفَتُونَ بَيْنَهُمْ إِنْ
لَبِثْتُمْ إِلَّا عَشْرًا ﴿١٠٣﴾ نَحْنُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا يَقُولُونَ إِذْ يَقُولُ أَمْثَلُهُمْ
طَرِيقَةً إِنْ لَبِثْتُمْ إِلَّا يَوْمًا ﴿١٠٤﴾ وَيَسْتُلُونَكَ عَنِ الْجِبَالِ فَقُلْ
يَنْسِفُهَا رَبِّي نَسْفًا ﴿١٠٥﴾ فَيَذَرُهَا قَاعًا صَفْصَفًا ﴿١٠٦﴾ لَا تَرَى فِيهَا
عِوَجًا وَلَا أَمْتًا ﴿١٠٧﴾ يَوْمَئِذٍ يَتَّبِعُونَ الدَّاعِيَ لَأَعِوَجَ لَهُ ۚ وَ
خَشَعَتِ الْأَصْوَاتُ لِلرَّحْمَنِ فَلَا تَسْمَعُ إِلَّا هَمْسًا ﴿١٠٨﴾ يَوْمَئِذٍ لَا
تَنفَعُ الشَّفَاعَةُ إِلَّا مَنْ أَذِنَ لَهُ الرَّحْمَنُ وَرَضِيَ لَهُ قَوْلًا ﴿١٠٩﴾ يَعْلَمُ
مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ وَلَا يُحِيطُونَ بِهِ عِلْمًا ﴿١١٠﴾ وَعَنْتِ
الْوُجُوهُ لِلْحَيِّ الْقَيُّومِ ۖ وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنْ حَمَلَ ظُلْمًا ﴿١١١﴾ وَمَنْ
يَعْمَلْ مِنَ الصَّالِحَاتِ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَلَا يَخْفُ ظُلْمًا وَلَا هَضْمًا
﴿١١٢﴾ وَكَذَلِكَ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا وَصَرَّفْنَا فِيهِ مِنَ الْوَعِيدِ لَعَلَّهُمْ
يَتَّقُونَ أَوْ يُحَدِّثُ لَهُمْ ذِكْرًا ﴿١١٣﴾ فَتَعَلَى اللَّهُ الْمَلِكُ الْحَقُّ ۚ وَلَا
تَعْجَلْ بِالْقُرْآنِ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ يُقْضَى إِلَيْكَ وَحْيُهُ ۚ وَقُلْ رَبِّ زِدْنِي

عَلَّمَ ﴿١١٤﴾

Thus We narrate to you certain events of what has passed, and We have given to you, from Ourselves, a (book of) advice. [99] Whoever turns away from it shall certainly bear a heavy burden on the Doomsday, [100] all such people living under it forever. And how evil for them is that burden on the Doomsday! [101] The Day when the Horn (Ṣūr) will be blown and We shall gather them together that day, while turned blue, [102] whispering among themselves, "You did not remain (in graves) more than ten (days)". [103] We very well know what they say, when the best of them in his ways will say, "You did not remain more than a day." [104]

And they ask you about the mountains. So, you say, "My Lord will blow them up totally (as dust), [105] then will turn them into a levelled plain [106] in which you will see neither a curve nor a mound. [107]

That day they will follow the caller, having no crookedness. And the voices will turn low in awe for the Raḥmān (All-Merciful). So, you will hear not but whispering. [108]

That day no intercession will be of any use to anyone, except the one whom the Raḥmān (All-Merciful) has permitted and was pleased with his word. [109] He knows what is in front of them and what is behind them, and they do not encompass Him in (their) knowledge. [110]

And all faces will be humbled before the Ever-Alive, the All-Sustaining. And the loser is the one who bears (the burden of his) transgression. [111] And whoever does acts from righteous deeds, while he is a believer, shall fear neither injustice nor curtailment (of his rewards). [112]

And in this way We have sent it down to you, an Arabic Qur'ān, and have detailed therein some warnings repeatedly, so that they may be fearful or it may produce a lesson for them. [113] So High above all is Allah, the King, the True.

And do not hasten with (reciting) the Qur'an before its revelation to you is concluded, and say, "My Lord, improve me in knowledge." [114]

Commentary

وَقَدْ آتَيْنَاكَ مِنْ لَدُنَّا ذِكْرًا (And We have given to you, from Ourselves, a (book of) advice. - 20:99) According to a majority of commentators the word ذِكْرٌ (advice) in the present context means the Qur'an.

مَنْ أَعْرَضَ عَنْهُ فَإِنَّهُ يَحْمِلُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وِزْرًا (Whoever turns away from it shall certainly bear a heavy burden on the Doomsday - 20:100) Turning aside from the Qur'an can take different forms: not paying proper attention and respect when it is being recited; showing scant desire to learn to read it or to comprehend its meaning, or reading it incorrectly without regard to correct pronunciation etc.; reading it without full concentration; reading it not to win God's goodwill but to attain worldly rewards such as wealth and fame. Likewise not striving to comprehend the laws laid down by the Qur'an or, having understood them, not complying with them or acting in their defiance are extreme forms of disregard for the Qur'an. Any neglect of the rights and claims of the Qur'an is a great sin and the guilty person will bear it on his head on the Day of Judgment in the shape of a heavy load. It has been related in several traditions that the evil deeds and the sins which a person has committed in his life time will be placed on his head in the shape of a heavy burden on the Day of Resurrection.

يُنْفَخُ فِي الصُّورِ (The Day when the Horn [Sūr] will be blown - 20:102) According to Sayyidnā Ibn 'Umar رضي الله عنه, a Bedouin asked the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم about صُور (the Horn) to which he replied that it is something like a horn which will be blown, meaning thereby that when the angel will blow into it all those who had lain dead for centuries will return to life. Only Allah knows the true nature of the Ṣūr (the Horn).

وَلَا تَعْجَلْ بِالْقُرْآنِ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ يُقْضَى إِلَيْكَ وَحْيُهُ (And do not hasten with (reciting) the Qur'an before its revelation is concluded - 20: 114.) It has been stated in Ṣaḥīḥ Ḥadīth on the authority of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه that in the early days of revelation when angel Jibra'il عليه السلام brought a Qur'anic verse and recited it to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, the latter would try to repeat it after him, lest it escapes from his memory. He had, thus, to make a double effort, i.e. to listen to and understand the meaning of the Qur'anic verses

while they were being recited by Jibra'il عليه السلام and also to repeat them in order to commit them to memory. In this verse as well as in the verse occurring in Surah Qiāma (75:16) Allah lightened this burden from the Holy Prophet ﷺ by assuring him that he need not worry himself about memorizing the Qur'ānic verses which were revealed to him because He (Allah) would make it possible for him to remember them without any effort on his part. All that he was directed to do was that he should keep praying, رَبِّ زِدْنِي عِلْمًا (My Lord, improve me in knowledge). This comprehensive prayer includes a plea for memorizing that portion of the Qur'ān which had already been revealed to him and a desire for what remained of it and for the ability to understand its true meaning.

Verses 115 - 127

وَلَقَدْ عَهِدْنَا إِلَىٰ آدَمَ مِنْ قَبْلُ فَنَسِيَ وَلَمْ نَجِدْ لَهُ عَزْمًا ﴿١١٥﴾ وَإِذْ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ اسْجُدُوا لِآدَمَ فَسَجَدُوا إِلَّا إِبْلِيسَ ط أَبَى ﴿١١٦﴾ فَقُلْنَا يَا آدَمُ إِنَّ هَذَا عَدُوٌّ لَكَ وَلِزَوْجِكَ فَلَا يُخْرِجَنَّكُمَا مِنَ الْجَنَّةِ فَتَشْقَى ﴿١١٧﴾ إِنَّ لَكَ أَلَّا تَجُوعَ فِيهَا وَلَا تَعْرَى ﴿١١٨﴾ وَأَنَّكَ لَا تَظْمَأُ فِيهَا وَلَا تَصْحَى ﴿١١٩﴾ فَوَسْوَسَ إِلَيْهِ الشَّيْطَانُ قَالَ يَا آدَمُ هَلْ أَدُلُّكَ عَلَىٰ شَجَرَةِ الْخُلْدِ وَمُلْكٍ لَّا يَبْلَى ﴿١٢٠﴾ فَأَكَلَا مِنْهَا فَبَدَتَ لَهُمَا سَوَآتُهُمَا وَطَفِقَا يَخْصِفْنَ عَلَيْهِمَا مِنْ وَّرَقِ الْجَنَّةِ ۖ وَعَصَى آدَمُ رَبَّهُ، فَغَوَى ﴿١٢١﴾ ثُمَّ اجْتَبَاهُ رَبُّهُ، فَتَابَ عَلَيْهِ وَهَدَى ﴿١٢٢﴾ قَالَ اهْبِطَا مِنْهَا جَمِيعًا، بَعْضُكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ ۗ فِيمَا يَأْتِيَنَّكُمْ مِّنِّي هُدًى ۖ فَمَنِ اتَّبَعَ هُدَايَ فَلَا يَضِلُّ وَلَا يَشْقَى ﴿١٢٣﴾ وَمَنْ أَعْرَضَ عَن ذِكْرِي فَإِنَّ لَهُ، مَعِيشَةً ضَنْكًا وَنَحْشُرُهُ، يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ أَعْمَى ﴿١٢٤﴾ قَالَ رَبِّ لِمَ حَشَرْتَنِي أَعْمَى وَقَدْ كُنْتُ بَصِيرًا ﴿١٢٥﴾ قَالَ كَذَلِكَ أَتَتْكَ آيَاتُنَا فَنَسِيَتْهَا ۗ وَكَذَلِكَ الْيَوْمَ تُنسى ﴿١٢٦﴾ وَكَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي

مَنْ أَسْرَفَ وَلَمْ يُؤْمِنْ بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِ وَلَعَذَابُ الْآخِرَةِ أَشَدُّ وَأَبْقَى

﴿١٢٧﴾

And earlier We had given a directive to 'Ādam, then he forgot, and We did not find in him a firm resolve. [115]

And when We said to the angels, "Prostrate before 'Ādam". So, they prostrated, all but Iblīs who refused. [116] So, We said "O 'Ādam, this is an enemy to you and to your wife. So let him not expel you from Paradise, lest you get into trouble. [117] Here you are privileged that you will not be hungry nor will you be unclad, [118] and you will not be thirsty, nor will you be exposed to sun." [119]

Then the Satan instigated him. He said, "O 'Ādam, shall I guide you to the tree of eternity and to an empire that does not decay?" [120]

So, both of them ('Ādam and Eve) ate from it, and their parts of shame were exposed to them, and they started stitching on themselves some of the leaves of Paradise. And 'Ādam disobeyed his Lord, and erred. [121] Thereafter his Lord chose him. So He accepted his repentance and gave (him) guidance. [122] He said, "(O 'Ādam and Eve) Go down from here, all of you, some of you enemies of some. Then, should some guidance come to you from Me, the one who follows My guidance shall not go astray, nor shall he be in trouble. [123] And whoever turns away from My message shall have a straitened life, and We shall raise him blind on the Day of Judgment." [124] He will say, "My Lord, why did you raise me blind while I was sighted?" [125] He will say, "Like this Our signs came to you and you had ignored them. And in the same way you will be ignored today." [126]

And thus We recompense him who exceeds the limits and does not believe in the signs of his Lord. And certainly the punishment of the Hereafter is more severe and more lasting. [127]

Commentary

And now we come to the story of Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام which has

been related earlier in Sūrah Al-Baqarah and Al-A'rāf and partly in Sūrah Hījr and Al-Kahf, and will also appear later in Sūrah Ṣād. The link of the story with the preceding verses has been variously explained by the commentators. The most obvious of these explanations is the one which refers to an earlier verse كَذَلِكَ نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ مِنْ أَنْبَاءِ مَا قَدْ سَبَقَ (Thus We narrate to you certain events of what has passed- 20:99) in which Allah informed the Holy Prophet ﷺ that the stories of the past prophets were revealed to him as evidence and confirmation of his own prophethood and in order that his own followers be warned against committing the sins for which the earlier generations were punished. The first, and in some ways, the most instructive story was that of Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام in which there was a clear warning for the followers of the Holy Prophet ﷺ that Satan was an old enemy of mankind who by his flattery and show of sympathy tricked Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام into committing an error for which both he and his wife were expelled from Paradise and the clothes which they wore there were taken away from them. Later their prayer for forgiveness was accepted by Allah and Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام was elevated to the status of prophethood.

وَلَقَدْ عَهِدْنَا إِلَىٰ آدَمَ مِنْ قَبْلِ فَنَسِيَ وَلَمْ نَجِدْ لَهُ عَزْمًا (And earlier We had given a directive to 'Ādam, then he forgot, and We did not find in him a firm resolve. - 20:115) Here the word عَهِدْنَا has been used in the sense of أَمَرْنَا or وَصَّيْنَا (Al-Bahr ul-Muḥīṭ), and the meaning of the verse is that long before the time of the Holy Prophet ﷺ Allah had assigned a particular tree and enjoined upon Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام to shun it and not to eat any yield from it, and that barring this tree and its yields he was free to use the fruits of all the trees and all the other gifts from Allah which were abundantly available in Paradise. And, as will follow, he was also warned that the Satan was his enemy against whose wiles he must at all times remain on his guard and that any lapse on his part would land him in serious trouble. But he forgot and was found wanting in resolution. Here two words have been used, namely نَسِيَانٌ (*nisyān*) which means to forget or to be unmindful, the other word is عَزَمَ (*'azm*) which means to be resolute in the performance of some task. In order to fully comprehend the meanings of these two words it is well to bear in mind that Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام was one of those prophets who were endowed by Allah with constancy and determination, and that prophets, by virtue of their status

are infallible.

The first word suggests that Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام was overtaken by نسيان (forgetting) and since forgetting something is beyond one's control and volition it does not constitute sin. There is a Ḥadīth which says رفع عن امتي الخطأ والنسيان (My followers will not be held liable for mistakes and unmindfulness). Then there is the general pronouncement in the Qur'ān لا يكلف الله نفسا إلا وسعها (Allah does not obligate anyone beyond his capacity - 2:286). At the same time it has to be remembered that there are ways and means which if adopted will prevent people from forgetting things. And since the prophets stand high in the favour of Allah a special responsibility rests upon them to adopt such ways and means to avoid even mistakes and refrain even from forgetting something, therefore, they may well be held liable for not using the means which were available to them in order to avoid forgetfulness. The well known Ṣūfī Junaid Al-Baghdadi رحمه الله تعالى has expressed this idea in the following words حسنات الارباب سيئات المقربين (The good deeds of ordinary virtuous men are often regarded as sinful and evil when performed by those who stand high in Allah's favour).

The episode under reference occurred before Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام was granted prophethood and according to some Sunni Scholars sins committed in the prior period do not militate against the concept of the prophet's immunity from sin. Also it was a case of forgetfulness which cannot be considered as a sin, but in view of the high position of Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام as a prophet of Allah this too was regarded as a lapse for which he was admonished and as a warning to him his lapse was described as عصيان (Disobedience).

The second word is 'azm (firm resolve) and the same verse says that Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام was found wanting in 'azm. As a matter of fact he was fully determined to comply with the commands of Allah but the intrigues of Satan weakened his resolve and unmindfulness made him lose his grip on it.

وَإِذْ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ (And when We said to angels - 20:116) Here is a brief mention of the command which, after the creation of Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام, Allah gave to all the angels including Iblīs (Satan) who at that time lived in the Paradise with them, to prostrate to him. All the angels obeyed

but Satan refused. In his haughtiness he claimed that he was made of fire while Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام was made of clay, and fire being superior to clay, he could not be expected to prostrate to the latter. As a punishment for his arrogance and defiance of the command of Allah he was accursed and driven from Paradise while all the gates of Paradise were opened wide for Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام and Sayyidah Ḥawwā' عليها السلام to enjoy the fruits of its gardens and all the blessings of Allah at their will. However, there was one particular tree which they were told to shun in all circumstances and never to partake of any of its produce. This story has been related in Sūrah Al-Baqarah and Al-A'rāf. Instead of repeating it here, Allah has mentioned his directives given to Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام to comply with His commands to the fullest extent. Referring to the rebellious conduct of Satan He reminds Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام that the former is his enemy and that both he himself and his wife should at all times be on their guard against his deceptions. But if they succumbed to his tricks and became heedless of the commands of Allah then they would be expelled from Paradise and face distress (فَلَا يُخْرِجَنَّكُمَا مِنَ الْجَنَّةِ فَتَشْقَى). The word *tashqā* (تَشْقَى) is derived from شَقَاوَةٌ (*shaqāwah*) which has two meanings namely distress or trouble in the Hereafter and distress in this world. Here the word has obviously been used in the second meaning because it cannot be used in its first meaning even for pious Muslims, leave alone the prophets. Commentators have explained this word in the sentence هو ان يأكل من كَدِّ يديه (He will have to earn his living by the labour of his hands). (Qurtūbī) In the present context the second meaning of the word appears more appropriate because in the following verse reference has been made to the four basic needs of human life, namely food, water, clothes and shelter which are freely available in Paradise without any effort and toil. This verse also contains a hint to Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام that if he ever was expelled from Paradise, He would forfeit all these gifts. It is worth noting that here only those gifts have been mentioned which are basic to human life, to the exclusion of the other major rewards and comforts which are available in Paradise and the intention is to warn Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام that one wrong step would deprive him of all these benefits, which he would have to earn for himself with physical labour and by the sweat of his brow. Most commentators have adopted this very meaning of the word فَتَشْقَى. (lest you get into trouble) Imām Qurtūbī رحمه الله تعالى has also recorded that when Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام came down to

the earth, Jibra'īl عليه السلام gave him some grains of wheat and rice and taught him how to plant the seeds, harvest the ripe crop, grind the grain and prepare bread from it. Finally when all the stages were completed and Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام sat down to eat, the bread slipped out of his hand and rolled down the hill. Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام went after it and retrieved it with great exertion. Thereupon Jibra'īl عليه السلام told Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام that on the earth he and his descendants would have to work very hard in order to earn their livelihood. (Qurtubī)

The responsibility for providing the essential needs of a wife rests on her husband

Early in this verse when Allah spoke to Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام He included Sayyidah Ḥawwā' also in His address عَدُوُّكَ وَلِزَوْجِكَ فَلَا يُخْرِجَنَّكَ مِنَ الْجَنَّةِ (Satan is your enemy and the enemy of your wife. So you both must be very careful so let him not expel you from Paradise - 20:117). But towards the end of the verse word فَتَشْقَى (lest you get into trouble) is used in the singular and not in dual form. From this Imām Qurtubī has deduced the rule that a husband is responsible for meeting the essential needs of his wife and that any physical labour which is necessary to meet that responsibility must be provided by the husband alone. The use of the word فَتَشْقَى in second person singular is a pointer to Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام that if they were sent to the earth the onus of earning a livelihood for himself and Sayyidah Ḥawwā' عليها السلام will fall on him alone.

Only four things fall within the definition of obligatory maintenance.

Qurtubī says that this verse clearly indicates that there are four things only which a husband must provide for his wife namely food, water, clothes and shelter. Anything else which he gives her will be regarded as gift, but is not binding on him. From this it has also been deduced that wherever Islamic law makes a person responsible for the maintenance of somebody else (such as sick and needy parents whose maintenance is the responsibility of the children), it is obligatory on him to provide only these four things.

إِنَّ لَكَ أَلَّا تَجُوعَ فِيهَا وَلَا تَعْرَى (Here you are privileged that you will not be hungry nor will you be unclad, and you will not be thirsty, nor will you be exposed to sun - 118, 119.) Four things needed for the existence of life will

be provided in Paradise without asking or putting in any labour. One should not doubt that good taste of food will not be enjoyed because of the absence of hunger in Paradise. Similarly, it is incorrect to assume that one would not enjoy drinking cold water in Paradise because of lack of thirst. The reality is that hunger and thirst would not be felt in Paradise to the extent of feeling any difficulty. The food will be made available as and when one would desire, and the cold water will be provided immediately when one would like to drink. In fact everything will be provided the moment one would desire.

فَوَسْوَسَ إِلَيْهِ الشَّيْطَانُ (الى قوله) وَعَصَى أَدَمُ رَبَّهُ فَعَوَى (Then the Satan instigated him... And 'Ādam disobeyed his Lord and erred - 120, 121.) Here it is pertinent to ask that when Allah had specifically told Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام and Sayyidah Ḥawwā' عليها السلام to abstain from a particular tree or to eat any part of its yield, and had also warned them to beware of Satan's machinations who was their sworn enemy who would do his best to seduce them and thus cause their expulsion from Paradise, why then, despite all the warnings and admonitions, did Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام let himself fall into the trap laid out for him by the Satan. His action clearly constituted disobedience of the commands of Allah and were, therefore, acts of sin. There is consensus among scholars that the prophets of Allah are immune from all sins - minor or major, and Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام was a prophet of Allah! So how may one explain his action of eating the fruit of the forbidden tree when Allah had warned him in such clear terms? An answer to all these questions will be found in the commentary of Sūrah Al-Baqarah which also explains the use of the words عَصَى (to disobey) and عَوَى (to err) in reference to Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام. According to the divine Islamic law the action of Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام did not constitute a sin but because he was a prophet of Allah and in His high favour therefore this minor lapse on his part has been described as عَصِيَان (disobedience) for which he was admonished by Allah. A further point here is that the word عَوَى has two meanings: One is "to be deprived" and the other is "to err", or "to go astray". Al-Qushairi and Al-Qurṭubī have adopted the first meaning of the word and have explained this verse by saying that as a punishment for his lapse Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام was deprived of the comforts which were available to him in the Paradise and as a result his life became harsh and bitter.

It is incumbent on Muslims to show reverence to the prophets of Allah when referring to them

Qāḍī Abū Bakr Ibn Al-'Arabi رحمه الله تعالى when discussing the word عَصِي (disobeyed) etc. in reference to Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام in his book Aḥkām-ul-Qur'ān has made an important observation which is reproduced below in his own words:

لا يجوز لاحدنا اليوم ان يخبر بذلك عن ادم الا اذا ذكرناه في اثناء قوله تعالى عنه
او قول نبيه، فاما ان يتدعى ذلك من قبل نفسه فليس بجائز لنا في ابائنا الادين الينا
المماثلين لنا فكيف في ابينا الاقدم الاعظم الاكرم النبي المقدم الذي عذره الله
سبحانه و تعالى وتاب عليه وغفرله (تفسير قرطبي و ذكره في البحر المحيط ايضا)

Today it is not permissible for any of us to use the word عَصِيان (disobedience) in relation to Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام except when it has been used with reference to this verse or to a Ḥadīth of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. When indeed it is not desirable to use this word in relation to our own not-too-distant ancestors, who were like us, how can it be permissible in relation to Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام who is the father of all mankind and more deserving of respect than our own ancestors? Besides he is a revered prophet of Allah whose excuse He accepted and forgave him for his lapse. For such a person the use of the word عصيان (disobedience) is totally forbidden.

The same views have been expressed by Qushairi Abū Naṣr.

The words اِهْبِطَا مِنْهَا جَمِيعًا (123) mean "both of you go down together". This command can be in reference to Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام and the Satan in which case the meaning of the phrase بَعْضُكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ (some of you enemies of some - 123) is obvious, namely that the two of them will remain enemies in the world also. However if it is argued that the Satan had already been expelled from Paradise long before these events occurred, then it would be correct to assume that these words have been addressed to Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام and Sayyidah Ḥawwā' عليها السلام meaning thereby that their children would cherish hostile feelings towards one another and mutual hostility among the children embitters the lives of the parents.

وَمَنْ أَعْرَضَ عَن ذِكْرِي (And whoever turns away from My message - 20:124.) Here the word can refer both to the Qur'ān and the Holy Prophet ﷺ as has been mentioned in other verses ذِكْرًا رَسُولًا (65:10). In both cases the

meaning would be that if anyone fails in his duty to recite the Qur'ān or to comply with its commands, or if he fails to submit to the authority of the Holy Prophet ﷺ then as punishment he would be condemned to a harsh and rigorous life in this world and would be raised blind on the Day of Resurrection.

The truth about the life of infidels and evil-doers being harsh in this world

Here one may ask that a life of penury and destitution in this world is not for the infidels and wicked people only but it afflicts good and pious people also. Indeed the prophets of Allah عليهم السلام have to endure the greatest misfortunes and calamities in their worldly life. Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī and all other books of Ḥadīth contain a tradition in which, on the authority of Sa'd ؓ and others, the Holy Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said that the severest trials and tribulations are suffered by the prophets and in the case of the pious people those who enjoy a higher rank in the hierarchy are the ones who will get a greater share of misfortunes. On the other hand the infidels and the evildoers enjoy a life of comfort and affluence. Therefore the words of the Qur'ān that such people would be condemned to a harsh and rigorous life can refer to the life in the Hereafter (آخرة) only, because experience shows that they have, in this world, all the comforts of life.

The answer to the question posed above is that the punishment which the evil-doers will suffer in this world refers to the chastisement which awaits them in the grave where their existence will be made miserable and beyond endurance. Their graves will be their abodes and will squeeze them so tight that their graves will crack. There is a tradition in Musnād al-Bazzār on the authority of Sayyidnā Abu Hurairah ؓ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself stated that the words مَعِيشَةً ضَنْكًا (straitened life) occurring in this verse (124) refer to the existence in the grave. (Maḥzarī)

Another interpretation given to these words by Sayyidnā Sa'īd ibn Jubair ؓ is that these people will be deprived of the gift of contentment which will result in an overpowering greed for worldly goods (Maḥzarī) but no amount of wealth will ever give them peace and content. The constant desire to augment their worldly possessions and the fear of any decrease in their size will always keep them anxious and uneasy. It

is generally observed that the wealthy people who have all the means of comfort at their disposal actually are unable to enjoy comfort themselves, because comfort cannot be achieved without content and peace of mind.

Verses 128 - 135

أَفَلَمْ يَهْدِ لَهُمْ كَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا قَبْلَهُمْ مِنَ الْقُرُونِ يَمْشُونَ فِي مَسْجِدِهِمْ^ط
 إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّأُولِي النُّهَى ﴿١٢٨﴾ ۞ وَلَوْ لَا كَلِمَةٌ سَبَقَتْ مِنْ
 رَبِّكَ لَكَانَ لِزَامًا وَأَجَلٌ مُّسَمًّى ﴿١٢٩﴾ ۞ فَاصْبِرْ عَلَىٰ مَا يَقُولُونَ وَ
 سَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ قَبْلَ طُلُوعِ الشَّمْسِ وَقَبْلَ غُرُوبِهَا ۖ وَمِنْ آنَاءِ
 اللَّيْلِ فَسَبِّحْ وَأَطْرَافَ النَّهَارِ لَعَلَّكَ تَرْضَىٰ ﴿١٣٠﴾ ۞ وَلَا تَمُدَّنَّ عَيْنَيْكَ
 إِلَىٰ مَا مَتَّعْنَا بِهِ أَزْوَاجًا مِنْهُمْ زَهْرَةَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا ۖ لِنَفْتِنَهُمْ فِيهِ^ط
 وَرِزْقُ رَبِّكَ خَيْرٌ وَأَبْقَىٰ ﴿١٣١﴾ ۞ وَأْمُرْ أَهْلَكَ بِالصَّلَاةِ وَاصْطَبِرْ
 عَلَيْهَا ۖ لَا نَسْأَلُكَ رِزْقًا ۖ نَحْنُ نَرْزُقُكَ ۖ وَالْعَاقِبَةُ لِلتَّقْوَىٰ ﴿١٣٢﴾ ۞ وَ
 قَالُوا لَوْلَا يَأْتِينَا بِآيَةٍ مِنْ رَبِّهِ^ط ۖ أَوْلَمْ تَأْتِهِمْ بَيِّنَةٌ مَا فِي الصُّحُفِ
 الْأُولَىٰ ﴿١٣٣﴾ ۖ وَلَوْ أَنَّا أَهْلَكْنَاهُمْ بِعَذَابٍ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ لَقَالُوا رَبَّنَا لَوْلَا
 أَرْسَلْتَ إِلَيْنَا رَسُولًا فَنَتَّبِعَ آيَاتِكَ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ نَذِلَّ وَنَخْزَىٰ ﴿١٣٤﴾ ۖ
 قُلْ كُلُّ مُتَرَبِّصٍ فَتَرَبَّصُوا ۗ فَسَتَعْلَمُونَ مَنْ أَصْحَابُ الصِّرَاطِ
 السَّوِيِّ وَمَنِ اهْتَدَىٰ ﴿١٣٥﴾ ۖ

Did it give them no guidance, as to how many generations We have destroyed before them who used to walk in their dwellings? Surely, in this there are signs for the people of understanding. [128] And had there not been a word from your Lord that had come earlier, and an appointed time, it (the punishment) would have been inevitable. [129]

So, (O messenger) endure what they say and proclaim the purity and praise of your Lord before the sun rises

and before it sets. And in some hours of night proclaim His purity, as well as at the edges of the day, so that you may be pleased. [130]

And never stretch your eyes towards what we have given to groups of them to enjoy, the glamor of the worldly life, so that We put them to test thereby. And the bounty of your Lord is better and lasting. [131]

And bid your family to perform Ṣalāh and adhere to it yourself. We ask no provision from you. We give provision to you. And the end is in favour of Taqwā. [132]

And they said, "Why does he not bring to us sign from his Lord?" Has there not come to them the manifestation of that which was contained in the earlier scriptures? [133] And if We had destroyed them with a punishment before it, they would have said, "Our Lord, why did you not send a messenger to us, so that we might have followed Your signs before we were humiliated and put to disgrace?" [134]

Say, "Everyone is waiting. So wait, then you will know who are the people of the straight path and who has guidance. [135]

Commentary

The word هُدًى (guidance) implied in the first sentence of verse 128 can refer either to the Qur'ān or to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the meaning would be, "Did not the Qur'ān or the Holy Prophet ﷺ direct them i.e. the people of Makkah and tell them about the nations and the societies who were destroyed because they disobeyed the commands of Allah and turned away from the message brought to them by the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and whose houses and lands are now occupied by them?" It is also possible that the word هُدًى (guidance) may refer to God in which case the meaning would be "Did God not direct."

فَاصْبِرْ عَلَىٰ مَا يَقُولُونَ (So endure what they say - 20:130) The people of Makkah offered various excuses to justify their rejection of the religion brought to them by the Holy Prophet ﷺ and these included derogatory remarks against his person also, such as branding him as a sorcerer, a poet or even an untruthful person. The Qur'ān suggested here two

weapons to combat the torments aimed at him by the infidels of Makkah. One was to show patience and forbearance in the face of all provocation, and the other was to devote himself wholeheartedly to prayers, as the words **وَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ** (and proclaim the purity of your Lord) suggest.

Patience and prayers are the only remedies against aggressive hostility

Everyone in this world, whether he is big or small, good or bad, has enemies and these enemies, however weak and feeble they may be, can do harm to their opponents. If they are not strong enough, they will not hesitate to stab them in the back, and failing everything else they will use abusive language which is equally hurtful. Therefore everybody has to be on his guard to protect himself from the hostile designs of his enemies. The Qur'ān has prescribed two very effective tools for use in such a situation. One is patience, forbearance and to eschew all thoughts of revenge, while the other is to occupy oneself in prayers and invocation of Allah. A person whose thoughts are full of revenge is often unable to exact it from his enemy despite his power and influence and is consumed with chagrin and frustration. On the other hand a person who devotes himself to prayers finds solace in the belief that nobody can harm him without the will of Allah and that whatever Allah wills has a hidden purpose behind it. This belief not only affords him satisfaction but also frees his mind from all thoughts of anger and revenge resulting from the hostile acts of his enemies. The words **لَعَلَّكَ تَرْضَى** (So that you may be pleased) occurring at the end of the verse mean that "If you follow this advice, you will be able to lead a happy and contented life".

وَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ (And proclaim the purity and praise of your Lord - 20:130) Here the direction of proclaiming Allah's purity is followed by the direction of proclaiming His praise. It implies an indication that when a person is given *taufīq* to remember Allah by performing *dhikr* or any other form of worship, it should not make him proud of it. Instead, he should praise Allah, because without His *taufīq* (facilitation) he could not perform that worship. Then, proclaiming the purity and praise of Allah may mean invocation of Allah and His praise, and they may also mean the prescribed prayers. The subsequent fixed times which have been mentioned obviously refer to prayer timings. Thus **قَبْلَ طُلُوعِ الشَّمْسِ** (before the sunrise) means early morning (*fajr*) prayer **قَبْلَ غُرُوبِهَا** (before it sets)

means midday prayers (*ẓuhr*) and afternoon prayers (*‘aṣr*) while وَمِنْ أَنَايِ النَّيْلِ (and in some hours of night) means all prayers after sunset i.e. *maghrib*, *‘ishā* and *tahajjud*. The words أَطْرَافَ النَّهَارِ (the edges of the day) are intended to put additional emphasis on Fajr and Maghrib prayers.

Worldly wealth is a fleeting thing and is not an evidence of God's favour, and for good Muslims it is a danger signal

وَلَا تَمُدَّنَّ عَيْنَيْكَ (And never stretch your eyes - 20:13) The words are addressed to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and are intended to provide guidance to his followers. They are told not to cast covetous eyes at the splendor and glitter of those who revel in the enjoyment of worldly pleasures, because all these things are fleeting and transient while the grace and blessings bestowed upon the Holy Prophet ﷺ and through him upon his followers are everlasting and much more desirable than worldly luxuries.

People have always wondered at the wealth and prosperity of the infidels and evil doers despite their being loathsome and contemptible in the eyes of Allah, while pious and obedient Muslims spend their lives in poverty and destitution. Even the great and highly respected Sayyidnā ‘Umar al-Fārūq ؓ was made aware of this glaring disparity one day when he entered the private quarter of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and saw him lying on a mat of rough reeds which left their marks on his body. Sayyidnā ‘Umar ؓ stood there and wept. Then he said, "O Prophet of Allah! The kings of Persia and Byzantium live in comfort and luxury whereas you who are the chosen prophet of Allah and also his beloved live such a harsh life." To this the Holy Prophet ﷺ replied, "O son of Khattab! Has it not dawned upon you yet that Allah has given to these people everything that is dear to them in this world, but they will have no share of the good things in the Hereafter, only punishment and pain?" This is the reason why the Holy Prophet ﷺ chose for himself a life which was free from the pomp and vanity of this wicked world, even though he had the means of accumulating all the comforts and luxuries of life. Whenever he received share of wealth even without physical toil or exertion, he immediately distributed it among the poor and the needy and kept nothing of it for himself. Ibn Abī Ḥātim has related, quoting Sayyidnā Abū Sa‘īd al-Khadri ؓ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ once said,

ان اخوف ما اخاف عليكم ما يفتح الله لكم من زهرة الدنيا (ابن كثير)

What I fear most about you is wealth and worldly splendor which will be arrayed before you. (Ibn Kathīr)

In this Ḥadīth the Holy Prophet ﷺ has foretold the Muslims about their conquests and the acquisition of vast territories which will bring them untold wealth and means of luxury. But there is no cause to feel satisfaction at these prospects; on the other hand there is every reason to fear such an eventuality because an excess of indulgence in luxuries may make people forget their duty to Allah.

Requiring one's relatives and associates to offer their prayers regularly and the philosophy behind it

وَأْمُرْ أَهْلَكَ بِالصَّلَاةِ وَاصْطَبِرْ عَلَيْهَا (And bid your family to perform *ṣalāh* and adhere to it yourself - 132) Here the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been asked to direct the members of his family to say prayers and that he himself should be very particular about his prayers. These appear to be two separate commands, i.e. one for the family and the other for himself but the fact is that for a person to be steadfast in saying prayers it is essential that his family and friends should be equally mindful of their duty in this matter. The word *ahl* used for the family is quite comprehensive and includes a person's wife, children and his associates because all of them influence the environment and are an integral part of society. After this verse was revealed to the Holy Prophet ﷺ he used to go to the house of Sayyidnā 'Alī ؑ and Sayyidah Fāṭimah رضى الله عنها every morning at the time of morning prayers and call out الصَّلَاةُ الصَّلَاةُ (Come to *ṣalāh*, come to *ṣalāh*). (Qurṭubī)

It is reported that whenever Sayyidnā 'Urwah ibn Zubair ؓ saw a display of wealth, he would at once return home, call his family to prayer and recite to them this verse. Also when Sayyidnā 'Umar ibn Khaṭṭāb ؓ got up for his midnight (*tahajjud*) prayers, he would awake the other members of his family and recite to them this verse. (Qurṭubī)

Allah provides easy sustenance to a person who devotes himself to prayers and to His worship

لَا تَسْأَلُنَا (We ask no provision from you - 20:132) Allah does not demand of the people that they should provide sustenance to their families and dependants by their own power, because the responsibility for this is in His hands alone. Man is incapable of providing for himself,

and the best that he can do is to plough the land and plant seeds in it, but he has no power to germinate it or to make a tree grow out of it. The role of man in all this is to protect the tree after it has grown to maturity and then to put its yield to his personal use. And for the person who spends all his time in prayer Allah makes even this labour bearable for him (Tirmidhī). Ibn Mājah has quoted Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضي الله عنه that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said,

يقول الله تعالى: يا ابن آدم: تفرغ لعبادتي املأ صدرك غنى واسد فقرك، وار لم تفعل ملأت صدرك شغلا ولم اسد فقرك (ابن كثير)

"Allah says: 'O son of 'Ādam! You dedicate yourself to My worship and I will fill your chest with sufficiency and free you from want. But if you do not obey my commands, I will fill your chest with anxieties and worries and will not free you from want.'" (Ibn Kathīr)

The meaning of the words لم اسد فقرك (I will not free you from want) is that such a man will always remain poor because the more wealth he acquires the more his greed will increase. And Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضي الله عنه says that he heard the Holy Prophet ﷺ saying,

من جعل همومه همًا واحدا همّ المعاد، كفاه الله همّ دنياه، ومن تشعبت به الهموم في احوال الدنيا لم يبال الله في أي اودية هلك "رواه ابن ماجه" (ابن كثير)

"A man who makes his concern for the Hereafter the focal point of all his efforts, Allah will take care of his concerns, but a person whose concerns are all about worldly affairs, Allah does not care in which valley he perishes."

أَوَلَمْ تَأْتِهِم بَيِّنَةٌ مَّا فِي الصُّحُفِ الْأُولَى (Has there not come to them the manifestation of that which was contained in the earlier scriptures? - 20:133) It means that all the old Revealed Books such as the Torah, the Injīl (Evangeli) and the scriptures given to Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام bear a witness to the prophethood of the last Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. Is not all this sufficient evidence for those who persist in their denial of his prophethood?

فَسَتَعْلَمُونَ مَنْ أَصْحَابُ الصِّرَاطِ السَّوِيِّ وَمَنِ اهْتَدَى (Then you will know who are people of the straight path and who has guidance - 20:135.) It means that though everybody is free to claim merit for his own ways and his own

actions, these claims are of no value, because the correct way is that only which finds favour with Allah, and on the Day of Resurrection everybody will be made aware as to who followed the path of error and who took the road to salvation.

اللَّهُمَّ اهْدِنَا لِمَا اخْتَلَفَ فِيهِ إِلَى الْحَقِّ بِإِذْنِكَ وَلَا حَوْلَ
وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِكَ وَلَا مَلْجَأَ وَلَا مُنْجَا مُنْكَ إِلَّا إِلَيْكَ

Alḥamdulillāh

The Commentary on

Sūrah Ṭā-Hā

Ends here.

Sūrah Al-Anbiyā'

(The Prophets)

Sūrah Al-Anbiya was revealed in Makkah and it has 112 Verses and 7 sections

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

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

Verses 1 - 10

اَقْتَرَبَ لِلنَّاسِ حِسَابُهُمْ وَهُمْ فِي غَفْلَةٍ مُّعْرِضُونَ ﴿١﴾ مَا يَأْتِيهِمْ مِّنْ ذِكْرٍ مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ مُّحَدَّثٍ اِلَّا اسْتَمَعُوْهُ وَهُمْ يَلْعَبُوْنَ ﴿٢﴾ لَّا هِيَ اِلَّا قُلُوْبُهُمْ ط وَاَسْرُوْا النَّجْوٰى ۗ الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا ۗ هَلْ هٰذَا اِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُكُمْ ۗ اَفَتَاتُوْنَ السِّحْرَ وَاَنْتُمْ تُبْصِرُوْنَ ﴿٣﴾ قُلْ رَبِّيْ يَعْلَمُ الْقَوْلَ فِي السَّمَآءِ وَالْاَرْضِ ۗ وَهُوَ السَّمِیْعُ الْعَلِیْمُ ﴿٤﴾ بَلْ قَالُوْا اَضْغَاثُ اَحْلَامٍ ۗ بَلْ اَقْتَرَبَهُ بَلْ هُوَ شَاعِرٌ ۗ فَلْيَاْتِنَا بِآیَةٍ كَمَا اُرْسِلَ الْاَوَّلُوْنَ ﴿٥﴾ مَا اَمَنْتُ قَبْلَهُمْ مِّنْ قَرِیْبَةٍ اَهْلَكْنٰهَا ۗ اَفْهُمْ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿٦﴾ وَمَا اُرْسَلْنَا قَبْلِكَ اِلَّا رِجَالًا نُّوْحِیْ اِلَيْهِمْ فَسْئَلُوْا اَهْلَ الدِّكْرِ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٧﴾ وَمَا جَعَلْنٰهُمْ جَسَدًا ۗ لَّا يَأْكُلُوْنَ الطَّعَامَ وَمَا كَانُوْا خٰلِدِيْنَ ﴿٨﴾ ثُمَّ صَدَقْنٰهُمُ الْوَعْدَ ۗ فَاَنْجَيْنٰهُمْ وَمَنْ نَّشَاءُ وَاَهْلَكْنَا الْمُسْرِفِيْنَ ﴿٩﴾ لَقَدْ اَنْزَلْنَا اِلَيْكُمْ كِتٰبًا فِيْهِ ذِكْرُكُمْ ۗ اَفَلَا تَعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿١٠﴾

The reckoning of the people has drawn near to them while they are in negligence, turning away (from its signs). [1] No new message comes to them from their Lord, but they listen to it in a state of playing, [2] their

hearts paying no heed. And the wrongdoers whisper in secret, "This one is nothing but a human like you. Would you then go along with the sorcery while you have eyes to see?" [3]

He (the prophet) said, "My Lord knows all that is spoken in the heavens and the earth, and He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing. [4]

Further they said, "(The Qur'ān is) a mixture of hotch-potch dreams. Rather, he (the prophet) has fabricated it. Rather, he is a poet. So, let him bring a sign to us, as the earlier ones were sent with." [5] Not a single town We destroyed did believe before them. So then, will they believe? [6]

And We did not send before you messengers except men whom We inspired with revelation. So, ask the people (having the knowledge) of the Message, if you do not know. [7] And We did not make them as bodies that ate no food, nor were they immortal. [8] Then We made the promise come true for them, so We saved them and the ones We willed, and destroyed the transgressors. [9]

Surely, We have sent down to you a book having a good name for you. So, do you not understand? [10]

Commentary

Importance of Sūrah Al-Anbiyā'

Sayyidnā Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd رضي الله عنه has said that four Sūrah viz Al-Kahf, Maryam, Ṭahā and Al-Anbiyā' are among the earlier revelations which I value a lot and keep them close to my heart. (Qurtubī)

إِقْتَرَبَ لِلنَّاسِ حِسَابُهُمْ (The reckoning of the people has drawn near - 21:1) It means that the time is near when people will have to give an account of their deeds. Here, the reference is to the Day of Judgment, and its approach is in relation to bygone ages, as the *ummah* of Sayyidnā Muḥammad Al-Muṣṭafā صلوات الله عليه is the last of them all. And if the meaning of the word حِسَابٌ (reckoning) is taken in its general sense then reckoning in the grave is also included, which each individual faces immediately after death. It is for this reason that an individual's death is regarded as his Day of Reckoning. من مات فقد قامت قيامته (for a person who has died his Day of Reckoning has arrived) so the latter explanation makes the verse very

clear in that the individual reckoning for every one is not very far, no matter how long one lives, because death is certain and no one knows when it will befall. The underlying message of this verse is to warn those people, whether believers or non-believers, who are in a state of slumber due to indulgence in worldly affairs, unmindful of the certainty that all this will come to an end one day. In fact it is this disregard of the Day of Judgment which is the root cause of all ills.

مَا يَأْتِيهِمْ مِنْ ذِكْرٍ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ مُحَدَّثٍ إِلَّا اسْتَمَعُوهُ وَهُمْ يَلْعَبُونَ لَأَهِيَةً قُلُوبُهُمْ (No new message comes to them from their Lord, but they listen to it in a state of playing, their hearts paying no heed. 21:2,3) This verse describes the state of those who disregard the punishment in the grave and in the Hereafter and do not prepare themselves to counter it with good deeds. The verse further describes their practice of making light of new Qur'ānic verses when they are recited before them. They are totally oblivious of the fear of God and the Hereafter. The verse can be explained in two other ways. One, that they keep themselves engaged in their own amusement and take no notice of Qur'ānic verses when they are recited before them and two, that they ridicule the Qur'ānic verses themselves.

افْتَاتُونَ السِّحْرَ وَأَنْتُمْ تُبْصِرُونَ (Would you then go along with sorcery while you have eyes to see? - 21:3) Those people used to discuss among themselves secretly that the claim of the Holy Prophet ﷺ about his prophethood should not be accepted, because he was an ordinary human being like all others and not an angel. On the other hand not even the most rigid among the unbelievers could deny the supreme charm and eloquence of the Book of Allah nor its power to influence people when it was recited before them. Therefore, in order to turn people away from the Holy Book they started calling it magic and black art. They thought that they could keep people away from Islam by labelling the Qur'ān as a book of magic thereby dissuading people from going to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and listening to Qur'ān. Probably they used to discuss this subject secretly among themselves lest the Muslims come to know about their foolish views and unveil their fallacy.

بَلْ قَالُوا أَضْغَاثُ أَحْلَامٍ (Further they said, [The Qur'ān is] a mixture of hotch-potch dreams. - 21:5.) Dreams having an element of personal and satanic thoughts are called أَضْغَاثُ أَحْلَامٍ. That is why this term (أَضْغَاثُ أَحْلَامٍ) has been translated as "hotch-potch dreams". What it means is that in the

first place the unbelievers called the Qur'ān as magic, then they described it as a collection of disturbed dreams, and then they said it was a forgery and fabrication against Allah Ta'ālā to call it His words; and finally they said that he ﷺ was a poet and the Qur'ān represented his poetic compositions.

فَلْيَأْتِنَا بآيَةٍ (So let him bring to us a sign - 21:5) It means that the unbelievers demanded from the Holy Prophet ﷺ certain specific miracles to be shown as a proof of his being a real Prophet. In response to this demand, Allah Ta'ālā said in this verse that the same demand for miracles was also made by the people in the past from other prophets, and when their request was met, it was of no avail. They did not submit to Allah even after witnessing the miracles of their choice. And Allah has decreed that people who do not submit to Him even after they have seen the miracle of their choice are subjected to His wrath even in this world and are destroyed. Allah, in His Divine Mercy and in view of the honoured position of the Holy Prophet ﷺ had granted to his Ummah immunity from the terrible punishment which is the inevitable fate of those people who defy the Will of Allah. It was not, therefore, considered desirable to show them miracles of their choice because if they, like the earlier people, persisted in their unbelief even after seeing those miracles, they too would invite the wrath of Allah Ta'ālā. Then in أَفَهُمْ يُؤْمِنُونَ (Will they believe?) there is a hint that there was no likelihood of these people accepting the true faith even after seeing the miracles of their choice. Hence they were not shown the desired miracle.

فَسْئَلُوا أَهْلَ الذِّكْرِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ (So, ask the people (having the knowledge) of the message, if you do not know. - 21:7) In this verse, scholars of Injīl (Evangele) and Torah are referred to as أَهْلَ الذِّكْرِ (people of the message), who had accepted the Holy Prophet's ﷺ prophethood. Therefore, what it actually means is that if you are not aware whether the prophets of the past were angels or ordinary men then you should find out from the scholars of Injīl and Torah as they know perfectly well that all prophets were human beings. It is, therefore, quite possible that here the term أَهْلَ الذِّكْرِ (people of the message) refers to all Jews and Christians (even though they have not believed in the Holy prophethood of the Holy Prophet ﷺ).

Ruling: Qurṭubī has said in his exegesis that this verse has made it

clear that ignorant persons who are not acquainted with the rules of Shari'ah must seek knowledge from scholars and then follow them accordingly.

The Holy Qur'an is an honour and pride for the Arabs

كِتَابًا فِيهِ ذِكْرُكُمْ (a book having a good name for you - 21:10): The word كتابا (Book) is meant for Qur'an and ذِكْرُ (name) is used here for honour, excellence and fame. Thus what is meant here is that the revelation of Qur'an in Arabic language is a great honour and ever lasting fame for the Arabs and they should value it as such. History has proved that by Allah's Mercy and by the blessings of Qur'an Arabs have dominated the world and ruled over it for a long time. This is also a fact of life that Arabs gained dominance over the world not because of any tribal or linguistic supremacy but because of Qur'an. If there was no Qur'an, probably no one would have known about the Arabs at all.

Verses 11 - 15

وَكَمْ قَصَمْنَا مِنْ قَرْيَةٍ كَانَتْ ظَالِمَةً وَأَنْشَأْنَا بَعْدَهَا قَوْمًا آخَرِينَ
﴿١١﴾ فَلَمَّا أَحْسَسُوا بِأَسَآ إِذَاهُمْ مِّنْهَا يَرْكُضُونَ ﴿١٢﴾ لَا تَرَكُضُوا
وَارْجِعُوا إِلَى مَا أُتْرِفْتُمْ فِيهِ وَمَسْكِنِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُسْأَلُونَ ﴿١٣﴾ قَالُوا
يُؤْيَلْنَا إِنَّا كُنَّا ظَالِمِينَ ﴿١٤﴾ فَمَا زَالَتْ تِلْكَ دَعْوَاهُمْ حَتَّى جَعَلْنَاهُمْ
حَصِيدًا خُمِيدِينَ ﴿١٥﴾

And how many a town We crushed, that were wrongdoing, and We raised up another people after them. [11] So when they sensed Our punishment, all of a sudden, they started fleeing from it. [12] Do not flee, and go back to the luxuries you were involved in and to your homes. May be you are asked questions. [13] They said, "Woe to us! We were wrongdoers indeed." [14] Then, this continued to be their cry till We turned them into stubble, totally extinguished. [15]

Commentary

These verses describe the destruction of those settlements which some

exegesists have taken as *Ḥadhūrā'* (حضوراء) and *Qilābah* (قلابه) of Yemen. Allah Ta'ālā had sent there a prophet about whose name there are different versions. Some say he was Mūsā Ibn Mishā while others say his name was Shu'aīb, in which case he was a different prophet from the one who lived in Madyan. This Prophet was killed by his people, who were, as a punishment annihilated by the infidel King Nabucad Nazzar.

This King was placed in authority over them just as he was used as an instrument for the punishment of Banī Isra'īl when they strayed from the righteous path in Palestine. In fact, Qur'an has not identified any specific settlement. Hence it will be apt to leave the subject open, so that these settlements of Yemen may also come in its ambit. والله اعلم (Only Allah knows best).

Verses 16 - 29

وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَاءَ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا لِعِبِينِ ﴿١٦﴾ لَوْ أَرَدْنَا أَنْ
تَتَّخِذَ لَهَوًا لَّا تَتَّخِذُهُ مِنْ لَدُنَّا ۗ إِنَّ كُنَّا فَعِيلِينَ ﴿١٧﴾ بَلْ نَقْذِفُ
بِالْحَقِّ عَلَى الْبَاطِلِ فَيَدْمَغُهُ فَإِذَا هُوَ زَاهِقٌ ۗ وَ لَكُمْ الْوَيْلُ مِمَّا
تَصِفُونَ ﴿١٨﴾ وَلَهُ، مَنْ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۗ وَمَنْ عِنْدَهُ لَا
يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ عَنْ عِبَادَتِهِ وَلَا يَسْتَحْسِرُونَ ﴿١٩﴾ يُسَبِّحُونَ اللَّيْلَ
وَالنَّهَارَ لَا يَفْتُرُونَ ﴿٢٠﴾ أَمْ اتَّخَذُوا إِلَهًا مِّنَ الْأَرْضِ هُمْ يُنْشِرُونَ
﴿٢١﴾ لَوْ كَانَ فِيهِمَا آلِهَةٌ إِلَّا اللَّهُ لَفَسَدَتَا ۗ فَسُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ رَبِّ
الْعَرْشِ عَمَّا يَصِفُونَ ﴿٢٢﴾ لَا يُسْأَلُ عَمَّا يَفْعَلُ وَهُمْ يُسْأَلُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾
أَمْ اتَّخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِهِ إِلَهًا ۗ قُلْ هَاتُوا بُرْهَانَكُمْ ۗ هَذَا ذِكْرٌ مِّنْ مَّعَى
وَذِكْرٌ مِّنْ قَبْلِي ۗ بَلْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ۗ الْحَقُّ فَهُمْ مُّعْرِضُونَ
﴿٢٤﴾ وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ مِنْ رَسُولٍ إِلَّا نُوحِي إِلَيْهِ أَنَّهُ، لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا
أَنَا فَاعْبُدُونِ ﴿٢٥﴾ وَقَالُوا اتَّخَذَ الرَّحْمَنُ وَلَدًا سُبْحٰنَهُ ۗ بَلْ عِبَادٌ

مُكْرَمُونَ ﴿٢٦﴾ لَا يَسْبِقُونَهُ بِالْقَوْلِ وَهُمْ بِأَمْرِهِ يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٢٧﴾ يَعْلَمُ
 مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ وَلَا يَشْفَعُونَ إِلَّا لِمَنِ ارْتَضَىٰ وَهُمْ مِنَ
 خَشْيَتِهِ مُشْفِقُونَ ﴿٢٨﴾ وَمَنْ يَقُلْ مِنْهُمْ إِنِّي إِلَهٌ مِنْ دُونِهِ فَذَلِكَ
 نَجْزِيهِ جَهَنَّمَ ۚ كَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٢٩﴾

And We did not create the heavens and the earth and what lies between them for play. [16] Had We intended to have a pastime, We would have had it from Our own, if We were to do so. [17] Instead, We launch the truth against the falsehood, which smashes it, and in no time it is nothing. And woe to you for what you relate. [18]

And to Him belong all those in the heavens and the earth. And those who are near Him are not arrogant against His worship, nor are they sluggish. [19] They proclaim His purity night and day, never slackening. [20]

Or have they taken to gods from the earth who raise the dead? [21] Had there been gods in them (the heavens and the earth) other than Allah, both would have fallen in disorder. So pure is Allah, the Lord of the Throne, from what they describe. [22] He is not questioned of what He does, and they are questioned. [23]

Or have they taken to gods besides Him? Say, "Bring your proof." Here is the Message for those with me and the Message for those before me. Yet most of them do not know the truth and therefore they are averse. [24] And We did not send before you any messenger but We revealed to him that there is no god but I, so worship Me." [25]

And they said, "The Raḥmān (All-Merciful) has taken to Himself a son". Pure is He. They are but servants, honoured. [26] They do not precede Him in speech and only under His command they act. [27] He knows what is in front of them and what is behind them, and they make recommendation for none but for whom He likes, and in awe of Him they are apprehensive. [28] And whoever of them says, "I am god besides Him", is the one

whom We will recompense with Jahannam. This is how
We recompense the transgressors. [29]

Commentary

وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَاءَ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا لَعِبِينَ (And We did not create the heavens and the earth ... 21:16.) It means that we have not created the sky and the earth, and everything that lies in between them for mere amusement. In the preceding verses a reference has been made to the annihilation of certain settlements. In this verse there is a suggestion that just as the creation of the earth and the sky and all other created things was according to a set design, the destruction of the settlements was also the result of a definite purpose. Having witnessed the marvels and wonders of creation which are so abundantly spread all over, manifesting Allah's omnipotence and omniscience, do they still think that all these things are futile and without significance?

The word لَعِبِينَ is taken from لَعِبَ (play), which means having no useful objective (Rāghib) while لَهْوٌ (pastime) means an act which has no purpose at all except to provide amusement in free time. The disbelievers who argue against the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the Holy Qur'an and reject the Oneness of Allah and deny His Power, despite its abundant manifestations, then it is apparent that they have a notion that all this creation is meant for amusement and pastime. The verse rejects this false view and says that Allah's creation is not for fun and pastime. A little reflection will show that even the minutest particle of the universe has its utility and each and everything created by Allah has a purpose which speaks by itself for His omniscience and Oneness.

لَوْ أَرَدْنَا أَنْ نَتَّخِذَ لَهُمْ لَهْوًا لَوَلَّيْنَا مِنْ لَدُنَّا مَا إِن كُنَّا فاعِلِينَ (Had We intended to have a pastime, We would have had it from Our own, if We were to do so. - 21:17) It means that if We were to create something for amusement, there was no need to create the earth and the sky, and We could have done so from the things around Us.

In Arabic language the word لَوْ is used for imaginary and non-existent things. Here also it is used in the same sense i.e. those foolish people who regard all the wonderful things of the earth and the sky objects of fun and frolic do not realize that creation on such a gigantic scale cannot be undertaken for amusement. The suggestion here is that even a person of

ordinary common sense would not indulge in a project which has no serious purpose, to say nothing of Allah Ta'ālā who is Supreme and Exalted.

The commonly accepted meaning of **لَهُ** is a purposeless pastime, and this meaning has been adopted in translating this verse. According to some commentators this word **لَهُ** is also used sometimes for wife or children in which case the meaning of the verse would be a denial of the belief of the Jews and Christians, who thought that Sayyidnā 'Uzair and Sayyidnā Masiḥ عَلَيْهِمَا السَّلَام were God's sons. If Allah wished to have children why should they be from humans and not from other creatures around Him. (Allah knows best).

بَلْ نَقْذِفُ بِالْحَقِّ عَلَى الْبَاطِلِ فَيَدْمَغُهُ، فَإِذَا هُوَ زَاهِقٌ (Instead, We launch the truth against the falsehood, which smashes it, and in no time it is nothing. - 21:18) The literal meaning of **فَقَذَفَ** is to throw horizontally which has been translated above as launching) **يَدْمَعُ** means to hit on the head (to smash it) and **زَاهِقٌ** means something which is gone or vanishes without leaving a trace.

This verse explains that Allah has not created this marvelous universe with earth and the sky for amusement. This creation is the result of a carefully thought out plan which aims at distinguishing right from wrong. Observation of Nature's creations leads people along the righteous path and protects them from evil. This idea is conveyed in the verse by saying that virtue is hurled against evil and smashes its head so completely that it disappears without a trace.

وَمَنْ عِنْدَهُ لَا يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ عَنْ عِبَادَتِهِ وَلَا يَسْتَحْسِرُونَ (And those who are near Him are not arrogant against His worship, nor are they sluggish. - 21:19) It means that Allah's servants who are with Him i.e. angels pray to Him all the time without ceasing. So, if the humans do not pray to Him, it will not make any difference to Him, but they themselves will be the losers. It is human nature to judge others by applying one's own situation to them. Hence there are two possibilities preventing a person from offering acts of worship ceaselessly. One, that he regards it below his dignity to bow down before any one and therefore does not pray to Allah Ta'ālā. Secondly, it is physically not possible for a man to worship without a break because he needs to rest in between. In view of these two human constraints, it is