

the word must be interpreted here in its common literal sense i.e. to purify one's own self. There is an indication in the verse itself which supports this meaning of the word. It will be observed that wherever obligatory Zakāh has been mentioned in the Qur'an the words used are *إِتْيَاءُ الزَّكَاةِ* and *يُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ* (which refer to the 'payment' of *zakāh*) whereas here the words used are *لِلزَّكَاةِ فَاعِلُونَ* (who are performers of *zakāh*) which clearly indicates that in this verse the word has not been used in its technical meaning. Besides, the word *فاعِلُونَ* (performers) is related to *فعل* (performance) and technically Zakah is not an act but a portion of wealth and the use of the word *فاعِلُونَ* for this portion of wealth needs suitable explanation. If the technical meaning of the word Zakāh is adopted, then its being obligatory and binding on all Muslims is undisputed and if the word means purification of soul then that too is obligatory and to cleanse one's soul of impurities and sins such as polytheism, hypocrisy, vanity, jealousy, hatred, greed, miserliness is called *تَزْكِيَةٌ* (*tazkiyah*). All these things are forbidden and are major sins and it is obligatory to purify one's soul from them.

**Forth Attribute** is guarding ones private parts against unlawful liaison. *وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِأَعْيُنِهِمْ هَحْفَظُونَ إِلَّا عَلَىٰ أَزْوَاجِهِمْ أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُمْ* (And who guard their private parts except from their wives or from those (slave-girls) owned by their right hands - 23:5,6). They satisfy their needs with their wives and their legal bondmaids according to the prescribed laws and avoid unlawful liaison. About these people the Qur'an says *فَإِنَّهُمْ غَيْرُ مَلُومِينَ* (Because they are not liable to blame - 23:6), which also means that the sexual desire must be kept under strict control and must not be allowed to become a means of gratification of one's passions.

*فَمَنْ ابْتَغَىٰ وَرَاءَ ذَلِكَ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْعَادُونَ* (However, those who seek (sexual pleasure) beyond that are the transgressors - 7). Satisfying one's desire with someone other than one's own wife or a lawfully acquired slave-girl is strictly forbidden and the ban includes adultery (marrying a woman whom one is not allowed to marry under the religious code is also adultery), having sex with one's wife or slave-girl when she is menstruating or is confined, or having unnatural sex with them, homosexuality and bestiality, while most jurists include masturbation also in the ban. (Tafsir Bayān ul-Qur'an, Qurṭubī, al-Baḥr ul-Muḥīṭ, etc.)

**Fifth Attribute** of a good Muslim is that he should discharge his

trust truly and faithfully. وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِأَمْتِهِمْ وَعَهْدِهِمْ رَاعُونَ (And [success is attained] by those who honestly look after their trusts and covenant, - 23:8). The word أَمَانَات (trusts) covers everything which a person has undertaken to perform or which have been placed under his care as trust. Since it may be of many kinds, the word is used in plural, so that it may include all sorts of trusts whether they may relate to the rights of Allah or to the rights of human beings. To perform scrupulously all the injunctions and duties made obligatory by religious laws and to abstain from things which have been forbidden or declared undesirable is to look after the trust that relates to the rights of Allah. As regards the discharge of trusts relating to the rights of human beings, these take numerous forms, and the most well-known is that a person must promptly return to the owner on demand any goods which have been in his custody as trust. Any information received in confidence is a trust and to reveal it to anybody else without the permission of the person who gave it is a breach of trust. Mutual settlement between an employer and an employee of the terms of employment, i.e. the work to be done and time to be spent in the performance of work, and the wages to be paid is a trust and binding on both the parties and a violation of this agreement by either party would constitute a breach of trust. Hence discharge of trust is an all-encompassing word.

**Sixth Attribute** of a perfect Muslim is to fulfill his covenant. The word عَهْد (covenant) has two connotations. One is a covenant between two parties specifying the duties and obligations of either party and is binding on both and a breach of this covenant by either party is a fraud and deceit and therefore forbidden in Islam. The other is where a person voluntarily promises to give something to someone or undertakes to do some job. This is known as وَعْدَة (promise) and its fulfillment is also obligatory under the dictates of Sharī'ah. There is a Ḥadīth which says العدة دين (a promise is like a debt). It means that a promise is like a debt and must be fulfilled in the same manner as a debt must be discharged, the difference being that whereas the repayment of a debt can be enforced through a court of law, a voluntary promise is not enforceable likewise. Nevertheless the person making the promise is morally bound to abide by it and failure to do so would be a sin unless there is a religious ground for his inability to fulfill his promise.

### Seventh attribute

وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ عَلَى صَلَوَاتِهِمْ يُحَافِظُونَ (And who consistently observe their prayers - 23:9). To observe one's prayers here means to offer them regularly at the appointed time, and the word صَلَوَاتٍ (Prayers) has been used in the plural form to include all the five prayers. In an earlier verses the word صَلَاةٌ (Ṣalāh: prayer) was used in the singular because the emphasis was on Khushū' which is the essence of all prayers whether they are *farḍ*, *wājib*, *sunnah* or *nafl*.

A careful study of the above seven attributes would show that they encompass all the duties which man owes to Allah and to fellow men, and all the laws governing those duties. A person who possesses these attributes and adheres to them is a complete *mu'min* (believer) and deserving of *falāḥ* in this world and in the Hereafter. It will also be noted that these seven attributes begin and also end with a reference to prayers which suggests that if prayers are offered in the prescribed manner with all their requirements, the other attributes will appear automatically.

أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْوَارِثُونَ الَّذِينَ يَرْتُونَ الْفِرْدَوْسَ

Those are the inheritors who will inherit Firdaus (Paradise) - 23:10,11.

The good Muslims who possess the attributes described above have been declared in this verse to be the heirs to the garden of Paradise. There is a suggestion here that just as the assets of a deceased person must devolve on his heirs, similarly the possessors of these attributes will, without doubt, enter Paradise. It should be noted that the possessors of these seven qualities have been mentioned in the beginning as those who attain *falāḥ* or success, then after describing these qualities it is mentioned in this last sentence that possessors of these qualities will inherit Paradise. This indicates that the total *falāḥ* (success) may be achieved in Paradise only.

### Verses 12 - 22

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ سُلَالَةٍ مِّنْ طِينٍ ﴿١٢﴾ ثُمَّ جَعَلْنَاهُ نُطْفَةً فِي قَرَارٍ مَّكِينٍ ﴿١٣﴾ ثُمَّ خَلَقْنَا النُّطْفَةَ عَلَقَةً فَخَلَقْنَا الْعَلَقَةَ مُضْغَةً فَخَلَقْنَا الْمُضْغَةَ عِظْمًا فَكَسَوْنَا الْعِظْمَ لَحْمًا ۗ ثُمَّ أَنشَأْنَاهُ خَلْقًا



and of them you eat, [21] and on them and on the boats  
you are transported. [22]

### Commentary

In the earlier verses it was explained that man can achieve *falāḥ* (success) in this world and in the Hereafter by spending his time in assiduously worshipping Allah and, in compliance with His commands, by keeping his body and soul pure at all times and by discharging the claims and duties which he owes to fellow human beings. The present verse gives an account of the universal and supreme power of Allah the Almighty and a manifestation of His power in the process leading to the creation of the human race. If a person whom Allah has given wisdom and intelligence ponders seriously the meanings of these verses, he must necessarily choose the path which would lead him to *falāḥ* in this world and in the Hereafter.

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ سُلَالَةٍ مِّنْ طِينٍ

And We have created man from an extract of clay. - 23:12

The word سُلَالَةٌ *sulālah* means "extract" and طِينٍ means "wet earth" or clay and the verse means that man was created from some special elements extracted from earth. Creation of mankind began with Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام who was himself created from this essence of earth. Therefore the first creation has been related to earth after which the seed of one man becomes the means of another man's creation. In the next verse ثُمَّ جَعَلْنَاهُ نُطْفَةً (then We made him a sperm-drop) this same point has been mentioned differently. The meaning of all this is that the first life i.e. Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام was created from earth and continued further with the sperm which is a refined element of the same earth. This is how a majority of commentators have explained this verse. Another view is that سُلَالَةٍ مِّنْ طِينٍ (extract of clay) may also mean human seed because it is produced from the food which a man takes and the food grows out of the earth.

### Seven stages of the creation of man

In the above verse seven stages in the creation of man have been described. These are:

- (1) سُلَالَةٍ مِّنْ طِينٍ (an extract of clay).
- (2) نُطْفَةً (sperm-drop),

(3) عَلَقَهُ (clot),

(4) مُضْغَةً (foetus-lump),

(5) عِظَامَ (bones),

(6) clothing bones with flesh, and

(7) completion of the process of creation by blowing the spirit into the child.

### A very interesting story about Sayyidnā 'Abbās ﷺ

Qurtubī in his commentary has related a very interesting story in which Sayyidnā 'Abbās ﷺ is said to have determined the exact date of the Night of Majesty (لَيْلَةُ الْقَدْرِ) and based his reasoning on this verse: The story goes like this. One day Sayyidnā 'Umar ﷺ while sitting in the company of some eminent companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, asked them on what date of the month of Ramaḍān the Night of Majesty (Lailatulqadr) would fall. None of them was able to mention a specific date so they all said that only Allah knew the answer. Sayyidnā Umar ﷺ then turned to Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ who was the youngest among them and asked him if he had an answer to the question. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ then said, "O Amir ul-Mominin! Allah created seven skies and seven earths. He created man in seven stages and provided him sustenance from seven sources. Therefore in my opinion the Night of Majesty (لَيْلَةُ الْقَدْرِ) will surely fall on the twenty-seventh night of the month of Ramaḍān." When Sayyidnā Umar ﷺ heard this reasoning, he said to the companions, "See, this lad has given an answer which none of you could give". This story is reproduced at length in the Musnād of Ibn Abi Shaibah. When Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ mentioned the seven stages of man's creation, he was obviously alluding to this verse. As for the seven sources of human sustenance, the reference is to the verse in Sūrah 'Abas:

فَالْبِتْنَةَ فِيهَا حَبًّا وَعِنَبًا وَقَضْبًا وَزَيْتُونًا وَنَخْلًا وَحَدَائِقَ غُلْبًا وَفَاكِهَةً وَأَبًّا

And therein made the grains to grow and vines, and reeds, and olives, and palms, and clense-tree gardens, and fruits, and pastures. 90:27 - 31

This verse mentions eight items of which the first seven are food for human beings and the eighth provides fodder for animals.

The supreme beauty and eloquence of the Qur'ānic language is evident from the fact that the seven stages of the creation of man have not all been described in the same manner. In describing the metamorphosis of the human foetus from one stage to the next, the word **ثُمَّ** (afterwards) has been used at some place which is a suggestion of some delay in the process, while at other places the particle **فَ** has been used as a prefix indicating uninterrupted succession in the process of change. Some of the changes in the human foetus in mother's womb take a long time to take place whereas other changes occur in relatively shorter periods. Thus the word **ثُمَّ** has been used in the context of the first two changes. First there is **سُلَالَةٍ مِّن طِينٍ** (an extract of clay) which changes into the seed **ثُمَّ جَعَلْنَاهُ نُطْفَةً** (then We made him a sperm-drop). Now it is well known that the production of food from the earth, its absorption in the human body of that special element which changes into the seed is a long drawn out process. Similarly the third stage of the transformation from the sperm-drop **نُطْفَةٍ** to clot **مُضْغَةٍ** takes a long time to materialize and has been described by the Qur'ān in the words **ثُمَّ خَلَقْنَا النُّطْفَةَ عَلَقَةً** (then We made the sperm-drop into a clot - 23:14). The next three stages, i.e. from **عَلَقَةٍ** (clot) to **مُضْغَةٍ** (foetus-lump), from **مُضْغَةٍ** to bones, and thirdly clothing flesh on bones occurring in short periods is not too remote a possibility, and in describing these three changes the particle **فَ** has been used which, as has been explained earlier, is indicative of uninterrupted succession. The final change in the condition of the unborn child comes when life and soul are breathed into it. And since, according to human reckoning, putting life and soul into a lifeless mass must necessarily take a long time, therefore, here again the word **ثُمَّ** has been used to describe this final stage of transformation.

### **The final stage in human creation, i.e. putting life and soul into it**

The Qur'ān describes this change with the words **ثُمَّ أَنشَأْنَاهُ خَلْقًا آخَرَ** (We developed it into another creature - 23:14). This distinction is due to the fact that whereas the first six stages in the creation of man are related to the world of elements and substances, the final stage relates to the transfer of soul from the world of spirits into his body and is, therefore, described as **خَلْقًا آخَرَ**, i.e. a special or distinct creation.

### **Biological spirit and Real Spirit**

"We developed it into another creature" in this verse is interpreted by Ibn 'Abbās, Mujāhid, Sha'bi, 'Ikrimah, Ḍaḥḥāk and Abul-'Aliyah to mean

blowing spirit into the body. Tafsīr Mazharī mentions that most probably it refers to the biological spirit. According to its explanation spirits are of two kinds. Biological spirit is a subtle substance embedded in every part of the body of a human being or an animal. This is the spirit recognized by medical scientists and the philosophers. This biological spirit is created after the organs are created. That is why its creation is mentioned in this verse with the word **نُفْسٌ** (thereafter). The other kind of spirit is the 'Real spirit'. It belongs to the spiritual universe. This real spirit was created long before the creation of human beings, and it is these spirits which were assembled by Allah when He asked them, "Am I not your Lord?" and they answered, "Why not?" This Real Spirit having been created long before, is connected by Allah Ta'ālā with biological spirit in a manner not known to anyone. Life of man depends on this connection and when biological spirit of a person is disconnected from Real Spirit, he dies. Therefore, it is also possible that it is this connection which is referred to in this verse by the words another creation.

**فَتَبَارَكَ اللَّهُ أَحْسَنُ الْخَالِقِينَ** (So, glorious is Allah, the best of the creators-23:14). The word **خَلَقَ** and **تَخْلُقُ** mean "to create something from nothing", which is a very special and exclusive attribute of Allah. Thus, Allah alone is the creator and none else. Neither an angel nor man can create anything. However sometime these two words are used in the sense of manufacturing which is no more than the reshaping and assembly by man of substances created by Allah. The man who does this is also called the creator of an article. The Qur'ān says **تَخْلُقُونَ إِنْ كَأْتَىٰ أَخْلَقُ لَكُمْ مِنَ الطِّينِ كَهَيْئَةِ الطَّيْرِ** (I create for you from clay something in the shape of a bird - 3:49). In all these places the word **خَلَقَ** (creating) has been used in the metaphorical sense to mean "manufacture".

Here the word **خَالِقِينَ** (creators) has been used in the plural and the meaning is that though ordinary human beings who manufacture things may also be called **خَالِقِ** or creators in the metaphorical sense, yet Allah is the best among all those creators.

**نُفْسٌ إِنَّكُمْ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ لَمَيِّتُونَ**

Then, after all this, you are to die - 23:15

The preceding three verses were about the creation of man and this

verse and the one which follows is about the life to come. In this verse Allah says that after his creation man will spend a period of time in this world and then will meet his death from which there is no escape. Then He says that man will be raised on the Day of Resurrection **ثُمَّ إِنَّكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ تُبْعَثُونَ** (Then you are to be raised again on the Day of Judgment - 23:16) so that his deeds and actions in this world may be weighed and he may be sent to Paradise or Hell as he deserves. This is how a man's life would end. Further on there is a brief mention of the events which will take place in the intervening period between his life in this world and the life to come, and of the gift and blessings which Allah will bestow upon him. This is prefaced by a reference to the creation of the skies.

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا فَوْقَكُمْ سَبْعَ طَرَائِقَ

And We created upon you seven paths (heavens) - 23:17

**طَرِيقَهُ** is the plural of **طَرِيقَةٌ** which may also be used as a synonym for **طَبَقَهُ** (tier) in which case the meaning would be that Allah created seven skies overhead row upon row in tiers. The other and more common meaning of the word **طَرِيقَهُ** is "road" or "passage" in which case the verse would mean that these skies provide a path for the angels who bring commands from Allah to the earth.

**وَمَا كُنَّا عَنِ الْخَلْقِ غَافِلِينَ** (And We were never neglectful of the creation - 23:17). The verse means that Allah did not just abandon man after creating him, but was ever mindful of his needs and provided the means for his sustenance and growth. To this end He first created the skies and from the skies He sent forth rains upon the earth which then produced food for men's nourishment.

### **The Divine system of providing water to meet human needs**

وَأَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً مُبْدَرًا فَاسْكَنْتَهُ فِي الْأَرْضِ ۖ وَإِنَّا عَلَىٰ ذَهَابٍ بِهٖ لَقَدِيرُونَ

And We sent down water from the sky in due measure, then We lodged it in the earth, and of course, We are able to take it away. - 23:18

The addition of the phrase **بِقَدَرٍ** (In due measure) shows how feeble and utterly powerless man is, because if the very things without which no life can exist exceed a certain limit, they become the cause of death and destruction. Water is a case in point without which no living thing - man

or beast - can survive. Torrential rains coming down from the sky cause a deluge which becomes a source of misery for human beings. But Allah is kind and merciful and He sends rains which, while fulfilling man's needs, do not turn into flood except at those places where it is His will that they should be engulfed in water. Another point to consider is that if man was to obtain his daily requirement of water through daily rainfall, that too would cause extreme discomfort and suffering, because he is not by nature adapted to live in an environment where rain falls every day. Moreover the conduct of business would become impossible in such conditions. On the other hand, if the total quantity of water that men would need for a whole year, or for six months or even for three months were to come down in a single downpour and people are told to store their quota of water and use it according to their daily needs, that would be an impossible task because, apart from lack of adequate storage capacity, the water would become foul and unfit for consumption. Therefore Allah has regulated the supply of water in such a way that when rains come, the water saturates the earth and the plants and then it flows into lakes, ponds and natural depressions where it is used by men and animals according to their needs. But the water stored in this manner can only last for a limited time and men of different regions need a continuous supply of fresh water. To meet this eventuality Allah has designed a system by which very large quantities of water are converted into oceans of ice and snow and placed on top of mountains where the atmosphere is pure and free from pollution. Slowly and gradually the snow melts and the water seeps through the pores in the mountains and flows into the network of underground water channels which carry it to all parts as springs and flow on the surface of the earth as streams, water courses and rivers. This fresh running water provides drinking water to men and animals and irrigates fields which yield food and fodder for all living things. Another part of the water percolates deep into the ground and becomes sub-soil water and is drawn up from wells. This entire design and process is covered in the Qur'ān by a simple and short sentence **فَأَسْكَنَهُ فِي الْأَرْضِ** (23:18). A point is also made at the end of the verse that the sub-soil water which is drawn from wells has been placed by merciful Allah at a depth from where it can be drawn easily because by its nature, water flows downwards and could have gone down to a depth from where it would have been impossible to draw it out. This is explained by the

sentence **وَأَنَا عَلَىٰ ذَهَابٍ بِهٖ لَقْدِيرُونَ** and, of course, We are able to take it away(23:18).

The Qur'ān then goes on to say that it is from an assured and regular supply of water only that Allah created fruit gardens which produce dates and grapes and many other kinds of fruits. People eat these fruit for their taste and flavour and also preserve some of them for future use as articles of food as is evident from the sentence **وَمِنْهَا تَأْكُلُونَ** (And of them you eat - 23:19). Then special mention is made of olives and the oil extracted from it because it has many uses and offers many benefits. And since the Mount Sinai produces an abundant crop of olives therefore a reference has been made to it **وَشَجَرَةً تَخْرُجُ مِنْ طُورِ سَيْنَاءَ** (And [We produced] a tree [of olive] that comes out from the [mount] Ṭūr of Sinai. - 23:20). Sinai is the name of the area where the Ṭūr Mountain is located. Olive oil can be used to massage the body, in lamps to provide light and in food as a curry or dressing. This has been expressed in the verse in the words. **تَنْبُتُ بِالدُّهْنِ وَصَيِّغٌ لِلْأَكْلِينَ** (which grows having oil and a dressing for those who eat - 23:20). The reason why olive tree has been associated with the Ṭūr mountain is that this tree first grew on that mountain. Some people have said that it was the first tree to grow on earth after the great Deluge in the days of Sayyidnā Nūḥ **العليه السلام**. (Mazharī)

Then there is a mention of the blessings and the numerous gifts which Allah has provided for the benefit of mankind so that they may ponder and worship Him. The words of the verse are **وَأِنَّ لَكُمْ فِي الْأَنْعَامِ لَعِبْرَةً** (And indeed there is a sure lesson in the cattle for you - 23:21). The lesson to which this verse refers has been described further in the words **نُسْقِيكُمْ مِمَّا فِي بُطُونِهَا** (We give you a drink from that which lies in their bellies - 23:21). Some of the ways in which the cattle serve mankind are that they provide milk which is a very clear and nourishing food; every part of their body is put to some use, and their wool, hides, intestines etc. are all utilized, in industries which support a country's economy, the meat of the animals, which are *ḥalāl* (permissible) is a favourite food for all men. **وَمِنْهَا تَأْكُلُونَ** (and of them you eat - 23:21). And finally they are used, together with ships, as mounts and as means of transporting goods from one place to another. In the last benefit, ships and boats are also included, because they are also used in transportation **وَعَلَيْهَا وَعَلَى الْفُلْكِ تُحْمَلُونَ** (And on them and on the boats you are transported - 23:22). All types of mounts which

are run with wheels may also be added to *fulk* (boats) because they render the same service.

## Verses 23 - 30

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا نُوحًا إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِ فَقَالَ يَا قَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِنْ إِلَهٍ غَيْرُهُ ۗ أَفَلَا تَتَّقُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾ فَقَالَ الْمَلَأُوا الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ قَوْمِهِ مَا هَذَا إِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِثْلُكُمْ لَا يُرِيدُ أَنْ يَتَفَضَّلَ عَلَيْكُمْ ۗ وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَأَنْزَلَ مَلَائِكَةً مَعَهُ مَا سَمِعْنَا بِهَذَا فِي آبَائِنَا الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿٢٤﴾ إِنَّهُ هُوَ إِلَّا رَجُلٌ بِهِ جِنَّةٌ فْتَرَبِّصُوا بِهِ حَتَّىٰ حِينٍ ﴿٢٥﴾ قَالَ رَبِّ انصُرْنِي بِمَا كَذَّبُونِ ﴿٢٦﴾ فَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْهِ أَنْ اصْنَعِ الْفُلْكَ بِأَعْيُنِنَا وَوَحَيْنَا إِذَا جَاءَ أَمْرُنَا وَفَارَ التَّنُورُ ۗ فَاسْلُكْ فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ زَوْجَيْنِ اثْنَيْنِ وَأَهْلَكَ إِلَّا مَنْ سَبَقَ عَلَيْهِ الْقَوْلُ مِنْهُمْ ۗ وَلَا تُخَاطِبُنِي فِي الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا ۗ إِنَّهُمْ مُّغْرَقُونَ ﴿٢٧﴾ فَإِذَا اسْتَوَيْتَ أَنْتَ وَمَنْ مَعَكَ عَلَى الْفُلِّ فَقُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي نَجَّيْنَا مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٢٨﴾ وَقُلْ رَبِّ انزِلْنِي مُنْزَلًا مُّبْرَكًا وَأَنْتَ خَيْرُ الْمُنزِلِينَ ﴿٢٩﴾ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ وَإِنْ كُنَّا لَمُبْتَلِينَ ﴿٣٠﴾

And surely, We sent Nūḥ to his nation. So he said, "O my people, worship Allah. You have no god whatsoever other than Him. So, do you not fear Allah?" [23] So, said the disbelieving chiefs from among his nation, "This (man) is nothing but a human being like you. He wishes to impose his superiority over you. Had Allah willed, He would have sent down angels. We have not heard of such a thing among our forefathers. [24] He is none but a man possessed by madness, so wait for (what happens to) him, for some time" [25]

He said, "My Lord, help me, for they have belied me." [26] So, We sent Our revelation to him, saying, "Make the

ship under Our eyes and Our revelation. So, when Our command comes and the oven gushes forth, take on its board a pair of two from each (species) along with your family, except those of them against whom the word has already passed. And do not speak to Me (in favour) of those who did wrong. They are sure to be drowned. [27] So, when you and those with you, are well seated in the ship, say, 'Praise is for Allah who saved us from the wrongdoing people.' [28] And say, 'My Lord, make me land a blessed landing. And You are the best of those who bring (someone) to land'. [29]

Surely, there are signs in it and We do always test (people). [30]

وَفَارَ التَّنُورُ (And the oven gushes forth - 23:27). The word تَنُورٌ means oven which is used for making flat, round bread, and is also used in the sense of the whole earth. According to some people تَنُورٌ is a specific oven in the Kūfāh mosque, while others believe that it was somewhere in Syria. Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام was informed by Allah that when water began boiling forth from the تَنُورُ (oven) that would be the sign of the coming of the Deluge (Maẓharī). The story of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام, the Deluge and his Ark has been reported in some earlier Sūrahs (See Volume 4, p. 626 to 643).

### Verses 31 - 41

ثُمَّ أَنْشَأْنَا مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ قَرْنًا آخَرِينَ ﴿٣١﴾ فَأَرْسَلْنَا فِيهِمْ رَسُولًا مِنْهُمْ  
 أَنْ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِنْ إِلَهٍ غَيْرُهُ ۗ أَفَلَا تَتَّقُونَ ﴿٣٢﴾ وَقَالَ الْمَلَأُ  
 مِنْ قَوْمِهِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَكَذَّبُوا بِإِفْقَاءِ الْآخِرَةِ وَآتَرَفْنَاهُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ  
 الدُّنْيَا ۗ مَا هَذَا إِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِثْلُكُمْ ۙ يَأْكُلُ مِمَّا تَأْكُلُونَ مِنْهُ وَيَشْرَبُ مِمَّا  
 تَشْرَبُونَ ﴿٣٣﴾ وَلَئِنْ أَطَعْتُمْ بَشَرًا مِثْلَكُمْ ۙ إِنَّكُمْ إِذَا لَخَسِرُونَ ﴿٣٤﴾  
 أَيْعِدُكُمْ أَنْكُمْ إِذَا مِتُّمْ وَكُنْتُمْ تُرَابًا وَعِظَامًا أَنْكُمْ مُخْرَجُونَ ﴿٣٥﴾  
 هِيَ هَاتَ هَيْهَاتَ لِمَا تُوعَدُونَ ﴿٣٦﴾ إِنَّ هِيَ إِلَّا حَيَاتُنَا الدُّنْيَا نَمُوتُ

وَنَحِيًّا وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمَبْعُوثِينَ ﴿٣٧﴾ إِنَّ هُوَ إِلَّا رَجُلٌ افْتَرَىٰ عَلَىٰ  
 اللَّهِ كَذِبًا وَمَا نَحْنُ لَهُ بِمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٣٨﴾ قَالَ رَبِّ انصُرْنِي بِمَا  
 كَذَّبُونِ ﴿٣٩﴾ قَالَ عَمَّا قَلِيلٍ لِّيُصْبِحَنَّ نَدِيمِينَ ﴿٤٠﴾ فَأَخَذْتَهُمُ  
 الصَّيْحَةَ بِالْحَقِّ فَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ عِثَاءً فَبَعْدًا لِلْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٤١﴾

Then after them We created another generation, [31] and sent among them a messenger from themselves (to convey the message): "Worship Allah; you have no god whatsoever than Him. So do you not fear Allah?" [32] So said those chiefs of his nation who disbelieved and belied facing the Hereafter and whom We made affluent in the worldly life, "This (man) is nothing but a human being. He eats from what you eat from, and drinks from what you drink. [33] And if you obey a human like you, you will be absolute losers. [34] Does he promise you that, when you die and are turned into dust and bones, you are to be brought forth? [35] Far too improbable is what you are being promised. [36] There is nothing but our worldly life. We die and we live and we are not to be raised again. [37] He is nothing but a man who has forged a lie against Allah and we are not going to believe in him." [38]

He said, "My Lord, help me, for they have belied me." [39] He (Allah) said, "In a little while they have to become remorseful." [40] So the Cry seized them according to the true (promise), and We turned them in to scum. So, woe to the wrongdoing people. [41]

In the earlier verses the story of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام was told who was sent to his people to guide them along the path of righteousness and the following verses contain a brief account of some other prophets without mentioning their names and the people for whose guidance they were sent. From certain references and allusions the commentators have concluded that the verses refer to Sayyidnā Hūd عليه السلام or Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام who were sent for the guidance of the tribes of 'Ād and Thamūd respectively. In the present story both these tribes are reported to have perished as a result of صَيْحَةٌ (Cry) from an unseen source, whereas in other verses it has been specifically mentioned that it was the tribe of

Thamūd which perished from صَيْحَةَ (Cry) and this had led some scholars to the view that the words قَرْنَا آخِرِينَ (another generation) refers to Thamūd. An alternative explanation is that the word صَيْحَةَ (Cry) has been used in the general sense of punishment from Allah in which case it would include the tribe of 'Ād also.

إِنْ هِيَ إِلَّا حَيَاتُنَا الدُّنْيَا نَمُوتُ وَنَحْيَا وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمَبْعُوثِينَ

There is nothing but our worldly life. We die and we live and we are not to be raised again. - 23:37

This is the argument which the unbelievers advance when denying belief in the Day of Judgment. Those who deny it publicly are confirmed infidels, but it is very unfortunate that many Muslims also act in a manner that the same denial can be felt from their deeds and actions. They seem to be totally oblivious of the coming in of the Hereafter. May Allah Ta'ala grant them faith to release themselves from the clutches of this belief of theirs.

#### Verses 42 - 50

ثُمَّ أَنشَأْنَا مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ قُرُونًا آخَرِينَ ﴿٤٢﴾ مَا تَسْبِقُ مِنْ أُمَّةٍ أَجَلَهَا  
وَمَا يَسْتَأْخِرُونَ ﴿٤٣﴾ ثُمَّ أَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلَنَا تَتْرًا ۗ كُلَّمَا جَاءَ أُمَّةٌ رَسُولُهَا  
كَذَّبُوهُ فَاتَّبَعْنَا بَعْضَهُمْ بَعْضًا وَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ أَحَادِيثَ ۗ فَبُعْدًا لِقَوْمٍ  
لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٤٤﴾ ثُمَّ أَرْسَلْنَا مُوسَىٰ وَأَخَاهُ هَارُونَ ۗ بَايِنًا وَسُلْطٰنٍ  
مُبِينٍ ﴿٤٥﴾ إِلَىٰ فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَلَئِهِ فَاسْتَكْبَرُوا وَكَانُوا قَوْمًا عَالِينَ  
﴿٤٦﴾ فَقَالُوا أَنْزَمِنُ لِيَشْرِينَ مِثْلَنَا وَقَوْمُهُمَا لَنَا عِبِدُونَ ﴿٤٧﴾  
فَكَذَّبُوهُمَا فَكَانُوا مِنَ الْمُهْلَكِينَ ﴿٤٨﴾ وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَىٰ الْكِتَابَ  
لَعَلَّهُمْ يَهْتَدُونَ ﴿٤٩﴾ وَجَعَلْنَا ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ وَأُمَّةً آيَةً ۖ وَأَوَيْنَهُمَا إِلَىٰ رُبُوعٍ  
ذَاتِ قَرَارٍ وَمَعِينٍ ﴿٥٠﴾

Then, after them, We created another generation. [42] No community can go ahead of its appointed time, nor can they stay behind. [43] Thereafter, We sent Our

messengers successively. Whenever a community was approached by its messenger they belied him. Then We made some of them follow others (in destruction) and turned them into tales (of history). So, woe to a people who do not believe. [44]

Thereafter, We sent Mūsā and his brother Hārūn, with Our signs and a clear proof [45] towards Fir'aun (the Pharaoh) and his advisors. But they showed arrogance and they were haughty people. [46] So they said, "shall we believe in two humans who are like ourselves and whose people are serving us as slaves?" [47] Thus they belied both of them and were among the destroyed. [48] And, of course, We gave Mūsā the Book, so that they may take the right path. [49]

And We made the son of Maryam (Mary) and his mother a sign and gave them shelter on a height, a place of rest and running springs. [50]

### Commentary

وَأَوَيْنَهُمَا إِلَى رُبُوعٍ ذَاتِ قَرَارٍ وَمَعِينٍ (and We gave them shelter on a height, a place of rest and running springs). According to Bayān-ul-Qur'ān, this verse refers to the event that a tyrant was resolute to kill Sayyidnā 'Īsā and his mother عليهما السلام right from his childhood. They escaped from him and, with Allah's grace, found a place on a height where they enjoyed a peaceful life until Sayyidnā 'Īsā ﷺ attained maturity and was entrusted with prophethood. (This commentary is taken from Khulasa-e-tafsīr of Ma'āriful-Qur'ān).

### Verses 51 - 56

يَا أَيُّهَا الرُّسُلُ كُلُّوَا مِنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَاعْمَلُوا صَالِحًا إِنِّي بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٥١﴾ وَإِنَّ هَذِهِ أُمَّتُكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَأَنَا رَبُّكُمْ فَاتَّقُونِ ﴿٥٢﴾ فَتَقَطَّعُوا أَمْرَهُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ زُبُرًا كُلُّ حِزْبٍ بِمَا لَدَيْهِمْ فَرِحُونَ ﴿٥٣﴾ فَذَرَهُمْ فِي عَمَرَتِهِمْ حَتَّىٰ حِينٍ ﴿٥٤﴾ أَيَحْسَبُونَ أَنَّمَا نُمِدُّهُمْ بِهِ مِنْ مَّالٍ وَبَيْنِينَ ﴿٥٥﴾ نُسَارِعُ لَهُمْ فِي الْخَيْرَاتِ بَلْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿٥٦﴾

**O messengers, eat from the good things, and act righteously. Of whatever you do, I am fully aware. [51]**

**And surely, this is your creed, a single creed, and I am your Lord. So fear Me. [52] But they split up ways from one another (dividing themselves) into factions, each faction happy with what lies before it. [53] So leave them in their negligence for some time. [54]**

**Do they think that by consistently providing them with wealth and children, [55] We are accelerating the (real) good things to them? The fact, however, is that they do not understand (the reality). [56]**

### **Commentary**

يَا أَيُّهَا الرُّسُلُ كُلُوا مِنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَاعْمَلُوا صَالِحًا (O messengers, eat from the good things and act, righteously - 23:51.) The word طَيِّبَاتِ means pure and good things. Since things which are forbidden under the Islamic laws are neither pure nor desirable for people who are gifted with common sense, it follows that the word طَيِّبَاتِ refers only to the things which are permitted under the Islamic Shari'ah and which are not only good in appearance, but also pure in their intrinsic nature. This verse also tells us that all the prophets were enjoined by Allah to do two things - eat food which is clean and permissible under Shariah, and to do good deeds, and considering that these injunctions have been addressed to prophets who are impeccable in any case, it is necessary that their followers should strive hard to mould their lives according to these injunctions. This in fact is the real meaning of this verse.

Scholars have expressed the view that the Juxtaposition of these two commands points to the fact that the consumption of lawful food has a very important bearing on human actions and when a person takes lawful food only, a divine guidance takes his actions along the path of righteousness. But if the food is unlawful, then serious obstacles will prevent the accomplishment of good deeds in spite of his best intentions. According to a *ḥadīth*, people travel long wearing miles and are covered with dust and they pray to Allah with hands upraised calling out "O Lord, O Lord!" But since they eat forbidden things and their clothes are also made from forbidden material, there is little hope of their prayers being granted. (Qurtūbī) Thus it is evident that a person hoping that his worship will get him the pleasure of Allah or that his prayers will be granted by

Him must pay scrupulous attention to what he eats and must, at all times, avoid eating unlawful things.

وَإِنَّ هَذِهِ أُمَّةٌ أُمَّةٌ وَاحِدَةٌ (And surely this is your creed, a single creed - 23:52). The word *أُمَّة* is used to describe a group or the followers of a prophet. Sometimes it is also used in the sense of "faith", "creed" or "way of life", as in the verse وَجَدْنَا آبَاءَنَا عَلَىٰ أُمَّةٍ (We found our fathers upon a creed - 43:22). In the present verse the word *ummah* has been used in the latter sense.

فَنَقَطَعُوا أَمْرَهُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ زُبُرًا (But they split up ways from one another (dividing themselves) into factions - 23:53). The word *زُبُر* is the plural of *زُبُر* meaning a book, and the verse would mean that Allah had commanded all prophets and their followers to adhere to the one and only faith revealed by Him in all matters relating to the basic principles and beliefs. But the followers of different prophets split up into groups and sects and each one of them chose a different way of life and adopted a different book in which the beliefs of each group and sect were recorded. Sometimes *زُبُر* is used for the plural of *زُبْرَة* (*zubah*) meaning "fragment" or "group". This meaning is more appropriate here and the meaning of the verse would be that these people were divided into sects even in the matter of fundamental beliefs of their religion. It should be noted that the difference of opinion among the *mujtahidīn* (competent Shari'ah Scholars) in some minor issues is not included in this division which is condemned in this verse, because these differences do not cause a division of the religion, nor do the people maintaining these differences become separate sects. Giving these interpretative and subsidiary differences a sectarian colour is the height of ignorance and no religious scholar would support it.

### Verses 57 - 62

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ هُمْ مِنْ خَشِيَةِ رَبِّهِمْ مُشْفِقُونَ ﴿٥٧﴾ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٥٨﴾ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ بِرَبِّهِمْ لَا يُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٥٩﴾ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ لَا يُكْفَرُونَ ﴿٦٠﴾ أُولَٰئِكَ يُسَارِعُونَ فِي الْخَيْرَاتِ وَهُمْ لَهَا سَابِقُونَ ﴿٦١﴾ وَلَا تَكْفُلْ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا وَلَدَيْنَا كِتَابٌ يَنْطِقُ بِالْحَقِّ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ ﴿٦٢﴾

(Contrarily) those who are anxious out of awe of their Lord, [57] and those who believe in the verses of their Lord [58] and those who do not associate any partner to their Lord, [59] And those who give whatever they give with their hearts full of fear that to their Lord they are to return [60] – those people are accelerating towards the (real) good things, and they are the foremost to attain them. [61]

We do not place a burden on anyone except to his capability. And with Us is a book which speaks with truth, and they shall not be wronged. [62]

### Commentary

وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْتُونَ مَا آتَوْا وَقُلُوبُهُمْ وَجِلَةٌ (And those who give whatever they give with their hearts full of fear - 23:60.) The word يُؤْتُونَ is derived from آتاء meaning "to give, to spend", and is used in commentaries in the sense of صَدَقَات (alms to the poor). Another reading of this verse reported from Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها is يَأْتُونَ مَا آتَوْا (They do whatever they do - 23:60) and this covers all good deeds such as charity, prayers, fasting etc. As for the generally accepted reading of the verse, although it mentions alms to the poor only, yet it would include all good deeds also as is borne out by a ḥadīth. Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ the meaning of this verse whether those who do these deeds are the ones who drink wine and steal things. The Holy Prophet ﷺ replied, "O daughter of Ṣiddīq ﷺ! It is not as you say. These are the people who observe fasts, say their prayers and give alms, yet they are apprehensive lest, due to some mind lapse on their part, all their good deeds may not be accepted by Allah. They hasten to do good deeds and are foremost, in accomplishing them." (Aḥmad, Tirmidhī, Ibn Majāh, Maḥzarī)

Ḥasan al-Baṣrī says that he knew people who did virtuous deeds, yet were more fearful than people who committed evil deeds. (Qurṭubī)

أُولَئِكَ يُسَارِعُونَ فِي الْخَيْرَاتِ وَهُمْ لَهَا سَابِقُونَ

Those people are accelerating towards the (real) good things, and they are the foremost to attain them. - 23:61

The meaning of فِي الْخَيْرَاتِ is that just as ordinary human beings run after worldly gains and try to leave other competitors behind, these good and virtuous people strive to gain spiritual reward and try to excel

others in their efforts to fulfill their religious obligations.

### Verses 63 - 77

بَلْ قُلُوبُهُمْ فِي غَمْرَةٍ مِّنْ هَذَا وَلَهُمْ أَعْمَالٌ مِّنْ دُونِ ذَلِكَ هُمْ لَهَا  
 عَمِلُونَ ﴿٦٣﴾ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا أَخَذْنَا مُتْرَفِيهِمْ بِالْعَذَابِ إِذْ هُمْ يُجْتَرُونَ  
 ﴿٦٤﴾ لَا تَجْتَرُوا الْيَوْمَ إِنَّكُمْ مِنَّا لَا تَنْصُرُونَ ﴿٦٥﴾ قَدْ كَانَتْ آيَاتِي  
 تُتْلَىٰ عَلَيْكُمْ فَكُنْتُمْ عَلَىٰ أَعْقَابِكُمْ تَنْكُصُونَ ﴿٦٦﴾ مُسْتَكْبِرِينَ ۖ  
 بِهِ سَمِيرًا تَهْجُرُونَ ﴿٦٧﴾ أَفَلَمْ يَدَّبَّرُوا الْقَوْلَ أَمْ جَاءَهُمْ مَّالٌ يَأْتِ  
 آبَاءَهُمُ الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿٦٨﴾ أَمْ لَمْ يَعْرِفُوا رَسُولَهُمْ فَهُمْ لَهُ مُنْكَرُونَ ﴿٦٩﴾  
 أَمْ يَقُولُونَ بِهِ جِنَّةٌ بَلْ جَاءَهُمُ بِالْحَقِّ وَآكَثَرَهُمُ لِلْحَقِّ كُرْهُونَ  
 ﴿٧٠﴾ وَلَوْ اتَّبَعَ الْحَقُّ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ لَفَسَدَتِ السَّمَوَاتُ وَالْأَرْضُ وَمَنْ  
 فِيهِنَّ ۗ بَلْ آتَيْنَهُمْ بَدِئَهُمْ فَهُمْ عَنْ ذِكْرِهِمْ مُّعْرِضُونَ ﴿٧١﴾ أَمْ  
 تَسْتَلْهُمُ خَرْجًا فَخَرَجَ رَيْكَ خَيْرٌ ۖ وَهُوَ خَيْرُ الرَّزْقِينَ ﴿٧٢﴾ وَإِنَّكَ  
 لَتَدْعُوهُمْ إِلَىٰ صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿٧٣﴾ وَإِنَّ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ  
 عَنِ الصِّرَاطِ لَنَكِبُونَ ﴿٧٤﴾ وَلَوْ رَحِمْنَاهُمْ وَكَشَفْنَا مَا بِهِمْ مِنْ ضُرِّ  
 لَلْجُؤِ فِي طُغْيَانِهِمْ يَعْمَهُونَ ﴿٧٥﴾ وَلَقَدْ أَخَذْنَاهُمْ بِالْعَذَابِ فَمَا  
 اسْتَكَانُوا لِرَبِّهِمْ وَمَا يَتَضَرَّعُونَ ﴿٧٦﴾ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا فَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِم بَابًا ذَا  
 عَذَابٍ شَدِيدٍ إِذْ هُمْ فِيهِ مُبْلِسُونَ ﴿٧٧﴾

But their hearts are in ignorance about this, and they have deeds, other than that, which they are continuously doing. [63] Until when We will seize their affluent ones with punishment, they will suddenly start crying. [64] "Do not cry today. You will not be helped by Us. [65] My verses used to be recited to you, but you used to turn back on your heels [66] in arrogance,

making it a subject of tales at night, talking nonsense (about it)." [67] (1)

Then, is it that they did not ponder over the Word (of Allah) or there has come to them something that did not come to their forefathers? [68] Or did they not recognize their messenger and therefore they denied him? [69] Or do they say, 'He is possessed by madness?' Instead, the fact is that he has come to them with truth, but it is the truth that most of them dislike. [70]

And had the truth followed their desires, all the heavens and the earth and all those therein would have fallen in total disorder. However, We have brought to them their advice, but it is their advice that they are averse to. [71]

Or is it that you (O Muhammad) demand a remuneration from them? But the remuneration from your Lord is best, and He is the best of all givers. [72] And surely you are inviting them to a straight path, [73] and those who do not believe in the Hereafter are surely the deviators from the Path. [74]

And if We have mercy on them and remove whatever distress they have, they would still persist obstinately in their rebellion, wandering blindly. [75] And We have already seized them with punishment, but they did not turn humble to their Lord, nor do they supplicate in humility, [76] until when We will open against them the door of a severe punishment, they will be taken aback in despair. [77]

### Commentary

بَلْ قَلُوبُهُمْ فِي غَمْرَةٍ (But their hearts are in ignorance) Lexically غَمْرَةٌ means deep water where a person may drown or be overwhelmed. For this reason the word is also used to signify a covering or something that conceals an object. In this verse the word means the ignorance in which the hearts of the infidels are submerged and hidden so that no light can

1). Another possible translation of this verse may be as follows: 'but you used to turn back on your heels, being over-proud of it (the *ḥarām* being looked after by you), indulging in tales at night, talking nonsense.' It is this second translation on which the forthcoming explanation is based.

reach them.

وَلَهُمْ أَعْمَالٌ مِّنْ دُونِ ذَلِكَ

And they have deeds, other than that - 23:63

It means that in addition to their rejection of the Oneness of Allah, and their denial of the true faith, they engage themselves in other sinful deeds.

مُتْرَفِيهِمْ (their affluent ones - 23:64). The word مُتْرَفٌ is derived from تَرَفٌ meaning comfort and prosperity. This verse mentions the Divine punishment which will descend upon the unbelievers whether rich or poor. The rich people have been specially mentioned here because they are the ones who make adequate arrangements to protect themselves against disasters and misfortunes. But when retribution comes from Allah, they find themselves totally helpless. According to Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ the punishment which is mentioned in this verse is an allusion to the crushing defeat which the infidels of Makkah suffered at the hands of the Muslims in the Battle of Badr. Some others say that the reference is to the severe famine which afflicted the people of Makkah as a result of the curse laid on them by the Holy Prophet ﷺ, when they were forced to eat dead animals and cats and dogs.

Although the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his companions, when faced ill-treatment from the infidels, used to remain patient and never complained yet when their suffering and torment became unbearable, the Holy Prophet invoked divine punishment for the infidels in the following words:

اللَّهُمَّ اشْدُدْ وَطْأَتَكَ عَلَى مَضْرٍ واجعلها عليهم سنين كسنى يوسف (رواه البخارى و مسلم) (قرطبي و مظهرى)

(O Lord! Let thy punishment descend hard on the tribe of Muḍar and make their land barren like the land of Yūsuf.

مُسْتَكْبِرِينَ بِهِ سِمِرًا تَهْجُرُونَ (Being over-proud of it (the ḥarām), indulging in tales at night talking non-sense). According to many commentators the word بِهِ (on it) in this verse has a reference to the ḥarām (the sanctuary of Makkah). Although there is no specific mention of the ḥarām in the verse, yet the very close association of the Quraish of Makkah with it and their great pride in this association renders a specific mention of the ḥarām

unnecessary. The purpose of the verse, therefore, is to mention the causes of their aversion against Allah's verses. The first factor was their pride in their being the neighbors and care-takers of *ḥarām*. The other two factors are mentioned in the next two words.

The word سَامِرًا is derived from سَمَرَ meaning "Moon lit night". It was a favourite pastime with the Arabs to assemble on moon lit nights and tell stories. Thus the word سَمَرَ came to be used in the sense of stories and anecdotes and سَامِر meant a raconteur. Although the word has been used in the singular yet it is often used as a plural also as in this verse. This word points out the second reason for the repudiation of divine communications by the infidels of Makkah which is their preoccupation with petty and frivolous matters such as story-telling and their lack of interest in divine messages. And finally there was a third reason for this state of affairs also namely that they used to indulge in foolish talk and pass unseemly remarks about the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

The word تَهْجُرُونَ (23:67) is derived from هَجَرَ with a *ḍammah* mark ( ' ) on the letter ه and means "to speak nonsense, to use foul language).

### Ban on story-telling after 'Ishā' prayers

Story telling was favourite pastime among the Arabs and the Persians since ancient times. This habit was not only time wasting but was also the cause of certain evils. With a view to discourage this practice, the Holy Prophet ﷺ enjoined upon the Muslims not to sleep before the 'Ishā' prayers. The philosophy behind this injunction was that all daily human activity ended with the 'Ishā' prayers which should arguably be a man's last action and which might even atone for his lapses during the day. On the other hand if, after the 'Ishā' prayers, he sits down to while away his time listening to silly and frivolous tales which in itself is a foolish act, he renders himself guilty of encouraging falsehood, back-biting and other sins. Another consequence of this evil habit is that such a person will go to bed late, will rise late and miss his early morning prayers. Sayyidnā 'Umar ؓ used to admonish people whom he found listening to stories after 'Ishā' prayers and advised them to go early to bed so that with Allah's grace they might be enabled to say midnight prayers. (Qurṭubī)

The verses 68, 69 and 70 mention five reasons which might possibly have prevented the unbelievers from accepting the faith brought by the

Holy Prophet ﷺ, and also give a rebuttal of each of these causes. Thus on the one hand all the arguments advanced by the infidels for not accepting the true faith have been demolished, and on the other hand there are compelling grounds and irrefutable evidence which should convince any right minded person of his error and persuade him to accept the message brought by the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Their persistence in their unbelief is, therefore, the result of their unreasoning hatred towards and blind prejudice against the Holy Prophet ﷺ to which a reference has been made in the latter part of the verse *بَلْ جَاءَهُمْ بِالْحَقِّ وَأَكْثَرُهُمْ لِلْحَقِّ كَارِهُونَ* (Instead, the fact is that he has come to them with truth, but it is the truth that most of them dislike - 23:70). In other words, there being no valid and rational ground for repudiating the mission of the Holy Prophet ﷺ their opposition may be explained by their dislike of truth and their unwillingness to pay heed to its message. This, no doubt, is due to their love for undisputed power and their reluctance to share it with anyone else.

أَمْ لَمْ يَعْرِفُوا رَسُولَهُمْ

Or did they not recognize their messenger? - 23:69.

One reason for their denial of the true faith could have been if the message was brought to them by an outsider who was a stranger to them and with whose character and antecedents they were unfamiliar. But this argument could not be invoked in the case of the Holy Prophet ﷺ who belonged to the noble family of Quraish, was born in Makkah, grew up among them, and his whole life was like an open book before them. Before prophethood was bestowed upon him, he was known among the unbelievers of Makkah as *أَمِين* (trustworthy) and *صَادِق* (truthful) and nobody had ever raised an accusing finger on his character and general behavior. Thus they could not take the plea that their repudiation of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and of the message brought to him was due to their ignorance about him or about his family connections.

وَلَقَدْ أَخَذْنَاهُمْ بِالْعَذَابِ فَمَا اسْتَكَانُوا لِرَبِّهِمْ وَمَا يَتَضَرَّعُونَ

And We have already seized them with punishment, but they did not turn humble to their Lord, nor do they supplicate in humility. (23:76)

In the preceding verse it has been stated that when the unbelievers are subjected to chastisement for their sins, they plead to Allah and the Holy Prophet ﷺ for mercy and when Allah who is Merciful relieves their

suffering, they return to their evil practices and wicked deeds. This verse relates a similar instance when the unbelievers were punished for their misdeeds. However when they were delivered from their sufferings as a result of the intercession by the Holy Prophet ﷺ on their behalf, they did not humble themselves before Allah but persisted in idolatry and unbelief.

### Visitation of famine upon Makkah and its deliverance on the prayers of the Holy Prophet ﷺ

It has been mentioned earlier that the Holy Prophet ﷺ had prayed to Allah to punish the people of Makkah with famine and as a result they were reduced to great straits and were forced to eat dead animals. At last, Abū Sufyān presented himself before the Holy Prophet ﷺ at Madīnah and said, "I appeal you in the name of Allah, did you not say that you had been sent by Him as mercy for the whole world?" The Holy Prophet ﷺ replied, "Yes I did, and what I said is true also." Then Abū Sufyān said, "You killed the leaders of your clan with sword at the battle of Badr and now you are killing those who still survive with starvation. Pray to Allah, I beseech you, to remove this curse from over our heads." The Holy Prophet ﷺ then prayed to Allah to forgive the people of Makkah and deliver them from the agony of hunger, and his prayer was granted forthwith. The verse: وَقَدْ أَخَذْنَاهُم بِالْعَذَابِ فَمَا اسْتَكَانُوا لِرَبِّهِمْ (23:76) was revealed on this occasion and refers to this incident. (Maẓharī)

### Verses 78 - 92

وَهُوَ الَّذِي أَنْشَأَ لَكُمْ السَّمْعَ وَالْأَبْصَارَ وَالْأَفْئِدَةَ ۗ قَلِيلًا مَّا تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٧٨﴾ وَهُوَ الَّذِي ذَرَأَكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَإِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُونَ ﴿٧٩﴾ وَهُوَ الَّذِي يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ وَلَهُ اخْتِلَافُ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ ۗ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٨٠﴾ بَلْ قَالُوا مِثْلَ مَا قَالَ الْأَوَّلُونَ ﴿٨١﴾ قَالُوا ۗ إِذَا مِتْنَا وَكُنَّا تُرَابًا وَعِظَامًا ۗ إِنَّا لَمَبْعُوثُونَ ﴿٨٢﴾ لَقَدْ وَعِدْنَا نَحْنُ وَآبَاؤُنَا هَذَا مِنْ قَبْلُ ۖ إِنْ هَذَا إِلَّا أَسَاطِيرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿٨٣﴾ قُلْ لِمَنِ الْأَرْضُ وَمَنْ فِيهَا ۖ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٨٤﴾ سَيَقُولُونَ لِلَّهِ ۗ قُلْ أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٨٥﴾ قُلْ مَنْ رَبُّ السَّمَوَاتِ السَّبْعِ وَرَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ ﴿٨٦﴾

سَيَقُولُونَ لِلّٰهِ ۗ قُلْ اَفَلَا تَتَّقُونَ ﴿٨٧﴾ قُلْ مَنْ اَبَدَكُمْ مَلَكُوتُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَهُوَ يُحْيِيْهِ وَلَا يُجَيِّدُ وَلَا يُجَارُ عَلَيْهِ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٨٨﴾ سَيَقُولُونَ لِلّٰهِ ۗ قُلْ فَاَنى تُسْحَرُونَ ﴿٨٩﴾ بَلْ اَتَيْنَهُم بِالْحَقِّ وَاِنَّهُمْ لَكَاذِبُونَ ﴿٩٠﴾ مَا اتَّخَذَ اللّٰهُ مِنْ وَلَدٍ وَّمَا كَانَ مَعَهُ مِنْ اِلٰهٍ اِذَا لَذَهَبَ كُلُّ اِلٰهٍ بِمَا خَلَقَ وَلَعَلَّ بَعْضُهُمْ عَلٰى بَعْضٍ سُبْحٰنَ اللّٰهِ عَمَّا يُصِفُونَ ﴿٩١﴾ عَلِيمِ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ فَتَعَلٰى عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٩٢﴾

And He is the One who created for you the ears and the eyes and the hearts. Little you are grateful. [78] And He is the One who created you on the earth and it is He unto whom you will be gathered together. [79] And He is the One who gives life and brings death and it is He to whom belongs the alternation of night and day. So, do you not understand? [80]

But they said like what the earlier people had said. [81] They said, "Is it that, when we will die and become dust and bones--is it that we will be raised again? [82] This is what we and our fathers had been promised with before. It is nothing but the tales of the ancients." [83] Say, "Whose is the earth and all those therein if you have knowledge?" [84] They will say, "Allah's." Would you still pay no heed? [85]

Say, "Who is the Lord of the seven heavens and the Lord of the Great Throne?" [86] They will say, "(All this belongs) to Allah". Say, "Would you still not fear Allah?" [87] Say, "Who is the One in whose hand lies the kingdom of every thing and who gives protection and no protection can be given against him, if you have knowledge?" [88] They will say, "(All this belongs) to Allah." Say, "Then from where are you being bewitched?" [89]

The fact is that We have brought to them The Truth, and they are absolute liars. [90] Allah did not take to a son, nor was there any god with Him. Had there been so, every god would have taken away what he created and each one of them would have been aggressive

against the other. Pure is Allah from what they describe. [91] He is the Knower of the hidden and the manifest. So, He is far higher than their ascribing of partners to Him. [92]

### Commentary

وَهُوَ يُجِيرُ وَلَا يُجَارُ عَلَيْهِ (And who gives protection and no protection can be given against him - 23:88) The meaning of the verse is that Allah alone can deliver a person from pain and suffering as He wills, but there is none who can save a person from divine punishment. This is true of this world because nobody can stop Allah from rewarding virtuous people nor can anyone protect someone whom He chooses to punish. And the same is true of the Hereafter also. (Qurṭubī)

### Verses 93 - 100

قُلْ رَبِّ إِنَّمَا تُرِنِّي مَا يُوعَدُونَ ﴿٩٣﴾ رَبِّ فَلَا تَجْعَلْنِي فِي الْقَوْمِ  
الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٩٤﴾ وَإِنَّا عَلَىٰ أَنْ نُرِيكَ مَا نَعِدُهُمْ لَقَدِيرُونَ ﴿٩٥﴾ اذْفَعُ  
بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ السَّيِّئَةِ ۗ نَحْنُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا يَصِفُونَ ﴿٩٦﴾ وَقُلْ رَبِّ  
أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ هَمَزَاتِ الشَّيْطَانِ ﴿٩٧﴾ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ رَبِّ أَنْ يَحْضُرُونِ  
﴿٩٨﴾ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءَ أَحَدَهُمُ الْمَوْتُ قَالَ رَبِّ ارْجِعُونِ ﴿٩٩﴾ لَعَلِّي  
أَعْمَلُ صَالِحًا فِيمَا تَرَكْتُ كَلَّا ۗ إِنَّهَا كَلِمَةٌ هُوَ قَائِلُهَا ۗ وَمِنْ  
وَرَاءِهِمْ بَرْزَخٌ إِلَىٰ يَوْمِ يُبْعَثُونَ ﴿١٠٠﴾

(O prophet) say (in prayer), "O my Lord, if You are to show me (in my life) that (punishment) which they (the infidels) are threatened with, [93] then, my Lord, do not place me among the wrongdoing people." [94] And of course, We do have the power to show you what We threatened them with. [95]

Repel evil with that which is best. We are well aware of what they describe. [96] And say, "O my Lord, I seek your refuge from the strokes of the satans, [97] and I seek Your refuge from that they come to me." [98]

(The infidels go on doing their misdeeds) until when

death comes to one of them, he will say, "My Lord send me back, [99] so that I may act righteously in that which I have left behind." Never! It is just a word he has to utter. And in front of them there is a barrier till the day when they will be resurrected. [100]

### Commentary

قُلْ رَبِّ إِمَّا تُرِيدُنِي مَا يُوعَدُونَ . رَبِّ فَلَا تَجْعَلْنِي فِي الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ

(O prophet) say (in prayer), "O my Lord, if You are to show me (in my life) that (punishment) which they (the infidels) are threatened with, then, my Lord, do not place me among the wrongdoing people." (23: 93, 94)

There are many verses of the Qur'ān which contain warnings of punishment to the unbelievers. While the award of punishment is a certainty on the Day of Judgment, it is possible that it may be awarded in this world also - and even during the life time of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. And when Allah's wrath descends upon a people, it is not confined to sinners alone, but some times it afflicts virtuous people too, who may not be punished in the Hereafter and may even be compensated by extra rewards for the undeserved punishment which they suffered in this world. The Qur'ān says *إِنقُوا فِتْنَةً لَا تُصِيبُ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مِنْكُمْ خَاصَّةً* (And beware of a punishment which shall not fall on the wrongdoers only - 8:25). In these verses, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been told by Allah to pray to Him that if His wrath were to descend upon the infidels in his life time, then He ﷺ should be removed from their company. This prayer was suggested to the Holy Prophet ﷺ in spite of the fact that he was impeccable and infallible, the intention being that He ﷺ should at all times remember Allah and beseech His mercy so as to increase his own reward in the Hereafter.

وَأَنَا عَلَىٰ أَنْ تُرِيدَ مَا نَعِدُهُمْ لَقَدِيرُونَ

And of course, We do have the power to show you what We threatened them with. (23:95)

Some commentators say that even though Allah has promised, on account of His regard for the Holy Prophet ﷺ, that He will not punish the entire community while he lives among them *وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيُعَذِّبَهُمْ وَأَنْتَ فِيهِمْ* (And Allah is not to send punishment upon them while you are in their midst - 8:33) yet the punishment of some selected persons in special circumstance does not negate the promise. The punishment of the infidels

of Makkah through famine and through their defeat at the hands of the Muslims at the Battle of Badr had taken place in the lifetime of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, which is emphasized in this verse that "We have the power to show you what We threatened them with".

إِدْفَعُ بِالتَّيِّبِ هِيَ أَحْسَنُ السَّيِّئَةِ

Repel evil with that which is best - 23:96

Allah instructs the Holy Prophet ﷺ to counter evil with good, oppression with justice and cruelty with mercy. These virtues of conduct have been taught by Allah to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and are generally observed in settling affairs among the Muslims. Later on these instructions were repealed in so far as the infidels and the unbelievers were concerned when Allah permitted Muslims to embark on جهاد (Jihād). Nevertheless even during Jihād the Muslims were told to adopt a humane approach towards the enemy. For example they were forbidden to kill women and children or the priests who did not engage in battle against the Muslims. Similarly, mutilation of the dead bodies of enemies was strictly forbidden. It is for this reason that the Holy Prophet ﷺ is instructed in the next verse to seek protection from Satan's evil suggestions even in the battle fields where he may arouse emotions to act against ethics.

وَقُلْ رَبِّ أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ هَمَزَاتِ الشَّيْطَانِ ﴿٩٧﴾ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ رَبِّ أَنْ يَحْضُرُونِ ﴿٩٨﴾

And say, 'O my Lord, I seek your refuge from the strokes of the satans, and I seek Your refuge from that they come to me.'

(23:97, 98)

The word هَمَز (the infinitive of Hamazāt translated above as 'strokes') means "to push, to press" and sometimes is also used to mean "to make a call from behind". This is a very comprehensive prayer often invoked for protection from the guile and mischief of Satan and the Holy Prophet ﷺ has urged upon the Muslims to recite it frequently in order to avoid sudden bursts of rage which are brought about by the promptings of Satan and which cause people to lose self-control. This prayer is also very effective in repelling other assaults of Satans and Jinns. Sayyidnā Khalid ؓ suffered from insomnia and the Holy Prophet ﷺ suggested that he should recite the following prayer before going to bed :

أَعُوذُ بِكَلِمَاتِ اللَّهِ التَّامَّةِ مِنْ غَضَبِ اللَّهِ وَعِقَابِهِ وَمِنْ شَرِّ عِبَادِهِ وَمِنْ هَمَزَاتِ  
الشَّيْطَانِ وَأَنْ يَحْضُرُونِ

I seek refuge with Allah's Perfect Words from Allah's wrath and His punishment, and from the evils of His slaves, and from the strokes of the satans and from that they come to me.

Sayyidnā Khālīd رضي الله عنه did as advised and was soon cured of insomnia.

أَنْ يَحْضُرُونِ (from that they come to me - 23:98) According to a *ḥadīth* in Ṣāḥīḥ of Muslim the Holy Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said that Satan meddles in all human affairs and tempts people to do evil deeds, and that this prayer is the best protection against his attempts. (Qurtubī)

رَبِّ ارْجِعُونِ (My Lord, send me back - 23:99) When death approaches an infidel and he senses the punishment that awaits him on the Day of Judgment, he wishes for a return to this world, so that by performing good deeds he may escape the punishment which he has richly deserved.

Ibn Jarīr has related a story on the authority of Ibn Juraij that the Holy Prophet ﷺ once said, "At the time of death when a good Muslim perceives the angels of mercy and all the luxuries of Paradise spread out before him, and the angels ask whether he wishes to be sent back to the world, his reply invariably is in the negative. He refuses to return to a place which is full of woes and suffering and misery, and only desires to be taken to Allah's presence. But when the same question is put to an infidel, his answer is رَبِّ ارْجِعُونِ i.e. he wishes to be sent back to the world."

كَلَّا إِنَّهَا كَلِمَةٌ هُوَ قَائِلُهَا ط وَمِنْ وَرَائِهِمْ بَرْزَخٌ إِلَى يَوْمِ يُبْعَثُونَ

Never! It is just a word he has to utter. And in front of them there is a barrier till the day when they will be resurrected.  
(23:100)

The word بَرْزَخٌ (*Barzakh*) means "barrier" and implies anything which intervenes between two conditions or two objects. For this reason it also means the intervening period between death and the Day of Judgment. The meaning of this verse is that the wish of the infidel who has died to be returned to this world is fruitless, because he has reached the *Barzakh* from which no return is possible and a second life cannot be given until the Day of Resurrection, when all the dead will rise and be brought back to life.

## Verses 101 -115

فَإِذَا انْفُخَ فِي الصُّورِ فَلَا أَنْسَابَ بَيْنَهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ وَلَا يَتَسَاءَلُونَ ﴿١٠١﴾  
 فَمَنْ ثَقُلَتْ مَوَازِينُهُ، فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ ﴿١٠٢﴾ وَمَنْ خَفَّتْ  
 مَوَازِينُهُ، فَأُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ خَسِرُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ فِي جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدُونَ ﴿١٠٣﴾  
 تَلْفَحُ وُجُوهُهُمُ النَّارَ وَهُمْ فِيهَا كَالِحُونَ ﴿١٠٤﴾ أَلَمْ تَكُنْ آيَتِي تُتْلَى  
 عَلَيْكُمْ فَكُنْتُمْ بِهَا تُكَذِّبُونَ ﴿١٠٥﴾ قَالُوا رَبَّنَا غَلَبَتْ عَلَيْنَا شِقْوَتُنَا  
 وَكُنَّا قَوْمًا ضَالِّينَ ﴿١٠٦﴾ رَبَّنَا أَخْرِجْنَا مِنْهَا فَإِنْ عُدْنَا فَإِنَّا ظَالِمُونَ  
 ﴿١٠٧﴾ قَالَ اخْسَرُوا فِيهَا وَلَا تُكَلِّمُونَ ﴿١٠٨﴾ إِنَّهُ كَانَ فَرِيقٌ مِّنْ  
 عِبَادِي يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا آمَنَّا فَاغْفِرْ لَنَا وَارْحَمْنَا وَأَنْتَ خَيْرُ الرَّحِيمِينَ  
 ﴿١٠٩﴾ فَاتَّخَذْتُمُوهُمْ سُخْرِيًّا حَتَّىٰ أَنْسَوَكُم ذِكْرِي وَكُنْتُمْ مِّنْهُمْ  
 تَصْحَكُونَ ﴿١١٠﴾ إِنِّي جَزَيْتُهُمُ الْيَوْمَ بِمَا صَبَرُوا ۗ إِنَّهُمْ هُمُ  
 الْفَآئِزُونَ ﴿١١١﴾ قُلْ كَمْ لَبِثْتُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ عَدَدَ سِنِينَ ﴿١١٢﴾ قَالُوا  
 لَبِثْنَا يَوْمًا أَوْ بَعْضَ يَوْمٍ فَسْئَلِ الْعَادِّينَ ﴿١١٣﴾ قُلْ إِنْ لَّبِثْتُمْ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا  
 لَّوْ أَنَّكُمْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١١٤﴾ أَفَحَسِبْتُمْ أَنَّمَا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ عَبَثًا وَأَنَّكُمْ  
 إِلَيْنَا لَا تُرْجَعُونَ ﴿١١٥﴾

Thereafter, when the *Ṣūr* (the trumpet) is blown, there are no ties of kinship between them, nor will they question one another. [101] So, the one whose scales (of good deeds) turn out to be heavy, then such people are the successful ones, [102] and the one whose scales turn out to be light, then such people are the ones who harmed their own selves; in *Jahannam* (Hell) they are to remain for ever. [103] Fire will scorch their faces and they will be disfigured therein. [104]

(It will be said to such people), "Were My verses not used to be recited to you and you used to belie them?" [105] They will say, "Our Lord, our wretchedness

prevailed over us, and we were a people wandering astray. [106] O our Lord, get us out from here; if we do this again, then of course, we will be transgressors."

[107] He (Allah) will say, "Stay in it, humiliated, and do not speak to Me" [108] There was indeed a group of My servants who used to say, "Our Lord, we adhere to the (true) faith, so forgive us and have mercy upon us, and you are the best of all the merciful." [109] But you made fun of them, so much so that they caused you to forget My remembrance, and you used to laugh at them. [110] I have given them today, for their observing patience, the recompense that they are the only ones who are victorious.' [111]

He (Allah) will say, "How long did you stay on the earth by number of years?" [112] They will say, "We stayed for a day or for a part of a day." So, ask the ones who count. [113] He will say, "You did not stay but for a little. Would that you have understood (this at that time)! [114] So did you think that We created you for nothing and that you will not be brought back to Us?" [115]

## Commentary

فَإِذَا أَنْفَخَ فِي الصُّورِ فَلَا أَنْسَابَ بَيْنَهُمْ

Thereafter, when the Ṣūr (the trumpet) is blown, there are no ties of kinship between them, - 23:101.

On the Day of Judgment the صور (trumpet) will be sounded twice. The result of the first sound will be that everything - the earth, the skies and every living thing in between will perish and when the second sound is given, every dead thing will come back to life. This is clearly mentioned in the Qur'an in the verse ثُمَّ نُفِخَ فِيهِ أُخْرَىٰ فَإِذَا هُمْ قِيَامٌ يَنْظُرُونَ (Then it shall be blown again, and lo! They shall stand beholding - 39:68). There is difference of opinion whether in the present verse the reference is to the first call or to the second call. According to Ibn Jubair Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ thought that it refers to the first call. On the other hand Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd ؓ says that reference here is to second call and, according to 'Atā' الله رحمه الله as Sayyidnā 'Abbās ؓ also supports this view and which has also been adopted in Tafsīr Mazharī. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd ؓ says that on the Day of Judgment every man and woman will be assembled in the gathering place (مَحْشَر) where a herald appointed by

Allah will identify each person by his name and his father's name and invite any one from amongst those present who has a claim against him to come forward and receive it. This proclamation will please everyone - a father having a claim against his son, a wife having a claim against her husband, a sister having a claim against her brother (and vice versa) - and they will all come forward to receive their dues. The present verse describes this situation: **فَلَا أَسَابَ بَيْنَهُمْ** (There are no ties of kinship between them - 23:101). The same situation has been described in the verse **يَوْمَ يَفِرُّ الْمَرْءُ مِنْ أَخِيهِ وَأُمِّهِ وَأَبِيهِ وَصَاحِبَتِهِ وَبَنِيهِ** (Upon the day when a man shall flee from his brother, his mother, his father, his consort, his sons, - 80:34).

### **Difference between the condition of believers and infidels in *maḥshar* (gathering place on the Day of Judgement)**

The condition described above will apply to the unbelievers only who in their selfishness will abandon their dear and near relatives. As for the believers, Allah has said **الْحَقْنَا بِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ** (We shall join their seed with them. - 52:21) which means that the children of good Muslims, if they themselves are believers also, will be united with their parents. According to a *ḥadīth* the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "On the Day of Judgment when everybody will be dry with thirst, Muslim children who had died as minors will come out carrying water from Paradise, and when people will ask them for it, they will reply that water is for their parents only whom they are searching". The gist of this discussion is that whereas in the case of infidels no one will be of any help to each other nor will anyone recognize the dear ones in *maḥshar*, the case of Muslim will be exactly the opposite. The believers will help each other and will also intercede for other Muslims.

There is also a *ḥadīth* which Ibn 'Asākir has related on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Umar ؓ in which the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "On the Day of Judgment all relationships arising out of a common ancestry or from marriage ties will be severed except in my own case." Scholars have interpreted this verse to mean that all the Muslims of the Ummah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ are part of his family, because he is the father of the Ummah and his wives are the mothers.

**وَلَا يَتَسَاءَلُونَ** (nor will they question one another - 23:101). However their is another verse **وَأَقْبَلْ بَعْضُهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ يَتَسَاءَلُونَ** (And advance one upon another, asking each other question - 37:27). Discussing this latter verse Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ says that in *maḥshar* there will be different stations, and

the conditions in each station will be different. There will be a time when nobody will speak to anybody, but in another station when the terror which earlier overwhelmed the gathering abates, people will converse with one another. (Maẓharī)

فَمَنْ ثَقَلَتْ مَوَازِينُهُ، فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ ﴿١٠٢﴾ وَمَنْ خَفَّتْ مَوَازِينُهُ، فَأُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ خَسِرُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ فِي جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدُونَ ﴿١٠٣﴾

So, the one whose scales (of good deeds) turn out to be heavy, then such people are the successful ones, [102] and the one whose scales turn out to be light, then such people are the ones who harmed their own selves; in Jahannam (Hell) they are to remain for ever. (23: 102, 103)

In this verse there is a comparison between perfect Muslims and the infidels and their deeds and the end which awaits them. There is further evidence in the Qur'ān that in the case of perfect Muslims the pan in which evil deeds are placed for balancing will be totally empty, whereas in the case of unbelievers the pan in which the good deeds are placed will be empty. At another place the Qur'ān says *فَلَا نُقِيمُ لَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَزْنًا* (We shall not assign to them any weight - 18:105) meaning that on the Day of Judgement, the infidels or their deeds will carry no weight. This is so far as the perfect Muslims and the infidels are concerned. As for the Muslims who have committed sins and whose good deeds and evil deeds will be placed in the two pans of the scale for weighing, there is no specific mention about them in the Qur'ān which is, in general, silent about the punishment and reward of erring Muslims. Perhaps the reason for this is that during the period when the Qur'ān was being revealed, all the Companions were upright men and generally free from major sins, but if somebody committed a sin incidentally, he repented and was forgiven by Allah. (Maẓharī)

There is a verse of the Qur'ān which deals with people who have a mixed bag of good and evil deeds (*خَلَطُوا عَمَلًا صَالِحًا وَآخَرَ سَيِّئًا*) (They had mixed a good deed with another that was evil - 9:102). Sayyidnā ﷺ says about such people that if their good deeds exceed their bad deeds, even by a single deed they will go to Paradise and if their evil deeds exceed their good by a single deed, they would go to Hell. But a believer Muslim will be sent to Hell for the purpose of purification only just as gold and iron and other metals are subjected to heating process to remove their

impurities and as soon as they are purged of their sins, they will be admitted to Paradise. Also according to Sayyidnā 'Abbās رضي الله عنه on the Day of Judgment the weighing scale will be so precise and finely tuned that it will be tipped by a grain of rye and a man whose good and bad deeds are of equal weight in the scale will join أَصْحَابِ الْأَعْرَافِ (People of A'raf) and spend a while between heaven and hell waiting for a decision, but ultimately he too would go to Paradise (Ibn Abī Ḥātim, Maḏharī). The above story of Sayyidnā 'Abbās رضي الله عنه deals only with believers who have committed sins, and makes no mention of unbelievers.

### How will the deeds be weighed?

There are different versions about the method for the weighing of deeds, and all of them are derived from ḥadīth. One version is that the believers and the infidels will be weighed bodily in the scale of justice and the infidel will not be able to tilt the scale however obese and corpulent he may be (Bukhārī and Muslim, quoting Abū Hurairah). Another version says that the scrolls on which their deeds are recorded will be weighed. Tirmidhī, Ibn Mājah, Ibn Ḥayyān have taken this version from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umar رضي الله عنه. And according to a third version a man's deeds which were weightless and intangible in this world, will be made solid on the Day of Judgment and will be placed on the scales and weighed. Ṭabrānī has related this version from the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم on the authority of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه. The words and the text of all these ḥadīths are given in full in Tafsīr Maḏharī which may be consulted if required. Abdur Razzāq has quoted a ḥadīth in his book under the chapter on فَضْلُ الْعِلْمِ (the merits of knowledge) on the authority of Ibrāhīm Nakha'ī which supports the just preceded version. This version has it that on the Day of Judgment a person's deeds will be brought for weighing and when placed in the pan, they will fail to tilt it. Then something resembling clouds will be brought and put in the pan of good deeds which will then weigh down. The man will then be asked what was it that lent weight to the pan of his good deeds, but he will express his ignorance. Then he will be informed that the object in question was his learning which he used to impart to other people. Dhahabi has included a hadith in فَضْلُ الْعِلْمِ which he heard from Sayyidnā 'Imrān Ibn Ḥuṣain رضي الله عنه that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, "On the Day of Judgment the blood of the martyrs will be weighed against the ink of scholars (with which they wrote books on the science of religion)

and the latter will be heavier than the former." (Maẓharī) After giving the above mentioned versions about the weighing of deeds, Tafsīr Maẓharī says that it is not wholly inconceivable that man himself and his deeds may be weighed physically or that he and his record of deeds may be weighed together. Thus there is no inconsistency in these three versions.

وَهُمْ فِيهَا كَلْحُونَ (And they will be disfigured therein - 23:104). The word كَالِح is used for a person whose lips do not meet and leave his teeth fully exposed, which looks very ugly. It is said that the upper lip of a person consigned to Hell will be drawn up and his lower lip will be drawn down so that his teeth will remain visible at all times.

وَلَا تُكَلِّمُونِ (Do not speak to Me - 23:108). According to Ḥasan al-Baṣrī these will be the last words of the people who are cast in hell and in reply Allah will say, "Do not speak to Me." After this they will not be able to speak like human beings, but will make animal sounds to each other. Baihaqī and others have quoted Muḥammad Ibn Ka'b as saying that the Qur'ān mentions five requests made by the people condemned to hell. Out of the five, replies were furnished to four, but in reply to the fifth Allah commanded them not to speak to Him. Thus these are the last words to be uttered by them after which they will not be able to speak. (Maẓharī)

### Verses 116 - 118

فَتَعَلَى اللَّهِ الْمَلِكُ الْحَقُّ ۚ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ رَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْكَرِيمِ  
 ﴿١١٦﴾ وَمَنْ يَدْعُ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهًا آخَرَ لَا بُرْهَانَ لَهُ بِهِ فَإِنَّمَا حِسَابُهُ  
 عِنْدَ رَبِّهِ إِنَّهُ لَا يُفْلِحُ الْكٰفِرُونَ ﴿١١٧﴾ وَقُلْ رَبِّ اغْفِرْ وَارْحَمْ وَأَنْتَ  
 خَيْرُ الرَّحِيمِينَ ﴿١١٨﴾

So, High above all is Allah, the King, the True. There is no god but He, the Lord of the Noble Throne. [116] And whoever invokes another god with Allah, while he has no proof for it, his reckoning lies with his Lord. Surely, the infidels will not achieve success. [117] And say (O prophet) 'My Lord, forgive and have mercy and you are the best of all the merciful.' [118]

## Commentary

The last few verses of this Sūrah Al-Mu'minūn from verse 115 to verse 118 have special merit. Baghawī and Tha'labi have related from Sayyidnā Ibn Mas'ūd ؓ that he came across a person who was very ill. He recited the above verses into the sick man's ears and he was cured immediately. The Holy Prophet ﷺ asked him what he had whispered in the sick man's ears to which Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd ؓ replied that he had recited these verses (115 to 118) in his ears. Thereupon the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "I swear by Him Who has power over my life that if a person with genuine faith were to recite these verses on a mountain, the mountain itself may move from its place". (Qurṭubī and Mazharī)

رَبِّ اغْفِرْ وَارْحَمْ (My Lord, forgive and have mercy - 23:118). Here the object of the forgiveness and having mercy has not been mentioned. What is there to be forgiven and to whom is mercy to be shown? And this seems to suggest a general prayer for forgiveness which would include deliverance from harm and suffering, and a general prayer for mercy which would include the grant of every wish. Since protection from bodily harm and acquisition of legitimate gains is the object of all human activity, this prayer covers both these aspects. (Mazharī) And the reason why the Holy Prophet ﷺ was commanded to recite this prayer of forgiveness and mercy, even though he is impeccable, is to impress upon his followers the special merit of this prayer. (Qurṭubī)

Sūrah Al-Mu'minūn began with the verse قَدْ أَفْلَحَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ (Success is really attained by the believers - 23:1) and ends with إِنَّهُ لَا يُفْلِحُ الْكَافِرُونَ (Surely, the infidels will not achieve success - 23:117) which shows that success will come to believers only and that the unbelievers will have no share of it.

*Alḥamdulillāh*

The Commentary on

Sūrah Al-Mu'minūn

Ends here.

# Sūrah An-Nūr

## (The Light)

Sūrah An-Nūr was revealed in Madīnah and it has 64 Verses and 9 sections

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

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

### Verses 1 - 2

سُورَةٌ أَنْزَلْنَاهَا وَفَرَضْنَاهَا وَأَنْزَلْنَا فِيهَا آيَاتٍ لَّعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿١﴾  
 الزَّانِيَةُ وَالزَّانِي فَاجْلِدُوا كُلَّ وَاحِدٍ مِّنْهُمَا مِائَةَ جَلْدَةٍ وَلَا تَأْخُذْكُمْ بِهِمَا رَأْفَةٌ فِي دِينِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ  
 الْآخِرِ وَلْيَشْهَدْ عَذَابَهُمَا طَائِفَةٌ مِّنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٢﴾

This is a Sūrah We have sent down and prescribed and sent down in it clear signs, so that you may receive the advice. [1]

The fornicating woman and the fornicating man, flog each one of them with one hundred stripes. And no pity for them should withhold you from (complying with) Allah's religion, if you really believe in Allah and the Last Day. And a group of believers must witness their punishment. [2]

### Some Characteristics of this Sūrah

This Sūrah generally deals with those rules of Shari'ah which aim at preserving chastity and enjoin *hijāb* for women. These rules end up with the punishment prescribed for *zinā* (adultery or fornication). The previous Sūrah (Al-Mu'minūn) had spelt out the basic qualities necessary for attainment of success in this world and in the Hereafter. One of these qualities was to guard one's private parts against illicit sexual acts (verse

4 of that Sūrah). Now the present Sūrah describes the detailed rules meant to acquire this quality. That is why the women are especially directed to learn this Sūrah. Sayyidnā 'Umar رضي الله عنه issued a directive to people of Kūfah in which he advised them to teach Sūrah An-Nūr to women.

### Commentary

The first verse of this Sūrah is introductory preface to put extra emphasis to the commands given in it. The very first command after that is regarding punishment for adultery, which has a direct bearing on the intent of the Sūrah - that is to preserve chastity, even of the eyes. The subjects of control on casting eyes and not to enter houses without permission are to follow soon. Commitment of adultery is the ultimate outcome when one ignores all types of prudence against continence and is an open rebellion against Divine precepts. Therefore, the punishment for adultery in Islam is most severe as compared to all other punishments prescribed by the Qur'ān for the crimes committed by human beings. Adultery, being a big crime by itself, also brings along with it many other crimes, the result of which is destruction of the entire social order. If the causes of killings and atrocities are probed deeply, the majority of them will appear to be caused due to illegitimate relationship with women. It is for this reason that in order to eliminate completely this heinous crime, its Islamic punishment has been described in the opening verses.

**Adultery is a great crime and is a combination of many crimes.**

**That is why its punishment in Islam is very severe**

The Holy Qur'ān and *mutawātir ahādīth* on their own have fixed the punishments of four crimes. They are not left at the discretion of the judge or the ruler. These punishments are called *Hudūd* in the terminology of Islamic jurisprudence. Apart from these, the punishment is not fixed for other crimes, and the ruler or the judge can award the punishment in accordance with the type of crime, the circumstances of the criminal and the background in which the crime is committed, in order to control the spread of crime as he feels best. Such punishments are known as penal laws in Islamic jurisprudence. Islamic *Hudūds* are four in number:

- (1). Stealing
- (2). Leveling false accusation against chaste women.

(3). Drinking liquor

(4). Adultery

Each one of these crimes is very evil in its own right, and while disturbing the peace and tranquility of the society contribute toward other ills of the world at large. However, the ill effects and consequences of adultery are so immense in their destruction of the human values that no other crime can perhaps compete with it.

(1) Molestation of someone's wife, daughter or sister is nothing but his destruction. For a noble man it is not as bad to lose all his material wealth and belongings as to lose the chastity of his women folk. It is for this reason that often we come across such incidents that people whose women folk are molested get after the life of the molester without caring for their own lives. This passion for revenge passes on to the generations and results in the destruction of families after families.

(2) In a community where illicit sexual acts become rampant the family lineage is lost. When the sanctity of relationship with mother, daughter and sister is vanished, with whom the marriage is forbidden, then one can marry them as well, which is even a greater crime than adultery.

(3) If we analyze the causes of disorder and disturbance the world over, we will note that in most cases the root cause is woman and to a lesser degree the wealth. Only those rules can guarantee the worldly peace which safeguard the woman and wealth in a befitting manner and do not allow them to cross the appointed limits. It is not the intention to highlight here the ills and evils of adultery. The points mentioned above are enough for the human society to know the destructive ills of this act. This is why Islam has fixed the punishment of adultery as more severe than the punishments of all other crimes. The punishment has been described in the verse in the following words:

الرَّانِيَةُ وَالرَّانِي فَاجْلِدُوا كُلَّ وَاحِدٍ مِّنْهُمَا مِائَةَ جَلْدَةٍ

The fornicating woman and the fornicating man, flog each one of them with one hundred stripes - 24:2.

First the fornicating woman is mentioned and then the fornicating man. The punishment for both is the same. The common practice about

injunctions is that mostly the command is conveyed by addressing the men-folk only and the women are included in that by implication. It is not regarded necessary that they be addressed separately. In the whole of Qur'an masculine gender is used for passing the injunctions through the phrase **يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا** and women-folk are regarded as included in that. Perhaps the wisdom is that as Allah Ta'ālā has ordained the women-folk to keep themselves covered, in the same way their mention is kept covert in the context of mankind. But here there was a possibility that some might have the confusion that all these injunctions relate to men only and the women are free from them. Therefore, in some specific verses the women-folk are also mentioned alongside separately like in the verse **أَقِمْنَ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتِينَ الزَّكَاةَ** (33:33). Moreover, where both men and women are to be mentioned then the natural order is that first the men are mentioned and then women. In the case of punishment for stealing, the same order is maintained in the injunction **أَلْسَارِقُ وَالسَّارِقَةُ فَاقْطَعُوا أَيْدِيَهُمَا** (As for a man or woman who commits theft, cut off the hands of both - 5:38) where the male thief is mentioned first and then the female thief. But in the case of punishment for adultery only an incidental mention of women was not considered enough, instead a specific reference was regarded necessary. Secondly, mention of the women is given priority over men. There are many points of wisdom in this. First, the women are regarded weaker sex and compassionate for their physique; if they were not mentioned specifically, one could have had the misgiving that perhaps the women are exempt from this punishment. The mention of woman is preceded because the act of adultery is so impudent that its commitment from her side could be carried out only by extreme fearlessness and carelessness, because the nature has bestowed in her character instinctive shyness and an urge to guard her chastity. The nature has provided many a things for the safety of women. Hence commitment of fornication from her side is more grave than from man. As against this, in the case of theft it is a bigger crime for men who are bestowed with strength by Allah Ta'ālā, so that they earn their living from the bounty He has provided. The man is required to take advantage of Allah's bounty by working for the sustenance and not stealing for the living, as this is a great shame and sin for him. Since the women do not have the same circumstances, if they commit theft their crime will be of a lesser degree as compared to that of men.

فَاجْلِدُوا (24:2) Meaning of the word جَلَدٌ is to hit with the whip, and it is derived from the word جِلْدٌ (leather). As the whip is normally made of leather, some commentators have suggested that by the use of word جَلَدٌ it is alluded that the strike of the whip should be so moderate that it should be felt only within the skin and not deeper into the flesh. The Holy Prophet ﷺ had himself urged that the punishment of whipping be exercised with moderation, so that neither it is so hard that it tears off the flesh nor so mild that it does not hurt at all. On this point some commentators have reproduced *ahadīth* of the Holy Prophet ﷺ with their chain of narrators.

### **The punishment of whipping a hundred times is exclusive to unmarried man and woman. For married persons the punishment is stoning to death**

This point is worth noting that the injunctions on adultery were revealed gradually and moved on from a lighter punishment to a more severe one, like the gradual prohibition of alcohol which is mentioned in the Qur'ān itself, the details of which have been described earlier. The very first injunction on adultery is the one given in verses 15 and 16 of Sūrah An-Nisā', which is:

وَالَّتِي يَأْتِيَنَّ الْفَاحِشَةَ مِنْ نِسَائِكُمْ فَاسْتَشْهَدُوا عَلَيْهِنَّ أَرْبَعَةً مِنْكُمْ فَإِنْ شَهِدُوا فَاْمْسِكُوهُنَّ فِي الْبُيُوتِ حَتَّى يَتَوَفَّهِنَّ الْمَوْتُ أَوْ يَجْعَلَ اللَّهُ لَهُنَّ سَبِيلًا. وَالَّذَانِ يَأْتِيَنَّهَا مِنْكُمْ فَادُّوهُمَا فَإِنْ تَابَا وَأَصْلَحَا فَأَعْرَضُوا عَنْهُمَا إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ تَوَّابًا رَحِيمًا.

And those of your women who commit the shameful act, then have four witnesses against them from among you. So, if they do testify, then confine those women to their homes until death overcomes them or Allah prescribes a way for them. [15] And those two of you who commit it, torture them both. But if they repent and amend, turn away from them. Surely, Allah is Most-Relenting, Very-Merciful. (4:15, 16)

Detailed commentary and explanation of the above two verses is given under Sūrah An-Nisā'. They are repeated here so that preliminary stage of the punishment of fornication is kept in mind. In these verses the proof for establishing adultery is described with a specific condition of having four male witnesses. Secondly, punishment for the woman is prescribed as to confine her within the home and for both of them inflicting of harm. At the same time it is also hinted that this was not the final injunction on

adultery and that some more directives will follow. This is the meaning of **أَوْ يُجْعَلُ اللَّهُ لَهُنَّ سَبِيلًا** (or Allah prescribes a way for them - 4:15).

In the above referred punishment confinement of the women within the homes was regarded sufficient at that time, and causing harm to both as enough punishment. But the limit, the magnitude and the form of harm to be inflicted was not defined. Rather the wordings of the Qurān suggest that the initial punishment of adultery was only punitive, of which the quantum was not fixed by the Shari'ah a *ta'zir* (a punishment left to the discretion of a judge), but was left at the discretion of the ruler or the judge. That is why the ambiguous phrase of inflicting harm or torture was adopted. But at the same time it was hinted that probably some other form of punishment for the culprits of the crime will be introduced later by saying **أَوْ يُجْعَلُ اللَّهُ لَهُنَّ سَبِيلًا** (4:15). When the present verse of Sūrah an-Nūr was revealed, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه said that what was promised in Sūrah An-Nisā' through **أَوْ يُجْعَلُ اللَّهُ لَهُنَّ سَبِيلًا** "or Allah prescribes a way for them", so now this verse of Sūrah an-Nūr has prescribed the way, that is flogging both man and woman with a hundred stripes. And then Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه made the punishment of hundred stripes exclusive to fornication, that is when the crime is committed by unmarried man and woman, and said:

الرَّجْمُ لِلثَّيْبِ وَالْجُلْدُ لِلْبَكَرِ

It is prescribed that if the married man and woman commit this crime then they be stoned to death, and the punishment for unmarried culprit is a hundred stripes. (Şaḥīḥ Bukhārī, Kitāb ut-Tafsīr p. 657)

In the verse of Sūrah an-Nūr under reference punishment for adultery is given as a hundred stripes without qualification. So, it is obvious that he must have found from some other authentic Ḥadīth that the punishment for adultery is stoning to death and for fornication a hundred stripes, and that Ḥadīth has been related by Şaḥīḥ Muslim, Musnād Aḥmad, Sunnan Nasa'ī, Abū Dāwūd, Tirmidhī and Ibn Mājah on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Ubādah Ibn Şāmīt رضي الله عنه that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

خَذُوا عَنِّي خَذُوا عَنِّي قَدْ جَعَلَ اللَّهُ لَهُنَّ سَبِيلًا، الْبَكَرُ بِالْبَكَرِ جُلْدٌ مِائَةً وَتَغْرِبُ عَامٌ  
وَالثَّيْبُ بِالثَّيْبِ جُلْدٌ مِائَةً وَالرَّجْمُ (ابن كثير)

Have knowledge from me, have knowledge from me that Allah Ta'ālā has prescribed now the 'way for women' (that He had promised before), which is that for unmarried man and woman is a hundred stripes and exile for one year, and for married man and woman it is a hundred stripes and stoning.

Alongwith the punishment of a hundred stripes for the unmarried man and woman prescribed in the an-Nūr verse there is an additional punishment mentioned in the Ḥadīth to send the adulterer man in exile for one year. On this there is a difference of opinion among jurists, that is whether the punishment of exile to male adulterer is compulsory or it is at the discretion of the judge - that is if he deems it necessary only then send the criminal in exile also for one year. In the opinion of Imām A'zam Abū Ḥanīfah رحمه الله تعالى this last referred position is correct, that is, it remains at the discretion of the ruler or judge. Secondly, according to this Ḥadīth there is the punishment of a hundred stripes also for the married man and woman before the stoning. But in accordance with other *aḥādīth* and the actions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the first four Caliphs, it is established that these two punishments are not to be combined.

Married persons are to be awarded the punishment of stoning only. The main point to be noted in this Ḥadīth is that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has explained here the verse of Surah An-Nisa' *أَوْ يَجْعَلَ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ سَبِيلًا* (or Allah prescribes a way for them) and while explaining he had added some more points beside flogging a hundred stripes as stated in Sūrah an-Nūr. These points are:

1. - punishment of hundred stripes is exclusive to unmarried man and woman.
2. - An addition of one year's exile.
3. - Rajm or stoning to death of married man and woman.

It is but obvious that the additions made by the Holy Prophet ﷺ in the verse of Surah an-Nūr was also on the command of Allah Ta'ālā *إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا وَحْيٌ يُوحَىٰ* (This is naught but a revelation revealed - 53:4). For the Messenger, and for those who hear from him directly, both the revelations which are recited in the form of Qur'an and those which are not recited have equal sanctity. The Holy Prophet ﷺ himself had acted upon this rule (punishment of stoning to married adulterer) in the presence of many

of his companions. He awarded the punishment of *rajm* or stoning to Mā'iz and Ghāmiyyah which is recorded in all the books of traditions with authentic authorities. Additionally, an incident is reported in the authentic traditions books on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah and Zaid Ibn Khālid Juhānī رضى الله عنهما that an unmarried man committed adultery with a married woman whose servant he was. The father of the adulterer boy brought him before the Holy Prophet ﷺ. The incident was proved by his admission. Then the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: لا قضين بينكما بكتاب الله that is I will adjudge your case according to the Book of Allah. He then adjudicated that the unmarried adulterer boy be flogged with a hundred stripes and the married woman is stoned, and directed Sayyidnā Unais ؓ to execute the punishment, who took the confessional statement of the woman, and then the punishment was carried out on the orders of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. (Ibn Kathīr)

According to above tradition, the Holy Prophet ﷺ awarded the punishment of hundred stripes to one criminal and of stoning to the other and described them both as the judgment by the Book of Allah; although in Sūrah An-Nūr only the punishment of hundred stripes is indicated and there is no mention of stoning. The reason is the same that Allah Ta'ālā had revealed to the Holy Prophet ﷺ the complete explanation and details of the injunction which all fall within the purview of the Book of Allah, although some of it is not included and mentioned in the Sūrah an-Nūr expressly. Bukhārī and Muslim have recorded an address of Sayyidnā 'Umar ؓ on the authority of Ibn 'Abbās ؓ, the wordings of which are:

قال عمر بن الخطاب رضى الله عنه، وهو جالس على منبر رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: ان الله بعث محمدا صلى الله عليه وسلم بالحق وانزل عليه الكتاب، فكان مما انزل الله عليه اية الرجم قرأناها ووعيناهما وعقلناها، فرجم رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم ورجمنا بعده، فاخشى ان طال بالناس زمان ان يقول قائل ما نجد الرجم فى كتاب الله تعالى فيضلوا بترك فريضة انزلها الله، وان الرجم فى كتاب الله حق على من زنا اذا احصن من الرجال والنساء اذا قامت البينة او كان الحبل والاعتراف. (مسلم ص ٦٥ ج ٢)

Sayyidnā 'Umar Ibn Khaṭṭāb ؓ said while he was sitting on the pulpit of the Holy Prophet ﷺ that Allah sent Muḥammad ﷺ with truth and revealed to him the Book. So, whatever is revealed to him includes the verse of stoning (رجم) as well,

which we have read, memorized and understood. Now I fear that with the passage of time one might say that we do not find the injunction of *rajm* (stoning) in the Book of Allah, and hence go astray by not following a religious obligation, which is revealed by Allah. And be clear in your mind that the injunction of stoning (*rajm*) is ordained upon the one, whether man or woman, who is married (محسن) and when the evidence of adultery is established or there is a confession or pregnancy .

The same version is narrated in Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī also with greater detail (Bukhārī 1009 vol.2) and in Nasai' it is narrated in the following words:

انا لانجد من الرجم بدءا، فانه حد من حدود الله، الا وان رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قد رجم ورجمنا بعده، ولولا ان يقول قائلون ان عمر زاد في كتاب الله ما ليس فيه لكتبت في ناحية المصحف، وشهد عمر بن الخطاب وعبد الرحمن بن عرف و فلان و فلان ان رسول الله ﷺ رجم ورجمنا بعده. الحديث (ابن كثير)

We have no choice to avoid the punishment of stoning (*rajm*), because it is one of the punishment (حد) from the punishments prescribed by Allah. Be very clear in your mind that the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself had awarded stoning and we too have awarded stoning after him. If there was no risk of people saying that 'Umar has added something on his own in the Book of Allah, I would have written this in a corner of the Qur'an. And 'Umar Ibn Khaṭṭāb ﷺ is witness, 'Abdurrahmān ﷺ is witness and so and so companions are witnesses that the Holy Prophet ﷺ had awarded stoning. (Ibn Kathīr)

This is apparently proved by the address of Sayyidnā 'Umar ﷺ that there is a specific verse on injunction of stoning which is in addition to the verse under reference of Sūrah an-Nūr. But Sayyidnā 'Umar ﷺ did not tell the wordings of that verse, nor did he tell that if there is a separate verse beside the verse of Sūrah an-Nūr why it is not included in the Qur'an, and why it is not recited. He only said that if there was no risk involved that people would put blame on him of making addition in the Book of Allah, he would have written this verse on a corner of the Qur'an. (al-Nasai')

What needs careful consideration in this narration is that, if it is a verse of the Qur'an and its recitation is mandatory like other verses, then why Sayyidna 'Umar ﷺ left it out just because of the fear of people's calumny; when he is well known for his vehemence about Allah's

injunctions. The other point to be noted is that he did not say that he would have included this verse in the Qur'ān, but all he said was he would have written it on the margin of the Qur'ān.

All these things support the inference that the explanation of this verse that Sayyidnā 'Umar رضي الله عنه heard from the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in which he specified the punishment of hundred stripes for unmarried man and woman and stoning for the married persons. He treated it as a verse of the Book of Allah because of the words of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and his consistent practice. Sayyidnā 'Umar رضي الله عنه understood fully well that the Holy Prophet's صلى الله عليه وسلم explanation was in line with the command of Allah's Book and not actually the verse of the Book, otherwise no power on earth would have stopped him to write down the verse in its place if it was missed out. His comment about writing it on the margin of Qur'ān is further proof that the verse was not a part of Qur'ān but only the explanation of the verse of Sūrah an-Nūr. Some narrations have carried the actual wordings of the injunction on the subject, but they fall short of proof and authenticity to merit inclusion in the Qur'ān. The jurists (فقهاء) who have related this verse as abrogated for recitation but not abrogated as a command have done so by way of an example, and as such it does not in fact prove that it is a part of the Qur'ān.

The gist of the matter is that the punishment of hundred stripes described in Sūrah an-Nūr for adulterer man and woman is exclusive to unmarried man and woman as per detailed explanation and elucidation of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, and punishment for the married persons is *rajm* (stoning). Although this elucidation is not given in the wordings of the verse but the exalted person to whom this verse was revealed has himself elaborated the subject without the slightest doubt of any confusion. It is not that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم explained this only through his words, but he also executed this punishment several times in the presence of many companions, and the proof of this has reached us with unbroken authentic chain of narrators. Therefore, the punishment of stoning for married man and woman is in fact an injunction of the Book of Allah itself, in the sense that it is as certain as any other injunction of the Qur'ān. This fact may be mentioned either by saying that *rajm* is a provision of the Qur'ān itself, or by saying that it is established by the unbroken chain of traditions. Sayyidnā 'Alī رضي الله عنه has also said the same

thing that the verdict of stoning is established by the tradition of the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

### **An important warning**

Wherever words married and unmarried appear in the above explanation, they are used for ease of explanation. The actual words used in the saying are *غَيْرُمُحْصَنٍ* or *تَيْبٍ* and *بِكْرٍ*. The real position of *مُحْصَنٍ* in Islamic jurisprudence is of the one who has copulated with the spouse with an authentic Nikah, and is also sane. Whenever we have used the words 'married' in this context, it carries the same meaning. It is only for brevity and ease that the word 'married' has been used.

### **Three degrees of gradations in the punishment of adultery**

On pondering over the verses of the Qur'ān and the *aḥadīth* referred to above, it becomes clear that initially the punishment of fornication was light in that the judge or the ruler was to afflict pain to the perpetrator (man and woman) of the crime at his own discretion, and confine the woman in the home. This punishment was enjoined in Sūrah An-Nisā'. The second period was that when the verse of Sūrah an-Nūr was revealed in which hundred stripes each to both were enjoined. The third period was the one when the Holy Prophet ﷺ instructed after the revelation of the verse under discussion that the punishment of hundred stripes will be restricted only to those who are not married, but if married man and woman commit this crime then their punishment is stoning (*rajm*).

### **In Islamic law if the punishment of a crime is severe, the conditions of proving it are also tough**

As described above, the punishment of adultery in Islam is most severe compared to punishments of all other crimes. Alongwith that the conditions to prove this crime are equally tough in Islamic law. If there is the slightest doubt or uncertainty, then the maximum punishment, known as *ḥadd* (حد), is remitted, and only a punishment by way of *ta'zīr* may be awarded which should be commensurate with the extent of crime. In all other cases testimony of two men or one man and two women is required for the proof of a particular event. However, for the maximum punishment of fornication (حدزنا) the evidence, of four male eye-witnesses is necessary who must testify without a slightest doubt or confusion. Another severe circumstance that aggravates the severity of an evidence of fornication is that if the evidence of a witness in a case of adultery is

rejected, then the witness himself may suffer badly, because in that case, he may be charged for false accusation of adultery (فذف) and may be awarded the punishment of eighty stripes. Therefore, no one will dare testify the fornication where there's even slightest degree of doubt. However, if the adultery is not proved clearly by eye witnesses, but there is proven evidence of a man and woman found in a compromising and unlawful position, then the judge can award the punishment by way of *ta'zīr* which stripes as are suitable in that particular case. Details of the punishment for fornication and its conditionalities can be seen in the books of Fiqh.

### Injunction against homosexuality and sex with animals

The issue that if a man indulges in sexual act with a man or an animal, whether his act falls within the purview of fornication or not, and whether its punishment is the same as that of fornication has already been dealt with under the commentary of Sūrah An-Nisā'. Although this act is not called fornication neither lexically nor in the terminology of Sharī'ah and hence punishment of fornication is not applied to that, but its punishment is no less in its severity compared to punishment of fornication. The noble Companions رضي الله عنهم punished such culprits by burning them alive.

لَا تَأْخُذْكُمْ بِهِمَا رَأْفَةٌ فِي دِينِ اللَّهِ

No pity for them should withhold you from (complying with)  
Allah's religion - 24:2.

Since the punishment for adultery is very severe and there is the possibility that those awarding the punishment may feel pity and be lenient, hence, it is also enjoined that in the fulfillment of this important religious duty any compassion is not permissible. Pity or mercy and forgiveness or pardon are always laudable, but any compassion shown to criminals will result in injustice to the entire humanity; hence it is prohibited and not permissible.

وَلْيَشْهَدْ عَذَابَهُمَا طَائِفَةٌ مِّنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

And a group of believers must witness their punishment. - 24:2

At the time of execution of the punishment of fornication a group of Muslims should be present to watch. It is customary in Islam to execute

all punishments, specially the *hudūd*, in public, so that those who see it take a warning. But the directive for the presence of a group of Muslims at the time of execution of punishment for fornication is peculiar to this punishment.

**Initially Islam requires not to publicize the crimes, but once they are established through evidence, it is the requirement of wisdom to disgrace the criminals**

For the control of vulgarity and shamelessness Islamic laws have imposed far reaching restrictions. It is made obligatory for women to cover themselves. Men are asked to lower their eyes on seeing women-folk. The sound of jewelry or the singing of women are prohibited as they may lead to wanton acts. However, if someone is seen wanting in adopting Islamic teachings, he should be guided in private, but is not allowed to be disgraced. But if someone has crossed all limits and has broken all the ties with Islamic laws, and his crime is established in accordance with the Islamic jurisprudence, then keeping his crime secret might embolden others for committing this crime. Hence, the extent to which Islam has cared for avoiding publicity of the crime, to the same extent the emphasis is laid in making it public for disgracing the culprits, once the crime is established. It is for this reason that not only the punishment for adultery is enjoined to be executed publicly, but the presence of a group of Muslims at the time of execution is also made mandatory.

### Verse 3

الزَّانِي لَا يَنْكِحُ إِلَّا زَانِيَةً أَوْ مُشْرِكَةً وَالزَّانِيَةُ لَا يَنْكِحُهَا إِلَّا زَانٍ  
أَوْ مُشْرِكٌ ۗ وَحَرَّمَ ذَلِكَ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٣﴾

A man who is fornicator does not (like to) marry but a woman who is a fornicator or a polytheist. And a woman who is a fornicator does not (like to) marry but a man who is a fornicator or a polytheist. And this (i.e. preferring to marry such spouses) has been prohibited for the believers. [3]

### Commentary

#### The second injunction about fornication

The first injunction was regarding the punishment of fornication,

which has been described in the previous verse. The second injunction is about marrying the men or women who have committed adultery. Alongside the marriage with polytheist man and woman is also described. The commentators have given different views while explaining this verse, but the simplest and safe meaning is that fornication is an obnoxious act, and as such whoever indulges in this act loses his character and taste, and is attracted towards persons of the same character, and likes to marry them.

The objective of this verse, according to this interpretation, is not part of an injunction, but merely to describe a fact of life, normally seen in every day life. This is a reflection on the filthy act of fornication, and its far reaching detrimental and evil effects. In other words, the verse says that fornication is a poison to ethics, and its poisonous effects ruin the moral behavior of man. He stops differentiating between good and bad, and develops a liking for evil things. He does not bother about permissible (حلال) and prohibited (حرام). Any woman that he fancies for is with the purpose of fornication, and hence he tries to cajole her into the shameful act. If he fails in his advances, only then agrees for the marriage under compulsion. But he does not really like the marriage, because he finds the objects of marriage, such as being faithful to wife, produce virtuous children and take charge of all her needs and alimony for life, a burden and nuisance for him. Since such a person does not have any concern with the marriage, his inclination is not restricted towards Muslim women but is as much for polytheist women. If a polytheist woman lays the condition of marital bond for fulfilling her religious obligation, then he would agree for the marriage as well to meet his desire, without having regard that such a marriage has no sanctity and is not valid in Islamic law. It, therefore, comes true on him that if he has a fancy for a Muslim woman, she would either be an adulterer or will become an adulterer after having illicit relations with him, or he would fancy a polytheist woman, with whom the marriage is as impermissible as adultery. This is the explanation of the first sentence of the verse, that is *الرَّائِي لَا يَنْكِحُ إِلَّا زَانِيَةً* (24:3). *أَوْ مُشْرِكَةً*.

Likewise, if a woman is a habitual adulterer and does not beg Allah's pardon, then a truly believing Muslim male, for whom marriage is a religious trust, would not really fancy such a woman, especially knowing

fully well that she would not give up her obnoxious habit of adultery even after the bond of marriage. Only a male adulterer would be attracted to her whose sole aim is to fulfill his lust rather than marriage. But if she makes marriage a condition for any mundane consideration, he accepts that too as a compromise. Alternatively, a polytheist male would agree to marry an adulterer (Muslim) woman. Since, marrying a polytheist is as prohibited for a Muslim woman as adultery, two things have been combined in this situation, that the man is both a polytheist and an adulterer. This is the explanation of the second sentence of the verse وَالرَّائِيَةُ وَالرَّائِيَةُ (24:3). لَا يَنْكِحُهَا إِلَّا زَانٍ أَوْ مُشْرِكٌ

This has become apparent from the above explanation that the term adulterer is used for those men and women who do not repent and beg Allah's Mercy, and stick to this evil habit. In case an adulterer man marries a chaste woman for the sake of house-keeping or for having children, then there is no ban to this marriage from this verse. Similarly, if an adulterer woman marries a virtuous man with the intent of leading a pure life, then also there is no stopping for such a marriage in the light of this verse. Such a marriage will be valid in accordance with the Islamic law. Majority of the Muslim jurists like Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, Imām Mālik and Imām Shāfi'ī etc. are of the same view, and it is also established that the companions of the Prophet ﷺ have solemnized such marriages. Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr has also reported the same *fatwa* by Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ. Now, as to the last sentence of the verse وَحَرَّمَ ذَٰلِكَ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (24:3) some commentators have explained the word ذَٰلِكَ as alluding towards adultery. In that case the meaning of the sentence would be that, as the adultery is such an evil act, it has been forbidden for believers. There is no confusion in the meaning by adopting this explanation, but taking ذَٰلِكَ for the meaning of adultery is rather far fetched in the context of this verse. Therefore, other commentators have adopted the explanation for ذَٰلِكَ to allude towards the marriage of adulterer (man and woman) and polytheist (man and woman).

The marriage between a Muslim man and a polytheist woman, and between a polytheist man and a Muslim woman is even otherwise established as forbidden by other categorical Qur'ānic injunctions, and there is consensus of Ummah on the issue. However, the marriage between an adulterer man and a chaste woman, and a chaste man and

an adulterer woman is forbidden as implied by this sentence but is exclusive to the situation that a chaste man after marrying an adulterer woman does not stop her from indulging in adultery even after the marriage, as that will be nothing short of pimping, which is forbidden (حرام) by Islamic law. Similarly, if a pious and chaste lady marries a habitual adulterer man and let him indulge in adultery even after the marriage, then this is also forbidden (حرام). What is meant here is that it is a big sin, but it does not follow that their marriage will be nullified.

The word 'prohibited' (حرام) has two connotations in Islamic law. One, that this act is a sin and one who acts upon it will undergo punishment for that in the Hereafter, and the other is that it will have no legal validity in this world either. For instance if a Muslim man marries a polytheist or a woman of prohibited degree, then it is not only a sin but such a marriage is not valid under Islamic law. There is no difference between such a marriage and adultery. The second meaning of prohibition is that the act is forbidden (حرام) and is liable for punishment, but the legal consequences of the act are recognized. For example if a man elopes or abducts a woman and then marries her before two witnesses with her consent, then despite the act being unlawful, the marriage will be valid and the children legitimate. Similarly the marriage between an adulterer man and an adulterer woman is though prohibited if they marry for some worldly expediency but their real aim is adultery, yet, such a marriage is legally recognized. As such all the provisions of marriage, such as alimony, dower, lineage proof, heritage etc. will all be applicable. This way the word حرم in this verse fits in very well for the polytheist woman as per former explanation, and for the adulterers (man and woman) according to the latter explanation.

In the light of this explanation it is not needed to declare the verse as cancelled as has been done by some commentators.

#### Verses 4 - 5

وَالَّذِينَ يَرْمُونَ الْمُحْصَنَاتِ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَأْتُوا بِأَرْبَعَةِ شُهَدَاءَ فَاجْلِدُوهُمْ  
ثَمَنِينَ جَلْدَةً وَلَا تَقْبَلُوا لَهُمْ شَهَادَةً أَبَدًا وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ

﴿٤﴾ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ تَابُوا مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ وَأَصْلَحُوا ۗ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ  
رَحِيمٌ ﴿٥﴾

And those who accuse the chaste women (of fornication), but they do not produce four witnesses, flog them with eighty stripes and do not accept their any evidence any more, and they are the sinners, [4] except those who repent afterwards and mend their ways; then, Allah is All-Forgiving, Very-Merciful. [5]

### Commentary

#### The third injunction relating to fornication is on false accusation and the punishment prescribed for it

As explained earlier, since adultery is the most damaging and heinous of all crimes for society, as such its punishment is also most severe under Islamic law, compared to all other crimes. Hence it was the requirement of justice and fairness that the special care be attached to prove this act. Without having prescribed evidence under Islamic law, no one should dare accuse any man or woman of adultery. Therefore, the Islamic law has made it mandatory to produce four honest equitable just men as witnesses to the crime, without which the accusation of adultery is declared a big crime by itself, for which the prescribed punishment (حد) is eighty stripes. In view of this mandatory provision one would dare making the accusation of adultery only when he is absolutely sure of watching the crime happening himself. Not only that, at the same time he should be sure that alongwith him another three honest men have also seen the crime happening, for which they will give the evidence. Because, if there are no other witnesses, or the total number is less than four, or there is doubt if the witnesses will give the evidence, then only one man would never like to venture evidence alone and be punished with eighty stripes.

#### A doubt and its answer

As for the issue that when there are such strong conditions for the evidence of adultery, the criminals will have a free hand. No one will ever dare to give evidence and fulfill the conditions of Islamic law, and hence, no criminal will ever get punished. But this thinking is totally wrong, because these conditions are exclusive to the punishment prescribed as

*ḥadd* for adultery, i.e. - hundred stripes or stoning. If two non-*mehram* man and woman are seen together in a compromising posture or indulging in shameless acts, then there is no restriction against giving evidence for it. All such matters which have nexus to adultery are also liable for punishment under Islamic penal code, for which punishment of stripes is awarded at the discretion of the judge or the ruler in accordance with the extent of the crime, but not the maximum punishment of *ḥadd*. Therefore, someone who has seen the act of adultery, but has no other witnesses need not give evidence of adultery, but can testify for having seen the accused persons in compromising position, and the judge or ruler can award the punishment after establishing the crime.

### Who are *muḥṣanāt* (مُحْصَنَات)

The word *Muḥṣanāt* is derived from the word *إِحْصَان*. In the Islamic jurisprudence there are two types of *إِحْصَان*. One, that has been acknowledged for the punishment of adultery. It means that the person against whom adultery is established is sane, adult, a free Muslim, and who is validly married to a Muslim woman and has also copulated with her. In that case the punishment of stoning will be awarded to him. The second type is that which has been acknowledged for the punishment of *فَدَف*, that is punishment for accusation of adultery. It means that the person against whom the charge of adultery is levelled is sane, adult, a free Muslim and chaste, that is he has not been proved an adulterer before. The word *مُحْصَنَات* is used in this sense in this verse (Jaṣṣāṣ).

### Ruling

In the Qur'ānic verse, either because of general practice or because of the incident for which the verse was revealed, the accusation of adultery and related punishment is described in a way that the accusers are men and the accused is a chaste lady. But the injunction applies to all situations because of the common ground applicable to all persons. If a woman levels a charge of adultery against another woman or a man, or a man accuses another man, but the required legal evidence is lacking, then in either case the accuser will be liable to the punishment of eighty stripes. (Jaṣṣāṣ & Hidāyah)

### Ruling

The punishment of eighty stripes as *ḥadd* is exclusive to false

accusation of adultery and does not apply to accusation of any other crime. However, other punishments of *ta'zīr* can be awarded on false accusations of other crimes. Although it is not specifically mentioned in the Qur'ān that this punishment is exclusive to false accusation of adultery but the condition of four witnesses is the proof of its exclusiveness, because the condition of four witnesses is only in the case of adultery. (Jaṣṣāṣ and Hidāyah)

### Ruling

The punishment prescribed for *qazf* (false accusation of adultery) relates to the right of the person against whom the charge of adultery is levelled. As such the punishment against this crime will be executed only when the person demands the execution of the punishment, otherwise it will be annulled. This is unlike the punishment of adultery, which is purely a right of Allah. Therefore, it has to be executed, even though no person has ever demanded for it.

وَلَا تَقْبَلُوا لَهُمْ شَهَادَةً أَبَدًا

And do not accept his any evidence any more - 24:4.

It means that the person guilty of *qazf* is subject to two punishments. One is inflict at once, i.e. the eighty stripes, but there is another punishment which stays with the culprit for ever. This punishment is that his evidence will not be accepted in any matter, unless he begs Allah's pardon with sincere repentance, and is also forgiven by the one whom he had accused. Until this is done, his evidence will not be acceptable in any case. This much is by consensus of Ummah. But in case of Hanafiah, even after begging the pardon, his evidence is not acceptable. Only his sin is pardoned.

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ تَابُوا مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ وَأَصْلَحُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

Except those who repent afterwards and mend their ways; then, Allah is All-Forgiving, Very-Merciful. (24:5)

Those who have been punished for false accusation of adultery, if they beg pardon and improve their habits, so that there is no risk of repetition of falsehood from them and also obtain forgiveness from one they had accused, then Allah Ta'ālā grants forgiveness and is Merciful.

This exemption, that is إِلَّا الَّذِينَ تَابُوا مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ وَأَصْلَحُوا refers to only the last sentence of the

previous verse according to Imām Abū Ḥanīfah and some other Imāms, which is وَأَوْلَيْكَ هُمْ الْفَيْسُقُونَ (24:4). So, with this exemption it means that the one who is punished for false accusation is a sinner, but if he repents with sincerity and improves himself after obtaining forgiveness from the one he had falsely accused, then he will no longer remain a sinner, and his punishment will be pardoned in the Hereafter. In other words the two punishments meant for this world, which are referred in the beginning of the verse, that is eighty stripes and inadmissibility of his evidence, will remain despite the repentance. It is because the big punishment of stripes has already been executed and the second punishment is part of *ḥadd*. All scholars are unanimous on the point that repentance does not remit punishment of *ḥadd*, only the torment of the Hereafter is pardoned. Since inadmissibility of the evidence is part of *ḥadd*, it will not be remitted by repentance. Imām Shafi'i and some other Imāms have taken this exemption toward all the sentences of the previous verse, which means that as one does not remain sinner after repentance, hence he would also not be debarred from giving evidence. Jaṣṣāṣ and Maḥzarī have provided arguments on both sides - Those interested may consult them.

### Verses 6 - 10

وَالَّذِينَ يَرْمُونَ أَزْوَاجَهُمْ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُمْ شُهَدَاءُ إِلَّا أَنْفُسُهُمْ فَشَهَادَةُ أَحَدِهِمْ أَرْبَعُ شَهَدَاتٍ بِاللَّهِ إِنَّهُ لَمِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ ﴿٦﴾  
وَالْخَامِسَةُ أَنَّ لَعْنَتَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ إِنْ كَانَ مِنَ الْكَاذِبِينَ ﴿٧﴾ وَيَدْرُؤُا  
عَنْهَا الْعَذَابَ أَنْ تَشْهَدَ أَرْبَعَ شَهَدَاتٍ بِاللَّهِ إِنَّهُ لَمِنَ الْكَاذِبِينَ  
﴿٨﴾ وَالْخَامِسَةَ أَنَّ غَضَبَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهَا إِنْ كَانَ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ ﴿٩﴾  
وَلَوْ لَا فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ تَوَّابٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿١٠﴾

And those who accuse their wives (of adultery) and they have no witnesses except their own selves, then the evidence of one of them would be to swear four oaths by Allah that he is from among the truthful, [6] and the fifth (oath) that Allah's curse be on him if he is from among the liars. [7] And it will remove the punishment from the woman if she swears four oaths by Allah that