

وَجُنُودٌ اِئْتِيَسَ اَجْمَعُونَ ﴿٩٥﴾ قَالُوا وَهُمْ فِيهَا يَخْتَصِمُونَ ﴿٩٦﴾
 تَاللّٰهِ اِنْ كُنَّا لَفِي ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِينٍ ﴿٩٧﴾ اِذْ نَسُوْا كُمْ بِرَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ
 ﴿٩٨﴾ وَمَا اَضَلَّنَا اِلَّا الْمُجْرِمُونَ ﴿٩٩﴾ فَمَا لَنَا مِنْ شٰفِعِيْنَ ﴿١٠٠﴾
 وَلَا صٰدِقٍ حَمِيْمٍ ﴿١٠١﴾ فَلَوْ اَنَّ لَنَا كَرَّةً فَنَكُوْنُ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ
 ﴿١٠٢﴾ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَايَةً وَمَا كَانَ اَكْثَرُهُمْ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿١٠٣﴾ وَاِنَّ
 رَبَّكَ لَهُوَ الْعَزِيْزُ الرَّحِيْمُ ﴿١٠٤﴾^ع

And recite before them the narrative of Ibrāhīm, [69] when he said to his father and to his people, "What do you worship?" [70] They said, "We worship idols, and stay devoted to them." [71] He said, "Do they listen to you when you call [72] (them) or do they bring benefit to you or harm [73]?" They said, "No, but we have found our fathers doing like this." [74] He said, "Have you then ever considered what you have been worshipping, [75] you and your ancient fathers, [76] they all are an enemy to me, except the Lord of the worlds, [77] Who created me, then guides me, [78] and Who feeds me and gives me drink, [79] and when I become sick, He heals me, [80] and who will make me die, then will give me life, [81] and who, I hope, will forgive my fault on the Day of Retribution. [82] O my Lord, give me wisdom and join me with the righteous, [83] and destine for me a truthful description among the next generations. [84] And make me among those who will inherit the Garden of Bliss, [85] and forgive my father. Indeed he was among those who went astray. [86] And do not put me to disgrace on the Day when all will be raised to life, [87] the Day when neither wealth will be of any use (to any one) nor sons, [88] except to one who will come to Allah with a sound heart, [89] and the Paradise will be brought near to the God-fearing [90] and the Hell will be fully uncovered for the perverse, [91] and it will be said to them, 'Where is that which you used to worship [92] beside Allah? Can they help you or help themselves?' [93] So they (their false gods) will be thrown on their faces into it - they and the erring people [94] and the

entire army of Iblīs, all together. [95] They will say when they will be quarreling with each other, [96] 'By Allah, we were in open error [97] when we used to equate you with the Lord of the worlds, [98] and none misguided us except the sinners. [99] Now we have neither any intercessors [100] nor any true friend. [101] Would that we have a chance to return whereby we become among the believers!'" [102]

Surely, in this there is a sign, [103] and most of them are not to believe. And your Lord is the Mighty, the Merciful. [104]

Commentary

وَأَجْعَلْ لِّي لِسَانَ صِدْقٍ فِي الْآخِرِينَ

And destine for me a truthful description among the next generations. (26:84)

The word لِسَانَ (*lisān*, which literally means tongue) is used in this verse in the sense of description and 'for me' means 'for my benefit. Thus meaning of the prayer is 'O Allah, grant me such delectable ways and nice signs that others may follow until the Dooms Day, and they remember me with good words and nice attributes'. (Ibn Kathīr and Rūḥ al-Ma‘ānī) Allah Ta‘ālā has accepted the supplication of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. All, including Jews, Christians and even the disbelievers of Makkah, have feelings of love and affection for the creed of Ibrāhīm عليه السلام, and attribute themselves to it. Although their ways are in conflict with those of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام, based on infidelity and polytheism, but they claim to be following his ways. As for the Ummah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, they rightly claim to be on the ways of Ibrāhīm عليه السلام, and feel proud of it.

Love for being praised is contemptible but allowed with certain conditions

Love and aspiration for being praised and respected by others is contemptible under Islamic law. The Holy Qur‘ān has made the bounties of the Hereafter dependent on desisting from the love for being praised by saying تِلْكَ الدَّارُ الْآخِرَةُ نَجْعَلُهَا لِلَّذِينَ لَا يُرِيدُونَ عُلُوًّا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فَسَادًا (As for that Ultimate Abode (the Hereafter) We assign it to those who intend neither being high on earth nor mischief - 28:83) In the present verse (84) the supplication of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام for his praise and eulogy by the

coming generations apparently looks like a wish for being praised. But if the wordings of the verse are examined carefully, it would become quite evident that it was not the love for being praised, but the real purpose of the supplication was to invoke the Divine help for performing such righteous deeds which could help him in the Hereafter. Moreover, others should also get attracted towards the righteous deeds by following his example, and so should the posterity. By declaring the love for being praised as unlawful and contemptible the Holy Qur’ān and hadith actually meant the love for mundane position of importance and profit which is not the case in the prayer of Ibrāhīm عليه السلام.

Imām Tirmidhī and Nasa’ī have related on the authority of Sayyidnā Ka’b ibn Mālīk رضي الله عنه that Holy Prophet ﷺ once said that ‘If two hungry wolves are let loose in a herd of goats, they would not do so much damage to the herd as two traits damage the faith of a man. One is the love for wealth and the other is the aspiration for being praised and respected’. (Ṭabrānī from Abū Sa’īd al-Khudrī, and Bazzār from Abū Hurairah).

Dailamī has reproduced a narration on the authority of Sayyidnā Ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنه with a weak chain of narrators that the love for praise and worldly status makes a man blind and deaf. All these aḥādīth refer to the love that has mundane considerations, or for which one has to indulge in sin or negligence in the matter of faith. When this is not the case, aspiration for praise and high position is not contemptible. It is reported in a ḥadīth that Holy Prophet ﷺ himself had made the following supplication: اللهم اجعلني في عيني صغيرا وفي اعين الناس كبيرا that is “Ya Allah, make me insignificant and disdain in my own sight, but make me great in the eyes of people”. Here also the purpose of making great in the eyes of people is that people emulate him in his righteous deeds. That is why Imām Mālīk رحمه الله تعالى has said that the one who is in fact virtuous and pious is required only to avoid making deliberate efforts to present himself as pious in the eyes of people, otherwise, if he loves to be praised by people, it is not contemptible.

Ibn ‘Arabī has said that it is evident from this verse that the desire for a righteous deed which results in people’s praise is allowed. Imām Ghazzālī رحمه الله تعالى has ruled that the love for being praised and the position of respect is permissible under three conditions. One, when the object is not to proclaim oneself as superior to others and to degrade them

to an insignificant position, but for the benefit in the Hereafter, so that others may be influenced to follow his example and try to emulate him. Second, when the object is not to earn false praise against a trait one does not possess, and desire that people should eulogize him for that. Third, when one does not have to indulge in a sin or negligence in the matter of faith in order to achieve it.

Supplication for the absolution of disbelievers is not allowed

وَاعْفُرْ لِأَبِي إِنَّهُ كَانَ مِنَ الضَّالِّينَ ﴿٨٦﴾

And forgive my father. Indeed he was among those who went astray. (26:86)

This prayer of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام seems to be against the following verse:

مَا كَانَ لِلنَّبِيِّ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَنْ يَسْتَغْفِرُوا لِلْمُشْرِكِينَ وَلَوْ كَانُوا أُولَىٰ قُرْبَىٰ مِنْكُمْ بَعْدَ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُمْ أَنَّهُمْ أَصْحَابُ الْجَحِيمِ .

“It is not for the Prophet and the believers to seek forgiveness for the Mushriks, even if they are kinsmen, after it became clear to them that they are the people of hell. (9:113)

This verse clearly lays down the rule that it is not allowed for a Muslim to pray for the forgiveness of the one about whom it is certainly known that he died in the state of *kufr*.

Now the question arises here as to why did Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام supplicate for the forgiveness of his father, who was a disbeliever? Allah Ta‘ālā himself has given answer to this question in the Holy Qur‘ān:

وَمَا كَانَ اسْتِغْفَارُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ لِأَبِيهِ إِلَّا عَنْ مَوْعِدَةٍ وَعَدَّهَا أَيَّاهُ ۖ فَلَمَّا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُ أَنَّهُ عَدُوٌّ لِلَّهِ تَبَرَّأَ مِنْهُ ۗ إِنَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ لَأَوَّاهٌ حَلِيمٌ .

And the prayer of Ibrāhīm for the forgiveness of his father was not but due to a promise he had made to him. Later when it became clear to him that he was an enemy of Allah, he withdrew himself from him. Surely, Ibrāhīm is oft-sighing (before Allah), forbearing. (9:114)

The gist of the answer is that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام had supplicated for the pardon of his father within his lifetime with the intent and desire

that Allah Ta'ālā would give him Divine help to turn to faith, after which the forgiveness was sure. Alternatively, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام was of the opinion that his father had accepted the faith, but had not made it public. But once he learnt that his father had died as an infidel, he pronounced his complete disgust against his attitude and disowned it.

Note

The point whether Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام had become aware of the infidelity of his father within his lifetime or came to know about it after his death, or he would know this on the Dooms Day, is fully discussed in Sūrah Taubah.

يَوْمَ لَا يَنْفَعُ مَالٌ وَلَا بَنُونَ ﴿٨٨﴾ إِلَّا مَنْ آتَى اللَّهَ بِقَلْبٍ سَلِيمٍ ﴿٨٩﴾

The Day when neither wealth will be of any use (to any one) nor sons, [88] except to one who will come to Allah with a sound heart, [26:89]

This verse has declared that wealth and children will not be of any help to a person on the Day of Judgment. This declaration is subjected to exception in the words, "except to one who will come to Allah with sound heart". (coming with sound heart means to come to Him with true faith). Now, this exception has been interpreted in two different ways. According to one interpretation adopted by some commentators this exception is not meant to exclude the believers from the rule. It is an exception of a special type which is known in Arabic grammar as "*munqati'*" (This type of exception does not exclude anything from the aforementioned statement. It simply says that the thing negated in the first sentence is found in someone else.) A simple example for this expression is that a person is asked about Zaid whether he has some wealth and children, and he replies, "No, his wealth and children are nothing but his sound heart." The same expression is used in this verse. The gist of the verse, according to this interpretation would be that wealth and children will not be helpful to anyone, neither to a believer nor to a disbeliever; what will be helpful, instead of wealth and children, is one's sound heart, i.e. the true faith and righteous deeds.

The second interpretation, adopted by the majority, is that it is a normal exception which means that wealth and children may be helpful

to the one who will come to Allah with sound heart, i.e. with faith and righteous deeds, but these things will not be of any use to a disbeliever.

Another point worth noting in this verse is that while referring to 'children' the Holy Qur'an has used the word بَنُونَ (Banūn) which is literally restricted to the male children. Probably the reason is that it is the male children from whom an effective help is expected in adverse situations. The expectation of help from female children in some calamities is very rare even in this world. Therefore, the male children are specifically mentioned in the context of the Hereafter to indicate that even those who were expected to help in the world will not be of any use there.

It may also be noted that "sound heart" literally means a healthy heart. But according to Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه here it means that heart of a believer that testifies the Oneness of Allah and is pure from *shirk*. The same interpretation is reported from Mujāhid, Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and Sa'īd ibn al-Musayyab رحمهم الله تعالى with different expressions. Sa'īd ibn al-Musayyab رحمهم الله تعالى says that the sound heart is only that of a believer because the heart of a disbeliever is sick. The Holy Qur'an says, فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَرَضٌ (In their heart there is a malady (2:10)).

Wealth, children and the family relationship can also be beneficial in the Hereafter to a believer

In accordance with the commonly adopted explanation of the verse it has now become clear that the wealth of a person could be of help to him on the Dooms Day, provided he is a Muslim. It can be elaborated by saying that the one who has spent his wealth in this world in the way of Allah and in the cause of righteous deeds or has spent in an ongoing charity (Ṣadaqah Jariyah), will get its benefit in the Hereafter if he dies with the faith of Islam and is listed as a believer on the Day of Judgment. On the other hand if he was not a Muslim or God-forbid became an apostate before his death, then all the good deeds he had done in this world will be of no benefit to him. The same rule will apply in the case of children, that is, if a person is Muslim, he can benefit from them in the Hereafter in that his children supplicate for his forgiveness after his death. Also, if he had tried to train the children to be pious, whatever good they will do, its benefit will also be passed on to him as long as they do righteous deeds. It is also possible that his pious children obtain his pardon in the Hereafter by intercession. In a few Āḥādīth it is reported

about such an intercession and its acceptance, especially the intercession of the young children yet to attain puberty. Likewise, the children will also benefit from their parents on the condition of faith in that if they were Muslims but their righteous deeds could not attain the level of their parents, then Allah Ta'ālā by taking into account their parents good deeds would place them also at the high position of their parents. The Holy Qur'an has elucidated it in these words وَالْحَقْنَا بِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ (52:21) that is 'We will join together with Our righteous servants their progeny'. The above quoted famous explanation of this verse has made it clear that wherever it is mentioned in the Qur'an or hadith that the family connection will be of no avail in the Hereafter, the reference is to the non-believers. This principle is applicable to the extent that even if the wife and children of the messenger are not believers, they too would not benefit from his prophethood in the Hereafter, as is the case of the son of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام the wife of Lūṭ عليه السلام and the father of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. The Qur'anic verses "Thereafter, when the Ṣūr (the trumpet) is blown, there are no ties of kinship between them" (23:101) and يَوْمَ يَفِرُّ الْمَرْءُ مِنْ أَخِيهِ وَأُمِّهِ وَأَبِيهِ (upon the day when a man shall flee from his brother, his mother, his father - 80:34) and لَا يَجْزِي وَالِدٌ عَنْ وَلَدِهِ (nor will a son be standing for his father in any way" (31:33) all reflect this very theme. (وَاللَّهُ اعْلَمُ)

Verses 105 - 122

كَذَّبَتْ قَوْمُ نُوحٍ بِالْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿١٠٥﴾ إِذْ قَالَ لَهُمُ أَخُوهُمْ نُوحٌ أَلَا تَتَّقُونَ ﴿١٠٦﴾ إِنِّي لَكُمْ رَسُولٌ أَمِينٌ ﴿١٠٧﴾ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا عِزِّي ﴿١٠٨﴾ وَمَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ إِنْ أَجِرِيَ إِلَّا عَلَى رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٠٩﴾ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا عِزِّي ﴿١١٠﴾ قَالُوا أَنْتَ لَنَا رَسُولٌ مُبِينٌ ﴿١١١﴾ قَالَ وَمَا عَلِمِي بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١١٢﴾ إِنْ حَسَابُهُمْ إِلَّا عَلَى رَبِّي لَوْ تَشْعُرُونَ ﴿١١٣﴾ وَمَا أَنَا بِطَارِدِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١١٤﴾ إِنْ أَنَا إِلَّا نَذِيرٌ مُبِينٌ ﴿١١٥﴾ قَالُوا لَيْسَ لَكَ تَنْتَهُ يَنْتَهُ لَتَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْمَرْجُومِينَ ﴿١١٦﴾ قَالَ رَبِّ إِنَّ قَوْمِي كَذَّبُونِ ﴿١١٧﴾ فَانفَحْ

بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَهُمْ فَتَحًا وَ نَجِّنِي وَمَنْ مَعِيَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١١٨﴾
 فَانجِنُهُ وَمَنْ مَعَهُ فِي الْفُلْكِ الْمَشْحُونِ ﴿١١٩﴾ ثُمَّ أغرَقْنَا بَعْدَ
 الْبَاقِينَ ﴿١٢٠﴾ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لآيَةً ط وَمَا كَانَ أَكْثَرُهُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٢١﴾
 وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿١٢٢﴾^ع

And the people of Nūḥ belied the messengers [105] when their brother Nuḥ said to them, "Do you not fear Allah? [106] I am an honest messenger for you. [107] So, fear Allah and obey me. [108] And I do not claim from you any reward for it. My reward is with none but with the Lord of the worlds; [109] so, fear Allah and obey me." [110] They said, "Shall we believe in you while you are followed by the lowest people?" [111] He said, "I do not know about what they do; [112] their account is with none but with my Lord, if you have sense. [113] And I am not to drive the believers away; [114] I am not but a plain warner." [115] They said, "Should you not stop, O Nūḥ, you will surely be among those stoned." [116] He said, "My Lord, my people have belied me. [117] So judge between me and them with an open verdict and save me and all the believers who are with me." [118] 'So We saved him and those with him in the Ark that was fully occupied. [119] Then We drowned, after that, all the remaining. [120] Surely in this there is a sign, and most of them are not to believe. [121] And surely your Lord is the Mighty, the Merciful. [122]

Commentary

وَمَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ

And I do not claim from you any reward for it. - 26:109

It is learnt from this verse that charging and acceptance of wages against religious teachings and preaching is not right. Therefore, the righteous elders have ruled it as forbidden, but the later generations have allowed it under compelling circumstances. Its full details have been given under the explanation of the verse لَا تَشْتَرُوا بِآيَاتِي ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا "And do not take a paltry price for My signs" - 2:41.

Special note

Here the verse فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا (So, fear Allah and obey me - 110) is repeated twice to make clear that for the obedience of the Messenger and fear of Allah it was enough that the prophet has any one of the two qualities: One, his honesty and integrity, and the second, his teaching and preaching without a fee. But when the Messenger who is personified of all these traits, his obedience and the fear of his God becomes all the more necessary.

Nobility of a person depends on deeds and moral qualities and not on family or status

قَالُوا أَنْتُمْ لَكُمْ وَاتَّبَعَكَ الْأَرْذَلُونَ. قَالَ وَمَا عَلِمِي بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ.

They said, "Shall we believe in you while you are followed by the lowest people?" [111] He said, "I do not know about what they do. (26:111-112)

It is related in this verse that the disbelievers rejected the invitation of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام to accept the faith on the plea that his followers were worthless poor people. So, how could they, the elite and noble, mix up with them? On this Nūḥ عليه السلام replied that he did not know about their acts, thereby hinting that their understanding of nobility on the basis of family background, wealth, or status was wrong, and that the nobility or meanness and honour or disgrace is dependent on one's deeds and morals. Hence, it was their ignorance to put the label of sordidness on his followers, because they did not know about their deeds and disposition. Unless one knows fully well about the morals and deeds of others, it is not right to pass any judgment about them. (Qurṭubī).

Verses 123 - 140

كَذَّبَتْ عَادٌ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿١٢٣﴾ إِذْ قَالَ لَهُمُ أَخُوهُمْ هُودٌ أَلَا تَتَّقُونَ
 ﴿١٢٤﴾ إِنِّي لَكُمْ رَسُولٌ أَمِينٌ ﴿١٢٥﴾ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا ﴿١٢٦﴾
 وَمَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ إِنْ أَجْرِيَ إِلَّا عَلَى رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٢٧﴾
 أَتَبْنُونَ بِكُلِّ رِيعٍ آيَةً تَعْبَثُونَ ﴿١٢٨﴾ وَتَتَّخِذُونَ مَصَانِعَ لَعَلَّكُمْ
 تَخْلُدُونَ ﴿١٢٩﴾ وَإِذَا بَطِشْتُمْ بَطِشْتُمْ جَبَارِينَ ﴿١٣٠﴾ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ

وَأَطِيعُونَ ﴿١٣١﴾ وَاتَّقُوا الَّذِي أَمَدَّكُمْ بِمَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٣٢﴾ أَمَدَّكُمْ
بِأَنْعَامٍ وَبَيْنٍ ﴿١٣٣﴾ وَجَنَّتِ وَعْيُونَ ﴿١٣٤﴾ إِنِّي أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ
عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ ﴿١٣٥﴾ قَالُوا سَوَاءٌ عَلَيْنَا أَوَعَظْتَ أَمْ لَمْ تَكُنْ مِنَ
الْوَاعِظِينَ ﴿١٣٦﴾ إِنَّ هَذَا إِلَّا خُلُقُ الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿١٣٧﴾ وَمَا نَحْنُ
بِمُعَدِّيْنَ ﴿١٣٨﴾ فَكَذَّبُوهُ فَأَهْلَكْنَاهُمْ ط إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً ط وَمَا كَانَ
أَكْثَرَهُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٣٩﴾ وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿١٤٠﴾

The (people of) ‘Ad belied the messengers [123] when their brother Hūd said to them, "Do you not fear Allah? [124] I am an honest messenger for you, [125] so fear Allah and obey me. [126] And I do not claim from you any reward for it. My reward is with none but with the Lord of the worlds. [127] Do you erect on every height a sign, having no sound purpose, [128] and take the objects of architecture as if you are going to live for ever, [129] and when you seize (someone) you seize as tyrants? [130] So fear Allah and obey me. [131] And fear the One who has supported you with what you know. [132] He has supported you with cattle and sons, [133] and with gardens and springs. [134] In fact I fear for you the punishment of a great day." [135]

They said, "It is all equal for us, whether you give us advice or you are not among those who give advice. [135] This is nothing but the practice of the ancient, [137] and we are not going to be punished." [138] Thus they belied him, so We destroyed them. Surely, in this there is a sign, and most of them are not to believe. [139] And surely your Lord is the Mighty, the Merciful. [140]

Commentary

Explanation of some difficult words

تَبْنُونَ بِكُلِّ رِيعٍ آيَةً تَعْبَثُونَ. وَتَتَّخِذُونَ مَصَانِعَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَخْلُدُونَ.

Do you erect on every height a sign having no sound purpose, [128] and take the objects of architecture as if you are going to live for ever, (26:128-129)

Ibn Jarīr رحمه الله تعالى has related from Mujāhid رحمه الله تعالى that the passage between two hills is called *Rī’* (رَيْع). But Sayyidnā Ibn ‘Abbās رحمه الله and majority have taken the meaning of *Rī’* as a high place, and its derivative is *rī’-un-na bāt* (رَيْعِ النَّبَاتِ), which means growing and climbing vegetation. Literal meaning of ‘*Āyah* (آيَة) is symbol or sign, but here it means a high palace. *تَعْبُوثٌ* is derived from ‘*abath* (عَبَثَ), which is something of no value and benefit neither in reality nor by implication. So, the meaning of the verse is that they used to make very high palaces of no benefit and which they did not need. It was just to fulfill their ego and pride. *maṣānī’* (مَصَانِعَ) is the plural of *Maṣna’* (مَصْنَعٌ). Sayyidnā Qatādah has taken *maṣānī’* (مَصَانِعَ) for the water tank, whereas Ḥaḍrat Mujāhid رحمه الله تعالى take it to mean strong palace.

لَعَلَّكُمْ تَخْلُدُونَ (as if you are going to live for ever) Imām al-Bukhārī رحمه الله تعالى has commented in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī that the word *la‘alla* (لَعَلَّ) in the verse is used as a word of simile, and that Sayyidnā Ibn ‘Abbās رحمه الله has translated it as *كَأَنَّكُمْ تَخْلُدُونَ* that is ‘as if you are..’. (Rūḥ al-Ma‘ānī)

Construction of buildings without any need is contemptible

This verse indicates that the construction of houses and buildings without need is a condemnable act. The *ḥadīth* quoted by Imām Tirmidhī on the authority of Sayyidnā ‘Anas رحمه الله conveys exactly the same message: *النفقة كلها في سبيل الله إلا البناء فلا خير فيه* (All spendings are in Allah's way, except construction, which has no merit). It means that the building which is constructed in excess of requirement has no benefit or virtue. Another narration of Sayyidnā ‘Anas رحمه الله also confirms this: *ان كل بناء وبال على صاحبه إلا: مالا، إلا مالا، يعني إلا مالا بد منه* - ‘Every building is a tribulation for the builder, except that which is necessary, because it is not a nuisance’. It is commented in Rūḥ al-Ma‘ānī that without genuine requirement construction of tall buildings is contemptible and condemned under the Shari‘ah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

Verses 141 - 159

كَذَّبَتْ ثَمُودُ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿١٤١﴾ إِذْ قَالَ لَهُمْ أَخُوهُمْ ضَلِحُ الْأَتَقُونَ ﴿١٤٢﴾ إِنِّي لَكُمْ رَسُولٌ أَمِينٌ ﴿١٤٣﴾ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا ﴿١٤٤﴾

وَمَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ ۚ إِنْ أَجْرِيَ إِلَّا عَلَىٰ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ
 ﴿١٤٥﴾ اتُّرَكُونَ فِي مَا هَاهُنَا آمِنِينَ ﴿١٤٦﴾ فِي جَنَّاتٍ وَعُيُونٍ ﴿١٤٧﴾
 وَزُرُوعٍ وَنَخْلٍ طَلَعَتْ هَٰهْنَا مِنْ الْجِبَالِ يَبُوتًا
 فَرِهِينَ ﴿١٤٩﴾ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا أَمْرَ
 الْمُسْرِفِينَ ﴿١٥١﴾ الَّذِينَ يُفْسِدُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا يُصْلِحُونَ
 ﴿١٥٢﴾ قَالُوا إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ مِنَ الْمُسَحَّرِينَ ﴿١٥٣﴾ مَا أَنْتَ إِلَّا بَشَرٌ
 مِّثْلُنَا ۗ فَأْتِ بآيَةٍ إِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ ﴿١٥٤﴾ قَالَ هَذِهِ نَاقَةٌ لَهَا
 شَرْبٌ وَلَكُمْ شَرْبٌ يَوْمَ مَعْلُومٍ ﴿١٥٥﴾ وَلَا تَمْسُوهَا بِسُوءٍ
 فَيَأْخُذْكُمْ عَذَابٌ يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ ﴿١٥٦﴾ فَعَقَرُوهَا فَاصْبَحُوا نَدِيمِينَ
 ﴿١٥٧﴾ فَأَخَذَهُمُ الْعَذَابُ ۗ إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَةً ۗ وَمَا كَانَ أَكْثَرَهُمْ
 مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٥٨﴾ وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿١٥٩﴾

The (people of) Thamūd belied the messengers [141] when their brother Ṣāliḥ said to them, "Do you not fear Allah? [142] I am an honest messenger for you. [143] So, fear Allah and obey me. [144] And I do not claim from you any reward for it. My reward is with none but with the Lord of the worlds. [145] Will you be left secure in whatever is here, [146] in gardens and springs, [147] and in farms and date-palms, the spathes of which are interwoven? [148] And you hew out houses from the hills with pride. [149] So fear Allah and obey me, [150] and do not obey the order of the transgressors [151] make mischief on the land and who do not set things right". [152]

They said, "You are merely one of those bewitched. [153] You are nothing but a human like us. So, bring a sign if you are one of the truthful." [154] He said, "This is a she-camel - She has a share of water, and you have a share of water on a specified day. [155] So do not touch her with evil (intent), lest you should be seized by a painful punishment." [156] But they killed her, then they

became remorseful and the punishment seized them. Surely in this there is a sign, and most of them are not to believe. [158] And surely, your Lord is the Mighty, the Merciful. [159]

Commentary

وَتَنْحِتُونَ مِنَ الْجِبَالِ بُيُوتًا فَرِهِينَ ﴿١٤٩﴾

And you hew out houses from the hills with pride. [149]

According to Sayyidnā Ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنه, the word فَرِهِينَ (Fārihīn) means arrogant and conceited people. But Abū Ṣāliḥ and Imām Raghīb have taken this word to mean experts. Therefore, the meaning of the verse is that Allah Ta‘ālā has favoured you by teaching such skills that you could make houses by cutting hills. The essence of all this is that you should remember the bounties of Allah Ta‘ālā and should not make mischief and trouble on earth.

Useful vocations are Divine Graces provided they are not employed in bad things

This verse indicates that nice vocations are Allah’s Graces, and to draw benefit from them is lawful. But if they are used for some sinful purpose or in an unlawful act, or if someone gets involved in them with unnecessary concentration, then it is not lawful to adopt them. An example of unnecessary construction of tall buildings and its contempt has just been mentioned in the previous verses.

Verses 160 - 175

كَذَّبَتْ قَوْمُ لُوطٍ بِالْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿١٦٠﴾ إِذْ قَالَ لَهُمُ أَخُوهُمْ لُوطُ أَلَا تَتَّقُونَ ﴿١٦١﴾ إِنِّي لَكُمْ رَسُولٌ أَمِينٌ ﴿١٦٢﴾ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا رِبِّ ﴿١٦٣﴾ وَمَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ ۚ إِنْ أَجْرِيَ إِلَّا عَلَى رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٦٤﴾ أَتَأْتُونَ الذُّكْرَانَ مِنَ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٦٥﴾ وَتَذَرُونَ مَا خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ ۗ بَلْ أَنْتُمْ قَوْمٌ عَادُونَ ﴿١٦٦﴾ قَالُوا لَئِنْ لَمْ تَنْتَهِ يَلُوطُ لَتَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْمُخْرَجِينَ ﴿١٦٧﴾ قَالَ إِنِّي

لَعَمَلِكُمْ مِّنَ الْقَالِينَ ﴿١٦٨﴾ رَبِّ نَجِّنِي وَاهْلِي مِمَّا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٦٩﴾
فَنَجَّيْنَاهُ وَاهْلَاهُ أَجْمَعِينَ ﴿١٧٠﴾ إِلَّا عَجُوزًا فِي الْغَابِرِينَ ﴿١٧١﴾ ثُمَّ
دَمَرْنَا الْآخَرِينَ ﴿١٧٢﴾ وَأَمْطَرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ مَطَرًا ۚ فَسَاءَ مَطَرُ الْمُنذَرِينَ
﴿١٧٣﴾ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً ۗ وَمَا كَانَ أَكْثَرُهُمْ مُّؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٧٤﴾ وَإِنَّ
رَبَّكَ لَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿١٧٥﴾

The people of Lūṭ belied the messengers [160] when their brother Lūṭ said to them, "Do you not fear Allah? [161] I am an honest messenger for you. [162] So fear Allah and obey me. [163] And I do not claim from you any reward for it. My reward is with none but with the Lord of the worlds. [164] Do you go to the males(for having sex) out of the whole universe, [165] and leave what your Lord has created for you, that is, your wives? in fact, you are a people who cross (all) limits." [166]

They said, "If you do not stop O Lūṭ, you shall be included among the outcast." [167] He said "Certainly, I am hateful to your act. [168] O my Lord, save me and my family from what they do." [169] So We saved him and his family, all of them [170] except an old woman among those who remained behind. [171] Then We destroyed the others, [172] and subjected them to a terrible rain. So evil was the rain of those who were warned. [173] Surely, in this there is a sign, but most of them are not to believe. [174] And surely your Lord is the Mighty, the Merciful. [175]

Commentary

Unnatural act is unlawful even with one's own wife

وَتَذَرُونَ مَا خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ

And leave what your Lord has created for you, that is, your wives? - 26:166

In the phrase مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ the word مِنْ (*min*) *Min* could be descriptive (which is translated above as 'that is') if taken in the technical sense, which would mean that in order to satisfy your lust you go after the homosexual men instead of your wives, whom Allah has given you to

meet your natural urge. This is indeed a proof of malignity. The other possibility is that the letter 'Min' is used to mean 'from' or 'out of'; then the meaning of the verse would be that it is a special part in the body of your wives which is created for the satisfaction of your natural urge. But you indulge in unnatural act with them, which is totally unlawful. Thus according to this second interpretation, it has also been made clear that it is not permitted to have unnatural intercourse with one's wife. In a *hadith* Holy Prophet ﷺ has cast curse on such a person. نعوذ بالله منه (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī).

إِلَّا عَجُوزًا فِي الْغَيْرِينَ

Except an old woman among those who remained behind. -
26:171

The word 'old woman' is used for the wife of Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام, who was an infidel and was agreeable to the unnatural act of the people of Lūṭ عليه السلام. If the wife of Lūṭ عليه السلام was an old woman then the use of this word for her is quite clear, but if she was not old, then perhaps she was called 'old woman' for the reason that the prophet's wife is regarded like the mother of the Ummah, and to call a woman having many children as old is not unlikely.

وَأَمْطَرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ مَطْرًا ۖ فَسَاءَ مَطَرُ الْمُنْذَرِينَ

and subjected them to a terrible rain. So evil was the rain of those who were warned. - 26:173

This verse has confirmed that if a man commits sodomy, he may be punished with throwing a wall on him or by throwing him down from a high place, as suggested by Ḥanafī scholars, because the people of Lūṭ عليه السلام were destroyed in a similar manner. Their township was lifted and thrown on the ground. (Shāmī Kitāb Al-Ḥudūd)

Verses 176 - 191

كَذَّبَ أَصْحَابُ لَيْكَةِ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿١٧٦﴾ إِذْ قَالَ لَهُمُ شُعَيْبٌ أَلَا
تَتَّقُونَ ﴿١٧٧﴾ إِنِّي لَكُمْ رَسُولٌ أَمِينٌ ﴿١٧٨﴾ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا

﴿١٧٩﴾ وَمَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ ۚ إِنْ أَجْرِيَ إِلَّا عَلَىٰ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ
 ﴿١٨٠﴾ أَوْفُوا الْكَيْلَ وَلَا تَكُونُوا مِنَ الْمُخْسِرِينَ ﴿١٨١﴾ وَزِنُوا
 بِالْقِسْطَاسِ الْمُسْتَقِيمِ ﴿١٨٢﴾ وَلَا تَبْخُسُوا النَّاسَ أَشْيَاءَهُمْ وَلَا
 تَعْتُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ مُفْسِدِينَ ﴿١٨٣﴾ وَاتَّقُوا الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ وَالْجِبَلَةَ
 الْأُولَىٰ ﴿١٨٤﴾ قَالُوا إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ مِنَ الْمُسَحَّرِينَ ﴿١٨٥﴾ وَمَا أَنْتَ إِلَّا
 بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُنَا وَإِنْ نَظُنُّكَ لَمِنَ الْكَاذِبِينَ ﴿١٨٦﴾ فَاسْقِطْ عَلَيْنَا كِسْفًا
 مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ إِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ ﴿١٨٧﴾ قَالَ رَبِّيَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا
 تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٨٨﴾ فَكَذَّبُوهُ فَأَخَذَهُمْ عَذَابٌ يَوْمَ الظُّلَّةِ ۗ إِنَّهُ كَانَ
 عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ ﴿١٨٩﴾ إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَةً ۗ وَمَا كَانَ أَكْثَرُهُمْ
 مُّؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٩٠﴾ وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَهوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿١٩١﴾

The people of Aykah belied the messengers [176] when Shu'aib said to them, "Do you not fear Allah? [177] I am an honest messenger for you. [178] So fear Allah and obey me. [179] And I do not claim from you any reward for it; my reward is with none but with the Lord of the worlds. [180] Give full measure and do not be among those who bring loss to others. [181] And weigh with an even balance. [182] And do not make people short of their things and do not spread disorder in the land as mischief makers. [183] And be fearful of the One who created you and the former generations." [184]

They said, "You are but one of the bewitched men. [185] And you are no more than a human like us, and in fact we consider you to be one of the liars. [186] So cause a piece from the sky to fall down upon us, if you are one of the truthful." [187] He said, "My Lord knows best what you do." [188] Thus they belied him, so they were seized by the torment of the Day of Canopy. Indeed it was the punishment of a terrible day. [189] Surely in this there is a sign, but most of them are not to believe. [190] And surely your Lord is the Mighty, the Merciful. [191]

Commentary

وَزِنُوا بِالْقِسْطَاسِ الْمُسْتَقِيمِ

And weigh with an even balance. - 26:182

Some scholars have held the word *Quisṭās* as a Roman word, which means justice, while others have taken it as an Arabic word, derived from *Qist*, which is also used for justice. It means to make use of the scale and other measuring tools in a straight and correct manner, where there is no possibility of weighing less.

وَلَا تَبْخَسُوا النَّاسَ أَشْيَاءَهُمْ

And do not make people short of their things - 26:183

What it means is that it is unlawful to reduce any quantity or amount from that which has been contracted with anyone, whether it is a measurable thing or otherwise. Therefore, if a servant or a laborer does not work his full time at his workplace, he too is included in this warning. Imām Malik رحمه الله تعالى has reported a narration in his *Muwatta'* that Sayyidnā 'Umar رضي الله عنه noticed that someone did not join in the 'Aṣr prayer. So, he enquired about the reason for that, to which he offered some excuse. Then Sayyidnā 'Umar رضي الله عنه said, *طَفَفْتَ*, 'You have reduced in measuring'. As prayer is not something to be measured, hence after quoting this ḥadīth Imām Malik رحمه الله تعالى has said that this command is not restricted to measurable things. Rather, performing any obligation less than due is included in prohibition highlighted in this verse and in Sūrah "At-taṭfīf 84".

فَأَخَذَهُمْ عَذَابٌ يَوْمَ الظُّلَّةِ

so they were seized by the torment of the Day of Canopy. -
26:189

عَذَابٌ يَوْمَ الظُّلَّةِ (the Torment of the Canopy), mentioned in this verse refers to an incident, which is this: Allah Ta'ālā sent down such an extreme heat on a people that they could not find comfort either inside the houses or outside. Then He sent down a mass of dark cloud over a nearby forest, under which there was a cool breeze. As the entire people were distressed due to excessive heat, they ran to take shelter under the cloud. When all of them assembled under the cover of the cloud, it rained fire

instead of water. Thus the whole nation was burnt to ashes. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

Verses 192 - 227

وَأَنَّهُ لَتَنْزِيلُ رَبِّ الْعَلَمِينَ ﴿١٩٢﴾ نَزَلَ بِهِ الرُّوحُ الْأَمِينُ ﴿١٩٣﴾
 عَلَى قَلْبِكَ لِتَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُنذِرِينَ ﴿١٩٤﴾ بِلِسَانٍ عَرَبِيٍّ مُبِينٍ ﴿١٩٥﴾
 وَإِنَّهُ لَفِي زُبُرِ الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿١٩٦﴾ أَوْلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُمْ آيَةٌ أَنْ يَعْلَمَهُ عُلَمُوا
 بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ ﴿١٩٧﴾ وَلَوْ نَزَّلْنَاهُ عَلَى بَعْضِ الْأَعْجَمِينَ ﴿١٩٨﴾ فَقَرَأَهُ
 عَلَيْهِمْ مَا كَانُوا بِهِ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٩٩﴾ كَذَلِكَ سَلَكْنَاهُ فِي قُلُوبِ
 الْمُجْرِمِينَ ﴿٢٠٠﴾ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ حَتَّى يَرُوا الْعَذَابَ الْأَلِيمَ ﴿٢٠١﴾
 فَيَأْتِيَهُمْ بَغْتَةً وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿٢٠٢﴾ فَيَقُولُوا هَلْ نَحْنُ مُنظَرُونَ
 ﴿٢٠٣﴾ أَفَبِعَذَابِنَا يَسْتَعْجِلُونَ ﴿٢٠٤﴾ أَفَرَأَيْتَ إِنْ مَتَّعْنَاهُمْ سِنِينَ
 ﴿٢٠٥﴾ ثُمَّ جَاءَهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يُوعَدُونَ ﴿٢٠٦﴾ مَا أَغْنَى عَنْهُمْ مَا
 كَانُوا يُمْتَعُونَ ﴿٢٠٧﴾ وَمَا أَهْلَكْنَا مِنْ قَرِيَةٍ إِلَّا لَهَا مُنذِرُونَ ﴿٢٠٨﴾
 ذِكْرًا ۖ وَمَا كُنَّا ظَالِمِينَ ﴿٢٠٩﴾ وَمَا نَنْزَلَتْ بِهِ الشَّيَاطِينُ ﴿٢١٠﴾
 وَمَا يَنْبَغِي لَهُمْ وَمَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ ﴿٢١١﴾ إِنَّهُمْ عَنِ السَّمْعِ لَمَعزُولُونَ
 ﴿٢١٢﴾ فَلَا تَدْعُ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهًا آخَرَ فَتَكُونُ مِنَ الْمَعْدِيينَ ﴿٢١٣﴾
 وَأَنْذِرْ عَشِيرَتَكَ الْأَقْرَبِينَ ﴿٢١٤﴾ وَاخْفِضْ جَنَاحَكَ لِمَنِ اتَّبَعَكَ
 مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٢١٥﴾ فَإِنْ عَصَوْكَ فَقُلْ إِنَّي بِرِيءٍ مِمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ
 ﴿٢١٦﴾ وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى الْعَزِيزِ الرَّحِيمِ ﴿٢١٧﴾ الَّذِي يَرِيكَ حِينَ تَقُومُ
 ﴿٢١٨﴾ وَتَقْلُبَكَ فِي السُّجُودِ ﴿٢١٩﴾ إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ
 ﴿٢٢٠﴾ هَلْ أُنَبِّئُكُمْ عَلَىٰ مَنْ نَزَّلَ الشَّيَاطِينُ ﴿٢٢١﴾ نَزَّلَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ
 أَفَّاكٍ أَثِيمٍ ﴿٢٢٢﴾ يُلْقُونَ السَّمْعَ وَأَكْثُرُهُمْ كَذِبُونَ ﴿٢٢٣﴾ وَالشُّعْرَاءُ

﴿٢٢٠﴾ وَإِذْ يَرْثِي رَبِّي قَوْمِي رَبِّ كَيْفَ أَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٢١﴾ أَلَمْ يَرِ الْإِنسَانَ إِذْ أَلَمَهُ الْإِنسَانُ أَن يَمْشِي وَكَيْفَ أَلَمَهُ الْإِنسَانُ إِذْ عَلَّمَهُ الْقَامُونَ ﴿٢٢٢﴾ وَتَسْمِعُ الْأَنْعَامَ غَلْغَلَهَا وَتَكْفُرُ الْإِنسَانَ بِمَا كَفَرَ ﴿٢٢٣﴾

And this (Qur'an) is the revelation of the Lord of the worlds. [192] It is brought by the Trusted Spirit down [193] to your heart, so that you become one of the warners [194] in plain Arabic language. [195] And of course, it is (mentioned) in the scriptures of the former people. [196]

Is it not a proof for them that the knowledgeable of the children of Isra'il recognize him (the prophet)? [197] And (even) if We had revealed it to a non-Arab, [198] and he would have recited it to them, they were not to believe in it. [199] Thus We have made it enter into the hearts of the sinners. [200] They will not believe in it until they will see the painful punishment [201] and it will come to them suddenly while they will not be anticipating (it), [202] and they will say, "Is it (possible) that we are given some respite?" [203] Are they asking then that Our punishment should come soon? [204] So tell me, If We give them enjoyment for years, [205] then comes to them what they are warned of, [206] what help can be provided to them by the things they were given to enjoy? [207] And We did not destroy any town unless it has had warners [208] to give advice, and We have never been unjust. [209]

And this (Qur'an) is not brought down by the satans. [210] It neither fits them, nor are they able to (do this). [211] In fact they are kept far from hearing (it at the time of revelation). [212] So do not invoke any other god along with Allah, or you will be among those who are to be punished. [213] And warn the nearest people of your clan, [214] and be kind with humbleness to the believers who followed you. [215] So if they disobey you, then say, "I disown what you do," [216] and place your trust in the Mighty, the Merciful, [217] Who sees you when you stand

[218] (in prayer) and (sees) your movement among those who prostrate. [219] Surely, He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing. [220]

Shall I tell you on whom the satans descend? [221] They descend on every sinful liar. They give ear to hear (secretly) and most of them tell lies. As for the poets, they are followed by the straying people. Did you not see that they wander in every valley and that they say what they do not do, except those who believe and do righteous deeds and remember Allah very much and defend themselves after they are wronged. And the wrongdoers will soon know to which place they are going to return. [227]

Commentary

Qur'ān is the name of the collection of its words and meanings

نَزَلَ بِهِ الرُّوحُ الْأَمِينُ ﴿١٩٣﴾ عَلَى قَلْبِكَ لِتَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُنذِرِينَ ﴿١٩٤﴾ بِلِسَانٍ عَرَبِيٍّ مُبِينٍ ﴿١٩٥﴾ وَإِنَّهُ لَفِي زُجُرِ الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿١٩٦﴾

It is brought by the Trusted Spirit down [193] to your heart, so that you become one of the warners [194] in plain Arabic language. [195] And of course, it is (mentioned) in the scriptures of the former people. [196]

The words بِلِسَانٍ عَرَبِيٍّ مُبِينٍ (in plain Arabic language - 195) in these verses makes it clear that Qur'ān is only that which is in Arabic language. Any translation of a passage or the whole of Qur'ān in any language cannot be called Qur'ān. But the next sentence إِنَّهُ لَفِي زُجُرِ الْأَوَّلِينَ (And of course, it is [mentioned] in the scriptures of the former people - 196) does not seem to be in consonance with it, because the pronoun 'it' is apparently refers to the Qur'ān and means that the Qur'ān was also in the earlier scriptures, i.e. in Torah, Injil and Zabūr. It is also well known that the earlier books, namely Torah, Injil and Zabūr, were not in the Arabic language. Hence the inclusion of the meanings of Qur'ān in them is referred in this verse as 'Qur'ān'. Answer to this apparent contradiction is that according to majority of the Ummah, sometimes even the subject matter of the Qur'ān is called Qur'ān in a general sense, because the real purpose of a book is the subjects it deals with. The statement that earlier books also contained Qur'ān is in this sense only that they included some Qur'ānic subjects. This statement is also endorsed by many narrations of *ḥadīth*.

Sayyidnā Maqil ibn Yasar ؓ has reported a Ḥadīth in Mustadrak of Ḥākim that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said that Sūrah Al-Baqarah was given to him from 'adh-dhikr al-'awwal', and Sūrah Ṭāḥā, Ṭawāsin طواسين (all Sūrahs starting from Ṭasin طس) and Ḥawāmīm حواميم (all Sūrahs beginning with Ḥāmīm) were given from the tablets of Sayyidnā Mūsā ؑ, while Sūrah Al-Fātiḥah was given to him from under the 'Arsh عرش (the great Throne). Ṭabarānī, Ḥākim, Baihaqī etc. have reported on the authority of Sayyidnā Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd ؓ that Sūrah Al-Mulk is present in Torah as well. (Al-Ḥadīth). The Sūrah سَبِّحْ اسْمَ رَبِّكَ الْأَعْلَى has itself said, إِنَّ هَذَا لَفِي الصُّحُفِ الْأُولَى صُحُفِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَمُوسَى عَلَيْهِمُ السَّلَام (87:18,19) that is these subjects have also appeared in the books of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm and Sayyidnā Mūsā ؑ.

The gist of all these verses and narrations is that many a subjects of the Qur'ān were also covered in the earlier books as well. But it does not mean that those parts of the earlier books in which the Qur'ānic subjects were covered are given the name of Qur'ān. No one in the Ummah is of the opinion that those parts of the earlier books, be called Qur'ān. Instead the majority of Ummah believes that Qur'ān is the name not only of its wordings but also of its meanings. If someone picks up some of the Quranic words from different places and put them together to make a passage like الحمد لله العزيز الرحيم الذي له ملك السموات وهو رب العالمين خالق كل شيء وهو المستعان, it will not be called Qur'ān, despite the fact that all these words are taken from the Qur'ān. Likewise, only the meanings of Qur'ān, irrespective of the language they are rendered in, cannot be regarded as Qur'ān.

Reciting translation of Qur'ān in prayers is not allowed by consensus of Ummah

The whole Ummah is unanimous on the rule that reciting the translation of the Qur'ān in any other language like Urdu, Persian, English etc. is not sufficient for discharging the obligation of recitation in Ṣalāh, except in a case of extreme necessity. The jurists who are reported to have relaxed this rule have, later on, changed their view.

Urdu translation of Qur'ān is not allowed to be called Urdu Qur'ān

If only the translation of the Qur'ān is written in any language without the Arabic text, it cannot be called the Qur'ān. Some people call

the Urdu translation of the Qur'ān as Urdu Qur'ān, or the English translation of the Qur'ān as English Qur'ān. It is not right and amounts to disrespect of the Holy Book. Printing, calling or trading of something in the name of Qur'ān, without the Arabic text of the Qur'ān, is not permitted. This subject is dealt with in detail in my treatise (تحذير الاخوان عن (تغيير رسم القرآن).

﴿٢٠٥﴾ أَفَرَأَيْتَ إِنْ مَتَّعْنَاهُمْ سِنِينَ

So tell me, If We give them enjoyment for years, - 26:205.

There is a hint in this verse that those who are bestowed with long life in this world by Allah Ta'ālā, it is His grace on them. But those who show ingratitude for this grace and do not submit to Islam, to them this respite and grace will not be of any avail. Imām Zuhri رحمه الله تعالى has related that Sayyidnā 'Umar ibn 'Abdul Azīz رحمه الله تعالى used to recite this verse every morning by holding his beard and addressing his Self:

وليلك نوم والردي لك لازم	نهارك يا مغرور سهو و غفلة
ولا انت فى النوم ناج وسالم	فلا انت فى الايقاظ يقظان حازم
كذلك فى الدنيا تعيش البهائم	وتسعى الى ما سوف تكره غبه

'O the duped one! Your whole day is spent in negligence and the night in sleep, while death is inevitable for you. Neither you are awake among the alert and woken nor are you the one who will get salvation from among the sleepers. You keep endeavoring for things which will soon bring you unpleasant results. Cattle and animals live like this in the world'.

﴿٢١٤﴾ وَأَنْذِرْ عَشِيرَتَكَ الْأَقْرَبِينَ

And warn the nearest people of your clan, -26:214.

'Ashirah عشيرة means clan and by limiting it with 'aqrabīn (the nearest people) it is used for close relatives. It is worth noting here that the mission of the Holy Prophet ﷺ as a messenger is universal to the whole Ummah, then what is the wisdom in making it special for the members of the clan? But if we look at it rather closely, we will notice in it an easy and effective way for preaching, which would have far-reaching effect. One's own family members having the privilege of closeness are also entitled to

have precedence over others on initiating any act of virtue. By virtue of close mutual relations they know each other well and anyone with false claims would get exposed in no time. Conversely, the one having good reputation among the family members would be readily accepted and listened to. Once the close relatives throw their weight to support a good cause, it brings in unity and mutual help between them. This way they develop a group of the family members on the basis of trust and sincerity and it becomes very easy to spend the daily life in an atmosphere of peace to follow the religious code. Then this homogeneous and sincere group works like a small power in preaching and spreading the precepts and code of religion to others. In another verse of the Holy Qur‘ān it is said قُرْآنًا أَنفُسِكُمْ وَأَهْلِيكُمْ نَارًا (66:6) that is ‘Save yourself and your family members from the fire of Jahannam’. Responsibility of saving one's dependent from the fire of Jahannam is placed on every member of the clan. This is an easy and simple way of reforming the conduct and morals. It is an every day experience that in order to follow good conduct and morals and then to stick to them is only possible when the environment is favourable for that. If only one person in the entire household wishes to perform his prayers regularly, even that devotee will find it difficult to carry it out. In the present environment it has become difficult to abstain from the unlawful things not because it is not possible to keep away from them, but the reason is that when the whole fraternity is involved in a sin, it becomes very difficult for just one person to keep himself aloof. When this verse was revealed to Holy Prophet ﷺ, he called out all the members of the family and conveyed to them the message of truth. Although they did not accept the truth at that time but gradually the family members started converting to Islam. When the uncle of Holy Prophet ﷺ Sayyidnā Ḥamzah ؓ, converted to Islam it provided great strength to the mission.

وَالشُّعْرَاءُ يَتَّبِعُهُمُ الْغَاوُونَ ﴿٢٢٤﴾

As for the poets, they are followed by the straying people. -
26:224.

شعر (Shi‘r) which is the origin of Shu‘arā’ and is translated as poetry; is an Arabic word which lexically means any statement based on imagination and ideas not confirmed by serious proofs. It is not necessary for being a ‘Shi‘r’ in original Arabic to have a particular rhythm or

qāfiyah or *radīf*.

Since the technical *shi‘r* (poetry) which is always based on particular rhythms is generally composed of imaginary thoughts, the technical definition of *shi‘r* (poetry) is "a composition of words having a particular rhythm and a similar sound at the end of each line (Qāfiyah)". The pagans of Makkah used to call the Holy Prophet ﷺ a *shā‘ir* (a poet) and the Holy Qur‘ān, a *shi‘r* (poetry). Some commentators of the Holy Qur‘ān are of the view that the pagans of Makkah used to call the Qur‘ān a *shi‘r* in its technical sense. But others are of the opinion that it was not so, because the infidels of Makkah were fully conversant with the code and principles of poetry, and it is obvious that Qur‘ān is not a book of poetry. Even a non-Arab would not accept that, not to say anything of the eloquent Arabs. On the contrary, the Arabs used to call him a poet in the literal sense of the word, that is they regarded his thoughts as imaginary. Their objective was to call him a liar, because the word *Shā‘ir* is also used in the sense of lie, and *Shi‘r* for a liar.

وَالشُّعْرَاءُ يَتَّبِعُهُمُ الْغَاوُونَ ﴿٢٢٤﴾

As for the poets, they are followed by the straying people. -
26:224

The word *شاعر* (*Shā‘ir*) is used in this verse in its technical and commonly known meaning, that is the rhythmic composer. This interpretation is endorsed by a narration in *Fataḥul Bārī* that when this verse was revealed, the respected companions, Sayyidnā ‘Abdullāh ibn Rawāḥah, Ḥassān ibn Thābit and Ka‘b ibn Mālīk رضى الله عنهم اجمعين, who were well known poets, went crying to Holy Prophet ﷺ and submitted that this verse was revealed by Allah Ta‘ālā and they too were poets. Then Holy Prophet ﷺ said ‘You go through the last part of the verse’. What he conveyed was that their poetry was not frivolous having bad intent, hence they were included in that exception which is mentioned in the last part of the verse. The commentators have therefore, elaborated that in the beginning of the verse the disbeliever poets are purported, because depraved people, defiant Satan and disobedient Jinn followed and narrated their poetry. (*Fataḥul Bārī*)

The place of poetry in Islamic Shari‘ah (jurisprudence)

In the beginning of these verses the poetry is disapproved strongly and appears an object of God’s wrath. But towards the end of Sūrah the exception allowed proves that poetry is not condemned completely. Only that poetry is condemned and abominable which encourages Allah’s disobedience or puts hindrance in His remembrance, or disgraces and condemns someone falsely, or be obscene or leads to obscenity. But that poetry which is free from these sins and unbecoming things is exonerated by Allah Ta‘ālā through this verse *إِلَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ* (227). On the other hand the poetry which deals with the subjects of wisdom based on sermons and teachings is part of the virtues carrying reward in the Hereafter as reported by Sayyidnā ‘Ubayy Ibn Ka‘b رضي الله عنه *إِنَّ مِنَ الشَّعْرِ حِكْمَةً* that is ‘There is a poetry which contains wisdom’. (Bukhārī) Ḥāfiẓ ibn Ḥajar has said that here wisdom stands for rightful things based on truth. Ibn Baṭṭāl has explained that the poetry dealing with Oneness of Allah, His remembrance and love for Islam is desirable and praiseworthy, and in the hadith under reference that type of poetry is in view. However, the poetry dealing with falsehood and obscenity is contemptible. This explanation is also confirmed by the following narrations:

(1) ‘Amr ibn Sharīd has reported through his father that Holy Prophet ﷺ had listened 100 couplets of ‘Umayyah ibn aṣ-ṣalt from him.

(2) Muṭarrif has reported that he traveled with Sayyidnā ‘Imrān ibn Ḥuṣain رضي الله عنه from Kūfa to Baṣrah and he used to recite couplets on every stage of the journey.

(3) Ṭabarī رحمه الله تعالى has reported about the distinguished companions and *tābi‘īn* that they used to compose, listen and recite poetry.

(4) Imām Bukhārī رحمه الله تعالى has reported that Sayyidah ‘A’ishah رضي الله عنها used to compose poetry.

(5) Abū Ya‘lā has reported from Ibn ‘Umar رضي الله عنه that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said, "Poetry is a composition". If its subject matter is good and useful, it is good, and if its subject is bad or sinful, it is bad. (Fataḥul Bārī)

Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī has remarked that from among the ten jurists of

Madīnah, who are well known for their learning and graciousness, ‘Ubaidullāh ibn ‘Utbah ibn Mas‘ūd ؓ was an eloquently articulate poet, and the poetry of Qāḍī Zubair ibn Bakkār was compiled in a book. Qurṭubī has reproduced an observation of Abū ‘Amr that no intelligent and knowledgeable person would take the poetry comprising of nice subjects as bad. It is also worth noting that among the noble companions who were the religious leaders, there is none who had either not composed the poetry himself or had not recited or listened to the composition of others with fondness.

Where poetry is condemned in certain narrations, it is with the purpose that one should not get engrossed so much in it that he neglects his worships and the Qur’ān. Imām Bukhārī has elaborated this subject in a separate chapter in which he has quoted from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ؓ :

لَأَنْ يَمْتَلِي جَوْفَ رَجُلٍ قَبْحًا يَرِيهِ خَيْرٌ مِنْ أَنْ يَمْتَلِي شِعْرًا

‘It is better to fill up one’s belly with pus than to fill it up with poetry’.

Imām Bukhārī has explained that according to his understanding this statement portrays the situation when the poetry becomes dominant over remembrance of Allah Ta‘ālā, or in one’s involvement with the Qur’ān or with acquiring knowledge. But if the poetry is kept under check, it is not bad. Similarly, there is consensus of Ummah that the poetry which is obscene or contains defaming subjects is unlawful and is not permitted. This ruling is not exclusive to poetry only, but applies to any writing – prose or poetry. (Qurṭubī)

Sayyidnā ‘Umar ibn Khaṭṭāb ؓ had dismissed his governor, ‘Adiyy ibn Naḍlah from his position because he used to compose obscene poetry. Sayyidnā ‘Umar ibn ‘Abdul ‘Azīz رحمه الله تعالى had directed to exile ‘Amr ibn Rabī‘ah and ‘Abul Aḥwaṣ on the same charge, but when ‘Amr ibn Rabī‘ah repented on his deeds, his repentance was accepted. (Qurṭubī).

Every art or learning, which makes one oblivious of Allah and Hereafter, is contemptible

Ibn Abī Jamrah has ruled that excessive involvement in poetry and all such learning or art which makes one oblivious of the remembrance of Allah Ta‘ālā and causes doubts in the mind about beliefs of Islam or helps

in promoting spiritual ills, fall under the same ruling as is given for contemptible poetry.

The depravity of the followers is often an indicator of the depravity of the leader

وَالشُّعْرَاءُ يَتَّبِعُهُمُ الْغَاوُونَ ﴿٢٢٤﴾ ط

As for the poets, they are followed by the straying people. -
26:224

The poets are blamed in this verse that their followers are misled. Here the question arises that if it is the followers who are misled, how could the poets be blamed for the acts which their followers adopt? It is because the wrong deeds adopted by the followers are normally the signs of misdeeds of the one who is followed. But Maulana Ashraf ‘Ali Thanavi رحمه الله تعالى has clarified that this rule will apply when the one who is followed has a hand in the misdeeds of the followers. For instance if there is no check on telling lies and backbiting in the meetings of the leader, and because of that his followers, who sit in his company, also adopt this habit, then this sin committed by the followers will be regarded as a manifestation of the sin of the one who is followed. But if the misdeeds are different from the deeds of the leader, then he cannot be made responsible for the misdeeds of his followers. For example, if a person follows a scholar for his beliefs diligently and sincerely, but does not follow the scholar in his righteous deeds and morals, then the scholar cannot be blamed for the former's lack of righteousness and morality. (Allah is pure and knows best).

Alḥamdulillāh

**The Commentary on
Sūrah Ash-Shu‘arā’
Ends here.**

Sūrah An-Naml

(The Ant)

Sūrah An-Naml was revealed in Makkah and it has 93 Verses and 7 sections

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

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

Verses 1 - 6

طَس ت تِلْكَ اَيْتُ الْقُرْآنِ وَكِتَابٍ مُّبِينٍ ﴿١﴾ هُدًى وَبُشْرَى
لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٢﴾ الَّذِينَ يُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَهُمْ
بِالْآخِرَةِ هُمْ يُوقِنُونَ ﴿٣﴾ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ زِينًا لَهُمْ
أَعْمَالُهُمْ فَهُمْ يَعْمَهُونَ ﴿٤﴾ أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ لَهُمْ سُوءُ الْعَذَابِ وَهُمْ
فِي الْآخِرَةِ هُمُ الْآخْسَرُونَ ﴿٥﴾ وَإِنَّكَ لَتَلْقَى الْقُرْآنَ مِنْ لَدُنْ
حَكِيمٍ عَلِيمٍ ﴿٦﴾

Tā, Sīn. These are the verses of the Qur'ān and an enlightening book, [1] to give guidance and good news to the believers [2] who establish Ṣalāh and pay Zakāh and who have faith in the Hereafter. [3] As for those who do not believe in the Hereafter, We have made their deeds adorned in their sight. So they are wandering astray. [4] Those are the the people who deserve the worst punishment and who are the worst losers in the Hereafter. [5] And surely you are being given the Qur'ān by a wise, knowledgeable Being. [6]

Commentary

زَيْنًا لَهُمْ أَعْمَالَهُمْ (We have made their deeds adorned in their sight - 27:4) It means that those who do not believe in the Hereafter We have made their bad actions look adorned in their sight. Therefore they feel good about them and remain enthralled in depravity. Some commentators have interpreted that "their deeds" is used in this verse for good deeds. Hence meaning of the verse is that Allah had placed the good deeds before them with all their attractions. But those unjust people did not pay any attention to them, rather they remained engrossed in infidelity; hence lost their way in wilderness.

However, the first interpretation looks more appropriate and straightforward. In the first place, in the Qur'ān, the word (Zīnah) 'adornment' has been generally used for bad actions, for instance: زَيْنَ لِلنَّاسِ (It has been made attractive for people to love the desires - 3:14) حُبُّ الشَّهَوَاتِ، زَيْنَ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا (Adorned is the present life for those who disbelieve - 2:212) زَيْنَ لِكَثِيرٍ مِّنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ (6:137). Its use for good actions is very rare, such as: وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ حَبَّبَ إِلَيْكُمُ الْإِيمَانَ وَزَيَّنَهُ فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ (But Allah has endeared to you belief, decking it fair in your hearts - 49:7). Secondly, the word أعمالهم (their deeds) used in the verse is also pointing out that bad actions are meant here and not the righteous actions.

Verses 7 - 14

إِذْ قَالَ مُوسَىٰ لَأَهْلِيهِ إِنِّي آنستُ نَارًا ۗ سَأَتِيكُم مِّنْهَا بِخَبَرٍ أَوْ آتِيكُم بِشِهَابٍ قَبَسٍ لَّعَلَّكُمْ تَصْطَلُونَ ﴿٧﴾ فَلَمَّا جَاءَهَا نُودِيَ أَنْ بُورِكَ مَنْ فِي النَّارِ وَمَنْ حَوْلَهَا ۗ وَسُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٨﴾ يُمُوسَىٰ إِنَّهُ أَنَا اللَّهُ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿٩﴾ وَالَّتِي عَصَاكَ ۗ فَلَمَّا رَأَاهَا تَهَتَّرُ كَانَهَا جَانٌّ وَلَّىٰ مُدْبِرًا وَلَمْ يُعَقِّبْ ۗ يُمُوسَىٰ لَا تَخَفْ إِنِّي لَا يَخَافُ لَدَى الْمَرْسُلُونَ ﴿١٠﴾ إِلَّا مَن ظَلَمَ ثُمَّ بَدَّلَ حُسْنًا بَعْدَ سُوءٍ فَإِنِّي غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿١١﴾ وَأَنْزِلْ بَدَاكَ فِي جَبِّكَ تَخْرُجُ بَيْضَاءَ مِنْ غَيْرِ سُوءٍ ۗ فِي تِسْعِ آيَاتٍ إِلَىٰ فِرْعَوْنَ وَقَوْمِهِ ۗ إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا قَوْمًا فَسِيقِينَ ﴿١٢﴾ فَلَمَّا جَاءَتْهُمْ آيَاتُنَا مُبْصِرَةً قَالُوا هَذَا

سِحْرٌ مُّبِينٌ ﴿١٣﴾ وَجَحَدُوا بِهَا وَاسْتَيْقَنَتْهَا أَنفُسُهُمْ ظُلْمًا وَعُلُوًّا ط
فَانظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُفْسِدِينَ ﴿١٤﴾ ع

(Remember) when Mūsā said to his family, "I have noticed a fire. I shall bring to you some news from it, or bring to you a live ember, so that you may warm yourselves." [7] So when he came to it, he was called: "Blessed is the one who is in the fire and the one who is around it. And pure is Allah, the Lord of the worlds. [8] O Mūsā, the fact is that I AM Allah, the Mighty, the Wise. [9] And cast your staff down." So when he saw it moving, as if it was a snake, he retreated, turning his back and did not look behind. "O Mūsā be not scared. I am such that the messengers are not scared before Me, [10] except him who did wrong, then after (having done) evil, replaced (it) with good, then I am Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful. [11] And put your hand into your bosom, and it will come out white, without any evil, as one of the nine signs (sent) to the Pharaoh and his people. Surely they have been a sinful people. [12]

So when Our signs came to them as an eye-opener, they said, "This is a clear magic." [13] And they denied them out of sheer injustice and arrogance, though their hearts believed them (to be true). See, then, how was the fate of the mischief-makers. [14]

Commentary

Adoption of natural means for one's need is not against trust in Allah

إِذْ قَالَ مُوسَىٰ لِأَهْلِهِ إِنِّي آنَسْتُ نَارًا ط سَاتِيكُمْ مِنْهَا بِخَبِيرٍ أَوْ سَاتِيكُمْ بِسِهَابٍ قَبَسٍ لَّعَلَّكُمْ تَصْطَلُونَ ﴿٧﴾

(Remember) when Mūsā said to his family, "I have noticed a fire. I shall bring to you some news or bring to you an inflamed ember, so that you may warm yourselves" (27:7).

Here Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام faced two necessities. One, to find out the way, which he had forgotten, and second, to warm up with the fire, because it was a cold night. For achieving this purpose he tried to go to

mount Ṭūr. But he did not make a claim of success in his endeavour, rather he uttered such words that conveyed his servitude and hope from Allah Ta'ālā. Thus, it is apparent that in order to meet one's requirements and needs in life it is not against the trust in Allah to strive and make endeavour. But the conviction should be in Allah Ta'ālā and not in one's own efforts. Perhaps, the wisdom in showing him the fire was that it had fulfilled his two needs – finding the way and to get warm with its heat. (Ruḥ)

Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام has said *أَمْكُنُوا* and *تَصْطَلُونُ* which are both in plural form, and are used where the addressees are more than one, although there was only his wife (Sayyidnā Shuāib's عليه السلام daughter) with him. Use of plural form for her only was to show respect to her. It was in the same manner as some times the noble people use plural form in addressing even a single person. It is reported from the Holy Prophet ﷺ also in āḥādīth that he used to address his wives in plural form.

It is prudent not to refer one's wife by her name in general gatherings, rather an allusion for the purpose is better

قَالَ مُوسَى لِأَهْلِهِ (Mūsā said to his family) The word "Ahl" is used in this verse for the wife of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام while this word means "family" and includes all the members of one's household alongwith his wife, although the wife of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was the only one present at the time of this incident, but by the use of this word in his discourse there is a hint that while referring to one's wife in a group of people it is better to use common words. For example, 'my family members are of the opinion'.

فَلَمَّا جَاءَهَا نُودِيَ أَنْ بُورِكَ مَنْ فِي النَّارِ وَمَنْ حَوْلَهَا وَسُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٨﴾ يَمْوَسَىٰ إِنَّهُ أَنَا اللَّهُ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿٩﴾

So when he came to it, he was called: "Blessed is the one who is in the fire and the one who is around it And pure is Allah, the Lord of the worlds. O Mūsā, the fact is that I AM Allah, the Mighty, the Wise. (27:8 - 9)

The real nature of seeing the fire and hearing the voice from it

This incident of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام has appeared in the Qur'an at many places under different chapters. Two sentences in the above verses of Sūrah An-Naml call for special attention. One, *بُورِكَ مَنْ فِي النَّارِ* (Blessed is the one who is in the fire) and two, *إِنَّهُ أَنَا اللَّهُ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ*. (The fact is that I AM

Allah, the Mighty, the Wise) In Sūrah Ṭa-Ḥā, the commentary on which appears in this volume earlier, this incident is mentioned in these words:

إِذْ رَأَىٰ نَارًا فَقَالَ لِأَهْلِهِ امْكُثُوا إِنِّي آنَسْتُ نَارًا لَّعَلِّي آتِيكُم مِّنْهَا بِقَبَسٍ أَوْ أَجْدَعَلَىٰ النَّارِ هُدًى ﴿١٠﴾ فَلَمَّا أَتَاهَا نُودِيَ يَمْوَسَىٰ ﴿١١﴾ إِنِّي أَنَا رَبُّكَ فَاخْلَعْ نَعْلَيْكَ إِنَّكَ بِالْوَادِ الْمُقَدَّسِ طُوًى ﴿١٢﴾ وَأَنَا اخْتَرْتُكَ فَاسْتَمِعْ لِمَا يُوحَىٰ ﴿١٣﴾ إِنِّي أَنَا اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنَا فَاعْبُدْنِي وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِذِكْرِي ﴿١٤﴾

When he saw a fire and said to his family, wait. I have noticed a fire. Perhaps I bring you an ember from it, or find some guidance by the fire."

So when he came to it, he was called, "O Mūsā, it is Me, your Lord, remove your shoes, you are in the sacred valley of Tuwa. And I have chosen you, so listen to what is revealed: Surely, I AM ALLAH. There is no god but I, so worship Me and establish Ṣalāh for My remembrance. (20:10-14)

In these verses also two sentences need special attention: **إِنِّي أَنَا رَبُّكَ** (it is Me, your Lord) and **إِنِّي أَنَا اللَّهُ** (I AM ALLAH). And in Sūrah Al-Qaṣaṣ the incident is related in these words:

نُودِيَ مِنْ شَاطِئِ الْوَادِ الْأَيْمَنِ فِي الْبُقْعَةِ الْمُبَارَكَةِ مِنَ الشَّجَرَةِ أَنْ يَمْوَسَىٰ إِنِّي أَنَا اللَّهُ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ

He was called by a voice coming from a side of the right valley in the blessed ground, from the tree, saying" O Mūsā, I AM Allah, the Lord of the worlds" (28:30)

In all the three Sūrahs although the incident is described under different titles, yet the subject matter is the same, which is that Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام needed fire that night for quite a few reasons. Allah Ta'ālā evinced that to him on a tree of mount Ṭūr, and he heard these words from that fire or the tree:

إِنِّي أَنَا رَبُّكَ

It is Me your Lord. (20:12)

إِنَّهُ، أَنَا اللَّهُ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ

The fact is that I AM ALLAH, the Mighty, the Wise. (27:9)

إِنِّي أَنَا اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنَا

I AM ALLAH. There is no god but I. (20:14)

أَنَا اللَّهُ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ

I AM ALLAH, the Lord of the worlds. (28:30)

It is possible that this vocative might have been repeated again and again, sometime by one word and then by another. The condition of hearing this vocative as described by Abū Ḥayyān in Tafsīr Al-Baḥr ul-Muḥīṭ and by 'Ālūsī in Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī is that it was heard in a manner as if it was emanating from all sides, and not from any particular direction. The hearing of this was also very peculiar in that it was not heard by the ears only but by all the parts of the body, which was nothing less than a miracle.

It was the sound of an invisible speaker which was being heard without a particular quality (*kayf*) and without determining the direction. But its source was the fire or the tree on which the fire was glowing. Under such situations normally people get led into fallacy and involve themselves in idol worshipping. Therefore, under each title, the Oneness of Allah has been reminded and emphasized alongside. In the verse under reference *سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ* (Pure is Allah) is added for this very warning. In Sūrah Ṭa-Ḥā the expression *لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنَا* (20:14) and in Sūrah Al-Qaṣaṣ *أَنَا اللَّهُ* (28:30) is used for the emphasis of this point. The outcome of this discussion is that the fire was shown to Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام because he was in need of fire and light at that time, otherwise there was no connection between the Word of Allah or with the entity of Allah with the fire or the tree of Ṭūr. Fire was nothing but a creature of Allah Ta'ālā like so many other creatures. This is why the commentators have different views in the interpretation of the verses under reference: *أَنْ بُورِكَ مَنْ فِي النَّارِ* (27:8) that is Blessed is the one who is in the fire and the one who is around it. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه, Mujāhid and 'Ikrimah have expressed the view that the words *مَنْ فِي النَّارِ* (the one who is in the fire) stand for Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام because the fire he had seen was not the real fire, but the auspicious spot he had reached was so luminous that it looked like fire from a distance. Therefore, Mūsā عليه السلام was inside that fire, and *مَنْ حَوْلَهَا* (the one who is around it) is purported for the angels, who were present there nearby. Other commentators have put forward a totally opposite explanation, that the words "who is in the fire" refer to the

angels, while the words "who is around it" stand for Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام. Tafsīr Bayān ul Qur'ān has adopted the latter explanation. It is sufficient to know this much for the understanding of the meaning of these verses.

A narration of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās and Ḥasan Al-Baṣrī and its explanation

Ibn Jarīr, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, Ibn Marduwait etc. have also quoted another explanation put forward by Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās, Sayyidnā Ḥasan Al-Baṣrī and Sa'īd Ibn Jubair رضي الله عنه about the phrase مَنْ فِي النَّارِ (who is in the fire) that it is meant for Allah Ta'ālā Himself. It is but obvious that fire is created by Allah, and incarnation of the Creator into anything created by Him is impossible. Therefore, this narration cannot be taken to mean that Allah Ta'ālā had transfigured into the fire, as many idol-worshippers believe in transfiguration of God in their idols. This is absolutely against the concept of Tauḥīd (Oneness of Allah). All it means is manifestation, like the reflection in the mirror. The image is manifested in the mirror but it is not transfigured in it. What is seen in the mirror is outside it, having its own entity. It is also quite evident that this manifestation, which is also called refulgence, was not the refulgence of Allah Ta'ālā. It is for the simple reason that if Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام had already witnessed the Divinity, he would not have requested at the mount of Tūr رَبِّ ارْنِي أَنْظُرْ إِلَيْكَ that is, 'O my Lord, show Your Self to me (7:143), so that I may look at you'. In that case the reply لَنْ تَرَانِي (You will never see me - 7:143) would also have been meaningless. It is now clear that Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه in his explanation had meant the manifestation of Allah Ta'ālā, that is refulgence, which appeared in the form of fire. As it was not the transmigration, it was also not the refulgence of His real Self. The phrase لَنْ تَرَانِي (You will never see me) has also clarified that in this world no one can witness the refulgence of His real Self. Then what do manifestation and refulgence really mean? The answer to this is that this refulgence was figurative, which is commonly known among the mystics. It is rather difficult to comprehend it fully, but in order to make it simple according to common understanding, I have tried to explain it in my book Aḥkāṁ ul-Qur'ān, in Arabic language, in the explanation of Sūrah Al-Qaṣāṣ. Those who are interested can see it there.

﴿الْأَمِنْ ظَلَمَ ثُمَّ بَدَّلَ حُسْنًا بَعْدَ سُوءٍ فَإِنِّي غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ﴾ (١١)

Except him who did wrong, then after (doing) evil replaced (it) with good, then I am Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful. 27:11

The miracle of the staff of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was mentioned in the verse prior to this, where it was also stated that when the staff turned into serpent, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام himself started running out of fear. The other miracle of illuminative hand of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام is related in the verse next to above referred verse. Then why this exception is mentioned in between two verses relating to miracles, and whether this exception is snapped from the subject (*munqaṭi'*) or is it adjoining (*muttaṣil*)? The commentators have different view points on this subject. Some have declared it as snapped from the subject. In that case the verse will read as that in the previous verse it was stated that messengers do not get frightened, then it was also mentioned, by the way, as to who are the ones who should get frightened. They are those who have committed any sin, but later repented and sought Allah's pardon and performed good deeds. Although Allah Ta'ālā would pardon their sins, but even then there would be possibility of traces of sins being left over. It is for this reason that they always remain fearful of Allah. But If the exception is regarded adjoining with the subject, then the meaning of the verse would be that Allah's messengers do not get frightened except those who have committed some trifle or minor mistake and have repented on that. In that situation such trifle sins are forgiven. But the actual position is that even if there were some minor slips by the messengers, they were not regarded as sins – neither small nor big. Although they looked like sins but factually they were errors of *ijtihad*. According to this interpretation, this exception is an allusion toward the incident of the Egyptian who was killed by Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام by error of judgement. Although this error was pardoned by Allah Ta'ālā, yet its effect remained with Mūsā عليه السلام leaving some fear of the incident. Had this incident not have occurred, there would not have been any fear of the sort.

Verses 15 - 19

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا دَاوُدَ وَسُلَيْمَانَ عِلْمًا ۖ وَقَالَ الْاِحْمَدُ لِلّٰهِ الَّذِي فَضَّلَنَا عَلٰى
 كَثِيْرٍ مِّنْ عِبَادِهِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿١٥﴾ وَوَرِثَ سُلَيْمٰنُ دَاوُدَ وَقَالَ يَا اٰیُّهَا
 النَّاسُ عُلِمْنَا مِنْطِقَ الطَّيْرِ ۚ وَاُوْتِيْنَا مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ ۗ اِنَّ هٰذَا لَهٗا

الْفَضْلَ الْمُبِينُ ﴿١٦﴾ وَحَشِيرَ لِسُلَيْمَانَ جُنُودَهُ مِنَ الْجِنِّ وَالْإِنْسِ
وَالطَّيْرِ فَهُمْ يُوزَعُونَ ﴿١٧﴾ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا أَتَوْا عَلَىٰ وَادِ النَّمْلِ قَالَتْ
نَمْلَةٌ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّمْلُ ادْخُلُوا مَسْكِنَكُمْ ۚ لَا يَحْطِمَنَّكُمْ سُلَيْمَانُ
وَجُنُودُهُ ۗ وَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٨﴾ فَتَبَسَّمَ ضَاحِكًا مِّن قَوْلِهَا وَقَالَ
رَبِّ أَوْزِعْنِي أَنْ أَشْكُرَ نِعْمَتَكَ الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيَّ وَعَلَىٰ وَالِدَيَّ وَأَنْ
أَعْمَلَ صَالِحًا تَرْضَاهُ وَأَدْخِلْنِي بِرَحْمَتِكَ فِي عِبَادِكَ الصَّالِحِينَ ﴿١٩﴾

And surely We gave knowledge to Dāwūd and Sulaimān. And they said, "Praise belongs to Allah who made us excel many of His believing slaves. [15] And Sulaimān inherited (the traits of) Dāwūd and said, "O people we have been taught the speech of birds and we have been given of everything. Indeed, this is the evident grace (of Allah)." [16]

And mustered for Sulaimān were his forces from among the Jinns and the humans and the birds. So all of them were kept under (his) control, [17] until when they reached the valley of the ants, one of the ants said, "O ants, enter your dwelling places, lest Sulaimān and his armies crush you unknowingly." [18] So he (Sulaimān) smiled, laughing at her speech and said, "My Lord, enable me that I become grateful to Your favour that you have bestowed on me and on my parents and that I do the good deeds You like, and admit me, by Your mercy, among Your righteous slaves." [19]

Commentary

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا دَاوُدَ وَسُلَيْمَانَ عِلْمًا

And surely We gave knowledge to Dāwūd and Sulaimān. (27:15)

The knowledge given to Sayyidnā Dāwūd and Sulaimān عليهما السلام was obviously the special knowledge normally given to the prophets about their functions and obligations as prophets, but at the same time it may also include other sciences and arts, as Sayyidnā Dāwūd عليه السلام was given the art of making armors. Sayyidnā Dāwūd and Sulaimān عليهما السلام

enjoyed a special position among the prophets in that they were also bestowed with the empire along with the prophethood. The empire was of a very special nature in that they ruled over not only the humans but also the Jinns and animals. While relating all these graces, knowledge is mentioned first, which is a clear hint that knowledge is superior and paramount among them all. (Qurṭubī)

There is no heritage of wealth among the prophets

وَوَرِثَ سُلَيْمٰنُ دَاوۡدَ (And Sulaimān inherited Dāwūd - 27:16). The inheritance mentioned in this verse is not the inheritance of wealth and property, because the Holy Prophet ﷺ has clearly declared that the prophets do neither inherit the property of anyone nor does their property is inherited by anyone. Tirmidhī and Abū Dāwūd have reported from Sayyidnā Abuddardā' ؓ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said, 'Ulamā' (men of knowledge) are the inheritors of prophets, but the prophets did not leave *dirhams* or *dinars* (wealth) as their inheritance; instead, they have left knowledge as their heritage. Al-Kulaini, the famous Shi'ite scholar, has reported from Sayyidna Ja'far Aṣ-ṣādiq that he said, "Sayyidnā Sulaimān ؑ was the inheritor of Sayyidnā Dāwūd ؑ, and the Holy Prophet ﷺ was the inheritor of Sayyidnā Sulaimān ؑ. (Rūḥ from al-Kulaini). This statement makes the issue very clear that the inheritance is used here in the sense of heritage of knowledge (because nobody can claim that the Holy Prophet ﷺ inherited the property of Sulaimān ؑ). Rationally speaking also, here inheritance cannot mean wealth, because when Sayyidnā Dāwūd ؑ died he had 19 sons, hence if inheritance of wealth was meant to be distributed, then all these sons would have been entitled for the inheritance, and it cannot be exclusive to Sayyidnā Sulaimān ؑ alone. It is, therefore, quite clear that the inheritance meant here is the one in which the brothers were not included and only Sayyidnā Sulaimān ؑ was the inheritor. This could only be the inheritance of knowledge and prophethood. Along with that inheritance, Allah Ta'ālā also graced him with the empire of Sayyidnā Dāwūd ؑ and furthermore control over the Jinns, birds, animals and the wind. In the light of these proofs, the narration of Ṭabrasī is proved to be wrong in which he has regarded inheritance as that of wealth on authority of some Imāms of Ahl-ul-Bait. (Rūḥ)

The period between the death of Sayyidnā Sulaimān ؑ and the

birth of the last of the prophets the Holy Prophet ﷺ was seventeen hundred years, while Jews calculate this period as fourteen hundred years. The life span of Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام was a little over fifty years. (Qurṭubī)

It is permissible to use plural form for one's own self, provided it is not out of arrogance

عَلَّمْنَا مَنْطِقَ الطَّيْرِ وَأَوْتَيْنَا (27:16). Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام has used plural form for himself as a regal idiom, although he was alone. It was to impress his subjects, so that they do not indulge in indolence in the obedience of Allah Ta'ālā and in following him. Similarly, there is no harm if the rulers and officials also use plural form for themselves while they are in the company of their subjects, provided it is for the esteem of the office they are holding and not out of arrogance.

Birds and animals also have sense and intelligence

There is sense and intelligence to some degree in all animals and birds. However, it is not developed to such an extent that they were made to follow any injunctions of the Sharī'ah. But the humans and jinns are bestowed with such perfected sense and intelligence that they are made the addressee and followers of the injunctions of Allah Ta'ālā. Imām Shafi'ī رحمه الله تعالى has said that dove is the cleverest of all the birds, and Ibn 'Atīyyah has said that ant is very intelligent animal; its smelling power is very strong . If it gets hold of a grain it breaks it into two, so that it does not germinate, and thus it stock its food for the winters. (Qurṭubī)

Special Note

The expression "speech of birds" is used in the verse because of the incident of the hoopoe which is a bird, otherwise Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام was taught languages of all the beasts, birds and the insects, as mentioned in the next verse about understanding the language of the ant. Imām Qurṭubī has mentioned in his Tafsīr different incidents in which Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام told the people how different birds chirped and what did they mean. The chirping of each bird was a word of advice.

وَأَوْتَيْنَا مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ (and we have been given of every thing -16). The word كُلِّ (every) applies to everything of a kind, but sometimes its application is not universal but pertains to a specific purpose . Here also it is used in

that sense and "everything" refers to those things only which are needed by the government or an empire. Otherwise it is obvious that they did not have aeroplanes, motor cars or railways in those days.

رَبِّ أَوْعِنِي (My Lord, enable me - 27:19). It is derived from وَزَع (*waz'*), which lexically means to stop or restrain. Here it means 'enable me with Divine help so that I should have the trait of gratitude with me all the time and do not part with it ever', which will result in restraint. In the earlier verse فَهَمُّ يُورَعُونَ (27:17) (translated as "kept under control" it was also used in the same sense, that in order to save them from confusion because of their large number the armies were restrained.

وَأَنْ أَعْمَلَ صَالِحًا تَرْضَاهُ (and that I do the good deeds You like - 27:19). Here رضا (*liking*) means acceptance. Thus the meaning is 'Yā Allah! Grace me with Divine help for such righteous deeds which are acceptable to You'. From this it is argued in Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī that it is not necessary for the righteous deeds to be accepted, but their acceptance is dependent on certain conditions. It is further explained that there is no relation between righteousness and acceptance either rationally or in religious law. It is for this reason that the prophets used to pray for the acceptance of their righteous deeds. Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm and Isma'īl عَلَيْهِمَا السَّلَام prayed while constructing the House of Allah رَبَّنَا تَقَبَّلْ مِنَّا (Our Lord accept from us - 2:127). It shows that after doing a good deed, one should not be complacent, but should pray to Allah for its acceptance.

Despite having done good deeds and their acceptance the entry into Paradise will not be possible without the grace of Allah

وَأَدْخِلْنِي بِرَحْمَتِكَ فِي عِبَادِكَ الصَّالِحِينَ (And admit me, by your mercy, among your righteous slaves - 27:19). Despite having performed good deeds and their acceptance, the entry into Paradise will depend on the grace and kindness of Allah Ta'ālā. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has said that no one will enter into Paradise relying only on his deeds. So the companions enquired from the Holy Prophet ﷺ "Even you too?", and he answered "Yes, me too, but I am surrounded by Allah's favour and grace". (Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī)

Sayyidnā Sulaimān عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام was also praying for the grace of Allah for the entry into Paradise in these words 'O Allah, grace me also with your favour so that I become entitled to enter Paradise'.

Verses 20 - 28

وَتَفَقَّدَ الطَّيْرَ فَقَالَ مَا لِيَ لَا أَرَى الْهُدْهُدَ ۖ أَمْ كَانَ مِنَ الْغَائِبِينَ ﴿٢٠﴾
 لَأَعَذِّبَنَّهُ عَذَابًا شَدِيدًا أَوْ لَأَذْبَحَنَّهُ أَوْ لَيَأْتِيَنِي بِسُلْطَنٍ مُّبِينٍ ﴿٢١﴾
 فَمَكَتْ غَيْرَ بَعِيدٍ فَقَالَ أَحَطْتُ بِمَا لَمْ تُحِطُ بِهِ وَجِئْتُكَ مِنْ سَبَإٍ ۚ بِنَا يُعْقِبِينَ ﴿٢٢﴾ إِنِّي وَجَدْتُ امْرَأَةً تَمْلِكُهُمْ وَأُوتِيَتْ مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَلَهَا عَرْشٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿٢٣﴾ وَجَدْتُهَا وَقَوْمَهَا يَسْجُدُونَ لِلشَّمْسِ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَزَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ أَعْمَالَهُمْ فَصَدَّهُمْ عَنِ السَّبِيلِ فَهُمْ لَا يَهْتَدُونَ ﴿٢٤﴾ أَلَّا يَسْجُدُوا لِلَّهِ الَّذِي يُخْرِجُ الْخَبْءَ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا تُخْفُونَ وَمَا تُعْلِنُونَ ﴿٢٥﴾ اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ رَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ ﴿٢٦﴾ قَالَ سَنَنْظُرُ أَصَدَقْتَ أَمْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الْكَاذِبِينَ ﴿٢٧﴾ إِذْهَبْ بِكِتَابِي هَذَا فَاَلْقَهُ إِلَيْهِمْ ثُمَّ تَوَلَّ عَنْهُمْ فَانظُرْ مَاذَا يَرْجِعُونَ ﴿٢٨﴾

And (once) he (Sulaimān) checked the birds and said, "What is wrong with me that I do not see the *hudhud* (hoopoe)? Rather he has disappeared. [20] I will punish him with a severe punishment or slaughter him unless he brings to me a clear plea." [21] Then the bird did not take long and said (to Sulaimān), "I have discovered what you did not, and have brought to you a sure information from Saba' (Sheba). [22] I have found a woman ruling over them and she has been given of everything (she needs) and she has a great throne. [23] I have found her and her people prostrating to the sun, instead of Allah, and the Satan has beautified their deeds for them and has prevented them from the way, so they do not take the right path, [24] that is, they do not prostrate to Allah who brings forth what is hidden in the heavens and the earth and who knows whatever you conceal and whatever you reveal, Allah! There is no god but He, the Lord of the Great Throne." [26]

He (Sulaimān) said, "We shall see whether you have told the truth or you are one of the liars. [27] Go with this letter of mine and deliver it down to them, then turn back from them and see what they return." [28]

Commentary

وَتَفَقَّدَ الطَّيْرَ (And he checked the birds - 27:20). The word تَفَقَّدَ (*tafaqqud*) means to verify about the presence or absence of some people. Hence it is translated as to check. Sayyidnā Sulaimān ﷺ was bestowed by Allah Ta'ālā the rule over Jinns, the beasts and the birds, apart from humans. As it is customary for the ruler to look after and take care of all of his subjects, it is stated in this verse تَفَقَّدَ الطَّيْرَ. That is Sayyidnā Sulaimān ﷺ inspected the birds from his subjects, and made a note of the presence and absence of them all. The Holy Prophet ﷺ also had the habit to keep himself informed about the well-being of his companions. If some one was absent, he used to go to his house to find out his welfare. If any one was sick, he would go and visit him and do the needful nursing. If some one was afflicted with any trouble, he would make the effort to remove it.

It is necessary for the rulers to take care of their subjects and for the saints of their disciples and students

This verse has proved that Sayyidnā Sulaimān ﷺ used to keep an eye on all types of his subjects, and used to keep himself fully informed about them, so much so that the absence of a small and weak bird like a hoopoe which has a small population compared to other birds, did not go unnoticed from him. It is also possible that his specific enquiry about the hoopoe was due to its small population and weak make-up among the species of birds. Therefore, he made special effort to keep his eyes on the weaker section of his subjects.

Among the companions, Sayyidnā 'Umar ؓ established the traditions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ in totality during his tenure as caliph. He used to go round the streets of Madīnah during the nights to keep him fully abreast with the state of affairs. If he found any one in distress or need, he would help him out. A number of such incidents are related in his biography. He used to say "If a wolf kills a lamb by the side of river Euphrates, for that too Umar will be answerable". (Qurṭubī)

Such were the principles of rule and administration, which were taught by the prophets and practically demonstrated by the revered

companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ . Because of these practices, the entire populace, both Muslims and non-Muslims, used to live in complete harmony and tranquility. Such justice and fair play, composure and tranquility were never witnessed ever in the whole world after their time.

مَا لِي لَا أَرَى الْهُدُودَ ۚ أَمْ كَانَتْ مِنَ الْغَائِبِينَ

"What is wrong with me that I do not see the hoopoe; rather he has disappeared? - 27:20

Taking account of one's own Self

Apparently Sulaimān عليه السلام should have said at this occasion, "What is wrong with the hoopoe that he is absent?" But Sulaimān عليه السلام asked about his own wrong when he said, "What is wrong with *me*?" Perhaps, it was because the hoopoe and all other birds were put under his control as a special reward. Initially it crossed his mind momentarily that probably His blessings have been curtailed for some slip on his part that a species of birds (the hoopoe) was not present. So, he made some soul searching to find out what could have been the reason for its absence? It was a case similar to that of the mystic saints who make enquiries from their Self before looking into the material causes for the relief of any distress, or when any blessing is reduced for them. It is their practice to take into account of any possible slips on their part in paying gratitude to Allah Ta'ālā for His bounties, which might have caused the withdrawal of the blessings from them. Qurṭubī has quoted here the practice of these saints on the authority of Ibn al-'Arabī in the following words:

اذا فقدوا أعمالهم تفقدوا اعمالهم That is 'when these saints do not succeed in their objectives, they take stock of their deeds to find out where have they committed the mistake'.

After this initial stock-taking of Self and due considerations and deliberations it is said أَمْ كَانَتْ مِنَ الْغَائِبِينَ (rather, he has disappeared - 27:20). Here the word أَمْ is used for the meaning of the word بَلْ (rather) (Qurṭubī). Therefore, the meaning of the sentence is 'It is not that my sight has faltered in locating the hoopoe, but in fact it is not present'.

Reason for picking up hoopoe from among the birds, and an important warning

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Abbās عليه السلام was asked as to what was the

reason that the hoopoe was picked up from all the birds. He replied that Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام had camped at a place where there was no water, and Allah Ta'ālā has bestowed such a peculiar instinct to hoopoe that it can see things under the ground and can also locate the underground water. Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام wanted to find out, through the proficiency of the hoopoe, the depth and extent of the underground water. Having known the location of the underground water, he would have commanded the Jinns to excavate the ground to bring the water up – a task they would have performed very quickly. Paradoxically, despite having the piercing sight, the hoopoe gets entrapped in the nets of the hunters. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه has commented on this:

قف يا وقاف كيف يرى الهدهد باطن الارض وهو لا يرى الفخ حين يقع فيه (قرطبي)

'O the people of knowledge! try to understand this fact that the hoopoe has the ability to see things under the ground, but the net spread out over the ground gets obscured from its sight, and hence it gets entrapped in that'.

The bottom line to understand is that whatever is destined for a person through the divine decree, whether it is trouble or comfort, has to be enforced, and no one can escape from it by his wisdom, insight or through the use of force or money.

لَأُعَذِّبَنَّهُ عَذَابًا شَدِيدًا أَوْ لَا أَدَّبَحْنَهُ

I will punish him with a severe punishment - 27:21

It is part of the political sagacity to punish the absentee after making due scrutiny.

It is permissible to punish a lethargic animal moderately

Allah Ta'ālā had permitted Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام to punish the animals in the same way, as He had permitted people of all ages, a permission which is still valid, to slaughter them to make use of their flesh, bones, skin etc. Similarly, if the domestic animals, such as cow, horse, camel, donkey etc., do not perform their normal duty, then it is permissible even now to punish them moderately for disciplining. Punishing animals, other than domestic, is not permissible under Islamic law. (Qurṭubī)

أُولِيَاءِنِّي بِسُلْطَنِ مُبِينٍ

Unless he brings to me a clear plea. - 27:21

That is, if the hoopoe offers a plausible excuse for its absence, then it will be saved from the punishment. There is a subtle hint in it that it is expected of a ruler or an administrator that if someone falters doing something, then it should be thoroughly investigated before punishing him. The punishment should be enforced only when the guilt is established, otherwise he should be forgiven.

أَحَطْتُ بِمَا لَمْ تُحِطْ بِهِ (I have discovered what you did not - 27:22). That is, the hoopoe said while offering its excuse that it knew something which he did not know. What it meant was that it had brought information, which he (Sulaimān عليه السلام) did not know before.

The prophets do not have the knowledge of the unknown

Imām Qurṭubī has deduced from this incident that the prophets do not have the knowledge of the unseen (*‘Ilm ul-ghayb*), so that they could know all about every thing. It is quite evident from this verse.

وَجِئْتُكَ مِنْ سَبَإٍ بِنَبَأٍ يَقِينٍ

"And have brought to you a sure information from Saba'
(Sheba)". 27:22

Saba' (Sheba) (سَبَاء) is a well-known city of Yemen, and its other name is Ma'ārib (مَارِب). The distance between San'ā', the capital of Yemen, and Saba' is three day's journey.

Is it proper for a junior to say to his senior that he knows more than him?

On the basis of this conversation by the hoopoe, some people have deduced that it is appropriate for a pupil to say to his teacher or for a common man to say to a knowledgeable person that he knows more than the latter on the subject, provided he is absolutely confident that his knowledge on that subject is really more than others. But it is argued in Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī that such an assertion before the elders and scholars is against the etiquettes, and should be avoided. This argument, however, does not apply to the conversation of the hoopoe, because it made that statement to save itself from the punishment and to justify its excuse for the absence. The hoopoe actually wanted to place before Sulaimān عليه السلام the exact position, so that he could understand the reason for its absence.

In such situations it is not improper if something is said against the normal etiquettes.

أَنِّي وَجَدْتُ امْرَأَةً تَمْلِكُهُمْ

I have found a woman ruling over them, - 27:23

The name of this woman is given in the history as Bilqīs, daughter of Sharāḥīl. But in some other narrations, it is mentioned that her mother was a jinni whose name was Bal'amah, daughter of Shiṣān. (Wuhaib b. Jarīr has reported this from Khalīl Ibn Aḥmad, Qurṭubī) Her grandfather, Hudahud, was a great king and controlled the entire land of Yemen. He had forty sons. All these sons became kings. Her father, Sūrah, had married a jinni woman, who gave birth to her (Bilqīs). Different reasons are given for his marriage to a jinni. One of them being that he used to say with arrogance "No one from you is a match for me; hence I will not marry. It is because I do not like marrying outside my matching clan". As a result of this, people got him married to a jinni woman. (Qurṭubī) Perhaps it was his conceit that he deemed his own people as not his equal. This did not go well with the Divine writ and he was made to marry a jinni woman, who was neither from his family nor his kind or race.

Is it permissible to marry a jinni?

Some people have expressed doubt on the question, because they thought the jinns are not capable of reproducing like the humans. Ibn-al-'Arabī has opined in his commentary that this is a wrong conception. It is established through authentic āḥādīth that jinns also possess all the requisites of reproduction and the essentials of male and female, as in humans.

There is another aspect to this question from the angle of Islamic law. That is, whether it is permissible for a man to marry a jinni woman? On this aspect there are different views of the Islamic jurists. Some have ruled that it is permissible, while others have ruled it out, because of their different kind, like the animals. In the book named as (أحكام المرجان في أحكام الجان) this subject is discussed in detail, where some incidents are quoted mentioning that Muslim men married Muslim jinni women, and they also gave birth to children. Here this subject is irrelevant, because the father of Bilqīs, who married the jinni woman, was not a Muslim. Hence, the question of permissibility does not arise here. In Islamic law the lineage is

the other, all well protected and locked.

وَجَدْتَهَا وَقَوْمَهَا يَسْجُدُونَ لِلشَّمْسِ

I have found her and her people prostrating to the sun - 27:24

This shows that her people were star-worshippers and used to worship the sun. Some believe that they were Zoroastrians, who worship fire and all forms of light.

أَلَّا يَسْجُدُوا لِلَّهِ الَّذِي يُخْرِجُ الْخَبْءَ (that is, they do not prostrate to Allah who bring forth what is hidden - 25). This sentence is linked with the previous one, "The Satan has beautified their deeds - 26" and the sense is that the Satan had engrained in their minds that they should not bow down before Allah, or had prevented them from the righteous path so that they should not prostrate before Allah Ta'ālā.

Letters and writings are enough proof on religious matters in the normal circumstances

إِذْهَبْ بِكِتَابِي هَذَا (Go with this letter of mine - 28). Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام considered it enough to write to the queen of Saba' (Sheba) for the fulfillment of his duty to invite her to faith, and hence sent her a letter. This shows that in the normal circumstances the letter or writing is an acceptable proof. The religious jurists did not accept a letter as an evidence only where a proper personal evidence is required under Islamic law, because testimony is not allowed on telephone or by letter. It has been made mandatory for the witnesses to appear in person before the court. There is a lot of wisdom in this law. Under any law of the world prevalent in any country it is compulsory for the witnesses to appear before the court in person, and the testimony through letter or telephone is not accepted.

Writing letters and sending them to the disbelievers is permissible

Another matter that has been proved by the letter of Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام is that in preaching of religion and invitation to Islam it is permissible to write letters to disbelievers and infidels. According to many Ṣaḥīḥ āḥādīth it is established that the Holy Prophet ﷺ had also written letters to many infidels.

Social etiquettes should always be observed, no matter if it is a gathering of infidels

فَأَلْفَهُ إِلَيْهِمْ ثُمَّ تَوَلَّى عَنْهُمْ

Throw it down to them, then turn back from them - 27:28

When Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام made use of the hoopoe as a courier, he also taught him the social etiquette that after delivering the letter to Queen of Saba' it should move out of her court, which is the norm of the royal courts. This shows that observance of social etiquettes and good human behavior is desirable as a general rule.

Verses 29 - 37

قَالَتْ يَا أَيُّهَا الْمَلَأُوْا إِنِّي أُلْقِيَ إِلَيَّ كِتَابٌ كَرِيمٌ ﴿٢٩﴾ إِنَّهُ مِنْ سُلَيْمَانَ
وَأَنَّهُ بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ ﴿٣٠﴾ أَلَّا تَعْلَمُونَ عَلَيَّ وَأَتُونِي
مُسْلِمِينَ ﴿٣١﴾ قَالَتْ يَا أَيُّهَا الْمَلَأُوْا أَفْتُونِي فِي أَمْرِي ؕ مَا كُنْتُ
قَاطِعَةً أَمْرًا حَتَّى تَشْهَدُونِ ﴿٣٢﴾ قَالُوا نَحْنُ أَوْلُوا قُوَّةٍ وَأَوْلُوا بِأَسِ
شَدِيدٍ ؕ وَالْأَمْرُ إِلَيْكِ فَانظُرِي مَاذَا تَأْمُرِينَ ﴿٣٣﴾ قَالَتْ إِنَّ الْمُلُوكَ
إِذَا دَخَلُوا قَرْيَةً أَفْسَدُوهَا وَجَعَلُوا أَعِزَّةَ أَهْلِهَا أَذِلَّةً ؕ وَكَذَلِكَ
يَفْعَلُونَ ﴿٣٤﴾ وَإِنِّي مُرْسَلَةٌ إِلَيْهِمْ بِهَدِيَّةٍ فَنظُرْهُ ؕ بِمَ يَرْجِعُ
الْمُرْسَلُونَ ﴿٣٥﴾ فَلَمَّا جَاءَ سُلَيْمَانَ قَالَ أَتُمِدُّونَنِ بِمَالٍ فَمَا آتَيْنَا
اللَّهُ خَيْرٌ مِّمَّا آتَيْتُمْ ؕ بَلْ أَنْتُمْ بِهَدِيَّتِكُمْ تَفْرَحُونَ ﴿٣٦﴾ ارْجِعْ إِلَيْهِمْ
فَلِنَاتِيَنَّهُمْ بِجُنُودٍ لَّا قِبَلَ لَهُمْ بِهَا وَلِنُخْرِجَنَّهُمْ مِنْهَا أَذِلَّةً وَهُمْ
صَاغِرُونَ ﴿٣٧﴾

She (the queen) said (to her officials after receiving the letter), "O chieftains, there has been delivered to me an esteemed letter. [29] It is from Sulaimān and it is (in the following words:) With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful. [30] Do not rebel against me and come to me in submission." [31] She said, "O chieftains, advise me in the matter I have (before me). I am not the one who decides a matter absolutely unless you are present with me." [32] They said, "We are powerful and tough fighters, and the decision lies with

you; so consider what command you should give." [33] She said, "In fact when the kings enter a town, they put it to disorder and put its honorable citizens to disgrace, and this is how they normally do. [34] And I am going to send a gift to them, then see, what response the envoys will bring back." [35]

So when he (the envoy) came to Sulaimān, he said, "Are you extending a financial aid to me? So what Allah has given me is much better than what He has given to you. But you yourselves are proud of your gift. [36] Go back to them, and we will bring to them forces they have no power to face, and we will certainly drive them out from there in humiliation while they are disgraced." [37]

Commentary

قَالَتْ يَا أَيُّهَا الْمَلَأُوْاِئِنِّيَ الْقِيََ اِلَىٰ كِتَابٍ كَرِيمٍ

She (the queen) said (to her officials after receiving the letter), "O chieftains, there has been thrown to me an esteemed letter, 27:29.

Literal meaning of Karīm is respectable, honorable or esteemed, and idiomatically this word is used for a letter when it is sealed. This is why Sayyidnā Ibn ‘Abbās ؓ, Qatādah, Zohair رَحِمَهُمُ اللّٰهُ تَعَالَىٰ etc. have interpreted the expression "كِتَابٌ كَرِيمٌ" as the sealed book, which indicates that Sayyidnā Sulaimān ؓ had put his seal on the letter. When the Holy Prophet ﷺ learnt about the tradition of the non-Arab kings that they do not read the letter if it is not sealed, he got a seal made for himself, and used it on the letters he sent to Caesar and Chosro. It shows that the practice of sealing a letter is to show respect to the letter as well as to the addressee. The present day practice is to secure the letter in an envelope, which is as good as sealing it. Where show of respect to the addressee is intended, it is closer to the practice of the Holy Prophet ﷺ to secure it in an envelope.

The language of the letter of Sulaiman ؓ

Although Sayyidnā Sulaimān ؓ was not an Arab, yet it is not unlikely that he knew the Arabic language, especially when he knew the languages of the animals. As the Arabic language is supreme among all the languages, it is possible that he might have written the letter in Arabic. It is also probable because Bilqīs was an Arab by race, and she

read the letter and understood it. The other probability is that he had written the letter in his own language and an interpreter read it for her. (Rūḥ)

Some rules of writing letters

إِنَّهُ مِنْ سُلَيْمَانَ وَإِنَّهُ بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

It is from Sulaimān and it is (in the following words:) With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful. 27:30

There is not a single aspect of human life on which Qur'ān does not provide guidance. Mutual exchange of welfare and other information through letters is part of human requirements. In this Sūrah, full text of the letter from Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام to Queen Saba' has been reproduced. This is a letter from a prophet, and Qur'ān has reproduced it as an approved format for a letter. Hence, it should be taken in that light and Muslims should try to follow the guidance provided in it for letter writing.

Writer should first write his name and then of the addressee

The very first guidance provided in this letter is that Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام has begun it by writing his name. How did he write the name of the addressee, it is not mentioned in the Qur'ān. However, it does tell us that it was the practice of the prophets to write their name first, in which there are many benefits. For instance, the addressee would know even before reading the letter from whom it has come. So he would read the letter in the backdrop of his relations with the writer, and any confusion about the identity of the writer would be eliminated right in the beginning. The Holy Prophet ﷺ had also adopted the same practice in all his letters addressed to various persons, and began the letter with the wordings من محمد عبد الله ورسوله (From Muḥammad, the slave of Allah and His messenger)

A question may arise here as to whether it would be a disrespect to the addressee if a junior writes his name first while writing to his elder, teacher or senior in status? So, is it appropriate to follow this practice or not? In this respect the companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ had acted differently. Most of them preferred to follow the practice of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and not the requirement of the formality, and wrote their names first even when writing to the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself. Rūḥ

ul-Ma‘ānī has reproduced a narration of Sayyidnā ‘Anas ؓ from al-Baḥr ul-Muḥīṭ as follows:

ما كان احد اعظم حرمة من رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم، وكان اصحابه اذا كتبوا اليه كتاباً بدأوا بانفسهم. قلت: وكتاب علاء الحضرمي رضى الله عنه يشهد له، على ماروى.

"No human is more revered than the Holy Prophet ﷺ, but when his companions used to write to him, they would first write their names, and I say that Sayyidnā ‘Alā’ Al-Ḥadramī’s letter, which he wrote to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, is a proof to that."

However, after quoting these narrations in Rūḥ ul-Ma‘ānī it is observed that all this discussion is about the preferred way, otherwise both ways are permissible. If some one writes his name in the last, that too is correct. Religious jurist Abū al-Layth has written in his Bustan that if some one starts with the name of the addressee, no one can question its permissibility, because this has also been the practice among the Muslims for long, and no one has objected to that. (Rūḥ ul-Ma‘ānī, Qurṭubī)

Replying to letters is also a practice of the prophets

It is observed in Tafsīr ul-Qurṭubī that if someone receives a letter, it is incumbent upon him to answer it, because a letter from someone not present is as good as the greeting of the one who is present. It is attributed to Sayyidnā Ibn ‘Abbās ؓ in a narration that he used to regard the reply of a letter as much obligatory as the reply to a greeting by *salām*. (Qurṭubī)

Starting letters with Bismillah

The letter of Sayyidnā Sulaimān ؓ and all the letters sent by the Holy Prophet ﷺ have established that writing Bismillah at the beginning of a letter was the practice of the prophets. As to the question whether Bismillah should precede the name of the writer or not, the practice of the Holy Prophet ﷺ was that he always put Bismillah before his name, and the name of the addressee after his own name. But in the Qur’ān the order is reversed and the name of Sayyidnā Sulaimān ؓ is written first and then Bismillah. Therefore, it is also in order if the name of the writer is written first and then Bismillah. But Ibn Abī Ḥātim has reported on the authority of Yazīd Ibn Raumān that in fact Sayyidnā Sulaimān ؓ had

written his letter in this manner: بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ. من سلیمان بن داود الی بلقیس (which means that he wrote Bismillah before his name) but when Bilqīs read out this letter to her people, she mentioned the name of Sulaimān ﷺ first in order to let them know the name of the writer. The Holy Qur'ān has copied what Bilqīs had uttered. There is no mention in the Qur'ān whether Bismillah was written first or the name of Sayyidnā Sulaimān ﷺ in the original letter. There is yet another possibility that the name of Sulaimān ﷺ was written on the envelope and Bismillah at the top of the letter, and when Bilqīs read out the letter to her people she announced the name of Sayyidnā Sulaimān ﷺ first.

Ruling

The original tradition (Sunnah) of letter writing is that all letters should begin with Bismillah. However, the religious jurists have ruled, on the authority of the indications given in the Qur'ān and Sunnah, that if there is a risk of disrespect to the name of Allah on the apprehension that the paper on which Bismillah is written would be thrown away, then it is not right to write Bismillah, lest one should get involved in sin. The present day practice is that letters are thrown away after reading and they end up in garbage. Hence, it is better to perform Sunnah by reciting Bismillah orally before starting the letter, rather than writing it on paper.

Can a paper bearing a Qur'ānic verse be given in the hands of a disbeliever?

Sayyidnā Sulaimān ﷺ had sent this letter to Bilqīs when she was not a Muslim, but بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ was written on it. It confirms that this is permissible. The non-Arab kings to whom the Holy Prophet ﷺ had written letters were disbelievers. But the letters contained some Qur'ānic verses too. It should be understood that although it is not permitted to hand over the Holy Qur'ān to infidels, but any book or paper containing some verses of the Qur'ān does not qualify to be the Qur'ān itself; hence, such papers or books can be handed over to an infidel or to someone without wuḍū' (ablution). (Alamgiri)

Letters should be written short, comprehensive, eloquent and effective

Looking at the letter of Sayyidnā Sulaimān ﷺ one cannot avoid noticing that it is so comprehensive that all important matters have been

put together in a few sentences, maintaining the high standard of eloquence alongwith the royal grandeur in front of the infidels. At the same time perfected attributes of Allah Ta'ālā are also described along with an invitation towards Islam. The condemnation of conceit and arrogance is also noticeable. As a matter of fact, this letter is a specimen of the marvel of Qur'an. Sayyidnā Qatadah رضي الله عنه has stated that it was the practice in letter writing by all the prophets to make it brief but at the same time ensuring that nothing mentionable is left out. (Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī)

Consultation in important matters is a Sunnah. It provides the benefit of having views of others, and gives them a sense of participation

قَالَتْ يَا أَيُّهَا الْمَلَأُوْا أَفْتُونِي فِي أَمْرِي ۗ مَا كُنْتُ قَاطِعَةً أَمْرًا حَتَّى تَشْهَدُونِ

She said, "O chieftains, advise me in the matter I have (before me). I am not the one who decides a matter absolutely unless you are present with me." - 32

The word أَفْتُونِي is derived from Fatwā فَتْوَى, which means answering some specific issue. Here it means to give counsel or to express one's views. When Queen Bilqīs received the letter of Sayyidnā Ṣulāimān عليه السلام she called the members of her government and asked their view as to what she should do. Before asking their view on the matter, she encouraged and pleased them by declaring that she did not take decisions without consulting them. Because of her remarks, the ministers and the generals expressed their readiness to sacrifice every thing they had in order to follow her command. نَحْنُ أَوْلُوْا قُوَّةً وَأَوْلُوْا بِأَسْ شَدِيْدٍ وَالْأَمْرُ إِلَيْكَ ("We are powerful and tough fighters, and the decision lies with you - 33). Sayyidnā Qatādah رضي الله عنه has related that according to his information there were 313 members in her consultative committee, and each one of them represented and enjoyed the support of ten thousand persons. (Qurṭubī)

This statement brings to light that having consultation with supporters is an old practice. Islam has attached great importance to consultation and has made this mandatory for the government functionaries. So much so that the Holy Prophet ﷺ, who was the recipient of revelations from Allah Ta'ālā and also used to get direct guidance from Him (thus did not have any need for consultation or advice), was also commanded to follow this practice, in order to set up a

tradition for his followers. The Holy Qur'an directs the Holy Prophet ﷺ, (3:159) *وَشَاوِرْهُمْ فِي الْأَمْرِ* that is, he should consult them in the matters. There is a sense of participation for the companions in this command, and an advice for the coming generations that the government functionaries must always consult on important matters.

Reaction of Queen Bilqīs on the letter of Sulaimān

After having consulted the functionaries of her government and gaining their confidence, she herself developed a strategy that she should initially test out the real intention of Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام and to find out whether he was actually a prophet and messenger of God, and whether he was really conveying the message of God or he was aspiring for a greater empire. The purpose behind this strategy was to find out that if he was a prophet in reality, then his command should be followed and no hostility be adopted against him. On the other hand if he was only a king and wished to expand his empire by subjugating her kingdom, then a different plan be worked out to face the challenge. To test out the real intention of Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام she adopted the tactic of sending to him precious gifts and presents. If he becomes satisfied after receiving the gifts, then it would indicate that he was only a king and had approached her with mundane motives. On the other hand, if he was actually a prophet then he would not agree on any thing other than acceptance of Islam. Ibn Jarīr has reported this explanation from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه Mujāhid, Ibn Juraij, and Ibn Wahb رحمهم الله تعالى with several chains of narrators. The same subject is elaborated in the following verse:

وَأَنِّي مُرْسَلَةٌ إِلَيْهِمْ بِهَدِيَّةٍ فَنظُرْهُ بِمِ يَرْجِعُ الْمُرْسَلُونَ

And I am going to send a gift to them, then see, what response the envoys will bring back." 27:35.

Appearance of envoys of Bilqīs in the court of Sulaimān عليه السلام

Historical Isra'īli legends describe in great detail the incident of the visit of the envoys of Bilqīs and the gifts they had taken with them. All versions of the legends agree on that the gifts included some gold bricks, some precious stones, one hundred slaves and one hundred slave girls. But the slave girls were dressed in men's clothes and the slaves were dressed in ladies outfits. There was also a letter from Bilqīs, in which

there were some questions for testing Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام. In the selection of gifts also, his test was intended. Allah Ta'ālā had passed on detailed information of gifts to Sulaimān عليه السلام even before their arrival. Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام commanded the Jinns to lay out a floor of gold and silver bricks over a thirty miles stretch from his court, and that strange looking animals be lined up on either side of this pathway. Their excrement of bowels was also to be placed on the floor of gold and silver. Similarly, his court was decorated with special attention. Four thousand chairs of gold were placed on the left side and four thousand on the right side of the main hall for the scholars, ministers, and other officials of the court. The entire hall was bedecked with precious stones. When Bilqīs's envoys saw animals standing on the floor of gold bricks, they were embarrassed with the gifts they had brought with them. It is reported in some narrations that they threw away their gold bricks. Then as they proceeded, they saw rows of beasts and birds on either side of the pathway. After that they came across the rows of jinns. Seeing them, they were browbeaten. Ultimately, when they reached the court and stood before Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام, he received them with dignity, and entertained them with veneration. But he returned all their gifts and presents, and answered all the questions sent up by Bilqīs. (Qurtubī)

Return of the presents of Bilqīs by Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام

قَالَ أَتُمِدُّونَ بِمَالٍ فَمَا آتَىٰ ٱللَّهُ خَيْرٌ مِّمَّا أَتَىٰكُمْ ۗ بَلْ أَنتُمْ بِهَدِيَّتِكُمْ تَفْرَحُونَ

"Are you giving me an aid of wealth? So what Allah has given me is much better than He has given to you. But you yourselves are proud of your gift. 27:36.

When Bilqīs's envoys reached the court of Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام with the gifts and presents sent by her, he said to them 'Do you wish to help me with wealth? Whatever wealth and bounties I have been given by Allah is much better than your wealth and material. Therefore, I do not accept your presents of wealth. You better take them away, and enjoy them yourself.

Is it permissible to accept presents from infidels?

Sayyidnā Sulaimān عليه السلام did not accept the presents of Queen Bilqīs, which indicates that it is not permissible or not preferable to accept presents from infidels. The correct position about this question is that if

this may lead to weakening of one's position or that of Muslim community, or is likely to go against the expediency of the national interest, then it is prudent not to accept their presents. (Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī). But if the interest of the Muslims is in favour of acceptance, for instance if this gesture may lead the non-Muslims to the acceptance of Islam, or may ward off some impending danger to Islam, in such situations it is permitted. It was the practice of the Holy Prophet ﷺ to accept presents from some infidels and reject them from others. It is reported in 'Umdatul Qārī Sharḥ al-Bukhārī (Kitāb ul-ḥibah) and Sharḥ-As- Siyar-Al-Kabr on the authority of Sayyidnā Ka'b ibn Mālīk رَحِمَهُ اللهُ تَعَالَى that 'Āmir ibn Mālīk, brother of Brā', went to Madīnah on some work, when he was a disbelieving infidel, and presented two horses and two pairs of garments to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. He sent back these presents with the remarks "We do not accept presents from disbelievers". Once 'Iyād ibn Ḥimār al-Mujashī'ī presented to him some thing. The Holy Prophet ﷺ enquired from him whether he was a Muslim, to which he replied in the negative. So he returned his presents, explaining that Allah Ta'ālā has commanded him not to accept presents from the disbelievers.

As against this there are other narrations reporting that the Holy Prophet ﷺ had accepted presents from some disbelievers. In one such narration, it is related that Abū Sufyān had presented to him a piece of leather when he was still a disbeliever, which the Holy Prophet ﷺ had accepted. Another narration has reported that a Christian had presented to him a very shiny piece of fine silk, which was also accepted by him.

Shamsul 'A'immah has commented after citing these narrations that, in his view, the reason of rejection and acceptance of these presents by the Holy Prophet ﷺ was that where he thought that by their rejection the disbeliever would come near Islam, he rejected them, and where he considered that their acceptance will help bring the disbeliever close to Islam he did that. (Umdatul Qārī)

Bilqīs took the rejection of her presents by Sayyidnā Sulaimān رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ as a sign of his prophethood - not because the acceptance of gifts from disbelievers is not permissible - but she had purposefully sent those presents as a bribe, in order to save herself from any attack from him.

Verses 38 - 41

قَالَ يَا أَيُّهَا الْمَلَأُوْا أَيُّكُمْ يَأْتِينِي بِعَرْشِهَا قَبْلَ أَنْ يَأْتُونِي مُسْلِمِينَ
 ﴿٣٨﴾ قَالَ عِفْرِيتُ مِنَ الْجِنِّ أَنَا آتِيكَ بِهِ قَبْلَ أَنْ تَقُومَ مِنْ مَقَامِكَ ۚ
 وَإِنِّي عَلَيْهِ لَقَوِيٌّ أَمِينٌ ﴿٣٩﴾ قَالَ الَّذِي عِنْدَهُ عِلْمٌ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ أَنَا
 آتِيكَ بِهِ قَبْلَ أَنْ يَرْتَدَّ إِلَيْكَ طَرْفُكَ ۚ فَلَمَّا رَآهُ مُسْتَقِرًّا عِنْدَهُ قَالَ هَذَا
 مِنْ فَضْلِ رَبِّي لِيَبْلُوَنِي ءَأَشْكُرُ أَمْ أَكْفُرُ ۚ وَمَنْ شَكَرَ فَإِنَّمَا يَشْكُرُ
 لِنَفْسِهِ وَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَإِنَّ رَبِّي غَنِيٌّ كَرِيمٌ ﴿٤٠﴾ قَالَ نَكُرُوا لَهَا عَرْشَهَا
 نَنْظُرَ أَتَهْتَدِي أَمْ تَكُونُ مِنَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَهْتَدُونَ ﴿٤١﴾

He said, "O chieftains, which one of you will bring her throne to me before they come to me submissively?" [38] An *'ifrit* (stalwart) from the Jinns said, "I will bring it to you before you rise up from your place, and for this (task) I am powerful, trust-worthy". [39] Said the one who had the knowledge of the book, "I will bring it to you before your glance returns to you." So when he saw it (the throne) well-placed before him, he said, "This is by the grace of my Lord, so that He may test me whether I am grateful or ungrateful. And whoever is grateful is grateful for his own benefit, and whoever is ungrateful, then my Lord is Need-Free, Bountiful". [40] He said, "Disguise the throne for her, and we will see whether she discovers the truth or she is one of those who have no guidance." [41]

Commentary

Bilqīs's appearance in the court of Sulaimān ﷺ

Qurtubī has reported, giving references of historical record, that Bilqīs's envoys returned from the court of Sulaimān ﷺ totally dumb-founded and awe-struck, and conveyed his declaration of war to the queen. Then Bilqīs said to her people that she was already of the view that he was no ordinary king, but was on some special assignment from God, and that fighting with His messenger is like fighting with God, for which they did not have the strength. After making this statement, she started getting ready to go to Sayyidnā Sulaimān ﷺ. She took along