

Verse 9

إِنَّا نَحْنُ نُزَلِّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ ﴿٩﴾

We, Ourselves, have sent down the Dhikr (the Qur'ān),
and We are there to protect it. [9]

Commentary

An Episode from the Court of Ma'mūn

Imām Al-Qurṭubī has authentically reported an event from the court of 'Abbāsī Khalīfah, Al-Ma'mūn. He was used to patronizing occasional debates on intellectual issues at his court where all scholars were welcome. It so happened that a Jew came to attend one of these debates. By his looks, dress and manners, he seemed to be an elegant person. Then, his address during the debate was eloquent and intellectually bright. When the meeting was over, Ma'mūn called for him and asked him if he was an Israelite, which he confirmed. To test him, Ma'mūn asked him to become a Muslim in which case he could hope to have the best possible treatment from him.

He said that he was not willing to leave the religion of his forefathers which was his religion too. The matter ended there. That person went away. Then, after a year, the same person returned as a Muslim and made a very distinct contribution in the court meeting on the subject of Islamic jurisprudence. After the session was over, Ma'mūn called for him and asked him if he was the same person who had come last year. He said: Yes, I am. Ma'mūn asked: At that time you had refused to accept Islam. Tell me what made you accept Islam now.

He said: When I went back from here, I decided to do some research on contemporary religions. I am a scribe. I write books and sell them. They bring good price. This time I wanted to make a test. First, I calligraphed three manuscripts of the Torah in which I made some additions and deletions on my own. I took these manuscripts to the Synagogue. The Jews found them interesting and bought them. Then, I did the same things with the Injīl. I calligraphed three manuscripts, complete with my additions and deletions, and took them to the Church where the Christians were pleased with these manuscripts and bought them from me. After that, I tried the same thing with the Qur'ān. I calligraphed three good looking manuscripts of the Qur'ān, of course with the usual addi-

tions and deletions of my own. When I went out to sell them, I faced a problem. Every buyer I went to would take the manuscript, look into it to determine if it was correct or not, and when he would notice additions or deletions made into it, he would quietly return the manuscript back to me.

From this episode, I learnt my lesson that this Book is protected, and protected by Allah Ta'ālā Himself, therefore, I embraced Islam. Qādī Yaḥyā ibn Aktham, the narrator of this event says that, by chance, he had the *taufīq* of performing his Ḥajj in the same year. There he met Sufyān ibn 'Uyainah to whom he related this event. He said: Surely, this is how it should be because this is confirmed by the Qur'an. Yaḥyā ibn Aktham asked about the *āyah* he had in mind. He said: When the glorious Qur'an mentions the Torah and the Injīl, there it says: *بِمَا اسْتَحْفِظُوا مِنْ كِتَابِ اللَّهِ* (that is, the Jews and Christians have been entrusted with the responsibility of protecting the Torah and Injīl, the Books of Allah - 5:44). This is the reason why, when the Jews and Christians did not fulfill their duty of protecting them, these Books were lost through distortions and alterations. This is contrary to the case of the Holy Qur'an about which Allah Ta'ālā has said: *إِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ* (And We are there to protect it - 9). Thus, when Allah Ta'ālā Himself arranged to have it remain protected, then, despite thousands of efforts made by enemies, not a single change in one tiny dot or case mark could be made. Today, over fourteen hundred years have passed since even the blessed age of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and there has been a shortfall and neglect on the part of Muslims in all areas of their religious matters, yet the continuous arrangement of memorizing the Holy Qur'an all over the world stands firmly established as it was. In every period of time, there are millions of Muslims, old and young, male and female, always present on the scene, blessed people in whose hearts and minds the Holy Qur'an lives protected. Before them, not even the highest of the high religious scholar can dare recite a single letter of the Qur'an wrong, for there would be around at that time many, seniors or children, who would promptly apprehend the error.

The Promise to Protect the Qur'an Includes the Protection of Ḥadīth

As a matter of principle, all learned people agree that the Qur'an is neither the name of the words of the Qur'an alone, nor that of its meanings alone, instead, a combination of both is called the Qur'an. The rea-

son is that Qur'ānic meanings and subjects appear in other books as well, and as for Islamic writings, their subjects are essentially Qur'ānic, but they are not called Qur'ān - because, they are not the words of the Qur'ān. Similarly, if a person were to borrow different words and sentences from the Holy Qur'ān and write an article or treatise, no one will call this too by the name of Qur'ān, even though there is no word from outside the Qur'ān. This tells us that the Qur'ān is the exclusive name of the particular Divinely revealed Book the words and meanings of which are simultaneously protected.

This also leads us to the ruling that the practice of people who publish the translation of the Qur'ān only in a foreign language and give it the name, for example, an English Qur'ān or an Urdu Qur'ān, is not permissible at all - because, that is not the Qur'ān. And when we know that Qur'ān is not the name of the words of the Qur'ān alone, but that its meaning too are a part of it, then, the responsibility of protecting the Qur'ān taken upon Himself in this verse by Allah Ta'ālā covers the total protection of the words of the Qur'ān as well as the meanings of the Qur'ān in that they remain protected against alteration or distortion.

And it is obvious that the meanings of the Qur'ān are the same as the Holy Prophet ﷺ was sent to teach - as pointed out in the Qur'ān: لَتُبَيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ مَا نُزِّلَ إِلَيْهِمْ (16:44). It means: 'You have been sent to explain the meaning of what has been revealed for them.' And this is what the verse: يُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْعِلْمَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ : 'Teaches them the Book and the Wisdom' (3:164) also means. And that is why he said:

أَنَا بَعُثْتُ مُعَلِّمًا

'As for me, I have been sent as a teacher.'

Now, when the Holy Prophet ﷺ was sent to explain the meanings of the Qur'ān and to impart education to people, then, he used a set of his sayings and doings as the medium of instruction for his community, and this very set of his words and deeds is known as the Ḥadīth.

One who says that the Aḥādīth of the Rasūl of Allah are not absolutely protected is really saying that the Qur'ān is not protected.

There are people around who would like to deceive the whole world by saying that the treasure of Aḥādīth present in authentic books is not

trustworthy because it has been documented much later than the blessed age of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. First of all, even this assumption of theirs is not correct because the process of protection and documentation of Aḥādīth had already started within the age of prophethood itself, though it was completed later. In addition to that, the Ḥadīth of the Rasūl of Allah is really the explanation of the Qur'ān and the meaning of the Qur'ān. Their protection is something which Allah Ta'ālā has taken upon Himself. Then, how can it be possible that only the words of the Qur'ān remain protected while the meanings of the Qur'ān (that is, the Aḥādīth of the Rasūl) go to waste?

Verses 10 - 15

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ فِي شَيْعِ الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿١٠﴾ وَمَا يَأْتِيهِمْ مِنْ رَسُولٍ
إِلَّا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِءُونَ ﴿١١﴾ كَذَلِكَ نَسُكُّهُ فِي قُلُوبِ الْمُحْرِمِينَ
﴿١٢﴾ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ وَقَدْ خَلَتْ سُنَّةُ الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿١٣﴾ وَلَوْ فَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ
بَابًا مِنَ السَّمَاءِ فَظَلُّوا فِيهِ يَعْرُجُونَ ﴿١٤﴾ لَقَالُوا إِنَّمَا سُكِّرَتْ
أَبْصَارُنَا بَلْ نَحْنُ قَوْمٌ مَسْحُورُونَ ﴿١٥﴾

And We did send the messengers before you among the groups of earlier peoples. [10] And no messenger came to them but they used to mock at him. [11] This is how We make it enter into the hearts of the sinners, [12] (whereby) they do not believe in it (the Qur'ān). And this has been the way of earlier people. [13] And even if We were to open a gate in the sky and they keep ascending through it, [14] still they will say, "It is nothing but that our eyes have been deluded and that we are a people bewitched. [15]

A Lexical Note of Explanation

The word: *شَيْعَة* in the first verse (10) is the plural form of: *شَيْعَة* (*shī'ah*) which means the follower or helper of a person. Then, it is also used to denote a group which agrees upon particular beliefs and theoretical assumptions. So, the sense of the statement is that Allah Ta'ālā has sent messengers among every group or sect. Here, by using the word: *فِي* (*fī*) in: *فِي شَيْعِ الْأَوَّلِينَ* in place of *إِلَى* : *ilā*: to (translated as 'among the groups of

earlier peoples'), the hint given is that the messenger for every group was sent from among that particular group so that people would find it easy to trust him, and that he too, by being aware of their taste and temperament, could make appropriate plans to work for their reform.

Verse 16

وَلَقَدْ جَعَلْنَا فِي السَّمَاءِ بُرُوجًا وَزَيَّنَّاهَا لِلنَّاظِرِينَ ﴿١٦﴾

And We have created stellar formations in the sky and have beautified them for the onlookers. [16]

Sequence

Mentioned in the previous verses was the doggedness and hostility of deniers and disbelievers. In the present verse, and in those which follow immediately after, clear proofs of the Oneness, Knowledge and Power of Allah Ta'ālā have been given. Described alongside is what transpires before His creation between the heavens and the earth, a little deliberation in which on the part of a sensible person would make any denial impossible.

Commentary

The word: بُرُوجًا is the plural of: بُرْجٌ (*burj*) which is applied to big palaces and castles and to similar other structural entities. Tafsīr authorities Mujaḥid, Qatādah, Abū Ṣāliḥ and others have explained '*burūj*' at this place in the sense of big stars. As for the statement in this verse which points to the creation of these big stars in the sky, the word: السَّمَاءُ (*as-samā'*) or sky means atmosphere which, in common modern day terminology, is called the 'space.' The application of '*as-samā'*' in both these senses is common, and recognized. Thus, the physical presence of deep space is identified as '*as-samā'*' and the atmosphere much lower than it has also been repeatedly termed as '*as-samā'*' in the Holy Qur'ān. As for the planets and stars being in the space, and not in the skies, the relevant investigative details, as coordinated with the verses of the Qur'ān and classical and modern astronomy, will Inshallah appear under our comments on the verse: تَبَارَكَ الَّذِي جَعَلَ فِي السَّمَاءِ بُرُوجًا وَجَعَلَ فِيهَا سِرَاجًا وَقَمَرًا مُنِيرًا (Blessed is He Who made in the sky stellar formations and made in it the Sun and the Moon providing light) of Sūrah Al-Furqān (25 :61).

Verses 17 - 18

وَحَفِظْنَاهَا مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْطَانٍ رَجِيمٍ ﴿١٧﴾ إِلَّا مَنْ اسْتَرَقَ السَّمْعَ فَاتَّبَعَهُ
شِهَابٌ مُبِينٌ ﴿١٨﴾

... and have protected them from every outcast satan, [17]
but the one who tries to eavesdrop is chased by a clearly
visible flame. [18]

Commentary

The Meteor

The first thing these verses prove is that the satans have no access to the heavens. That Shayṭān the accursed was in the heavens at the time of the creation of Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام and that he deceived 'Ādam and Ḥawwā (Eve) عليهما السلام were events which took place before they appeared on the earth. Upto that time, the entry of the Jinns and satans in the heavens was not prohibited. It was after the coming down of Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام and the expulsion of the Shayṭān that this entry was banned. From what has been said in Sūrah Al-Jinn: إِنَّا كُنَّا نَقْعُدُ مِنْهَا مَقَاعِدَ لِلسَّمْعِ فَمَنْ يَسْتَمِعِ الْآنَ يَجِدْ لَهُ شِهَابًا رَصَدًا (And we used to sit in ambush at places from it so as to eavesdrop. Whoever then tries to hear would find for him a flame in hot pursuit - 72:9), it appears that, before the coming of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, the satans could overhear about things happening in the heaven through the mutual conversation of angels. This does not necessarily imply that the satans used to hear about such information by entering into the heavens. The first sentence of the verse quoted above: نَقْعُدُ مِنْهَا مَقَاعِدَ gives the sense that they would enter the atmospheric zone where clouds abound like thieves, would sit there in ambush and hear. These words themselves are indicative of no other possibility but that the entry of the Jinns and the satans had continued to be banned in the heavens - but, they would reach the outer atmosphere of the skies and hear a little by stealth. It was after the advent of the Prophet of Islam, peace and blessings be on him, that an additional arrangement was activated when the satans were stopped even from this covert eavesdropping through meteors or shooting stars (*Al-Shihāb Al-Thāqib*) which zoom in upon them from the outer space with enormous speed.

Now the question, as to how could the satans hear the conversation

of angels taking place inside the heavens while they were out of it, is not something just impossible. It is quite probable that the heavenly bodies not be prohibitive of the audition of sounds, and it is also not far out that the angels sometimes come lower down the heavens and engage themselves in some conversation hearing which the satans used to run. A Ḥadīth of Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها appearing in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Al-Bukhārī confirms this very probability. She said that the angels sometimes come down as far as where the clouds are and talk about the heavenly happenings among themselves. It was in this atmospheric zone of the skies that the satans used to hide themselves in to hear this news. This furtive effort of theirs was stopped through Al-Shihāb Al-Thāqib, the shooting stars. Detailed comments on this subject will, Inshallah, appear in Sūrah Al-Jinn under our exegesis of the verse: *أَنَا كُنَّا نَقْعُدُ مِنْهَا مَقَاعِدَ لِلسَّمْعِ* (72:9).

Now, the second question we have here is that of Al-Shihāb Al-Thāqib, meteors or shooting stars, in these verses. According to the statements of the Holy Qur'ān, it appears that these 'shihābs' or flames are formed to hit the satans in order that the revelation remains protected. In other words, the satans are driven away through them so that they would not overhear angels.

The difficult part of the question relates to the fact that the presence of shooting stars in outer space is nothing new. Falling stars were seen even before the coming of the Holy Prophet ﷺ - and this phenomena continues later than that as well. If so, how can it be said that the shooting stars show up to drive the satans away, which is the particular feature of the age of the Holy Prophet ﷺ? Obviously, this seems to support the view of the scientists who say that meteors become so hot from rushing through the air that they glow and often burn up which gives onlookers the impression that a star has fallen. Therefore, in usage, this is identified as a falling star. The Arabic language itself has an expression: *إِنْقِذَادُ الْكَوْكَبِ* (*inqiḍāḍ al-kaukab*) which is a virtual synonym, of the falling of a star.

However, the answer is that there is no contradiction here. One or more scientific explanations for this phenomena could be possible, for example, vapours rising from the earth surface may heat up at some point, or the speed of the meteors makes them glow and burn, or a flame emits

from a star - and this may have habitually continued since ever. But, before the coming of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, these flames were not employed to serve a particular purpose. However, after his coming, meteoric flames were employed to serve the purpose of shooting the satans who would come up to stealthily hear the conversation of angels.

This is how 'Allāmah Al-'Ālūsī has interpreted it in Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī. There he reports that someone asked Imām Zuhri, the Ḥadīth authority, that stars used to fall even before the coming of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. He said: "Yes." Thereupon, this person confronted him by quoting the verse cited above. Then he said: "The shooting stars, no doubt, did exist before - but, after the coming of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, when the satans were dealt with sternly, these were employed to drive them away."

In a Ḥadīth of the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim, there is a narration from Sayyid-nā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ which reports the saying of the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself on this subject. According to this report, he was sitting with a group of his Ṣaḥābah when they saw a star falling. He asked them: What did you take the falling of a star to be during the days of Jāhiliyyah, that is, before Islam? They said: We took it to be a sign of some major upheaval in the world, or that a prominent man would die, or be born. He said: This is absurd. It has nothing to do with someone's death or birth. As for these flames, they are thrown to dispel the satans.

To sum up, it can be said that the view of scientists about the shooting stars is also not contrary to the Qur'ān, and it is also not too far out to state that these flames were made to fall directly from some stars. Whichever way it is taken, the purpose of the Qur'ān stands proved clearly.

Verses 19 - 25

وَالْأَرْضَ مَدَدْنَاهَا وَأَلْقَيْنَا فِيهَا رَوَاسِيَ وَأَنْبَتْنَا فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ
 مَوْزُونٍ ﴿١٩﴾ وَجَعَلْنَا لَكُمْ فِيهَا مَعَايِشَ وَمَنْ لَسْتُمْ لَهُ بِرِزْقِينَ ﴿٢٠﴾
 وَإِنْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِلَّا عِنْدَنَا خَزَائِنُهُ وَمَا نُنزِلُهُ إِلَّا بِقَدَرٍ مَعْلُومٍ ﴿٢١﴾
 وَأَرْسَلْنَا الرِّيحَ لَوَاقِحَ فَأَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَاسْقَيْنَاكُمُوهُ ۖ وَمَا أَنْتُمْ

لَهُ، بِخَزَائِنَ ﴿٢٢﴾ وَأَنَا لَنَحْنُ نُحْيِي وَنُمِيتُ وَنَحْنُ الْوَارِثُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾
 وَلَقَدْ عَلِمْنَا الْمُسْتَقْدِمِينَ مِنْكُمْ وَلَقَدْ عَلِمْنَا الْمُسْتَأْخِرِينَ ﴿٢٤﴾ وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ يَحْشُرُهُمْ إِنَّهُ حَكِيمٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٥﴾

And We have spread out the earth and placed therein mountains, and caused to grow therein everything in balance, [19] and created therein sustenance for you, and those for whom you are not the sustainers. [20] There is nothing but We have treasures of it. And We do not send it down but in a determined quantity. [21]

And We sent forth winds, loaded then sent down water from the sky and gave it to you to drink, and you are not able to store it. [22]

And We, only We give life and bring death and We are the ultimate inheritor (of everything). [23]

And We know those of you who went ahead, and We know those who remained behind. [24] And surely, your Lord will gather them together. Surely, He is All-Wise, All-Knowing. [25]

Commentary

Divine Wisdom: Balanced Provision for Human Needs

One sense of the expression: مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ مَوْزُونٍ (everything in balance - 19) is what has been taken in the present translation of the text, that is, it was in His infinite wisdom that He caused everything that grows to grow in a determined measure, not less than that which would have made life difficult, and not too much which would have also brought difficulties of a different nature. If grains like wheat and rice and the best of fruits around were to grow in such excess that stockpiles of them remain behind even after their liberal consumption by human beings and animals, then, it is obvious that they would go bad, or their possible storage (in ideal natural state) will be difficult under varying conditions, and if they had to be dumped, then, not much space will be left for such mega dumpings.

This tells us that it was also within the power of Allah Ta'ālā that He would have caused grains and fruits on which human life depends to grow in such abundance that everyone would have them free everywhere

so much so that, despite their care-free use, stores upon stores of them would have kept lying around. But, this situation could have turned into a punishment for human beings, therefore, these were provided in a particular measure and balance so that their worth and value remains actively recognized, and that they are not left over only to go to waste either.

And this expression: مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ مَوْزُونٌ (everything in balance) could also be taken in the sense that Allah Ta'ālā has created everything that grows in a suitable and proportionate manner which gives it beauty and attraction. Trees are different, so are their trunks, branches, leaves, flowers and fruits. Different are their sizes, shapes, colours and tastes. What one readily sees is their happy balance and delightful looks. Everyone enjoys having them around. But, a full comprehension of the wisdom which has gone into their making is not possible for any human being.

Water Supply : The Unique Divine Arrangement

In verse 22, from: وَأَرْسَلْنَا الرِّيَّاحَ (And We send forth winds ...) to: مَا آتَيْتُمْ لَهُ؛ بَحْرَيْنِ (and you are not able to store it), a hint has been given to this wise arrangement through which a formidable system has been established to provide water for all human beings, animals, cattle, birds and beasts who live on this earth as and when they need it. Under this arrangement, everyone gets water everywhere, under all conditions, as needed, for drinking or bathing or washing or for irrigating farms and trees. This is water at no cost. As for those who would spend to dig a well or put water pipes to receive the supply of water, they only pay for the means and facilities. No one can pay for even a drop of water, nor has anyone been asked to pay for it.

Mentioned first in the verse was how Divine power has set in motion its unique system of delivering water from the sea all over the earth by creating vapours in the sea which generated the substance of rains (the monsoons) and on top of it fanned the winds which would transform it into clouds making them as if they were mountain-like planes laden with water. Then, comes the task of having these giant planes carrying their cargo of water reach every nook and corner of the world where it must reach. And then this mission is accomplished directly under Divine command whereby these gigantic autoplanes would rain down a specific quantity of water over a specific area of the earth, as commanded.

In this manner, water from the sea is home-delivered to all inhabitants of the earth, human beings, and animals, wherever they may be. Then, this system takes care of seeing that an equally unique change is made in the taste and properties of the water being delivered. We know that Allah Ta'ālā has, in His wisdom, made sea water so salty and brackish that tons and tons of salt is extracted and used from it. The element of wisdom behind it is that this great sea sphere which is home to millions and billions of life forms, and their burial place too where they die and disintegrate. Then, foul water from all over the earth (despite much publicized ecological concerns voiced by the polluters themselves) ultimately gets delivered in it. Had this been sweet water, it would have gone bad within a day, and its stench would have been so severe that it would have become a health hazard for the dwellers on land. Therefore, nature made it so acidly brackish that it would just burn up the filth which keeps reaching it from all over the world. So, it was based on this wise consideration that the sea water was made salty, rather brackish, which cannot be drunk or used to quench thirst. Certainly great is the Divine system which not only made water planes designed as clouds to carry the priceless treasures of water, but did much more when it activated its own desalination without the help of huge mechanized plants used for this purpose in our time. It only took the period of time from the rising of the monsoons until the rains fell down on the earth that salt from sea water separated and sweet water was what we got. A reference to this appears in Sūrah Al-Mursalāt (77:27) where it is said: **وَأَسْقَيْنَكُم مَّاءً فُرَاتًا** It means: We gave you water to drink which quenches thirst. The word: **فُرَات** (*furāt*) used here signifies thirst-quenching sweet water. In other words, the sense is that Allah has made the salty water of the sea go through His own desalination plant in the clouds and has arranged for you to have sweet drinking water out of water which was brackish.

The same subject occurs in Sūrah Al-Wāqī'ah (56:68-70) where it is said:

أَفَرَأَيْتُمُ الْمَاءَ الَّذِي تَشْرَبُونَ ءَأَأَنْتُمْ أَنْزَلْتُمُوهُ مِنَ الْمُزْنِ أَمْ نَحْنُ الْمُنزِلُونَ - لَوْ نَشَاءُ
جَعَلْنَاهُ أَمْحًا فَلَوْ لَا تَشْكُرُونَ

You see the water you drink? Is it you who bring it down from the cloud, or are We the senders? If We had willed, We would have made it bitter. Why, then, would you not be grateful?

Upto this point, we have seen the spectacular manifestation of Divine power as to how it has picked up water from the sea, changed it into sweet water, and delivered it through clouds all over the world with such efficiency of management that it reached not only the human beings of every region but was also passed on to animals and wildlife which are not within the range of human inquiry. Water was, so to say, home-delivered to them - and free of cost too, in fact, they had to have it.

But, this arrangement does not solve the problem faced by human beings and animals because they need water every day, rather every moment. Therefore, one method of fulfilling their daily demand was to have rains come every day, twelve months a year. But, under this arrangement, their elemental need for water would have been taken care of to a certain degree, however, the disturbance they would have faced in other economic activities is not difficult to foresee, at least for those who have the experience. Constant rain, every day of the year, would have affected health and caused gridlocks in transportation, hazards in movement and sluggishness in business.

Also possible was a second method that there be enough rain in particular months of the year so that the water from it becomes sufficient for the rest of the months. But, this method would have required that everyone be assigned a quota of water which may be entrusted to each such person with the ground rule that they would keep the quota and share of water thus received under their personal custody.

Now, just imagine. If this was done, how could every human being have managed to assemble enough water containers of suitable sizes and capacities in which water needed for a period of three to six months could be stored? Even if, this could somehow be done, it goes without saying that this water would have gone bad within a few days drinking which, in fact, using which for some other purpose would have been out of the question. Therefore, Divine power introduced yet another unique system to preserve it and make it become available as and when and where needed. We see that some portion of the water rained down is immediately put to use when it helps farms and trees to bloom and human beings and animals to quench their thirst. Part of it gets deposited and preserved in open ponds and lakes. Then a greater portion of it is transformed into ice - a frozen sea - which is so conveniently put atop moun-

tain peaks. Neither dust, nor filth can touch it. Had this water remained in the liquid form, there would have been the danger of its being contaminated with dust or filth brought by the winds. May be birds and animals would have fallen into it, and died, which would have spoiled this water. But, what Divine power did was to take this treasure of water, turn it into a virtual sea of ice, and put it on top of the mountains from where it keeps seeping into the pores of the mountains and then becomes what streams are and thus it reaches everywhere. Places where there are no streams either, water keeps flowing under the earth surface like human veins in every region of the world. Dig a well, it would come out.

To sum up, this Divine system of water supply holds thousands of blessings in its fold. First of all, the creation of water is in itself a great blessing. Then, making it reach all regions of the earth is the second blessing. Then, making it potable is the third blessing. Then, giving human beings the opportunity to drink it is the fourth blessing. Then, the formidable system of collecting and preserving water according to its need is the fifth blessing. And then, giving men and women of this world the ability to benefit by it is the sixth blessing - because, despite water being available, there may be unwelcome circumstances or natural and man-made calamities due to which one may not remain capable enough to drink water. In the present verse of the Holy Qur'an: فَاسْقِنَكُمُوهُ وَمَا أَنْتُمْ لَهُ بِخَازِنِينَ (and gave it to you to drink, and you are not able to store it - 22), a clear hint has been given to these blessings, and also a warning (to those who refuse to see truth as it is):

فَبَارِكْ اللَّهُ أَحْسَنُ الْخَالِقِينَ

Blessed is Allah, the best of creators.

Going Ahead and Remaining Behind in Righteous Deeds : The Difference in Degrees

Some exegetic interpretations of the words: *al-mustaqdimīn* (المُسْتَقْدِمِينَ) : 'those who go ahead' and: *al-musta'khirīn* (المُسْتَأْخِرِينَ) : 'those who remain behind' appearing in verse 24: وَقَدْ عَلِمْنَا الْمُسْتَقْدِمِينَ مِنْكُمْ وَقَدْ عَلِمْنَا الْمُسْتَأْخِرِينَ have been variously reported from Tafsīr authorities among the Ṣaḥābah and Ṭabi'īn. These are:

1. 'Al-Mustaqdimīn' are those born to date, and 'Al-Musta'khirīn' are those not born yet [Qatādah and Ṭkrimah].

2. 'Al-Mustaqdimīn' means the dead, and 'Al-Musta'khirīn' means those alive till now [Ibn 'Abbās and Ḍaḥḥāk]

3. 'Al-Mustaqdimīn' signifies good people who came before the appearance of the Ummah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and 'Al-Mustakhirīn' refers to his Ummah itself [Mujāhid].

4. 'Al-Mustaqdimīn' denotes people who obey Allah and do good deeds while 'Al-Musta'khirīn' refers to people who disobey Him and neglect what is good [Ḥasan and Qatādah]

5. 'Al-Mustaqdimīn' are people who remain ahead in the rows of Ṣalāh, or in the front lines of Jihād, and in other righteous deeds - and 'Al-Musta'khirīn' are those who remain behind in these deeds of merit, stay in the rear rows and are used to being late [which is the Tafsīr given by leading authorities Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, Sa'īd ibn al-Musaiyyab, al-Qurṭubī, al-Sha'bī and others]

It is obvious that there is no distinct conflict or contradiction in these sayings, in the real sense. They can be accomodated all in one because the all-encompassing knowledge of Allah Ta'ālā covers all kinds of people 'who go ahead' or 'remain behind.'

In his Tafsīr, Al-Qurṭubī has said that this verse indicates the merit of performing Ṣalāh in the first row, and soon after the time it becomes due. This is in accordance with the Ḥadīth where the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been reported to have said: If people were to find out the enormous merit of calling the Adhān and standing in the first row of Ṣalāh, everyone would have started making the effort to necessarily stand in the first row, and when there would remain no space for everybody to stand there, lots would have to be drawn.

With this, Al-Qurṭubī has also reported the saying of Sayyidnā Ka'b رضي الله عنه : 'There are some people in this Ummah who, when they put their forehead on the ground for their Sajdah, forgiveness is granted to all those who are praying behind them.' Therefore, Sayyidnā Ka'b رضي الله عنه liked to be in the last row in the hope that 'perhaps, there may be in the front rows, some servant of Allah of the class, because of whose *barakah* (blissful presence), I may be forgiven.'

What is apparent here is that real merit does lie in praying in the

first row - as stands proved from the clear statements of the Qur'ān and Sunnah. But, a person who does not, for some reason, find a place in the first row, then, he too will have a sort of merit in that there may perhaps be some righteous servant of Allah praying in the front rows for whose sake, he too may be forgiven. And the way praying in the first row of Ṣalāh stands proved from this verse, also proved is the superiority of being in the front lines of Jihād.

Verses 26 - 44

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ صَلْصَالٍ مِنْ حَمَإٍ مَسْنُونٍ ﴿٢٦﴾ وَالْجَانَّ
 خَلَقْنَاهُ مِنْ قَبْلُ مِنْ نَارِ السَّمُومِ ﴿٢٧﴾ وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَكَةِ إِنِّي
 خَالِقٌ ۚ بَشَرًا مِنْ صَلْصَالٍ مِنْ حَمَإٍ مَسْنُونٍ ﴿٢٨﴾ فَإِذَا سَوَّيْتَهُ،
 وَنَفَخْتُ فِيهِ مِنْ رُوحِي فَقَعُوا لَهُ سَاجِدِينَ ﴿٢٩﴾ فَسَجَدَ الْمَلَائِكَةُ
 كُلُّهُمْ أَجْمَعُونَ ﴿٣٠﴾ إِلَّا إِبْلِيسَ ۖ أَبَىٰ أَنْ يَكُونَ مَعَ السَّاجِدِينَ ﴿٣١﴾
 قَالَ يَا إِبْلِيسُ مَا لَكَ أَلَّا تَكُونَ مَعَ السَّاجِدِينَ ﴿٣٢﴾ قَالَ لَمْ أَكُنْ
 لِأَسْجُدَ لِبَشَرٍ خَلَقْتَهُ، مِنْ صَلْصَالٍ مِنْ حَمَإٍ مَسْنُونٍ ﴿٣٣﴾ قَالَ
 فَاهْرَجْ مِنْهَا فَإِنَّكَ رَجِيمٌ ﴿٣٤﴾ وَإِنَّ عَلَيْكَ اللَّعْنَةَ إِلَىٰ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ
 ﴿٣٥﴾ قَالَ رَبِّ فَأَنْظِرْنِي إِلَىٰ يَوْمِ يُبْعَثُونَ ﴿٣٦﴾ قَالَ فَإِنَّكَ مِنَ
 الْمُنْظَرِينَ ﴿٣٧﴾ إِلَىٰ يَوْمِ الْوَقْتِ الْمَعْلُومِ ﴿٣٨﴾ قَالَ رَبِّ بِمَا أَغْوَيْتَنِي
 لِأَرِيَنَّ لَهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَاغْوِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ ﴿٣٩﴾ إِلَّا عِبَادَكَ مِنْهُمْ
 الْمُخْلِصِينَ ﴿٤٠﴾ قَالَ هَذَا صِرَاطٌ عَلَيَّ مُسْتَقِيمٌ ﴿٤١﴾ إِنَّ عِبَادِي
 لَيْسَ لَكَ عَلَيْهِمْ سُلْطَانٌ إِلَّا مَنْ اتَّبَعَكَ مِنَ الْغَوِينَ ﴿٤٢﴾ وَإِنَّ جَهَنَّمَ
 لَمَوْعِدُهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ ﴿٤٣﴾ لَهَا سَبْعَةُ أَبْوَابٍ ۖ لِكُلِّ بَابٍ مِنْهُمْ جُزْءٌ
 مَّقْسُومٌ ﴿٤٤﴾

And We created man from a sound-giving clay made of decayed mud. [26] And "the Jān" (the first Jinn) We had

created earlier from the fire of the hot wind. [27] And (remember) when your Lord said to the angels, "I am going to create a human being from a sound-giving clay made of decayed mud. [28] And when I form him perfect and blow in him of My spirit, you fall down before him, prostrating." [29] So the angels prostrated, all together, [30] except Iblīs. He refused to be among those who prostrated. [31] He (Allah) said, "O Iblīs, what is wrong with you that you did not join those who prostrated?" [32] He said, "I am not the one to prostrate before a human being whom You have created from a sound-giving clay made of decayed mud." [33] He said, "Then, get out from here for you are an outcast. [34] And upon you is the curse upto the day of Judgement." [35] He said, "O my Lord, then give me respite upto the day they (the dead) shall be raised." [36] He (Allah) said, "Well, you are among those given respite [37] till the day of the appointed time." [38] He said, "My Lord, since You made me go astray, I swear I shall adorn for them (evils) on the earth and shall lead all of them astray, [39] except those of Your servants from among them who are chosen (by You)." [40] He (Allah) said, "To Me, it is the straight path. [41] My servants are such that you have no power over them except those who follow you from the deviators. [42] And the Jahannam (Hell) is the promised place for them all. [43] It has seven gates. For each gate there is a group apportioned from them." [44]

Commentary

Blowing of Spirit into the Human Body and Making Angels

Prostrate to him : A Brief Review

Is the spirit (*Rūḥ*) a physical entity, or pure essence? On this subject, there has been a difference of opinion among the learned since a long time. According to Ash-Shaykh 'Abd Al-Raūf Al-Munāwī, there are upto a thousand positions taken by them. But, they are all based on conjectures. None of them can be called certain. Imām Al-Ghazālī, Imām Rāzī and mystic scholars and thinkers maintain that it is no physical entity. It is pure essence. Imām Rāzī has advanced twelve arguments in support of this view.

But, the majority of the 'Ulamā' of the Muslim Ummah declare *Rūḥ* (spirit, soul) to be a highly refined physical entity. The word: نَفْخ (*nafkh*) means to blow, to breathe into. If we were to go by the consensus of the

majority of 'Ulamā' and take Rūḥ to be a refined physical entity, then breathing into it becomes evident by itself. And if we were to accept it to be pure essence, then breathing into it would mean establishing its connection to the body. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

Rūḥ (spirit) and Nafs (self) :

The View of Qāḍī Thanā'ullah رحمه الله تعالى

Leaving this long-winding debate aside, we consider it sufficient to refer the reader to a special research presented by Qāḍī Thanā'ullah Panīpatī رحمه الله تعالى in his Tafsīr Mazḥarī.

The respected commentator says that Rūḥ has two kinds: (1) Higher (*Ulwi*) and (2) Lower (*Sifli*). The higher Rūḥ is bereft of matter and is a creation of Allah Ta'ālā the comprehension of whose reality is difficult. The masters of insight by illumination (*ahl al-kashf*) see its real station to be above the Throne ('*Arsh*) because it is more refined than the 'Arsh. And this higher Rūḥ, as seen through illumination, is sensed in five degrees at upper and lower levels. Their number is five and they are: (1) The heart (*Qalb*) (2) The spirit (*Rūḥ*) (3) The mystery (*Sirr*) (4) The secret (*Khafī*) (5) The most secret (*Akhfā*). These are all from the refinements of the domain of Divine command towards which the Holy Qur'ān has hinted by declaring: قُلِ الرُّوحُ مِنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّي (Say, "The spirit is from the command of my Lord - 17:85).

As for the lower Rūḥ, it is a refined vapour which emerges from the combination of the four elements of the human body, that is, from fire, water, dust and air, and this lower Rūḥ is called the self (*nafs*).

Allah Ta'ālā has made this lower spirit called self a mirror of the higher spirits mentioned above. An illustration would make it clear. If we were to hold a mirror against the sun, then, despite that the sun is far far away, its reflection comes into the mirror. And because of the light, that too starts glowing like the sun. It even receives the heat of the sun in it which could burn a piece of cloth. The same thing applies to the higher spirits. Though they are, because of their purity and detachment, very high and elevated in station, and far distant too, yet their reflection appears in the mirror of the lower spirit and transfers the states and effects of the higher spirits into it. When these very effects take root in human selves, they become known as subordinate parts of each individual's spirit.

Then, this lower form of spirit which is identified as Nafs or self armed with the states and effects which it has acquired from the higher forms of spirits first gets connected with the heart muscle of the human body. This connection itself is another name for life. Once the lower spirit relates to the human heart, it infuses in it life and cognitions which it has acquired from the higher spirits. This lower spirit then starts circulating through the thin veins spread throughout the body and thus reaches every part of it.

It is this infusion of the lower spirit into the human body which has been called the 'blowing or breathing of the spirit' (نفخ الروح : the *nafkh* of *rūḥ*) because it bears close resemblance to blowing or breathing into something.

And, in the present verse, Allah Ta'ālā has attributed the spirit to Himself. He has said: 'مِنْ رُوحِي' (from My spirit) so that the superior status of the human spirit out of the entire creation becomes evident - because, it has come into existence, without any material substance, only under Divine command. In addition to that, it has a unique ability to accept and absorb the manifestations of Divine light, an ability which does not exist in the spirit of any other living creature other than that of the human person.

Though, dust is the dominant element in the creation of man - and that is why the creation of man has been attributed to clay - but, the reality is that man is a combination of ten elements out of which five belong to the universe of creation (عالم الخلق) while the other five to the universe of Divine command (عالم الأمر). The four elements of the universe of creation are fire, water, dust and air. The fifth is the refined vapour from these four which is called the lower spirit or *nafs*. As for the five elements of the universe of Divine command mentioned above, they are: (1) heart (*qalb*) (2) spirit (*rūḥ*) (3) mystery (*sirr*) (4) secret (*khafiy*) (5) totally hidden (*akhfa*).

It is because of this comprehensive making of the human model that man became deserving of Divine vice-regency, and very much capable of absorbing the light which helps him know his Lord and, of course, sustaining his own burning quest on the path of love and longing for Him. The outcome, though unspecified as to its actual state, is communion

with the Divine because the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said: 'الْمَرْءُ مَعَ مَنْ أَحَبَّ' (One shall be with whoever one loves).

And since human beings have the ability to absorb the manifestations of Divine light, and since they have been given the honour of being in communion with the Divine, it came to be the dictate of Divine wisdom that man be made the object of prostration by the angels. It was said: 'افْقَعُوا لَهُ سَجْدِينَ' (you fall down before him, prostrating - 29)

The Command to Prostrate was Given to Angels - Iblīs was to Follow Suit

Addressing Iblīs in Sūrah Al-A'raf, it was said: مَا مَنَعَكَ أَلَّا تَسْجُدَ إِذْ أَمَرْتُكَ (What stopped you from prostrating when I ordered you? - 7:12). This shows that the command to prostrate was given, along with the angels, to Iblīs as well. However, the verses you have gone through a little earlier apparently give the sense that the command was particular to the angels. This could mean that the command was originally given to the angels but, as Iblīs too was present among the angels, therefore, he too was covered by this command as a corollary - because, when the command went forth for the most august creation of Allah Ta'ālā, that is, the angels, that they pay their homage to Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام, it was obvious that any other creation was bound to follow suit under this command. It was for this reason that Iblīs did not respond by saying that he was never asked to prostrate to begin with, so he could not be charged with the crime of non-compliance of the order. Perhaps, the words of the Qur'an here: 'أَبَى أَنْ يَكُونَ مَعَ السَّاجِدِينَ' (He refused to be among those who prostrated - 30) may contain a hint in that direction. Rather than say: 'أَبَى أَنْ يَسْجُدَ' that is, 'he refused to prostrate', what was actually said was: 'أَبَى أَنْ يَكُونَ مَعَ السَّاجِدِينَ' he refused to be among those who prostrated. This indicates that the main prostraters were after all the angels but Iblīs too, being present with them, was reason-bound to join the prostrating angels. So, the Divine wrath was against his failure to join.

The Meaning of Shayṭān Having No Power over Special Servants of Allah

From the verse: إِنَّ عِبَادِي لَيْسَ لَكَ عَلَيْهِمْ سُلْطَانٌ (My servants are such that you have no power over them - 42), we learn that there are special and chosen servants of Allah Ta'ālā who are not affected by Satanic deception. But, within this event relating to Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام, it has also been

said that the deception of Satan worked in the case of Sayyidnā 'Ādam and Ḥawwā'. Similarly, about the noble Companions, the Qur'an has said: إِنَّمَا اسْتَكْرَمَهُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ بِبَعْضِ مَا كَسَبُوا (Satan had but made them slip for some of their deeds - 3:155) which tells us that there was an occasion (during the Battle of Uḥud) when the evil plan of the Satan worked against the Companions as well.

Therefore, in the present verse, the sense of saying that the special servants of Allah are such that Satan has no power over them is that their hearts and minds never come under the power and sway of Satan to the extent that would just not become alerted to their error at all, because of which, they would remain deprived of necessary repentance for ever, or that they fall into some sin the forgiveness of which would become impossible.

As for the events mentioned above, they offer no contradiction because 'Ādam and Ḥawwā' عليهما السلام made their Taubah and this repentance was accepted. Similarly, the noble Companions referred to above had also made their Taubah. Thus, whatever sin they fell into because of the mechanization of Satan was forgiven.

The Seven Gates of Jahannam

About the statement: لَهَا سَبْعَةُ أَبْوَابٍ (It has seven gates - 44), according to a narration of Sayyidnā 'Alī عليه السلام reported by Imām Aḥmad, Ibn Jarīr Al-Ṭabarī and Al-Baihaqī, the seven gates of Jahannam (Hell) are in terms of seven levels, one upon the other. Some others have taken these as common gates where every gate will be reserved for a special kind of sinners. (Qurṭubī)

Verses 45 - 50

إِنَّ الْمُتَّقِينَ فِي جَنَّاتٍ وَعُيُونٍ ﴿٤٥﴾ أُدْخِلُوهَا بِسَلَامٍ آمِنِينَ ﴿٤٦﴾
 وَنَزَعْنَا مَا فِي صُدُورِهِمْ مِنْ غَلٍّ إِخْوَانًا عَلَى سُرُرٍ مُتَقَابِلِينَ ﴿٤٧﴾
 لَا يَمَسُّهُمْ فِيهَا نَصَبٌ وَمَا هُمْ مِنْهَا بِمُخْرَجِينَ ﴿٤٨﴾ نَبِيُّ عِبَادِيَ أَنِّي
 أَنَا الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿٤٩﴾ وَأَنَّ عَذَابِي هُوَ الْعَذَابُ الْأَلِيمُ ﴿٥٠﴾

Surely, the God-fearing are in Gardens and streams: [45]

"Enter here in peace, free of fear." [46] And We shall have removed whatever grudge they had in their hearts (making them) brothers, sitting on couches, face to face. [47] No weariness shall touch them nor will they be expelled from there. [48]

Tell My servants that I am the Most-Forgiving, the Very-Merciful [49] and that My punishment is the painful punishment. [50]

Commentary

According to Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه, when the people of Jannah will enter Jannah, first of all two streams of water will be presented before them. They will drink water from the first stream and all mutual grudges they had from their life in the mortal world - the effect of which naturally survived right through the end - will be totally washed away. In its place, they all will feel love for each other in their hearts because mutual bickering too is virtually a pain and punishment as such, and Jannah is free of all pain.

As for the report appearing in Ṣaḥīḥ Ḥadīth: 'Anyone who nurses the least grudge in his heart against a Muslim will not go to Jannah,' it means the grudge and malice which is rooted in material ends, and is there by one's personal intention and choice, and because of which this person keeps looking for an opportunity to inflict pain or loss on his enemy. Being ill at ease in someone's company as a matter of natural temperament, a human trait beyond one's control, is not included here. Similar is the case of what is based on some Islamic legal ground. It is this kind of grudge which has been referred to in this verse and where it has been said that such grudge and temperamental distaste will be removed from their hearts.

It is about this kind of grudge that Sayyidnā 'Alī رضي الله عنه said: "I hope that I shall be, alongwith Ṭalḥa and Zubayr, among those the dust of mutual anxiety from whose hearts will be removed while entering Jannah." The reference here is to the difference of opinion and resulting conflict which took place between Sayyidnā Ṭalḥa رضي الله عنه and Sayyidnā Zubayr رضي الله عنه and Sayyidnā 'Alī رضي الله عنه.

From verse 48: لَا يَمَسُّهُمْ فِيهَا نَصَبٌ وَمَا هُمْ مِنْهَا بِمُخْرَجِينَ (No weariness shall touch them therein nor will they be expelled from there), we learn about

two features of Jannah: (1) No one shall ever feel tired or weak. This is contrary to what happens in our mortal world where hard work naturally results in fatigue. In fact, even a state of total rest and fun would sometimes tire a person out, no matter how enjoyable are things one is occupied with.

(2) The other feature of Jannah we discover is that the blessings once received there shall be eternal. These blessings shall never diminish nor shall anyone be expelled from there. In Sūrah Ṣād, it was said: *إِنَّ هَذَا لَرِزْقُنَا مَا لَهُ مِنْ نَفَادٍ* (This is sustenance provided by Us which is never to exhaust - 38:54). And in the present verse, it was said: *وَمَا هُمْ مِنْهَا بِمُخْرَجِينَ* (nor will they be expelled from there) that is, they shall never be deprived of the state of bliss bestowed upon them. This is contrary to the affairs of the mortal world where the recipient of the best of conveniences lives under the apprehension that the giver of the facilities may become displeased with him one of those days and expel him out.

As for the third probability, that the blessings of Jannah may remain everlasting, nor one is expelled from there, but one may himself get bored by living there and wish to go out, the Qur'an has demolished this probability in one sentence of Sūrah Al-Kahf with the following words: *لَا يَسْئَلُونَ عَنْهَا جِوَارًا* (That is, these people too would never seek to return from there - 18:108).

Verses 51 - 77

وَنَبِّئُهُمْ عَنْ ضَيْفِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ ﴿٥١﴾ إِذْ دَخَلُوا عَلَيْهِ فَقَالُوا سَلَامًا ط قَالَ إِنَّا مِنْكُمْ وَجِلُونَ ﴿٥٢﴾ قَالُوا لَا تَوْجَلْ إِنَّا نُبَشِّرُكَ بِغُلَامٍ عَلِيمٍ ﴿٥٣﴾ قَالَ أَبَشْرْتُمُونِي عَلَىٰ أَنْ مَسَّنِيَ الْكِبَرُ فِيمَ تَبَشِّرُونَ ﴿٥٤﴾ قَالُوا بَشْرْنَاكَ بِالْحَقِّ فَلَا تَكُنْ مِنَ الْقَنِطِينَ ﴿٥٥﴾ قَالَ وَمَنْ يَقْنَطُ مِنْ رَحْمَةِ رَبِّهِ إِلَّا الضَّالُّونَ ﴿٥٦﴾ قَالَ فَمَا خَطْبُكُمْ أَيُّهَا الْمُرْسَلُونَ ﴿٥٧﴾ قَالُوا إِنَّا أُرْسِلْنَا إِلَىٰ قَوْمٍ مُجْرِمِينَ ﴿٥٨﴾ إِلَّا آلَ لُوطٍ ط إِنَّا لَمُنَجُّوهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ ﴿٥٩﴾ إِلَّا امْرَأَتَهُ قَدَرْنَا لَّ إِنَّهَا لَمِنَ الْغَابِرِينَ ﴿٦٠﴾ فَلَمَّا جَاءَ آلَ لُوطٍ

الْمُرْسَلُونَ ﴿٦١﴾ قَالَ إِنَّكُمْ قَوْمٌ مُنْكَرُونَ ﴿٦٢﴾ قَالُوا بَلْ جِنَّكَ بِمَا
 كَانُوا فِيهِ يَمْتَرُونَ ﴿٦٣﴾ وَأَتَيْنَكَ بِالْحَقِّ وَإِنَّا لَصَادِقُونَ ﴿٦٤﴾ فَاسْرِبْ
 بِأَهْلِكَ بِقِطْعٍ مِنَ اللَّيْلِ وَاتَّبِعْ أَدْبَارَهُمْ وَلَا يَلْتَفِتْ مِنْكُمْ أَحَدٌ وَامْضُوا
 حَيْثُ تُؤْمَرُونَ ﴿٦٥﴾ وَقَضَيْنَا إِلَيْهِ ذَلِكَ الْأَمْرَ أَنَّ دَابِرَ هُوَلَاءِ مَقْطُوعٌ
 مُصْبِحِينَ ﴿٦٦﴾ وَجَاءَ أَهْلَ الْمَدِينَةِ يَسْتَبْشِرُونَ ﴿٦٧﴾ قَالَ إِنَّ هُوَلَاءِ
 ضِيقِي فَلَا تَفْضَحُونِ ﴿٦٨﴾ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَلَا تَخْزُونِ ﴿٦٩﴾ قَالُوا أَوْلَكُمُ
 نَهْكَ عَنِ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٧٠﴾ قَالَ هُوَلَاءِ بَنَاتِي إِن كُنتُمْ فاعِلِينَ ﴿٧١﴾
 لَعَمْرُكَ إِنَّهُم لَفِي سَكْرَتِهِمْ يَعْمَهُونَ ﴿٧٢﴾ فَأَخَذْتَهُمُ الصَّيْحَةَ
 مُشْرِقِينَ ﴿٧٣﴾ فَجَعَلْنَا عَالِيَهَا سَافِلَهَا وَأَمْطَرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ حِجَارَةً مِنْ
 سِجِّيلٍ ﴿٧٤﴾ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّلْمُتَوَسِّمِينَ ﴿٧٥﴾ وَإِنَّهَا لَبِسَبِيلٍ
 مُّقِيمٍ ﴿٧٦﴾ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٧٧﴾

And tell them about the guests of Ibrāhīm. [51] When they visited him, they greeted him with Salām (peace on you). He said, "We are scared of you." [52] They said, "Do not be scared. We give you good news of a boy who will be knowledgeable." [53] He said, "Do you give me the good news while old age has befallen me? So what is the good news you are giving to me?" [54] They said, "We have given to you the good news of a fact. So do not be among those who lose hope." [55] He said, "Who would lose hope in the mercy of his Lord except those who have lost the straight path?" [56] He said, "Then, what is your mission, O messengers?" [57] They said, "We have been sent to a sinful people, [58] except the family of Lūṭ - all of whom we shall save, [59] but his wife. We have ordained that she is to be among those who will remain behind." [60]

So when the messengers came to the family of Lūṭ, [61] he said, "you are an unusual people." [62] They said, "No, but we have brought to you what they have been doubting in. [63] And we have come to you with a definite matter and surely we are truthful. [64] So, carry your family

after a part of the night (has passed) and follow them at the rear and no one from you should look back and keep going to where you are commanded." [65] And We revealed to him the fact that they are to be annihilated to the last man when they see the morning. [66]

And the people of the city came rejoicing. [67] He (Lūṭ) said, "They are my guests; so do not put me to shame [68] and fear Allah and do not disgrace me." [69] They said, "Had we not forbidden you from (being the guardian of) the whole world?" [70] He said, "These are my daughters, (for marriage) if you are to do so." [71]

By your life, (O prophet) they are wandering blindly in their intoxication (misguidance). [72] So, they were seized by the Cry at sunrise. [73] Then, We turned it (the city) upside down and sent over them rain of stones made of clay. [74]

Surely, in that there are signs for those who read signs. [75] And surely, it (their city) is located on the straight road. [76] Surely, in it there are signs for the believers. [77]

Commentary

A Great Honour for the Holy Prophet ﷺ

About the word of Allah: لَمْرُكَ (*la'amruk* : By your life), the majority of commentators, as reported in Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī, have said that the addressee of '*la'amruka*' is the Holy Prophet ﷺ. It is his life that Allah Ta'ālā has sworn by. Al-Baihaqī in Da'ā'ilun-Nubūwwah, and Abū Nu'aym, Ibn Marduwayh and others have reported from Sayyidnā 'Abdullah ibn 'Abbās ؓ that Allah Ta'ālā has not bestowed on anyone in the whole creation an honour and rank higher than that of Sayyidnā Muhammad al-Muṣṭafā ﷺ. This is the reason why Allah Ta'ālā has never sworn by the life of any prophet or angel, while in this verse, He has sworn by the age and life of the Holy Prophet ﷺ - which is the highest conceivable honour and deference accorded to him.

Swearing by Non-Allah

To swear by anyone or anything, other than the names and attributes of Allah Ta'ālā, is not permissible for any human being because one would only swear by whoever is held in the highest of esteem - and, as obvious, Allah alone can be the highest.

According to Ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: Do not swear by your mothers, fathers and idols. And do not swear by anyone except Allah - and if you have to swear by Allah, do it only when you are truthful in your statement. (Reported by Abū Dāwūd and An-Nasā'ī from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ؓ)

It appears in the Ṣaḥīḥayn (the Ṣaḥīḥ of Al-Bukhārī and the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim) that the Holy Prophet ﷺ once saw Sayyidnā 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb ؓ swearing by his father. He called out to him and said: 'Watch out! Allah Ta'ālā forbids swearing by fathers. Whoever has to take an oath, let him do it in the name of Allah, otherwise, let him be silent. (Al-Qurṭubī under the commentary on Sūrah al-Mā'idah)

But, this injunction applies to Allah's creation in general. As for Allah Ta'ālā Himself, He swears by different things He has created. This is particular to Him. Its purpose is to state the sublimity and beneficence of something from the desired angle. Then, the cause of forbidding common people from swearing by anyone other than Allah is not present here - because, in the Word of Allah there is no probability that He would take someone from His creation to be the highest and the best. Again, the reason is that absolute greatness is particular only with Allah Ta'ālā.

Learn Your Essential Lesson From Sites Ruined by Divine Punishment

In verses 75 and 76: ﴿إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّمَن تَوَسَّعَ ٱبْصَارُهُۥ﴾ ﴿٧٥﴾ ﴿وَٱنہَا لَبِئْسَ لِمُؤْمِنٍ مَّقِيمٍ﴾ ﴿٧٦﴾ (Surely, in that there are signs for those who read signs. And surely, it [their city] is located on the straight road), Allah Ta'ālā has pointed out to the geographical location of such ruined cities which fall on the main road which takes people from Arabia to Syria. Also said with it was that in them there are great signs of the perfect power of Allah Ta'ālā for those who believe and have the necessary hindsight and foresight.

About this, there is another statement in Sūrah al-Qaṣaṣ where it was said: ﴿لَمۡ يَسۡكُنۡ مِنۢ بَعۡدِهِمۡ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا﴾ (not lived in after them except a little - 28:58). In other words, after their destruction by Divine punishment, these habitations were not repopulated except some. So, by combining these indicators, we can see that Allah Ta'ālā has made these ruined habitations and homes a site from which coming generations could learn

their essential lesson.

This is the reason why the Holy Prophet ﷺ, whenever he has passed by these sites, went through a particular emotional state under which he would be overwhelmed by the awe of Almighty Allah and which caused his blessed head to lower down and he would then try to make his mount hasten through these sites. This particular mode of action taken by the Holy Prophet ﷺ has established the *sunnah* that making sites which have been hit by Divine punishment a place of picnic and amusement is hard-heartedness at its ugliest. Rather than do something like that, the only method of learning a lesson from them is to think about and feel the very presence of the most perfect power of Allah Ta'ālā on the site being visited which should cause one to tremble with the fear of His punishment.

The habitations of the time of Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام which were overturned are located, as said by the Qur'ān, on the Arabia-Syria route. This site is still present in the proximity of Jordan in the form of a wilderness below the sea level. On a major portion, flows a particular kind of water like a river. Sea life cannot survive here. Therefore, it is called the Dead Sea or the Sea of Lūṭ.

The local Department of Archaeology has set up some hotels and residential quarters at this site to attract tourists. The result is that people with an incorrigible infatuation with the material and who are equally dismissive of the concerns of the Hereafter have made this site a place of fun and frolic. People go there to enjoy the sights of the ancient. Lest such heedlessness becomes a habit, the Holy Qur'ān has served a warning towards the end by saying: إِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَايَةً لِّلْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ (Surely, in it there are signs for the believers). It means: In reality, these sites and the events associated with them are full of moral lessons for everyone having insight. But, it is the good fortune of believers only who would benefit by learning what these sites teach, while others would go through these sites as tourists and leave empty-handed.

Verses 78 - 86

وَأَنَّ كَانَ أَصْحَابُ الْأَيْكَةِ لَظَالِمِينَ ﴿٧٨﴾ فَانقَمْنَا مِنْهُمْ، وَإِنَّهُمَا

لِبِأَمَامٍ مُّبِينٍ ﴿٧٩﴾ وَقَدْ كَذَبَ أَصْحَابُ الْحِجْرِ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿٨٠﴾
 وَأَتَيْنَهُمُ آيَاتِنَا فَكَانُوا عَنْهَا مُعْرِضِينَ ﴿٨١﴾ وَكَانُوا يُنْحِتُونَ مِنَ
 الْجِبَالِ تُيُوتًا آمِنِينَ ﴿٨٢﴾ فَأَخَذْتَهُمُ الصَّيْحَةُ مُصْبِحِينَ ﴿٨٣﴾ فَمَا
 أَغْنَىٰ عَنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ ﴿٨٤﴾ وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ
 وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ ۗ وَإِنَّ السَّاعَةَ لَأْتِيَةٌ فَاصْفَحِ الصَّفْحَ الْجَمِيلَ
 ﴿٨٥﴾ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ الْخَلْقُ الْعَلِيمُ ﴿٨٦﴾

And, indeed, the people of Aikah were transgressors. [78]
 So, We punished them in retribution and both of them
 are (situated) by a highway, clearly visible. [79]

And the people of Al-Ḥijr did belie the messengers. [80]
 And We provided them with Our signs yet they kept
 turning away from them. [81] They would hew out
 houses from the hills, in peace. [82] Then, the Cry seized
 them by the morning. [83] So, whatever they earned did
 not come to their help. [84]

And We did not create the heavens and the earth and
 whatever is there in between them but with truth. And
 the Hour is sure to come. Therefore, overlook in a gra-
 cious manner. [85] Surely, your Lord is the Master - Crea-
 tor, the All-Knowing. [86]

Commentary

Aikah means a dense forest. There are other views too. Some com-
 mentators say that there was a dense forest near Madyan, therefore,
 Aikah is actually the title of the people of Madyan. Others have said
 that the people of Aikah and the people of Madyan were two different
 people. It was after the destruction of one of them that Sayyidnā
 Shu‘ayb عليه السلام was sent to the other.

In Tafsīr Rūḥ al-Ma‘ānī, the following *marfū‘ ḥadīth* appears with
 reference to Ibn ‘Asākīr:

إِنَّ مَدْيَنَ وَأَصْحَابَ الْاَيْكَةِ اٰمَنَانِ بَعَثَ اللّٰهُ تَعَالٰى اِلَيْهِمَا شُعَيْبًا

Madyan and the people of Aikah are two peoples. Allah Ta‘ālā
 sent Shu‘ayb to them.

And Al-Ḥijr is a valley situated in between Ḥijāz and Syria. It was inhabited by the people of Thamūd.

A Brief Explanation

Described at the beginning of the Sūrah was the hostility of the disbelievers of Makkah against the Holy Prophet ﷺ which also carried words of comfort for him briefly. Now, at the end of the Sūrah, more words of comfort appear to mollify his concern about their grudge and hostility.

Here, he is being asked not to grieve over their hostile opposition because there is a day when all scores will be settled, and that is the day of Judgement, and it is bound to come as he has been told. Then, there is the fact that Allah did not create the heavens and the earth and whatever is there in between them but with truth and wisdom. The wise consideration behind this creation is that people should believe in the existence of the maker of the universe, attest to His Oneness and supremacy and obey His injunctions. Also present there is the consequence of not doing so, after the argument of Allah stands established, that the defaulter be punished. Since this promised punishment does not seem to come in full right here in this mortal world, it has to be somewhere else. For that, the time is fixed, the time of the Qiyāmah, the day of Judgement. And this Hour is sure to come. Everyone will be taken care of there.

This being the wise arrangement of things, let him not grieve. The better course for him is to overlook their wicked behaviour in a gracious manner, that is, neither pay attention to their behavior nor complain about it. The reason is that his Lord is great as Creator and great as the Master Knower as well. He knows his patience and fortitude and He knows the evil mechanizations of his enemies too. Therefore, He is to exact the full return from them of what they have been doing.

Verses 87 - 99

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنِكَ سَبْعًا مِّنَ الْمَثَانِي وَالْقُرْآنَ الْعَظِيمَ ﴿٨٧﴾ لَا تَمُدَّنَّ عَيْنَيْكَ
إِلَىٰ مَا مَتَّعْنَا بِهِ أَزْوَاجًا مِنْهُمْ وَلَا تَحْزَنْ عَلَيْهِمْ وَاخْفِضْ جَنَاحَكَ
لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٨٨﴾ وَقُلْ إِنِّي أَنَا النَّذِيرُ الْمُبِينُ ﴿٨٩﴾ كَمَا أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَىٰ
الْمُقْتَسِمِينَ ﴿٩٠﴾ الَّذِينَ جَعَلُوا الْقُرْآنَ عِضِينَ ﴿٩١﴾ فَوَرَبِّكَ

لَنَسْتَلْتَهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ ﴿٩٢﴾ عَمَّا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٩٣﴾ فَاصْدَعْ بِمَا تُؤْمَرُ
وَأَعْرِضْ عَنِ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴿٩٤﴾ إِنَّا كَفَيْنَاكَ الْمُسْتَهْزِئِينَ ﴿٩٥﴾ الَّذِينَ
يَجْعَلُونَ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهًا آخَرَ ۚ فَسَوْفَ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٩٦﴾ وَلَقَدْ نَعْلَمُ أَنَّكَ
يَضِيقُ صَدْرَكَ بِمَا يَقُولُونَ ﴿٩٧﴾ فَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ وَكُنْ مِنَ
السَّاجِدِينَ ﴿٩٨﴾ وَاعْبُدْ رَبَّكَ حَتَّىٰ يَأْتِيَكَ الْيَقِينُ ﴿٩٩﴾

And We have given you the seven oft-repeated verses and the glorious Qur'an. [87] Never stretch your eyes towards what We have given to groups of them to enjoy and do not grieve for them, and be kind to believers in humbleness. [88] And say, "I am the one who warns clearly (against punishment) [89] as We sent down upon the schismatics [90] who split the Qur'an into bits. [91] So, by your Lord, We shall question them all, [92] about what they have been doing. [93]

Now, proclaim what you are commanded to and turn away from the *mushriks* (polytheists). [94] Surely, We are sufficient for you against those who deride, [95] those who take to another god alongwith Allah. So, they shall soon learn. [96] And We know that your heart feels distressed for what they say. [97] So, proclaim the purity, and glory of your Lord and be among those who prostrate. [98] And worship your Lord until comes to you that which is certain. [99]

Commentary

Sūrah Al-Fātiḥah is the Text and Summary of the Whole Qur'an

That Sūrah Al-Fātiḥah (The Opening) has been called the Glorious Qur'an in this verse (87) indicates that Sūrah Al-Fātiḥah is, in a way, the whole Qur'an - because the basic principles of Islām have been merged in it.¹

1. In order to understand this, one must keep in mind that the words: السبع المثاني والقرآن العظيم (the seven oft-repeated verses and the glorious Qur'an) in verse (87) are interpreted by the commentators in different ways. Most of them are of the view that 'seven oft-repeated verses' refer to Sūrah al-Fātiḥah which consists of seven verses. Since these seven verses are repeated in every *Ṣalāh*, they have been referred to in the verse 87 as 'oft-repeated verses'. Then, the words 'and the glorious Qur'an' occurring after it are of explanatory nature which refer to the same 'seven oft-repeated verses'. Therefore, the name of the 'glorious Qur'an' has been given here to the Sūrah al-Fātiḥah itself. The comment of the author is based on this interpretation.

On Being Questioned in Al-Maḥshar : About what will it be?

In verse 92, swearing by His Own sacred Being, Allah Ta'ālā has declared that all such people who came earlier or later shall definitely be questioned.

The Ṣaḥābah رضى الله عنهم اجمعين asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ as to what it will be about. He said that it will be about saying: لا اله الا الله (*lā ilāha illallāh* : there is no god worthy of worship but Allah). Al-Qurṭubī, after reporting this narration in his Tafsīr, has said: It means the fulfilling of this pledge practically as signified by the Kalimah Ṭayyibah: *Lā ilāha illallāh*. A simple verbal statement is not what is desired here because, as for verbal attestation, that was done by the hypocrites (*munāfiqīn*) too. Haḍrat al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī رحمه الله تعالى said: 'Īmān (faith) does not become a living reality by taking on a particular style and form, and *Dīn* (religion) does not prosper by simply having the best of wishes for it. 'Īmān is the name of that certitude which has been poured into the heart and which has been proved true by deeds. This is well illustrated by a Ḥadīth from Sayyidnā Zayd ibn Arqam ؓ in which the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been reported to have said: A person who says: لا اله الا الله (*lā ilāha illallāh* : there is no god worthy of worship but Allah) with *ikhhlāṣ* (totally unalloyed sincerity) will definitely go to Jannah. People asked: *Yā Rasūl Allāh*, how is '*ikhhlāṣ*' related to this Kalimah? He said: When this Kalimah stops a person from what has been prohibited by Allah as unlawful and impermissible, then, it is with '*ikhhlāṣ*' (with sincerity in the absolute sense). (Qurṭubī)

On Spreading the Religious Message Stage by Stage As Convenient

Before the revelation of the verse (94): فَاصْدَعْ بِمَا تُؤْمَرُ (Now, proclaim what you are commanded to), the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his noble Ṣaḥābah رضى الله عنهم اجمعين used to make Ṣalāh and recite Qur'ān secretly (lest they are seen and harmed). The process of passing on the religious message to others and the mission of teaching and training was also kept secret being limited to a counted few. The reason was that doing so openly would have given the disbelievers the opportunity to bring harm to them. In this verse (95), Allah Ta'ālā has Himself taken the responsibility of seeing that they stay safe against those who deride their faith and bring harm to them. Therefore, from that time onwards, the mission was

pursued openly and publicly in all its aspects, recitation of the Qurʾān, acts of worship, the call, the propagation, everything.

The people who have been referred to in the verse: **إِنَّا كَفَيْنَاكَ الْمُسْتَهْزِئِينَ** (Surely, We are sufficient for you against those who deride - 95) their ring leaders were five in number: (1) Al-ʿĀṣ ibn Wāʿil (2) Aswad ibn al-Muṭṭalib (3) Aswad ibn ʿAbd Yaghūth (4) Walīd ibn Mughīrah (5) Ḥārith ibn Ṭalḥah. They were killed simultaneously and miraculously when signalled by Sayyidnā Jibrāʾīl.

This event provides a guideline in matters of Tablīgh and Daʿwah. In places and under circumstances where a worker in the way of Allah sees no good coming out of saying what is true and right openly, rather apprehends harm coming to him in doing so, then, under such conditions, doing so secretly is also correct and permissible. However, when there is the option and ability to proclaim things openly, then, no delay should be made in taking a public stance.

The Spiritual Defence Against Enemy Hostility

From verses 97 and 98, we learn that should one face heart-rending sayings and doings of enemies the anxiety from which bothers him, then, there is a spiritual cure for that condition: Let him or her get busy with Tasbīḥ and ʿIbādah, praising Allah Taʿālā and praying before Him. Allah Taʿālā will Himself remove this pain and anxiety.

Alḥamdulillāh
The Commentary on
Sūrah Al-Ḥijr
Ends here.

Sūrah Al-Naḥl

(The Honey Bee)

Sūrah al-Naḥl is Makkī and it has 128 verses and 16 sections

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

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

Verses 1 - 2

أَتَىٰ أَمْرَ اللَّهِ فَلَا تَسْتَعْجِلُوهُ ۗ سُبْحٰنَهُ ۖ وَتَعَلٰی عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ ﴿١﴾ يُنزِلُ
الْمَلٰٓئِكَةَ بِالرُّوْحِ مِنْ أَمْرِهِ عَلَىٰ مَنْ يَشَآءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ أَنْ أَنْذِرُوا أَنَّهُ لَا
إِلٰهَ إِلَّا أَنَا فَاتَّقُونِ ﴿٢﴾

The command of Allah is bound to come. So, do not ask for it to come sooner. Pure is He, and much higher than what they ascribe to Him as partners. [1]

He sends down the angels at His behest with the spirit, (that is, the revelation), upon whom He wills from among His servants: 'Warn people that there is no god but Me. So, fear Me.' [2]

The Name of the Sūrah

This Sūrah has been called Al-Naḥl, that is, the honey bee because it mentions it as a unique Divine marvel. Another name for this Sūrah is Sūrah Al-Ni'am. (Qurṭubī) The word Ni'am is the plural of Ni'mah (blessing) because the great blessings of Allah Ta'ālā have been particularly mentioned in this Sūrah.

Commentary

The Sūrah begins without any particular introduction with a direct,

stern and awesome note of warning. The reason behind it was the saying of the polytheists that Muḥammad (al-Muṣṭafā صلى الله عليه وسلم) keeps warning them of the day of Qiyāmah and the punishment of Allah and telling them that Allah Ta'ālā has promised victory for him and punishment for his opponents. All this, they challenged, they do not see coming upon them. In reply, it was said: **أَتَىٰ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ فَلَا تَسْتَعْجِلُوهُ** (The command of Allah is bound to come. So, do not ask for it to come sooner - 1).

Here, the expression: **أَمْرُ اللَّهِ** (*amrullāh* : the command of Allah) means the promise Allah has made to His Rasūl - that his enemies will be made to surrender, and that Muslims will be blessed with victory and honour. In this verse, it is in a distinctly awesome tone that Allah Ta'ālā has said: **أَتَىٰ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ** (*atā amrullāh* : translated here as 'the command of Allah is bound to come'). Literally (the nuance of the original expression remaining untranslatable), the sense is that issued is the command of Allah, that is, it is bound to come which you will soon see.

Some commentators say that 'the command of Allah' here means the day of Qiyāmah. The sense of its being 'bound to come' is that it is going to come soon. And if we were to look at it in the frame of the life of the entire world itself, its being close, or its actual coming does not remain much distant. (Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ)

As for the second sentence in the first verse where it is said that Allah Ta'ālā is free of Shirk (the ascribing of partners to Him), it means that the act of these people who are belying the promise of Allah Ta'ālā is itself an act of Kufr (infidelity) and Shirk. Allah Ta'ālā is absolutely free from it. (Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ)

The essential message of the first verse is to call people to believe in the Oneness of Allah (*Tauḥīd*) through a stern warning. The second verse carries an affirmation of *Tauḥīd* through a reported proof, the substance of which is that every Rasūl or messenger of Allah, from Sayyidnā Ādam ﷺ to the Last of the Prophets ﷺ, who has come in different parts of the world at different times, has but preached this belief in the Oneness of Allah - though, none of them knew anything about the life and work of each other because of obvious causes. Just imagine if at least one hundred and twenty thousand blessed wise men who are born in different ages, countries and regions, and believe in and

adhere to one single principle, then, one is naturally compelled to accept that their saying so cannot be false. In order to have faith, this single proof is sufficient.

The word: روح (*rūḥ*: spirit) as used in this verse, according to Sayyidnā ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنه, means Waḥy (revelation); and according to some commentators, it means Hidāyah (guidance). (Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ) After having presented the reported proof of Tauḥīd in the second verse, the same belief has been proved rationally by turning the focus on the blessings of Allah Ta‘ālā as it follows next in verses 3-8.

Verses 3 - 8

خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ بِالْحَقِّ ۗ تَعَلَىٰ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٣﴾ خَلَقَ
 الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ نُطْفَةٍ فَإِذَا هُوَ خَصِيمٌ مُّبِينٌ ﴿٤﴾ وَالْأَنْعَامَ خَلَقَهَا ۗ لَكُمْ
 فِيهَا دِفْءٌ وَمَنَافِعُ وَمِنْهَا تَأْكُلُونَ ﴿٥﴾ وَلَكُمْ فِيهَا جَمَالٌ حِينَ
 تُرْيَحُونَهَا وَحِينَ تَسْرَحُونَ ﴿٦﴾ وَتَحْمِلُ أَثْقَالَكُمْ إِلَىٰ بَلَدٍ لَّمْ تَكُونُوا
 بِلَيْعِهِ إِلَّا بِشِقِّ الْأَنْفُسِ ۗ إِنَّ رَبَّكُمْ لَرؤُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿٧﴾ وَالْخَيْلَ
 وَالْبِغَالَ وَالْحَمِيرَ لِتَرْكَبُوهَا وَزِينَةً ۗ وَيَخْلُقُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٨﴾

He created the heavens and the earth in the proper way. He is much higher than what they ascribe to Him as partners. [3] He created man from a drop, and soon he turned into a quarrelsome person expressing himself openly. [4] As for the cattle, He created them, having warmth for you, and other benefits; and of them you eat. [5] And for you there is beauty in them when you drive them (home) in the evening and take them out to graze. [6] And they carry your loads to a city where you were not able to reach without putting yourself into hardship. Surely, your Lord is Very Kind, Very Merciful. [7] And (He created) horses, mules and donkeys so that you may ride on them and they may look good. And He creates what you do not know (yet). [8]

Lexical Explanation

The word: *خَصِيمٌ* (*khaṣīm*) in verse 4 has been derived from: *خَصُومَةٌ* (*khuṣūmah*) and means a quarrelsome person. Al-An'ām is the plural of *na'am*, which are cattles such as the camel, goat and cow. (Al-Mufradat of Raghīb al-Isfahānī)

The word: *دِفْءٌ* (*difun*) in verse 5 denotes what provides warmth, that is, wool which is used to make warm clothings. The word: *تُرِيحُونَ* (*turiḥūn*) in verse 6 is a derivation from *rawāḥ*, and: *تَسْرَحُونَ* (*tasraḥūn*) in the same verse, from *sarah*. When the cattle are sent to graze, it is called *sarah*, and when they return home, it is called *rawāḥ*. The expression: *شِقِّقِ الْأَنْفُسُ* (*shiqqil-anfus*) in verse 7 - 8 means personal hardship.

Commentary

The verses affirm the Oneness of Allah through the great signs of the creation of the universe. The first such creation pointed to is the creation of the heavens and the earth. Then comes the creation of human beings whom Allah Ta'ālā has made the ones who are served by the whole universe. How did man originate? The text says that he was created from an insignificant drop. What happened then was: *فَإِذَا هُوَ خَصِيمٌ مُّبِينٌ* (and soon he turned into a quarrelsome person expressing himself openly). In other words, when the elementally weak man was endowed with strength and speech, he turned into a critic of the Creator Himself disputing His Being and Attributes publicly.

After human beings, mentioned there was the creation of things which were made specially for their benefit. Since the first addressees of the Qur'ān were Arabs and their economic life depended on domestic cattle like camels, cows and goats, therefore, these were taken up first: *وَالْأَنْعَامَ خَلَقَهَا* (As for the cattle, He created them - 5).

Then, out of the benefits received by human beings from the cattle, two were particularly mentioned. (1) *لَكُمْ فِيهَا دِفْءٌ* (having warmth for you), that is, they use wool from them to make clothings which keep them warm during winters.

(2) The second benefit was mentioned in: *وَمِنْهَا تَأْكُلُونَ* (and of them you eat), that is, they can slaughter these animals and eat from their meat; and, when alive, they procure milk from them which is fine food indeed. Included here are butter, yogurt, butter-oil and everything else which

fall under dairy products.

For the rest of benefits derived from them, only one word: *مَنَافِعُ* (*manāfi'* : other benefits) was considered sufficient. It signifies that there are countless benefits tied to the meat, skin, bone and hair of animals. It is within the framework of this brevity, even ambiguity, that a hint has been given towards all modern innovations in the processing and use of food, dress, medicine and domestic articles, innovations which have been made to date, or will be made right through the Last Day.

After that, identified there is yet another benefit of these cattle - though, in terms of the contemporary Arab taste of the time - when it was said that these cattle make things look good for them particularly when they return home from their grazing grounds in the evening, or when they are sent out to graze in the mornings. The reason is that these cattle at that time become silent spokesmen of the strength and pride of their owners.

Finally, mention has been made of another important benefit which comes from these animals. They carry heavy loads to far out places, places which could not be reached 'without putting yourselves into hardship.' Out of the animals, camels and oxen have been particularly harnessed into this service of man at a large scale. Even during our day of trains, trucks and cargo planes, human beings cannot universally claim to have become free of their need. There are places in the world where none of our modern means of transportation can work. Consequently, one is compelled to borrow their services.

Since mention was made of '*an'ām*' that is, camels and oxen, it was appropriate that mention be made of quadrupeds which have been created exclusively for purposes of draft and ride. One does not benefit by their milk or meat because, according to religious law, they are the cause of moral diseases, hence prohibited. It was said: *وَالْحَمِيرَ لِتَرْكَبُوهَا* 'And (He created) horses, mules and donkeys so that you may ride on them (which includes loading as a corollary) and (they were also created so that) they may look good - 8.' The word: *زِينَةٌ* (*zīnah*) used here means the same favourable quality of life which, as commonly recognized, is the pleasing possession of these animals by their owners.

Railroads, Automobiles and Aeroplanes in the Qur'an!

In the last sentence of verse 8, after having mentioned three animals particularly used for riding, that is, horses, mules and donkeys, what was said about other kinds of rides appears in the future tense as follows:

وَيَخْلُقُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

And He creates [or, will create] what you do not know (yet).

Thus, under this very statement, included there are all newly invented transport facilities which did not exist in the past, nor was there any precise idea of what they shall be. For instance, there are railroads, automobiles and aeroplanes. Apart from these means of transport which have been invented to date, included here are all other ways and means which will be invented and used in the future. The reason is that the creation of all these things is really nothing but the act of the Absolute Creator. In it, the role of science, whether classical or modern, is no more than utilizing the God-given intelligence and understanding when handling metallic or other components also created by the same Power, go through experimentations, find appropriate combinations and construct working components. Then, it can go and generate energy from the Divinely endowed treasures of air, water, heat etc. No science, classical or modern, even both combined, can create iron and copper, or lighter metals, nor can it create wood, nor air, nor water. None of these come under its power or control. Science does no more than learn the art of using what has been created by Divine power. All inventions of the world are simply the detail of this usage. Therefore, with a little deliberation, one is left with no choice but to accept and declare that all our new inventions (for which we seem to be so fond of congratulating our own selves!) are invariably the creation of the Absolute Creator.

In view of its importance, let us keep in mind that the text has used the past tense: خَلَقَ (*khalaqa* : He created) while mentioning the creation of things earlier. However, after the mention of animals commonly used for riding, the tense used: يَخْلُقُ (*yakhluqu* : He will create, or creates) is that of future. This change clearly indicates that the word so used is for means of transport and other things which have not yet come into existence. But, Allah Ta'ālā has it in His Knowledge as to what modes of travel and other things are to be created in times to come. All this was

said in this small sentence here.

It was also possible that Allah Ta'ālā would have mentioned all new inventions to come into being in the future by name. But, the mention of words signifying railroads, automobiles and aeroplanes would have brought no benefit except that it would have left people bewildered in mental confusion - because the very conceptualization of such things at that time was not easy, nor were such words in use for such things anywhere so that people could make some sense out of them.

My respected father, Ḥaḍrat Maulānā Muḥammad Yāsīn رحمه الله تعالى said: Our teacher, Ḥaḍrat Maulānā Muḥammad Ya'qūb Nānautawī رحمه الله تعالى, the great teacher of teachers, used to say: 'The rail (railway, railroad) has been mentioned in the Holy Qur'ān.' For proof, he quoted this verse. Cars, though invented, were not common in those days, while the aeroplanes were not invented yet. Therefore, he found it sufficient to mention the 'rail.'

Rulings:

1. The Qur'ān first mentioned *al-an'ām*, that is, the camel, cow and goat. Then, out of their benefits, one such benefit was declared to be the eating of their meat. Then, as separate from it, it was said: وَالْحَيْلَ وَالْبِغَالَ وَالْحَمِيرَ (and horses, mules and donkeys). When pointing out to their benefits, definite mention was made of their use for riding, and that they may look good by having them. But, the eating of their meat has not been mentioned here. This provides the proof that the meat from horse, mule and donkey is not Ḥalāl. As for the meat from mule and donkey is concerned, the majority of Fuqahā' (Muslim jurists) agree upon its meat being Ḥarām - and in a Ḥadīth on the subject, its unlawfulness has been clearly stated. But, in the case of horse meat, there are two conflicting narrations of Ḥadīth. One of them puts it as Ḥalāl, while the other, as Ḥarām. Therefore, sayings of the Fuqahā' of the Muslim community became divided on this religious issue. Some declared it to be Ḥalāl while others called it Ḥarām. It was because of these conflicting arguments that Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, did not call horse meat Ḥarām like the meat of a donkey or mule, but he did call it Makūrh (reprehensible). (Aḥkām al-Qur'ān by Al-Jaṣṣāṣ).

2. From verse 6 and 8, it appears that beauty and embellishment are

allowed - though, pride and arrogance are Ḥarām (prohibited). The difference is that the outcome of beauty and embellishment is that it makes one happy with himself, or that it shows the blessing of Allah openly. When this happens, neither does one nurse the idea in his heart that he is deserving of this blessing, nor does he take others to be low and contemptible. Instead, such a person keeps the fact, that all good things of life given to him are but the gift and blessing of Allah Ta'ālā, foremost in his mind. Contrary to this is pride and arrogance under which one takes himself to be deserving of this blessing while taking others to be low. That is Ḥarām (forbidden). (Bayān al-Qur'an)

Verse 9

وَعَلَى اللَّهِ قَصْدُ السَّبِيلِ وَمِنْهَا جَائِرٌ وَلَوْ شَاءَ لَهَدَاكُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ ﴿٩﴾

And undertaken by Allah is (to show) the right path while there are some (paths) which swerve; and had He so willed, He would have led you all to the right path. [9]

Commentary

Presented in the previous verses was a description of the great blessings of Allah Ta'ālā as rational proof of His Oneness. This description of Divine blessings continues later on as well.

In between these two, the present verse (9) has been introduced parenthetically for the purpose of warning that Allah Ta'ālā, pursuant to His standing promise, has taken it upon Himself that He makes the straight path which takes its follower to Allah Ta'ālā clear and explicit. Therefore, the objective of the presentation of Divine blessings is to demonstrate proofs of the Being and Oneness of Allah Ta'ālā.

But, counter to this, people have preferred to go by other crooked ways. It is unfortunate that, despite having clear signs and open proofs, they do not benefit by them. Instead, go on straying endlessly.

After that it was said that Allah Ta'ālā, if He had so willed, would have made all of them to (compulsively) be on the right path. Had He done so, it was within His power. But, wisdom and expedient considerations required that there be no compulsion. Let the two paths be before everyone. Whoever elects to take whichever path should be free to take

it. Everyone goes his or her way. The Straight Path (*al-Ṣirāṭ al-Mustaqīm*) will take people to Allah Ta'ālā and Jannah (Paradise). As for other crooked ways, they will take people to Jahannam (Hell). Human beings have been given the power to choose whichever path they wish to take.

Verses 10 - 16

هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً لَكُمْ مِنْهُ شَرَابٌ وَمِنْهُ شَجَرٌ فِيهِ تُسِيمُونَ ﴿١٠﴾ يُبْتِغُ لَكُمْ بِهِ الزَّرْعَ وَالزَّيْتُونَ وَالنَّخِيلَ وَالْأَعْنَابَ وَمِنْ كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ ۗ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴿١١﴾ وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمْ الَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ وَالشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ ۗ وَالنُّجُومَ مُسَخَّرَاتٌ بِأَمْرِهِ ۗ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿١٢﴾ وَمَا ذَرَأْتُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ مُخْتَلِفًا أَلْوَانُهُ ۗ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِقَوْمٍ يَذَّكَّرُونَ ﴿١٣﴾ وَهُوَ الَّذِي سَخَّرَ الْبَحْرَ لَنَا كُلُّوًا مِنْهُ لَحْمًا طَرِيًّا وَتَسْتَخْرِجُوا مِنْهُ حِلْيَةً تَلْبَسُونَهَا ۗ وَتَرَى الْفُلْكَ مَوَاجِرَ فِيهِ وَلِتَبْتَغُوا مِنْ فَضْلِهِ ۗ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿١٤﴾ وَأَلْقَى فِي الْأَرْضِ رَوَاسِيَ أَنْ تَمِيدَ بِكُمْ وَأَنْهَارًا وَسُبُلًا لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ ﴿١٥﴾ وَعَلَّمَتْ بِالنَّجْمِ هُمْ يَهْتَدُونَ ﴿١٦﴾

He is the One who sent down water from the heavens from which you have your drink and from which (you grow) plants, on which you pasture cattle. [10] He causes thereof to grow for you the crops, and olives, and date-palms, and grape-vines, and of all the fruits. Surely, in that, there is a sign for a people who ponder. [11]

And He has subjugated for you the day and the night and the sun and the moon. And the stars (too) are subservient by His command. Surely, in that, there are signs for a people who understand. [12]

And (He subjugated) for you whatever He created on the earth having varied colours. Surely, in that, there is a sign for a people who accept advice. [13]

And He is the One who has subjugated the sea so that you may eat fresh meat therefrom, and may take out from it ornaments you wear, and you see the boats cleaving through it, and so that you may seek of His bounty and that you may be grateful. [14]

And He placed mountains on the earth, lest it should shake with you, and rivers and tracks, so that you may find the right way. [15] And (He created) signs. And through stars they find the right path. [16]

Commentary

The word: شَجَرٌ (*shajar*) in verse 10: مِنْهُ شَجَرٌ فِيهِ تُسِيمُونَ (from which [you grow] plants, on which you pasture cattle) is mostly applied to a tree which stands on a trunk. Sometimes, it is also applied, in an absolute sense, to everything which grows on land. Included therein are grass on stems or tendrils. This is the sense meant in this verse, because the pasturing of cattle has been mentioned immediately after which is mostly related to grass.

The last word: تُسِيمُونَ (*tusīmūn*) is a derivation from *isāmah* which means to leave cattle to graze freely in a pasture.

It will be noticed that all verses cited above point out to Divine blessings and mention the creation of the universe with unprecedented wisdom. In them, those who ponder find significant indicators and proofs which lead them to perceive the truth of Tauḥīd, the truth that Allah Ta'ālā is One. Therefore, while these blessings are being mentioned, they are tied up with a notice to pay attention, think, understand and accept advice. Consequently, at the end of verse 11, it was said: إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ (Indeed, in that, there is a sign for a people who ponder). The reason is that the linkage of pastures, crops, trees and their flowers and fruits with the creativity and wisdom of Allah Ta'ālā needs some reflection. If one ponders over a grain or pit, he will come to realize that simply putting it inside the land and watering it cannot automatically cause it to grow into a huge big tree with flowers of many colours opening up all over it. No tiller or farmer or land owner has made this happen. Their role in this process is nil. All this is linked with and tied to the creativity and wisdom of the Absolute Master.

After that, when came the description of the night and day, the sun,

the moon and the stars which have been made subservient by His command, it was said in the concluding sentence of verse 12: **إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ** (Indeed, in that, there are signs for a people who understand). Given here is the hint that these things are of course subservient to the command of Allah, an open fact which does not need a lot of thinking. Anyone having some reason in him would understand, because there was obviously some human input in the growth of vegetation and trees, but, in this case, there is none.

Before we move to the next verse, let us clarify the first sentence of verse 12: **سَخَّرَكُمُ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ** (And He has subjugated for you the day and the night). Here, 'subjugating the day and the night' means that Allah made them subservient to His command in order that they can serve man, pursuant to which the night brings comfort to him and the day smooths out the avenues of his work. 'Subjugating them' never means that the day and the night start alternating under human command.

Then, in verse 13, after mentioning all other varied produce of the land, it was said: **إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَذَّكَّرُونَ** (Surely, in that, there is a sign for a people who accept advice). The sense is that no deep thinking is needed here as well - because, the proof has been furnished openly. But, the condition is that one must look at it carefully and learn his lesson. Otherwise, one who has no sense or concern and who just pays no attention could hardly hope to benefit from it.

After the description of things created in the heavens and the earth, and the benefits human beings derive from them, the text now turns to the high seas wherein Divine wisdom has placed many more benefits for them. Verse 14 which begins with the words: **هُوَ الَّذِي سَخَّرَ الْبَحْرَ لَنَا كُلًّا** (And He is the One who has subjugated the sea so that you may eat) which points out to the excellent arrangement whereby they get their supply of sea food, fresh white meat from the fish.

By calling the fish, fresh meat, in the sentence which follows immediately, that is: **لِنَأْكُلُوا مِنْهُ لَحْمًا طَرِيًّا** (so that you may eat fresh meat therefrom - 14), a hint has also been placed within the statement that it is free of any condition of slaughtering necessary with other animals. That is, as if, meat made ready, without having to do so. This was the first benefit.

The second benefit is identified in the sentence appearing immedi-

ately next: *وَتَسْتَخْرِجُوا مِنْهُ حِلْيَةً تَلْبَسُونَهَا* (and may take out from it ornaments you wear - 14), that is, divers would dive in it and take out what the text calls: *حِلْيَةٍ* (*ḥilyah*: translated as ornaments). The literal meaning of *ḥilyah* is *zinah*, that which beautifies, embellishes, adorns or ornaments. Thus, the reference here is to pearls and precious coral stones which are taken out of the sea. Women wear it as necklaces or earrings. Though these ornaments are worn by women, yet the Holy Qur'ān has used the word in the masculine gender: *تَلْبَسُونَهَا* (*talbasūnaha*), that is, 'you wear.' What has been hinted here is that the wearing of ornaments by women is, in reality, in the interest of men. That woman looks good is, in reality, the right of man. He can even compel his wife to wear dress and ornaments which look good on her. Other than that, men too can use precious stones on their rings.

The third benefit of the sea appears in: *وَتَرَى الْفُلْكَ مَوَاجِرَ فِيهِ وَيَلْتَمِعُونَ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ* (And you see the boats cleaving through it and so that you may seek His bounty - 14). The word: *فُلْكَ* (*fulk*) means boat, and: *مَوَاجِرَ* (*mawākhir*) is the plural of *مَاجِرَهُ* : *mākhirah*. *Makhr* (مَخْرُ) means to cleave or plough through the water. The reference is to boats and ships which traverse the sea cleaving through the waves of the waters.

The sense of the verse (14) is that Allah Ta'ālā has made the sea one of the means of reaching distant countries. Thus, He has made it easy for human beings to travel by sea and bring in or send out their commercial goods. The text also declares it to be an excellent means of seeking the bounty of Allah, that is, their *rizq* or sustenance - because, trading through the sea routes is most economical and beneficial.

In Verse 16, it was said: *وَأَلْقَى فِي الْأَرْضِ رَوَاسِيَ أَنْ تَمِيدَ بِكُمْ* (And He placed mountains on the earth, lest it should shake with you). The word: *رَوَاسِيَ* (*rawāsiya*) is the plural of *رَاسِيَه* (*rāsiyah*) which denotes a huge mountain. The word: *تَمِيدَ* (*tamīda*) is a derivation from the verbal noun: *مَيْدَ* (*mayd*) which means to shake or swing or sway from side to side (due to loss of balance).

The sense of the verse is that Allah Ta'ālā has not made the sphere of the Earth from components which are not solid and balanced, therefore, it is heavier on one side and lighter on some other. Its necessary outcome was that the Earth was to be taken as stationary, as commonly

held by early thinkers; or, taken to be orbitally moving, as determined by some early and most modern scientists. Under both these views, this phenomenon would have caused terristerial turbulence which is identified as shaking, swinging or swaying from side to side. To stop this turbulence and to provide a balance for the terristerial composition, Allah Ta'ālā placed on the Earth the weight of mountains so that it would not shake. As for its orbital movement like all planets which is the commonly held view from Pythagorus to modern scientists made more explicit through contemporary experiments, it is something which the Holy Qur'an neither affirms nor rejects. In fact, this possible turbulence which has been stopped through the use of mountains should be more conducive to this orbital movement which is credited to the Earth like other planets. Allah knows best.

In the last verse (16), it was said: وَعَلَّمَتْهُمُ الْبَلَدَاتِ وَالنَّجْمِ هُمْ يَهْتَدُونَ 'And (He created) signs. And through stars they find the right path.' Since trade-oriented travel was mentioned above, it was considered appropriate that conveniences which Allah Ta'ālā has provided in the heavens and the earth designed to help travellers cover distances and reach destinations be mentioned alongside. Therefore, it was said: وَعَلَّمَتْ (wa 'alāmāt), that is, 'We have set up many signs in the form of mountains, rivers, trees, homes and things like that in order to help people find their way on the earth.' It is obvious that, had the earth been flat, there was no way man would stray around in his effort to reach his destination.

As for the last statement in the verse: وَالنَّجْمِ هُمْ يَهْتَدُونَ that is, the way travellers know their bearing through territorial signs, quite similarly, they also find out their orientation through stars as well. The modality of the address here seems to hint that the initial purpose of the creation of the stars is, for that matter, something else - however, alongwith it, their additional benefit is that they help in the charting of one's course when travelling.

Verses 17 - 23

أَفَمَنْ يَخْلُقُ كَمَنْ لَا يَخْلُقُ أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿١٧﴾ وَإِنْ تَعُدُّوا نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ لَا تُحْصُوهَا إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَعَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿١٨﴾ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تُسِرُّونَ وَمَا

تُعَلِّمُونَ ﴿١٩﴾ وَالَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ لَا يَخْلُقُونَ شَيْئًا وَهُمْ
يُخْلَقُونَ ﴿٢٠﴾ أَمْوَاتٌ غَيْرُ أَحْيَاءٍ ۚ وَمَا يَشْعُرُونَ ۚ لَا آيَانَ يَبْغِثُونَ ﴿٢١﴾
إِلَهُكُمْ إِلَهٌ وَاحِدٌ ۚ فَالَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ قُلُوبُهُمْ مُنْكَرَةٌ وَهُمْ
مُتَّكِبُونَ ﴿٢٢﴾ لَأَجْرَمَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا يُسِرُّونَ وَمَا يُعْلِنُونَ ۗ إِنَّهُ
لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُتَّكِبِينَ ﴿٢٣﴾

Then, is He who creates (everything) equal to one who does not? Would you still pay no heed? [17]

And if you count the bounties of Allah, you cannot count them all. Surely, Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful. [18] And Allah knows what you conceal and what you reveal. [19]

And those whom they invoke beside Allah do not create anything, rather they are themselves created [20] - dead, having no life. And they do not know when they shall be raised again. [21] Your God is One God. So, those who do not believe in the Hereafter, their hearts are defiant and they are arrogant. [22] Invariably, Allah knows what they conceal and what they reveal. Surely, He does not like the arrogant. [23]

Commentary

Verses appearing immediately earlier described the many blessings of Allah Ta'ālā in details, proved that He alone is their Creator and established that He is unique in this matter. Now, in the present verses, there comes an admonition against the failure of people to recognize that there is a fact behind the statement describing all these blessings - and that is Tauḥīd, the Oneness of Allah Ta'ālā, except whom there is none worthy of worship. Therefore, it was said: When it stands proved that Allah alone made the heavens and the earth, made the mountains and rivers, vegetation and animals, trees and plants with their fruits and flowers, how can that most sacred Being that is the Creator of all these things become, for no reason, like idols and icons which cannot create anything? Why would you not understand something so elementary?

Verses 24 - 29

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ مَاذَا أُنزِلَ رَبُّكُمْ ۖ قَالُوا آسَاطِيرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿٢٤﴾ لِيَحْمِلُوا
 أَوْزَارَهُمْ كَامِلَةً يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ ۖ وَمِنْ أَوْزَارِ الَّذِينَ يُضِلُّونَهُمْ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ ۗ
 الْأَسَاءَ مَا يَزِرُونَ ﴿٢٥﴾ قَدْ مَكَرَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ فَآتَى اللَّهُ بُنْيَانَهُمْ مِنَ
 الْقَوَاعِدِ فَخَرَّ عَلَيْهِمُ السَّقْفُ مِنْ فَوْقِهِمْ وَأَتَاهُمُ الْعَذَابُ مِنْ حَيْثُ
 لَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿٢٦﴾ ثُمَّ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ يُخْزِيهِمْ وَيَقُولُ أَيْنَ شُرَكَاءِى الَّذِينَ
 كُنْتُمْ تُشَاقِقُونَ فِيهِمْ ۗ قَالَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ إِنَّ الْخِزْيَ الْيَوْمَ
 وَالسُّوءَ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٢٧﴾ الَّذِينَ تَتَوَقَّعُهُمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ ظَالِمِى أَنْفُسِهِمْ
 ص فَالْقُوا السَّلْمَ مَا كُنَّا نَعْمَلُ مِنْ سُوءٍ ۗ بَلَىٰ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ
 تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٢٨﴾ فَادْخُلُوا أَبْوَابَ جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا ۗ فَلَبِئْسَ مَثْوَى
 الْمُتَكَبِّرِينَ ﴿٢٩﴾

And when it is said to them, "What has your Lord sent down?" They say, "It is nothing but the tales of the ancient." [24] Hence, they shall carry their burdens in full on the day of Judgment, and some of the burdens of those whom they mislead without knowledge. Remember, evil is the burden they carry. [25]

Those before them did make plots. Then (the command of) Allah came upon their buildings (uprooting them) from the foundations. So roofs fell down upon them from above, and the punishment came to them from where they would not perceive. [26] Then, on the Day of Judgment, He will put them to disgrace and will say, "Where are My partners for whom you used to quarrel?" Those endowed with knowledge will say, "Today, the disgrace and the ill fate are upon the disbelievers - [27] the ones to whom the angels brought death while they were (still) unjust to themselves." Then, they will take to submission, (yet will say), "We used to do nothing wrong." (They will be answered) Why not? Allah knows what you used to do. [28] Hence, enter the gates of Jahannam to live there for ever. And evil is the abode of the arrogant. [29]

Commentary

It will be recalled that, after describing the blessings of Allah and proving that He was unique in the creation of the universe, the text made a pointed reference to how the polytheists chose to stick to their own ways of error. In the present verses, the text describes how they, not content with their own straying, tried that others should also go astray like them. The punishment they would get for doing that has also been stated here. Earlier to that (24), there is a question about the Qur'ān, and the addressees of the question, at this place, are the polytheists. It is their haughty and ignorant answer which has been mentioned here alongwith a warning of consequences for this attitude. Then, after five verses (30), the same question has been addressed to believers who fear Allah which is followed by their answer, and where a promise of reward for it has been mentioned.

The Holy Qur'ān does not explicitly say as to who asked the question. Therefore, commentators have expressed different views in this matter. Some say that the question was asked by disbelievers. Others say that it was asked by Muslims. Still others take one question to have been asked by the polytheists while the other by Muslims. But, the Holy Qur'ān has kept it ambiguous. This is to indicate that there is no need to argue as to where the question came from. What has to be seen is the answer and, more importantly, its ultimate consequence - which, the Qur'ān has itself chosen to describe.

The essence of the answer given by the polytheists is that they simply refused to acknowledge that there was any word of Allah really revealed from Him. In fact, they dismissed the Qur'ān as nothing but tales of people from early ages. Thereupon, the Qur'ān admonished those unjust people for disinforming people about the Qur'ān by telling them that it was nothing but the tales of the ancient whereby they make others too go astray like them. As for the consequences, these they shall have to face. It means that the total curse of their sins has to fall on them anyway on the Day of Judgment, but part of the curse of the evil consequences of their role in misguiding others will also fall on them. Then it was said that the burden of sins which these people are piling up on their shoulders is a terribly evil burden.

Verses 30 - 34

وَقِيلَ لِلَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا مَاذَا أَنْزَلَ رَبُّكُمْ ۗ قَالُوا خَيْرًا ۗ لِلَّذِينَ أَحْسَنُوا فِي
هَذِهِ الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةٌ ۗ وَالَّذِينَ فِي الْأُخْرَىٰ خَيْرٌ وَلَنِعْمَ دَارُ الْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿٣٠﴾ جَنَّاتُ
عَدْنٍ يَدْخُلُونَهَا يُجْرَىٰ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ لَهُمْ فِيهَا مَا يَشَاءُونَ ۗ
كَذَٰلِكَ يَجْزِي اللَّهُ الْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿٣١﴾ الَّذِينَ تَتَوَفَّاهُم الْمَلَائِكَةُ طَيِّبِينَ ۗ
يَقُولُونَ سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ ۗ ادْخُلُوا الْجَنَّةَ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٣٢﴾ هَلْ
يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَّا أَنْ تَأْتِيَهُمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ أَوْ يَأْتِيَ أَمْرٌ رَبِّكَ ۗ كَذَٰلِكَ فَعَلَ الَّذِينَ
مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ ۗ وَمَا ظَلَمَهُمُ اللَّهُ وَلَكِنْ كَانُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ ﴿٣٣﴾
فَأَصَابَهُمْ سَيِّئَاتُ مَا عَمِلُوا وَحَاقَ بِهِمْ مَا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِءُونَ ﴿٣٤﴾

And it is said to the God-fearing, "What has your Lord revealed?" They say, "The best." Those who do good in this world, there is good for them. And, indeed, the abode of the Hereafter is much better. And excellent is the abode of the God-fearing - [30] the eternal gardens they enter, with rivers flowing beneath them. For them there is what they desire. That is how Allah rewards the God-fearing - [31] the ones to whom angels bring death while they were pure (in beliefs and deeds). They (angels) say, "Peace on you! Enter Paradise for the deeds you have been doing." [32]

They are waiting for nothing but that the angels come to them, or comes the command of your Lord. Similarly acted those who were before them. And Allah did not wrong them, rather they were doing wrong to themselves. [33] So, the evil of what they did overtook them, and they were encircled by the very thing they used to mock at. [34]

Verses 35 - 40

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا لَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مَا عَبَدْنَا مِنْ دُونِهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ نَحْنُ
وَلَا آبَاؤُنَا وَلَا حَرَمْنَا مِنْ دُونِهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ ۗ كَذَٰلِكَ فَعَلَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ

قَبْلِهِمْ ۚ فَهَلْ عَلَى الرُّسُلِ إِلَّا الْبَلْغُ الْمُبِينُ ﴿٣٥﴾ وَأَقَدَ بَعَثْنَا فِي كُلِّ
 أُمَّةٍ رَّسُولًا أَنْ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَاجْتَنِبُوا الطَّاغُوتَ ۚ فَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ هَدَى
 اللَّهُ وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ حَقَّتْ عَلَيْهِ الضَّلَالَةُ ۖ فَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَانظُرُوا
 كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُكذِّبِينَ ﴿٣٦﴾ إِنَّ تَحْرِيصَ عَلَيَّ هُدَاهُمْ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ
 لَا يَهْدِي مَنْ يُضِلُّ وَمَا لَهُمْ مِنْ نَاصِرِينَ ﴿٣٧﴾ وَأَقْسَمُوا بِاللَّهِ جَهْدَ
 أَيْمَانِهِمْ لَيَبْعَثَنَّ اللَّهُ مَنْ يَمُوتُ بَلَى وَعَدًّا عَلَيْهِ حَقًّا وَلَكِنْ أَكْثَرَ
 النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٣٨﴾ لِيَسِينَ لَهُمُ الْآذَى يَخْتَلِفُونَ فِيهِ وَلِيَعْلَمَ الَّذِينَ
 كَفَرُوا أَنَّهُمْ كَانُوا كذِبِينَ ﴿٣٩﴾ إِنَّمَا قَوْلُنَا لِشَيْءٍ إِذَا أَرَدْنَاهُ أَنْ نَقُولَ
 لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ ﴿٤٠﴾

And the polytheists said, "If Allah had so willed, we would have not worshipped anything other than Him - neither we nor our forefathers - nor would we have made anything unlawful without (command from) Him." Similarly acted those who were before them. Therefore, the messengers are responsible for nothing but to convey the message clearly. [35]

And We did raise a messenger among every people, with the message, "Worship Allah and stay away from the Rebel." Then, there were some among them whom Allah guided, and there were others on whom deviation (from the right path) was established. So, travel on earth and see how was the fate of those who belied (the prophets). [36]

If you are keen on their guidance, then, (remember that) Allah does not lead to the right path the ones whom He lets go astray, and for them there are no helpers. [37] And they swore by Allah, taking great pains in their oaths: "Allah shall not resurrect those who die." Why not? It is a promise on His part which is due to come true, but most of the people do not know. [38] - so that He discloses for them what they have been disputing about, and so that those who disbelieve may know that they were liars. [39] Our only word for a thing when We intend it is that We say to it, "Be," and it comes to be. [40]

Commentary

The first doubt expressed by these disbelievers was: If Allah does not like our Kufr and Shirk and other unlawful deeds, why would He not stop us from doing so by force?

The absurdity of this doubt was all too evident. Therefore, instead of answering it, just saying words of comfort for the Holy Prophet ﷺ was considered sufficient, so that he does not feel sad about such senseless questions. The reason why their doubt was absurd is also obvious. Allah Ta'ālā has set up the system of this world on the basic arrangement that human beings have not been kept under compulsion totally. A kind of power to choose was given to them. If they use this choice in obedience to Allah, they have their reward for it; and if they use it to disobey Him, then, there stands His promise of punishment. That there will be a day of Judgment when the dead shall be resurrected and called to account for their deeds are the consequential outcome of this early warning. If Allah Ta'ālā had decided that He would force everyone to obey Him, who then would have dared to remain outside the fold of obedience to Him? But, His wisdom so required that such compulsion was not appropriate. Therefore, choice was given to human beings. Now, if the disbelievers were to say - had Allah disliked our ways, why would He not stop us by force? - it is an absurd and hostile question.

Has a Rasūl of Allah appeared in India and Pakistan too?

From verse 36 in the present Sūrah: *وَلَقَدْ بَعَثْنَا فِي كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَسُولًا* (And We did raise a messenger among every people), as well as from verse 24 of Sūrah Fāṭir: *وَإِنْ مِنْ أُمَّةٍ إِلَّا خَلَا فِيهَا نَذِيرٌ* (And there is no group of people among whom there has not been a warner - 35:24), it outwardly appears that messengers may have also been sent to areas now known as India and Pakistan - whether residents of the area, or located in another country whose deputies or emissaries had reached there. Then, there is the verse of Sūrah Al-Qaṣaṣ: *لِنُنذِرَ قَوْمًا مَّا أَتَاهُمْ مِنْ نَذِيرٍ* (so that you may warn a people unto whom came no warner - 28:46). The sense released by the verse is that no warner had come before him to the people unto whom the Holy Prophet ﷺ was sent. This can be answered by saying that this obviously refers to the people of Arabia who became the first addressees of the prophetic mission of Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā ﷺ - the fact being that no prophet since Sayyidnā Ismā'īl عليه السلام had appeared among them. There-

fore, the title given to these people in the Holy Qur'ān was **أُمِّيِّينَ** : "Ummiyyīn" (the unlettered ones). This does not necessarily imply that no prophet came before him in the rest of the world as well. Allah knows best.

Verses 41 - 42

وَالَّذِينَ هَاجَرُوا فِي اللَّهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا ظَلَمُوا لَنُبَوِّئَنَّهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا
حَسَنَةً ۗ وَلَا جَزَاءَ الْآخِرَةِ أَكْبَرَ، لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٤١﴾ الَّذِينَ صَبَرُوا
وَعَلَى رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ ﴿٤٢﴾

And those who have migrated for the sake of Allah after they were oppressed, We shall give them a good place in the world and, of course, the reward of the Hereafter is much greater, if they only knew! [41] - those who kept patient and who place trust in their Lord. [42]

Commentary

The verb: هَاجَرُوا (*hājarū*) is a derivation from *hijrat* (pausal : *hijrah*) which literally means to leave one's homeland. The leaving of one's homeland done for the sake of Allah is an act of great obedience and worship in Islam. The Holy Prophet ﷺ said: 'الهِجْرَةُ تَهْدِمُ مَا كَانَ قَبْلَهَا' ('Hijrah demolishes all sins that were before it').

This Hijrah is Farḍ (obligatory) and Wājib (necessary) under some situations while it is recommended as desirable and better (Mustaḥabb) under some others. Related injunctions have appeared in details under comments on verse 97 of Sūrah An-Nisā' : أَلَمْ تَكُنْ أَرْضُ اللَّهِ وَاسِعَةً : (Was not the earth of Allah wide enough that you might have sought refuge in it? - 3:97) [Ma'ariful-Qur'ān, Volume II] Mentioned here at this place are particular promises which Allah Ta'ālā has made to Muhājirīn, those who do Hijrah, that is, leave their homeland for His sake.

How does Hijrah bring Better Life in the Present World?

In the verses cited above, two great promises have been made to Muhājirīn subject to some conditions: (1) To give them a good place right here in this world, and (2) To bless them with the greater reward of the Hereafter which is limitless. The expression: 'a good place in the world'

is highly comprehensive. It includes a good residence for the Muhājir (one who does Hijrah) as well as neighbours who are good. It also includes extended means of living, supremacy over hostile enemies, recognition and fair name among people, and honour which continues through the family, and progeny. (Qurtubī)

The background of the revelation of the verse is basically the first Hijrah which the noble Companions made to Ethiopea. Then, the probability that it may include the Hijrah to Ethiopea as well as the Hijrah to al-Madīnah al-Munawwarah which came after that. Mentioned here in this verse are the same Muhājirīn to Ethiopea, or the Muhājirīn to Madīnah. Therefore, some scholars have said that this promise was for these blessed Ṣaḥābah only, that is, those who had made their Hijrah to Ethiopea, or those who had later done it to Madīnah. As for the promise of Allah, it stood already fulfilled within the present world, something witnessed openly. Everyone saw how Madīnah was made for them the real good place to live. Instead of hostile neighbours, they lived among those who were sympathetic, sharing and sacrificing. Enemies were conquered and subdued. Within a short period of time since their Hijrah, doors of ample sustenance were thrown open for them. The poor and needy of yester years became wealthy citizens of the day. Many countries of the world came under their sway. Such were their achievements in moral greatness and beauty of conduct that they remain receiving words of praise from friends and foes alike even to this day. Allah Ta‘ālā blessed them with great honour, and their generations as well. These were things that were to take place in this world, which they did. Now, the promise of the Hereafter shall also be fulfilled. But, says Abū Ḥayyān in his Tafsīr Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ:

وَالَّذِينَ هَاجَرُوا عَامًّا فِي الْمُهَاجِرِينَ كَانُوا مَا كَانُوا فَيشْمَلُ أَوْلَهُمْ وَأَخْرَهُمْ

The expression: **الَّذِينَ هَاجَرُوا** (And those who migrated) is general and inclusive of all those who leave their homeland whatever their country or time. Therefore, this includes all Muhājirīn, from the very first ones down to the last among them who do their Hijrah for the sake of Allah right upto the Last Day, the day of Al-Qiyāmah. (v. 5, p. 492)

This is also as required by the general exegetic rule under which a commentator relies on the general sense of the word, even though there

be a particular event or group as the prime cause of the revelation of the verse. Therefore, included in this promise are Muhājirīn of the whole world and of all times - and the fulfillment of both these promises for all Muhājirīn is certain.

A similar promise has been made for Muhājirīn in the following verse of Sūrah An-Nisā': وَسَعَةً [And whoever migrates in the way of Allah he shall find many a place to settle and wide dimension (of resources) - 4:100] particularly promised wherein are spatial abundance and extensive means. But, alongwith these promises, the Holy Qur'an has also put forth some qualifications of Muhājirīn and some conditions of Hijrah as well. Therefore, those deserving of the fulfillment of these promises can only be the Muhājirīn who possess these qualifications and who have satisfied the desired conditions.

Out of these, the very first condition is that of: فِي اللَّهِ (fil-lāh: for the sake of Allah) which means that the purpose of doing Hijrah should only be to please Allah Ta'ālā and that, in it, there be no selfish motives of material gains such as business or employment. The second condition is that these Muhājirīn be victims of injustice as stated in: مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا ظَلَمُوا (after they were oppressed). The third qualification is that they stay patient against initial disadvantages and difficulties showing steadfastness and fortitude as pointed out in: الَّذِينَ صَبَرُوا (those who kept patient). The fourth qualification is that they, even while utilizing all available material means, make it a point to place their trust in Allah alone for every ultimate success comes from Him alone, as described in: وَعَلَى رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ (and who place trust in their Lord).

This tells us that there are initial difficulties in everything undertaken. However, should a Muhājir fail to find the promised good place and favourable condition, then, instead of doubting the promise of the Qur'an, he better assess his intention, sincerity and conduct on which these promises have been made. Once this is done, he will discover that it was but his own fault, may be the intention was not pure, or there was a lack of endurance and trust.

Migration and Hijrah : Different Kinds and Their Injunctions

At this point, Imām Al-Qurṭubī has given details about migration and Hijrah highlighting their difference alongwith some related injunc-

tions. This is being reproduced here in view of its relevant usefulness.

Quoting Ibn al-‘Arabī, Al-Qurṭubī says that going out of the homeland and travelling through the earth is either to run from something and find a safe haven, or to seek and get something. The first kind of trip which is to escape and be safe from something is called Hijrah which is of six kinds:

1. Going from Dār al-Kufr (Abode of Disbelief) to Dār al-Islām (Abode of Islām): This kind of journey was obligatory (Farḍ) even during the days of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and it shall remain obligatory, subject to capability and ability, right through the day of the Qiyāmah (when there is no security of life, property and honour, or that it is not possible to fulfill religious obligations, the Farā’iḍ of Dīn). If one continues to stay in Dār al-Ḥarb (technically an enemy country of disbelievers at war with Muslims), one will be considered a sinner.

2. To get out of Dār al-Bid‘ah (Abode overtaken by deviation from established religion): Ibn Qāsim says that he had heard from Imām Mālik رحمه الله تعالى that it is not Ḥalāl for any Muslim to stay at a place where the early righteous elders of the Muslim community (*al-Salaf-al-Ṣaliḥūn*) are criticised and maligned. After reporting this statement, Ibn al-‘Arabī writes that it is totally correct - because, should you be unable to eradicate the practice of what is forbidden, then, it becomes necessary for you that you should remove your own self from that place, and have nothing to do with it. This is as commanded by Allah Ta‘ālā in the Qur‘ān: وَإِذَا رَأَيْتَ الَّذِينَ يَخُوضُونَ فِي آيَاتِنَا فَأَعْرِضْ عَنْهُمْ (And when you see those who indulge in Our verses adversely, turn away from them - 6:68).

3. To get out of a place overtaken by what is Ḥarām: This is because the quest for what is Ḥalāl is obligatory (Farḍ) on every Muslim.

4. To move out in order to avoid being subjected to physical pain: This kind of journey is permissible. In fact, it is a blessing from Allah that one should leave a place where danger exists that he will be physically hurt by enemies. So, this is his way out of that danger. This fourth kind of journey was first made by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. It was to seek deliverance from the pain inflicted on him by his people. When he left ‘Irāq for Syria, he had said: إِنِّي مُهَاجِرٌ إِلَىٰ رَبِّي (I am a *muhājir* [emigrant] unto my Lord - 29:26). After him, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام made a similar journey

from Egypt to Madyan: فَعَرَجَ مِنْهَا خَائِفًا يَتَرَقَّبُ (he got out from there, fearing, watching - 28:21).

5. To move out due to unsuitable climate or likely diseases: This is the fifth kind of journey which has also been permitted by Islam as the Holy Prophet ﷺ had advised some shepherds to settle by the grooves outside Madinah because the climate of the city did not suit them. Similarly, Sayyidnā ‘Umar al-Fārūq ؓ had sent an executive order to Sayyidnā Abū ‘Ubaidah ؓ that he should shift the provincial capital from Jordan to some site located on a higher altitude where the climate is not bad.

But, this is on condition that there be no plague or other epidemic diseases affecting the area. And if, an epidemic does spread out in an area, it is governed by another rule, that is, those who are already present there do not have to get out from that area. As for those who are outside it, they should not go in there - as it happened with Sayyidnā ‘Umar al-Fārūq ؓ during his journey to Syria. When he reached the borders of Syria, he was told that a plague has spread throughout that country. Hearing that, he hesitated from entering that country. He went into repeated consultations with the Ṣaḥābah to resolve this problem. The resolution came only after Sayyidnā ‘Abd Al-Raḥmān ibn Al-‘Awf ؓ narrated a Ḥadīth in which the Holy Prophet ﷺ had said:

إِذَا وَقَعَ بَارِضٌ وَأَنْتُمْ بِهَا فَلَا تَخْرُجُوا مِنْهَا وَإِذَا وَقَعَ بَارِضٌ وَلَسْتُمْ بِهَا فَلَا تَهْبِطُوا عَلَيْهَا (رواه الترمذی وقال حديث حسن صحيح)

When plague spreads in an area where you are present, do not go out from there; and when it spreads in an area where you are not already present, do not go in there (after having heard of plague). (This Ḥadīth has been reported by Tirmidhī who calls it Ḥasan Ṣaḥīḥ)

At that time, Sayyidnā ‘Umar al-Fārūq ؓ, in obedience to the command of the Ḥadīth, proclaimed that the whole caravan shall turn back and go home.

Some ‘Ulamā have pointed out that this Ḥadīth has a particular element of wisdom in it, that is, the people staying in an area affected by some epidemic are most likely to be infected by its germs. If they were to run away from there, the one who is infected dangerously is not going to

survive anyway, but he would infect others wherever he goes. Hence, the wise decision.

6. To secure personal property and possessions: When someone feels the danger of being hit by thieves and robbers at a certain place, he should move away from there. The Shari'ah of Islam has permitted doing this as well because the property and possessions of a Muslim are as sacrosanct as his or her life.

These six kinds belong to migration undertaken to run for safety against something. Then, there is the journey undertaken to seek and get something. It has nine kinds:

1. The journey for moral self-correction: It means touring and travelling through Allah's earth for the particular purpose of witnessing the creation of Allah Ta'ālā, the manifestations of His most perfect power, and having a spot observation of the sad end of past peoples in order to learn one's essential lesson in how to live sensibly and confidently. The Holy Qur'an has exhorted people to embark on such trips, for instance in: *أَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَيَنْظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ* (Have they not travelled around the earth and seen how was the end of those before them? - 35:44). 'Ulamā have identified the journey undertaken by Sayyidnā Dhul-Qarnain as a journey of this kind, while some of them suggest that his journey through the earth was to establish Divine Law on it.

2. The journey of Hajj: That it is an Islamic duty subject to some conditions is well known.

3. The journey of Jihād: All Muslims know that it is also either obligatory (*farḍ*), or necessary (*wājib*), or recommended (*mustaḥabb*).

4. The journey for employment: If a person cannot find economic support for his needs in his homeland, it is incumbent on him that he travels elsewhere and look for an employment opportunity there.

5. The journey for trading: It means travelling to acquire wealth in excess to the measure of need. According to Islamic legal norms, this too is permissible. Allah Ta'ālā says: *لَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ أَنْ تَبْتَغُوا فَضْلًا مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ*: 'There is no sin on you that you seek the bounty of your Lord (by trading) - 2:198.' Here, by 'seeking of bounty' in this verse, the reference is to trading. When Allah Ta'ālā has allowed trading even during the Hajj trip, then,

undertaking a journey for the sole purpose of trading becomes permissible in the first degree.

6. The journey for education: That it is an absolute duty in terms of religious need, and that it is an obligation of sufficiency (*farḍ al-kifāyah*: an obligation which, if discharged by some, would suffice for others) in terms of what is more than needed, is widely known and amply recognized.

7. The journey to a place believing it to be sacred and blessed: This is not correct and proper except for the three Masājid and they are: (1) Al-Masjid Al-Ḥarām (The Sacred Mosque of Makkah al-Mukarramah) (2) Al-Masjid An-Nabawiyy (The Mosque of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, in Al-Madīnah al-Munawwarah) (3) Al-Masjid Al-Aqṣā (Baytul-Maqdis). [This is the view of Al-Qurṭubī and Ibn al-'Arabī. Other revered scholars of early Islam and their successors have also allowed the undertaking of travel to visit places generally considered blessed - Muḥammad Shafī].

8. The journey undertaken to guard Islamic frontiers: This is known as *Ribāṭ*. There are many Ḥadīth reports which commend it strongly. (For details on *Ribāṭ*, please see our comments under Verse 200 of Sūrah 'Āl-'Imrān in Ma'āriful-Qur'ān, Volume II)

9. The journey to visit relatives and friends: This too has been classed as an act deserving of return and reward. A Ḥadīth of Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim mentions the prayer of angels in favour of those who undertake a journey to visit relatives and friends (which is valid only when the purpose of meeting them is to seek the pleasure of Allah Ta'ālā and not to seek any material gains). Allah knows best. (Qurṭubī, p. 349-351, v. 5, Sūrah An-Nisā')

Verses 43 -44

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ إِلَّا رِجَالًا نُوحِيَ إِلَيْهِمْ فَسَلُّوا أَهْلَ الدِّكْرِ إِنْ
 كُنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٤٣﴾ بِالْبَيْتِ وَالزُّبُرِ ط وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الدِّكْرَ لِتُبَيِّنَ
 لِلنَّاسِ مَا نُزِّلَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴿٤٤﴾

And We did not send (messengers) before you other than