

event when he said (in Persian, with its stylized translation) :

خليل آسادر ملك يقين زن

نوائے لا أحبُّ الّا فلین زن

Like Khalīl [Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm Khalīlullāh ...]

Enter

The Domain of Belief

By proclaiming

The Password:

I do not like the vanishing!

After that, some other night, with a glowing moon in sight, he again beamed his dialogue at his people following the earlier method, and said: (according to your view) this is my Lord but its reality you will find out after a little while. So, when the moon vanished, he said: If my Rabb had not been guiding me all along, I would have been enlisted among the stray like you, and it would have been the moon itself I might have taken as my Lord and my object of worship. But, the alternating conditions of its rising and setting brought me to the chastening conclusion that this star too is not worthy of worship.

Also hinted in this verse is that the *Rabb* or Lord of Ibrāhīm عليه السلام is a totally different entity from Whom guidance keeps coming to him.

Then, the day he saw the sun rising, he again said to his people as he had done earlier: This (according to your view) is my *Rabb*. And this is the biggest of all. But, its reality you will soon find out. So, when came the time for the sun to set, set it did. Driven home was his final argument against the ideas of his people. The reality had become all too obvious. So, he said: *يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا اِنِّىْٓ اِنۡتَبِهْتُكُمْ* (O my people, I am free of whatever you associate with Allah).

In conclusion, he made it clear before them that his *Rabb* (the Lord of life who nurtures, cherishes and sustains it) and their *Rabb* can never be any of these created heavenly bodies which are not free of dependence on something else for their existence, and are surrounded by constant and ongoing changes of rising and setting. Instead of them, his Lord and their Lord was no other than the One who has created the heavens and the earth and everything therein. Therefore, he declared that he had changed his orientation away from their self-

sculpted idols and away from the stars of their fancy which changed and alternated under creational compulsion, and it was to the total exclusion of all these, that he had turned to Allah alone, the One God who has no partners and associates with Him - (and when that was settled, he was different) so, he made it frank and clear that he was not a *Mushrik* (disbeliever or polytheist) like them. (Indeed, a line of demarcation drawn for ever!)

In this debate, it is significant that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm has shown characteristic prophetic wisdom and elegance of approach when he does not make a frontal assault on the false notions of star-worship entertained by his people as being false or erroneous. He has, rather, chosen a very telling style of presentation which by itself would help any rational human being to absorb the point being made and be able to recognize reality at the end. Of course, when the case was that of idol-worship, his method was different - there, he had taken a hard line right from the start, and had told his father point-blank that he and his people had gone astray. The reason was that idol-worship was all too obvious an error, contrary to star-worship the error of which was not so obvious and pronounced.

Noteworthy here is the outcome of the argument against star-worship presented by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام before his people. He said that (a) things which are subject to change, (b) things which keep alternating in their conditions, and (c) things which in their movements are subservient to some other power can never become deserving of being taken as anyone's *Rabb* or Lord. In this argument, it was possible to seek help from all other conditions of the stars, such as their rising and their intermediary stage before their setting, when it could have been said that they were not independent in their movements and were moving in a pre-specified orbit under the command of someone else. But, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام, from out of all these states and conditions, chose the setting of these stars as the main thrust of his argument - because their setting, in a way, spells out their decline in the sight of common people. The typical argument presented by prophets, may peace be upon them all, is what would go on to influence the minds of common people. They do not pursue philosophical truisms, instead, they address people at the level of common

comprehension. Therefore, it was to prove the helplessness and ineffectiveness of stars that the phenomenon of their setting was presented. Otherwise, the rising of the stars might have also been used to prove that they were helpless and powerless - and it would have also been possible to get hold of an argument from changes that come upon them before they finally set.

Some Instructions for Preachers of Islam

This debating style of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام provides some important points of guidance for Muslim scholars and *Da'wah* workers:

1. In matters relating to carrying the call of truth to people (*Tablīgh*) and seeking reform among them (*Islāh*), being universally rigid or universally lenient is not appropriate. The correct approach is to understand that each of these has an occasion and a limit. For example, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm has used strong words when it comes to idol-worship, because its error is within common sight. But, he has not used such strong words in the case of star-worship where he has used a particular method to clarify its reality in the minds of his people - because the matter of stars and planets being helpless and powerless was not so readily obvious as was that of self-carved idols. This tells us that should common people be involved in an error of judgement or conduct, which they do not realize as such, then, the *‘Ālim* (religious scholar) or *Muballigh* (religious preacher) would do well to avoid taking a hard line, rigid or excessive or dogmatic, and try to find a better way to remove their doubts.

2. The second guidance concerns the manner in which truth has to be presented. The example is that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام did not address his people directly asking them to do what had to be done. Rather than say something in the mode of an order, he simply told them about how he felt in this matter. He said that he could not declare things which were helplessly involved in a cycle of rising and setting as objects of worship. For this reason, he told them, he had turned to the Being that is the creator, nurturer and caretaker of all these things. Of course, the purpose was to bring them round to do the same. But, in his wise way, he abstained from a direct address lest they become totally uncompromising by opposing the suggestion just for the sake of opposition. This tells us that the job of a reformer and

preacher is not to go ahead and tell what is true in just about any way. Instead of doing something like that, he is bound to say it in a manner which would produce the desired effect on his listeners.

Verses 82 - 89

الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَلَمْ يَلْبِسُوا إِيمَانَهُمْ بِظُلْمٍ أُولَئِكَ لَهُمُ الْأَمْنُ وَهُمْ
 مُهْتَدُونَ ﴿٨٢﴾ وَتِلْكَ حُجَّتُنَا آتَيْنَاهَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ عَلَى قَوْمِهِ نَرْفَعُ
 دَرَجَاتٍ مَّنْ نَّشَاءُ ۗ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ حَكِيمٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٨٣﴾ وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ
 إِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ ۗ كُلًّا هَدَيْنَا ۚ وَنُوحًا هَدَيْنَا مِن قَبْلُ وَمِن
 ذُرِّيَّتِهِ دَاوُدَ وَسُلَيْمَانَ وَأَيُّوبَ وَيُوسُفَ وَمُوسَى وَهَارُونَ ۗ
 وَكَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٨٤﴾ وَزَكَرِيَّا وَيَحْيَىٰ وَعِيسَىٰ وَ
 الْيَسَاءَ ۗ كُلٌّ مِّنَ الصَّالِحِينَ ﴿٨٥﴾ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَالْيَسَعَ وَيُونُسَ
 وَلُوطًا ۗ وَكُلًّا فَضَّلْنَا عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٨٦﴾ وَمِن آبَائِهِمْ
 وَذُرِّيَّاتِهِمْ وَإِخْوَانِهِمْ وَاجْتَبَيْنَاهُمْ وَهَدَيْنَاهُمْ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ
 ﴿٨٧﴾ ذَلِكَ هُدَى اللَّهِ يَهْدِي بِهِ مَن يَشَاءُ ۗ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ ۗ وَلَوْ
 أَشْرَكُوا لَحَبِطَ عَنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٨٨﴾ أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ
 آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحُكْمَ وَالنُّبُوَّةَ ۚ فَإِن يَكْفُرْ بِهَا هَؤُلَاءِ فَقَدْ
 وَكَّلْنَا بِهَا قَوْمًا لَّيْسُوا بِهَا بِكَافِرِينَ ﴿٨٩﴾

Those who have believed and have not mixed their faith with injustice; it is they who deserve peace and it is they who are on the right path. [82]

And that is the proof from Us We gave to Ibrahim against his people. We raise in ranks whom We will. Surely, your Lord is Wise, Knowing. [83]

And We blessed Ishāq* and Ya‘qūb. To each We gave guidance. And earlier, We gave guidance to Nūḥ and, of

*. Biblical names in the order as they appear in this paragraph containing Verses 84-86: Isaac, Jacob, Noah, David, Solomon, Job, Joseph, Moses, Aaron, Zechariah, John, Jesus, Elias, Ishmael, Elisha, Jonah and Lot.

his progeny, to Dāwūd and Sulaymān and Ayyūb and Yūsuf and Mūsā and Harūn - and this is how We reward the good in deed [84] - and to Zakariyya and Yaḥyā and ‘Īsā and Ilyas - each one of them was of the righteous [85] - and to Ismā‘īl and Yasa‘ and Yūnus and Lūṭ, and all of them We made to excel over the worlds. [86] And We gave guidance to many among their fathers and their children and their brothers, and We chose them and led them on to the straight path. [87]

That is Allah’s guidance. He guides with it whom He wills from His slaves. And had they associated partners with Him, all they did would have been nullified for them. [88]

They are those whom We have given the Book and wisdom and prophethood. So, if these people disbelieve it, then, We have deputed for it a people who do not disbelieve in it. [89]

Commentary

Mentioned in the previous verses was the debate Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام had held with his father, ‘Āzar, and with his entire Nimrudic people. There, after having conclusively refuted their worship of idols and stars, he had addressed his people by telling them in effect: You threaten me that your idols will destroy me if I refuse to accept their authority, although these idols do not have the power to do so, nor have I done anything as a result of which I may be hit by some hardship. In fact, it is you who should be trembling in fear for you have committed a crime as terrible as equating with Him the creations of Allah, rather the objects made and prepared by His creation even giving them a share in His divinity. Then, the fact that Allah Ta‘ālā is All-Knowing, All-Aware and All-Powerful is not hidden from any sensible person. This calls for some thinking on your part. So, think and say who deserves to be in peace and who it is who should be fearing?

In the first (82) of the present verses, it was said that only those who believe in Allah and then do not go on to mix up their faith with injustice shall be the people who can hope to be safe against punishment. It appears in *Hadīth*, when this verse was revealed, the noble *Sahābah* were frightened. They said: *Yā Rasūl* Allah, who among us has not been unjust to himself by committing one or the other sin?

Now, in this verse, the only condition of remaining safe from punishment is that one should have done no injustice to himself while in the state of *Īmān*. If so, how can we ever achieve salvation? The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: You have not understood the correct meaning of the verse. Here, ‘*Zulm*’ (injustice) means ‘*Shirk*’ (ascribing of partners to Allah) as said in another verse: إِنَّ الشِّرْكَ لَظُلْمٌ عَظِيمٌ (Joining others in the worship of Allah is a great injustice - 31:13). Therefore, the sense of the verse is that one, who enters (the bliss of) *Īmān* and then does not associate anyone with the Being and the Attributes of Allah Ta‘ālā, shall remain safe from punishment, and considered well-guided.

In brief, those who worship idols, rocks, trees, rivers and stars do so because they, out of bland simplicity, take them to be the holders and wielders of power. So, they are scared of the idea of forsaking their worship lest these objects were to hurt them in some way. Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام gave such people a smart key to their problem when he asked them to fear Almighty Allah who knew all they do and had power over whatever good or bad reaches them - and not commit the folly of fearing things which have neither knowledge nor power. This fear is absolutely unreasonable. One must fear Allah alone - and whoever believes in it is out of all danger.

Said in this verse is: وَلَمْ يَلْمِسُوا إِيمَانَهُمْ ظُلْمًا (And those who have not mixed their faith with injustice). Here, ‘*Zulm*’ as explained by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, means *Shirk* (ascribing partners in the divinity of Allah) - not sin in an ordinary sense. But, by bringing in: يظلم (bi *zul-min*) as indefinite noun (*Nakirah*), a device supported by the rules of the Arabic grammar, the sense was made general which includes all kinds of *Shirk*. As for the word: لَمْ يَلْمِسُوا (lam *yalbisu*), it has been derived from: لبس (*labasa*) which means to wear, cover or mix. Thus, the verse comes to mean that a person who mixes some sort of *Shirk* in his or her *Īmān*, that is, one who, despite believing in Allah Ta‘ālā along with all His attributes of perfection, takes non-Allah too as bearing some of those attributes, shall be considered excluded from the guarantee of peace and faith given here.

We also come to know from this verse that *Shirk* is not restricted to becoming a *Mushrik* or idolater. In fact, also *Mushrik* is a person who

does not worship idols in the customary sense, but recites the *Kalimah* of Islam, yet takes some angel or messenger or *waliy* or 'saint' of Allah as partners or sharers in some exclusive attributes of Allah. This verse carries a stern warning for those who take the *Auliā'* of Allah (The Men of Allah) and their *Mazārs* (resting places, tombs) as capable of answering their prayers and granting their needs, and go as far as believing practically as if the Divine powers have been delegated to them. Refuge with Allah!

In the second verse (83), Allah Ta'ālā has said that the triumph of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm in his debate against his people and in which he had silenced them was a blessing of Allah alone for He gave him a sound theory to propound and glowing arguments to employ. Let no one wax proud about his or her intelligence and understanding or art of discourse and power of oration as self-sufficient. Nothing crosses the barrier of possibility without the support and help of Allah Ta'ālā. Bland human reason is not enough to comprehend realities. This is a matter of common observation in every age. Philosophers of great standing go astray while many among the illiterate get a firm hold on correct belief and right thinking. Maulanā Rūmī was on the beam when he said:

یہ عنایاتِ حق و خاصانِ حق
گر ملک باشد سیہ بستش ورق

Without the graces of The True One and those close to Him
Dark shall be the record of deeds, even if one be an angel.

By saying: *نَرْفَعُ دَرَجَاتٍ مِّنْ نَّفْسِهِ* (We raise in ranks whom We will) towards the end of the verse (83), the hint given is that the station of special reverence received by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام in this world which would last through generations to come until the Last Day, a homage universally paid by Jews, Christians, Muslims and Buddhists, was no feat of personal acquisition or recognition, instead of which, this was nothing but the grace and reward from Allah.

In the six verses (84-89) appearing after that, there is a list of seventeen blessed prophets, some of whom are the forefathers of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام while most are his progeny, with some being his brothers or nephews. On the one hand, described in these verses is their being Divinely guided, righteous in conduct and firm on the straight

path, along with the fact that Allah Ta‘ālā has chosen and blessed them to serve His religion. On the other hand, it has been stressed that, in return for the sacrifice of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام who had disassociated himself from his father, community and country in the way of Allah, was it not that, much before the reward of eternal bliss in the Hereafter, Allah Ta‘ālā bestowed on him right here in this world too a community better than his own, a country better than his own - and blessed him with the supreme distinction that all prophets and messengers sent into the world after him upto the end of time were from among his progeny? A branch that originated from Sayyidnā Ishāq عليه السلام had prophets who appeared among the Banī Isrā‘īl. The other branch which originated from Sayyidnā Ismā‘īl عليه السلام saw the coming of the foremost and the Last among prophets, Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā صلى الله عليه وسلم from among them. They all were the progeny of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. This phenomena also tells us that, though honour and salvation or disgrace and punishment really depend on one’s personal deeds, but having a prophet or man of Allah (*waliy*) among forefathers, or having observing ‘*Ālims of Dīn* and men and women of righteous conduct among children, is also a great blessing as this too brings its benefits.

Out of these seventeen prophets عليهم السلام identified in the cited verses, Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام is the patriarch of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. The rest have been called their progeny: *وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِهِ دَاوُدَ وَسُلَيْمَانَ* (and, of his progeny, to Dāwūd and Sulaymān ...). This poses two difficulties. The first could be about Sayyidnā ‘Īsā عليه السلام who, because of his father-less birth, is a progeny of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام from the daughter’s side, that is, not a paternal grandson, instead, is a grandson from the maternal side.

If so, how would calling him his progeny would be correct? Most learned Muslim scholars and jurists have answered it by saying that progeny is inclusive of both paternal and maternal grandsons. It is from here that they prove that Sayyidnā Hasan and Sayyidnā Husain رضی الله عنهما stand included under the progeny of the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

The second difficulty posed here relates to Sayyidnā Luṭ عليه السلام for he is not from among his children, but is a nephew. The answer is clear. In customary usage, referring to an uncle as father and to a

nephew as son is very common.

By mentioning the blessings of Allah on Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام in these verses, two things have been made very clear. Firstly, there is the law for anyone who sacrifices whatever he holds dear in the way of Allah, on him or her Allah bestows right here in this mortal world what is better than what he or she has surrendered in the way of Allah. Secondly, the purpose is to make the disbelievers of Makkah hear this background of things in their situation so that they may be guided right. This amounts to telling them: You do not listen to what Our prophet, Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā صلى الله عليه وسلم is telling you. If that is so, consider these you too rever as great. So, Ibrāhīm عليه السلام and his whole progeny have all been saying the same thing - that Allah is the only object worthy of worship. Associating anyone else with Him in *'Ibādah*, or suggesting that someone else is a sharer in His exclusive attributes is what disbelief and straying is. This proves that they are, even in terms of what they themselves accept as established truth, subject to censure.

The subject continues through the eighth verse (89) at the end of which it has been said to comfort the Holy Prophet صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَإِنْ : فَإِنْ : يَكْفُرْ بِهَا هَؤُلَاءِ فَقَدْ وَكَلْنَا بِهَا قَوْمًا لَيَكْفُرُنَّ بِهَا بَكْفِيرِينَ (So, if these people disbelieve it, then, We have deputed for it a people who do not disbelieve in it). In other words, it means: If some of your addressees do not listen to you and are, despite having been told about the teachings of all past prophets, bent upon nothing short of denial, then, you do not have to worry - because We have appointed a great people who would say yes to your call, follow your word and make the mission their own, and who would never stoop to the level of disbelief and denial.

Included here are all *Muhājirīn* and *Anṣār* present during the blessed age of the Holy Prophet صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ, and also all Muslims who keep coming upto the end of time until comes the *Qiyāmah*. And this verse is a fond asset for all such people, as Allah Ta'ālā has named them on an occasion which calls for praise by Him:

اللَّهُمَّ اجْعَلْنَا مِنْهُمْ وَأَحْسِنَّا فِي زُمْرَتِهِمْ

O Allah, make us one of them and raise us in their company.

وَأَن تَدْعُوا إِلَىٰ مَن دَعَا إِلَىٰ ضَلَالٍ مَّبِينَةٍ فَذَرُوهُنَّ وَمَا لَهُنَّ فِي الْأُمْرِ شَيْءٌ ﴿٩٠﴾
 وَأَن تَدْعُوا إِلَىٰ مَن دَعَا إِلَىٰ سُبُلِ اللَّهِ مُبِينَةٍ فَذَرُوهُنَّ وَمَا لَهُنَّ فِي الْأُمْرِ شَيْءٌ ﴿٩١﴾
 وَأَن تَدْعُوا إِلَىٰ مَن دَعَا إِلَىٰ ضَلَالٍ مَّبِينَةٍ فَذَرُوهُنَّ وَمَا لَهُنَّ فِي الْأُمْرِ شَيْءٌ ﴿٩٢﴾
 وَأَن تَدْعُوا إِلَىٰ مَن دَعَا إِلَىٰ سُبُلِ اللَّهِ مُبِينَةٍ فَذَرُوهُنَّ وَمَا لَهُنَّ فِي الْأُمْرِ شَيْءٌ ﴿٩٣﴾
 وَأَن تَدْعُوا إِلَىٰ مَن دَعَا إِلَىٰ ضَلَالٍ مَّبِينَةٍ فَذَرُوهُنَّ وَمَا لَهُنَّ فِي الْأُمْرِ شَيْءٌ ﴿٩٤﴾
 وَأَن تَدْعُوا إِلَىٰ مَن دَعَا إِلَىٰ سُبُلِ اللَّهِ مُبِينَةٍ فَذَرُوهُنَّ وَمَا لَهُنَّ فِي الْأُمْرِ شَيْءٌ ﴿٩٥﴾
 وَأَن تَدْعُوا إِلَىٰ مَن دَعَا إِلَىٰ ضَلَالٍ مَّبِينَةٍ فَذَرُوهُنَّ وَمَا لَهُنَّ فِي الْأُمْرِ شَيْءٌ ﴿٩٦﴾
 وَأَن تَدْعُوا إِلَىٰ مَن دَعَا إِلَىٰ سُبُلِ اللَّهِ مُبِينَةٍ فَذَرُوهُنَّ وَمَا لَهُنَّ فِي الْأُمْرِ شَيْءٌ ﴿٩٧﴾
 وَأَن تَدْعُوا إِلَىٰ مَن دَعَا إِلَىٰ ضَلَالٍ مَّبِينَةٍ فَذَرُوهُنَّ وَمَا لَهُنَّ فِي الْأُمْرِ شَيْءٌ ﴿٩٨﴾
 وَأَن تَدْعُوا إِلَىٰ مَن دَعَا إِلَىٰ سُبُلِ اللَّهِ مُبِينَةٍ فَذَرُوهُنَّ وَمَا لَهُنَّ فِي الْأُمْرِ شَيْءٌ ﴿٩٩﴾
 وَأَن تَدْعُوا إِلَىٰ مَن دَعَا إِلَىٰ ضَلَالٍ مَّبِينَةٍ فَذَرُوهُنَّ وَمَا لَهُنَّ فِي الْأُمْرِ شَيْءٌ ﴿١٠٠﴾

Those are the people Allah has guided. So, it is their guidance that you shall follow. Say, "I ask you no reward for it. It is nothing but an advice for all the worlds." [90]

And they did not hold Allah in due esteem when they said, "Allah has not sent down anything on a human being." Say, "Who has sent down the Book brought by

Mūsā as a light and a guidance for people, which you kept in sheets you displayed, and you concealed a lot? You were taught what you did not know - neither you nor your fathers?" Say, "Allah." Then leave them playing with what they are indulged in. [91]

And this is a blessed book We have sent down, confirming what has been before it, so that you may warn the town which is the mother of all towns, and those around it. And those who believe in the Hereafter believe in it, and of their prayers, they take due care. [92]

And who is more unjust than the one who fabricates a lie against Allah or says, "Revelation has been sent to me" whereas no revelation has been sent to him, and the one who says, "I would reveal just as Allah has revealed." And if you could witness when the unjust are in the throes of death, and the angels stretch their hands (and say,) "Out with your souls. Today, you shall have your punishment, a punishment of humiliation, because you have been saying about Allah what is not true, and rejecting His verses arrogantly." [93]

And you have come to Us all alone just as We had created you at first, and you have left behind what We had bestowed on you, and We do not see your intercessors with you - those whom you claimed to be (Our) partners in (managing) your matters. In fact, all ties between you are severed and all that you claimed is lost to you. [94]

Commentary

It will be recalled that mentioned in previous verses were great rewards and ranks bestowed on Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. Through these, the purpose was to show to the whole progeny of Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام generally and to the people of Makkah and Arabia particularly, in a practically demonstrated form, that a person who takes total obedience to Allah Ta‘ālā as the sole purpose of his or her life and sacrifices everything held dear in the way of Allah - as was done by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm Khalīlullah, may Allah bless him - then, in order are the best of returns for that person. He left his father and mother, his people and country, all for the sake of Allah. Then, it was to offer his supreme services to found and raise the foundations of the House of

Allah, the venerated Baytullah, that he abandoned the greeneries of the country of Syria and travelled all the way to the deserts of Makkah. When ordered to leave his wife and infant son in the wilderness, he obeyed instantly. When commanded to sacrifice his first-born and very dear son, he demonstrated his readiness to obey it all the way to the ultimate limits of his choice and volition. For those obedient in that class and degree, the real reward shall come only after *Qiyāmah*, and in *Jannah* alone. But, Allah Ta'ālā blesses such people right here in this world too with ranks and riches which would put all ranks and riches of the entire world to shame.

Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm Khalīlullah عليه السلام left his people for the sake of Allah - in return, he became the patriarch of prophets, most of whom were from among his progeny. He left his country of Syria and Iraq - in return, he was blessed with Baytullah (the House of Allah), al-Balad al-Amīn (the City of Trust) and Umm al-Qurā (the Mother of Cities) that is, Makkah. His own people tried to disgrace him - in return, he was made the supreme leader of generations to come right through the Last Day of *Qiyāmah* in the present world where nations and religions despite their major mutual differences have all along remained united on paying homage to the reverence of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام.

It will also be recalled that in those verses seventeen prophets were mentioned most of whom are either children or progeny of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. It was also stated there that they were persons of great status whom Allah had chosen to convey His message to all human beings and that it was He who had shown them the straight path.

Explanatory Notes on the Present Verses

Addressing the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in the first verse (90) the people of Makkah have been sounded that the forefathers of a people cannot be taken as objects of emulation or role-models deserving of being followed to the letter in all their words and deeds, as was generally believed by the people of Arabia, and by the people of Makkah particularly. Instead, before going ahead and starting to follow someone, it is necessary to find out whether or not the person, or people, being followed, is himself on the path of true guidance. Therefore, after enu-

merating a brief list of the blessed prophets, it was said: **أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ هَدَى اللَّهُ** (Those are the people Allah has guided). After that, it was said: **فَهُدَاهُمْ** (So, it is their guidance that you shall follow).

Thus, the guidance given in this verse is bi-polar. The first element is addressed to the people of Arabia, and to the whole Muslim *Ummah* by implication, that is, they should forsake the superstition of following forefathers and take to following prophets guided by Allah Ta‘ālā. The second element of guidance is for the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself, that is, he too should act in the way the past prophets have acted.

Noteworthy here is the fact that partial or subsidiary differences have been there in the laws of earlier prophets, may peace be upon them. Then, revealed for the Muslim peoples themselves, there have been many injunctions different from them. What, then, would be the meaning of asking the Holy Prophet ﷺ to follow the way of the past prophets and act in accordance with it? Keeping in view other Qur’anic verses and narrations of *Hadīth*, the answer is that the command here does not apply to the following of the way of past prophets in all partial and subsidiary aspects of injunctions. In fact, the purpose is to adhere to the basic principles of religion which include *Tauhid* (Oneness of Allah) *Risālah* (Prophethood) and *Ākhirah* (Hereafter) as has been their way. They never changed in the law of any prophet. From Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام to the Last of the Prophets ﷺ, all prophets, عليهم السلام, have been adhering to one Belief and one Way. As for subsidiary injunctions which remained unchanged, the *modus operandi* has been common. However, when a new injunction was given due to exigency of time or dictate of wisdom, it was acted upon as required.

This is the reason why it was the usual practice of the Holy Prophet ﷺ that he would - until such time that he received particular guidance through revelation - act in accordance with the way of past prophets عليهم السلام (Mazharī & others).

After that, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been specially commanded to proclaim - a common practice of all past prophets - in the words which follow: **قُلْ لَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ أَجْرًا إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا ذِكْرٌ لِلْعَالَمِينَ** (Say: “I ask you no reward for it. It is nothing but an advice for all the worlds). In other words, it means: I am not asking you to pay for the good counsel I am offering to help you better your life. I need no fees or wages or re-

wards. If you accept it, I gain nothing. If you do not accept it, I lose nothing. This is only a message, a message for people all over, a message of good counsel, good will. Not accepting any return for teaching and preaching has been the common legacy of all prophets عليهم السلام. This is a powerful factor which goes on to make *Tabligh* (conveying the message of religion to others) effective.

The second verse (91) has been revealed in answer to those who had the audacity to say that Allah Ta'ālā has just not revealed any book to any human being. According to them, this whole proposition of books and messengers was all wrong.

If, those who said that are the idolaters of Makkah, as mentioned by Ibn Kathīr, then, the matter is obvious, for they did not believe in any book and prophet. And if they were Jews, as held by other commentators - and the contextual elements of the verse obviously support this view - then, their saying so was an outcome of their anger and irritation, something contrary to the dictates of their own religion. According to a narration of Imām al-Baghawī, this was the reason why the Jews too were displeased with the person who had made this unfortunate remark, and it was because of this erroneous conduct of his that he was removed from his office of religious authority.

In this verse, Allah Ta'ālā has said to the Holy Prophet ﷺ that people who made this absurd remark did not recognize the Most True Allah as was His right to be recognized. Had they done that, this audacious remark would have never escaped their lips. Then, Allah Ta'ālā tells the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to ask the people who deny Scriptures absolutely: If that is what you think - that Allah Ta'ālā did not reveal any book to any human being - then, you better have an answer as to who revealed the Torah, in which you too believe, and because of which you sit in judgement over your people. Along with it, they were also told: You are such connoisseurs of crooked ways that you would treat your own book, the Torah, which you believe in as being Holy Scripture, in a way that you got it conveniently written on separate sheets, rather than having it in a formally bound book, so that you can take out any sheet from it as and when you want it, and by doing so you would have the option of denying what it enjoined. An example of this are the verses of the Torah which described the signs and attrib-

utes of the Messenger of Allah which you have excluded. The last sentence of the verse: *تَجْعَلُونَهَا قُرَاطِيسَ* (which you kept in sheets) means exactly this. The word: *قُرَاطِيسَ* (*qarāṭīs*) is the plural of: *قِرْطَاسٌ* (*qirtās*) which means sheet or paper.

After that, addressing the same people, it has been said: *وَعَلَّمْتُمْ مَا كَانُمْ لَا يَأْتُونَ بِهَا* that is, you were taught (through the Qur'an) what you or your forefathers did not know (earlier, either through the Torah or the Injil).

At the end of verse (91), it was said: *قُلِ اللَّهُ لَمْ يَزَلْ فِي خَوْضِهِمْ يَلْعَبُونَ* (Say, "Allah." Then leave them playing with what they are indulged in). In other words, the sense is: As for the question - if Allah just did not send any book, who sent the Torah? - it was something they would not know how to answer, so, you go ahead and tell them that it was revealed by none but Allah. Now that the argument against them stands concluded, your mission as far as they are concerned is over. So, let them be lost in the game they are playing.

After having concluded the argument concerning Books revealed by Allah Ta'ālā against deniers, it was said in the third verse (92): *وَهَذَا كِتَابٌ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ مَبِيرٌ الَّذِي يَبِينُ بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَلِيُنذِرَ أُمَّ الْقُرَىٰ وَمَنْ حَوْلَهَا* (And this is a blessed Book We have sent down confirming what has been before it, so that you may warn the town which is the mother of all towns, and those around it), that is, as it is that they too accept that the Torah was sent down by Allah Ta'ālā, so it is that We have sent down this Qur'an too, and sufficient for them is the proof of its veracity that the Qur'an confirms what has been revealed in the Torah and the Injil. And that it was revealed after the Torah and Injil is because these two Books were sent for the Banī Isrā'īl while for their other branch of Banī Ismā'īl, known as Arabs living in Umm al-Qurā, that is, Makkah and its environs, there has been no prophet or book of guidance until that time. Now this Qur'an has been sent for them particularly, and for the whole world generally. Makkah al-Mu'azzamah has been called Umm al-Qura by the Holy Qur'an. It means the root and foundation of all towns and habitations. The reason is that, according to historical narratives, the land mass of the earth first began appearing from here. In addition to that, this is the Qiblah, and the central attraction of all acts of *Ibādah* for the whole world. (Mazhari) Said with: *أُمَّ الْقُرَىٰ* (Umm al-

Qurā) is: وَمَنْ حَوْلَهَا (and those around it). It means all environs of Makkah, which includes the whole world East, West, North and South of Makkah.

Towards the end of the verse, it was said: وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ وَهُمْ عَلَىٰ صَلَاتِهِمْ يُحَافِظُونَ It means: Those who believe in the 'Ākhirah (Hereafter) also believe in the Qur‘ān and are particularly careful about their prayers (Ṣalāh). This carries an admonition for the Jews and disbelievers against their common ailment whereby they would, with typical lack of concern, accept what they liked and reject what they did not, opening a front against it. This is an effect of that ailment - that they do not believe in 'Ākhirah. Anyone who believes in 'Ākhirah and in a Day of Judgement will definitely be moved by the fear of Allah which would help him or her reason it out, and once convinced, one would bypass constraints of ignorant customs and embrace what is the truth.

A little thought would reveal that the lack of concern for the 'Ākhirah is the mother of all spiritual diseases. From here come *Kufr* and *Shirk* and sin and disobedience. If a believer in the 'Ākhirah happens to have committed a mistake or sin, he does feel a pinch in his heart. Sooner or later, he repents and resolves to stay away from sin in the future. So, the fear of Allah and the concern for the 'Ākhirah are, in all truth, channels which make human beings what they should be and which make them capable of staying away from crime and sin and disobedience by conscious choice. Therefore, no Sūrah (Chapter) of the Qur‘ān, perhaps no *Rukū‘* (Section) either, is left without a reminder of this concern for the 'Ākhirah:

اللَّهُمَّ اجْعَلْ جُمْلَةَ هُمُومِنَا هَمًّا وَاحِدًا هَمَّ الْآخِرَةِ

O Allah, make all our concerns a single concern - the concern for 'Ākhirah.

Verses 95 - 98

إِنَّ اللَّهَ فَلِقُ الْحَبِّ وَالْتَّوَىٰ ۖ يُخْرِجُ الْحَيَّ مِنَ الْمَيِّتِ وَمُخْرِجُ
الْمَيِّتِ مِنَ الْحَيِّ ۖ ذَلِكُمْ اللَّهُ فَأَنَّىٰ تُؤْفَكُونَ ﴿٩٥﴾ فَلِقُ
الإِصْبَاحِ ۖ وَجَعَلَ اللَّيْلَ سَكَنًا وَالشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ حُسْبَانًا ۖ ذَلِكُمْ

تَقْدِيرُ الْعَزِيزِ الْعَلِيمِ ﴿٩٦﴾ وَهُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمْ النُّجُومَ
 لَتَهْتَدُوا بِهَا فِي ظُلُمَاتِ الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ ۗ قَدْ فَصَّلْنَا الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ
 يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٩٧﴾ وَهُوَ الَّذِي أَنْشَأَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ فَمُسْتَقَرٌّ
 وَمُسْتَوْدَعٌ ۗ قَدْ فَصَّلْنَا الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَفْقَهُونَ ﴿٩٨﴾

Surely, Allah is the one who splits the seed and the pit. He brings forth the living from the dead, and He is the one who brings forth the dead from the living. That is Allah! Whereto, then, are you straying away? [95]

(He is) the One who causes the dawn to break. And He has made the night for rest and the sun and the moon for measurement. This is a measure set by (Allah) the Mighty, the Knowing. [96]

And He is the one who made for you the stars, so that you may be guided by them in darknesses of the land and the sea. We have elaborated the signs for people who know. [97]

And He is the One who created you from one person, then, you have a place to dwell and a place to sojourn. We have elaborated the signs for people who understand. [98]

Commentary

Mentioned in the previous verses was how obstinate and unmindful of consequences the disbelievers and ploytheists were. Since such evils are caused when people remain unaware of Allah and His unmatched knowledge and power, the present four verses provide the antidote. Here, Allah Ta'ālā cites some samples of His Knowledge and Power, and of blessings and favours bestowed on human beings, a little reflection in which would make every sensible person admit that feats of such magnitude cannot be accomplished by any power other than that of Almighty Allah.

In the first verse (95), it was said: *إِنَّ اللَّهَ فَلْيُ الْحَبِّ وَالنَّوَى* (Surely, Allah is the one who splits the seed and the pit). Pointed to here is a marvel of creation. Splitting a dry seed and pit and bringing out from it a living green tree is the act of that Most Sacred Being who is the Creator of

the Universe. Human input has nothing to do with it. The most a farmer can do is to remove impediments or things harmful away from the growth path of the tender bud or shoot rising from inside the seed or pit, a tribute to the great power of the Creator. Of course, there are processes of ploughing, cleaning, softening, leveling, fertilizing and watering of land - but, the maximum these efforts can achieve is to make sure that the tender newcomer has to face no hurdle on its way up. The rest of the job, the real job, that the seed and pit split, that a bud or shoot sprout out from it, that come leaves of many wonderful kinds and colour, that come flowers and fruits (of mind-boggling colours, varieties, smells and tastes), is a job taken care of by someone else. This is art and power alive which no human ingenuity can even come close to by making one leaf, one petal in that manner. Therefore, at another place in the Qur‘ān, it was said: أَفَرَأَيْتُمْ مَا تَحْرُثُونَ ، أَنْتُمْ تَزْرَعُونَهَا أَمْ نَحْنُ الزَّارِعُونَ that is, ‘Do you see the seed that you sow? Do you make it grow, or are We the One who makes it grow [the real Creator to whom its growth has to be attributed]? - 56-63.’

Then, it was said: مُبْرِجُ الْحَيِّ مِنَ الْمَيِّتِ وَمُخْرِجُ الْمَيِّتِ مِنَ الْحَيِّ (He brings forth the living from the dead, and He is the one who brings forth the dead from the living). The ‘dead’ or lifeless refers to cell or egg which serve to create human and animal life forms. Similarly, the expression: ‘dead from the living’ refers to the same cell or egg which issues forth from the living.

After that, it was said: ذَلِكُمْ اللَّهُ فَاتَّبِعُونَهُ (That is Allah. Whereto, then, are you straying away?). In other words, the sense is that all these things have been done by Allah Ta‘ālā alone, yet here you are knowingly straying away to strange directions, such as, taking self-carved idols as your removers of difficulties and fulfillers of needs and thus the objects of your worship.

Said in the second verse (96) is: فَالِقُ الْإِصْبَاحِ (He is) the One who causes the dawn to break.’ The word: فَالِقٌ (*Fāliq*) means one who splits, and the word: الْإِصْبَاحُ (*al-Iṣḥāḥ*) here means the time of morning. Thus, the expression: فَالِقُ الْإِصْبَاحِ (*Fāliq al-Iṣḥāḥ*) means one who splits the morning, that is, one who tears the dark layer of darkness apart and brings the morning out. This too is one of those functions of such magnitude that would render the combined powers of all Jinns and human beings and

all others to nothing. It does not take much to realize the truth of it. Everyone with a pair of sighted eyes is compelled to concede that the causer and creator of the morning light from the darkness of the night cannot be a human being, or angel, or any other created being, from fact or fiction. Instead of all that, the undeniable truth is that this is the work of that One Being that created the whole universe, a Being beyond human comprehension.

Night for Rest is a Blessing

After that, it was said: **وَجَعَلَ اللَّيْلَ سَكَنًا** (And He has made the night for rest). The word: **سَكَنًا** (*sakan*) is a derivation from : **سُكُونٌ** (*sukūn*). Everything - means, time or place - by having or reaching which one feels peaceful and comfortable is called *sakan*, therefore, the home of a person has been referred to as *sakan* in the Holy Qur‘ān: **جَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِنْ بُيُوتِكُمْ سَكَنًا** (Allah made for you your home a place to rest - 16:80). This is so because the home of a person, even if it be a hut, is a habitual source of peace and comfort. Therefore, this sentence comes to mean that Allah Ta‘ālā has made the night a time of peace and comfort for every living being. By saying: **فَالِقُ الْإِصْبَاحِ** (*Fāliq al-Iṣbāḥ*: the One who causes the dawn to break) mentioned there were blessings which one benefits from during the light of the day, something that would not be equally possible during the darkness of night. Then, by saying: **جَعَلَ اللَّيْلَ سَكَنًا** (made the night for rest) after that, indication was given that, no doubt the light of the day is a great blessing for human beings transacting most of their businesses and chores with its help, but not that bad is the darkness of night, for that too is a big blessing when it helps a person, all tired after a hard day’s work, get the rest needed to go back to work with recovered energy. Otherwise, human nature cannot withstand respite-less labour.

Earmarking the darkness of night for comfort is a regular blessing and, certainly, a special demonstration of the irresistably subjugating power of Allah Ta‘ālā. Since this blessing comes handy every day without having to ask for it, one hardly bothers to think how great a favour and reward it is. Imagine if everyone were to fix a time of rest with one’s choice, then, someone would be getting ready to sleep at eight in the morning, someone else at twelve noon and there will others sleeping at all sorts of odd hours during the day and night. The re-

sult would have been that there would have not come a single hour out of the twenty four hours of the night and day when human beings would have not been busy with their business, job or work and plants and factories would have not been working as usual. The inevitable result of such breathless activity would have been that the peace of the sleeping would have been disturbed and equally disadvantaged would have been those working on their jobs. The high decibel of discordant sounds emitting from traffic, factories and workers themselves would have interfered with the peace of the sleeping, and the absence of the sleeping would have affected those working on their jobs. In addition to that, those sleeping would have missed doing things which can be done only when it is time for them to sleep. In short, Allah *Jalla Sha’nuhū* has, in His great power to subdue, has set upon, not only human beings but on all living creatures, the weight of sleep in a manner that one is compelled to stop working and go to sleep. With the fall of dusk, birds and beasts and cattle head for their nests, lairs and homes. Man has to stop working as a compulsion and has to start looking towards his place of rest. Silence reigns. Darkness of night becomes an ally of sleep and rest, as light is usually not conducive to sleep.

Just imagine what would happen if all governments and peoples of the world joined hands in a global agreement to fix a universal time to sleep. First of all this would have posed too many problems. Then, should all human beings, abiding by a possible agreement, were to sleep at an appointed time, who would have made animals abide by that agreement? If they roamed around scot-free what would have happened to the sleeping human beings and their belongings? Most exalted is the majesty of Allah and great is His power to subdue that He has appointed sleep to descend upon every human being and every living creature at a given time compulsively, and thus, He has saved them from the very need of such international agreements: فَتَبَرَّكَ اللَّهُ أَحْسَنُ (So, blessed be Allah, the Best of creators) (23:14).

Solar and Lunar Calendar

In the next sentence : وَالشَّمْسُ وَالْقَمَرُ مُحْسَبَاتًا (and the sun and the moon for measurement), the word: مُحْسَبَاتًا (*Husban*) is a verbal noun and is used to mean to count, measure, calculate or compute. The sense of the verse is that Allah Ta‘ālā has appointed the rising and setting and the move-

ment of the sun and the moon in a particular measure through which human beings can easily calculate years, months, days, hours, even minutes and seconds.

Again, this is the manifestation of the same Divine power to subdue and commission into desired action that such huge glowing globes of awesome proportions and their movements have been so formidably programmed to perform according to measure which just does not vary even by a second despite the passage of thousands of years. Whatever machinery has been employed to make them function so flawlessly certainly needs no workshop, nor needed there is our customary repair and replacement of time-barred parts. The spheres of light, their function, their movement, everything in the system is performing perfectly as commanded: *لَا الشَّمْسُ يَنْبَغِي لَهَا أَنْ تُدْرِكَ الْقَمَرَ وَلَا اللَّيْلُ سَابِقُ النَّهَارِ* : "It behoves not the sun to overtake the moon, neither does the night outstrip the day" - 36:40 (as translated by Arberry). Alas, it must have been because of this formidable and changeless Divine system that man was mistaken as he took these manifestation of the system as existing in their own right, even went on to the limits of worshipping them. Had this system been open to flaws, a little malfunction here and there, some time out for repairs, then, one would have discovered that this mechanism is not automatic, somebody has made it and somebody keeps it running. But, such has been the brilliance and permanence of these great heavenly bodies that human beings have been blinded to the reality behind. It was to let them know what it was that came scriptures and prophets and messengers.

This statement of the Qur'ān also indicates that the calculation of years and months can be solar and it can be lunar as well. Both are rewards from Allah *Jalla Sha'nuhū*. It is a different matter that the lunar calendar has been used in Islamic injunctions for the sake of providing convenience to the common masses of the world so that they do not have to undergo the trouble of complicated calculations. Since Islamic history and Islamic injunctions are based on lunar calendar, it is an obligation on the Muslim *Ummah* that it retains and protects this calendar. As for other methods of calculation, such as the Solar or Gregorian calendar, if they are adopted because of some necessity, there is no sin in it. But, ignoring the lunar calendar totally and let-

ting it be forgotten is a grave sin - an unfortunate conduct which may lead to a situation in which a Muslim does not know when the months of Ramaḍān, Dhil-Hijjah and Muḥarram will come.

At the conclusion of the verse, it was said: **ذَلِكَ تَقْدِيرُ الْعَزِيزِ الْعَلِيمِ** (This is a measure set by [Allah] the Mighty, the Knowing). It means that this wondrous system of movement, precise and perpetual, at the scale of such magnitude, something which does not admit the difference of a second, can only be the charismatic feat of the supreme power of the One who is Al-‘Azīz, the Mighty, and who is the Subduer of whatever there is, and who is fully capable of articulating His Will as He deems fit and, beside that, He is Knowing, having the knowledge of everything and the mastery of doing what He elects to do.

In the third verse (97), it was said: **وَهُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمُ النُّجُومَ لِتَهْتَدُوا بِهَا فِي ظُلُمَاتِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ** (And He is the one who made for you the stars, so that you may be guided by them in 'darknesses' of the land and the sea). In other words, it is being said here that there are other stars too, besides the sun and the moon, which are no less unique a manifestation of the perfect power of Almighty Allah. Out of many considerations of Divine wisdom, one immediate benefit they provide for human beings travelling on high seas or open lands is that they can chart their course in the darkness of nights when it is not easy to do so. Experience bears out that even in the days of highly sophisticated guiding systems, there are alternative situations when the guidance from the position of stars cannot be totally ignored.

The point made in this verse is that one should rise above heedlessness and shortsightedness and see that these stars are also there observing the command of their maker and mover. They are there neither by themselves nor to be there nor to keep doing what they do for ever. Those who have pinned their sights on them and have ignored to look at their maker are terribly short-sighted, and ominously deceived indeed.

After that, it was said: **فَدَفَّصْنَا الْأَيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ** (We have elaborated the signs for people who know). The statement clearly indicates that those who do not recognize the presence and power of Allah Ta‘ālā even from such open signs are unaware and unconscious.

In the fourth verse (98), it was said: **وَهُوَ الَّذِي أَنشَأَكُم مِّن نَّفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ فَمُسْتَقَرًّا وَمُسْتَوْدَعًا** (And He is the One who created you from one person, then, you have a place to dwell, and a place to sojourn). The word: **مُسْتَقَرًّا** (*mustaqarr*) used in the text is from: **قَرَارًا** (*qarār*). So, *mustaqarr* denotes a place of *qarār*, of rest and peace, for someone or something. As for the word: **مُسْتَوْدَعًا** (*mustawda'*) in the text, it is a derivation from *wadī'ah* which means to keep something with someone temporarily for a few days. So, "mustawda'" will denote a place where something is placed temporarily for a few days.

Thus, the sense of the sentence would be: It is the sacred-most Being of Allah Ta'ālā that has created man from one person, that is, Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام. Then, made for him a *mustaqarr*, that is, a place to dwell for a certain length of time - and a *mustawda'*, that is, to stay temporarily for a few days.

The words of the Qur'an are as they have been stated. But, there are many probabilities in their interpretation. This is why the sayings of the commentators differ in this matter. Some say that *mustawda'* is the womb of the mother and *mustaqarr* is this world. Others say that *mustawda'* is the grave and *mustaqarr* is the abode of the 'Ākhirah. Then, there are several other sayings too. However, there is room for all these within the words of the Qur'an. Haḍrat Qāḍī Thanā'ullah Pānīpatī رحمه الله عليه has, in his *Tafsīr Maẓharī*, opted for *mustaqarr* being the abode of 'Ākhirah, that is, *Jannah* or *Jahannam*- and all human conditions and stages, from the beginning to the 'Ākhirah, are all the *mustawda'*, that is, a place to stay temporarily, whether in the womb of the mother, or a dwelling place on the earth, or the grave, or the state of *Barzakh* (intermediary state after death and before Resurrection). Preference for this view seems to have confirmation from a verse of the Qur'an also where it has been said: **لَتَرْكَبُنَّ طَبَقًا عَن طَبَقٍ** (you shall surely travel from stage to stage - 84:19). The outcome is that, before ultimately reaching the abode of the 'Ākhirah, man remains a traveller for his whole life who, despite his obvious peace and rest, is really traversing the stages of the long journey into the night of his being:

مسافر ہوں کہاں جانا ہے ، نا واقف ہوں منزل سے

ازل سے پھرتے پھرتے گورتک پہنچا ہوں مشکل سے

A traveller I am. My destination I know not.
 Winding and wandering from eternity
 Only upto the grave I have reached -
 How tough I know. What next I know not.

In conclusion, it can be said that this last verse (98) under study is showing a mirror to those who, having sold their souls to the veneer of glamour they see in the obvious and to the craze for things and trends they envy in their fellow beings, have forgotten that their place is elsewhere, that they have to go to their Creator and that there is a journey ahead, to the ultimate domain of the 'Ākhirah. The message is: Open your eyes, see reality, walk away from the web of deception and walk into salvation.

Verses 99 - 102

وَهُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً ۖ فَأَخْرَجْنَا بِهِ نَبَاتَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ
 فَأَخْرَجْنَا مِنْهُ خَضِرًا نُخْرَجُ مِنْهُ حَبًّا مَاتِرًا كِبَاءً ۖ وَمِنَ النَّخْلِ
 مِنْ طَلْعِهَا قِنْوَانٌ دَانِيَةٌ وَجَنَّاتٍ مِنْ أَعْنَابٍ وَالزَّيْتُونَ وَالرُّمَّانَ
 مُشْتَبِهًا وَغَيْرَ مُتَشَابِهٍ ۗ انظُرُوا إِلَى ثَمَرِهِ إِذَا أَثْمَرَ وَيَنْعِهِ ۗ إِنَّ
 فِي ذَٰلِكُمْ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٩٩﴾ وَجَعَلُوا لِلَّهِ شُرَكَاءَ
 الْجِنَّ وَخَلَقَهُمْ وَخَرَقُوا لَهُ بَنِينَ وَبَنَاتٍ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ ۗ سُبْحٰنَهُ
 وَتَعَالَىٰ عَمَّا يُصِفُونَ ﴿١٠٠﴾ بَدِيعُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۗ أَنَّىٰ
 يَكُونُ لَهُ وَلَدٌ وَلَمْ تَكُنْ لَهُ صَاحِبَةً ۗ وَخَلَقَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ ۗ وَهُوَ
 بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ﴿١٠١﴾ ذَٰلِكُمُ اللَّهُ رَبُّكُمْ ۖ لَا إِلٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ ۗ خَالِقُ
 كُلِّ شَيْءٍ فَاعْبُدُوهُ ۗ وَهُوَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَكِيلٌ ﴿١٠٢﴾

And He is the one who sent down water from the heavens, then, with it, We brought forth vegetation of all kinds. Then from it We brought grains set upon one another. And from the palm-trees, from their spathes, come forth the low-hanging bunches. And (We produce) vineyards, the olive, the pomegranate, similar or not similar to each other. Look at its fruit when it

bears fruit, and at its ripening. Surely, in all this there are signs for the people who believe. [99]

And they have invented partners with Allah, the Jinns - while He has created them - and they have forged for Him sons and daughters without any knowledge. Pure is He, and far higher than they describe. [100]

(He is) the originator of the heavens and the earth. How can He have a son when He never had a wife? And He created everything, and He knows everything. [101]

This is Allah: your Lord, there is no God but He, the creator of everything; so, worship Him. And He is Guardian over everything. [102]

Commentary

The contents of this verse present a unique concern for thematic order. It will be noticed that three kinds of universes have been mentioned here: The low, the high and the atmosphere - that is, what generates in what we know as the Biosphere. The description was initiated with the mention of that which is on the lower level because it is closer to us. Then, it was split in two parts. One part of the statement covered vegetation which grows on the land, plants and trees and gardens. The other part featured life forms as beasts, human beings and animals. The first part was given precedence because it is more obvious as compared to the other. Then comes the case of that which has been made to come after, the other part. This is different. It has *Rūḥ*, soul or spirit. It is deep, depends on progression from the sperm to its various stages and attending conditions, something allied with the comprehension, diagnosis and judgement of physicians - contrary to the case of vegetation which, in its growth, flowering and ripening etc., is observable commonly. Then, mentioned there was the atmosphere and its life support system, the morning and the evening. Then, came the mention of what is higher, the sun, the moon, and the stars. After that, since what is at the lower level is observed more frequently, the subject was repeated and made the concluding statement. But, firstly it was taken up briefly, now it was taken up in detail - yet, in the order of this detail, the order of brevity was reversed by giving precedence to life forms and succession to the mention of vegetation. Perhaps, its

basis is that the detailed statement highlights the expression of gratitude for blessings which, in that status, makes the blessed - being the intended recipients - deserving of being given precedence. As for vegetation, the previous order stays as the status of the donees, that is, of seeds and pits, remains preceded. That rain has been mentioned in between is subservient to the mention of vegetation. Incidentally, there might be another element of refinement here - in that rain has different states. In terms of its origin, it comes from the high; and in terms of its destination, it comes down to the low; and in terms of the distance covered, it is part of the atmosphere.

Verses 103 - 107

لَا تُدْرِكُهُ الْأَبْصَارُ وَهُوَ يُدْرِكُ الْأَبْصَارَ وَهُوَ اللَّطِيفُ الْخَبِيرُ ﴿١٠٣﴾
 قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ بَصَائِرُ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ فَمَنْ أَبْصَرَ فَلِنَفْسِهِ وَمَنْ عَمِيَ فَعَلَيْهَا وَمَا أَنَا عَلَيْكُمْ بِحَفِيظٍ ﴿١٠٤﴾ وَكَذَلِكَ نُصَرِّفُ الْآيَاتِ وَلِيَقُولُوا دَرَسْتَ وَلِنُبَيِّنَهُ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٠٥﴾
 اتَّبِعْ مَا أُوحِيَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ ۚ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ ۚ وَأَعْرِضْ عَنِ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴿١٠٦﴾ وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مَا أَشْرَكُوا ۗ وَمَا جَعَلْنَاكَ عَلَيْهِمْ حَفِيظًا ۗ وَمَا أَنْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِوَكِيلٍ ﴿١٠٧﴾

No vision can comprehend Him and He comprehends all visions, and He is All-Fine, All-Aware. [103]

(Say, O Prophet:) There have come to you insights from your Lord. Now, whoever uses his sight, does so for his own self, and whoever remains blind does so against himself. And I do not stand guard over you. [104]

And this is how We bring a variety of verses so that they say, "you have been tutored" and so that We may explain it to the people who have knowledge. [105]

Follow what has been revealed to you from your Lord. There is no god but He. And turn away from those who associate partners with Allah. [106]

And if Allah willed, they would not have associated.

**And We have not made you to stand guard over them,
and you are not entrusted with their affairs. [107]**

Commentary

Out of these five verses of Sūrah Al-An‘ām, the word: أَبْصَارٍ : ‘*al-abṣār*’ appearing in the first verse (103), is the plural of : بَصَر (baṣar) which means vision, sight or ability to see, while the word: إِدْرَاك (idrāk) means to reach, grasp, perceive, comprehend or encompass. Sayyidnā Ibn ‘Abbās رضى الله عنه has explained the meaning of ‘idrāk’ at this place as to comprehend or encompass. (Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ)

Thus, the sense of the verse comes to be that even the combined ability of seeing given to the entire creation, to Jinns and humans and angels, and to the rest of the life forms, can never see Allah *Jalla Sha’nuhū* in a way that their vision would encompass His Being. But, as for Him, He watches the vision of His entire creation fully, and His ‘seeing’ encompasses all of them. Mentioned in this brief verse are two particular attributes of Allah Ta‘ālā.

1. Allah is Imperceivable: No eye in the whole universe, not even the combined eyesights of everyone, can encompass His Being.

Sayyidnā Abū Sa‘īd al-Khudrī رضى الله عنه reports that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: If all human beings, Jinn, angels and Shaytan, from the first to the last, were to stand in a row, even their combined sights cannot comprehend His Being. (Maḥzarī with reference to Ibn Abī Ḥātim)

Thus, so unique an attribute can belong to none but to the most-exalted Being of Allah. Otherwise, the sight bestowed by Allah on even the most insignificant life form of His creation can see with its mini-eyes much larger bodies and comprehend what they are. The sun and the moon are spheres of great magnitude, our earth being no match to them, yet the human eye, even the eyes of the smallest of animals, would see them in a way that would encompass their presence.

The truth of the matter is that the human eye is one sense organ out of the many given to human beings which enable them to see and react to what is perceptible. But, the Sacred Being of Allah Ta‘ālā is beyond the all-surrounding, all-comprehending overview of even reason and conjecture. There is no way this knowledge could be acquired

by one single sense of sight. The Being and the Attributes of Allah Ta‘ālā are limitless while human senses, reason and imagination are all limited. It is obvious that the limitless cannot fit into the limited. This is why the philosophers and metaphysicians of the world who spent their lives in intellectual research and the respected Sufis who traversed through this difficult spiritual field through the medium of Illumination (*Kashf*) and Experiencing of the Presence (*Shuhud*) all agree upon the proposition that neither has anyone arrived at the total comprehension of the reality of His Being and Attributes, nor is that possible.

The Possibility of Seeing the Creator

The question is: Is it possible for human beings to see Allah Ta‘ālā, or is it not? On this religious question or *mas‘alah*, the belief of all ‘*Ulamā* of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā‘ah* (the majority of Muslims who adhere to the *Sunnah* of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and his Ṣaḥābah) is that it is not possible to see the Being of Allah Ta‘ālā in the state of life we have in this mortal world. This is the reason why, when Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام prayed: رَبِّ ارْنِيْ (My Lord, show (Yourself) to me - 7:143), the answer given was: كُنْ تَرَانِيْ (‘lan tarānī’ : ‘you shall never see Me’ - 7:143). It is obvious when this is the answer given to a prophet no less than Sayyidnā Mūsā the Kalīmullāh عليه السلام, no Jinn or human being can even dare think about it. However, that believing Muslims will have the honour of seeing Allah Ta‘ālā in the ‘*Ākhirah* stands proved on the authority of sound (*Ṣaḥīḥ*) and strong ‘*Āḥādīth* which have been reported in uninterrupted succession (*mutawātir*). And this is what appears in the Qur‘ān itself:

وَجُوهٌ يُّؤْمِنُذُ تَائِصَةٌ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهَا نَاطِرَةٌ

Faces on that Day shall be glowing, towards their Lord gazing! - 75:22

However, the disbelievers and the deniers will not have the honour of seeing Allah Ta‘ālā even on that Day, as punishment, as in a verse of the Qur‘ān:

كَلَّا إِنَّهُمْ عَنْ رَبِّهِمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ لَّمْ حُجُّوا

No indeed; surely from (the sighting of) their Lord on that Day, they shall be deprived - 83:15.

The Ziarah (the honour of seeing or visiting) of Allah Ta‘ālā shall take place in ‘*Ākhirah* at several places - and on the Day of Resurrection (*Al-Maḥshar*) as well as after reaching *Jannah* (Paradise). For the people of *Jannah*, the Ziarah of Allah Ta‘ālā shall be the greatest of all blessings.

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: When the people of *Jannah* have entered *Jannah*, Allah Ta‘ālā will ask them if they need any more blessings besides what they have already received in *Jannah*; if so, let them ask and they shall be granted those too. They will say: O Allah, You granted us deliverance from *Jahannam* (Hell), and admitted us into the *Jannah* (Paradise). What else could we ask for? That would be the time when the Veil shall stand removed, everyone shall have the honour to see Allah Ta‘ālā, and of all the blessings of *Jannah*, this will be the greatest. This *Hadīth* appears in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim as reported by Sayyidnā Ṣuhayb رضى الله عنه .

As reported in a *Hadīth* from the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was sitting under moonlight. His noble Saḥābah were with him. He looked at the moon, then said: You shall see your *Rabb* with your own eyes (in the ‘*Ākhirah*) in a way you are seeing this moon.

In a *Hadīth* of Tirmidhī and the Musnad of Aḥmad, it has been reported from Sayyidnā Ibn ‘Umar رضى الله عنه that people blessed with special ranks of *Jannah* by Allah Ta‘ālā will have the good fortune of seeing Him every morning and evening.

In short, no one can see Allah Ta‘ālā in the mortal world while, in the ‘*Ākhirah*, all those in *Jannah* will see Him. As for the Ziyarah made by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم on the night of *Mi‘rāj* (the Ascent to the Heavens), that too was, in reality, the Ziarah of Allah Ta‘ālā as it would be in the *Ākhirah*. According to Shaykh Muḥiyuddīn ibn al-‘Arabī, the world is what lies circumscribed by the skies. Beyond that is the domain of ‘*Ākhirah*. A Ziyarah there cannot be called a Ziyarah here in the world.

Now, still unanswered remains the question: When we know from the verse of the Qur‘ān: لَا تَدْرِكُهُ الْبَصَارُ (no vision can comprehend Him), that is, human beings just cannot see Allah Ta‘ālā, how would that be-

come possible in the 'Ākhirah? The obvious answer is that the verse of the Qur‘ān does not mean that the *Ru‘yah*, *Ziyarah* or Seeing of Allah Ta‘ālā is impossible for human beings. Instead of that, the meaning of the verse is that human vision cannot comprehend or encompass His Being because His Being is unlimited while human vision is limited.

Even the *Ziyarah* made in the 'Ākhirah will be in a manner that vision would still fail to comprehend Him fully; while in the mortal world, human beings and their vision do not have the strength and capacity to bear by 'seeing' even in this manner. Therefore, this *ru‘yah* or seeing is absolutely impossible in the mortal world. But, in the 'Ākhirah, given the strength and capability, this *ru‘yah*, *ziyarah*, or seeing would become possible - but, a full, all-encompassing comprehending of the Most-True Being of Allah *Subhānuhu wa Ta‘ālā* would still remain impossible even then.

2. Allah is All-Perceiving: The second attribute of Allah Ta‘ālā mentioned in this verse is that His vision encompasses the whole universe. Nothing, anywhere, not even the minutest particle, is hidden from Him. This Absolute Knowledge with all-pervading, all-comprehending reach, is also a unique attribute of Allah Ta‘ālā. Other than Him, no created being has ever achieved such all-inclusive knowledge of everything, nor shall it ever be possible - because this is the domain of Allah, the most-exalted in His majesty.

After that it was said: (and He is All-Fine, All-Aware). Lexically, the word: اللطيف (*al-Laṭīf*) has two meanings: (a) kind, (b) fine or subtle in contrast with thick or course, that is, what cannot be perceived through the senses.

As for the word: الخبير (*al-Khabīr*), it means All-Aware. Thus, the sentence comes to mean that Allah Ta‘ālā is All-Fine (*Al-Laṭīf*), therefore, He cannot be comprehended through the senses - and He is All-Aware (*Al-Khabīr*), therefore, nothing in the entire universe is beyond His knowledge and awareness. If *Al-Laṭīf* is taken to mean kind at this place, it will be suggesting that though Allah Ta‘ālā is All-Aware of everything we say or do, even what we intend, think or feel - which would have required that we should have been caught for every sin - but, He is kind and gracious too, therefore, He does not call us to account for every sin.

The word: *بَصَائِر* (*baṣā'ir*) appearing in the second verse (104) is the plural of *baṣīrah* which means reason, intelligence or insight, that is, the power through which one can acquire the knowledge of things which do not fall within the range of perception through the senses. '*Baṣā'ir*', in this verse, means the evidences and sources through which one can get to know truth and reality. The meaning of the verse is: The sources and means of seeing the truth have reached you from Allah, that is, the Qur'an has come, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has come, manifest have been his miracles, and observed openly were his morals and dealings and teachings. All these are means of seeing the truth.

So, whoever has used these means has become the one blessed with true insight with his benefits secured, while the one who elected to remain blind to the truth by ignoring these means ends up losing what was good.

Towards the end of the verse, it was said: 'I do not stand guard over you.' It means that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has not been given the responsibility of forcing people to stop doing what was improper, as usually done by one appointed to oversee and guard (or self-appointed as vigilantes in our day). Instead, the functional responsibility of a messenger of Allah is only to convey commands, and explain. After that, following or not following the message conveyed becomes a matter of personal discretion and responsibility of the addressees.

It will be recalled that many clear arguments in favour of *Tauhid* (Oneness of Allah) and *Risālah* (The Veracity of Prophethood) had appeared in previous verses. It is to these that reference has been made in the third verse (105) here where it has been said: *كَذَلِكَ نُصَرِّفُ الْآيَاتِ* (And this is how We bring forth a variety of verses [where arguments are presented from different angles]).

After that, it was said: *وَلِيُقُولُوا دَرَسْتَ وَلِنُبَيِّنَهُ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ* (so that they may say, "you have been tutored" and so that We may explain it to the people who have knowledge). From here it can be inferred that all aids to guidance in the form of miracles, signs, proofs, and the matchless Qur'an itself were all solid means to help see truth. Then, there was the spectacle of a total *Ummiyy* expressing with inimitable eloquence volumes of knowledge and reality through his blessed speech which has left the wise of the world wondering. And how could one bypass

the eloquence and truth of the Word of Allah which could not be imitated even to the scale of one small Sūrah, despite the challenge to all Jinn and human beings valid upto the end of time? As we said, these were means to help people know and see the truth as it was. Such was the class and substance of this treasure trove of truth that even the most diehard denier should have fallen on the blessed feet of the Holy Prophet ﷺ ! But, people who were chronically crooked in their ways started saying: “دَرَسْتَ” (*darasta*), that is, ‘you have been tutored.’

Then, said along with it was: وَرَبِّعِنَا لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ (and so that We may explain it to the people who have knowledge). Its essential meaning is that the statement made proved to be beneficial for those who were understanding, sensible and wise. As for the sources of guidance, those were surely placed before everyone, but the crooked took no advantage of the opportunity offered while the wise ones owned them heartily and became the leaders of their world.

In the fourth verse (106), the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been guided to a specific course of action. He has been asked not to worry about the acceptance or non-acceptance of the call. For him, the best course was to keep following the way revealed to him through Wahy from his *Rabb*, the major element of which is the belief that no one is worthy of worship but Allah. That he should continue preaching with his message of truth is part of what has been revealed. So, believing in Allah and remaining steadfast on the way ordained for him, he should avoid feeling concerned about disbelievers and their unfortunate non-acceptance of the call.

The reason for this has been given in the fifth verse (107). There it has been said: If Allah Ta‘ālā had willed - in consideration of His own creational imperative - that the whole human race should become Muslim in faith, then, it would have become impossible for them to associate partners in the Divinity of Allah (*Shirk*). But, it was because of their misdeeds that Allah willed that they be punished. So, He created the necessary conditions for that end. Now, how could he make them Muslims under these circumstances? In fact, why should he worry about what they choose to do with their lives? Allah has not made him to stand guard over what they do, nor has he been authorized by Allah to bring punishment on them for their misdeeds. Therefore, he should

not have any anxiety on account of what they do to themselves or for themselves.

Verses 108 - 113

وَلَا تَسُبُّوا الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ فَيَسُبُّوا اللَّهَ عَدْوًا
بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ كَذَلِكَ زَيْنًا لِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ عَمَلُهُمْ ثُمَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ
مَرْجِعُهُمْ فَيُنَبِّئُهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٠٨﴾ وَأَقْسَمُوا بِاللَّهِ
جَهْدَ أَيْمَانِهِمْ لَنَبْنِيَنَّ جَاءَ تَهُمْ آيَةٌ لِّيُؤْمِنَنَّ بِهَا ۗ قُلْ إِنَّمَا الْآيَاتُ
عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَمَا يُشْعِرُكُمْ أَنَّهَا إِذَا جَاءَتْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١٠٩﴾
وَنُقَلِّبُ أَفئِدَتَهُمْ وَأَبْصَارَهُمْ كَمَا لَمْ يُؤْمِنُوا بِهِ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ
وَنَذَرُهُمْ فِي طُغْيَانِهِمْ يَعْمَهُونَ ﴿١١٠﴾ وَلَوْ أَنَّا نَزَّلْنَا إِلَيْهِمُ
الْمَلَكَةَ وَكَلَّمَهُمُ الْمَوْئِي وَحَشَرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ قَبْلًا مَا كَانُوا
لِيُؤْمِنُوا إِلَّا أَنْ يَشَاءَ اللَّهُ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ يَجْهَلُونَ ﴿١١١﴾
وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَا لِكُلِّ نَبِيٍّ عَدُوًّا شَيْطِينِ الْإِنْسِ وَالْجِنِّ يُوحِي
بَعْضُهُمْ إِلَىٰ بَعْضٍ زُخْرُفَ الْقَوْلِ غُرُورًا ۗ وَلَوْ شَاءَ رَبُّكَ
مَا فَعَلُوهُ فَذَرُهُمْ وَمَا يَفْتَرُونَ ﴿١١٢﴾ وَلِتَصْغَىٰ إِلَيْهِ أَفئِدَةُ
الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ وَلِيَرْضَوْهُ وَلِيَقْتَرِفُوا مَا هُمْ
مُقْتَرِفُونَ ﴿١١٣﴾

And do not abuse* those whom they invoke other than Allah, lest they should abuse* Allah trangressingly without knowledge. This is how We have made the deeds of every community attractive in their sight. Then, to their Lord is their return whereafter He shall tell them what they have been doing. [108]

And they swore by Allah on eloquent oaths that if a sign comes to them, they shall surely believe in it. Say, "Signs are, definitely, with Allah." And what will make

*. Insult using foul language.

you realize that even when they (the signs) come, they will not believe - [109] and We upset their hearts and sights - as they did not believe in them the first time. And We leave them wandering blindly in their rebellion. [110]

And if We had sent down to them the angels and the dead had spoken to them and (even if) We had gathered everything before them, face to face, still, they were not to believe unless Allah would have so willed. But, most of them go for ignorance. [111]

And similarly, We have made enemies for every prophet, the satans of mankind and jinn. They reveal to one another ornamented words in order to deceive. And had Allah willed, they would have not done so. So, leave them with what they forge [112] - and in order that the hearts of those who do not believe in the Hereafter may incline to it and so that they commit what they are to commit. [113]

Commentary

The first of the present verses has been revealed concerning a particular event and provides guidance in a matter of principle, that is, what you are not permitted to do yourself, for that you cannot become the cause or channel either - both shall remain equally impermissible.

The Background of Revelation

According to the background of revelation as narrated by Ibn Jarīr, when Abū Ṭālib, the respected uncle of the Holy Prophet ﷺ was on his death bed, the disbelieving chiefs of the tribe of Quraysh who, hostile and torturous to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, always plotting to kill him, became alarmed at the eventuality of the death of Abū Ṭālib which was likely to become an impediment to their nefarious designs. Because, they thought, if they were to kill Muḥammad ﷺ after his protective uncle's death, that would go against the norms of their own self-respect and honour, for people would say that they were unable to do anything like that in the presence of Abū Ṭālib, but when he died, they killed his helpless nephew. So, they decided to get together and go to Abū Ṭālib to talk about the matter in a decisive manner.

Every educated Muslim knows that Abū Ṭālib, though he had not

formally embraced Islam, loved the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم dearly, even respected him as a great bearer of the Divine message right from his heart, and always defended him against his enemies.

So, the Quraysh chiefs formed a deputation who would go to see Abū Ṭālib. Included as members of the deputation were Abū Sufyān, Abū Jahl, ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ and some others. The name of the person chosen to arrange for an appointment to meet with Abū Ṭālib was Muṭṭalib. He got his permission and escorted the deputation to him.

To Abū Ṭālib, the deputation said: You are our elder, and a chief, and you know that your nephew, Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم has been causing great pain to the idols we worship. We wish that you would talk to him and prevail on him that he should say nothing offensive against our idols, in which case, we shall make peace on the principle that he acts as he wishes on his faith, takes whoever he chooses as the object of his worship, against which, we shall raise no objection.

Abū Ṭālib called the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to him and said: Here are the chiefs of your clan. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم turned to the deputation and asked: What is your wish? They said: We wish that you leave us and our idols alone. Do not speak ill of them. We shall leave you and your object of worship alone. This will end our mutual hostility.

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: All right, you tell me, if I were to accept what you were saying, would you be ready to say a *Kalimah* (statement in words) by saying which you would become masters of the whole Arabia with even people from beyond subscribing to your authority?

Abū Jahl said: You are talking about only one *Kalimah*. We are ready to say ten of them. Tell us what are they? The Holy Prophet ﷺ said: لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ [Lā Ilāha Illallāh : There is no god (worthy of worship) but Allah]. That infuriated all of them. Abū Ṭālib said to the Holy Prophet ﷺ: O my nephew, say something other than this *Kalimah* because it has left your clansmen all confused.

He said: As for me, I cannot say a *Kalimah* other than this. If they were to bring the sun down from the skies and put in my hands, even then I will not say a *Kalimah* other than this. His intention was to let

them become totally disappointed.

Thereupon, still in anger, they said: Either you stop speaking ill of our idols, the objects of our worship, or we too are going to start using insulting language against you, and also against that Being of which you claim to be the messenger. Revealed, thereupon, was the verse: وَلَا تَسُبُّوا الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ فَيَسُبُّوا اللَّهَ عَدْوًا بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ (And do not abuse those whom they invoke other than Allah, lest they abuse Allah transgressively without knowledge).

“لَا تَسُبُّوا” (*lā tasubbū*) in this verse is a derivation from the word: سَبَّ (*sabb*) which means to abuse or use insulting language against someone (not in the sense of misuse, maltreatment or corrupt practice as currently used in American English which uses other alternates for hurling invectives – Tr.). The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, given his intrinsically high moral disposition, had already been abiding by this rule of conduct. Not even during his childhood, had his blessed speech ever been contaminated with an abusive word for any human being, rather not even for an animal. Perhaps, there may have been some hard word which escaped the lips of some from among the noble Companions which was overestimated as an invective by the disbelievers of Makkah, and which was used as a pretext by the chiefs of the Quraysh when their deputation brought this case up before the Holy Prophet ﷺ and gave the ultimatum that either he stops insulting their deities or they would start insulting theirs.

Thereupon, came the Qur'anic injunction through which Muslims were prohibited from making any insulting statement against the false objects worshipped by disbelievers. Particularly worth noticing in this verse is that, just a verse earlier (106-107), the address was to the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself. Examples are: اَتَّبِعْ مَا أَوْحَىٰ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ (Follow what has been revealed to you from your Lord) and: اَعْرِضْ عَنِ الْمُشْرِكِينَ (and turn away from those who associate partners with Allah) and: مَا جَعَلْنَاكَ عَلَيْهِمْ حَفِيظًا (And We have not made you stand guard over them) and: مَا أَنْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِوَكِيلٍ (and you are not entrusted with their affairs). In all these grammatical forms, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was the addressee who was being asked to do or not to do something. After that, the form of address was changed in the present verse. It was turned away from the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and was turned to Muslims in general.

Said there was: لَا تُسَبِّحُوا (lā tasubbū). The hint given thereby is that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, who had never used abusive speech against anyone to start with, could not be directly addressed with the words of prohibition for that could make him disheartened. Therefore, the address was made general - and all Ṣaḥābah عليه السلام too started taking precaution in this matter. (As in Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ)

Related Considerations

That idols have been mentioned in strong words in several verses of the Qur'an, and that those verses are not abrogated either for they are still recited, is a different matter.

The answer is that such words wherever they appear in the verses of the Qur'an are there as a polemic or debating device to unfold some reality clearly. Intended at such places is no aggression, nor can a sensible person deduce from it such an intention to malign idols or to mock at disbelievers or to irritate them. This is an open difference in approach which is readily understood by those aware of the nuances of diction in any language. They know that the shortcoming or inadequacy of a person is called in question only to elucidate an issue in question. This is common practice in courts where no one challenges the statement being made before the Court as the throwing of invectives against someone. Similarly, narrated before physicians are the kind of defects and drawbacks people could have which, if described elsewhere would be taken as invectives hurled at someone. But, such statement made under medical need is not regarded as abusive talk by anyone.

Thus, when the Qur'an describes the helplessness of idols in being devoid of sense and consciousness, knowledge and power, it uses a manner of speaking which would help the understanding to understand reality and expose the error or short-sightedness of those who do not. Hence, it was said: 'ضَعْفَ الطَّالِبِ وَالْمَطْلُوبِ' 'Weak are the seekers and weak, the sought (idols) - 22:73.' And as it was said: 'إِنَّكُمْ وَمَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ حَصَبُ جَهَنَّمَ' (You, and what you worship, other than Allah, are but fuel for Hell - 21:98). Here too, the purpose is not to speak ill of someone. The purpose is to state the sad end of straying and error. Muslim jurists, may the mercy of Allah be upon them, have made it all clear by explaining: If anyone were to recite this verse too as a tool aimed at

causing irritation for disbelievers, then, for him, this recitation at that time and for that purpose, shall be considered as included under this ‘abusing which is prohibited,’ and will, therefore, be impermissible - as is the case in the prohibition of the recitation of the Qur‘ān at times and places which are *Makrūh* (reprehensible) and known to everyone. (Ruḥ al-Ma‘ānī).

To sum up, it can be said that, no word which could be taken as abusive was ever said by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, or had appeared in the Holy Qur‘ān, nor was there any apprehension that it could happen in the future. Of course, the probability that Muslims at large may fall into such impulsive action did exist, therefore, this verse stopped them from doing so. This event and the Qur‘ānic instruction based on it has provided access to a large body of significant knowledge, some examples of which are given below:

Becoming the Cause or Agent of a Sin is also a Sin

1. One of the principles thus deduced is: If doing something which is permissible intrinsically - in fact, even commendable in a certain degree - but, in the actual doing of it some corruption has to be accommodated, or as a result of which, people are let into sin, then, the doing of such a thing is also prohibited. The reason is that identifying false objects of worship, that is, the idols, is, at least, permissible after all - and if said under the need to uphold one’s religious feelings, it may perhaps be even worthy of praise and reward - but, since this resulted in the apprehension that people would start speaking ill of Allah *Jalla Sha’nuhū* which, in turn, would make the degraders of idols the cause of this evil, therefore, prohibited was the act which was already permissible.

2. Another example of this appears in *Hadīth* where, addressing his Companions, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is reported to have said: No one should abuse (use insulting language against) his or her parents. The Companions submitted: *Yā Rasūl* Allah, it is just not possible that one will abuse parents. He said: Yes, one does not usually do that. But, when such a person abuses the parents of someone else and, as a consequence of it, the other person abuses his parents, then, the cause of his parents being so abused was this very son. So, he too is like one who has himself abused his parents.

3. Yet another instance of a case of this nature came to pass during the blessed time of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. He said to Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها that the Baytullah (the Holy Ka'bah) had collapsed on its foundations in an accident during the *Jāhiliyyah*. The Quraysh of Makkah reconstructed it before the advent of prophethood.

In this structure, some details turned out to be against the initial Ibrāhīmī foundation. One of them was the part now known as Ḥaṭīm. This too is part of the Baytullah. It was left out because of paucity of funds. Then, there were two doors of Baytullah, the Eastern and the Western - one for entry and the other for exit. The people of *Jāhiliyyah* closed the Western door. The one door left was raised higher than the ground level so that entry into the Baytullah would depend on their will and permission and that no one could go there freely. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: I wish I could demolish the present structure of Baytullah and make it like the structure raised by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm Khalīlullah عليه السلام. But, the danger is that your people, that is, the common Arabs, who have entered the fold of Islam just now, may fall a victim to some doubts at the sight of Baytullah being demolished, therefore, I have abandoned my intention.

It goes without saying that raising the structure of Baytullah precisely on the foundations laid down by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام was an act of obedience and a deed deserving of merit and reward. But, seeing the shadows of a danger lurking behind this intended action because of the ignorance of people around, he abandoned that idea. So, from this event too, there emerges the same principle that, should there be an apprehension of some evil or corruption necessarily resulting from what is permissible, even from what is otherwise an act of *thawāb* or merit, then, that permissible or *thawāb*-worthy act too becomes impermissible.

But, there exists a strong doubt about this principle which has been reported from Abū Mansūr in Ruḥ al-Ma'ānī. The proposition posed is: Allah Ta'ālā has made *Jihād* binding on Muslims - though, the inevitable outcome of killing is that, when a Muslim will start killing some non-Muslim, they would start killing Muslims - and killing Muslims is *Ḥarām* (forbidden). Thus, given this principle, *Jihad* should also be prohibited. Then, the same will hold valid about our propaga-

tion of Islam and the recitation of the Qur‘ān, and about *Adhān* and *Ṣalāh* as well, all of which are subjected to mockery and ridicule by many among the disbelievers. If so, shall we surrender our right to worship and promote our religion?

Answering this, Abū Mansur has himself said that this doubt has come up because of ignoring a necessary condition. That condition is that a permissible act which has been prohibited, because of the apprehension of something evil, should not be one of the basic objectives and necessary duties in Islam. Thus, speaking ill of false objects of worship does not relate to any objective of Islam. Similarly, no basic Islamic objective depends on making the structure of Baytullah conform precisely to the foundations laid out by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. Therefore, whenever there was the danger of some religious mal-situation cropping up by doing what was permissible, or even reward-worthy, such acts or intentions were abandoned. As for acts which are either the very Islamic objectives in themselves, or on them depends some Islamic objective, then, even if the wrongdoings of other people seem to be bringing visible corruption or evil in its wake, then, these objectives will never be surrendered or abandoned. Instead of that, effort will be made that such permissible acts should keep continuing in their place, and steps will be taken to block the spreading of evils and corrupting agents as far as possible.

This is why two great men of Islamic history acted the way they did. Once Ḥasan al-Baṣrī رحمه الله عليه and Imām Muḥammad Ibn Sirīn رحمه الله عليه went out to participate in the *Ṣalāh* for a *Janāzah*. There, they noticed a gathering which had men as well as women. Seeing this Ibn Sirīn returned back. But, Ḥadrat Ḥasan al-Baṣrī said: Why should we leave doing what is necessary because of the false practice or ways of other people? The *Ṣalāh* of *Janāzah* is *Fard* (obligatory). It cannot be abandoned because of this corrupting agent. Of course, effort will be made, as far as possible, that this evil is rooted out.

This event too has been reported in *Ruḥ al-Ma‘ānī*.

So, the substance of this principle which emerges from this verse comes to be: An act which is permissible in itself, even if it be an act of obedience and *thawāb* - but, not be one of the religiously binding objectives, then, should doing it bring forth evil consequences, abandoning

of that permissible act becomes *Wājib* (necessary). This is contrary to the case of the objectives of the *Sharī'ah* which cannot be abandoned because of any impending evil or corruption.

From this principle, the jurists of the Muslim community have deduced solutions to thousands of problems. Some examples of their juristic efforts are:

1. If a person has a disobedient son and he knows that, should he ask him to do something, he would refuse to do it and even prefer to do against it, in which case, he will become liable to a grave sin, then, in such a situation, the father should not ask him to do or not to do something as an order, instead of which, he should say so in the mode of a good counsel - for example, he says to him, 'if such and such job could be done, that would be nice' - so that, in the eventuality of a refusal or reverse action, the son does not become liable to the sin of a new disobedience. (*Khulāṣatul-Fatāwā*)

2. The same rule holds good in matters where well-meaning advice is given to someone. If circumstantial indicators show that a person, rather than take advice, is more likely to take a worse course, as a result of which, he will sink deeper into sin, then, in such a situation, to give up advising is better. In his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, Imām al-Bukhārī has introduced a regular chapter on this subject:

باب من ترك بعض الاختيار مخافة ان يقصر فهم بعض الناس فيقعوا في
أشد منه

There are occasions when things permissible, even those commendable, are abandoned lest they put common people in misunderstanding - subject to the condition that these acts are not from the core objectives of Islam.

3. But, acts which are included under the objectives of Islam - whether *Farḍ*, *Wājib* or *Sunnah al-Mu'akkadah* (obligatory, necessary or emphasized *Sunnah*) or other kinds of Islamic hallmarks - if by observing them some people lacking in understanding start falling in misunderstanding, then, these acts will not be abandoned, rather, other methods will be used to remove the misunderstanding and misdoing of such people. Events which came to pass in early Islam prove that the disbelievers of Makkah were provoked because of *Ṣalāh*, the recita-

tion of the Qur‘ān and the preaching of Islam. But, the standing hallmarks of Islam were never abandoned because of such adverse conditions. In fact, the very episode relating to Abū Jahl and the rest of Quraysh chiefs recounted under the Background of Revelation of the present verse has proved the point eloquently. The essence of the episode was that the chiefs from the disbelieving Quraysh tribe wished to give a guarantee of peace if the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم would abandon preaching *Tauhid*, that is, stop calling Allah One. The answer given by him was: I can never do that, even if they were to bring the sun and the moon and put them in my hands.

In conclusion, the question as refined and resolved is: If, by doing what is included under Islamic objectives, some people fall a victim to misunderstanding or misdeed, such acts would never be abandoned. Of course, acts which are not included under Islamic objectives - and leaving them off does not compromise or kill any religious objective - then, such acts will be abandoned because of the apprehension that others might fall into misunderstanding or misdeed.

On Signs and Miracles

The previous verses had mentioned how obstinate people failed to benefit from clear signs of Allah and open miracles of His Messenger and kept on denying the message of truth. The present verses mention how they took a new turn, and demanded particular miracles from the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم . As reported by Ibn Jarīr, the Quraysh chiefs asked that they be shown the miracle of turning the Mount of Ṣafā into solid gold; if so, they would accept that he was a prophet and messenger, and that they would embrace Islam.

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: All right, make a solid agreement that, if this miracle is shown, all of you will become Muslims. They took solemn oaths. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم stood up to pray that Allah turns the Mount into gold. Sayyidnā Jibra‘īl came with Waḥy which said: If you wish, We shall make this whole Mount a Mount of gold, but the consequence will be that, according to the customary Divine Law, all of them - if they still fail to believe - shall be destroyed through a mass punishment, as has been happening with past communities who demanded a miracle which was shown, yet they reverted back to denial when the wrath and punishment of Allah over-

took them. Since the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was aware of their habitual obstinacy, and because he was in mercy the foremost, he said that he was not going to pray for that miracle anymore. Thereupon, the following verse was revealed: **وَأَقْسَمُوا بِاللَّهِ جَهْدَ آيْمَانِهِمْ** (And they swore by Allah on eloquent oaths - 109). Reported here is the sworn saying of the disbelievers that they would embrace Islam if they can see the miracle demanded by them. After that, in the sentence which follows immediately, it was said: **إِنَّمَا الْآيَاتُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ** (Signs are, definitely, with Allah - 109). This contains an answer to their saying. It has been declared here that all signs and miracles are within the power and control of Allah Ta‘ālā. As for the miracles already manifested, they too were from Him - and those being demanded now, they too lie within His absolute control. But, according to the dictate of reason and justice, they had no right to make such a demand - because, the Holy Prophet ﷺ claims to be a Messenger of Allah, in support of which, he has already presented proofs and evidences in the form of miracles. Now, the other party does have the right to question these proofs and evidences by showing the proofs of their being false. But, the attitude of not cross-examining evidences presented and yet demanding some other evidences would be like the scenario in a law court where the respondent would avoid cross-examining the witness presented by the plaintiff and take the plea that he does not accept the evidence of these witnesses and that he would accept what is said particularly by such and such a person in his statement. Obviously, no court would consider this plea worth hearing.

Similar is the case of the veracity of a prophet or *Rasūl* of Allah. To that end there are many clear signs and miracles before those who disbelieve. Now, unless they prove that these signs and miracles are false, they have no right to say that they would rather like to see a miracle of this or that kind before they could believe.

After that, upto the end of the cited verses, Muslims have been directly instructed that their duty is to stay firm on the true faith in their individual capacity, as well as convey it to others correctly and properly. If they, even then, show signs of rigidness and obstinacy, one should not worry about them because no one has to be forced into becoming a Muslim. If this was what could be done by force, who can

claim to have greater coercive power than Allah Ta'ālā. He Himself would have made everyone a Muslim. And in order to give Muslims their peace of heart, it was also explained in the verse that these people will not believe even if Allah were to show them the miracles of their choice openly and clearly. The reason was that their denial was not based on any misunderstanding or lack of awareness. In fact, it was due to their hostility and obstinacy - a disease which cannot be treated by miracles. In verse 111: *وَلَوْ أَنَّا نَزَّلْنَا إِلَيْهِمُ الْمَلَكَةَ*, it has been said that these people, if they were shown all miracles demanded by them, in fact, even if they were made to meet with angels and talk to the dead, they would still not believe. In the two verses that follow (112-113), the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been comforted by saying that the hostility of such people against him is nothing surprising. Past prophets too had their enemies - so, let him not be sad about it.

Verses 114 - 117

أَفَعَيِّرَ اللَّهُ أَتَّبِعِي حَكْمًا وَهُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ إِلَيْكُمُ الْكِتَابَ
مُفَصَّلًا وَالَّذِينَ آتَيْنَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ يَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّهُ مُنَزَّلٌ مِنْ رَبِّكَ
بِالْحَقِّ فَلَا تَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْمُمْتَرِينَ ﴿١١٤﴾ وَتَمَّتْ كَلِمَتُ رَبِّكَ
صِدْقًا وَعَدْلًا لَا مُبَدِّلَ لِكَلِمَتِهِ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ ﴿١١٥﴾
وَإِنْ تَطَّعْ أَكْثَرَ مَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ يُضِلُّوكَ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ إِنْ
يَتَّبِعُونَ إِلَّا الظَّنَّ وَإِنْ هُمْ إِلَّا يَخْرُصُونَ ﴿١١٦﴾ إِنْ رَبِّكَ هُوَ
أَعْلَمُ مَنْ يَضِلُّ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ ﴿١١٧﴾

So, is it someone apart from Allah that I should seek as judge while He has sent down to you the Book with details? And those We have given the Book know that it is something revealed from your Lord with the truth. So, never be one of those who are suspicious. [114]

And the Word of your Lord is perfect in truth and justice. None is there to change His words, and He is All-Hearing, All-Knowing. [115]

And if you obey the majority of those on earth, they will make you lose the way of Allah. They follow nothing but whims, and they do nothing but make conjectures. [116]

Surely, your Lord knows best those who go astray from His way, and He is the best knower of those who are on the right path. [117]

Commentary

Mentioned in previous verses was the obstinate attitude of the disbelievers of Makkah against the veracity of the Qur'an and the Prophet of Islam صلى الله عليه وسلم. Despite having seen signs and miracles proving their truth, they remained adamant, event went on to demand miracles of their choice before they could believe. The Qur'an answered this illogical argumentation by saying that the manifestation of miracles they demanded was easy for Allah, but those who were demanding them were obstinate people who would see them yet continue in their wickedness. When they do so, Divine Law will take over, as a result of which, they shall be over-run with mass punishment. That is why the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, in his universal mercy, refused to oblige them. He asked them to ponder over the miracles, signs and proofs they have already seen.

The present verses carry evidences which clearly prove the veracity of the Qur'an and that it is the Divine Word.

The substance of what has been said in the first verse (114) is: The difference between you and me is in the case of my being a prophet and messenger of Allah. I claim it and you deny it. But, this case has already been decided by the Judge of judges in my favour in a way that the miracle of the Qur'an itself is more than sufficient a proof of the truth of my claim. This is the same Qur'an which has challenged the nations of the world to come forward - if they doubt its being the Word of Allah - and make a small *Sūrah* or '*Āyah*' to match this Word. Even the eloquent Arabs failed to meet this challenge. Then, there were those opposing Islam, Qur'an and the Prophet of Islam enblock at the cost of their lives, properties and honour, even not one from among them rose with one single '*Āyah*' which would match the words of the miraculous Qur'an. Was this open miracle not good enough to make

one accept the truth that a total *Ummiyy* who was never taught by anyone was reciting what had left Arabia and the world at large wondering? This is a case already decided in the Court of the Judge of all judges - that Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم is a true *Rasūl* of Allah and the Qur‘ān is the *Kalām* (Word) of Allah *Jalla Sha‘nuhū*.

It was regarding this that it was said in the first verse (114): أَفَغَيَّرَ اللَّهُ أَفَغَيَّرَ اللَّهُ (So, is it someone apart from Allah that I should seek as judge). In other words, it means: ‘Do you want that I should, after this decision (of Allah Ta‘ālā to reveal the Qur‘ān to me), go and look for a judge other than Him? This is impossible. Following that - given there are some particular qualities of the Holy Qur‘ān which are by themselves the proof of the Qur‘ān being true and the Word of Allah. For example, it was said: هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ إِلَيْكُمُ الْكِتَابَ مُفَصَّلًا (while He has sent down to you the Book with details) which describes four special perfections of the Qur‘ān, that is: (1) It has been sent down from Allah Ta‘ālā; (2) It is perfect, miraculous, unchallenged and inimitable; (3) All matters of principle have been given in clear details; and (4) Before the Qur‘ān, the People of the Book, the Jews and the Christians knew for sure that the Qur‘ān is the true Word of Allah. Then, those who had regard for truth, said so while those who were hostile would not say so despite that they were sure about it.

After the description of these four qualities of the Holy Qur‘ān, the address is to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم (So, never be one of those who are suspicious). It means that in the presence of such clear proofs, there is no room for doubt. It is obvious that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was never one of those who were in doubt, nor he could be, as confirmed by his saying reported in *Tafsīr* Ibn Kathir: “Neither I ever doubted, nor I ever asked.” This tells us that, though in terms of the words, the address is to the Holy Prophet ﷺ but, in reality, the purpose is to make others hear it. That it has been ascribed to him is a manner in which the aim is to lay emphasis on and heighten the effect of the command - in the sense: ‘when this has been said to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, who would have the audacity to entertain any doubt?’

Described in the second verse (115), there are two more distinctive qualities of the Holy Qur‘ān sufficient to prove its being the Divine

Word. It is said: **وَمَنْتَ كَلِمَتُ رَبِّكَ صِدْقًا وَ عَدْلًا ط لَا مَبْدَلَ لِكَلِمَتِهِ** (And the Word of your Lord is perfect in truth and justice. None is there to change His Word).

The word: **مَنْتَ** (*tammāt*) denotes the state of perfection and: **كَلِمَتُ رَبِّكَ**. (*kalimatu Rabbik*) refers to the Qur‘ān (Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ, from Sayyidnā Qatādah). All subjects of the Qur‘ān are of two kinds: (1) Those in which lesson-oriented events and conditions of world history, reward on good deeds and warning of punishment on evil deeds have been described; and (2) those in which injunctions relating to human betterment and prosperity have been laid out. It is about these two kinds that the following two qualities of the Qur‘ān have been identified: **صِدْقًا وَ عَدْلًا**, that is, perfect in truth and justice. Here, **صِدْقٌ** (*ṣiḍq*:truth) belongs to the first kind. It means that all events, conditions, promises or warnings mentioned in the Qur‘ān are true and correct. There is no possibility of fault or defect or error in them. And: **عَدْلٌ** (*‘adl*:justice) relates to the other kind, that is, the injunctions (*Aḥkām*). It means that all injunctions of Allah *Jalla Sha‘nuhū* are based on ‘*Adl* (justice). The sense of ‘*Adl* covers two meanings: (1) Justice under which no injustice has been done to anyone, nor has any right been compromised or usurped; and (2) *‘Itidāl* (moderation), that is, not being totally subordinated to the desires of human self, nor being what ingrained human emotions and natural traits cannot bear. This comes to mean that all Divine injunctions are based on justice and moderation, that is, in them, there is no injustice inflicted on anyone, nor do they have hardship and pain which are humanly unbearable - as said elsewhere: **لَا يَكْتَلِبُ اللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا** (Allah does not obligate anyone except to his capacity - 2:286). Then, along with it, by bringing in the word: **مَنْتَ** (*tammāt*:is perfect), it was also pointed out that the Holy Qur‘ān not only has the qualities of truth and justice, but that it is also perfect and complete in them in all respects.

And that all injunctions of the Qur‘ān be - for all peoples of the world, for all generations to come and for all changed conditions - based on both justice and moderation is something which, if considered with a little deliberation, can only be possible in nothing but Divine injunctions. No legislative assembly or congress of the world can completely foresee all forthcoming conditions in the present and the future, nor can it make any law which would accomodate all such

conditions. Every country and nation makes its laws keeping in view what are usually the prevailing conditions of that country or nation. Then, even those laws are made to undergo changes when their experience proves that many of their provisions have remained contrary to justice and moderation. Now, to make a master law for other nations and peoples, or to make it with a complete consideration of all future events - that which embodies in it the qualities of justice and moderation for every nation, every country and every condition - is something beyond human thought and perception. This can only be in the Word of Allah *Subḥānuhu wa Ta‘ālā*. Therefore, this fifth quality of the Holy Qur‘ān, the quality of truth and justice, is impeccable. It demonstrates that all past and present events, promises and warnings, narrated in it are true, wherein the least doubt of their being contrary to the actual cannot be entertained, and that all injunctions given by it are embedded with justice and moderation for the benefit of the whole world for all generations to come right through the Last Day of *Qiyāmah*, injunctions which inflict no injustice on anyone, nor is there the slightest deviation from the norms of moderation and balance. This is, in itself, the perfect proof of the Qur‘ān being the Divine Word.

The sixth quality has been identified as: *لَا مَبْدَلَ لِكَلِمَاتِهِ* that is, there is no one who can change the words of Allah Ta‘ālā. One form in which such a change can take place is when someone proves a mistake in it because of which it has to be changed; or, that some enemy changes it forcibly. The Word of Allah is pristinely pure and far beyond any such possibilities. He has Himself promised: *إِنَّا نَعْنُقُ نَزْلَنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ حٰفِظُونَ* that is, ‘We (only We) have revealed the *Dhikr* (the Qur‘ān) and, for it, We (only We) are the Protector - 15:9). When so, who can dare break through the protection of Allah and make any changes or alterations in it? For that matter, over fourteen hundred years have passed and there have been, in every century and every age, more people who have been against it as compared in numbers, even in power, with those who have been believing it, but not one of them had the courage to introduce one tiny variance in even a vowel point of the Qur‘ān. Of course, possible there was a third form of bringing in a change, that is, it be changed through abrogation (*naskh*) by Allah Ta‘ālā Himself. Therefore, Sayyidnā ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ said: “This verse

indicates that the noble Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is the Last Prophet and the Qur‘ān, the Last Book. After this, there is no probability of an abrogation’ - as it has been elucidated in other verses of the Qur‘ān.

At the end of verse (115), it was said: *وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ* (and He is All-Hearing, All-Knowing) which means that Allah *Jalla Sha‘nuhū* hears all that is being said by these people and He knows what they do openly and secretly. He will give a return for every deed of theirs in accordance with it.

In the third verse (116), Allah Ta‘ālā tells the Holy Prophet ﷺ that the majority of the progeny of ‘Ādam living on the earth is in error. Let him not be overawed by this situation and let him ignore what they say or do. The Qur‘ān has dealt with this subject at several places. In Sūrah Aṣ-Ṣaaffaat, it is said: *وَلَقَدْ ضَلَّ قَبْلَهُمْ أَكْثَرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ* (And truly before them, many of the ancients went astray (37:71) In Sūrah Yūsuf, it is said: *وَمَا أَكْثَرُ النَّاسِ وَلَوْ حَرَصْتَ بِمُؤْمِنِينَ* (And the majority of people - even if you wish - are not to be believers (12:103). The outcome is that the awe of majority customarily overwhelms an individual and he or she ends up following it. Therefore, the address made to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was:

‘And if you obey the majority of those on earth, they will make you lose the way of Allah. They follow nothing but whims, and they do nothing but make conjectures.’

The gist of the advice is that he should not be impressed by their numerical majority as a model to follow because they lack principles and go off the right way: At the end of the verse (117), it was said:

‘Surely, your Lord knows best those who go astray from His way, and He is the best knower of those who are on the right path (consequently, as the errants shall be punished, the people of the straight path shall be rewarded).

Verses 118 - 121

فَكُلُوا مِمَّا ذُكِرَ اسْمُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ بِآيَاتِهِ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١١٨﴾
 وَمَا لَكُمْ أَلَّا تَأْكُلُوا مِمَّا ذُكِرَ اسْمُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ وَقَدْ فَصَّلَ لَكُمْ
 مَا حَرَّمَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِلَّا مَا اضْطُرُّرْتُمْ إِلَيْهِ وَإِنَّ كَثِيرًا لَيُضِلُّونَ

بَاهُوا أَنَّهُمْ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ ۖ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُعْتَدِينَ ﴿١١٩﴾ وَذَرُوا
ظَاهِرَ الْأَثَمِ وَبَاطِنَهُ ۖ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْسِبُونَ الْأَثَمَ سَيُجْزَوْنَ بِمَا
كَانُوا يَاقْتَرِفُونَ ﴿١٢٠﴾ وَلَا تَأْكُلُوا مِمَّا لَمْ يُذْكَرِ اسْمُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ
وَأَنَّهُ لَفِسْقٌ ۖ وَإِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ لِيُوحِيَ إِلَىٰ أَوْلِيَائِهِمْ لِيُجَادِلُوكُمْ
وَإِنْ أَطَعْتُمُوهُمْ إِنَّكُمْ لَمُشْرِكُونَ ﴿١٢١﴾

So, eat of that upon which the name of Allah has been invoked, if you do believe in His verses. [118]

And what can make you not to eat of that upon which the name of Allah has been invoked, while He has spelled out to you all that He has made unlawful for you, except that to which you are compelled by an extreme necessity? And surely, there are many who misguide with their desires without knowledge. Surely, your Lord is the best knower of those who cross the limits. [119]

And leave sin, the outward and the inward. Surely, those who commit sin shall be punished for what they used to commit. [120]

And do not eat that over which the name of Allah has not been pronounced. This is surely a sin. And the satans inspire their friends to dispute with you. And if you were to obey them, you would be Mushriks.* [121]

Linkage of Verses

Earlier (116), by saying: *وَإِنْ تُطِيعُوا* (And if you obey), following people in error was prohibited absolutely. Onward from there, comes the prohibition of such following in a particular matter as necessiated by an event. That event pertains to the lawfulness of what has been slaughtered properly or improperly. The event is that disbelievers tried to put Muslims in doubt by commenting that they did not eat of the ani-

* *Mushrik*: one who ascribes partners to Allah.

mals killed by Allah (i.e. by natural death) while they had no problem with eating of what they killed (slaughtered) themselves (as deduced by Abū Dāwūd and al-Ḥākim from Sayyidnā Ibn ‘Abbās). Some Muslims reported this doubt before the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. Thereupon, these verses ending at: لَمْ يَشْرِكُونْ (121) were revealed (narrated by Abū Dāwūd and Al-Tirmidhī from Sayyidnā Ibn ‘Abbās as in Al-Lubāb).

The gist of the answer given is: You are Muslims. You observe the injunctions of Allah particularly - and Allah has told you all about the Ḥalāl and the Ḥarām. So, keep abiding by it. Do not entertain any doubts about something Ḥalāl being Ḥarām, and something Ḥarām, being Ḥalāl. As for the scruples of disbelievers, just pay no attention to them.

The substantiation of this answer is that rational proofs are required only to prove the basic principles of faith (like Oneness of Allah, the prophethood of His messengers etc.) but once these basic principles are established and admitted, rational arguments are no more required for establishing a subsidiary or consequential rule of the Shari‘ah. What is required is to prove that this rule is based on a specific order given by Allah or His messenger. Once it is established that the rule is based on a specific injunction imposed by Allah Ta‘ālā or His messenger, it cannot be called in question on the basis of rational arguments. (because after admitting that the rule is prescribed by Allah Who is all-Wise, all-Powerful, it will always be based on wisdom which might be unknown to us.) Rather, it is sometimes harmful to mention rational wisdom for the rules of Shari‘ah, because any wisdom given by one's conjectures will always remain subject to doubts on the basis of counter arguments, and there is no way to find out a certain and absolute wisdom for a subsidiary rule of Shari‘ah. However, if it is evident that a person wants to know the wisdom behind a rule of Shari‘ah only to seek truth and to satisfy himself, there is no harm in mentioning some possible reasons of a rule before him as a matter of additional knowledge. But in the event that the rational wisdom is asked only for the sake of confrontation, then the proper way for a Muslim should be to ignore such questions and to act according to the prescribed rules without paying attention to the critic. It is true that if

a person wants to prove that a subsidiary rule of Shari'ah is repugnant to an absolute principle established by reason, the point raised by him may deserve answer, but the question raised by the *mushriks* in the present case was not of this nature in any way. Therefore, the Muslims are directed to ignore such absurd questions and keep believing and acting as before.

It is on the basis of the aforesaid principles that the question of Mushriks has not been answered in express terms. However, the expression used has given a subtle indication to the difference between a carrion and an animal slaughtered properly. The text gives permission to eat an animal on which Allah's name is invoked (كُلُوا مِمَّا ذُكِّرَ اسْمُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ). It is obvious that Allah's name is invoked on an animal while slaughtering it, therefore, it implies the condition of slaughtering an animal which drains out impure blood from the animal. On the other hand, it is forbidden to eat of an animal on which Allah's name is not invoked (وَلَا تَأْكُلُوا مِمَّا لَمْ يُذَكَّرْ اسْمُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ). Not invoking Allah's name may happen in two different situations: (1) Not slaughtering an animal at all (2) slaughtering an animal without invoking Allah's name. Both these situations render the animal *Ḥarām* according to this verse. Obviously, an animal which dies its natural death is covered under the first situation where its impure blood was not drained out and remaining in the body rendered it impure. That is why it has been held as *Ḥarām*.

Commentary

The Qur'anic order of reciting the name of Allah implied مَا ذُكِّرَ اسْمُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ (that upon which the name of Allah has been invoked) includes both kinds of slaughter termed in Islamic Fiqh as "*al-dhabḥ-al-ikhtiyāriyy*" (slaughtering an animal under control) and "*al-dhabḥ-al-idtirāriyy*" (hunting an animal out of control with an arrow or a hunting dog or falcon). The name of Allah shall be recited in the latter case when releasing the arrow or the dog or falcon.

Similarly, the words "مَا ذُكِّرَ اسْمُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ" include reciting actually or as implied. That is why Imam Abu Hanifah has allowed to eat an animal upon which the reciting of the name of Allah was missed inadvertently. However if it is missed deliberately, it will render the animal *Ḥarām*.

Verse 122

أَوَمَنْ كَانَ مَيِّتًا فَأَحْيَيْنَاهُ وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُ نُورًا يَمْشِي بِهِ فِي
النَّاسِ كَمَنْ مَثَلُهُ فِي الظُّلُمَاتِ لَيْسَ بِخَارِجٍ مِّنْهَا ۗ كَذَلِكَ
زُيِّنَ لِلْكَافِرِينَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٢٢﴾

Could it be that the one who was dead and We gave him life and made for him a light with which he walks among men, (is held to) be like the one whose condition is such that he is in total darkness, never coming out of it? This is how their deeds appear beautified to the disbelievers. [122]

Commentary

In the previous verses, mentioned there was the demand of ever new miracles by disbelievers as proof of their sheer obstinacy as they had already witnessed the open miracle of the Qur'an itself. After that, the Qur'an argued that the miracles already before their eyes should have been enough to lead them to the true path, only if these people themselves would have been genuinely seeking truth. Then, came the description of these miracles.

The present verse employs a similitude to focus on two life-styles in a tight frame. On one side is the state of those who believe in the Qur'an and in the Prophet of Islam, may he be blessed and protected by Allah Ta'ālā. Then, on the other side, there is the state of those who refuse to believe in them. Also stated through it is the good or bad end of both, as well as, the reality of what a believer or disbeliever stands for, and what belief and disbelief actually are. A believer is like one alive and the disbeliever is like one who is dead. Belief or 'Imān is like light - and Disbelief or *Kufr* is like darkness. These are Qur'anic similitudes. They are no poetry. They are a statement of reality.

Believer is Alive; Disbeliever, dead.

In this similitude, a *Mu'min*, a true believer has been identified as alive while a *Kāfir*, a disbeliever, has been pointed to as dead. The reason is that kinds and forms of life in human beings, animals and vegetation differ, but this much no sensible person can deny that every life form is there for a specific purpose. And nature has endowed it with

full ability to achieve this purpose. This is what the Qur‘ān is saying in: *أَعْطَى كُلَّ شَيْءٍ حَلْفَهُ ثُمَّ هَدَى* (Our Lord gave everything its creation, then guided it - 20:50), that is: Allah *Jalla Sha‘nuhū* created everything in the universe and gave it full instructions to achieve the purpose for which it was created. It is under this arrangement that all created beings are pursuing the mission assigned to them. In this eco-system, land, water, air and fire, and the moon, the sun and the stars are all aware of their duties and are fulfilling it. And this act of fulfilling their duties is a proof of life in all those things. And when one of these, whatever the condition or time, stops fulfilling its duties, then, it is no more alive; it is dead. If water stops its function of quenching thirst and removing impurities, it will not remain water anymore. If fire stops igniting and burning, it will not be the fire it was anymore. Trees and vegetation, once they stop growing and bearing flowers and fruits, will not be the trees and vegetation as they are - because they have abandoned the purpose of their life, as a result of which, they became lifeless, like the dead.

After looking at the universe around him bit by bit, anyone with the least fund of reason and understanding with him is bound to ponder about questions such as: What is the purpose of human life? What is one supposed to do as duty? Now, if one is fulfilling the purpose of one’s life, one is entitled to be taken as alive - and whoever is not fulfilling the purpose of one’s life, he or she is no better than a dead body.

What is the purpose of human life and what are the duties human beings have to fulfill? The question needs thought and - an answer. According to the principle stated above, it has already been determined that one who is fulfilling the purpose of his or her life is alive, otherwise, is dead. Now there are sightless tyrants among human beings who would take their species as self-rising vegetation or some kind of smart animal, with whom there is no distinction between a human being and a donkey or dog. According to them, the sole purpose of life is to fulfill the desire of one’s self, to eat, drink, sleep, wake up, and then die. So, reasonable people anywhere in the world would not take them as their addressees. People of reason and understanding, no matter what their religion, community or school of thought, have all along the lanes of time been in agreement that human beings are the superior-

most in creation and that the universe has been made and put into their service. It is obvious that what is most superior has to have a purpose of life which is matchingly superior. Every discerning person knows that there is no difference between human beings and animals as far as eating, drinking, sleeping and waking, finding and holding a shelter, dressing and wearing is concerned - in fact, many animals eat better and eat more than them, are even dressed better in standard natural attires. They even live in better surroundings with lots of fresh air. As for knowing their gain and loss, there too, every animal, even every tree, has awareness to limits suited to it. They have the ability to acquire the beneficial and stay away from the harmful. Similarly, when it comes to being beneficial to others, all animals and the vegetation seem to be obviously way ahead of human beings in that their flesh, skin, bone, ligaments, and of trees, including all they have in between their roots to the tiniest leaves, almost everything is harnessed into the service of man, yielding countless benefits to produce things needed in life. It is interesting that quite contrary to this, there is man whose flesh is of no use to anyone, nor is his skin, or hair, or bone or ligaments.

Now worth finding out is how does Monseigneur Humane (Mr. Man, the *homo sapiens*), under these circumstances, stand to deserve being the served one in this universe and being the cream of creation as much heralded? This brings us closer to the destination of truth. A little reflection will reveal that the reach of reason and consciousness given to all these units of creation is limited to the transitory and accidental gain or loss - and it is in this life, it appears beneficial for others. What was there before the life on this earth and what will be coming after is a field in which the reason and consciousness of nothing organic or inorganic, not even that of the smartest of animals, would work, nor can anything there serve as functional or beneficial in this particular field. So, this is the field in which human beings have to work, human beings for whom the universe has been commissioned to serve, and human beings who are the most superior of all creation. Only this will bring out the difference between the distinct status of human beings as compared with other elements of creation clearly and conclusively.