

that shortcomings were committed (God forbid) by Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام in the fulfillment of his duty as a prophet, as correct.

And it is not hidden from the people of knowledge that commentators generally include Israelite reports in their Tafsīrs about which all of them agree that these are not authentic and trustworthy. No Islām-ic legal ruling can be based on them. It is only through the crutches of these Israelite reports, whether they appear in the books of Muslim commentators or in the book of Jonah, that this grave accusation can be leveled against Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام that 'he had committed shortcomings in the fulfillment of his duties as a prophet.' No commentator of Islām has ever approved of it.

وَاللَّهُ سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَىٰ أَعْلَمُ، وَبِهِ اسْتَعِيثُ انْ يَعْصِمَنَا مِنَ الْخَطَايَا وَالزَّلَاتِ

And Allah, He is Pure and High and the Most Knowledgeable and before Him is our plaint that He protects us from all errors and lapses.

Details of the Event relating to Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام

Part of the details of the event relating to Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام has been mentioned in the Qur'ān while some of it has its proof in reports of Ḥadīth and history. According to these sources, the people of Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام lived in the well-known place, Nineveh near Mousel, Iraq. Their number has been given as more than one hundred thousand in the Holy Qur'ān. It was for their guidance that Allah Ta'ālā sent Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام. They refused to believe. Allah Ta'ālā asked Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام to warn these people that Divine punishment was going to overtake them within three days. Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام made the announcement before his people. When they went in consultation with each other, they agreed that they had never found Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام lying, therefore, this thing from him was not to be ignored. Finally, they devised a plan to see whether or not Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام stays among them at his place during the night. If he did, they were to understand that nothing would happen. And if he went somewhere else from there, then, they should be certain that the punishment would descend upon them the next morning. Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام moved out of his dwelling place during the night as Divinely commanded. When morning came, the Divine punishment, in the form of a cloud-like black smoke started hovering over their heads tending to be descending down closer to them. They then

became certain that they all were going to be destroyed. Seeing this, they looked for Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام so that they could confess to their past denial, repent and believe with him as the witness. But, when they did not find him, they took it upon themselves to come up with repentance and prayers for forgiveness in the best spirit of sincerity at their command. To do that, they left homes, came out on open grounds, women, children and animals all huddled there. Wearing rags, weeping and wailing, repenting and begging refuge from Divine punishment, they made the whole area resound with a massive collective plaint. Allah Ta‘ālā accepted their repentance and removed the punishment from them – as mentioned in this verse. Reports indicate that this was ‘Āshūrā, that is, the day of the tenth of Muḥarram.

On the other side, Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام was waiting outside the township expecting that the Divine punishment will be about to hit the people there. He knew nothing about how they had repented and sought forgiveness. When the punishment stood removed, he started worrying about himself for his people would now declare him to be a liar – because he had announced that the punishment would strike within three days. According to the law of those people, if a person whose lying was known did not produce a witness in his support, he would be killed. Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام was concerned apprehending that he would be declared a liar and killed.

The noble prophets are protected from every act of sin and disobedience, but are not set apart from others in terms of human nature and temperament. At that time, Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام naturally grieved that he had made the announcement as Divinely commanded and now it was because of the announcement he made he would be declared a liar. How could he go back to his place under these circumstances and take the risk of being killed in accordance with the law of his people? Deep in this anxiety, he started off with the intention of getting out of that town until he reached the shores of the Mediterranean Sea. There he saw a boat being boarded by people. They recognized Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام and let him board *gratis*. The boat sailed. But, when it reached off shore, it stopped suddenly. It refused to move any further, neither forward, nor backward. The boat people made an announcement. They said that Allah had made their boat special. When an oppressive sinner or a slave in flight boards it, the

boat stops on its own. So, they said, let that person show himself up so that others do not suffer because of one person.

Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام spoke out that he was the sinner and the fleeing slave. As the act of leaving his town and boarding the boat was prompted by a natural apprehension and not by Divine permission, the dignified bearing of Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام as a prophet had no hesitation in declaring this act, of coming towards the boat without that permission, a sin. The rule was that no movement of a prophet should have been without Divine permission. So he said, 'Throw me into the sea and be spared of the punishment.' The people of the boat would not do that. They drew lots so that the person thus named could be thrown into the sea. By chance, the lot drawn had the name of Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام on it. They were intrigued. They drew lots again and again. But, as Divine decree would have it, the name that kept appearing repeatedly was that of Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام. The Holy Qur'an mentions this drawing of lots and the incidence of the name of Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام being drawn therein (to be the one to be thrown overboard): فَسَاهَمَ فَكَانَ مِنَ الْمُدْحَضِينَ (and he drew lots and was among the losers – 37:141).

This dealing of Allah Ta'ālā with Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام was in view of his special status as a prophet. He had done no contravention of any Divine command that could be called sin or disobedience – for that matter, there exists no possibility of these issuing forth from any prophet because they are *ma'sūm* (Divinely protected). But, it was not appropriate to the high station of a prophet that he would transfer to another place without Divine permission simply on the basis of natural apprehension. It was this contra-dignity conduct which brought displeasure and resultant action.

On the one hand, names were being drawn in lots. The named was waiting to be thrown overboard. On the other hand, a large fish under Divine orders was lurking by the boat with her mouth agape, waiting for the incumbent to be thrown into the sea and right into her belly. Allah Ta'ālā had already commanded the fish that the body of Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام that was to be deposited in her belly was no food for her, instead, was his home for a while. When Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام was lowered into the sea, the fish received him. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضى الله عنه said that Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام lived in the belly

of the fish for forty days. It would take him down to the sea bed and to nautical journeys far and wide. The period of his stay in the belly of the fish has also been reported as, five, and one day and few hours. (Mazharī) Only Allah Ta‘ālā knows the truth about it. Living in that state, Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام made the following *du‘ā*:

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ سُبْحَانَكَ إِنِّي كُنْتُ مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ

There is no god but You. Pure are You. Indeed, I have been of the wrongdoers – 21: 87.

Allah Ta‘ālā accepted this prayer and Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام was put on the shore alive and unharmed.

But, the heat in the belly of the fish had left no hair on his body. Allah Ta‘ālā caused a gourd vine to grow near him. Even the shade provided by the leaves on it became a blessing for Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام. And signaled by Allah Ta‘ālā, a wild goat would come every morning and evening, stand near him and he would have milk to drink.

Thus, Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام was alerted to that slip, and later on, his people too came to know the whole story.

In this story, as for parts that have been mentioned in the Qur‘ān, or stand proved from authentic narratives of Ḥadīth, they are certain. The rest of them come from historical reports – and no ruling of Islamic law can be based on them.

Verses 99 – 100

وَلَوْ شَاءَ رَبُّكَ لَأَمَنَّ مَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ كُلَّهُمْ جَمِيعًا أَفَأَنْتَ
تُكْرَهُ النَّاسَ حَتَّى يَكُونُوا مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٩٩﴾ وَمَا كَانَ لِنَفْسٍ أَنْ
تُؤْمِنَ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَيَجْعَلُ الرَّجْسَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ لَا
يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿١٠٠﴾

Had your Lord willed, all those on earth would have believed altogether. Would you, then, compel people, so that they become believers? [99]

And it is not for any one that he believes except with the will of Allah. And He makes filth settle on those who do not understand. [100]

Verses 101 - 103

قُلْ أَنْظَرُوا مَاذَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ط وَمَا تُغْنِي الْآيٰتِ وَ
 التُّذْرَ عَنْ قَوْمٍ لَّا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١٠١﴾ فَهَلْ يَنْتَظِرُونَ إِلَّا مِثْلَ أَيَّامِ
 الَّذِينَ خَلَوْا مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ ط قُلْ فَانْتَظِرُوا إِنِّي مَعَكُمْ مِنَ
 الْمُنْتَظِرِينَ ﴿١٠٢﴾ ثُمَّ نُنَجِّي رُسُلَنَا وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كَذٰلِكَ ط حَقًّا
 عَلَيْنَا نُنَجِّ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٠٣﴾

Say, "Look at what is there in the heavens and the earth?" But, signs and warners do not suffice a people who do not believe. [101]

So, are they waiting for nothing short of something like the days of those who have passed before them? Say, "So wait. I am with you, among those waiting." [102]

Then We (used to) save Our messengers and those who believed. Similarly, it being on Us, We shall save the believers. [103]

Verses 104 - 107

قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِن كُنْتُمْ فِي شَكٍّ مِنْ دِينِي فَلَا أَعْبُدُ الَّذِينَ
 تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَلَكِنْ أَعْبُدُ اللَّهَ الَّذِي يَتَوَفَّكُم ۖ
 وَأُمِرْتُ أَنْ أَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٠٤﴾ وَأَنْ أَقِمَّ وَجْهَكَ لِلدِّينِ
 حَنِيفًا وَلَا تَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴿١٠٥﴾ وَلَا تَدْعُ مِنْ دُونِ
 اللَّهِ مَا لَا يَنْفَعُكَ وَلَا يَضُرُّكَ فَإِنْ فَعَلْتَ فَإِنَّكَ إِذَا مِنْ
 الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١٠٦﴾ وَإِنْ يَمْسَسْكَ اللَّهُ بِضُرٍّ فَلَا كَاشِفَ لَهُ
 إِلَّا هُوَ وَإِنْ يُرِدْكَ بِخَيْرٍ فَلَا رَادَّ لِفَضْلِهِ ط يُصِيبُ بِهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ
 مِنْ عِبَادِهِ ط وَهُوَ الْعَفُوُّ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿١٠٧﴾

Say, "O people, if you are in doubt about my Faith, then, I do not worship those you worship beside Allah. Rather, I worship Allah who brings death to you. And I have been ordained to be among the believers, [104] and

that I should make myself firm on Faith, being upright, and never be among the Mushriks.”* [105]

And do not invoke, other than Allah, what neither benefits you nor harms you, for, if you do so, then you will surely be one of the unjust. [106]

And if Allah brings some harm to you, then, there is none to remove it except He. And if He intends to bring some good to you, then, there is none to turn His grace back. He brings it to whomever He wills from among His servants. And He is the Most-Forgiving, the Very Merciful. [107]

Verses 108 - 109

قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ فَمَنِ اهْتَدَىٰ فَإِنَّمَا يَهْتَدِي لِنَفْسِهِ وَمَنْ ضَلَّ فَإِنَّمَا يَضِلُّ عَلَيْهَا وَمَا أَنَا عَلَيْكُمْ بِوَكِيلٍ ﴿١٠٨﴾ وَاتَّبِعْ مَا يُوحَىٰ إِلَيْكَ وَاصْبِرْ حَتَّىٰ يَحْكُمَ اللَّهُ ۗ وَهُوَ خَيْرُ الْحَاكِمِينَ ﴿١٠٩﴾

Say, “O people, the truth has come to you from your Lord. So, whoever accepts guidance accepts it to his own benefit, and whoever goes astray does so to his own detriment. And I am not responsible for you.” [108]

And follow what is being revealed to you, and be patient until Allah gives His judgment, and He is the best of judges. [109]

Alḥamdulillah

The commentary on

Sūrah Yūnus

Ends here.

*Mushriks: those who associate partners to the divinity of Allah.

Sūrah Hūd

Sūrah Hūd is Makki and it has 123 Verses and 10 Sections

Verses 1 - 5

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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

الرَّفِ كِتَابٌ أَحْكَمَتْ آيَاتُهُ ثُمَّ فُصِّلَتْ مِنْ لَدُنْ حَكِيمٍ خَبِيرٍ ﴿١﴾
 أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا اللَّهَ إِنِّي لَكُمْ مِنْهُ نَذِيرٌ وَبَشِيرٌ ﴿٢﴾ وَأَنْ
 اسْتَغْفِرُوا رَبَّكُمْ ثُمَّ تُوبُوا إِلَيْهِ يُمَتِّعْكُمْ مَتَاعًا حَسَنًا إِلَى
 أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى وَيُؤْتِ كُلَّ ذِي فَضْلٍ فَضْلَهُ وَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَإِنِّي
 أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ كَبِيرٍ ﴿٣﴾ إِلَى اللَّهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ وَهُوَ
 عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿٤﴾ أَلَّا إِنَّهُمْ يَأْتُونَ صُدُورَهُمْ
 لِيَسْتَحْفُوا مِنْهُ أَلْحِينَ يَسْتَغْشُونَ ثِيَابَهُمْ لَا يُعَلِّمُ مَا يَسْرُونَ
 وَمَا يُعَلِّنُونَ ۚ إِنَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ ﴿٥﴾

Alif, Lām, Rā. (This is) a book the verses of which have been made firm, then elaborated by a Being All Wise, All Aware, [1] (with an order) that you worship none but Allah – surely, I am for you a warner from Him, and a bearer of glad tidings [2] – and that you seek forgiveness from your Lord, then, turn to Him in repentance. He shall, then, provide you with good things to enjoy for a given time, and bestow His added grace on everyone of excellence. And if you turn away, then, I fear for you the punishment of a great day. [3] To Allah is your return and He is powerful over everything. [4] Beware, they bend their chests to hide from Him. Beware, when they make their clothes a cover, He knows what they hide and what they expose. Surely, He is All Aware of what lies in the hearts. [5]

Commentary

Sūrah Hūd is among the Sūrahs that describe the coming of several kinds of mass punishments triggered by Divine displeasure as well as the horrendous happenings of the fateful day of Judgement and its outcome in the form of individual reward and punishment, all in a manner that is unique.

For this reason, when a few strands of hair in the blessed beard of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had turned visibly grey, Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضى الله عنه expressed his concern by saying: 'Yā Rasūlallāh, you have become old.' He said: 'Yes, Sūrah Hūd has made me old.' There are reports which also add Sūrah al-Wāqī'ah, al-Mursalāt, 'Amma Yataṣā'alūn (an-Naba') and at-Takwīr with Sūrah Hūd. (Reported by al-Ḥākim and Tirmidhī)

The sense articulated through the Ḥadīth given above was to highlight that such was the awe and terror inspired by the mention of these happenings that it caused the emergence of the signs of old age.

The first verse of the Sūrah opens with the letters: ال (alif, lām, rā). These are isolated letters the meaning of which is a secret between Allah Ta'ālā and His Rasūl. Others have not been informed about it. Rather, they have been prohibited from even worrying about it.

After that, about the Holy Qur'ān it was said that it was a book the verses of which are made 'muḥkam' (firm). The word: محكم (muḥkam) is from: احكام (iḥkām) which means such a correct balancing of meaningful speech as would not leave the probability of any error or disorder in word or meaning. Based on this definition, the making of these verses 'muḥkam,' firm or established would mean that Allah Ta'ālā has made these verses such as do not admit of any likelihood and probability of any error in words, or disorder in meanings, or defect, or falsity. (Qurtubī)

And Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه has said that 'muḥkam' (firm) at this place stands in contrast to 'mansūkh' (abrogated). And the sense is that Allah Ta'ālā has made the verses of the Qur'ān as a whole firm, non-abrogated – that is, the way earlier Books, Torah, Injil etc. were abrogated after the revelation of the Qur'ān. But, after the revelation of this Book, since the very chain of the coming of prophets and revelations came to an end, therefore, this

Book will not be abrogated until the last day of *Qiyāmah*. (Qurtubī) As for the abrogation of some verses of the Qur'ān through the Qur'ān itself, it is not contrary to this.

In the same verse, given there was another standing feature of the Qur'ān: *ثُمَّ نُفَصِّلُكَ* (*thumma fuṣṣilat*) that is, 'then these verses were elaborated'. The real meaning of *tafsīl* or elaboration is to separate two things and make them distinct from each other. For this reason, different sections in ordinary (Arabic) books bear the heading of 'Faṣl'. At this place, the elaboration of verses could also mean that the verses concerning beliefs, acts of worship, dealings, social living, morals etc. have been separated from each other and described clearly.

And it could also mean that, as far as Allah Ta'ālā's will is concerned, the entire Qur'ān had already been embedded in the Preserved Tablet (*al-lawḥ al-maḥfūz*). But, later it was revealed bit by bit in many installments as necessitated under different conditions prevailing among peoples and countries, so that its preservation could become easy and acting in accordance with it also turns out to be functionally convenient.

After that, it was said: *مِنْ لَدُنْ حَكِيمٍ حَبِيرٍ* that is, all these verses have come from a Sacred Being who is absolutely and simultaneously Wise and Aware. In other words, there are so many considerations of wisdom ingrained in everything that issues forth from Him. It is impossible for human beings to encompass them all. Then He is fully aware of every particle, present now or to be present in the future, of this multifaceted universe. He knows all states of their existence as it is and as it will be and releases His commands keeping all this in sight. This is not like what human beings do. No matter how intelligent, smart and experienced they may be, their reason and vision are still cordoned by a limited frame of reference. Their experience is the product of what is around them. And this, mostly, proves to be unsuccessful, even wrong, especially when it concerns what would happen in the future under different times and conditions. (Interestingly enough, the observations of the commentator apply to what we now know as the intellectual phenomena of Futurology with its pundits, fellow travelers and dabblers all over the world, including Pakistan! - tr.).

From the second verse begins the delineation of one of the most important and foremost themes, that of Tauḥīd, the Oneness of Allah

Ta'ālā. It is said: **أَلَّا تَعْبُدُونَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ** (that you worship none but Allah). It means that among things stated in these verses the most important and foremost is that no one else should be worshipped except the One Allah.

After that, it was said: **إِنِّي لَكُمْ مِنْهُ نَذِيرٌ وَبَشِيرٌ** (Surely, I am for you a warner from Him, and a bearer of glad tidings). It means that the noble messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم has been commanded to tell the whole world through these verses that he was for them a carrier of warning (against disobedience) and a bearer of glad tidings (of blessings in this life and in the life to come) from Allah.

The word: نذير (*nadhīr*) is usually taken to mean a person who puts the fear of something into someone's heart. But, this word is not used to denote a fear-generating enemy or beast or others that harm. Instead of that, *nadhīr* is applied to a person who, out of his love and affection to someone, warns him against and saves him from some harmful things. These could be things that harm in this world and might as well could be those that bring harm in the Hereafter.

Out of the instructions given in these verses of the Qur'an, the second one appears in the third verse in the words: **وَأَنْ اسْتَغْفِرُوا رَبَّكُمْ ثُمَّ تُوبُوا إِلَيْهِ** (and that you seek forgiveness from your Lord). It means that, in these verses of firm and established meaning, Allah Ta'ālā has also instructed His servants to ask for forgiveness and pardon from their Lord, and make their Taubah before Him. Forgiveness (*maghfirah*) relates to past sins and Taubah (repentance) relates to the resolve of not going near these anymore. And, in reality, a correct and true Taubah is no more than being ashamed of past sins, praying to Allah that they be forgiven and resolving firmly that they would not be repeated in future. Therefore, some righteous elders have said that seeking forgiveness from Allah only verbally – without having made a firm resolution, and the necessary arrangements to implement it, in order to remain safe from future sins – is the Taubah (repentance) of liars (*al-kadhhabīn*). (Qurtubī) Or, as it was said poetically:

معصيت راخنده می آید بر استغفار ما

'Sin laughs at my style of seeking forgiveness'

or that such repentance is itself worth being repented.

After that, glad tidings of the finest fruits of success in *Dunyā* and

'*Ākhirah* have been given to those who repent and seek forgiveness by saying: *مَبْعُوثِكُمْ مَتَاعًا حَسَنًا إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى* (He will, then, provide you with good things to enjoy for a given time). It means that those who genuinely seek forgiveness for their past sins and firmly resolve to abstain from these in future and do what it takes to implement their resolution, then, not only that their error will be forgiven, they would also be blessed with a good life. And it is obvious that 'life' here carries a general sense that includes life in the mortal world as well as the life in the Hereafter. It is about such people that the Qur'an has said elsewhere: *لَنُعْجِبَنَّهُ حَيٰوةً طَيِّبَةً* (We shall certainly give them good and pure life – 16:97). According to the investigations of the majority of commentators, both the lives of *Dunyā* and '*Ākhirah* are included in the sense of this verse as well. This has been further clarified in Sūrah Nūḥ. The address is to the seekers of forgiveness. It was said: *مُرْسِلِ السَّمَاءِ عَلَيْكُمْ مِدْرَارًا* *وَوَاعِدُكُم بِأَمْوَالٍ وَأَنْهَارٍ وَيُزَكِّيَكُم بِأَنْهَارٍ* It means: (if you were to seek forgiveness from Allah genuinely), Allah Ta'ālā shall send the sky showering over you (the rains of His mercy) and bless you with wealth and children and make for you gardens and bring for you rivers – 71:11). It is obvious that the mercy of rains and the blessings of wealth and children relate to the life of the present world.

That is why most of the commentators have taken the expression *مَتَاعًا حَسَنًا* (good things to enjoy) to mean the worldly enjoyments. According to them the sense is that, 'Allah Ta'ālā shall bless you with extended sustenance and easy modalities of comfort and protect you from calamities and punishments – as a result of the forgiveness you seek and the repentance you show. And since this worldly life must end some day, the enjoyment of its comforts cannot become eternal under the law of nature. Therefore, by adding the caveat: *إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى* (for a given time), it has been stressed that the 'good things to enjoy' in the present world will be available up to a particular time, that is, the time of death. On the final count, death will eliminate all these things.

But, soon after this 'death,' the life of the other world will begin, and there too, eternal comforts will be available to those who repent and seek forgiveness.

And Sahl ibn 'Abdullāh رحمه الله تعالى said, 'The meaning of 'good things to enjoy' is that one's attention bypasses the created and remains fixed on the Creator.' Some other men of Allah have said, 'The

reality of 'good things to enjoy' is that one remains content with what is available and worries not for what is not.' In other words, one should be satisfied with as much as is within easy reach in this world and should not eat his heart out for what he does not have.

Of the glad tidings given to those who repent and seek forgiveness, the second appears in the following words: **وَرَبُّنَا كَلَّمَ ذِي فَضْلٍ فَضْلَهُ** (and bestow His added grace on everyone of excellence). Here, the first **فضل** (*faḍl*: excellence) refers to one's good deed, while the second '*faḍl*' denotes Divine grace or bounty, that is, the Paradise. Put simply, the sense is that Allah Ta'ālā shall bless every doer of good deed with His grace, that is, Paradise.

A promise was made of Good Life, both in *Dunyā* and *Ākhirah*, in the first sentence, and of everlasting blessings of Paradise, in the second. After that, it was said: **فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَإِنِّي أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ كَبِيرٍ** (And if you turn away, then, I fear for you the punishment of a great day). That is: 'If you turn away from the good counsel given to you, fail to seek forgiveness for your past sins, and fail to remain safe against sins in the future, then, there is a strong likelihood that you will be seized by the punishment of a great day'. It refers to the day of *Qiyāmah* for it would be a day of one thousand years and, also in terms of what ominous things would transpire in it, it will be the gravest.

In the fifth verse, the theme has been emphasized further. Let man do what he elects to. Let him live the way he fancies. But, ultimately, once dead, man has to return to Him and He is powerful over everything. It is not at all difficult for Him to have each particle man is made of reassembled after he is dead and becomes dust and see to it that there rises the man he was, all over again.

The sixth verse carries a refutation of what the hypocrites and the disbelievers do. They try to camouflage their hostility, and their antagonistic activism against the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, as deftly as they could. Their hearts blaze with malice and enmity but they maintain a cool front, find all sorts of covers to hide their true identity and intention and surmise that no one would find out who they were really and what they were doing actually. But, the truth of the matter is that Allah Ta'ālā knows it all, that which they let come out in the open and that which they conceal behind all sorts of clothes, covers and curtains: **إِنَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ** because, 'He is All Aware of [even] what lies in the

hearts.'

Verses 6 - 8

وَمَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا عَلَى اللَّهِ رِزْقُهَا وَيَعْلَمُ
مُسْتَقَرَّهَا وَمُسْتَوْدَعَهَا كُلُّ فِي كِتَابٍ مُبِينٍ ﴿٦﴾ وَهُوَ الَّذِي
خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ وَكَانَ عَرْشُهُ عَلَى الْمَاءِ
لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا وَلَئِنْ قُلْتَ إِنَّكُمْ مَبْعُوثُونَ مِنْ
بَعْدِ الْمَوْتِ لَيَقُولَنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِنْ هَذَا إِلَّا سِحْرٌ مُبِينٌ ﴿٧﴾
وَلَئِنْ أَخْرْنَا عَنْهُمُ الْعَذَابَ إِلَيَّ أُمَّةٍ مَعْدُودَةٍ لَيَقُولَنَّ
مَا يَحْبِسُهُ إِلَّا يَوْمَ يَأْتِيهِمْ لَيْسَ مَصْرُوفًا عَنْهُمْ وَحَاقَ بِهِمْ
مَا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِءُونَ ﴿٨﴾

And there is no creature on earth whose sustenance is not on Allah. And He knows its permanent and its temporary place. Everything is in a clear book. [6]

And He is the One who created the heavens and the earth in six days and His throne was on water so that He might test you as to who among you is better in deed. And if you say, "you shall be raised after death," the disbelievers will surely say, "This is nothing but sheer magic." [7]

And if We defer the punishment for them for a certain time, they shall say, "What is holding it back?" Beware, the day it visits them, it shall not be turned back from them and they shall be besieged by what they used to ridicule. [8]

Commentary

Mentioned in the previous verse was the all-encompassing knowledge of Allah Ta'ālā from whom nothing is hidden, nothing from the tiniest particle of the universe down to the secrets of the hearts. It is in consonance with it that the first verse (6) mentions a great favor bestowed on human beings – that Allah Ta'ālā has Himself taken the responsibility of providing their sustenance. Then, this is not restricted to human beings alone. It extends to every living form that walks over

the earth. Its sustenance reaches it where it lives or goes to. That being the state of affairs, the intentions and efforts of disbelievers and hypocrites to hide things from Allah Ta'ālā are nothing but ignorance and senselessness. Then, taken in a general sense, it would include all beasts, birds, insects and all animals of the land and the sea. To intensify this generality, the word: من (*min*) has been added and the text reads: وَمَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ (and there is no creature). *Dābbah* is any creature that moves on earth. Birds are also included there because their nests are also located somewhere on the land. That creatures living in water have also a connection with the surface of the earth is no secret. Allah Ta'ālā has taken the responsibility of providing sustenance for all these life forms and has put it in words which give the impression of a duty imposed on someone. It was said: عَلَى اللَّهِ رِزْقُهَا (its sustenance is on Allah). It is obvious that there is no power that could put a liability on Allah Ta'ālā. What really happened is that Allah Ta'ālā himself has made this promise out of his grace and mercy. But, this promise comes from One who is True and Merciful. There is no probability of things happening otherwise, counter to the promise. This is a matter of certitude. It is to express this element of certitude that the word: عَلَى ('*alā*: on) has been introduced at this place – a word used to describe duties, although, Allah Ta'ālā takes no orders from anyone, nor is He responsible for something as obligated or necessary.

Lexically, رِزْق *rizq* (sustenance, provision or livelihood) means something from which a creature procures its food and through which the body grows and the soul survives.

According to the lexical meaning of the word '*rizq*', it is not necessary that whoever has it should also be its owner – because, *rizq* is given to all animals, but they are not its owners. They are not cut out for ownership. Similarly, infants are not the owners of their *rizq*, but it is given to them.

In terms of this general sense of *rizq*, 'Ulamā' have said that *rizq* could be *ḥalāl* (lawful) and it could also be *ḥarām* (unlawful), because for a person who eats up what belongs to the other person, that property, no doubt, becomes his food, but so it becomes only unlawfully. Had this person not used unfair means blinded by his greed, he would have received the *ḥalāl* (lawful) *rizq* reserved and appointed for him.

Removal of a doubt against the Divine Responsibility of *Rizq*

A question arises at this stage. When Allah Ta'ālā has taken the responsibility of providing food for every creature, why is it that there are many animals and human beings who die of hunger and thirst for the reason that they do not get food or water? The 'Ulamā have given several answers.

One possible answer is that the responsibility of *rizq* is there until comes the appointed time, that is, until comes the end of the years of life. When these years are over, one has to die, pass away from this world, the common causes of which are diseases, or accidents like burning, drowning, injury and wounds. Similarly, there could also be the reason that the *rizq* for the incumbent was stopped and which caused death.

Imām al-Qurṭubī, under his comments on this verse, has mentioned an event related to Abū Mūsā, Abū Mālik and some others from their tribe of Banū al-Ash'ar. When these people reached the blessed city of Madīnah after their Hijrah, the wherewithal of their journey was all used up. They sent one of their men to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in the hope that he would make some arrangement for their meals. When this person reached his door, he heard the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم reciting the verse: وَمَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا عَلَى اللَّهِ رِزْقُهَا (And there is no creature on earth whose sustenance is not on Allah - 6). Hearing this verse, the person, thought that Allah has Himself taken the responsibility of providing *rizq* for all life forms, human or non-human, then, we Ash'arites too would not be any worse than the animals in the sight of Allah. He shall, most certainly, give us our *rizq*. With this thought in his mind, he turned from the door and left. He simply said nothing to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم about why he was there. After having returned to his tribe, he said, 'Rejoice, my friends. The help of Allah is coming for you.' His Ash'arī companions took his words in a different sense. They thought that their emissary sent to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was talking about the success of his visit and that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had promised to make arrangements for what they needed. Naturally, they found the news good and felt satisfied. Hardly had they sat down when they saw two men bringing a trencher, a large wooden tray, full of meat and bread. The carriers gave all this food to the Ash'arites who ate it to their fill. When food was still

left, they thought it would be nice to send the rest of the food to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم so that he could use it as he deemed fit. They had two of their men carry this food to the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

Later they all presented themselves before the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and told him, ‘Yā Rasūlallāh, the food you sent was very nice and very delicious.’ He said, ‘As for me, I never sent any food.’

Then, they told him the whole story that they had sent one of their men to him, the reply that he gave led them to believe that the food was sent by him. Hearing this, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, ‘not by me, this was sent by the Most Sacred Being who has taken the responsibility of providing *rizq* to every living creature.’

According to some Ḥadīth reports, when Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام reached the Mount of Ṭūr in search of fire, what he found there was not fire but Divine light. He was made a prophet and asked to go to Egypt so that the Pharaoh and his people could be brought on the right path. At that hour, it occurred to him that he had left his wife in a wilderness all alone – who would take care of her? To remove this scruple from his heart, Allah Ta‘ālā asked Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام to strike his rod at the rock in front of him. When he did what he was asked to do, the rock split and out came yet another rock. He was asked to strike his rod at that too. He did that, the rock split and out came the third rock from it. He was asked to strike his rod at that too. It split and coming out from it he saw a creature holding a green leaf in his mouth.

No doubt, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام believed in the perfect power of Allah Ta‘ālā even before, but what one sees with one’s eyes has an effect of its own. So, when Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام saw this, he took off for Egypt right from that spot. He did not even stop to tell his wife that he had been commanded to leave for Egypt and that he was going there.

Rizq for All: The Divine System is Unique

After having made the promise in this verse that Allah Ta‘ālā has taken the responsibility of providing the *rizq* of every living creature, things have not been left at that. Instead, to put human beings further at ease, it was said: وَيَعْلَمُ مُسْتَقَرَّهَا وَمُسْتَوْدَعَهَا (and He knows its permanent and its temporary place – 6). Different explanations of the words: *مستقر*

(*mustaqarr*) and مستودع (*mustawda'*) have been reported but, lexically, what Tafsīr al-Kashshāf carries is the closest. It says that *mustaqarr* is the place someone makes a permanent residence, or home; and *mustawda'* is a place where one stays temporarily to take care of something (as it appears in the translation of the text).

The sense being driven home is that the responsibility of Allah Ta'ālā should not be taken on the analogy of responsibilities as assumed by peoples and governments of the world of our experience. Here in this world, let us assume that there is a person or institution that would take the responsibility of delivering your '*rizq*' to you. In that case, if you were going somewhere, you would inform that individual or institution that you were leaving your permanent place to go somewhere else. Then, you will have to give a firm itinerary that you will be living in such and such city or village, from such and such date to such and such date, and that you wanted your provider to deliver your *rizq* there! But, when things are 'on Allah' and under His responsibility, you do not have to take even this much of trouble because He knows when you move and He knows when you do not and He knows what you are doing in this or that state. He knows where you live permanently and He knows where you live temporarily. He needs no application, or advice or address to take care of your *rizq*. It is just delivered wherever you are.

In view of the all-encompassing knowledge and perfect power of Allah Ta'ālā, only His will would have been sufficient to make everything come out right – without the need to maintain a log book or master file of work done. But, the only analogy weak man has is the analogy of the system he is used to, therefore, he could have apprehensions of possible errors and omissions. So, for his peace of mind, it was said: كُتِبَ كُلُّ شَيْءٍ فِي كِتَابٍ مُّبِينٍ (Everything is in a clear book). This 'clear book' means the Preserved Tablet (*al-lawḥ al-mahfūz*) which has a universal coverage with full details of the sustenance, age, deed and things like that and which are entrusted with concerned angels as and when needed.

As narrated by Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar رضى الله عنه and reported in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, 'Allah Ta'ālā had written the destinies of all His creation fifty thousand years even before the creation of the heavens and the earth.'

A lengthy Ḥadīth narrated by Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضى الله

عنه, appearing in al-Bukhārī and Muslim, reports the saying of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم which is summarized as follows: 'Man goes through different stages before his birth. When the parts of his body are formed completely, Allah Ta'ālā commands an angel who writes down four things about him. One: Deeds he will do. Two: Years of life. Even recorded there is the month, day, minute and breath count. Three: Death: Where would he die and where would he be buried? Four: *Rizq*: How much is his sustenance and how and where does it have to reach him?' (And that it stands written in the Preserved Tablet (*al-lawḥ al-mahfūz*) even before the creation of the heavens and the earth is not contrary to this).

Another manifestation of the all-encompassing knowledge and perfect power of Allah Ta'ālā has been mentioned in the second verse (7) – 'And He is the One who created the heavens and the earth in six days and (before creating these) His throne was on water.'

This tells us that water was created before the creation of the heavens and the earth. As for the elaboration of the creation of the heavens and the earth in six days, it has appeared in Sūrah Hā Mīm as-Sajdah (also called Sūrah Fuṣṣilat). There it has been said that the earth was created in two days, mountains, river streams, trees and means for the sustenance and survival of living creatures in two days, then, the seven heavens in two days – 41:9-12).

According to Tafsīr Mazharī, heavens mean everything high and above and the earth means down and below. Day is the measure of time which, after the creation of the heavens and the earth, is from sunrise to sunset – although, at the time of the creation of the heavens and the earth, neither did the sun exist nor its rising and setting.

It was also within the perfect power of Allah Ta'ālā to create all these things in the flash of a moment but, in His infinite wisdom, He has made the system of this world gradual which is suitable for human temperament.

The purpose of the creation of the heavens and the earth has been identified at the end of the verse by saying: *لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا* (So that He might test you as to who among you is better in deed).

This tells us that the creation of the heavens and the earth was not the main purpose. The fact is that these were created for human be-

ings who act right, do better and, along with it, also make the best use of what has been placed therein to run their lives. Finally, it is expected of them that they would ponder over these and would not miss to recognize their Master and Lord (the *Mālik*, the *Rabb*).

The outcome is that human beings are the real purpose of the creation of the heavens and the earth. However, human beings are not all alike. Among them there are those who believe and have faith. Then, even among the later, there is someone, a man or a woman, who is the best in deeds. And it goes without saying that, among the progeny of Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام, the best in deeds is our Rasūl, on him the blessing of Allah, and peace. Therefore, it is correct to say that the real purpose of creating the entire universe is to bless it with the generous presence of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم (serving as a model right through the Last Day). (Mazhari)

There is something we should also take note of. Allah Ta'ālā said: *أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا* (who among you is better in deed). He has said nothing about the number of deeds. From here we learn that Allah Ta'ālā favors the quality of deed more than He does the abundance or profusion or frequency of good deeds such as, Ṣalāh, Ṣawm, Tilāwah of Qur'ān and Dhikr of Allah. This beauty or excellence of deeds has been expressed through the word: احسان (*iḥsān*) in Ḥadīth. Essentially, it means the doing of a deed for the good pleasure of Allah alone with no worldly motive attached to it. Then, it is also necessary to do it in a way that is liked in the sight of Allah. This way has been demonstrated by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم through his conduct and he has made it necessary for his community to follow his Sunnah. In a nutshell, we can say that a little done with total sincerity and according to Sunnah is better than a lot more done with none, or less of the two.

Described in the seventh verse is the condition of those who denied that there was to be a Last Day and a Hereafter. Like chronic deniers of the truth, when they do not understand (or do not want to understand) something, they would dismiss it as nothing but magic.

In the eighth verse, an answer has been given to people who doubted the warnings of punishment given by prophets, peace be on them. Not willing to believe them, they used to ask them if they were true, and if they were, why the punishment they warned them of would not come?

Verses 9 - 14

وَلَيْنَ آذَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ مِنَّا رَحْمَةً ثُمَّ نَزَعْنَاهَا مِنْهُ إِنَّهُ لَكَفُورٌ
 كَفُورٌ ﴿٩﴾ وَلَيْنَ آذَقْنَاهُ نِعْمَاءَ بَعْدَ ضَرَاءٍ مَسَّتْهُ لِيَقُولَنَّ ذَهَبَ
 السَّيِّئَاتُ عَنِّي إِنَّهُ لَفَرِحٌ فَخُورٌ ﴿١٠﴾ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ صَبَرُوا
 وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ ط أُولَئِكَ لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةٌ وَأَجْرٌ كَبِيرٌ ﴿١١﴾
 فَلَعَلَّكَ تَارِكٌ بَعْضَ مَا يُوحَىٰ إِلَيْكَ وَضَائِقٌ بِهِ صَدْرُكَ أَنْ
 يَقُولُوا لَوْلَا أُنزِلَ عَلَيْهِ كَنْزٌ أَوْ جَاءَ مَعَهُ مَلَكٌ ط إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ نَذِيرٌ ط
 وَاللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَكِيلٌ ﴿١٢﴾ أَمْ يَقُولُونَ افْتَرَاهُ ط قُلْ
 فَأْتُوا بِعَشْرِ سُوْرٍ مِّثْلِهِ مُفْتَرِيَاتٍ وَادْعُوا مَنِ اسْتَطَعْتُمْ مِّنْ
 دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿١٣﴾ فَإِلَّامُ يَسْتَجِيبُوا لَكُمْ
 فَأَعْلَمُوا إِنَّمَا أُنزِلَ بِعِلْمِ اللَّهِ وَأَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ فَهَلْ أَنْتُمْ
 مُّسْلِمُونَ ﴿١٤﴾

And if We give man a taste of mercy from Us and then take it away from him, he is then utterly desperate, ungrateful. [9]

And if We give him a taste of comfort after he has suffered from some hardship, he shall say, "Evils have gone away from me." He is, then, over-exulting, arrogant, [10] except those who are patient and do good deeds. Those are the people for whom there is forgiveness and a great reward. [11]

It is then expected of you that you will abandon some of what is being revealed to you and that your heart will be straitened thereby, because they say, "Why has a treasure not been sent down to him or an angel not come with him?" You are but a warner. And Allah takes care of everything. [12]

What? Do they say that he has fabricated it? Say, "Then bring ten sūrahs like it, fabricated. And call whomsoever you can, other than Allah, if you are true." [13]

So, if they do not respond to you, then be sure that it has been sent down with the knowledge of Allah and

that there is no god but He. So, do you submit? [14]

Commentary

In the verses appearing above, it has been confirmed that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is a Messenger of Allah and an answer has been given to those who engineer doubts about it. At the beginning, in the first three verses (9-11), an instinctively bad human habit has been mentioned with an instruction to Muslims that they should stay away from it.

That man is naturally fickle-minded and haste-prone, and that he tends to be consumed by his immediate condition and puts all concerns of the past and future out of his mind, has been described in the first two verses (9,10). It has been said: 'If We let man taste a blessing and then take it back, he loses courage and hope and turns ungrateful. And if We let him taste a blessing after he has suffered from some hardship, he forgets all about his suffering and starts bragging and boasting.

In other words, man is given to hurry things, takes the present as everything, does not bother to refer to the past or show concern for the future, therefore, a suffering after a blessing makes him lose hope and slide into ungratefulness. He never thinks that Allah who blessed him first could bless him again. Similarly, if one gets comfort after suffering, then he, rather than recall his past suffering, turn to Allah and be grateful to Him, starts waxing more proud and arrogant. In that state, he forgets his past and goes about thinking that Allah's blessings were his right, he has to have these, and that he remains under the impression that this was how he would continue for the rest of his life. So heedless he becomes that it just does not occur to him that the way the days of suffering did not continue any more, the same thing could happen to the days of comfort and they too could vanish.

Such is the state of human worship of the present and so tragic is the penchant for forgetting the past and the present that a power-hungry man would not even blink to raise the edifice of his power on the blood and dust of another man of power. Always looking up, he would never look down to recall that this had been the fate of the man of power before him. Sad ends and ill fates make no effect on him for power in the present tastes good.

When people start worshipping the present and elect to remain drunk with the state they are in, that is high time for Books of Allah and His Messengers to come. When they do, they bring the lesson-oriented events of the past into sharp focus for heedless man to see things in this perspective and have a little concern for what would happen to them in the future. The lesson they teach is: Ponder over the changing conditions of the universe you are in and get to know the power working behind these – great sermonizers from the Lord!

A perfect believer, in fact, a perfect human being is one who is able to perceive the hidden Power behind every change, revolution, sorrow and comfort, ignore their transitory phases, dismiss their material causes as the sole explanation. The mark of an intelligent person is that he looks at the originator or causer of causes more than he would look at causes, and it is with Him alone that he would relate to as firmly as possible.

In order to make such perfect models of humanity distinct from those having common human temperament, it was said in the third verse (11): *إِلَّا الَّذِينَ صَبَرُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ* (except those who are patient and do good deeds). It means that people exempted from this common human frailty have two qualities: *Ṣabr* (patience) and *al-ʿAmal aṣ-Ṣāliḥ* (good deeds).

The word: *صبر* (*ṣabr*) is used to convey a much wider range of meanings in the Arabic language, much wider than conveyed by its translation as 'patience' in English. The real meaning of *ṣabr* is to tie, check, stop or hold back. In the terminology of the Qurʾān and Sunnah, to hold the desiring human self back from going for the impermissible is *Ṣabr*. Therefore, the sense of *Ṣabr* (patience) includes abstention from all sins and doings counter to the dictates of the Shariʿah and *al-ʿAmal aṣ-Ṣāliḥ* (good deeds) covers all that is obligatory (*farḍ*), necessary (*wājib*), Sunnah and recommended (*mustaḥabb*). The verse now comes to mean that there are people who will not be affected by common human weaknesses. This will happen because they would have faith in Allah and they would fear the reckoning of the Last Day of *Qiyāmah*. They will abstain from everything disliked by Allah and His Rasūl and race towards every deed that brings their pleasure.

At the end of this very verse, also identified there is the recompense of these perfect human beings: *أُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةٌ وَأَجْرٌ كَبِيرٌ* (Those are the

people for whom there is forgiveness and a great reward – 11)

At this place, it should be noted that the Holy Qur'ān uses the word: *اذتقا* (*adhaqnā*: We give them a taste of) for blessing and suffering both. By this device, it was indicated that real blessing and suffering is that of the Hereafter. Neither is the comfort of the mortal world the whole of it, nor is its suffering the whole of it. Instead of that, it should be taken at the level of tasting and sampling so that human beings could have some idea of the blessings and sufferings of the Hereafter. Therefore, neither are the comforts of this world something to be happy about unnecessarily, nor are its sufferings something to grieve about too much. If you were to think, this whole world is, to borrow a commercial term, only a showroom of the Hereafter with sample displays of comfort and suffering.

The fourth verse (12) has been revealed about a particular event. What happened was that the Mushriks of Makkah placed a host of demands before the Holy Prophet *صلى الله عليه وسلم*. One of these was, 'our idols have been maligned in this Qur'ān, therefore, we cannot believe in it. So, you should either bring some other Qur'ān, or improve it by making alterations in it: *إِنْتِ بِقُرْآنٍ غَيْرِ هَذَا أَوتَدِّ لَهٗ* (Bring a Qur'ān other than this, or change it – Yūnus, 10:15)'. (Al-Baghawī, Mazharī)

Another demand they came up with was, 'we are to believe in your prophesy only when some treasure, like the treasures of the kings of the world, is sent down for you and which you dole out to everyone around. Or that some angel descends from the heavens and hangs out with you everywhere testifying that you were a Messenger of Allah in all certainty.'

The Holy Prophet *صلى الله عليه وسلم* felt the pinch of these absurd, even disrespectfully audacious demands in his heart. The reason was that he was mercy for all the worlds. It was not possible for him to leave them to their fate and take out the hope that they might someday believe from his heart. Nor was it possible for him to fulfill their absurd demands. To begin with, these demands were based on bland irrationality. If idols, idol-worship and things like that are not called what they are, what would become of right guidance and how would it be done? And then this brain wave of demanding a treasure from a prophet was a loud miss-match with his mission. They had simply taken the station of a prophet on the analogy of the status of a king. Simi-

larly, it is not the practice of Allah Ta'ālā that He would create conditions under which people were materially compelled to start professing the Faith. Otherwise, the whole world is within His power and control. Who could dare profess a belief, and act according to it, against the will of Allah Ta'ālā? But, it is in His infinite wisdom that He has made this world a place of test. No material means are used here to compel people to do something good or to abstain from something bad. Certainly, what is done here is through Scriptures and Apostles. Lines are drawn between virtue and vice. Good and bad are separated. The outcome of each is explained. That is how people are invited and exhorted to do what is right and abstain from what is evil. And if some angel were to be miraculously attached to a prophet to attest to the veracity of his word, it would have posed problems. When no one believed it, he would have faced cash punishment on the spot. In that case, this would have been a modality of compelling people to believe. This kind of belief would have not been believing without seeing which is the essence of belief and faith, nor would there be any choice left for man to make which is the essence of his deed. As for the demands of those people, they were, no doubt, absurd and audacious. But, there is another aspect to it. The very act of making such demands proved that these people were grossly unaware of the status and reality of a messenger and prophet of Allah. They saw no difference between Allah and His Messenger. They even took the messenger to be absolutely powerful like Allah, therefore, they demanded that he should do for them what could not be done by anyone other than Allah.

In brief, when the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم became very sad because of such demands, this verse was revealed to comfort him and to revitalize his thinking. Addressing him first, it was said: Would you – surrendering to the pressure of these people – leave out some part of the Qur'ān, sent by Allah, which they do not like, such as a part where it talks about the utter helplessness of idols? Would you, then, still be disturbed in the face of such demands? The introduction of the statement in verse 12 with the word: *لا'allaka*: Is it then expected of you) does not mean that something like that could be expected of him actually. Instead, the purpose is to establish that he was free from such things. He would not leave out any part of the Qur'ān in consideration of their insistence, nor does he have to be sad, concerned and straitened over their demands. The reason is that he has been sent

from Allah as *nadhīr*, as one who warns people against what is harmful for them, then, Allah takes care of the rest for He is powerful over everything. *Nadhīr* has been mentioned here particularly because those being addressed were *kāfirs*, and *kāfirs* deserve nothing but warning against the consequences of their deeds. Otherwise, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is not simply *nadhīr*, one who warns, he is *bashīr* too, one who announces glad tidings for people who do good deeds. In addition to what has been said here about the mission of a *nadhīr*, we should understand that, in reality, *nadhīr* is a person who warns out of love and affection against what is evil and harmful. Therefore, in a way, the sense of *bashīr*, a giver of glad tidings, is included in the sense of *nadhīr*, a giver of warning.

In the cited verses, the Mushriks had demanded the kind of miracles they chose. Verses that follow tell them that they already have a miracle, the miracle of the Qur'ān shown at the hands of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم before them, a miracle even they could not deny. Now if they were demanding these miracles honestly, only to determine the veracity of the messenger of Allah, then, their demand stands accepted (and the miracle is on). And if this demand is simply to gratify their hostility, the showing of miracles demanded by them would remain redundant, for who could expect from such hostile people that they would embrace Islām, even after having seen those miracles. So, the essential point is that the Holy Qur'ān is a clear miracle that cannot be denied.

A refutation of the false doubts engineered by Mushriks and Kāfirs in it has been made in the next two verses (13,14): These people say that the Prophet of Islam has himself made up the Qur'ān – it is no book of Allah.

In answer, it was said: If you really think so, that Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم can make a Qur'ān like this, all by himself, then, you too, better come up with only ten Sūrahs like that. And it is not necessary either that these ten Sūrahs have to be made by any one person. Instead, let everyone in the world join forces and come up with it. And when they fail to make even ten Sūrahs, then, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was to tell them: Now the reality stands out loud and clear, for had this Qur'ān been the word of some human being, other human beings could have also been able to make something like this. And that

they all fail to do so is a strong proof of the fact that this Qur'an has been revealed only with the knowledge of Allah in which there is no room for the least increase or decrease and that it is beyond human power.

At this place, the Holy Qur'an has said that they should come up with ten Sūrahs like it. And in another verse it was also said: 'Then, bring a Sūrah the like of this – al-Baqarah, 2:23.'

The reason is that they were first asked to bring ten Sūrahs. They failed to do so. Then, to make their inability look more pronounced, it was said in the verse of Sūrah al-Baqarah quoted above: If you take the Qur'an to be a word of man, then, you too, bring no more than just one Sūrah being the like of it. But, despite this challenge of the Qur'an, made so easy for them, they could do nothing. It stood proved that the Holy Qur'an was a miracle, and the Word of Allah without any doubt. Therefore, at the end, it was said: *فَهَلْ أَنْتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ*, that is, 'would you now believe and obey, or would you prefer to remain heedless as before?'

Verses 15 – 17

مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا وَزِينَتَهَا نُوَفِّ إِلَيْهِمْ أَعْمَالَهُمْ فِيهَا وَهُمْ فِيهَا لَا يُبْخَسُونَ ﴿١٥﴾ أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ لَيْسَ لَهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ إِلَّا النَّارُ وَحَبِطَ مَا صَنَعُوا فِيهَا وَبَطُلَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٦﴾ أَفَمَنْ كَانَ عَلَىٰ بَيِّنَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّهِ وَيَتْلُوهُ شَاهِدٌ مِّنْهُ وَمِنْ قَبْلِهِ كِتَابٌ مُّوسَىٰ إِمَامًا وَرَحْمَةً ۗ أُولَئِكَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ ۗ وَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِهِ مِنَ الْأَحْزَابِ قَالُوا مَوْعِدُهُ قَالَتُكَ فِي مِرْيَةٍ مِّنْهُ إِنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكَ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١٧﴾

Those who have been intending (to achieve) the worldly life and its beauty, We shall fully recompense them herein for their acts, and herein they shall not be given less. [15] Those are the people for whom there is nothing in the Hereafter except fire. And nullified is what they have worked herein and void is what they have been doing. [16]

So, what about the one who is on a clear path, and there comes after it evidence from within and, before

it, the Book of Mūsā, a guide and a mercy? Such people believe in it. And whoever of the groups disbelieves it, then, Fire is his promised place. So, do not be in doubt about it. Surely, it is the truth from your Lord but most of people do not believe. [17]

Commentary

When warnings of punishment were given to opponents of Islam, they referred to the charities they contributed to and the social welfare work they did. With this testimonial of good deeds in their hands, why would they be punished? It is interesting that, in our time too, there are a lot of unaware Muslims who seem to be suffering from the same doubt. They look at disbelieving non-Muslims who impart a good image of their outward deeds and morals, are active in social work, give out in charities, and make roads, bridges, hospitals, free drinking water counters. This view leads them to hold the opinion that they were better than Muslims. This has been answered in the first (15) of the three verses cited above.

In gist, the answer is that every deed, in order to be accepted as a source of salvation in the Hereafter, must fulfill the first condition of absolute sincerity – that this deed should have been done for the sake of Allah. And the only valid way of doing it for Allah is that it is done in accordance with the way taught and shown in practice by His Messenger. A person who simply does not believe in Allah and His Messenger is a person the sum total of whose deeds and morals is a skeleton without soul. It may look handsome (even slim) but because it has no soul or spirit, it has no weight or effect in the home of the Hereafter. Yes, the contribution of such a person in the mortal world has benefited people. At least in terms of its outward form, what he had done was good, therefore, Allah, the Lord Almighty has, in consideration of His supreme equity and justice, not allowed this deed to go to waste totally. Instead, things were arranged in terms of the objectives the doers of these deeds had before them. If they had worked for recognition in society or an image as philanthropist, man of charity, goodwill or distinction, or had simply aspired for health and material wealth and comfort, Allah Ta'ālā lets them have all this right here in this world. They had no concept of the Hereafter. They had never cared to think of salvation there, nor their deeds, being without the essential spirit, could have qualified them to become deserving of it.

Therefore, no return waits for them there, against their deeds, while the added burden of disbelief and disobedience will keep them in Hell. This was a gist of what was said in the first verse. Now, we can have a look at some of the words used there.

It was said that a person who kept striving for the life of this world and its embellishments gets from Allah the full return for his or her deeds right here in this world. For them, nothing is cut short in *Dun-yā*. These are the kind of men and women for whom there is nothing in *Ākhirah* (Hereafter), except the Hell.

It is noteworthy at this point that the expression opted for in the Qur'an is: مَنْ كَانُوا يُرِيدُونَ (those who have been intending) which bypasses something brief like: مَنْ أَرَادَ (those who wanted). The Qur'anic expression denotes continuity and carries the sense of 'kept striving for' as translated a little earlier. This tells us that it is the condition of people who never wanted to have anything out of what they did but the good of this world. They just never bothered to worry about what would happen in the life to come. As for the person who feels concerned about the Hereafter and does what would bring salvation there and, along with it aims and plans to have his share from the world, then, it is not included in the purview of this verse.

Is this verse related to *kāfirs* or Muslims or to both Muslims and *kāfirs*? Major authorities in Tafsīr differ about it.

The words in the last sentence of the verse – for whom there is nothing in the Hereafter except the fire of Hell – seem to suggest that it is related to *kāfirs*, because a Muslim, no matter how sinning, would ultimately go to Paradise after having undergone the punishment of sins. Therefore, Ḍaḥḥāk and other commentators have interpreted it as related to *kāfirs* only.

Some commentators have said that it refers to Muslims who, through their good deeds, aim to acquire only the comfort, wealth and recognition from this worldly life. In other words, they do their good deeds with the sole intention of having comfort and recognition in the world they live in. And the sentence we are talking about would thus mean that, until they undergo the punishment of their evil deeds, they would have nothing except the fire of Hell.

However, the weightier and clearer approach is to take this verse

as relating to people who do their good deeds only with the intention of acquiring worldly benefits, such as wealth, health and recognition. Those who do so may be *kāfirs* or disbelievers who do not believe in the Hereafter from the very outset. Or, they may be Muslims who believe in the Hereafter theoretically but do not apply their belief to what they do practically. In fact, they would keep all concerns of their life exclusively attached to worldly benefits and interests. From among the early commentators, Mujāhid, Maimūn ibn Mihrān and Sayyidnā Mu'āwiyah رضى الله عنه have gone by this view.

This meaning is also supported by the well-known Ḥadīth of the Holy Prophet ﷺ: (إِنَّمَا الْأَعْمَالُ بِالنِّيَّاتِ) (Actions are [judged] according to Intentions). What one intends to have by his action gets exactly that. Whoever intends to have *Dunyā* (worldly benefits) gets *Dunyā*. Whoever intends to have *Ākhirah* gets *Ākhirah*. Whoever intends to have both gets both. That all actions depend on intention is a principle approved of in every community and religion. (Qurṭubī)

Therefore, says a Ḥadīth, those who devoted themselves to acts of worship in the mortal world to look respectable before others will be brought forth on the day of *Qiyāmah*. It would be said to them: 'you said your prayers, gave in charity, fought in Jihād, recited the Qur'an, but you did all that with the intention that you should be known as devotees to prayers, givers in charity, veteran warriors of Jihād and great reciters of Qur'an. Now you have had what you wanted to have. The honors you were looking for have already come to you in the mortal world. Now, there is no return for your deeds here. And these people will be the first to be thrown into the Hell.'

While reporting this Ḥadīth, Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضى الله عنه broke into tears and said, 'the verse of the Qur'an: مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا وَزِينَتَهَا (Those who have been intending (to achieve) the worldly life and its beauty – 15) confirms this Ḥadīth.

Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim reports on the authority of Sayyidnā Anas رضى الله عنه that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, 'Allah Ta'ālā does no injustice to anyone. For the good deed a believer does, he gets some return for it in the mortal world while gets the real reward in the Hereafter. As for a *kāfir* (since he does not bother about what would happen to him in the Hereafter), his account is cleared within his life in the mortal world. The return for his good deeds, if any, is given to him in the form

of worldly wealth, recognition, health and comfort – until comes the time when he reaches the stage of the Hereafter where he is left with nothing that could bring any return there.

It appears in Tafsīr Mazharī that, though a believer looks forward to having prosperity in the mortal world as well, but his intention to have the best of the Hereafter remains on top of everything. Therefore, he gets what he does in the mortal world only to the measure of his needs. However, he does get the larger return and reward in the Hereafter.

Sayyidnā ‘Umar رضى الله عنه once visited the home of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. When he saw virtually nothing in the house but a few things here and there, he said to him: ‘please pray that Allah Ta‘ālā blesses your *Ummah* too with extended material means. We see Persia and Byzantine. They are very prosperous in this world although they do not worship Allah Ta‘ālā.’ The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was reclining on a pillow behind his waist. When he heard these words of Sayyidnā ‘Umar رضى الله عنه, he sat up straight and said, ‘O ‘Umar, you are still lost in those thoughts. As for these people, they are the ones who have been given the return of their good deeds right here in this world.’ (Mazharī)

Jāmi‘ Tirmidhī and the Musnad of Aḥmad report on the authority of Sayyidnā Anas رضى الله عنه that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, ‘Whoever intends to have (the best of) the Hereafter through his deeds, Allah Ta‘ālā makes his heart need-free in this world. He (Himself) takes care of what he must have, and (the desire of) the world comes to him all humbled. And whoever intends to have (the best of) the present world, Allah Ta‘ālā makes want and need stand before him to the effect that they can never shake them off. There is no end to his needs because he is constantly being driven by worldly greed. No sooner does one need gets fulfilled, another gaping need stands before him. Countless concerns gang upon him but what he gets is what Allah Ta‘ālā has written for him.

Regarding what has been said in this verse: ‘those who aimed for worldly life are fully recompensed for their deeds within this world,’ someone may raise a doubt. It could be said that there are many people who, despite aiming and striving to have worldly benefits, fail to achieve their objective even in this world and, on occasions, they would

get just about nothing. The answer is that, in this verse, the Qur'an has dealt with the subject briefly. Details appear in the following verse of Sūrah al-Isrā' (Bani Isrā'il) where it was said: مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ الْعَاجِلَةَ عَجَّلْنَا لَهُ فِيهَا مَا نَشَاءُ لِمَنْ نُرِيدُ (whoever keeps aspiring for the immediate, We shall give soon what We will to whom We will). It means whoever keeps aiming for nothing but worldly life, Allah gives it to him right here within the world, but this giving is restricted by two conditions. Firstly, He gives as much as He wants. It is not necessary to let them have what matches their desires. Secondly, He gives only to a person it is appropriate to give him according to His wisdom. Giving to everyone is not necessary.

The second verse (17) presents the high ground the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and the purely sincere believers with him occupy. This is in sharp contrast to those the sum total of whose knowledge and the end of whose quest is restricted to worldly life only – so that the whole world could see that these two groups could not be equal. After having focused on this phenomena, it has been stated that the mission and message of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم as a prophet and messenger of Allah is open to mankind right through the Last Day of *Qiyāmah*. Then, it has been stressed that anyone who does not believe in him will be considered, irrespective of what one does, astray and Hell-bound.

In the first sentence, it was asked: Can a denier of the Qur'an be equal to the one who adheres to the Qur'an that has come from his Lord? And along with it there is a witness present within it, while a witness earlier to this is the Book of Mūsā عليه السلام that was sent to be followed and to be mercy for people?

The word: *bayyinah* (بينه) appearing in this verse refers to the Qur'an. As for the meaning of '*shāhid*' (شاهد: evidence), statements of Tafsir authorities differ. The author of Bayān al-Qur'an takes '*shāhid*' to mean the miracle of the Qur'an that is present in the Qur'an as such. Thus, it comes to mean that those who adhere to the Qur'an, they already have a witness to the veracity of the Qur'an within it, that is, its miracle. Then, the other witness has already come in the form of Torah. Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام had brought it as guidance and mercy for people. The reason is that the Torah confirms the truth of the Qur'an clearly.

In the second sentence, in order to stress that salvation, up to the

Last Day, depends on faith in the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, it has been said that anyone from any religion or community of the world who refuses to have faith in him will have his abode in Jahannam.

The Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim reports on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضى الله عنه that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, 'by the One in whose hands rests my life, any Jew or Christian who hears my call and still does not believe in the teachings I have brought, then, he or she will be of the people of Jahannam.'

This should remove the misunderstanding of those who regard the Jews and Christians or the adherents of other religions as being on *ḥaqq* (the truth) on the basis of some outward deeds and consider these to be sufficient for salvation without having faith in the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and the Qur'an. This is an open clash with the present *ayah* of the Holy Qur'an, and the authentic *aḥādīth*. (Allah may save us from that!)

Verses 18 - 24

وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ افْتَرَىٰ عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا ۖ أُولَٰئِكَ يُعْرَضُونَ عَلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ وَيَقُولُ الْأَشْهَادُ هَٰؤُلَاءِ الَّذِينَ كَذَبُوا عَلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ ۗ أَلَا لَعْنَةُ اللَّهِ عَلَى الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١٨﴾ الَّذِينَ يَصُدُّونَ عَن سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَيَبْغُونَهَا عِوَجًا ۖ وَهُمْ بِالْآخِرَةِ هُمْ كَافِرُونَ ﴿١٩﴾ أُولَٰئِكَ لَمْ يَكُونُوا مُعْجِزِينَ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا كَانَ لَهُمْ مِّن دُونِ اللَّهِ مِنْ أَوْلِيَاءَ ۖ يُضَعَّفُ لَهُمُ الْعَذَابُ ۗ مَا كَانُوا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ السَّمْعَ وَمَا كَانُوا يُبْصِرُونَ ﴿٢٠﴾ أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ خَسِرُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ وَصَلَّ عَنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يَفْتَرُونَ ﴿٢١﴾ لَآ جَزْمَ أَنَّهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ هُمْ الْأَخْسَرُونَ ﴿٢٢﴾ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَآخَبَتُوا إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ ۗ أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾ مَثَلُ الْفَرِيقَيْنِ كَالْأَعْمَىٰ وَالْأَصْمَىٰ وَالْبَصِيرِ وَالسَّمِيعِ ۗ هَلْ يَسْتَوِينَ مَثَلًا ۗ أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٢٤﴾

And who is more unjust than the one who forges a lie

against Allah? They shall be presented before their Lord, and the witnesses shall say, "These are the ones who lied against their Lord. Beware, the curse of Allah lies on the unjust, [18] those who prevent (people) from the way of Allah and seek crookedness in it. They, surely they, are disbelievers of the Hereafter." [19]

They were unable to frustrate (Allah's plan) on the earth, and there were no supporters for them besides Allah. Multiplied for them shall be the punishment. They were not able to hear, nor would they see. [20] Those are the ones who brought loss to their own selves, and lost for them was all that they used to fabricate. [21] Invariably, they are the worst losers in the Hereafter. [22]

Surely, those who believe and do good deeds and humble their selves before their Lord – those are the people of Paradise. There they shall live forever. [23]

The example of the two groups is like the one blind and deaf and the one seeing and hearing. Are the two equal when compared? Would you still pay no heed? [24]

Verses 25 - 35

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا نُوحًا إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِ إِنِّي لَكُمْ نَذِيرٌ مُّبِينٌ ﴿٢٥﴾ أَنْ لَا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا اللَّهَ إِنِّي أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ يَوْمِ إِلِيمٍ ﴿٢٦﴾ فَقَالَ الْمَلَأُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ قَوْمِهِ مَا نَرَاكَ إِلَّا بَشَرًا مِثْلَنَا وَمَا نَرَاكَ اتَّبَعَكَ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ هُمْ أَرَادُوا بُادِي الرَّأْيِ ۗ وَمَا نَرَىٰ لَكُمْ عَلَيْنَا مِنْ فَضْلٍ ۗ بَلْ نَظُنُّكُمْ كَاذِبِينَ ﴿٢٧﴾ قَالَ يَقَوْمِ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُ عَلَىٰ بَيِّنَةٍ مِنْ رَبِّي وَأَتْنِي رَحْمَةً مِنْ عِنْدِهِ فَعَمِيتَ عَلَيْكُمْ أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكُمُهَا وَأَنْشَمَّ لَهَا كَرِهُونَ ﴿٢٨﴾ وَيَقَوْمِ لَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مَا لَالٍ ۗ إِنْ أَجْرِي إِلَّا عَلَى اللَّهِ وَمَا أَنَا بِظَارِدِ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّهُمْ مُُلْقُوا رَبَّهُمْ وَالْكِتَابِ ۗ أَرَأَيْتُمْ قَوْمًا تَجْهَلُونَ ﴿٢٩﴾ وَيَقَوْمِ مَنْ يَنْصُرُنِي مِنَ اللَّهِ إِنْ طَرَدْتُهُمْ ۗ أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ

﴿٣٠﴾ وَلَا أَقُولُ لَكُمْ عِنْدِي خَزَائِنُ اللَّهِ وَلَا أَعْلَمُ الْغَيْبَ وَلَا
 أَقُولُ إِنِّي مَلَكٌ وَلَا أَقُولُ لِلَّذِينَ تَزْدَرِي أَعْيُنُكُمْ لَنْ يُؤْتِيَهُمُ
 اللَّهُ خَيْرًا ۗ اللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا فِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ ۗ إِنِّي إِذَا لَمِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ
 ﴿٣١﴾ قَالُوا يَنْوُحُ فَدَجَادَ لَتْنَا فَكَثَرَتْ جِدَالَنَا فَأَتَيْنَا بِمَا
 تَعِدُنَا إِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ ﴿٣٢﴾ قَالَ إِنَّمَا يَأْتِيَكُمْ بِهِ اللَّهُ
 إِنْ شَاءَ وَمَا أَنْتُمْ بِمُعْجِزِينَ ﴿٣٣﴾ وَلَا يَنْفَعُكُمْ نُصْحِي إِنْ
 أَرَدْتُ أَنْ أَنْصَحَ لَكُمْ إِنْ كَانَ اللَّهُ يُرِيدُ أَنْ يُغْوِيَكُمْ
 هُوَ رَبُّكُمْ ۗ وَالْيَهُ تَرْجِعُونَ ﴿٣٤﴾ أَمْ يَقُولُونَ افْتَرَاهُ ۗ قُلْ إِنْ
 افْتَرَيْتُهُ فَعَلَىٰ إِجْرَامِي وَأَنَا بَرِيءٌ ۗ مِمَّا تُجْرِمُونَ ﴿٣٥﴾

And We have sent Nuh to his people (saying to them): "I am, for you, a clear warner, [25] that you worship none but Allah, I fear for you the punishment of a painful day." [26]

So, the chiefs of his people, who disbelieved, said, "We see (that) you are nothing but a man like us. And we do not see you followed by anyone but by the lowest among us who are of shallow opinion, and we do not see in you any superiority over us; rather, think you are liars. [27]

He said, "O my people, tell me when I am on a clear path from my Lord, and He has bestowed mercy upon me from Himself and it has been hidden from your sight. Shall we, then, impose it upon you while you are averse to it? [28] And, O my people, I do not demand from you any wealth for it. My reward is with none but Allah. And I am not to drive the believers away. Surely, they are to meet their Lord, but I see that you are an ignorant people. [29] And, O my people, who will help me against (the punishment of) Allah, if I drive them away? Would you still pay no heed? [30] And I do not say to you that with me are the treasures of Allah, nor do I have the knowledge of the unseen, nor do I say that I am an angel. And I do not say about those who are contemptible in your eyes that Allah will never

award them any good; Allah is the best-knower of what is in their hearts. (If I do so) then, I shall indeed be one of the unjust.” [31]

They said, “O Nūḥ, you have quarreled with us, and quarreled much. Now bring what you threaten us with, if you are one of the truthful.” [32]

He said, “Only Allah will bring it to you, if He so wills, and you cannot frustrate (His will). [33] And my good counsel will not profit you, even though I wish you the best, if Allah wills to make you go astray. He is your Lord and to Him you shall be made to return.” [34]

Do they still say that he has forged it? Say, “If I have forged it, then, upon me is my sin, and I am free of the sins you commit.” [35]

Commentary

When Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام invited his people to believe, they responded with some doubts and objections against the veracity of his mission as a prophet and messenger of Allah. Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام, with the will and permission of Allah, answered their questions. Many primary and subsidiary religious rulings relating to honesty and social living emerge from here as a corollary. This dialogue forms the core of the subject taken up in these verses.

Some questions raised by the disbelievers appear in the third verse (27). Before we take these up, let us first look at the meanings of some of the words there.

The word: *ملا* (*malā*) generally means a group. Some leading lexicographers say that a group of the chiefs of a people is called: *ملا* (*malā*). *Bashar* (بشر) is translated as human being or man. *Arādhil* (اراذل) is the plural form of *ardhal* (ارذل). It means someone lowly, not having any status or respect among his people. The expression: *بَادِي الرَّأْيِ* (*badiyar-rāy*) means cursory or shallow opinion.

As for their objections, the first one related to the status of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام as a prophet and messenger: *مَا نَرَاكَ إِلَّا بَشَرًا مِّثْلَنَا* (We see that you are nothing but a man like us). In effect, they were saying that he ate, drank, walked, slept and woke up like them. How then, they questioned, could they accept this extra-ordinary status of his as a messenger and prophet of God?

They thought that the person who is sent to men as a messenger from Allah should not belong to the genus of man, instead, he should be an angel whose distinct status had to be recognized by everyone, willingly or unwillingly.

This was answered in the fourth verse (28) as follows:

يَقُولُ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُ عَلَىٰ بَيِّنَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّي وَأُنزِلَ مِن عِنْدِهِ فَعَمِيثٌ
عَلَيْكُمْ أَنْزِلُكُمْ هَا وَأَنْتُمْ لَهَا كَارِهُونَ

He said, "O my people, tell me when I am on a clear path from my Lord, and He has bestowed mercy upon me from Himself and it has been hidden from your sight. Shall we, then, impose it upon you while you are averse to it?"

Here we are being told that for a *rasūl* or messenger to be a man is not contrary to his mission as a prophet or messenger. In fact, a little thought would show that this is how it should be – that the *rasūl* of men should be a man so that men find it comfortable to learn their religion from him. There is an enormous difference in the mental and emotional make up of men and angels. If an angel were to be sent as a *rasūl*, learning religion from him would have become terribly difficult. The reason is that an angel is not hungry or thirsty or sleepy or plain tired, nor does he have to deal with all those human compulsions. How would he have the feeling for such human weaknesses? And, without this feeling, how could men have followed him deed-wise? This theme has appeared in other verses of the Qur'ān, either explicitly or suggestively, at several places. Bypassing these, they were exhorted to use their reason and realize that it was not the least necessary that a prophet and messenger should not be a man. But, what is necessary is that he brings with him some proof, argument and evidence from Allah Ta'ālā that could make it easy for people to accept that he was definitely a *rasūl* sent by Allah. Those open proofs (*bayyinah*) and binding arguments for common people take the form of miracles shown at the hands of prophets. Therefore, Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام said that he had brought with him the clear path, argument and mercy from his Lord. If they had seen it carefully and thought about it, they would not have refused to accept the invitation. But, their aversion and hostility made them blind, hence they opted to deny the truth and became adamant to it.

But, this mercy of Allah Ta'ālā that comes through a prophet is not something which could be caused to fall over the heads of people – until they themselves show their inclination to have it. There is a hint here that the prophet would have passed on the wealth of 'Imān he had come with to them, if he could, despite their denial and obstinacy. But, this was against Divine law. A blessing is aspired for. People cannot be compelled to have it. From here it also stands proved that it has never been permissible, in any period of a prophet, that people should be compelled to become believers. Even those who continue to spread the ugly propaganda that Islām was spread by the sword are not themselves unaware of the truth of the matter. But, they find it convenient to use the power of a lie to sow seeds of doubt in the hearts of the ignorant only to keep the torches of their hatred burning.

As a side benefit, it has also become easier to understand why an angel was not made a prophet. The reason is that an angel is endowed with supernatural power. He is way distinct from human beings in every facet of his existence. To see him and then to believe in him would have become an exercise in compulsion. With an angel in front of him, who could dare being obstinate – something so conveniently demonstrated before prophets? Then, according to the dictate of the Shari'ah, if a person believes unwillingly under the threat of some coercive power, his belief and faith is not acceptable. In fact, the ideally desirable thing is to believe without seeing (*al-'Imān bi 'l-ghaib*) – that one believes without having fully observed and witnessed the ultimate subduing power of Allah Ta'ālā.

The second objection they raised was: وَمَا نُرَاكَ اتَّبَعَكَ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ هُمْ أَرَادُوا لَنَا بَادِيَ الرَّأْيِ (and we do not see you followed by any one but by the lowest among us who are of shallow opinion – 27). This objection has two aspects: (1) That the people of higher status would have been the first to accept your call, if it was correct and true; and that only such lowly people have accepted it shows that the call itself is not worth accepting. (2) That there is something else that stops us from accepting your call to believe. Suppose we were to believe, then we understand that we too will be taken as Muslims, like them and equal to them and, in rows of prayers as well as in other meetings, we will have to sit with them as equals. This we cannot do.

These people were far from reality and very unaware indeed. Sim-

ply because poor people did not wallow in wealth and pride in office and status, they had elected to berate them as lowly and mundane – although, the thought itself is as ignorant as it can be. Honor and disgrace, reason and understanding are not subservient to wealth and property. Rather, as experience bears out, power and wealth can become intoxicating enough as would stop its possessors from understanding and accepting so many reasonable and correct things. These barriers do not stand before the meek and the poor. They go ahead and accept what is correct and true. This is the reason why the customary Divine practice through the lanes of time gone by has been no other but that the first among those who believe in prophets are none but the weak and the meek. This phenomenon has also been explained in past Scriptures. Pursuant to this, when the blessed letter from the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم inviting him to believe reached the Byzantine Emperor, Hiraql, he felt the need to ascertain the truth of the matter – because, he had read the signs of the noble prophets in the Torah and the Injīl. Therefore, he assembled people of Arabia who were visiting Syria at that time and asked them some questions about those signs.

One of these questions was, ‘Are those who follow him the poor and the weak among his people, or those who are considered big and notable among them?’ He was told, ‘They are poor and weak.’ Thereupon, Hiraql confessed, ‘this is sign of his being a true prophet because those who follow prophets initially are these very poor and weak people.’

In short, taking poor people to be lowly was ignorance on their part. In reality, ‘*radhīl*’ or disgraced is he who does not recognize his creator and sustainer and disobeys what He has asked him to do. Therefore, the venerated Sufyān Ibn Sa‘īd Ath-Thawrī, was asked by someone, ‘who is mean and disgraced?’ He said, ‘people who keep flattering rulers and officials.’ And Ibn al-A‘rabī said, ‘mean is he who earns *Dunyā* (benefits of worldly life) by selling his *dīn* (religion).’ Someone asked him, ‘who is the meanest?’ Then, he said, ‘a person who ruins his religion and streamlines the worldly life of someone else.’ Imām Mālik said, ‘mean is he who maligns the noble Companions of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم because they are the greatest benefactors of the entire Muslim Ummah, and the source through which the blessings of *Imān* and *Sharī‘ah* have reached us.’

Returning to the ignorant thought expressed by the objectors, we see that it has been initially refuted in the third verse (29). It has been said that a prophet does not fancy anyone's wealth or property. He takes no compensation for his service or good counsel to people. His compensation is with Allah alone. Therefore, the rich and the poor are equal in his sight. Let the rich not be scared about their wealth for no one would start asking for it once they become believers.

Then, they were told: 'As for the condition you impose that I should remove the poor from my company in order that you could believe, then, let it be very clear that I cannot do that. They may be poor but they are close to the Highest of the high, the greatest honor one can have. Turning such people out is not a right thing to do.'

And: *مُلْفَازِهِمْ* (They are surely to meet their Lord) could also mean: If, supposedly, I were to turn them out, when they go to their Lord on the day of *Qiyāmah* and complain, what would I have to say? The subject continues in the fourth verse (30): If I were to turn them out, who would save me from Divine punishment? At the end, it was said: All this is nothing but your ignorance and heedlessness. To you being a man is counter to being a prophet, or you go to the other extreme and demand that poor people should be driven away from his company.

Reported in the fifth verse (31) there is an address that Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام gave before his people to announce some matters of principle after he had heard their objections. In this address it has been stressed that the mission of a prophet and messenger does not depend on things they think are necessary for it.

For instance, first it was said: *وَلَا أَقُولُ لَكُمْ عِنْدِي خَزَائِنُ اللَّهِ* (And I do not say to you that with me are the treasures of Allah). This carries a refutation of their idea that someone coming from Allah as His messenger should have brought treasures with him giving it out to everyone freely. Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام put it out clearly that the mission of prophets has nothing to do with involving people into the mess of worldly enjoyments. What for would they need all those treasures?

It is also possible that the statement may be refuting the false thought nursed by some people that Allah has given all powers to prophets, even to Auliya'. Assuming this, it is surmised that they have the treasures of Allah's power in their hands and that they decide

whom to give and whom not to give. So, this declaration of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام makes it clear that Allah Ta‘ālā has not entrusted the total control of the treasures of His power not even with any prophet, not to say much about the Auliya’ or men of Allah. However, when they pray or wish, Allah Ta‘ālā does answer their prayers and fulfills their wishes with His infinite power.

Secondly, it was said: وَلَا أَعْلَمُ الْغَيْبَ (nor do I have the knowledge of the unseen). Another false idea these people harbored was that a person who is a *rasūl* of Allah Ta‘ālā should also be the one who knows what is unseen (*‘ālim al-ghayb*). This sentence clarifies that the mission of a prophet and messenger needs no knowledge of the unseen, and why should it when the knowledge of the unseen is an exclusive attribute of Allah Ta‘ālā which no prophet or angel can share with Him. However, Allah Ta‘ālā does inform whomever He wills from out of His prophets about the secrets of the unseen as much as He wills. But, because of this, it is not correct to call them *‘ālim al-ghayb* (possessor of the knowledge of the unseen) – because, it is not in their power to find out something in the domain of the unseen at their choice.

Thirdly, it was said: وَلَا أَقُولُ إِنِّي مَلَكٌ (nor do I say that I am an angel). Here we have a refutation of their idea that a *rasūl* should be some angel.

Fourthly, it was stated: In your sight these poor people may appear lowly and disgraceful. But, I cannot say as you say that Allah Ta‘ālā will not bless them with what is good, because good relates to one’s heart, not wealth, and only Allah knows the secrets of hearts and He knows whose heart is worthy of receiving good and whose heart is not.

Then, it was said: If I too were to start calling them lowly and disgraceful, I too would become unjust.

Verses 36 - 40

وَأُوْحِيَ إِلَى نُوحٍ أَنَّهُ لَنْ يُؤْمِنَ مِنْ قَوْمِكَ إِلَّا مَنْ قَدْ آمَنَ فَلَا
تَبْتَيْسَ بِمَا كَانُوا يَفْعَلُونَ ﴿٣٦﴾ وَأَصْحَجُ الْفُلْكَ بِأَعْيُنِنَا وَ
وَحِينَا وَلَا تَخَاطِبُنِي فِي الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا ۗ إِنَّهُمْ مُّعْرِفُونَ ﴿٣٧﴾
وَيَصْنَعُ الْفُلْكَ ۗ وَكَلَّمَا مَرَّ عَلَيْهِ مَلَأُ مِنْ قَوْمِهِ سَخِرُوا مِنْهُ ۗ

قَالَ إِنَّ تَسْخَرُوا مِنَّا فَإِنَّا نَسْخَرُ مِنْكُمْ كَمَا تَسْخَرُونَ ﴿٣٨﴾
 فَسَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ ۖ مَنْ يَأْتِيهِ عَذَابٌ يُخْزِيهِ وَيَحِلُّ عَلَيْهِ
 عَذَابٌ مُّقِيمٌ ﴿٣٩﴾ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءَ أَمْرُنَا وَفَارَ التَّنُورُ ۖ قُلْنَا
 احْمِلْ فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ زَوْجَيْنِ اثْنَيْنِ وَأَهْلَكَ إِلَّا مَنْ سَبَقَ عَلَيْهِ
 الْقَوْلُ وَمَنْ آمَنَ ۗ وَمَا آمَنَ مَعَهُ إِلَّا قَلِيلٌ ﴿٤٠﴾

And it was revealed to Nūḥ that none of your people would ever believe except those who have already believed: “So, be not distressed by what they have been doing. [36] And make an ark under Our eyes and according to Our revelation. And do not speak to Me about those who crossed the limits – they are to be drowned.” [37]

And he started making the Ark. And whenever the chieftains of his people passed by him, they mocked at him. He said, “If you mock at us, we mock at you like you mock at us: [38] So, you shall soon know to whom will come the punishment that will humiliate him and upon whom will befall a lasting punishment.” [39]

At last when Our command came and the oven overflowed. We said, “Load in it a pair of two from every kind along with your family – except those against whom the Word has already been spoken – and those who have believed.” And there were only a few who had believed with him. [40]

Commentary

Allah Ta‘ālā had blessed Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام with long years of life extending up to nearly one thousand years. Along with it, he was given a special status in terms of his prophetic mission to invite people to Allah and make their condition better whereby he devoted these long years to keep asking them to believe in the true Faith and in Allah as One. He had to face the harshest of pains in this mission. His people would throw stones at him until he fell down and lost consciousness. But, as soon as he would regain it, he prayed to Allah for the forgiveness of his people for they did not know what they were doing. A generation was followed by the other, and the other by yet another, in a chain and he kept giving his call in the hope that they

might, at some stage, accept the truth.

When centuries passed over this exercise in patience, he complained about their deplorable condition before his Almighty Lord which has been mentioned in Sūrah Nūh: *قَلِمَ يَرُدُّهُمْ لِيَلَّا لَئِنَّا لَنُفَعِلَنَّ الْفٰسِقِيْنَ اَشْرٰكًا* (My Lord, I did invite my people [to the truth] night and day. But, my invitation increased them in nothing but flight [in aversion] – 71:5,6) and, after all those long years of hardship, the prayer that this great servant of Allah made was: *رَبِّ اَنْصُرْنِيْ بِمَا كَذَّبْتُوْنِ* (My Lord, help me because they have belied me – al-Mu'minūn, 23: 26,39).

When the reign of terror let loose by the people of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام became much too excessive, he was addressed by Allah Ta'ālā in the words appearing in the verses cited above. (al-Baghawī, Maḥzarī)

Firstly, he was told that, out of his people, those who were to believe had already believed. No one was to believe after that. Their hearts were sealed with their own obstinacy and contumacy. Therefore, he should not grieve about his people any more and feel free of any concern about their failure to believe.

Secondly, he was told that Allah was to send the punishment of flood against those people. Therefore, he should make an ark that could hold his family, as many believers as there were, and what they needed, so that they could embark it when the flood comes and be safe from it. Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام made the ark as he was ordered to. When the initial signs of the flood came before them – that water started overflowing from the earth – Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام was commanded to embark the ark along with his family and the few believers who had believed in him. They were also asked to load a pair each of animals that serve human needs, such as, cow, ox, goat, horse, mule etc. Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام put everyone on the ark as ordered.

At the end it was said that the believers in Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام who boarded the ark were only a few.

This was a gist of the subject as it appears in the cited verses. Now we can turn to the explanation of each verse and deal with issues and problems that emerge therefrom.

In the first verse (36), it was said that it was revealed to Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام that those who were to believe from among his people had already believed. In future, no one else will believe. Therefore, he

should not worry about how they deal with him because one feels the pinch of sorrow only when one expects something good to come from someone. Disappointment is not that bad. It has its own relief. He might as well be disappointed with them. As for the shock felt by Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام because of all sorts of pains inflicted by his people on him, arrangements had already been made as indicated the next verse (37) – ‘they are to be drowned.’ Under these conditions came that invocation of curse for his people on the lips of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام which has been mentioned in Sūrah Nūḥ:

رَبِّ لَا تَذَرْنَا عَلَى الْأَرْضِ مِنَ الْكَافِرِينَ دَيَّارًا ، إِنَّكَ إِن تَذَرَهُمْ يُضِلُّوا عِبَادَكَ وَلَا يَلِدُوا إِلَّا فَاجِرًا كَفَّارًا

“My Lord, do not leave upon the earth any inhabitant from among the disbelievers. Indeed, if You were to leave them, they will mislead Your servants and will not procreate anyone but the ones wicked and disbelieving (diehards)” – 71:26,27.

In answer to this prayer, the people of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام were drowned en masse.

Boat-Making: The Education of a Prophet

When Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام was commanded to make an ark, he knew no ark, nor its making. Therefore, in the next verse (37), he got his first lesson. To orient him to the reality of boat making, it was said: *وَاصْنِعِ الْفُلْكَ بِأَعْيُنِنَا وَوَحْيِنَا* (And make an ark under Our eyes and according to Our revelation).

Hadīth reports say that Sayyidnā Jibra’īl al-Amin عليه السلام told Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام by means of revelation all about the making of boats. He had used wood from the saul tree (*shorea robusta*) to build this ark.

Some historical narratives give its measurement. It was three hundred yards long, fifty yards in width and thirty yard high, almost a three storied ship. Its ventilators, as customary, opened to the right and the left. Thus, this industry, the first prototype of the ship building industry, began at the hands of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام for the first time through Divine revelation. After that, the progress it made is current history.

All Essential Industries Originated through Revelation

It has been reported on the authority of some elders of early centu-

ries of Islām in at-Ṭibb an-Nabawī of Ḥafiz Shamsud-Dīn adh-Dhahabī that all industries essential for human beings owe their origin to the process of Divine revelation through some prophet. Later, improvements kept coming as needed during different times. The first revelation that came to Sayyidnā Adam عليه السلام mostly related to rehabilitation of the land and establishment of different industries. The invention of wheel carts for loading and hauling things is part of the chain of inventions.

Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, the founder of the well-known Aligarh College, (now the Muslim University of Aligarh, India) used to say more than a hundred years ago that the world has seen inventions of all sorts in moving vehicles but its pivot continued to be the axle and the wheel. It is the common factor between a bullock-cart, a donkey-cart, rails and cars. Therefore, the greatest inventor of moving vehicles is the person who invented the wheel that is the life and soul of a lot of machines. As it was said, this invention unfolded itself at the hands of the first prophet, Sayyidnā Ādam, peace on him, through a Divine revelation.

From here we also learn that industries devoted to essential human needs are so important that the blessed prophets have been taught and trained in these through Divine revelation.

Soon after instructing Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام how he would make an ark, he was told that a flood would come and his people will be drowned and that, at the time, he was not to intercede out of compassion on their behalf.

In the third verse (38), mentioned there is the total lack of concern for their sad end shown by the people of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام during the period he was making the ark. When the chieftains of his people saw him busy with his project under a Divine command, they would ask him, 'what are you doing?' He said, 'a flood is to come, therefore, I am making an ark.' They would mock at him and say, 'we have no water to drink here and this wise man is planning to sail in a boat on this dry land.' In response, Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام told them, 'if you mock at us today, then remember the day is sure to come when we shall be laughing at you.' The sense is that conditions would change and events would unfold in a manner that they themselves would become the cause of their being mocked at. For, in reality, ridicule is contrary to

the spiritual station of prophets. It is simply not permissible for anyone, in fact, it is *ḥarām* (unlawful). Says the Holy Qur'an: لَا يَسْتَحْرِقُونَ مِنْ قَوْمٍ عَسَىٰ أَنْ يَكُونُوا خَيْرًا مِنْهُمْ [other] people – may be, they are better than them – 49:11) Therefore, the mocking referred to here is a pragmatic response to their mockery. This is like saying, 'when you are seized by the punishment, we shall be telling you that this was the outcome of your mockery.' This is as it was said after that in the fourth verse (39): 'So, you shall soon know to whom will come the punishment that will humble him, and upon whom will befall the lasting punishment.' The first punishment refers to the punishment in the mortal world, and the 'lasting punishment' means the never-ending punishment of the Hereafter.

From the fifth verse (40) begins the description of the coming of the flood, related instructions and events as they unfolded. So, first it was said: حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءَ أَمْرُنَا وَفَارَ التَّنُّورُ (At last, when Our command came and the oven overflowed).

The word: تنور (*tannūr*: oven) is used in more than one sense. The Earth's floor is called an oven. The oven that bakes bread is also a *tannūr*. A raised part of the land is also referred to as *tannūr*. Therefore, some of the Tafsīr authorities have said that, at this place, '*tannūr*' means the surface of the land in that water started overflowing from it. Some of them have said that it means the *tannūr* of Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام that was located at '*ainul-wardah*' in Syria – and water overflowed from it. Some others said that Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام own *tannūr* was located in Kūfah and that was what it means. Most commentators – Sayyidnā Ḥasan, Mujāhid, Sha'bī, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه and others – have gone by this view.

As for Sha'bī, he used to say on oath that this *tannūr* was located in a secluded quarter of the city of Kūfah, and that Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام had built his ark in the mosque of Kūfah. This *tannūr* was right by the entrance to this mosque. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه says that Allah Ta'ālā had told Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام, 'when you see water overflowing from the oven in your home, know that the flood has come.' (Qurtūbī and Mazḥarī)

Commentator al-Qurtūbī said: The sayings of commentators appear to be different as to the meaning of *tannūr*, but this, in reality, is not a difference. When water began to bulge out, it overflowed from the

bread baking oven, and from out of the surface of the land, and from the oven of 'Ainul-Wardah in Syria. The Holy Qur'an has said explicitly: *فَفَتَحْنَا أَبْوَابَ السَّمَاءِ بِمَاءٍ مُنْهَمِرٍ وَفَجَّرْنَا الْأَرْضَ عُيُونًا* (Then We opened the gates of the heaven with rain pouring down and caused the earth to burst out with springs – al-Qamar, 54:11).

In his statement, Sha'bi has also said that this grand mosque of Kūfah has its own distinct status after al-Masjid al-Ḥarām, al-Masjid an-Nabawī and al-Masjid al-Aqṣā.

Later in the verse, it was said: When the flood had started, Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام was commanded: *إِحْمِلْ فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ زَوْجَيْنِ اثْنَيْنِ* (Load in it a pair of two from every kind).

This tells us that all kinds of animals were not loaded in the ark of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام. Loaded there were animals born to a pair of male and female and which cannot survive in water. Therefore, all sea life stands excluded from here and so do land based life forms born without male-female conjunction. This leaves only domestic animals like the cow, ox, water buffalo, goat etc.

This removes the possible doubt as to how could the ark hold that many animals.

After that, Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام was asked to have his family members – other than the disbelieving ones – board the ark, as well as those who had believed in him, though they were only a few.

The exact number of those who sailed on the ark has not been determined in the Qur'an and Ḥadīth. It has been reported from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه that their total number was eighty, which included three sons of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام – Sām, Ḥām, Yāfith – and the three of their wives. The fourth son had stayed with the disbelievers and was drowned with them.

Verses 41 – 44

وَقَالَ ارْكَبُوا فِيهَا بِسْمِ اللَّهِ مَجْرَاهَا وَمُرْسَاهَا إِنَّ رَبِّي لَغَفُورٌ
رَحِيمٌ ﴿٤١﴾ وَهِيَ تَجْرِي بِهِمْ فِي مَوْجٍ كَالْجِبَالِ قَفًّ وَنَادَى
نُوحٌ ابْنَهُ وَكَانَ فِي مَعْزِلٍ يَا بُنَيَّ ارْكَبْ مَعَنَا وَلَا تَكُنْ مَعَ
الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٤٢﴾ قَالَ سَأُوۡدِيۡ اِلَىۡ جَبَلٍ يَّعَصِمُنِي مِنَ الْمَآءِ ط قَالَ

لَا عَاصِمَ الْيَوْمَ مِنْ أَمْرِ اللَّهِ إِلَّا مَنْ رَحِمَ ۗ وَحَالَ بَيْنَهُمَا الْمَوْجُ
فَكَانَ مِنَ الْمَغْرِقِينَ ﴿٤٣﴾ وَقِيلَ يَا رِضُّ ابْلَعِي مَاءَكَ وَيَسْمَاءُ
أَقْلِعِي وَغِيضَ الْمَاءِ وَقُضِيَ الْأَمْرُ وَاسْتَوَتْ عَلَى الْجُودِيِّ
وَقِيلَ بُعْدًا لِلْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٤٤﴾

And he said, “Embark it. With the name of Allah it sails and anchors. Surely, my Lord is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful.” [41]

And it was sailing with them amidst the waves like mountains. And Nūḥ called out to his son, who was at an isolated place, “O my child, come on board with us, and do not be in the company of the disbelievers.” [42] He said, “I shall take shelter on a mountain which will save me from the water.” He said, “There is no savior today from the command of Allah, except the one to whom He shows mercy.” And the waves rose high between the two, and he was among the drowned. [43]

And it was said, “O earth, suck in your water, and O heaven, stop.” And water subsided, and the matter was over. And it (the Ark) came to rest on the Jūdiyy, and it was said, “Curse be upon the wrongdoers.” [44]

Commentary

Etiquette of boarding boats and other modes of conveyance

The first verse (41) teaches the etiquette of boarding boats and other modes of conveyance. One should board by saying: بِسْمِ اللَّهِ مَجْرًا وَمُرْسَلًا (With the name of Allah it sails and anchors). The word: مَجْرًا (*majrā* pronounced according to the reading (*qirā'ah*) of Imām Ḥafṣ as ‘*majrāy*’ with *fatḥah* on the letter *mīm* and a major *Imālah* [inclination] on the letter *rā*) means to sail or to move, and مَرْسَى (*mursā*) means to stop or anchor. The sense is that the moving of this mode of transport owes itself to the power of Allah, and is with His name alone, as well as its stopping which is also subservient to nothing but His power.

Every conveyance moves and stops only with the power of Allah Ta‘ālā

Even a little thought would show that no conveyance, a boat or any other mode of transport that moves on land (or flies in the air) is really

within one's own power, neither its creating and making, nor its moving and stopping. A shallow view of things leads man to assume that he is the one who has manufactured it and made it move. The reality lies elsewhere. It does not take much to realize that man has not created iron, wood, brass, aluminum etc. which serve as raw material that go into the making of these modes of conveyance. And it is also clear that it does not lie in his control to create on his own a gram of iron or a foot of wood. Then, who gave them the intelligence to design and produce all sorts of mechanical parts and instruments? How did he do that? Did he create his own intelligence? Had it been within the power of man, no one in this wide world would have remained dumb. Everyone would have been a Plato and Aristotle in his field. So, man puts together wood and iron and mechanical support from all sides, makes the body and frame for the conveyance. Now he needs to haul tons of weight easily and quickly on the land or in the air. He needs power to do that. It may come through petrol, gas or hydro-electricity. Has man created any of these? Did he create the petrol or gas, or water, or oxygen, or hydrogen?

If we were to look at things impartially, we will realize that even in this age of great scientific advancement, the helplessness of man is still visible and it is true that the moving and stopping of every conveyance rests within the ultimate control of the creator of this universe.

The process of inventing things and making them work makes inventors self-centered. They start living in a hall of mirrors. They congratulate themselves to the limit that they lose touch with the reality of things on a canvass larger than what they invent. Allah Ta'ālā tells them through his prophets that there is more to their making that they fail to see: بِسْمِ اللَّهِ مَجْرَعًا وَمَرْسَبًا (With the name of Allah it sails and anchors). This is the reality. A brief statement, but very comprehensive. In fact, it is a key to a door. Once he enters it, he lives in this mortal world but turns into a citizen of the spiritual universe – seeing the beauty of the Lord everywhere in it.

From here unfolds the difference between the world of a believer and the world of a disbeliever. Both ride. But, when a believer steps in there, the conveyance does not simply shorten his travel distances on the land, it introduces him to the one higher, more sublime.

As stated in the second (42) and third (43) verse, when the whole family of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام had boarded the ark, a son whose name has been reported as Kin'an (Canaan) was left out. Out of his paternal compassion, Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام called out to him asking him to come on board and warning him that he should not stay in the company of disbelievers otherwise he would be drowned with them. This young man was already in league with those disbelieving enemies, in fact, was himself a disbeliever. But, in all likelihood, Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام did not know that he was a disbeliever. And even if he did know that, the good counsel he gave to his son to board the boat and leave the company of the disbelievers was in the spirit of asking him to repent from disbelief and enter the fold of faith. But, the unfortunate son still took the flood to be something that will pass away and told him not to worry about him for he would be safe from the flood by climbing a mountain. Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام warned him again that nothing was going to save anyone, not even a mountain, from the punishment of Allah on that day and that there was no way one could remain safe from it unless Allah Himself were to show mercy to him. This father-son dialogue was on from a distance when rose a wave of the flood and took him down and away. Historical reports say that the level of the Flood was fifteen yards above the highest mountain peak and according to some other reports, it was forty yards high.

In the fourth verse (44), the recession of the flood and the return of things to normal conditions has been described in a particular manner. Addressing the earth, Allah Ta'ālā commanded: يَا رُحَىٰ اُبْلَعِي مَائِكَ (O earth, suck in your water). The sense was that the amount of water which had bulged out from the earth was to be taken back in by the earth. The sky was commanded to stop raining. The water from rains that had already accumulated on the earth, nature channeled it into rivers and streams for human beings to benefit by it. (Tafsīr Qurtubī, Mazḥarī)

In this verse, Allah Ta'ālā has given His commands by addressing the heaven and the earth, although these are no sensate entities, at least outwardly. Therefore, some commentators have taken it in a figurative sense. But, the fact of the matter is that, in terms of our perception, things in the world which appear non-conscious, insensate, and lifeless are, in all reality, live and conscious. Yes, their consciousness and perception are not of a level as given to humankind and oth-

ers, therefore, by declaring them to be inanimate, they were not obligated with the precepts and injunctions of the Shari'ah. Many verses of the Holy Qur'an confirm it, such as: *وَإِنْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِلَّا يُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِهِ* (and there is no such thing which does not glorify Him with praises – 17:44). And it is obvious that the glorification of Allah Ta'ālā depends on knowing Him, and knowing, on reason and consciousness. This tells us that everything has reason and consciousness according to its respective capacity. From it, it recognizes its creator and whatever it has been assigned to do by Him. Everything knows it fully well and keeps doing it staunchly as due. The verse of the Qur'an: *أَعْطَى كُلَّ شَيْءٍ حَلْفَهُ ثُمَّ هَدَى* (gave each thing its form then guided [it] – Tāhā, 20:50) means exactly this. Therefore, in this verse, if the address to the heaven and the earth is taken in the real sense, it does not matter. Sage Rūmī said:

خاک و باد و آب و آتش بنده اند بامن و تو مرده باحق زنده اند

Dust, air, water and fire are all 'servants'

For you and me, dead, but with Him, live.

At the end of the fourth verse (44), it was said that the heaven and the earth obeyed the orders and the matter of the flood was all over. The Ark of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام came to rest on the Mount Jūdiyy and it was declared that the unjust people have been cast far 'away from the mercy of Allah' – (which is what curse is).

Mount Jūdiyy still stands there by that name. Geographically, it is located on the border of Armenia near Ibn 'Umar Island north of Mou-sil in 'Iraq, the real home of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام. This is a mountain range, part of which is called Jūdiyy. Another part of it is known as Ararāt. In the present Torah, the place where the Ark came to rest has been identified as Mount Ararāt. As obvious, there is not much of a contradiction in these two reports. But, well-known old historical accounts also say that the ark of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام had come to rest on Mount Jūdiyy.

These accounts also mention that pieces of this ark are still there at many places in 'Iraq. These are kept and used as a relic.

According to Tafsīr at-Ṭabarī and al-Baghawī, Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام had embarked the Ark on the tenth of the month of Rajab. For six months, this ark sailed on the waters of the flood. When it reached the spot where Baytullah was, it made seven circuits. Allah Ta'ālā had

raised His House higher from being submerged. Then, on the tenth of Muḥarram, the day of ‘Āshūrā’, the flood subsided and the ark came to rest at the Mount of Jūdiyy. Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام observed a thanksgiving fast on that day and asked everyone on the ark to do the same. Some reports say that even animals that had shared the ark fasted on that day. (Mazharī and Qurṭubī)

The importance of the day of ‘Āshūrā’, that is, the tenth of Muḥarram, has been recognized in all religious codes of the blessed prophets. In early Islām – before the fasts of Ramaḍān became obligatory – fasting on the day of ‘Āshūrā’ was *farḍ*. It is no more *farḍ* after the revelation of the obligatory status of fasting in Ramaḍān, but it continues to be a practice of prophets, and a source of reward forever.

Verses 45 – 49

وَنَادَى نُوحٌ رَبَّهُ فَقَالَ رَبِّ إِنَّ ابْنِي مِنْ أَهْلِي وَإِنَّ وَعْدَكَ الْحَقُّ
وَأَنْتَ أَحْكَمُ الْحَكَمِينَ ﴿٤٥﴾ قَالَ يُنوحُ إِنَّهُ لَيْسَ مِنْ أَهْلِكَ
إِنَّهُ عَمَلٌ غَيْرُ صَالِحٍ فَلَا تَسْأَلْنِ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ إِنِّي
أَعِظُكَ أَنْ تَكُونَ مِنَ الْجَاهِلِينَ ﴿٤٦﴾ قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِكَ أَنْ
أَسْأَلَكَ مَا لَيْسَ لِي بِهِ عِلْمٌ وَإِلَّا تَغْفِرْ لِي وَتَرْحَمْنِي أَكُنْ مِنَ
الْخَاسِرِينَ ﴿٤٧﴾ قِيلَ يُنوحُ اهْبِطْ بِسَلَامٍ مِنَّا وَبَرَكَاتٍ عَلَيْكَ
وَعَلَى أُمِّمٍ مِمَّنْ مَعَكَ وَأُمَّمٌ سَنَمَتَهُمْ ثُمَّ يَمَسُّهُمْ مِنَّا عَذَابٌ
أَلِيمٌ ﴿٤٨﴾ تِلْكَ مِنْ أَنْبَاءِ الْغَيْبِ نُوحِيهَا إِلَيْكَ مَا كُنْتَ
تَعْلَمُهَا أَنْتَ وَلَا قَوْمُكَ مِنْ قَبْلِ هَذَا فَاصْبِرْ إِنَّ الْعَاقِبَةَ
لِلْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿٤٩﴾

And Nūḥ called unto his Lord and said, “My Lord, my son is a part of my family, and surely, Your promise is true, and You are the greatest of all judges.” [45] He said, “O Nūḥ, surely, he is not a part of your family. Indeed, he is (a man of) bad deeds. So do not ask Me something of which you have no knowledge. I counsel you not to be among the ignorant. [46]

He said, “My Lord, I seek refuge with You against that I

ask You something of which I have no knowledge. And if You do not forgive me and do not show mercy to me, I shall be among the losers.” [47]

It was said, “O Nūḥ, disembark in peace from Us and with blessings upon you and upon the peoples (springing) from those with you. And there are peoples whom We shall give some enjoyment, then a painful punishment from Us will visit them.”[48]

These are some reports from the unseen (events) which We reveal to you. You did not know them before this, neither you nor your people. So, be patient. Surely, the end is in favor of the God-fearing. [49]

Commentary

The remaining account of the flood associated with the name of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام, along with instructions related to it, appears in the five verses cited above.

When Can‘aan, the son of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام, did not board the ark despite the counsel and call of his esteemed father who was still concerned emotionally as he saw his son surrounded by the waves of the flood. His filial love knocked at another door. He turned to his Lord and prayed to Him on the basis of His promise that He would save his family from the flood, and that His promise was true. But, conditions were alarming and his son who was part of his family was going to be swallowed by the flood. The only court of appeal he could now go to was the court of the most just of judges for everything was in His power and control and that He could still save him from the flood.

In the second verse (46), came a stern response from Allah Ta‘ālā whereby Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام was told that this son was no more a part of his family because he was not good and right in what he did. Therefore, it was not proper for him to approach Him with some request while being unaware of the true state of affairs. Then came the mollifying remark that the good counsel was being given to him so that he too does not become one of the ignorant.

Two things come out from what was said by Allah Ta‘ālā:

1. Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام did not know about the disbelief of his son clearly and fully. He thought he was a hypocrite, so he still took him to

be a believer. Therefore, identifying him as a part of his family, he went ahead and prayed that he be saved from the flood. Otherwise, had he known the true state of affairs about him, he would have not made such a prayer. The reason is that he was already instructed in clear terms that he should not, once the flood comes, speak about those who had crossed the limit as it appears in verse 37 earlier *وَلَا تُخَاطِبُنِي فِي الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا، إِنَّهُمْ مُّكْرَمُونَ*. After this clear and explicit injunction, it was impossible for a prophet of God that he would venture to do something against it. The only possible explanation for this could be that, as suggested by the author of Bayān al-Qur'ān, the desired objective of this prayer is that his son becomes a believer and not that he be saved from the flood under his present condition. But, Allah Ta'ālā has not taken Sayyidnā Nūḥ's *عليه السلام* lack of knowledge about the disbelief of his son and the prayer for his deliverance based on it as sound excuses. Therefore, he was questioned as to why he would make such a prayer. This is a slip at the highest level of the station of a prophet which Sayyidnā Nūḥ *عليه السلام* would himself refer to on the day of Resurrection when the whole creation will request him to intercede with the Lord on their behalf. He would excuse himself by saying what had happened to him, therefore, he would not dare any intercession.

Prayer for the disbelieving and the unjust is not permissible

A religious rule of conduct that we learn about here is that one should first find out whether or not the objective for which he is making a prayer is permissible and *ḥalāl* (lawful). It is prohibited to make *Du'ā* (prayer) under doubtful circumstances. Tafsīr Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī with reference to al-Baydāwī reports that since this verse tells us about the prohibition of *Du'ā* under doubtful circumstances, it is automatically inferred from it that it will be all the more prohibited to pray for anything known to be impermissible and unlawful.

This rule also helps us realize the absence of discretion among modern day Shaykhs (spiritual masters) who have become used to raising their hands of prayer for anyone who comes in asking for some prayer to be made for him. Most of the time, they know that this person is not on the right, or is unjust, in the case for which he is asking the Shaykh to pray. Or, the person is asking the Shaykh to pray for a purpose that is not lawful for him, may be this person is looking for a particular job or office through which he will become involved in earn-

ing unlawfully, or succeed in it by usurping someone's right.

When attending circumstances are known, such prayers are unlawful and impermissible after all. Even if the circumstances are doubtful, taking the initiative to make Du'ā, without first getting to know the circumstances as they are and the lawfulness of the matter in question, is also not appropriate.

Brotherly relations between believers and disbelievers

2. The second religious ruling that emerges from here is that a believer and a disbeliever may be blood relatives to each other, but when it comes to religious and collective matters, this kinship will have no effect. A person may be high born, he may come from the progeny of men of high spiritual status, so much so that one may even have the honor of being among the progeny of our most noble Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. But, this high lineage and this prophetic connection will also not be taken into consideration as a factor in religious matters, if the person is not a believer. In religion, everything functionally depends on faith, goodness and the fear of Allah. One who is good in deeds and fears Allah, he is ours. If not like that, he is an alien.

Had concessions based on kinship been given even in religious matters, brothers would have not crossed swords against each other in the battlefields of Badr and Uḥud. It is common knowledge among Muslims that the battles of Badr, Uḥud and al-Aḥzāb were fought among individuals coming from the same families. This clearly demonstrates that Islamic nationality or brotherhood does not hinge on lineal bond or geographical or linguistic unity. Instead, it revolves round faith and deed. All believers, residents of any country, members of any family and speakers of any language, are a single nation, a single brotherhood. The Qur'ānic verse: *إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْوَةٌ* (The believers are but brothers – 40:10) means just this. Then, those who are deprived of faith and good deeds, they are not members of the Islamic brotherhood. The Holy Qur'an has made this reality all the more clear through the words spoken by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام: *إِنَّا مَبْرُؤُوا مِنْكُمْ وَإِنَّمَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ*: عليه السلام (Indeed, we have nothing to do with you and with whatever you worship other than Allah – al-Mumtaḥinah, 60:4).

This humble writer has restricted the above rule to the 'religious matters' only for the reason that, in worldly matters, demonstrating

good social behavior, moral grace, favor and generosity is something different. It is quite permissible to deal even with someone not good with these graces, in fact, it is recommended, and is an act worthy of *thawāb* (reward). Countless instances where the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and his noble Companions have treated non-Muslims with compassion, favor and good grace are sufficient to prove this.

In our time, the edifice of nationalities is raised on the foundations of homeland, language or color whereby Muslims are segregated into one or the other 'nation' under false banners. This is contrary to the Qur'an, and Sunnah, and amounts to rising in rebellion against the principles of political and social management enunciated by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم.

Mentioned in the third verse (47) is the apology tendered by Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام. In gist, it is a return to Allah in submission and entreaty, a prayer for the protection of Allah, His forgiveness for past omissions, and a request for His mercy.

From here we learn that, should one commit a mistake, let him not rely on his personal resolve to stay safe from it in the future. He should, rather, seek the protection of Allah Ta'ālā and pray to Him that He is the One who can keep him safe from errors and sins.

In the fourth verse (48), described there is the end of the flood. When the flood subsided, the ark of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام came to rest on Mount Judiyy, the earth sucked its water back, standing water from the heaven got preserved in the form of rivers and streams making the land habitable. Then, Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام was asked to disembark, go down the mountain, for there was nothing to worry about. Blessings of Allah will be with him keeping him secure from any calamities and hardships and that he will prosper in terms of peace, wealth and children.

According to this statement, the entire post-flood human population of the world is the progeny of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام. At another place, the Qur'an has said: *وَجَعَلْنَا ذُرِّيَّتَهُ هُمُ الْبَاقِينَ* (and those remaining We made his descendants - 37:77). Therefore, historians refer to Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام as the second Ādam.

Then, the promise of peace and blessing made to Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام is not limited to his person, instead, it was said: *وَعَلَىٰ أُمَمٍ مِّمَّنْ مَعَكَ* (and

upon the peoples [springing] from those with you). Those who boarded the ark with Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام have been identified with the word: امم (*umam*) which is the plural form of امة (*ummah*: community). It releases the sense that those on board the ark consisted of different nationalities and communities, although we already know that those who had embarked the ark were mostly people from the family of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام in addition to a few other believers as well. So, they were identified as different communities and nationalities in the sense that different communities and nationalities will spring forth from their future generations. This tells us that the whole human race to be born up to the day of Qiyāmah is included under the sense of the words: اُمَمٍ مِّنْ مَّعَكَ (peoples [springing] from those with you).

This was the reason why it became necessary to elaborate the subject of peace and blessing as the coming generation would include believers and disbelievers both. As for peace and blessing for believers, it is correct in its general sense for they would have peace and blessing in the mortal world as well as in the Hereafter. But, the disbelievers from this generation would have been consigned to the everlasting punishment of Hell. How would it be correct to say that they would be recipients of peace and blessing? Therefore, at the end of the verse, it was said: وَأَمَّا سُنْمُهُمْ فَمِمَّا عَذَابَ الْإِلْمِ (And there are peoples whom We shall give some enjoyment, then a painful punishment from Us will visit them). It means that the peace and blessing they will enjoy in the mortal world is like a feast thrown open to all, friends and foes alike. Also participating in it will be those who take to disbelief from among the progeny of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام, but the salvation and prosperity of the Hereafter shall be reserved for believers only. The disbeliever will be given the return for his good deeds within the mortal world and there will be nothing left for him to receive in the Hereafter where he will find nothing but punishment waiting for him.

When the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم came to know of this detailed information about Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام and the Flood through revelation, he related it to his people – this event, then became a standing witness to the veracity of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم himself as a genuine prophet. To alert him to this situation, it was said in the fifth verse (49): ‘As for Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام and the flood that came during his time, these were pieces of information that lay in the domain of the

unseen. He had no knowledge of it beforehand, nor his people, the Arabs, knew about it. It was he who told them about it. What was the explanation for it? How could it happen? There was no other explanation but that Allah had Himself told him about it through revelation, because, had his people been educated and conversant with world history, it could be surmised that he had related these events after having heard them from those learned people. But, when the whole lot of his people was unaware of these events and their prophet too had never gone to another country to get his education there, then, the only inlet of this information stands determined conclusively. It was Waḥy, the divine revelation, which is a clear proof that the prophet is a true messenger of Allah.

To console the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, it was said at the end of the verse that there were so many open proofs to the fact that he was a prophet and messenger of Allah. If there were some unfortunate human beings that see the sun yet insist that they do not, even challenge him and confront him, then, he should look at the role model of his predecessor, Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام, peace on him. He spent one thousand years of his long life suffering from pain inflicted by his people. He remained patient. Let him stay as patient as he was – because, it stands determined that success will ultimately kiss the hands of those patient and God-fearing.

Verses 50 – 68

وَالِى عَادِ آخَاهُمْ هُودًا ۖ قَالَ يَقَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ إِلَهِ
 غَيْرُهُ ۗ إِن أَنْتُمْ إِلَّا مُفْتَرُونَ ﴿٥٠﴾ يَقَوْمِ لَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ
 أَجْرًا ۗ إِن أَجْرِي إِلَّا عَلَى الَّذِي فَطَرَنِي ۗ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٥١﴾
 وَيَقَوْمِ اسْتَغْفِرُوا رَبَّكُمْ ثُمَّ تُوبُوا إِلَيْهِ يُرْسِلِ السَّمَاءَ عَلَيْكُمْ
 مِدْرَارًا وَيَزِدْكُمْ قُوَّةً إِلَى قُوَّتِكُمْ وَلَا تَتَوَلَّوْا مُجْرِمِينَ ﴿٥٢﴾
 قَالُوا يَهُودُ مَا جِئْتَنَا بِبَيِّنَةٍ وَمَا نَحْنُ بِتَارِكِي آلِهَتِنَا عَنْ
 قَوْلِكَ وَمَا نَحْنُ لَكَ بِمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٥٣﴾ إِن نَّقُولُ إِلَّا اعْتَرَاكَ
 بَعْضُ آلِهَتِنَا بِسُوءٍ ۗ قَالَ إِنِّي أُشْهِدُ اللَّهَ وَاشْهَدُوا أَنِّي بَرِيءٌ

تَمَا تُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٥٤﴾ مِنْ دُونِهِ فَكَيْدُونِي جَمِيعًا ثُمَّ لَا تُنظِرُونَ
 ﴿٥٥﴾ إِنِّي تَوَكَّلْتُ عَلَى اللَّهِ رَبِّي وَرَبِّكُمْ مَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ إِلَّا هُوَ
 آخِذٌ بِنَاصِيَتِهَا إِنَّ رَبِّي عَلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿٥٦﴾ فَإِنْ
 تَوَلَّوْا فَقَدْ أَبْلَغْتُكُمْ مَا أُرْسِلْتُ بِهِ إِلَيْكُمْ وَيَسْتَخْلِفُ رَبِّي
 قَوْمًا غَيْرَكُمْ وَلَا تَضُرُّوهُ شَيْئًا إِنَّ رَبِّي عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ
 حَفِيفٌ ﴿٥٧﴾ وَلَمَّا جَاءَ أَمْرُنَا نَجَّيْنَا هُودًا وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ
 بِرَحْمَةٍ مِنَّا وَنَجَّيْنَاهُمْ مِنْ عَذَابٍ غَلِيظٍ ﴿٥٨﴾ وَتِلْكَ عَادُتُ
 حَاجِدُوا بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ وَعَصَوْا رُسُلَهُ وَاتَّبَعُوا أَمْرَ كُلِّ جَبَّارٍ
 عَنِيدٍ ﴿٥٩﴾ وَاتَّبَعُوا فِي هَذِهِ الدُّنْيَا لَعْنَةً وَيَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ إِلَّا إِنْ
 عَادَا كَفَرُوا رَبَّهُمْ إِلَّا بَعْدًا لِعَادٍ قَوْمِ هُودٍ ﴿٦٠﴾ وَالِى ثُمَّ وَا
 أَخَاهُمْ ضَلِحًا قَالَ يَقَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِنْ إِلَهٍ غَيْرُهُ هُوَ
 أَنشَأَكُمْ مِنَ الْأَرْضِ وَاسْتَعْمَرَكُمْ فِيهَا فَاسْتَغْفِرُوهُ ثُمَّ تَوْبُوا
 إِلَيْهِ إِنَّ رَبِّي قَرِيبٌ مُجِيبٌ ﴿٦١﴾ قَالُوا يٰطِلْحُ قَدْ كُنْتَ فِينَا
 مَرْجُوًّا قَبْلَ هَذَا أَتَنْهَانَا أَنْ نَعْبُدَ مَا يَعْبُدُ آبَاؤُنَا وَإِنَّا لَفِي
 شَكٍّ مِمَّا تَدْعُونَا إِلَيْهِ مُرِيبٍ ﴿٦٢﴾ قَالَ يَقَوْمِ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُ
 عَلَى بَيِّنَةٍ مِّنْ رَبِّي وَآتَيْتُ مِنْهُ رَحْمَةً فَمَنْ يَنْصُرُنِي مِنَ اللَّهِ
 إِنْ عَصَيْتُهُ فَمَا تَزِيدُونَنِي غَيْرَ تَحْسِيرٍ ﴿٦٣﴾ وَيَقَوْمِ هَذِهِ
 نَاقَةُ اللَّهِ لَكُمْ آيَةٌ فَذَرُوهَا تَأْكُلْ فِي أَرْضِ اللَّهِ وَلَا تَمَسُّوهَا
 بِسُوءٍ فَيَأْخُذْكُمْ عَذَابٌ قَرِيبٌ ﴿٦٤﴾ فَعَقَرُوهَا فَقَالَ تَمَتَّعُوا
 فِي دَارِكُمْ ثَلَاثَةَ أَيَّامٍ ذَلِكُمْ وَعَدُّ غَيْرِ مَكْدُوبٍ ﴿٦٥﴾ فَلَمَّا
 جَاءَ أَمْرُنَا نَجَّيْنَا ضَلِحًا وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ بِرَحْمَةٍ مِنَّا وَمِنْ
 خِزْيِ يَوْمِئِذٍ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ الْقَوِيُّ الْعَزِيزُ ﴿٦٦﴾ وَأَخَذَ الَّذِينَ

ظَلَمُوا الصَّيْحَةَ فَأَصْبَحُوا فِي دِيَارِهِمْ جُثَمِينَ ﴿٦٧﴾ كَأَن لَّمْ
يَعْنُوا فِيهَا آلَآ إِنَّا نَمُودُ أَكْفَرُوا رَبَّهُمْ ط آلا بُعْدًا لِّثَمُودَ

٤
﴿٦٨﴾

And to 'Ād (We sent) their brother Hūd. He said, "O my people, worship Allah. You have no god other than Him. You are nothing but fabricators. [50] O my people, I ask you no reward for it. My reward is only on the One who created me. Have you, then, no sense? [51] And O my people, seek forgiveness from your Lord, then turn to Him in repentance, so that He may release the heavens pouring upon you and may increase you in strength beside your strength, and do not turn away like sinners." [52]

They said, "O Hūd, you did not bring to us any proof, and we are not to leave our gods on your statement, and we are not to believe in you. [53] We do not say except that some of our gods have subjected you to some evil." He said, "I make Allah my witness, and you be witness that I have nothing to do with what you take as gods besides Him. [54] So, try your plans against me, all of you together, then give me no respite. [55] I place my trust in Allah, my Lord and your Lord. There is no creature but He takes it by the forelock. Surely, my Lord is on a straight path. [56] Now, if you turn away, I have already conveyed to you what I was sent to you with. And my Lord will replace you with some other people, and you cannot do Him any harm. Surely, my Lord is guardian over every thing." [57]

And when came Our command, We saved Hūd and those who believed along with him, out of mercy from Us, and We did save them from a heavy punishment. [58]

That was the tribe of 'Ād who rejected the signs of their Lord, disobeyed their Messengers and followed the dictates of every obstinate tyrant! [59] And a curse was made to pursue them in this world and on the Day of Doom. Lo! The people of 'Ād disbelieved their Lord. Lo! Curse be upon 'Ād, the people of Hūd. [60]

And to (the people of) Thamūd (We sent) their brother,

Ṣāliḥ. He said, "O my people, worship Allah. You have no god other than Him. He has created you from earth and made you settle therein. So, seek His forgiveness, then turn to Him in repentance. Surely, my Lord is near, responding." [61]

They said, "O Ṣāliḥ, we had hopes in you before this. Do you ask us not to worship what our fathers worshipped? And we are certainly in confounding doubt about what you are calling us to." [62]

He said, "O my people, tell me: When I am on a clear path, and He has bestowed mercy upon me from Himself, who will then come to my help against Allah, if I disobey Him? So, you add on to me nothing but a loss.

[63] And O my people, this is the she-camel of Allah, a sign for you. So, leave her free to eat in the land of Allah and do not even touch her with evil (intention), lest a near punishment should seize you." [64]

Then they slaughtered her. So, he said, "Enjoy yourselves in your homes for three days (only). That is a promise, not going to be false." [65]

So, when came Our command, We saved Ṣāliḥ and those who believed along with Him, out of mercy from Us, and (We saved them) from the disgrace of that day. Surely, your Lord is the Powerful, the All Mighty. [66]

And those who transgressed were caught by the Cry, and they were found dead in their homes, fallen on their knees, [67] as though they had never lived there. Lo! The people of Thamūd disbelieved their Lord. Lo! Curse be upon the people of Thamūd. [68]

Commentary

Mentioned in the first eleven verses (50-60) from the ones cited above are the events of the revered prophet of Allah, Sayyidnā Hūd عليه السلام by whose name this Sūrah is identified. Appearing in this Sūrah, there are events related to seven blessed prophets and their peoples from Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام to Sayyidnā Mūsā described in the unique style of the Holy Qur'ān. They have such flashes of lesson and advice that no one with a responsive and discerning heart can remain unaffected by them. Apart from their instructive aspects, they contain many principals and subsidiaries of faith and good deed as well as