

intended to expel the Holy Prophet ﷺ from Makkah al-Mukarramah. Thereupon, Allah Ta'ālā revealed the verse: كَادُوا لَيَسْتَفْرِؤُنَكَ where the Quraysh disbelievers were warned that in the event they expelled the Holy Prophet ﷺ from Makkah, they too would not be sitting in Makkah in peace any longer. This is the event Ibn Kathīr considers to be the weightier choice as the point of reference in the verse. Then, he goes on to explain that this warning of the Holy Qur'an was seen come true by the disbelievers of Makkah with their own eyes. When the Holy Prophet ﷺ migrated from Makkah al-Mukarramah, they were unable to sit there in peace even for a day. It was within a period of a year and six months that Allah Ta'ālā made them assemble on the plains of Badr where seventy of their chiefs were killed and their initial aggressive power was broken. Then came the final outcome of the battle of 'Uḥūd which made them more awe-stricken, and the last confrontation of the battle of al-Aḥzāb virtually broke their back. It was in the eighth year of Hijrah that the Holy Prophet ﷺ conquered the whole of Makkah al-Mukarramah.

The last verse (77): سَنَّةٌ مِّنْ قَدَرٍ أَرْسَلْنَا (Such has been Our way with the messengers We sent ...) tells us that, according to the customary way and law of Allah Ta'ālā, when a people expel their prophet from his homeland, or compel him to leave by scaring and harassing, then, those people too are not left to continue living there. They are visited by the punishment of Allah Ta'ālā.

Verses 78 - 82

أَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِدُلُوكِ الشَّمْسِ إِلَى غَسَقِ اللَّيْلِ وَقُرْآنَ الْفَجْرِ إِنَّ قُرْآنَ
 الْفَجْرِ كَانَ مَشْهُودًا ﴿٧٨﴾ وَمِنَ اللَّيْلِ فَتَهَجَّدْ بِهِ نَافِلَةً لَّكَ عَلَى عَسَىٰ أَنْ
 يَبْعَثَكَ رَبُّكَ مَقَامًا مَّحْمُودًا ﴿٧٩﴾ وَقُلْ رَبِّ أَدْخِلْنِي مُدْخَلَ صِدْقٍ
 وَأَخْرِجْنِي مُخْرَجَ صِدْقٍ وَاجْعَلْ لِي مِنْ لَدُنْكَ سُلْطَانًا نَّصِيرًا ﴿٨٠﴾
 وَقُلْ جَاءَ الْحَقُّ وَزَهَقَ الْبَاطِلُ إِنَّ الْبَاطِلَ كَانَ زَهُوقًا ﴿٨١﴾ وَنُنزِّلُ
 مِنَ الْقُرْآنِ مَا هُوَ شِفَاءٌ وَرَحْمَةٌ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَلَا يَزِيدُ الظَّالِمِينَ إِلَّا
 خَسَارًا ﴿٨٢﴾

Establish *ṣalāh* between the decline of the sun and the darkness of the night, and the recital at dawn. Surely, the recital at dawn is well attended. [78] And during the night, wake up for *ṣalāh*, an additional prayer for you. It is very likely that your Lord places you at a Praised Station. [79]

And say, "O my Lord, make me enter a rightful entrance and make me exit a rightful exit, and grant me from Your Own a power, favoured (by You)." [80] And say, "Truth has come and falsehood has vanished. Falsehood is surely bound to vanish." [81]

And We reveal the Qur'an which is cure and mercy for the believers. And it adds nothing to the unjust but loss. [82]

Commentary

Ṣalāh is the best defense against enemy hostility

Previous verses have mentioned the hostility of the enemies of Islam, the plans they made to hurt and harass the Holy Prophet ﷺ and what was to be done in response. By giving the Holy Prophet ﷺ the command to establish Ṣalāh in the verses cited above, it is being suggested that it is the best remedy against the mischief made and pain caused by enemies. This is similar to what has been said more clearly in a verse of Sūrah al-Hijr: *وَلَقَدْ نَعْلَمُ أَنَّكَ يَضِيقُ صَدْرُكَ بِمَا يَقُولُونَ فَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ وَكُنْ مِنَ السَّاجِدِينَ* It means: "And indeed We know that your heart feels distressed for what they say. So, proclaim the purity and glory of your Lord, and be among those who prostrate." (Qurṭubī)

This verse declares devotion to the remembrance of Allah (*dhikr*) through His praises (*ḥamd*) and His glorification (*tasbīḥ*) and Ṣalāh (prayer) as the panacea of pains inflicted by enemies. Dhikr and Ṣalāh are special safety shields against their aggressive designs. Then, it is also not far out to believe that staying safe against the pain inflicted by enemies depends on the help and support of Allah Ta'ālā. So, the best medium of acquiring this help is Ṣalāh as stated in the Holy Qur'an: *وَاسْتَعِينُوا بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلَاةِ* (Seek help through patience and prayer - 2:153).

The injunction of five prayers

The majority of leading Tafsīr authorities has declared this verse to be a comprehensive injunction for all five daily prayers. The reason is

that the word: دُلُوك (dulūk) is essentially used in the sense of 'decline' and the decline of the Sun begins at the time of meridian - though, it could also be applied to the sunset. But, at this place, the majority of Ṣaḥābah and Tabi'in have taken the word: دُلُوك (dulūk) to mean the post-meridian decline of the Sun. (as explained in details by al-Qurṭubī, al-Mazharī and Ibn Kathīr).

The word: غَسَقَ اللَّيْلَ (ghasaq) in the next phrase: إِلَى غَسَقِ اللَّيْلِ means the darkness of the night when it is complete. Imām Mālik has reported this very Tafsīr of 'ghasaq' from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه.

Thus, within the statement: لِدُلُوكِ الشَّمْسِ إِلَى غَسَقِ اللَّيْلِ (between the decline of the Sun and the darkness of the night), four prayers stand covered. These are Zuhr, 'Aṣr, Maghrib and 'Ishā'. And also identified there is the time when two of these prayers begin, that is, the time of Zuhr begins from the decline (zawāl) of the Sun and the time of 'Ishā' from: غَسَقِ اللَّيْلِ (ghasaq al-layl) that is, at the time when the darkness of night is complete. Therefore, the great Imām, Abū Ḥanīfah has ruled that the time of 'Ishā' begins from the time when, after the red glow, the white glow of the evening also disappears. Everyone knows that, close to the sunset, a red glow appears on the western horizon and, soon after this redness, there spreads a sort of whiteness on it. Then, this whiteness too disappears. It is obvious that the darkness of the night will be complete only when the whiteness of the horizon also goes away. Therefore, these words support the view of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah. Other Imāms have ruled that the time of 'Ishā' begins after the disappearance of the red glow on the evening horizon and that this is the Tafsīr of 'ghasaq al-layl' (the darkness of night).

In the next phrase: وَقُرْآنِ الْفَجْرِ (wa Qur'an al-fajr: translated as 'and the recital at dawn'), the word: 'Qur'an' denotes Ṣalāh at this place because the Qur'an is an integral part of Ṣalāh. Most Tafsīr authorities - Ibn Kathīr, al-Qurṭubī, Mazharī and others - have adopted this very meaning. Therefore, the sense of the verse is that the words: دُلُوكِ الشَّمْسِ إِلَى غَسَقِ اللَّيْلِ (between the decline of the Sun and the darkness of the night) carried a description of four prayers. Identified now is the fifth prayer, that of Fajr. It has been described separately which is an indicator of the particular importance and merit of this Ṣalāh.

The word '*mashhūd*' in the expression: *كَانَ مَشْهُودًا* (*kāna mashhūdā*) has been derived from *shahādah* that means 'to be present.' This is a time when, according to clear statements in authentic Aḥādīth, both groups of angels, those of the night and those of the day, present themselves for Ṣalāh. Therefore, it has been called '*mashhūd*' (hence, translated as 'well-attended'). The injunction of five prayers has appeared in this verse briefly. It has been explained fully by the Holy Prophet ﷺ through his word and deed - and unless one acts in accordance with this explanation, no one can perform Ṣalāh. I just do not know how those who claim to understand the Qur'ān without Ḥadīth and the statements of the Rasūl of Allah go about making their Ṣalāh? Similarly, in this verse, the recital of the Qur'ān within the Ṣalāh has also been mentioned briefly. As for its details, it stands proved from the word and deed of the Holy Prophet ﷺ that the recitation in the Fajr prayer should be long - to the measure of strength and ability, less than that in Zuhr and Jumu'ah, average in 'Aṣr and 'Ishā' and very brief in Maghrib. As for the mention of a long recitation in Maghrib and very brief in Fajr in some reports, it stands practically abandoned. Imām al-Qurṭubī carries the *riwāyah* of Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim in which the recitation of long Sūrahs like Sūrah al-A'rāf and Mursalāt in the Ṣalāh of Maghrib, or the recitation of only the Mu'awwadhatāin (the last two Sūrahs) as sufficient in the Ṣalāh of Fajr have been reported. He, then, comments: *فمتروك بالعمل ولا نكاره على معاذ التطويل وبامره الائمة بالتخفيف* It means that these incidentals of long recitation in Maghrib and brief in Fajr stand abandoned in the light of the constant practice of the Holy Prophet ﷺ as well as his verbal sayings. (Qurṭubī)

The time of the Ṣalāh of Tahajjud: Injunctions and rulings

The word: *تَهَجَّدُ* (*tahajjud*) in: *وَمِنَ اللَّيْلِ فَتَهَجَّدُ بِهِ* (And during the night, wake up for Ṣalāh - 79) has been derived from *هَجَّوْدٌ* : *hujūd*. This word is used for two opposite meanings, that of sleeping and that of waking both. But, the words: *وَمِنَ اللَّيْلِ فَتَهَجَّدُ بِهِ*, at this place, mean 'be awake with the Qur'ān in a part of the night' because the pronoun in: *بِهِ* (*bihī*: with it) reverts back to the Qur'ān. (Maḥzarī). 'Being awake with the Qur'ān' means the making of Ṣalāh (with full compliance of what it requires). This very nightly prayer is called the prayer of Tahajjud in the terminology of Shari'ah. Speaking generally, the sense in which it has been taken is that the prayer said after waking up from a short sleep is the Tahaj-

jud. But, according to Tafsīr Maẓharī, the sense of the verse is no more than sacrificing sleep to make Ṣalāh during some part of the night. This sense holds good for sleeping a little, then waking up from it and making Ṣalāh. Very similarly, it is also good if one begins by postponing sleep for Tahajjud and makes the Ṣalāh. The condition that one has to sleep before doing the prayer of Tahajjud is not found in the words used by the Qur'an. Apart from this, there are reports from Aḥādīth which support this general sense of Tahajjud.

And the definition of the prayer of Tahajjud reported from al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī by Imām Ibn Kathīr also confirms this element of generality. The words of the report are as follows:

قال الحسن البصرى هو ما كان بعد العشاء ويحمل على ما كان بعد النوم

Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī says: The prayer of Tahajjud holds good for every prayer that is said after al-'Ishā' And, (because of actual practice) it will be applied to that which is said after some sleep. (Ibn Kathīr)

The outcome is that being after sleep is no condition in the real sense of the prayer of Tahajjud - and this condition is not present in the words of the Qur'an as well. But, speaking generally, it has been the constant practice of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his noble Companions that they used to do their Tahajjud prayer after waking up in the later part of the night, therefore, this would be the better way of doing it.

Is the prayer of Tahajjud Farḍ (obligatory) or Nafl (additional)?

The words: نافلة : *nafl* and نافلة : *nāfilah* in: نافلة لك (an additional prayer for you - 79) literally mean 'additional.' Therefore, prayer (Ṣalāh) and charity (*ṣadaqah*, *khairāt*) etc. that is not obligatory or necessary and, the doing of which brings *thawāb* (reward), and not doing which entails no sin or misconduct, are called *nafl*. In this verse, by looking at the words: نافلة لك (an additional prayer for you) with the prayer of Tahajjud, it is summarily understood that the prayer of Tahajjud is particularly associated with the Holy Prophet ﷺ as *nafl* for him. The fact, though, is that its effect as *nafl* is shared by all, the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his entire *ummah*. Therefore, some respected early commentators have taken '*nāfilah*' at this place as an attribute of *farīḍah* or duty. The meaning given by them is that the Muslim community at large is obligated with five

daily prayers only, but Tahajjud has also been made an additional obligation on the Holy Prophet ﷺ. So, at this place, the word: نافلة : *nāfilah* appears in the sense of an additional obligation, not in the general sense of *nafl*.

Let us look at the correct investigative position in this matter. When, during the early stage of Islam, Sūrah al-Muzzammil was revealed, that was a time when five prayers had yet to be obligated. What everyone was obligated with was the prayer of Tahajjud. This obligation has been mentioned in Sūrah al-Muzzammil (73). Then, it was in the night of the Mi'rāj (Ascent) that five prayers were made obligatory (*farḍ*). So, as for the obligatory nature of Tahajjud, it was abrogated as a duty on the Muslim community at large, by consensus. However, difference did exist about its obligatory nature. Was it also abrogated in the case of the Holy Prophet ﷺ? Or, did it remain an obligation on him as a matter of special consideration - and in this verse, the expression: نَافِلَةٌ لَكَ (*nāfilatal-lak*) means exactly that 'the prayer of Tahajjud is an additional obligation on you.' But, according to Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī, this is not correct for many reasons. Firstly, there is no justification for taking *nafl* as *farḍ*. If it is supposed to be figurative speech, then, there will be no reality against it. Secondly, in authentic Aḥādīth, only five fixed prayers have been mentioned as obligatory (*farḍ*). At the end of another Ḥadīth, it has been said that the fifty prayers made obligatory initially in the nocturnal journey of the Mi'rāj were later reduced in number and set at five. Thus, the number was, though, reduced but the reward promised against these was that of no less than fifty. Then it was said: مَا يُدَبَّلُ الْقَوْلُ لَدَيَّ (The word [given to My servants] will not be changed with Me - Qāf, 50:29). It means: When the command was given for fifty, the reward shall be given for no less than fifty, though the number to be actually performed was reduced.

The outcome of these narrative reports is no other but that no Ṣalāh - other than the five prayers - is obligatory (*farḍ*) on the Muslim *ummah* at large and on the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself. Then, there is a reason for it too. Had the word: نَافِلَةٌ : *nāfilah* been used here in the sense of an 'additional duty,' then, rather than using the word: لَكَ (*lak*: for you) after it, the word used should have been: عَلَيْكَ ('*alaik*: on you) since the latter signifies obligation while the word: لَكَ (*lak*: for you) is used only for approv-

al and permission.

Similarly, this is the position declared to be correct and sound in Tafsīr Maḏharī which says: When the obligatory status of Tahajjud was abrogated in the case of the Muslim *ummah*, it stood abrogated in the case of the Holy Prophet ﷺ as well. What remained was *nafl* for everyone. But, this position raises a question: What is the singularity of the Holy Prophet ﷺ in it? That it is *nafl* for everyone already stands proved. What, then, would be the outcome of saying: نافلة لك (an additional prayer for you)? The answer is that, according to clear statements of Aḥādīth, all kinds of voluntary offerings and *nafl 'ibādāt* made by the Muslim *ummah* expiate their sins and serve as complements to whatever shortcomings remain in the performance of their obligatory prayers. But, the Holy Prophet ﷺ is not only that he is infallible (*ma'sūm*) against sins, he is also above from any shortcomings in the observance of the etiquette of Ṣalāh. Therefore, as far as he is concerned, *nafl 'ibādāt* are nothing but additional. These cannot make amends for any shortcomings. Instead, these are simply a source of increased nearness to Allah. (Qurṭubī, Maḏharī)

Is the prayer of Tahajjud Nafl or Sunnah al-Mu'akkadah?

As for Sunnah al-Mu'akkadah (the emphasized Sunnah), Muslim jurists have a standing rule. Whatever the Holy Prophet ﷺ has done constantly, never leaving it unless under compulsion, is Sunnah al-Mu'akkadah - except that it is proved on the authority of an Islamic legal argument that the particular act was special to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and was not for the Muslim community in general. This rule will obviously require that the prayer of Tahajjud should also be taken as Sunnah al-Mu'akkadah for everyone and not a mere *nafl*. The reason is that the constancy of the Holy Prophet ﷺ in the matter of this Ṣalāh stands proved as an uninterrupted Sunnah. And there is no proof of its being restricted to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Therefore, it should be Sunnah al-Mu'akkadah for the Muslim *ummah* at large as well. This is the position Tafsīr Maḏharī rates as preferable, weightier and worthier. In proof of this being 'emphasized' (*al-mu'akkadah*), it has pointed out to the Ḥadīth in which the Holy Prophet ﷺ said about a person who used to say his Tahajjud prayer earlier but left it later: 'the Satan has soiled his ear.' Such a drastic admonition and warning does not sound in order against the

abandonment of *nafl* only. This tells us that it is Sunnah al-Mu'akkadah (an emphasized Sunnah).

And as for the respected elders who take the position that Tahajjud is only a *nafl*, they declared this perseverance and constancy to be the hallmark of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Then, what he said as admonition against the abandonment of Tahajjud by the person who used to do it before was not really said against its abandonment by him as such. Instead, it was said against first getting used to it, then abandoning it. The reason is that a person who gets into the habit of doing a certain *nafl* must continue with it assiduously - and there is a consensus of the Muslim *ummah* on it. If one leaves it after being in the habit of doing it, he will be blameworthy because leaving it without excuse after the habit is the sign of certain evasion and reluctance. However, there is no blame on the person who is just not in the habit of doing it from the very beginning. Allah knows best.

The number of Raka'āt in the prayer of Tahajjud

In the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī and Muslim, as narrated by Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها, 'the Holy Prophet ﷺ would never say more than eleven *raka'āt*, in Ramaḍān or during months other than it.' Out of these eleven, according to the Ḥanafiyyah, three *raka'āt* used to be that of *witr*, the remaining eight being that of Tahajjud.

And in a narration of Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, the following words of Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها have been reported: 'The Holy Prophet ﷺ used to say thirteen *raka'āt* during the night which includes *witr* and two *raka'āt* of the Sunnah of Fajr as well.' (Maḥzarī) The Sunnah of Fajr has been counted with the nightly prayer because they are performed in almost the same sequence. These reports tell us that the usual habit of the Holy Prophet ﷺ was to offer eight *raka'āt* in the prayer of Tahajjud.

But, from a report coming from Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها herself, it also stands proved that, on occasions, he has done less than that number - four or six - as being sufficient. When Sayyidnā Masrūq رضى الله عنها asked her about the prayer of Tahajjud, she has been reported in the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī to have said: 'There used to be seven, nine and eleven *raka'āt* - other than the Sunnah of Fajr' (Maḥzarī from al-Bukhārī). According to the Ḥanafiyyah, if three *raka'āt* are that of *witr*, four out of

seven, six out of nine and eight out of eleven turn out to be the *rak'at* of Tahajjud.

In what manner was the prayer of Tahajjud offered?

Narrative reports as they generally appear in Aḥādīth prove that the first two *rak'at* in the beginning were light with a brief recitation. Then, in the rest of the *rak'at*, the recitation was long and so were the *rukū'* and *sajdah* - and, at times, this length would become too much and, at others, somewhat less. (This is a summary of the Ḥadīth reports taken from Tafsīr Maḥzarī at this place)

The Praised Station

The Holy Prophet ﷺ has been promised مقام محمود (Maqām Maḥmūd: The Praised Station) in this verse and this station is, out of all prophets, particular to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. As to its explanation, there are different sayings. But, the most sound of them is what appears in authentic Aḥādīth in the words of the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself. This Station is the station of the Grand Intercession (*al-shafā'ah al-kubrā*). This will come to pass on the plains of Resurrection (*al-Ḥashr*) when all children of 'Ādam will be there requesting every prophet and messenger of Allah to intercede with Him on their behalf. All prophets عليهم السلام will offer their excuse. Only the Holy Prophet ﷺ shall be blessed with the honorable station of interceding on behalf of the entire progeny of 'Ādam. Ḥadīth reports carry lengthy relevant details that appear in Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr and Maḥzarī at this point.

The intercession made by prophets and the righteous will be accepted

Out of the Islamic sects, the Khawārij and the Mu'tazilah deny the intercession of prophets. They say that a major sin will not be forgiven through intercession by anyone. But, Aḥādīth coming in uninterrupted succession prove that the intercession for sinners will be accepted from prophets عليهم السلام, even from the righteous of the community. There will be many whose sins will be forgiven through intercession.

Based on a report from Sayyidnā 'Uthmān رضي الله عنه, it appears in Ibn Mājah and al-Baihaqī that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: On the day of Qiyāmah, the blessed prophets will be the first to intercede on behalf of sinners, then the 'Ulamā' and then the Shuhadā'. According to Dailamī

reporting from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Umar رضي الله عنه, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said that the 'Alim will be told that he could intercede on behalf of his disciples, even if their number matches the number of stars.

And Abū Dāwūd and Ibn Hibbān carry a narration of Sayyidnā Abū al-Dardā' رضي الله عنه, with its chains ascending to the Holy Prophet ﷺ who said: The intercession made by a Shahīd (شهيد) will be accepted in favor of seventy people from his family.

The Musnad of Aḥmad, al-Ṭabarānī and al-Baihaqi authentically report Sayyidnā Abū Umāmah رضي الله عنه narrating that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: On the intercession of one person from my *ummah* many people, more than the entire number of the people of the tribes of Rabī'ah and Muḍar, will be admitted to Jannah.

A question and its answer

The question is when the Holy Prophet ﷺ will himself intercede - and no believer will remain in Hell because of it - why and how will the 'Ulamā' and the righteous intercede? The answer appears in Tafsīr Maḥzarī: perhaps, the 'Ulamā' and the righteous of the community will present their intercession in favor of whomsoever they wish before the Holy Prophet ﷺ who will then intercede with Allah Ta'ālā.

An important note

In a Ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: *شَفَاعَتِي لِأَهْلِ الْكِبَائِرِ مِنْ أُمَّتِي* (My intercession shall be for people who had committed major sins). This seems to tell us that those involved with major sins will be forgiven particularly through the intercession of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Any angel or any individual from the Muslim community will not be able to intercede in the case of those who have committed major sins. Instead of that, the intercession made by the righteous of the Muslim community will be for those who were involved with minor sins.

The Station of Intercession could be reached through the efficacy of the prayer of Tahajjud

Ḥadhrat Mujaddid Alf Thānī, the famous religious revivalist of the first Islamic millenium in India, said that, in this verse, the Holy Prophet ﷺ was first given the command to make the prayer of Tahajjud, then he was promised the Praised Station, that is, the Station of Grand Intercession. This tells us that the prayer of Tahajjud serves as a special

via media in acquiring the Station of Intercession.

Before we proceed to verse 80, let us recapitulate what was said in the verses previous to it. Mentioned there first were the pains inflicted on the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the conspiracies they kept hatching to hurt and harm him. Along with it, it was also said that these hostile plans made by them will never succeed. In contrast, the Holy Prophet ﷺ was being blessed with the real plan to offset their evil by prompting him to establish the five prayers, and the Tahajjud. Following that, he has been promised the Praised Station, the highest among all prophets - a promise to be fulfilled in the Hereafter. Now, in this verse 80: **وَقُلْ رَبِّ اَدْخِلْنِيْ** (And say, "O my Lord, make me enter...), the first relief to him against the hurtful and treacherous actions of the disbelievers was given by Allah Ta'ālā within this world in the form of his migration to Madīnah. Then, he was given the good news of the conquest of Makkah in: **وَقُلْ جَاءَ الْحَقُّ** (And say, "Truth has come...81).

It has been reported in al-Jāmi' of Tirmidhī from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه that the Holy Prophet ﷺ was in Makkah al-Mu'azzamah. Then, he was commanded to migrate to Madīnah. Thereupon, this verse was revealed: **وَقُلْ رَبِّ اَدْخِلْنِيْ مُدْخَلَ صِدْقٍ وَّاَخْرِجْنِيْ مُخْرَجَ صِدْقٍ** (And say, "O my Lord, make me enter a rightful entrance and make me exit a rightful exit - 80). Here, the word: **مُدْخَلَ** (*mudkhal*) and **مُخْرَجَ** (*mukhraj*) meaning the place of entry and the place of exit are *اسم ظرف* (*ism-al-zarf*: the noun of place and time). The addition of the attribute (*na't*) of **صِدْقٍ** :*ṣidq* (translated as rightful) releases the sense of such entry and exit being totally true to the will and pleasure of Allah and in the best of attending circumstances, because the word: **صِدْقٍ** (*ṣidq*) is also used in the Arabic language for every such act as is correct and better both outwardly and inwardly. The words: **قَدَمَ صِدْقٍ** (Yūnus 10:2), **لِسَانَ صِدْقٍ** (ash-Shu'arā' 26:84) and **مَفْعَدَ صِدْقٍ** (al-Qamar 54:55) have been used in the Holy Qur'ān in that very sense.

'Entrance' means 'Madīnah' and the place of exit denotes 'Makkah.' The sense takes the form of a prayer: O Allah, may my entry into Madīnah turn out to be good and smooth, without having to face anything unpleasant and unwelcome on arrival there. And may my exit from Makkah be good and smooth, without being entangled in love of country and home.' There are other exegetic statements too which explain this verse. But, this particular explanation has been reported from Ḥasan al-Baṣrī

and Qatādah. Ibn Kathīr calls it 'the most sound statement.' Ibn Jarīr too has gone by it. As for the order, it required that the 'exit' should have been mentioned first while the 'entrance,' later. But, the precedence of 'entrance' and the succession of 'exit' is there, perhaps, to indicate that the exit from Makkah had no purpose of its own, in fact, parting from the Baytullah was extremely shocking. But, there was a purpose - to look for peace, for Islam and Muslims - something that could be hoped for through the entry in Madīnah. Therefore, the objective to be achieved was made to come first.

A prayer for important objectives

At the time of his migration to Madīnah, Allah Ta'ālā asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ to make this *du'ā'* which pleaded with Him that his exit from Makkah and then the arrival in Madīnah should both be good and smooth in all possible ways. It was the outcome of this prayer that, though he was within the striking range of the pursuing disbelievers at the time of Hijrah, yet Allah Ta'ālā shielded him at every step and finally made Madīnah al-Ṭayyibah good and promising for him and for all Muslims, both outwardly and inwardly. Therefore, some 'Ulamā' have said that every Muslim should remember to make this prayer at the beginning of all objectives they wish to pursue and that this prayer is beneficial for all objectives and purposes. The sentence which complements this very prayer appears next: *وَأَجْعَلْ لِي مِنْ لَدُنْكَ سُلْطَانًا نَصِيرًا* : "and grant me from Your Own a power favoured (by You)." Qatādah, the great *tabi'ī* says: the Holy Prophet ﷺ knew that fulfilling his functional duties as a prophet and working while besieged by enemies were challenges he could not handle personally. Therefore, He prayed to Allah Ta'ālā for help and the power to subdue. The prayer was answered and everyone saw its effects.

Verse 81: *وَقُلْ جَاءَ الْحَقُّ وَرَهَقَ الْبَاطِلُ* (And say, "Truth has come and falsehood has vanished") was revealed after Hijrah about the conquest of Makkah. Sayyidnā Ibn Mas'ūd رضي الله عنه says that on the day Makkah was conquered, the Holy Prophet ﷺ entered Makkah. At that time, there were three hundred and sixty idols standing around the Baytullah. Some 'Ulamā' report a reason for this particular number. They say that the Mushriks of Makkah had a separate idol for each day of the year that they used to worship on the given day. (Qurṭubī) When the Holy Prophet ﷺ

reached there, this was the verse he had on his blessed lips: حَاءَ الْحَقِّ وَزَهَقَ الْبَاطِلُ (Truth has come and falsehood has vanished) while he went round striking at each single idol on the chest with his stick. (al-Bukhārī and Muslim)

It appears in some Ḥadīth narratives that the end of this stick had a pewter or iron ferrule mounted on it. So, when the Holy Prophet ﷺ would hit an idol on the chest, it would fall back. In the end, when all idols fell down, he gave orders that they be demolished. (Qurṭubī with reference to Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ and al-Qushairī)

It is necessary to erase customs and symbols of polytheism, disbelief and falsehood

Imām al-Qurṭubī said that this verse proves that it is *wājib* (necessary, obligatory) to erase the idols of Mushriks and all other polytheistic symbols and signs - and all such false instruments that are used in the way of sin and disobedience as well. They too come under the purview of the same injunction. Ibn al-Mundhir said that pictures and sculpted figures made in wood or metal etc. also come under the injunction governing idols. The Holy Prophet ﷺ had torn the curtain having pictures made on it in lines and colors. This, incidentally, tells us about the general injunctions covering common pictures. According to Ṣaḥīḥ Ḥadīth, when Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام will come towards the later times, he will undo the cross and eliminate the swine. These things prove that it is necessary to demolish and eliminate the instruments of *shirk*, *kufr* and *bāṭil*.

We can now move to the last verse (82) cited above: وَنُنزِّلُ مِنَ الْقُرْآنِ مَا هُوَ شِفَاءٌ (And We reveal the Qur'an which is a cure). That the Holy Qur'an cures hearts and delivers people from *shirk* and *kufr*, low morals and spiritual ailments is no secret. The entire Muslim *ummah* agrees with it. And according to some 'Ulamā', the way the Qur'an is a cure for spiritual ailments, it is also a cure for physical diseases. The sense is that reciting the verses of the Qur'an and blowing the breath on the body of the sick person or to write its words on an amulet and putting it around the neck is also expected to be a cure for physical diseases. Ḥadīth narratives bear testimony to it. The Ḥadīth of Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī عليه السلام can be seen in all books of Aḥādīth. It says that a party of the noble Companions was in travel. In a village on their way, a scorpion had bitten the chief. The village people asked the Companions if they could suggest

some treatment for it. They recited the Sūrah al-Fātiḥah seven times, blew their breath on him and the ailing patient stood cured. Later, when this incident was mentioned before the Holy Prophet ﷺ, he declared this action of the Companions to be permissible.

Similarly, there are several other Ḥadīth reports which prove that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has done it himself. After having recited the last two verses of the Qur'ān, he would blow his breath on the sick person. It is also proved that the Ṣaḥābah and the Ṭabī'īn used to treat sick people with the recital of the last two verses of the Qur'ān as well as with the recital of other verses from it. That it was written and placed around the neck as an amulet also stands proved. Al-Qurṭubī has given details about it under his commentary on this verse.

The last sentence of the verse: وَلَا يَزِيدُ الظَّالِمِينَ إِلَّا خَسَارًا (And it adds nothing to the unjust but loss - 82) tells us that the Holy Qur'ān - when recited with faith and reverence - is certainly a cure. It is open. It is proven. Conversely, any denial of the Qur'ān, or irreverence to it, could also become a source of loss and misfortunes.

Verses 83 - 84

وَإِذَا أَنْعَمْنَا عَلَى الْإِنْسَانِ أَعْرَضَ وَنَأَى بِجَانِبِهِ ؕ وَإِذَا مَسَّهُ الشَّرُّكَانَ
يُتُوسًا ﴿٨٣﴾ قُلْ كُلٌّ يَعْمَلُ عَلَى شَاكِلَتِهِ ؕ فَرَبُّكُمْ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ هُوَ
أَهْدَى سَبِيلًا ﴿٨٤﴾

And when We bestow Our favor upon man, he avoids (to recognize it) and keeps himself far aside (from obedience), and when some evil touches him, he is in total despair. [83]

Say, "Everyone acts in his own style. For, your Lord knows best which one is better guided in his way." [84]

Commentary

Regarding the explanation of the word: شَاكِلَةٌ (*shākilah*) in verse 84: كُلٌّ يَعْمَلُ عَلَى شَاكِلَتِهِ (Everyone acts in his own style), several interpretations have been reported from authorities among the early righteous elders, such as, disposition, habit, instinct, intention, way or manner. In sum,

all these turn into a second nature in terms of the circumstances, habits and customs everyone lives with. Thus, what one does remains subservient to it. (Qurṭubī) In this verse, human beings have been warned that they must abstain from bad surroundings, bad company and bad habits and take to the company of good people and inculcate good habits (al-Jaṣṣāṣ). The reason, as stated earlier, is that one's response pattern built up under the influence of surrounding, company and custom makes one do what it dictates. Imām al-Jaṣṣāṣ has also given another meaning of 'shākilah' at this place, that of 'like.' Given this meaning, the sense of the verse would be that everyone feels comfortable with a person who is compatible with one's temperament. A good man finds another good man familiar while a wicked man feels comfortable with another wicked man whose style he follows without any qualms of conscience. An example of this behavior pattern appears in what Allah says in the Qur'an: الْحَيَاتُ الْخَبِيثَاتُ (Evil women are for evil men - 24:26) and وَالطَّيِّبَاتُ لِلطَّيِّبِينَ (Good women are for good men - 24:26). It means that everyone strikes familiarity with a man or woman according to one's own temperament. In short, this too is a warning against falling into bad company and bad habits. One should really make an effort to abstain from these.

Verses 85 - 89

وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الرُّوحِ ۖ قُلِ الرُّوحُ مِنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّي وَمَا أُوتِيتُمْ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا ﴿٨٥﴾ وَلَئِنْ سَأَلْتُمْ لَنَدْهَبَنَّ بِالَّذِي أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ ثُمَّ لَا تَجِدُ لَكَ بِهِ عَلَيْنَا وَكِيلًا ﴿٨٦﴾ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً مِنْ رَبِّكَ ۗ إِنَّ فَضْلَهُ كَانَ عَلَيْكَ كَبِيرًا ﴿٨٧﴾ قُلْ لَئِنْ اجْتَمَعَتِ الْإِنْسُ وَالْجِنُّ عَلَىٰ أَنْ يَأْتُوا بِمِثْلِ هَذَا الْقُرْآنِ لَا يَأْتُونَ بِمِثْلِهِ وَلَوْ كَانَ بَعْضُهُمْ لِبَعْضٍ ظَهِيرًا ﴿٨٨﴾ وَلَقَدْ صَرَّفْنَا لِلنَّاسِ فِي هَذَا الْقُرْآنِ مِنْ كُلِّ مِثْلٍ ۚ فَأَبَىٰ أَكْثَرُ النَّاسِ إِلَّا كُفُورًا ﴿٨٩﴾

And they ask you about the soul. Say, "The soul is something from the command of my Lord, and you are not given but a little from the knowledge." [85]

And if We so will, We will surely take away what We have revealed to you, then you shall find no one to rely upon against Us in this matter. [86] But it is a mercy from your Lord. Great is indeed His favor upon you. [87]

Say, "If all the humans and *jinn*s join together to produce the like of this Qur'an, they shall not (be able to) come up with its like, even though they back up one another. [88]

And surely We have explained for the people in this Qur'an every subject in various ways. Still most of the people refused to do anything but reject. [89]

Commentary

The first verse (85) appearing above carries a question posed by disbelievers about Rūḥ (soul, spirit) along with its answer that came from Allah Ta'ālā. The word: **الرُّوحُ** (*al-rūḥ*) is used in the Arabic language and idiom, and in the Holy Qur'an as well, to convey several meanings. The well-recognized meaning taken from this word is common knowledge, that is, the soul on which depends life. In the Holy Qur'an, this word has also been used for the archangel, Jibra'īl al-Amin (Gabriel, the Trustworthy): **نَزَلَ بِهِ الرُّوحُ الْأَمِينُ عَلَى قَلْبِكَ** (The Trustworthy Spirit has brought it down upon your heart - ash-Shu'arā' 26:193,194). It has also been used for Sayyidnā 'Isā **الطَّيِّبَاتِ** (4:171), and Waḥy (revelation - 40:15), and the Qur'an too: **أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ رُوحًا مِّنْ أَمْرِنَا** (and We have revealed to you a spirit of Our command - 42:52).

What does 'Rūḥ' signify?

Therefore, the first thing to be determined here is the intent of the questioners as to which meaning they had in mind when they had asked the question about the Rūḥ. Some respected early commentators have, in view of the context, declared this question as related to revelation and Qur'an, or to angel Jibra'īl who brought it. The apparent reason is that the Qur'an was mentioned earlier in: **وَنُنَزِّلُ مِنَ الْقُرْآنِ** (And We reveal the Qur'an - 82) and it is again the Qur'an that finds mention in the verses after that. Given this congruity, they found it appropriate to take 'Rūḥ' in this question too as signifying nothing but Waḥy and Qur'an, or Jibra'īl. In that case, the question would be about how the Waḥy or revelation came to him and who brought it. In response to the question, the Holy Qur'an considered it sufficient to say that the revelation was from

the command of Allah. It elected to be silent about its details and modalities that the questioners were seeking.

But, the background of the revelation of this verse given in authentic Aḥādīth ascending to the Holy Prophet ﷺ is just about very clear in respect of the nature of the question. Those asking the question had asked about the living Rūḥ and the underlying purpose was to find out the reality of Rūḥ. What is it? How does it come in and go out of the human body? How does it make man and animal come alive? According to the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī and Muslim, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضي الله عنه narrates:

'Once I was walking with the Holy Prophet ﷺ through an unpopulated part of Madīnah. He had a stick from the branch of a date palm in his blessed hand. When he passed by some Jews, they were talking among themselves: Muhammad ﷺ is coming. Ask him about the Rūḥ. Others asked them not to do that. But, those bent on asking went ahead and asked the question. After having heard the question, the Holy Prophet ﷺ reclined on his stick and stood silent which gave me the inkling that the revelation was about to come on him. After a little while, when the revelation had come to him, he recited the verse: وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الرُّوحِ (And they ask you about the Rūḥ).'

At this point, it is understandable that it was a terminology of the Qur'an when it called the Qur'an, or Waḥy (revelation) as Rūḥ. That the question asked by these people was based on it is too far out. Of course, the matter of the living Rūḥ, human or animal, is such as would naturally emerge in everyone's mind. Therefore, the majority of commentators - Ibn Kathīr, Ibn Jarīr, al-Qurṭubī, Abū Ḥayyān, 'Alūsī - confirm the view that the question related to the reality of the living Rūḥ. As for the continuity of references to the Qur'an in the context and that the question-answer interlude about Rūḥ coming in between would be incoherent, its answer is clear. Previous verses have mentioned hostile questions asked by the disbelievers and Mushriks. Their objective thereby was to test the Holy Prophet ﷺ concerning his claim to be a messenger of Allah. This question too is a link of the same chain. Therefore, it is not incoherent. There is yet another authentic Ḥadīth reported about the background of the revelation of this verse particularly. The position being explained here has been covered there

more explicitly, that is, the purpose of the questioner was to test the authority of the Holy Prophet ﷺ as a Messenger.

Accordingly, a report of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās ؓ appearing in the Musnad of Aḥmad says that the Quraysh of Makkah who kept addressing all sorts of questions to the Holy Prophet ﷺ hit upon the idea that the Jews were learned and knew about past scriptures. Why not ask them about what to ask the Holy Prophet ﷺ and test him thereby? Therefore, they sent their men to the Jews seeking their guidance in this matter. They told them to ask about the Rūḥ. (Ibn Kathīr) Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ has also been reported to have said in his explanation of this verse that the Jews had also said while asking this question - 'you tell us how does punishment affect the Rūḥ.' By that time, nothing had been revealed to the Holy Prophet ﷺ about it. Therefore, he did not answer the question instantly at that time. Then, came angel Jibrā'īl with the verse: قُلِ الرُّوحُ مِنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّي (Say, "the Rūḥ is from the command of my Lord.") (Abridged from Ibn Kathīr)

The incident of the question: Did it happen in Makkah or Madīnah?

Before we resolve this aspect of the question, we have to consider the two Ḥadīth reports relating to the background of the revelation of this verse, that of Sayyidnā Ibn Mas'ūd and Ibn 'Abbās ؓ, referred to above. Out of the two, according to the report of Sayyidnā Ibn Mas'ūd ؓ, this incident about the question came to pass in Madīnah - and that is the reason why some commentators have declared this verse to be Madani, though a major portion of Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl (al-Isrā') is Makkī. As for the report from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ, it places the incident at Makkah. In accordance with that, this verse too remains Makkī like the whole Sūrah. Therefore, Ibn Kathīr has declared this very probability to be weightier and more acceptable. And as for the report of Sayyidnā Ibn Mas'ūd ؓ, he responds by saying that it is possible that this verse was revealed in Madīnah a second time - as a repeated revelation of many verses of the Qur'ān is an accepted fact in the sight of all 'Ulamā'. And Tafsīr Maḥzarī, by declaring the report of Sayyidnā Ibn Mas'ūd as weightier and more acceptable, has determined the incident to be that of Madīnah and the verse to be Madani. It gives two reasons for it. Firstly, this report appears in the two Ṣaḥīḥs of al-Bukhari and Muslim and its

authority is stronger as compared to the report of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه. Secondly, in this report, Sayyidnā Ibn Mas'ūd is a part of the incident. He is narrating an event that was his own. This makes it contrary to the report of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās where, it is obvious, he would have heard it as told by someone (because he was too young at that time to witness the occurrence).

The answer to the question asked

The Holy Qur'ān said: *قُلِ الرُّوحُ مِنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّي* (Say, "the Rūḥ is from the command of my Lord."). While explaining the answer, statements and interpretations given by commentators differ. The closest and the clearest of these is what Qādī Thanā'ullah Pānīpatī has preferred in his Tafsīr Maḥzarī. He says: Only what was necessary and what common people would understand has been told - and the full reality of Rūḥ, that the question sought, was not unfolded because it was beyond the comprehension of common people and, for that matter, nothing they needed hinged on understanding it. Here, the Holy Prophet ﷺ was asked to respond by saying that 'the Rūḥ is from the command of my Lord.' In other words, it is not like the usual created that come into existence through the dispersal of matter and procreation. In fact, it is something created directly through the command (*كُنْ*: *kun*: be) of Allah Ta'ālā. At least, this much of the answer makes it clear that Rūḥ cannot be taken on the analogy of common matter - which removes all those doubts that emerge as a result of trying to understand Rūḥ through the prism of materialistic inquiry. The hard truth is that this much knowledge of Rūḥ is sufficient for man. No business, religious or worldly, depends on knowing more than that. Therefore, taking that part of the question as redundant and unnecessary, it was not answered - specially when understanding its reality is something not easy even for the wisest of the wise, not to say much about the common people.

Answering every question is not necessary unless religiously advisable

Imām Abū Bakr al-Jaṣṣāṣ has deduced from this answer the ruling that it is not necessary for the Muftī and 'Ālim to answer every question and every aspect from it as posed by the questioner. Instead of doing that, the answer should be given with religious advisability kept in sight. Any answer that is above the comprehension of the addressee, or

should there be the danger of his or her falling into misunderstanding, then, such an answer should not be given. Similarly, not to be answered are questions that are unnecessary (لا يعنى : *lā ya'nī*). Yes, should there be a person who faces a situation in which he must act one way or the other and who is no 'Ālim, then, it is necessary for the Muftī and 'Ālim to give an answer in the light of his knowledge. (Jaṣṣāṣ) Imām al-Bukhārī has devoted a chapter heading in Kitāb al-'Ilm to highlight this point. He has said that a question the answer to which is likely to cause misunderstanding should not be answered.

Whether or not it is possible for anyone to have the knowledge of the reality of Rūḥ

The Holy Qur'ān has given an answer to this question in accordance with the need and comprehension of the addressee. It has not elected to unfold the reality of Rūḥ. But, it does not necessarily imply that no human being can simply understand the reality of Rūḥ and that the Holy Prophet ﷺ also did not know its reality. The truth of the matter is that this verse neither negates nor confirms it. If a prophet or messenger were to come to know its reality through Waḥy (revelation), or a Waliyy (man of Allah) through Kashf (illumination) and Ilhām (inspiration), then, it is not contrary to this verse. In fact, even if this matter is debated and investigated in terms of reason and philosophy, it would certainly be called useless and unnecessary, but it cannot be called impermissible. Therefore, many learned scholars from the early and later period of Islam have written standard books about Rūḥ. In our period, my venerated teacher, Shaykh al-Islam, Shabbīr Aḥmad Usmānī has presented this issue admirably in a small tract. Here, he has explained its reality to the measure it is possible for a common person to understand and an educated one to find sufficient enough to avoid doubts and difficulties.

An important note

At this juncture, Imām al-Baghawī has carried a detail report from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās ؓ as follows: This verse was revealed in Makkah al-Mukarramah. It happened at a time when the Quraysh chiefs of Makkah got together and talked about the problem that Muḥammad ﷺ was born amongst us and grew up into a young man. No one ever doubted his trustworthiness, honesty and truthfulness, and he was never accused by anyone of having told a lie. Yet, despite all that,

we just do not understand the claim of being a prophet he was now making. Therefore, let us do something about it, like sending our delegation to the Jewish scholars of Madīnah and get a learned opinion about him from them. So, a delegation from the Quraysh met the Jewish scholars in Madīnah. They advised: 'we tell you three things. Ask him about these three. If he answers all three, he is no prophet. Similarly, if he does not answer any of the three, he is still no prophet. And if he answers two, not answering the third, be certain that he is the prophet.'* They proposed three questions: (1) Ask him about those in the past who had sought refuge in a cave to stay safe from *shirk* - because, their account is unique. (2) Ask him about the person who had traveled through the East and West of the Earth and what had happened to him. (3) Ask him about the Rūḥ (soul, spirit).

The delegation returned and posed those three questions before the Holy Prophet ﷺ. He said, 'I shall give you the answer to these tomorrow'- but, he did not say, "*Insha'Allah*" with it. The outcome was that the channel of Waḥy (revelation) remained discontinued for a few days. There are various reports that put the number of days from twelve, fifteen to forty during which it stood stopped. The Quraysh of Makkah had their opportunity to hurl taunts - 'we were promised an answer tomorrow, now so many days have passed and we have no answer!' This caused the Holy Prophet ﷺ too to become anxious. Then came angel Jibrā'il with the verse: وَلَا تَقُولَنَّ لِشَيْءٍ إِنِّي فَاعِلٌ ذَلِكَ غَدًا إِلَّا أَن يَشَاءَ اللَّهُ (And never say about anything: "I will do that tomorrow," without [saying]: "*Insha'Allāh*": [If Allah wills].) - al-Kahf, 18: 23,24) and, after that, he recited the verse about the Rūḥ mentioned above. Then came the revelation of the verses relating to the people of Kahf, and the event of Dhul-Qarnain who had traveled from the East to the West which is to appear in Sūrah al-Kahf. A detailed answer has been given there by narrating the story of the people of Kahf and Dhul-Qarnain while the question concerned with the reality of the Rūḥ was not answered (which made the sign of the veracity of prophecy given by the Jews manifest). Tirmidhī has also described this event briefly. (Maḥzarī)

Investigative observations on the reality of Rūḥ (soul, spirit) and

*. This detail is in accordance with Ma'ālim al-Tanzīl, p. 134, v. 4 - Muḥammad Taqī Usmānī.

Nafs (self) have appeared earlier in this volume under verse 29 of Sūrah al-Ḥijr: نَفَخْتُ فِيهِ مِنْ رُوحِي (I have blown into him of my spirit - 15:29). Presented with reference to Tafsīr Maẓharī, it makes the kinds of Rūḥ along with the reality of each sufficiently clear.

We can now move to verse 86: وَكَيْنُ شَيْئًا لَنُذْهِبَهُنَّ (And if We so will, We will surely take away...). It will be recollected that, in the previous verse (85), by giving an answer to the question about Rūḥ as true to the measure of its necessity, the underlying effort to find out the reality of the Rūḥ was blocked and it was declared that man's knowledge, no matter how much, still remains relatively insignificant in terms of the great span of the ultimate reality of things. Therefore, getting entangled with unnecessary debates and investigations is a waste of precious time. The present verse: وَكَيْنُ شَيْئًا (And if We so will) indicates that the sum total of whatever knowledge human beings have been given, even that is no private property of theirs. Allah Ta'ālā can, if He so wills, take away that too. Therefore, they should be grateful to Allah for whatever of knowledge they have and stay away from wasting time in redundant and unnecessary investigations - specially when pure investigation is just not the objective, instead, testing others or belittling them is. If one did that, it is not out of the realm of possibility that this crookedness may result in all that one has in the name of knowledge taken away in toto. The address in this verse is, though, to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, but the purpose is to really make his followers listen and get the message - when even the knowledge of the Rasūl of Allah is not within his exclusive power and control, not much can be said about others!

The subject in verse 88: قُلْ لَئِنِ اجْتَمَعَتِ الْإِنْسُ وَالْجِنُّ (If all humans and *jinn*s join together...) appears in some other verses of the Holy Qur'ān as well. Challenging the humankind, it has been said there: If you do not take the Qur'ān to be the word of Allah, rather take it to be a word of man, then, you too are human, why would you not come up with its like? Along with that challenge, it was also said in this verse: Not the human-kind alone, you are welcome to join up with *jinn*s, but you, all combined together, will still be unable to come out with one Sūrah - even one verse - like that of the Qur'ān.

The repetition of this subject at this place may possibly be to show the futility of what the deniers of the message were trying to do. Here

they were trying to test the veracity of the mission of a prophet of Allah by asking all sorts of questions, the one about the Rūḥ being one of them. Being an exercise in futility, why would they go about digging into unnecessary issues only to determine whether or not the prophet sent to them was true? Why they would not look into the Qur'an as it is? It leaves no room for doubt in the veracity of the Holy Prophet ﷺ as prophet and messenger of Allah. The reason is simple. When the humans and *jinn*s of the whole world are incapable of producing the least like of it, what doubt could there be in that it is but the Divine Word. And once it is proved so manifestly that the Holy Qur'an is Divine Word, hardly any doubt remains in that the Holy Prophet ﷺ was a true prophet and messenger of Allah.

The last verse: وَقَدْ صَرَّفْنَا (And surely We have explained - 89) tells us that the Holy Qur'an stands out as a miracle so clear that it leaves no room for any question and doubt. Still, what is happening is that people do not thank Allah for His blessings, do not even recognize the real worth of the blessing of the Qur'an and keep wandering around in error.

Verses 90 - 95

وَقَالُوا لَنْ نُؤْمِنَ لَكَ حَتَّى تَفْجُرَ لَنَا مِنَ الْأَرْضِ يَبُوعًا ﴿٩٠﴾ أَوْ تَكُونَ لَكَ جَنَّةٌ مِّنْ نَّحِيلٍ وَعِنَبٍ فَتُفَجَّرَ الْأَنْهَارَ حِلَالَهَا تَفْجِيرًا ﴿٩١﴾ أَوْ تُسْقِطَ السَّمَاءَ كَمَا زَعَمْتَ عَلَيْنَا كِسْفًا أَوْ تَأْتِيَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ قَبِيلًا ﴿٩٢﴾ أَوْ يَكُونَ لَكَ بَيْتٌ مِّنْ زُخْرَفٍ أَوْ تَرْفَى فِي السَّمَاءِ ط وَكُنْ تَوْمِنَ لِرَبِّكَ حَتَّى تُنَزَّلَ عَلَيْنَا كِتَابًا نَقْرُؤُهُ ط قُلْ سُبْحَانَ رَبِّيْ هَلْ كُنْتُ إِلَّا بَشَرًا رَسُولًا ﴿٩٣﴾ وَمَا مَنَعَ النَّاسَ أَنْ يُؤْمِنُوا إِذْ جَاءَهُمْ الْهُدَى إِلَّا أَنْ قَالُوا أَبَعَثَ اللَّهُ بَشَرًا رَسُولًا ﴿٩٤﴾ قُلْ لَوْ كَانَ فِي الْأَرْضِ مَلَائِكَةٌ يَّمْشُونَ مُطْمَئِنِّينَ لَنَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَلَكًا رَسُولًا ﴿٩٥﴾

And they said, "We shall never believe in you unless you

make a spring gush forth for us from the earth. [90] Or you have a garden of date-palms and grapes, then you bring forth rivers from their midst in abundance. [91] Or you cause the sky to fall upon us in pieces, as you claimed, or you bring Allah and angels before us face to face. [92] Or you have a house made of gold; or you ascend to the sky, and we will not believe in your ascension unless you send down to us a book we may read. Say, "I proclaim the Purity of my Lord. I am nothing but human, a messenger." [93]

And nothing prevented people from believing, when guidance came to them, except that they said, "Has Allah sent a man as a messenger?" [94]

Say, "Were there angels (living) on the earth, walking about in peace, We would have certainly sent down an angel from the heavens as a messenger." [95]

Commentary

A prophetic answer to hostile questions sounding absurd

The questions asked and the demands made in these verses from the Holy Prophet ﷺ were virtually conditions on the fulfillment of which his antagonists were supposed to believe. These conditions are such that anyone who hears them would find them nothing but some sort of weird mockery and certainly a very absurd excuse for not believing. While having to respond to such questions, one becomes naturally angry and retorts in the same manner. But, the answer that Allah Ta'ālā taught His prophet ﷺ to give against their impertinent questions reported in this verse is something significant for everyone. Particularly so, for the leaders and reformers of the Muslim community who would do well to always remember it making it a regular feature of their work among people. Is it not that, in answer to all that, nothing was said about their lack of sense, nor mention was made of their hostile mischief, nor there was any verbal duel fought against them? Instead, the truth of the matter was made clear to them in very simple words. In effect, they were told: Perhaps, you think that a person who comes as a messenger of Allah should also be the possessor of all Divine powers and should be able to control everything. This is a mistaken notion. The duty of a messenger of Allah is only to convey the Divine message. It is a different matter that Allah would also send many miracles to prove the veracity of the mission of His apostles, prophets and messengers. But, that takes

place exclusively with the power and under the control of Allah Ta'ālā. A *rasūl* (messenger) is not given Divine powers. He is a human being and is never outside the framework of human power - except that Allah Ta'ālā alone were to manifest His great subduing power to help him.

Only a human being can be a messenger of Allah: Angels cannot be sent as messengers to human beings

Common disbelievers and polytheists thought that '*bashar*,' that is, a man, could not be the messenger of Allah because he is someone accustomed to all human compulsions like them. When so, what edge did he have over them to make them call him the messenger of Allah and take him as their leader claiming that they follow him? This assumption of theirs has been answered in the Holy Qur'ān, at several places in various ways. The outcome of the answer given here in this verse: مَا مَنَعَ النَّاسَ (And nothing prevented people - 94) is that a messenger of Allah sent to a set of people has to be from their genus or race. If these people are human, the messenger should be human because mutual congruity does not exist between one genus and the other - and without congruity, guidance and grooming bring no benefit. Had some angel been sent to men as their messenger, he would have known no hunger, or thirst, or sexual desires, nor would he have felt the effect of chill and heat, nor fatigue after hard work. He would have, then, expected human beings to act like him without having ever realized their weaknesses and limitations. Similarly, when human beings knew that he was an angel, after all, they would have come to the conclusion that they just did not have the ability to do what he did. Who would have, then, followed him? Following is the fruit of correction, reform and right guidance. This benefit can be hoped for only when the messenger of Allah is from the genus of men. He should be an embodiment of human emotions and physical desires while, at the same time, he should also have an angelic majesty that could serve as a liaison - intermediary communicator - between human beings and angels, receiving revelation from angels bringing it and communicating it to his fellow human beings.

This submission also removes the doubt that arises by thinking: when human beings cannot derive benefit from the angel, how would a messenger - despite being human - derive the benefit of revelation from them?

As for the doubt - when the compatibility of genus is a condition between a messenger and his people, how was the Holy Prophet ﷺ made a messenger of the *jinn*s for they are not from the same genus as men? - it can be answered by saying that the messenger is not simply a human being, instead, he also has an angelic majesty about him because of which *jinn*s too could also be congruous to him.

In the last verse (95), it was said that they, despite being human, cannot demand that their messenger should be an angel. This demand was unreasonable. Yes, if angels had been living on the Earth and there was the need to send a messenger to them, then, indeed, an angel would have been sent as a messenger. It will be noted that the attribute of angels living on the Earth has been described here in the words: *يَمْشُونَ مُطْمَئِنِّينَ* (walking about in peace). This tells us that the need to send an angel deputed as a messenger to other angels would have come up only at a time when the angels of the Earth could not themselves go to the heavens rather remained living on the Earth alone. Otherwise, had they themselves possessed the power to go to the heavens, there would have remained just no need to send a messenger to the Earth.

Verses 96 - 100

قُلْ كَفَىٰ بِاللَّهِ شَهِيدًا ۖ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَكُمْ ۖ إِنَّهُ كَانَ بِعِبَادِهِ خَبِيرًا ۖ بَصِيرًا ﴿٩٦﴾
 وَمَنْ يَهْدِ اللَّهُ فَهُوَ الْمُهْتَدِ ۚ وَمَنْ يُضِلِلْ فَلَنْ تَجِدَ لَهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءَ
 مِنْ دُونِهِ ۗ وَنَحْشُرُهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ عَلَىٰ وُجُوهِهِمْ عُمِيَآ وَبِكُمَا
 وَصْمًا ۗ مَا وَهَمُّ جَهَنَّمَ ۗ كُلَّمَا خَبَتْ زِدْنَاهُمْ سَعِيرًا ﴿٩٧﴾ ذَلِكَ
 جَزَاءُ هُمُ بَانَهِمْ كَفَرُوا بِآيَاتِنَا وَقَالُوا إِذَا كُنَّا عِظَامًا وَرَفَاتًا إِنَّا
 لَمَبْعُوثُونَ خَلْقًا جَدِيدًا ﴿٩٨﴾ أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّ اللَّهَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ
 وَالْأَرْضَ قَادِرٌ عَلَىٰ أَنْ يَخْلُقَ مِثْلَهُمْ وَجَعَلَ لَهُمْ أَجَلًا لَّارْتِبَ فِيهِ ۗ
 فَآبَى الظَّالِمُونَ إِلَّا كُفُورًا ﴿٩٩﴾ قُلْ لَوْ أَنَّكُمْ تَمْلِكُونَ خَزَائِنَ رَحْمَةِ
 رَبِّي إِذًا لَأَمْسَكْتُمْ خَشْيَةَ الْإِنْفَاقِ ۗ وَكَانَ الْإِنْسَانُ قَنُورًا ﴿١٠٠﴾

Say, "Allah is sufficient as witness between me and you. Surely, about His servants, He is All-Aware, All-Watchful." [96]

And the one whom Allah guides is the guided one. And whom He lets go astray, you will never find for them any helpers other than Him. And We shall gather them on the Day of Judgment their faces down - blind, dumb and deaf. Their abode is the Fire. Whenever it calms down, We increase the flames for them. [97]

That is their punishment, because they rejected Our signs and said, "What! Once we are reduced to bones and dust, is it, then, that we shall be raised, created anew?" [98]

Have they not seen that Allah who has created the heavens and the earth has the power to create them as they were? And (for this) He has appointed a time in which there is no doubt. Still, the wrongdoers refused to do anything but reject. [99]

Say, "If you were to own the treasures of my Lord's blessing, even then you would certainly hold them back, lest it should be spent. And man is so niggardly. [100]

Commentary

The truth of the matter about what has been said in the last verse (100) is that the treasures of the mercy of Allah are limit-less and end-less. They are never going to end, but man is by nature narrow-minded, short on courage. When it comes to giving, he is not motivated enough to share what he has with others.

Commentators generally take the expression 'the treasures of the Lord's blessing or mercy' to mean the treasures of wealth. This has its link with previous verses (90,91) where the disbelievers of Makkah had demanded that the Holy Prophet ﷺ should - if he was really a prophet in truth - make rivers flow in the barren desert of Makkah and transform it into lush green farms, like the land of Syria. The answer to this was given right there (93), saying in effect: This is as if you have taken me to be nothing short of God whose authority you want me to exercise. As for me, I am only a messenger of Allah, not Allah. I cannot do what I will. If we see this verse in this context, it would mean: If you are asking me to turn this desert land of Makkah into a green land to test my verac-

ity as prophet and messenger, then, the miracle of the eloquence of the Qur'an is sufficient to prove that. There is no need for any other demands. And if this is to meet the needs of your country and people, remember that, even if you are given everything you demand for the land of Makkah, and all sorts of treasures with it, it would not result in the prosperity of the masses of your country. In fact, human nature will take its course and whoever gets hold of these treasures will sit on them like legendary serpents. Tell them to spend it on the people and you will see them all consumed by the fear that it will go out of their hands. In a situation like this, if a few rich men of Makkah get to be richer and opulent, what are the masses of people going to get out of it? Most commentators have declared this to be the sense of the verse.

My master and mentor, Ḥaḍrat Thānavī, in his Bayān al-Qur'an, has interpreted 'my Lord's mercy' as the station of prophet-hood and messenger-ship, and 'the treasures of mercy' as the varied perfection of prophet-hood. Given this Tafsīr, this verse will be linked with previous verses by saying: The outcome of all those absurd demands you are making against my status as a prophet and messenger of Allah is that you just do not want to believe in it. Do you, then, want that the function of prophet-hood should be entrusted in your hands, so that you can make anyone a prophet at your sweet will? If such a wish were to be granted, the consequence would be that you would never give prophet-hood or messenger-ship to anyone, sitting over it like misers. After having given this explanation, he has added that this Tafsīr is something that comes as one of the many divine gifts. It fits the occasion. Interpreting prophet-hood in this setting with mercy would be similar to its interpretation in the verse of Sūrah az-Zukhruf. It was said: أَهْمُ يُقْسِمُونَ رَحْمَةَ رَبِّكَ (Do they distribute the mercy of your Lord? - 43:32). Here, 'rahmah' (mercy) means nothing but 'nubuwwah' (prophet-hood) - and there is a consensus on it. Allah knows best.

Verses 101 - 109

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى تِسْعَ آيَاتٍ بَيِّنَاتٍ فَسُئِلَ نَبِيَّ إِسْرَاءَ يَلِ إِذْ جَاءَهُمْ
فَقَالَ لَهُ فِرْعَوْنُ إِنِّي لَأَظُنُّكَ يُمُوسَى مَسْحُورًا ﴿١٠١﴾ قَالَ لَقَدْ

عَلِمْتَ مَا أَنْزَلَ هُوَآءِ إِلَّا رَبُّ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ بِصَآئِرِهِ وَإِنِّي
 لَأَظُنُّكَ يُفْرِعُونَ مُتَّبُورًا ﴿١٠٢﴾ فَأَرَادَ أَنْ يَسْتَفِزَّهُمْ مِنَ الْأَرْضِ فَأَغْرَقْنَاهُ
 وَمَنْ مَعَهُ جَمِيعًا ﴿١٠٣﴾ وَقُلْنَا مِنْ بَعْدِهِ لِبَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ اسْكُنُوا
 الْأَرْضَ فَإِذَا جَاءَ وَعْدُ الْآخِرَةِ جِئْنَا بِكُمْ لَفِيفًا ﴿١٠٤﴾ وَبِالْحَقِّ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ
 وَبِالْحَقِّ نَزَلْنَا وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا مُبَشِّرًا وَنَذِيرًا ﴿١٠٥﴾ وَقُرْآنًا فَفَرَقْنَاهُ
 لِتَقْرَأَهُ عَلَى النَّاسِ عَلَى مُكْتٍ وَنَزَلْنَاهُ تَنْزِيلًا ﴿١٠٦﴾ قُلْ أَمِنُوا بِهِ أَوْ لَا
 تُؤْمِنُوا إِنَّا الَّذِينَ أَوْتُوا الْعِلْمَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ إِذَا يُتْلَى عَلَيْهِمْ يَخِرُّونَ
 لِلأَذْقَانِ سُجَّدًا ﴿١٠٧﴾ وَيَقُولُونَ سُبْحَانَ رَبِّنَا إِنْ كَانَ وَعْدُ رَبِّنَا
 لَمَفْعُولًا ﴿١٠٨﴾ وَيَخِرُّونَ لِلأَذْقَانِ يَكُونُونَ فِيهَا خَاشِعِينَ ﴿١٠٩﴾

﴿١٠٩﴾ السجدة

And surely we gave Mūsā nine clear signs. So, ask the children of Isrā'īl, when he came to them, the Pharaoh said to him, "I am afraid, O Mūsā, you are under the spell of magic." [101] He said, "You know well that these (signs) are sent down by none but by the Lord of the heavens and the earth as eye-openers. And, I am afraid O Pharaoh, you are going to be destroyed." [102]

Then he (the Pharaoh) tried to harass him out of the land, so We drowned him and those with him altogether, [103] and thereafter We said to the children of Isrā'īl, "Live in the land. So, when the appointed time of the Hereafter will come, We shall bring you all joined together." [104]

And with truth We have sent it down and with truth it descended. And We did not send you but as a bearer of good tidings and as a warner. [105]

And We have divided the Qur'an in portions, so that you may recite it to the people gradually, and We have revealed it little by little. [106]

Say, "Believe it or do not believe it; when it is recited to those who were given knowledge before it, they fall down on their faces in prostration [107] and say, "Pure is

our Lord. Certainly, the word of our Lord is sure to be done." [108] And they fall down on their faces weeping and it increases them in the humbleness of heart. [109]

Commentary

The first verse (101): **وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى تِسْعَ آيَاتٍ** mentions the bestowal of nine clear signs on Sayyidnā Mūsā **عليه السلام**. The word: آية ('āyah) carries the meaning of miracle or sign as well as that of the آيات: *āyāt* or verses of the Qur'ān, that is, the divine injunctions. At this place, the probability of both meanings exists. Therefore, a number of commentators have taken the word '*āyāt*' to mean miracles - and the number nine does not make it necessary that they will not be more than nine - but, at this place, the figure 'nine' has been mentioned on the basis of some particular importance it has. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās **رضي الله عنه** has enumerated these miracles as follows:

1. The staff of Sayyidnā Mūsā **عليه السلام** which turned into a huge snake.
2. The hand that emitted light when placed under and taken out of the armpit.
3. The removal of stammering from his tongue.
4. The splitting of the water barrier in two sections to give safe passage to the Banī Isrā'īl to cross it.
5. The sending of the punishment through locusts in unusual circumstances.
6. The sending of the storm.
7. The clothes on their bodies were infested with countless lice they had no escape from.
8. The punishment of frogs was released on them when frogs would appear in everything they ate or drank.
9. The punishment of blood was sent that filled every utensil and mingled with whatever they ate or drank.

And a Ṣaḥīḥ Ḥadīth tells us that the word '*āyāt*' used here means divine injunctions. This Ḥadīth has been reported in Abū Dāwūd, an-Nasā'ī, Tirmidhī and Ibn Mājah on the authority of Sayyidnā Safwān

ibn al-'Aththāl ؓ. He says that a Jew asked one of his friends to take him to 'that' prophet. The friend said, 'do not call him a prophet. If he finds out that we too call him a prophet, he will have four eyes on him (that is, he will have an opportunity to wallow in his pride and glee).' Then they came to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and asked him as to what were the nine clear signs given to Sayyidnā Mūsā ؑ. He said:

1. Do not ascribe any partners to Allah.
2. Do not steal.
3. Do not fornicate.
4. Do not unjustly take the life of the one whose killing has been forbidden by Allah.
5. Do not falsely impute anyone innocent with charges liable to the sentence of death or any other punishment.
6. Do not practice magic.
7. Do not devour interest.
8. Do not level a false accusation of fornication on a chaste woman.
9. Do not desert the battlefield in Jihād for fear of being killed.

And he also said, 'O Jews, it has also been specially enjoined on you that you shall not contravene the particular injunctions of the observance of the day of Sabbath (Saturday) given to you.'

Hearing what the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, they both kissed his hands and feet and declared, 'We bear witness that you are the prophet of Allah.' He said, 'What is it, then, that stops you from following me?' They said that Sayyidnā Dāwūd ؑ had prayed to his Lord for prophets to always keep appearing from among his progeny - 'and we are scared that the Jews will kill us if we started following you.'

Since this explanation of the verse stands proved on the authority of Ṣaḥīḥ Ḥadīth, therefore, this is what many commentators have preferred to go by.

About the last sentence: *يَكُونُونَ وَيَرِيْدُهُمْ حُشُوْعًا* (And they fall down on their faces weeping and it increases them in the humbleness of heart -109), it

appears in Tafsīr Maḏharī that being in tears while reciting the Qur'ān stands as a highly recommended and reward worthy act (*mustahabb*). Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضي الله عنه narrates that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, 'a person who wept in fear of Allah shall not go to Hell until milk is returned to the udder after having been milked. (It means, as it is not possible to put milk once milked back into the udder, very similarly, it is also not possible that a person who weeps in fear of Allah were to go to Hell). And says another report, 'Allah Ta'ālā has forbidden the fire of Hell on two eyes - the eye that weeps in fear of Allah, and the eye that stays awake at nights guarding the Islamic frontiers. (Baihaqī, and Ḥakīm). And Sayyidnā Naḏr ibn Sa'd رضي الله عنه reports that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, 'a people, among whom there is someone who weeps in fear of Allah, will be delivered from the fire of Hell because of him.' (Rūḥ al- Ma'ānī from Tirmidhī)

The reason for the big trouble Muslims are in today is no other but that there are very few left among them who would weep fearing Allah. After reporting the Aḥādīth showing the merits of weeping in fear of Allah at this point, the author of Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī says: وَيَبْغِي أَنْ يَكُونَ ذَلِكَ حَالُ الْعُلَمَاءِ (And that is the state the 'Ulamā' should be in) - because, Ibn Jarīr, Ibn al-Mundhir and others have quoted the following saying of 'Abd al-A'lā Taimī:

'A person who has received the kind of knowledge that does not make him cry [because of having realized the reality of things] should be enough to make you understand that he has not been given the knowledge that brings benefits.'

Verses 110 - 111

قُلِ ادْعُوا اللَّهَ أَوْ ادْعُوا الرَّحْمَنَ أَيُّمَا تَدْعُوا فَلَهُ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَىٰ ۗ
وَلَا تَجْهَرُوا بِصَلَاتِكُمْ وَلَا تَخَافُتُمْ بِهَا وَابْتَغِ بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ سَبِيلًا ﴿١١٠﴾
وَقُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي لَمْ يَتَّخِذْ وَلَدًا وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ شَرِيكٌ فِي الْمُلْكِ
وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ وِليٌّ مِّنَ الدُّنْيَا وَكَبْرُهُ كَبِيرًا ﴿١١١﴾ ۗ

Say, "Call (Him by the name of) Allah or Ar-Raḥmān, in whichever way you call, His are the best names." And do

not be (too) loud in your Ṣalāh nor be (too) low in it, and seek a way in between. [110]

And say, "Praise belongs to Allah who has neither taken to Him a son, nor is there any partner to Him in His kingdom, nor is anyone (needed) to protect Him because of (any) weakness. And proclaim His greatness, an open proclamation. [111]

Commentary

These are the last verses of Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl (Al-'Isrā'). The Sūrah began with a declaration of the purity and oneness of Allah Ta'ālā, and this is how it is being concluded. The revelation of these verses was based on some events. The first one came to pass on a certain day when the Holy Prophet ﷺ, during his supplication, said 'Yā Allah' and 'Yā Raḥmān.' The Mushriks thought that he was calling two Gods. They said, 'he forbids us to call anyone else other than the One while he himself calls two deities.' The answer to this comment was given in the first part of the verse by saying that the most exalted Allah does not have a mere two names. He has many more names and all of them are the best of names. Call Him by any of these and it means the One and Only Allah. So, it was made clear that their apprehensions on that count were wrong.

As for the second incident, when the Holy Prophet ﷺ would recite the Qur'an loudly during Ṣalāh, the Mushriks made fun of him and passed audacious remarks berating the Qur'an, archangel Jibra'īl, even Allah Ta'ālā. In response to that, the last part of this very verse was revealed where he has been advised to take to a middle course between the loud and the low, as the average voice took care of the functional necessity. And as for the opportunity the Mushriks had to cause pain to them over the loud pitch of the voice, they would be relieved of that too.

The third problem was that the Jews and Christians proposed children for Allah Ta'ālā and the pagan Arabs said that idols were partners of Allah. The Sābians and the Māgians used to hold that not being particularly close to Allah amounted to a personal loss of worth and honor. In answer to these three religious groups, the last verse was revealed where their three notions have been refuted.

It will be noted that, in this world, the one from whom strength and

support is received is sometimes younger than one, like children, and sometimes an equal, like a partner, and sometimes older than one, like a supporter and helper. Here, in this verse, Allah Ta'ālā has refuted all three in the same order.

Ruling

The etiquette of recitation in Ṣalāh as given in verse 110 is that it should not be in a voice raised very high, nor should it be in a voice so lowered that those standing behind in the congregation cannot hear it. This injunction, as obvious, is particular with prayers wherein the recitation is voiced. As for the prayers of Ḍuhr and 'Aṣr, the recitation therein is totally unvoiced as proved from uninterrupted Sunnah.

In prayers with voiced recitation, included there are the Farḍ of Maghrib, 'Ishā' and Fajr, as well as the prayer of Tahajjud - as in a Ḥadīth which says: Once the Holy Prophet ﷺ passed by Sayyidnā Abū Bakr and Sayyidnā 'Umar ؓ at the time of Tahajjud. Sayyidnā Abū Bakr was reciting in a lowered voice while Sayyidnā 'Umar ؓ was reciting in a loud voice. The Holy Prophet ﷺ said to Sayyidnā Abū Bakr, 'why would you recite in such a lowered voice?' Sayyidnā Abū Bakr said, 'the One I wanted to talk to in secret, Him I have made to hear, because Allah Ta'ālā hears every voice, even the lowest of the low.' The Holy Prophet ﷺ said, 'recite somewhat loudly.' Then he said to Sayyidnā 'Umar, 'why do you recite in such a loud voice?' Sayyidnā 'Umar ؓ said, 'I recite loudly to wake up the drowsy, and satan.' He ordered him too, 'you should recite in a voice somewhat lowered.' (Tirmidhī as quoted Maḏharī)

Problems and their solutions relating to the loud or lowered rendering of the recitation of the Qur'ān in Ṣalāh, or on occasions other than it, have been already explained in Sūrah al-A'rāf (see commentary under Verse 55, Volume III). About the last verse beginning with: قُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ (say, 'alḥam-dulillāh: praise belongs to Allah'), the Ḥadīth says that this is the 'āyah' (verse) of 'izzah' (power and glory). [The reference is to the efficacy of the verse in seeking the help of Allah to overcome weaknesses and difficulties]. (Reported by Aḥmad and at-Ṭabarānī on the authority of Sayyidnā Mu'ādh al-Juhaniyy as in Maḏharī) This verse also provides an essential guidance. The drive of the meaning is that it does not matter how much one devotes to the worship of Allah, one is still obligated to take his or her deed

to be deficient as compared with His due right and confess to the likely shortfall in performing it. (Maḏharī)

And Sayyidnā Anas رضي الله عنه has said that a child from the tribe of Banī 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, when able to say meaningful words, was taught to recite this verse by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. Then he recited the verse:

وَقُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي لَمْ يَتَّخِذْ وَلَدًا وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ شَرِيكٌ فِي الْمُلْكِ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ وِلِيٌّ
مِّنَ الدَّلِّ وَكَبْرَهُ تَكْبِيرًا - (١٧:١١١)

And say, "Praise belongs to Allah who has neither taken to Him a son, nor is there any partner to Him in His kingdom, nor is anyone [needed] to protect Him because of [any] weakness. And proclaim His greatness, an open proclamation" - 111). (Maḏharī)

And Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضي الله عنه has said that once he went out with the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, in a manner that his hand was in Holy Prophet's hands. He passed by a person who was disheveled and worried. He asked, 'what brought you to this condition?' That person said, 'sickness and poverty have done this to me.' He said, 'I am going to tell you a few words. If you recite these, your sickness and poverty will go away. The words were:

تَوَكَّلْتُ عَلَى الْحَيِّ الَّذِي لَا يَمُوتُ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي لَمْ يَتَّخِذْ وَلَدًا وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ شَرِيكٌ
فِي الْمُلْكِ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ وِلِيٌّ مِّنَ الدَّلِّ وَكَبْرَهُ تَكْبِيرًا -

I place my trust in the Ever Living who is not to die. Praise belongs to Allah who has neither taken to Him a son, nor is there any partner to Him in His kingdom, nor is anyone (needed) to protect Him because of (any) weakness. And proclaim His greatness, an open proclamation. (17:111)

After the passage of some time, when he went that way, he found his condition good and showed his pleasure about it. That person told him, 'since the time you taught me these words, I recite them punctually.' (Abū Ya'lā and Ibn al-Sunnī, as quoted by Maḏharī)

The Tafsīr of Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl ends here

With the help of Allah

After al-'Ishā', Jumāda I, 1390 Hijrah

Praised be Allah, from the beginning to the end.

A personal postscript by the author

... While writing these lines, this humble servant of Allah has completed full seventy five years of his age on 21 Sha'bān, 1390 Hijrah. Year seventy-six opens amidst diseases of different kinds including the natural weakness that sets in at this age. Then there is the mass of things to do and problems to resolve. Who can look forward to the task of writing beyond this point for it would be hoping against hope. But, when it comes to the service of the Qur'ān things become different. When someone does something in the name of the Qur'ān, no matter how insignificant, it becomes for a servant of Allah a matter of good fortune and honour. This thought led me to begin the Tafsīr of Sūrah al-Kahf with the name of Allah. The idea was to take whatever it was possible to do during the years of life left as sufficient and good enough, because the purpose is not to finish the Qur'ān, the purpose is to consume one's years and energy into the Qur'ān. And Allah is the giver of ability and the helper of the effort made in His way.

(Abridged from the detailed note)

End of Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl

Sūrah Al-Kahf

(The Cave)

Sūrah al-Kahf is Makki. It has 110 verses and 12 sections

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

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

Verses 1 - 8

الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ الَّذِیْ اَنْزَلَ عَلٰی عَبْدِهِ الْكِتٰبَ وَلَمْ یَجْعَلْ لَّهِ عِوَجًا ﴿١﴾
 قِیْمًا لِّیُنذِرَ بَاسًا شَدِیْدًا مِّنْ لَّدُنْهُ وِیُبَشِّرَ الْمُؤْمِنِیْنَ الَّذِیْنَ یَعْمَلُوْنَ
 الصّٰلِحٰتِ اَنَّ لَهُمْ اَجْرًا حَسَنًا ﴿٢﴾ مَا كَثِیْرٌ فِیْهِ اَبَدًا ﴿٣﴾ وَیُنذِرَ الَّذِیْنَ
 قَالُوْا اتَّخَذَ اللّٰهُ وَلَدًا ﴿٤﴾ مَا لَهُمْ بِهٖ مِنْ عِلْمٍ وَّلَا لِابٰئِهِمْ کُبْرٰتُ
 کَلِمَةً تَخْرُجُ مِنْ اَفْوَاهِهِمْ ؕ اِنْ یَقُوْلُوْنَ اِلَّا کَذِبًا ﴿٥﴾ فَلَعلَّكَ بَاخِعٌ
 نَّفْسًا عَلٰی اٰتٰرِهِمْ اِنْ لَّمْ یُؤْمِنُوْا بِهٰذَا الْحَدِیْثِ اَسْفًا ﴿٦﴾ اِنَّا جَعَلْنَا
 مَا عَلٰی الْاَرْضِ زِیْنَةً لِّهَا لِیَبْلُوْهُمْ اَبۡهَمٌ اَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا ﴿٧﴾ وَاِنَّا
 لَجَعَلُوْنَ مَا عَلَیْهَا صَعِیْدًا جُرُزًا ﴿٨﴾

Praise belongs to Allah who has sent down to His servant the Book and allowed no crookedness in it, [1] a straightforward Book to warn of a severe punishment from Him, and to give glad tidings to the believers who do righteous deeds that they will have a good reward (Paradise) [2] where they will dwell for ever, [3] and to warn those who have said that Allah has taken to Himself a son, [4] while they have no knowledge of it, nor had their fathers. Grave is the word that comes out of their mouths. They say nothing but a lie. [5]

So, perhaps you are going to kill yourself after them out of grief if they do not believe in this message. [6]

Surely, We have made what is on earth an adornment for it so that We test them as to who among them is better in deed. [7] And surely, We are going to turn what is thereon into a barren land. [8]

The properties and merits of Sūrah al-Kahf

According to a narration of Sayyidnā Abū al-Dardā' ؓ appearing in Muslim, Abū Dāwūd, Tirmidhī, al-Nasā'ī and the Musnad of Aḥmad, one who has memorized the first ten verses of Sūrah al-Kahf will remain protected from the ill effects of Dajjāl (imposter). In another report in the same books and from the same authority, the same thing has been said about having memorized the last ten verses of Sūrah al-Kahf.

And it has been reported in the Musnad of Aḥmad on the authority of Sayyidnā Sahl ibn Mu'ādh ؓ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "One who recites the first and the last verses of Sūrah al-Kahf, for him there is light from his feet up to his head. And the one who were to recite the whole Sūrah, then, for him there is light from the earth up to the sky."

And it appears in some narratives that a person who recites Sūrah al-Kahf on the day of Jumu'ah will have light from his feet up to the sky. This light will serve him well on the day of Qiyāmah, and every sin committed by him between the past and the present Jumu'ah will be forgiven." (Imām Ibn Kathīr has declared this report to be *mawqūf* (a Ḥadīth the narration of which stops at a Ṣaḥābī and does not ascend to the Holy Prophet ﷺ).

And Ḥāfiẓ Zya' al-Maqdisī, in his book Al-Mukhtārah, has reported on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Alī ؓ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "One who recites Sūrah al-Kahf on the day of Jumu'ah will remain protected from every *fitnah*. And if Dajjāl appears, he will stay safe against the trying challenges released by him as well." (All these narrative reports have been taken from Tafsīr ibn Kathīr)

According to a report from Dailamī on the authority of Sayyidnā Anas ؓ appearing in Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "The entire Sūrah al-Kahf was revealed at one time and seventy thousand angels came with it" - which shows its majesty.

The cause of revelation

Imām ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī has reported from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn

'Abbās ﷺ that the Quraysh of Makkah (disturbed by the rising influence of the Holy Prophet ﷺ as a prophet) sent two of their men, Naḍr ibn Ḥārith and 'Uqbah ibn Abī Mu'ayt, to the Jewish scholars of Madīnah. Their mission was to find out what they said about him as they were learned in past scriptures of the Torah and Injīl. The Jewish scholars told them, "put three questions before him. If he answers these correctly,* you should know that he is a prophet and messenger of Allah, and if he fails to do that, you should know that he is a pretender and not a messenger. Firstly, ask him about the young men who had left their city in the distant past and what had happened to them, for this is a unique event. Secondly, ask him about the person who had traveled through the East and West of the Earth and what had happened to him. Thirdly, ask him about the Rūḥ (soul, spirit) as to what it was?"

The two Quraysh emissaries returned to Makkah al-Mukarramah, informed their tribesmen that they had come back with a decisive plan of action and told them all about their encounter with the Jewish scholars of Madīnah. Then, these people took these questions to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. He heard the questions and said that he will answer them tomorrow. But, he forgot to say '*insha'Allah*' at that time. These people went back and the Holy Prophet ﷺ kept waiting for the Divine revelation in the hope that he will be told about answers to these questions through *wahy*. But, no *wahy* came until the next day as promised. In fact, fifteen days went by and things stood as they were, neither did Sayyidnā Jibra'īl come nor did the revelation. The Quraysh of Makkah started throwing taunts which caused real pain to the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

After fifteen days, came angel Jibra'īl with Sūrah al-Kahf (wherein the delay caused has also been explained by saying that one should say '*insha'Allah*' when promising to do something in the future. Since, this was not done in the event concerned, therefore, revelation was delayed as a measure of reminder. In this Sūrah, verses relating to this matter such as: *وَلَا تَقُولَنَّ لِشَيْءٍ إِنِّي فَاعِلٌ ذَٰلِكَ غَدًا ۚ إِلَّا أَنْ يَشَاءَ اللَّهُ* (18:23,24) will be appearing later). Also related in this Sūrah there was the event about the young

* That is, he gives the answer he should give (and his correct answer to the question about 'Rūḥ' will be that Allah Ta'ālā knows its reality best). So, this report which appears in Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī, p. 191, v. 15 is not contrary to the report which has appeared on pages 544-47 of this volume under the commentary on verse 85 of Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl - Muḥammad Taqī Usmānī.

men known as Aṣḥāb al-Kahf or the People of the Cave, and the event concerning the travel of Dhul-Qarnain from the East to the West. Also included therein was the answer to the question asked about 'Rūḥ' (Qurṭubī and Maḥzarī with reference to Ibn Jarīr). But, answering the question about Rūḥ (soul, spirit) briefly was as dictated by wisdom. This was taken up separately at the end of Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl (17:85) and this is the reason why Sūrah al-Kahf has been placed after Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl [al-Isrā'] - as mentioned by Al-Suyūṭī.

Commentary

The word: *عَوَجَ* (*iwaǧ*) in: *وَلَمْ يَجْعَلْ لَهُ عَوْجًا قِيمًا* (and allowed no crookedness in it - 1) means crookedness of any kind, or inclination towards one side or deviation from the norms of rectitude. The Holy Qur'ān remains pure and free of all that in terms of the perfection of its words and meanings. It simply admits of no distortion anywhere, either in eloquence or in knowledge and wisdom. The sense which has been conveyed in a negative or eliminative form through: *عَوَجًا* (and allowed no crookedness in it) has been fortified positively through the word: *قِيمًا* (*qayyimā*) which follows immediately for emphasis. The reason is that this word carries the sense of: *مُسْتَقِيمًا* (*mustaqīmā*) and that which is: *مستقيم* (*mustaqīm*: straightforward, straight, upright) will not have the least crookedness or tilt towards any side. However, *قِيمَ* (*qayyim*) can also have another sense, that of caretaker, custodian and protector. Given this probability, the sense of the expression would be that the Qur'ān, while perfect in itself as free from all kinds of excess, deficiency and crookedness, keeps others upright, firm and unflinching and protects the interests and advantages of all servants of Allah. Thus the gist of the two expressions would be that the Holy Qur'ān stands perfect in itself and has the ability to make men and women created by Allah become equally perfect. (Maḥzarī)

It was said in verse 7: *إِنَّا جَعَلْنَا مَا عَلَى الْأَرْضِ زِينَةً لَهَا* (Surely, We have made what is on earth an adornment for it) with reference to all living forms, vegetation, mountains, minerals and everything else present on the earth. They are its embellishment. That there are snakes, scorpions, beasts and many harmful and fatal things may lead someone to doubt as to how can they be called 'an adornment for it.' This doubt is unfounded because everything in this world considered harmful, fatal or plain bad

may be so in a restricted sense but, in terms of the totality of creation, nothing is bad. Everything, no matter how bad, has been invested with many benefits by Allah Ta'ālā on other counts. The medical use of poisonous and fatal life forms in the interest of human beings is an example. Therefore, things that are considered even bad are not that bad in terms of the function of this entire universe.

Verses 9 - 12

أَمْ حَسِبْتَ أَنَّ أَصْحَابَ الْكَهْفِ وَالرَّقِيمِ كَانُوا مِنْ آيَاتِنَا عَجَبًا ﴿٩﴾ إِذْ
 أَوَى الْفِتْيَةُ إِلَى الْكَهْفِ فَقَالُوا رَبَّنَا إِنَّا مِنْ لَدُنْكَ رَحْمَةً وَهَيِّئْ لَنَا
 مِنْ أَمْرِنَا رَشَدًا ﴿١٠﴾ فَضَرَبْنَا عَلَى آذَانِهِمْ فِي الْكَهْفِ سِنِينَ عَدَدًا
 ﴿١١﴾ ثُمَّ بَعَثْنَاهُمْ لِنَعْلَمَ أَيُّ الْحِزْبَيْنِ أَحْصَى لِمَا لَبِثُوا أَمَدًا ﴿١٢﴾

Do you think that the People of Kahf (the Cave) and Raqīm (inscription*) were unusual out of Our signs? [9]

When the young men took refuge in the Cave and said, "Our Lord, bless us with mercy from Your own and provide us with guidance in our matters." [10] So, We veiled their hearing (putting them to sleep) in the Cave for a number of years. [11] Thereafter We raised them up, so that We know which of the two groups had best calculated the period they remained (sleeping). [12]

Lexical Explanation

Kahf is a large mountainous cave or cavern. If not large, it will be a *ghār*. The word: الرقيم (*al-raqīm*) literally denotes: المرقوم (*al-marqūm*) that is, something written. What does it mean at this place? The sayings of commentators differ about it. Ḍaḥḥāk, Sudiyy and Ibn Jubayr following the authority of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās ؓ declare it to mean a written tablet on which the ruler of the time had inscribed the names of the People of Kahf and had it fixed on the entrance to the Cave. For this reason, the People of Kahf are also called the People of al-Raqīm (the inscribed ones). Qatādah, 'Aṭiyyah, 'Awfī and Mujāhid have said that Raqīm is the name of the valley adjoining the mountain in which the hol-

* The word Raqīm has been interpreted differently. Most of the commentators have preferred 'inscription' while others have taken it to be a mountain, a valley or a specific town.

low cavern of the People of Kahf was located. Some others have identified this mountain itself as the Raqīm. 'Ikrimah رحمه الله تعالى says, "I have heard Sayyidnā ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه saying - I do not know whether Raqīm is the name of some inscribed tablet or some town." Ka'b al-Aḥbār and Wahb ibn Munabbih report from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās that Raqīm is the name of a town near Ailah, that is, 'Aqabah, situated in the kingdom of the Romans.

Fityah (فَيْتَاهُ) in verse 10 is the plural of: فَيْتَى: *fatā*, which means a young man.

The expression: فَضَرْنَا عَلَىٰ أَدَانِهِمْ (translated as 'so, We veiled their hearing [putting them to sleep]' - 11) literally means to plug ears to prevent someone from hearing. It is used to convey the sense of deep sleep. When sleeping, eyes close first but ears remain active. Sounds are heard. When sleep takes over completely, ears stop functioning. Later, when awake, ears resume their function first for sound startles the person sleeping who then comes out of his sleep.

Commentary

The story of the People of Kahf and Raqīm

There are a few subjects of study in this story. First of all, it needs to be determined whether People of Kahf and People of Raqīm are two names of the same group, or these are two separate groups. Though, no clarification of this appears in any Ṣaḥīḥ Ḥadīth, but Imām al-Bukhārī, in his Ṣaḥīḥ, has given two separate chapter headings - Aṣḥāb al-Kahf and Aṣḥāb al-Raqīm. Then, under Aṣḥāb al-Raqīm, he mentions the well-known story of three persons being locked shut into a cave with no way out, which opened later through prayers, and which is there in details in all books of Ḥadīth. From this innovative device of Imām al-Bukhārī, it is gathered that, according to him, the People of Kahf are one group, and the appellation of the People of Raqīm has been used for those three persons who had taken shelter in the cave at some earlier time. Then a huge rock from the mountain fell on the entrance to the cave and blocked it totally, making it impossible for them to come out. At that moment, it was with reference to whatever righteous deeds they each had done in life that the three of them supplicated before Allah: Our Lord, if we had done this thing for Your good pleasure, please open the passage for us. Following the prayer of the first person, the rock

moved a little and light started coming in. By the prayer of the second one, it moved a little more. Then, by the prayer of the third one, the passage opened up fully.

But, Ḥāfiẓ ibn Ḥajar has made it clear in Sharḥ al-Bukhārī that, in the light of Ḥadīth reports, there is no clear-cut proof about the People of Raqīm being the name for the three persons referred to above. What has happened here is that some narrators have added to the report of Sayyidnā Nu'mān ibn Bashīr ؓ, a reporter of the incident of the cave, by saying that Sayyidnā Nu'mān ibn Bashīr ؓ while mentioning the story of the cave said, 'I heard the Holy Prophet ﷺ mentioning Raqīm. He was relating the story of the three who got shut into the cave.' This addition appears in the report of al-Bazzār and al-Ṭabarānī as quoted by Faḥ-al-Bārī. But, to begin with, none of the reports from the usual narrators of this Ḥadīth which are available in details in the six Ṣaḥīḥs and other books of Ḥadīth have included this sentence of Sayyidnā Nu'mān ibn Bashīr ؓ. Even the report of al-Bukhārī itself does not have this sentence in it. Then, even within this sentence, it has not been made clear whether or not the Holy Prophet ﷺ had called those three persons who got shut into the cave by the name of the People of Raqīm. In fact, the words are: 'he was mentioning Raqīm.' Those three were mentioned as a corollary to this statement. As for the difference in the sayings of the Ṣaḥābah, Ṭābi'īn and commentators in general concerning the meaning of Raqīm, it is by itself a proof that there was no Ḥadīth reported from the Holy Prophet ﷺ about the meaning of Raqīm as determined by him. Otherwise, how was it possible that once the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself determines the meaning of a word, the Ṣaḥābah, Ṭābi'īn and other commentators opt for some other saying contrary to it? Therefore, Ḥāfiẓ ibn Ḥajar, the commentator of al-Bukhārī, denies that the People of Kahf and the People of Raqīm are two separate groups. According to him, the correct position is that both these names apply to one single group. The mention of three persons getting shut into a cave could have been made with the mention of Raqīm. It does not necessarily follow from it that these very three persons were 'the Aṣḥāb al-Raqīm' (the People of Raqīm).

Ḥāfiẓ ibn Ḥajar has also clarified at this place that the very context of the story of the People of Kahf as described by the Qur'an tells us that

the People of Kahf and Raqīm are but one group. This is why the majority of commentators and Ḥadīth experts agree that they both are one and the same.

The second issue to be determined here is that of the details of the story. It has two parts. Part one is the spirit of the story, and the real objective. It provides an answer to the question asked by the Jews, and guidance and good counsel for Muslims as well. The second part deals with the historical and geographical aspects of the story. As for the delineation of the objective, it plays no role there, for instance: When and where did this event come to pass, who was the infidel king these people ran from and hid in the cave? What were his beliefs, what did he actually do to them because of which they were compelled to run and hide in the cave? How many were they? Exactly how long did they remain asleep? Are they still alive or are they dead?

The Holy Qur'an, under its wise principles and unique methodology, has not related any story in all its detail and order throughout the Qur'an (with the sole exception of the story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام) - a common method used in books of history. Instead, it has introduced only a part of each story that was appropriate to the occasion and was particularly related to guiding and teaching human beings. (The reason for excluding the story of Sayyidnā Yūsuf عليه السلام from the parameter of this method appears in the Tafsīr of Sūrah Yūsuf included in Volume V, pages 24, 25)

The same method was used in relating the story of the People of Kahf. Here, the Qur'an has described its particular parts that were relevant to the real objective. No mention was made of the remaining parts that were purely historical or geographical. Of course, mention was made of the number of the People of Kahf. The questions regarding the period of time they remained asleep were certainly alluded to, even an indication was released towards the answer but, along with it, an instruction was also given that it was not appropriate to investigate and debate such issues. These should be entrusted with Allah Ta'ālā. This is the reason why the Holy Prophet ﷺ who was duty-bound to explain the meanings of the Holy Qur'an never related those parts of the story in any Ḥadīth. It is on the grounds of this Qur'anic methodology that great men among the Ṣaḥābah and Ṭābi'īn have declared the essential policy guideline in such matters by saying:

أَبْهَمُوا مَا أَبْهَمَهُ اللَّهُ (الاتقان للسيوطي)

What Allah has left undetermined, you too leave it undetermined. (al-Itqān li-Suyufī)

This approach and conduct of leading Ṣaḥābah and Ṭabīʿīn required that, in this Tafsīr too, those parts of the story should be ignored as ignored by the Qurʾān and Ḥadīth. But, this is a time when historical and geographical breakthroughs are taken as great achievements. Therefore, later day scholars of Tafsīr have described those parts as well in varying lengths. As far as Tafsīr Maʿāriful-Qurʾān is concerned, the parts of the story that have already been mentioned in the Qurʾān will be covered under the explanation of its verses. The remaining historical and geographical parts of the story are being described here within the limits of their need. However, the truth of the matter is that, even after this description, the end result will remain the same - that is, it is impossible to arrive at a categorical decision in these matters. The reason is that writings in Islamic, and then Christian history, relating to this subject are so different, even contradictory, that one writer determines something in the light of his investigation, opinion and evidence while the other prefers something else.

Events relating to hiding in caves to protect faith have been many and widespread

One major reason for differences existing among historians lies in the great importance attached to monasticism by adherents to the faith brought by Sayyidnā ʿĪsā عليه السلام. As a result, there were several instances spread around different regions and countries of the world where some people took shelter in caves to devote themselves to the worship of Allah Taʿālā living there for the rest of their lives. Now, where so ever some such event has occurred, it was not so far out for a historian to suspect it to be that of the People of Kahf.

People of Kahf: Place and Period

Tafsīr authority al-Qurṭubī of al-Andulus (Spain) has reported some events at this juncture in his Tafsīr. Some of these events, that belong to different cities, he had heard or seen himself. First of all, he says on the basis of a report from Ḍaḥḥāk that al-Raqīm is the name of a town in Rūm (the Greco-Roman territory) where twenty-one men are lying in a

cave as if they are sleeping. Then, he reports from Tafsīr authority, Ibn 'Aṭīyah that he had heard from many people that there was a cave in Shām (Syria) which had some dead bodies in it. Attendants said that they were the ones called the People of Kahf. And adjacent to the cave, there was the structure of a mosque and residential house called Raqīm. In addition to the dead bodies, the skeleton of a dead dog was also present there.

Then, al-Qurṭubī writes about another event relating to al-Gharnāṭah (Granada) in al-Andulus (Spain), again reporting from Ibn 'Aṭīyah who says, 'there is a cave in Lawshah (Lojah), a village outside al-Gharnāṭah. It has some dead bodies and along with these there is the skeleton of a dead dog as well. Most of the dead bodies have no flesh left reducing them to bare skeletons. However, some do have signs of flesh and skin still being there. Centuries have passed over this. But, nothing is known about them authentically. Some people say that they were the People of Kahf. Ibn 'Aṭīyah further says, 'when I heard this news, I personally went there in the Hijrah year 504. On arrival there, I really found those bodies in the same state. Close by there is a mosque and a structure of the Roman period called Raqīm. It seems to have been some palace from the remains of several walls still there. This thing is located in an unpopulated area with wild growth around. He also said, 'remains of an old city are found in the area characterized by higher altitudes in al-Gharnāṭah. It is Roman in style. The name of the city is said to be Raqyus. We have seen many graves and strange things in its ruins.' From what has been said here it will be realized that al-Qurṭubī who lived in Spain avoids calling anyone as the People of Kahf definitely, despite that he has described these events as reported. Then, there is the case of Ibn 'Aṭīyah who, despite his personal observation, did not claim that they were the People of Kahf. He rather limits himself to reporting what was popular. But, Abū Ḥayyān, the seventh century commentator from al-Andulus (Spain) was born in al-Gharnāṭah itself in Hijrah year 654. There he was raised and there he lived. He too mentions the cave of al-Gharnāṭah in his Tafsīr, al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ, very much like al-Qurṭubī has done. After having written about the eye witness account of Ibn 'Aṭīyah, he says, 'when I was in al-Andulus (that is, before shifting to Cairo), many people went to see this cave. They used to say that, despite

al-Ma'ānī p. 227, v. 15)

The reports and narratives appearing above establish that commentators have given three locations for the site of the Cave of the People of Kahf. Firstly, in Ailah near 'Aqabah on the shore of the Gulf of 'Aqabah. Most of the narrations from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās favor this interpretation.

From the personal observation of Ibn 'Aṭīyyah, and Abū Ḥayyān's support, it seems likely that this cave is in al-Gharnāṭah, al-Andulus (Spain). Out of these two places, the name of a city or particular building has also been given as Raqīm. Similarly, the name of the great structure in ruins close to the cave in al-Gharnāṭah has been cited as Raqīm. Then, none of the two kinds of reports decisively say that this cave was The Cave of the People of Kahf. Both rely on popular local talk and oral tradition. As for the old name of the city where the People of Kahf lived, it has been mentioned as Iḥsūs (Ephesus as in the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Ephesians - Holy Bible, p. 239), with Ṭarsūs as its Islamic name, in nearly all Tafsīr reports of al-Qurṭubī, Abū Ḥayyān and Ibn Jarīr. That this city was located on the western coast of Asia Minor is a fact accepted by historians. This shows that the Cave is also within Asia Minor. Therefore, there is no proof to declare any one of these as true and the rest as false. As for probability, all three are probable. In fact, no one can deny the very probability that the events relating to these caves, despite being true, may not be relevant to the Cave of the People of Kahf that has been mentioned in the Qur'ān. May be, it is somewhere else. And it is also not necessary that Raqīm at this place may exclusively be the name of some city or building. In fact, no one can reject even the probability that Raqīm denotes the inscription engraved with the names of the People of Kahf on a tablet and placed on the entrance to the cave by some king.

Investigations of Modern Historians

Some contemporary historians have made considerable efforts to determine the place and time of the Cave of the People of Kahf with the help of Christian and European historical accounts.

Abūl-Kalām Āzād has declared the present city of Petra near Ailah ('Aqabah) - Arabicized by Arab historians as Baṭrā - as the old city of Raqīm. With reference to current historical accounts, he reports the rem-

nants of a cave in the mountain and of some mosque adjacent to it. In confirmation, he refers to the Book of Joshua in the Old Testament (18:27) where the place has been mentioned as Raqm or Raqīm. According to him, this is the place now called Petra. But, this has been considered doubtful as the reference to Raqm or Raqīm in the Book of Joshua is connected with the inheritance of Banī bin Yamin (Benyamin). Then, this territory was located west of River Jordan and the Dead Sea where the city of Petra could have not possibly been located. Therefore, contemporary archaeologists are very reluctant in accepting Petra and Raqīm as one and the same. (Encyclopaedia Britannica 1946, v. 17, p. 658)

Commentators in general have pointed out to the city of Ifsūs, a major Byzantine city on the western coast of Asia Minor the remains of which are still found twenty or twenty five miles south of the modern Turkish city of Izmīr (Samarna).

Maulanā Sayyid Sulaimān Nadwī while mentioning the city of Petra in his book, Arḍ al-Qur'ān, has put Raqīm in parenthesis. But, he has not given any evidence in support of the proposition that the old name of the city of Petra was Raqīm. Maulanā Ḥifzur-Raḥmān Sihwārwi has also adopted this view. For evidence, he refers to Torah: The book of Numbers and the book of Isaiah and gives the name of Petra as Raqīmāh. (Dā'irah al-Ma'ārif al-'Arabiyah)

When a cave was discovered in a desolate jungle area close to 'Amḁān in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the Archaeological Department of the Government started digging operations on that site in the year 1963. After having removed the upper strata of topsoil and rocks, they found six coffins filled with bones and stones, and two graves. Towards the south side of the cave, they found inscriptions on rocks in Byzantine script. Local people think that this is the place called Raqīm close to which is this cave of the People of Kahf. Allah knows best.

My revered teacher and master, Maulanā Ashraf Alī Thānavī, relying on Tafsīr Ḥaqqānī, has reported the following historical account of the place and time of the People of Kahf. According to this account, when the People of Kahf had escaped the tyranny of the king of the time and taken shelter in the cave, the time was the year 250 A.D. Then they remained asleep for three hundred years. Thus, it comes to a total of 550

A.D. And the Holy Prophet ﷺ was born in 570 A.D. Therefore, this event of their wakening occurred twenty years before the birth of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Then, in Tafsīr Ḥaqqānī as well, their locale has been determined as the city of Ifsūs or Ṭarsūs that used to be in Asia Minor. Its ruins still remain. And Allah knows best the reality of it.

These historical and geographical details have been given here from the reports of classical commentators, then from contemporary historians. This humble writer had already submitted that neither does the understanding of any verse of the Qur'ān depend on these, nor does any essential part of the objective for which the Qur'ān has related this story belong thereto. Then, relevant reports and stories and their indicators and connections are so different that, despite all investigations and efforts, it is just not possible to take any categorical decision in this matter. Having preferences and inclinations is all that is left to do here. But, in our time, educated people have acquired an increased taste in historical investigations. It is for this satisfaction that these details have been reported for them, by way of introduction and hypothesis, tell us at least this much that this event came to pass after Sayyidnā 'Isa عليه السلام close to the time of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. And that most reports seem to agree on this being near the city of Ifsūs or Ṭarsūs. Even then, Allah knows best. And the truth is that we, after all these investigations, are standing where we had started from - that there is no need to fix an exact location, nor can this be fixed with any certain modality. The Tafsīr and Ḥadīth authority, Ibn Kathīr has said exactly this about it:

قَدْ أَخْبَرَنَا اللَّهُ تَعَالَى بِذَلِكَ وَأَرَادَ مِنَّا فَهْمَهُ، وَتَدْبِيرَهُ، وَلَمْ يُخْبِرْنَا بِمَكَانِ هَذَا الْكَهْفِ فِي أَيِّ الْبِلَادِ مِنَ الْأَرْضِ إِذْ لَا فَايِدَةَ لَنَا فِيهِ وَلَا قَصْدَ شَرْعِيٍّ

Allah Ta'ālā has already told us about that. And He expects us to understand it and deliberate into it. And He did not tell us about the location of this Cave in a particular city out of this earth because there is nothing beneficial for us in it nor does any religious objective hinge upon it - Ibn Kathīr, v. 3, p. 75.

When did the event relating to the People of Kahf come to pass and why did they take shelter in the Cave?

This segment of the story is also the same upon which neither does the understanding of any verse of the Qur'ān depend, nor does it influence the objective of the story in any significant way, nor do the Qur'ān

and Sunnah make any statement about it. What we have here is no more than historical stories. Therefore, in Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ, Commentator Abū Ḥayyān has said:

وَالرُّوَاةُ مُخْتَلِفُونَ فِي قِصَصِهِمْ وَكَيْفَ كَانَ اجْتِمَاعَهُمْ وَخُرُوجَهُمْ وَلَمْ يَأْتِ فِي
الْحَدِيثِ الصَّحِيحِ كَيْفِيَّةُ ذَلِكَ وَلَا فِي الْقُرْآنِ -

And narrators differ in stories about them, and about how they got together and moved out, and the mode and manner of that has neither been mentioned in any authentic Ḥadīth nor in the Qur'an - al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ, p. 101, v. 6.

However, when we provided some information about the site of the remnants of the People of Kahf a little earlier, it was in consideration of the curiosity of contemporary temperament. For the same reason, we are providing here brief notes of information regarding the period and causes of the passing of this event from exegetic and historical reports. As for a detailed and comprehensive description of this story, the respected scholar, Qāḍī Thanā'ullāh Pānīpatī has reported it on the authority of different narratives in his Tafsīr Maḥzarī. But, given here is a brief version of the event that Ibn Kathīr has presented with reference to many early and later commentators. He says:

"The Aṣḥāb al-Kahf were the progeny of kings and chiefs among their people who were idol-worshippers. Once their people went out of the town to participate in some religious festival of theirs. This was a place where they met every year, worshipped their idols and sacrificed animals to please them. Their king was a tyrant. Called Daqyānūs, he used to force his people to worship idols. That year, when everyone had gathered together in this festival, these young men identified as the Aṣḥāb al-Kahf also reached there and saw their people taking rocks carved with their own hands as God, worshipping them and sacrificing for them. At that time, Allah Ta'ālā blessed them with the good sense to shun this absurd practice of their people. Thus, when they used their reason, they arrived at the conclusion that this worship belongs to none but that supreme Power who has created the heavens and the earth and everything therein. This thought crossed the minds of those few young men simultaneously and they started moving away from there to avoid the absurd practice of their people in the fair name of worship. The first young man who withdrew went far from the crowd and sat down under a

tree. After that, came another and he too sat there. Similarly, came the third, and the fourth, and each one of them kept taking a seat under the tree. But, none of them were familiar with each other, nor did they know as to why they had come there. The truth of the matter is that they were brought together on that spot by the Power that lit the light of faith in their hearts."

The real foundation of nationalism and collectivism

After having transmitted that, Ibn Kathīr comments that people tend to take nationalism and common race as the cause of cohesion and union in social life. But, the reality lies in what has been said in a Ḥadīth of Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, that unity or disunity first germinates in souls, then it affects the bodies in this world. Souls that have experienced congruity and unity among them in *'azal* (eternity) go on to become mutually connected and get molded into the form of a confraternity. As for those that did not have the experience of this mutual congruity and unity - in fact, remained separated there - they will remain separated here too. Take this very event as an example and see how the same thought crossed everyone's mind separately and it was this thought that brought everyone unconsciously together.

In short, these people got together at one place all right, but everyone was concealing his belief from the other lest this person reports him to the king and he gets arrested. After having remained there all together in silence, one of them spoke out, 'brothers, there must be some reason why all of us have broken away from our people and reached here. It seems appropriate that we all should get to know each other's thoughts.' Thereupon, one person declared, 'the truth is that the faith and worship in which I found my people involved gave me the certitude that this whole thing is false. 'Ibādah or worship should be for One Allah who is most exalted in His majesty and who has no partner or associate in the act of the creation of this universe.' This broke the ice. Others were prompted to speak out and they all declared that this was the thought, the belief that separated them from their people and brought them there.

Now they were an ideologically unified group enjoying mutual fellowship and friendship. They set up a separate House of Worship for themselves where they would assemble and worship Allah who is One and

who has no partner in His divinity.

But, by and by they became the talk of the town. Backbiters told on them before the king who ordered that they all should be brought to him. When they came into the royal court, the king asked them about their belief and its mores. Allah gave them the courage to state their belief in the Oneness of Allah. In fact, they invited the king himself to believe as they did. This is precisely what has been mentioned in the verses appearing next: *وَرَبَطْنَا عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِمْ إِذْ قَامُوا فَقَالُوا رَبُّنَا رَبُّ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ لَن نَّدْعُوَ مِنْ دُونِهِ إِلَهًا* (And We made their hearts firm. And when they rose, they said, "Our Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth; and we shall never invoke any god other than Him, for then we would be saying something far from the truth. These are people of ours. They have taken to gods other than Him. Why do they not bring a proof in their favor? So, who is more unjust than the one who fabricates a lie against Allah?" - al-Kahf, 18:14,15)

When these young men acted bold before the king and invited him to believe, he turned the call down and threatened them with drastic action. He had the princely robes they donned on their bodies taken off in reprisal so that they may think and change their behavior. In order that they actually do so, he gave them respite for a few days saying that they were young, therefore, he did not wish to kill them right away. In fact, he wanted them to have the time to think over it. Then, if they reverted to the faith of their people, they will be allowed to live as usual, otherwise they would be killed.

It must have been the mercy of Allah Ta'ālā on His believing servants that this respite given to them opened an escape door for them. They ran from there and took refuge in a cave.

Usual reports carried by commentators agree that these people were followers of the faith of Sayyidnā 'Īsā Masīḥ عليه السلام. Ibn Kathīr and most commentators have mentioned it. However, Ibn Kathīr has not accepted it. According to him, had these people been the followers of the Christian faith, the Jews of Madīnah would have not suggested that a question be asked about them just because of their mutual hostility and thus would have not given them that importance. But, this is not a sufficient basis because of which all reports should be rejected. When the Jews of Madīn-

ah proposed that such a question should be asked, they were simply looking at it as a unique event - very similar to the question about Dhul-Qarnain which was also on that basis. That there was no Jewish-Christian prejudice involved in questions of this nature is fairly obvious here.

In Tafsīr Mazharī, based on a report from Ibn Ishāq, these people have been identified as monotheists who, after the decline of the original Christian faith, were among the rare remnants still adhering to the true faith of the Sayyidnā 'Isā عليه السلام and to pure monotheism. In this report of Ibn Ishāq too, the name of the oppressive king has been given as Daqyānūs while the city in which these young men lived before they went into hiding in the cave has been called Ifsūs.

Then, the event has been described in the same manner in the report of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه as well and the name of the king has been given as Daqyānūs. The report of Ibn Ishāq also adds that the name of the king of the people who were followers of the faith of Sayyidnā Masīḥ and had taken over the country at the time the Aṣḥāb al-Kahf woke up was Baidūsis.

So, at least the strong likelihood of the People of Kahf being committed to the true faith brought by Sayyidnā 'Isa Masīḥ عليه السلام stands proved from the reports as a whole, and that they belong to the post-Masīḥ period, and that the Mushrik king they ran from was called Daqyānūs. At the time they woke up after three hundred and nine years, the name of the righteous and believing king who ruled the country has been named as Baidūsis in the report of Ibn Ishāq. If this is seen in conjunction with the contemporary calendar, it is possible to determine their period, at the least as a matter of conjecture and approximation. Trying to determine it any more than that is needless, nor there exist the means to acquire this knowledge.

Are the People of Kahf still alive?

In this matter, the correct and obvious approach is that they have died. Tafsīr Mazharī carries the detailed report of Ibn Ishāq. According to this report, when the People of Kahf woke up, their unique event became the talk of the town. They went to meet the king. When they took leave of king Baidūsis, they bid farewell to him and prayed for him. The

king was still there when they went back to the place only to lie down where they had been lying for such a long time. And that was exactly when Allah Ta'ālā sent death to them.

At this stage, the following report from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه has been reproduced by Ibn Jarīr, Ibn Kathīr and many more from among the commentators:

قَالَ قَتَادَةُ غَزَا ابْنُ عَبَّاسٍ مَعَ حَبِيبِ بْنِ مَسْلَمَةَ فَمَرُّوا بِكَهْفٍ فِي بِلَادِ الرُّومِ فَرَأَوْا فِيهِ عِظَامًا فَقَالَ قَائِلٌ هَذِهِ عِظَامُ أَهْلِ الْكَهْفِ فَقَالَ ابْنُ عَبَّاسٍ لَقَدْ بَلَّيَتْ عِظَامُهُمْ مِنْ أَكْثَرِ مِنْ ثَلَاثِمِائَةِ سَنَةٍ (ابن كثير)

Qatādah says that Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه participated in a Jihād in the company of Ḥabīb ibn Maslamah when they passed by a cave in the Roman territory. There they saw bones in it. Then someone said, 'These are the bones of the People of Kahf.' Thereupon, Ibn 'Abbās said, 'The bones of them have already become dust more than three hundred years ago' - Ibn Kathīr.

These were particular segments of the story that were neither described by the Qur'ān, nor by the Ḥadīth of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. In addition to that, neither does some specified purpose of this event or the understanding of any verse of the Qur'ān depend on it - nor can any categorical decision be arrived at in these matters on the basis of historical reports. As far as the remaining segments of the story already described within the text of the Qur'ān are concerned, their details appear under the commentary on relevant verses.

Up to this point, the Qur'ān had mentioned this story in brief. Details follow.

Verses 13 - 16

نَحْنُ نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ نَبَاهَهُم بِالْحَقِّ ۗ إِنَّهُمْ فِتْيَةٌ آمَنُوا بِرَبِّهِمْ وَزِدْنَاهُمْ هُدًى ﴿١٣﴾ ۖ وَرَبَطْنَا عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ إِذْ قَامُوا فَقَالُوا رَبُّنَا رَبُّ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ لَنْ نَدْعُوهُ مِنْ دُونِهِ إِلَهًا لَقَدْ قُلْنَا إِذَا شَطَطًا ﴿١٤﴾ ۖ هُوَ لَاءِ قَوْمًا اتَّخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِهِ إِلَهَةً لَوْلَا يَأْتُونَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِسُلْطَانٍ مُبِينٍ ۖ فَمَنْ

أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرَى عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا ﴿١٣﴾ وَإِذَا عَتَرْتُمُوهُمْ وَمَا يَعْبُدُونَ
 إِلَّا اللَّهَ فَأَوْا إِلَى الْكَهْفِ يَنْشُرْ لَكُمْ رَبُّكُمْ مِنْ رَحْمَتِهِ وَيَهَيِّءْ لَكُمْ مِنْ
 أَمْرِكُمْ مِرْفَقًا ﴿١٤﴾

We narrate to you their story with truth. They were young men who believed in their Lord and We increased, them in guidance. [13] And We made their hearts firm and when they rose, they said, "Our Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth; and we shall never invoke any god other than Him, for then we would be saying something far from the truth. [14] These are people of ours. They have taken to gods other than Him. Why do they not bring a clear proof in their favor? So, who is more unjust than the one who fabricates a lie against Allah? [15]

And when you have turned away from them, and those they worship, except Allah, then seek refuge in the cave and your Lord will unfold His mercy for you and provide you ease in your matters." [16]

Commentary

The word: *فِتْيَةٌ* (*fityah*) in: *إِنَّهُمْ فِتْيَةٌ* (They were young men - 13) is the plural of: *فَتًى* (*fatā*) which means someone young. According to Tafsīr scholars, this word indicates that the time ripe for correction of deeds and morals, and the inculcation of guidance and righteousness, is invariably the time when one is young. When old, formerly acquired deeds and morals become so deeply rooted that - no matter how evident becomes the truth against these - it is very difficult to break loose from their shackles. Those among the noble Companions who responded to and believed in the call of the Holy Prophet ﷺ were, after all, mostly young people. (Ibn Kathīr, Abū Ḥayyān)

The first sentence of verse 14: *وَرَبَطْنَا عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ* (And We made their hearts firm) refers to the event described by Ibn Kathīr a little earlier. This tells us that Allah made the hearts of these people firm when the king who was cruel and worshipped idols summoned them in his court and questioned them. This was a matter of life and death. But, despite their apprehension for the worst, Allah Ta'ālā made His love, awe and grandeur prevail over their hearts which empowered them to face any

eventuality of death or distress. The outcome was that they proclaimed their belief clearly and courageously saying that they did not worship anyone or anything other than Allah and would not do that in future as well. People who firmly resolve to do something for the sake of Allah, this is how they receive help from Allah Ta'ālā.

About the verse: فَأَرَا إِلَى الْكَهْفِ (then seek refuge in the Cave - 16), Ibn Kathīr says that the course adopted by the People of Kahf was that they left the city in which it was not possible to worship Allah and took refuge in the Cave. This is the Sunnah, the way of all prophets. They migrate from such places and opt for a place where 'Ibādah could be done.

Verses 17 - 18

وَتَرَى الشَّمْسَ إِذَا طَلَعَتْ تَزْوُرُ عَنْ كَهْفِهِمْ ذَاتَ الْيَمِينِ وَإِذَا
 غَرَبَتْ تَقْرُبُهُمْ ذَاتَ الشِّمَالِ وَهُمْ فِي فَجْوَةٍ مِنْهُ ۗ ذَلِكَ مِنْ آيَاتِ
 اللَّهِ ۗ مَنْ يَهْدِ اللَّهُ فَهُوَ الْمُهْتَدِ ۚ وَمَنْ يُضِلِلْ فَلَنْ تَجِدَ لَهُ وَلِيًّا مُرْشِدًا
 ﴿١٧﴾ وَتَحْسَبُهُمْ آيِقَاطًا وَهُمْ رُقُودٌ ۖ وَنُقَلِّبُهُمْ ذَاتَ الْيَمِينِ وَذَاتَ
 الشِّمَالِ ۖ وَكَلْبُهُمْ بَاسِطٌ ذِرَاعَيْهِ بِالْوَصِيدِ ۗ لَوِ اطَّلَعْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ
 لَوَكَّيْتُمْ مِنْهُمْ فِرَارًا وَكَلَّمْتُمْ مِنْهُمْ رُعبًا ۗ ﴿١٨﴾

And you see the sun, when it rises, it turns away from their Cave towards the right; and when it sets, it bypasses them towards the left - and they are in the hollow thereof. That is one of the signs of Allah. Whomsoever Allah guides is the one who gets the right path and whomsoever He lets go astray, you will find for him no one to help, no one to lead. [17] And you think they are awake while they are asleep. And We turn them on their sides, right and left. And their dog has its forelegs stretched out to the doorstep. If you had a look at them, you would have fled away from them and would have been filled with awe of them. [18]

Commentary

In these verses, Allah Ta'ālā has told us about three states of the Peo-