

the whole story. Wondering thereupon, he asked, 'Do you really believe it as true that, once we die and become dust, we shall get another life and, in that life, we shall be given the return for our deeds? Get lost. I am not going to give you anything.' After that, both of them died. The man of Jannah referred to in the cited verses is the servant of Allah who had given all his wealth in Ṣadaqah for the sake of 'Ākhirah (life in the Hereafter), and his acquaintance in Jahannam is the same partner who had chided him on his confirmation of the life to come, the 'Ākhirah. (Tafsīr ad-Durr-ul-Manthūr with reference to Ibn Jarīr and others, p. 165, v. 5)

An advice to avoid bad company

Anyhow, whoever this person may be - it does not matter. This event has been mentioned with a purpose. The noble Qur'ān is really alerting people towards a beneficial rule operative in human relations. Let everyone make a careful survey of his or her circle of friends, and try to find out whether or nor there is someone included therein who may actually be dragging them towards the sad end of the Jahannam. The destruction bad company can bring about can only be discovered fully and truly in the Hereafter - and that will be a time when there will be no escape from such destruction. Therefore, it is better to take one's guard right here in this world in matters concerning the taking of friends and promoting of relationships, something that must be done with due caution and judgment. There are occasions and circumstances when one does not foresee what would happen after having inculcated relationships with someone who disbelieves or disobeys. What ultimately happens is that one starts becoming affected by his ideas, thoughts and way of life without having any sense of that which is happening to him. This attitude proves lethal for one who is so affected in terms of the end he would have in the Hereafter.

Wondering about not having to die anymore

When the man who has been mentioned here will peep into Jahannam to have a look at his disbelieving acquaintance, it has been mentioned that the same man will be so delighted with the blessings of Jannah that he will exclaim: "Is it that we do not have to die anymore?" It does not mean that he will not be certain of the eternal life of Jannah. Instead, it is like the case of a person who achieves the highest degree of happiness. Such a person would occasionally break into exclamations that

show as if he does not believe his eyes on having received such enormous blessings. These remarks are of the same nature.

Towards the end, the noble Qur'ān turns our attention to the essential lesson embedded in this event and says: لِمِثْلِ هَذَا فَلْيَعْمَلِ الْعَامِلُونَ which means 'For this kind (of achievement), all workers must work.'

Verses 62 - 74

أَذْلِكَ خَيْرٌ نَزَلًا أَمْ شَجَرَةُ الزَّقُّومِ ﴿٦٢﴾ إِنَّا جَعَلْنَاهَا فِتْنَةً لِلظَّالِمِينَ
 ﴿٦٣﴾ إِنَّهَا شَجَرَةٌ تَخْرُجُ فِي أَصْلِ الْجَحِيمِ ﴿٦٤﴾ طَلْعُهَا كَأَنَّهُ
 رُءُوسُ الشَّيَاطِينِ ﴿٦٥﴾ فَإِنَّهُمْ لَا يَكُلُونَ مِنْهَا فَمَالِؤْنَ مِنْهَا الْبُطُونَ
 ﴿٦٦﴾ ثُمَّ إِنَّ لَهُمْ عَلَيْهَا لَشَوْبًا مِّنْ حَمِيمٍ ﴿٦٧﴾ ثُمَّ إِنَّ مَرْجِعَهُمْ
 لَإِلَى الْجَحِيمِ ﴿٦٨﴾ إِنَّهُمْ أَلْفَوْا آبَاءَهُمْ ضَالِّينَ ﴿٦٩﴾ فَهُمْ عَلَى
 آثَرِهِمْ يُهْرَعُونَ ﴿٧٠﴾ وَلَقَدْ ضَلَّ قَبْلَهُمْ أَكْثَرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿٧١﴾ وَلَقَدْ
 أَرْسَلْنَا فِيهِمْ مُنْذِرِينَ ﴿٧٢﴾ فَانظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُنْذَرِينَ
 ﴿٧٣﴾ إِلَّا عِبَادَ اللَّهِ الْمُخْلَصِينَ ﴿٧٤﴾

Is that better as hospitality or the tree of Zaqqūm? [62] We have made it a test for the unjust. [63] It is a tree that comes out in the bottom of Jahannam. [64] Its fruits are like the heads of satans. [65] So, they have to eat from it and have to fill their bellies with it. [66] Then they will have, on top of it, a mixture made of boiling water. [67] Then, their return is but to the Fire. [68] They found their fathers on the wrong path. [69] So, they used to run in their foot steps. [70] And most of the earlier ones (too) had gone astray before them. [71] And We did send warners among them. [72] So look, how was the end of those warned - [73] except the chosen servants of Allah. [74]

Commentary

After having described the conditions prevailing in Jahannam and Jannah briefly, Allah Ta'ālā has invited every human being to compare and decide as to which of the two conditions is better. It was said: أَذْلِكَ خَيْرٌ

نَزَلًا أَمْ شَجَرَةُ الرَّقُومِ that is, 'there are these blessings of Jannah mentioned here - are they better? Or, is it the tree of Zaqqūm the fruits of which will be fed to the people of Jahannam?

The reality of Zaqqūm

A tree by the name of Zaqqūm is found in the territory of Tihāmah, a part of the Arabian Peninsula, and 'Allāmah 'Ālūsī has written that it is also found in other barren deserts. Some say that this is the same tree known as *thohar* (Euphorbia neriifolia or antiquorum) in Urdu and Hindi. Some others point out to another tree known as *nagphan* (hood of serpent) found in India as being the *zaqqūm* that appears to be more likely. Now, commentators differ in this matter. What tree is it the fruit from which the people of Jahannam will be given to eat? Is it one of the trees found somewhere in this world, or is it some other tree? Some support the view that it is what is found growing in this world. Some others say that the zaqqum of Jahannam is an entirely different thing. It has nothing to do with the earthly *zaqqūm*. Apparently, the way there are snakes and scorpions in the mortal world, it seems they are there in Jahannam as well. But, it goes without saying, that the snakes and scorpions of the Jahannam will be far ferocious than their counterparts here. Similarly, the *zaqqūm* of Jahannam will, though, be like the zaqqum of this world in terms of its genus, but it will be far too gruesome to look at, and far too unpalatable to eat. And Allah is pure and high who knows best.

In verse 63, it was said: *إِنَّا جَعَلْنَاهَا فِتْنَةً لِلظَّالِمِينَ* (We have made it [the tree of zaqqum] a test ['*fitnah*'] for the unjust). Here, according to some commentators, *فِتْنَةً* (*fitnah*) means punishment, that is, 'have turned this tree into a source of punishment.' But, most commentators say that it is more appropriate to translate '*fitnah*' at this place as 'trial' or 'test'. The purpose here is to say that Allah wishes to test as to who believes in it, and who ridicules it. Consequently, what happened was that the disbelievers of Arabia failed this test. Rather than fear this punishment and believe, they opted for the method of confrontation and ridicule. According to Ḥadīth narrations, when the verses of the Qur'ān in which it has been mentioned that the disbelievers will be made to eat the fruit of *zaqqūm*, Abū Jahl said to his accomplices: "Your friend (Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafa ﷺ) says that there is a tree in the Fire -

although, fire eats the tree - while we, by God, do know this much that zaqqum is the name of butter-topped dates. So, come and eat this date and butter" (ad-Durr-ul-Manthūr, p. 277, v. 5). In fact, in the language of the Berbers, dates topped with butter or cream were known as zaqqum, therefore, Abū Jahl made use of this opportunity to ridicule the prophet of Islam. To the two things he said, Allah Ta'ālā gave an answer in a single sentence by saying: *إِنَّهَا شَجَرَةٌ تَخْرُجُ فِي أَصْلِ الْجَحِيمِ* (That is a tree that comes out in the bottom of Jahannam - 37:64). Thus, neither does it mean date and butter, nor the objection as to how could a tree survive in fire hold valid - particularly when that tree owes its very origin to the fire itself. Hence, Allah Ta'ālā has placed such properties in it that instead of getting burnt in fire, it is actually nurtured by it. For example, there are many life forms that would survive only in fire that does not burn them, in fact, makes them grow.

By saying: *طَلْعُهَا كَأَنَّهُ رُءُوسُ الشَّيَاطِينِ* (Its fruits are like the heads of the satans.- 65), the fruits of *zaqqūm* have been likened to the heads of the satans. Some commentators have translated the word: *الشَّيَاطِينِ* (*ash-shayāṭīn*) in this verse as 'serpents' since the fruit of *zaqqūm* resembles the hood of the serpent. Therefore, in Urdu and Hindi too, it is called 'nagphan' (hood of the serpent) for this very reason. But most commentators have said that the word: *الشَّيَاطِينِ* (*ash-shayāṭīn*) here should be taken in its well-recognized sense. Thus, it would mean that, in its ugliness, the fruit of *zaqqūm* is like the head of the satans. Now, let there be no doubt here that nobody has seen the Shaitan, why then, would something be likened to him? The reason is that it is an imaginative simile. Speaking metaphorically, things ugly and grotesque are commonly likened to satans, Jinns and ghosts. The purpose is only to express an extreme degree of ugliness. The simile used here is also of this very nature. (Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī and others).

The sense of the rest of the verses is clear from their translation.

Verses 75 - 82

وَلَقَدْ نَادَيْنَا نُوْحًا فَلَنِعْمَ الْمُجِيبُونَ ﴿٧٥﴾ وَنَجَّيْنَاهُ وَأَهْلَهُ مِنَ الْكَرْبِ
 الْعَظِيمِ ﴿٧٦﴾ وَجَعَلْنَا ذُرِّيَّتَهُ هُمُ الْبَاقِينَ ﴿٧٧﴾ وَتَرَكْنَا عَلَيْهِ فِي

الْآخِرِينَ ﴿٧٨﴾ سَلَّمَ عَلَىٰ نُوحٍ فِي الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٩٧﴾ إِنَّا كَذَلِكَ
نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٨٠﴾ إِنَّهُ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٨١﴾ ثُمَّ أَغْرَقْنَا
الْآخِرِينَ ﴿٨٢﴾

And Nūḥ did call Us (for help after he was disappointed from his people), so We were the best to respond. [75] And We delivered him and his family from the great agony, [76] and made his progeny the sole survivors. [77] And We left for him (a word of praise) among the later people, (that is): [78] Salām be on Nūḥ among (the people of) all the worlds. [79] Certainly, this is how We reward those who are good in deeds. [80] He was one of Our believing servants. [81] Then, we drowned others. [82]

Commentary

In the previous verses, it was said that Allah had sent messengers to warn the earlier communities as well, but most of the people did not listen to them, therefore, they met a very sad end. Now, from here details of that brief statement made earlier are being given. As a corollary, events relating to several noble prophets have been narrated. Mentioned first in these verses was Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام. The event relating to Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام has appeared in Sūrah Hud (11) with sufficient details. A few things connected with the explanation of these very verses particularly are being taken up here.

In verse 75, it was said: وَلَقَدْ نَادَانَا نُوحٌ (And Nūḥ did call Us). According to most commentators, it means either the prayer of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام mentioned in Sūrah Nūḥ: رَبِّ لَا تَذَرْ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ مِنَ الْكَافِرِينَ دَيَّارًا (My Lord, do not leave on earth even a single inhabitant (surviving) from the disbelievers - 71:26), or that which appears in Sūrah Al-Qamar: أَنِّي مَغْلُوبٌ فَانْتَصِرْ (I am overpowered, so defend me - 54:10). Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام had made this prayer at a time when his people had crossed all limits in being wicked and unruly to him and had gone as far as conspiring to kill him.

And in verse 77, it was said: وَجَعَلْنَا ذُرِّيَّتَهُ هُمُ الْبَاقِينَ (And [We] made his progeny the sole survivors.). According to most commentators, this verse means that the majority of world population was annihilated in the great flood during the time of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام. After that, all races in the

entire world originated from the three sons of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام. Sam was one of his sons. His children were the forbears of the peoples of Arabia and Persia. The second son was named Ham. The populations in African countries came from him. Some scholars have included the people of India in the same racial stock. Yafith was the third son. From him came the races known as Turk, Mongol and Gog and Magog. Out of the people who had embarked the ark of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام and had survived the Flood, the three sons of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام were the only ones whose progeny survived later on.

However, some scholars - whose number is very small - hold the view that the Flood during the time of Sayyidnā Nūḥ was not world wide, instead, it was restricted to the land of ancient Arabia. In their sight, it was only in that land area where the progeny of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام flourished and survived, and it was through them that the Arab race came. That the race of others spread out in other regions of the world does not go on to contradict this verse. (Bayān-ul-Qur'ān)

A third group of commentators says that as for the Great Flood, it was worldwide, but the universal racial stock did not come from the sons of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام alone. Rather, it spread out from all those people who were on board with Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام. This group of commentators takes the restrictive statement of the Qur'ān in the sense of relative restriction, and says that, at this place, the real purpose is to state that the race of the people drowned did not continue. (Qurṭubī)

Given the context of the Qur'ān, this third view is very weak, while the first view is the best for the reason that it is supported by some *aḥādīth* as well which Imām Tirmidhī and others have reported directly from the Holy Prophet ﷺ under the Tafsīr of this verse. In a narration from Sayyidnā Samurah Ibn Jundub رضي الله عنه, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been reported to have said: "Sam is the father of the people of Arabia; Ḥām is the father of the people of Ethiopia, and Yafith, that of the people of Byzantine." Imām Tirmidhī calls this Ḥadīth as Ḥasan, while Imām Ḥākim rates it as Ṣaḥīḥ (Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī, p. 98, v.23).

In verses 78 and 79, it was said: وَتَرَكْنَا عَلَيْهِ فِي الْآخِرِينَ سَلَامًا عَلَى نُوحٍ فِي الْعَالَمِينَ (And We left for him (a word of praise) among the later people, (that is): Salām be on Nūḥ among [the people of] all the worlds.). It means that, in

the sight of those who were born after Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام, he was made so revered that they would continue praying for his peace and well-being right through the last day of the Qiyāmah. As such, this is how it actually happened. All religions with attribution to Divine Scriptures subscribe to the mission of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام as a prophet and hold him in great reverence. In addition to Muslims, even Jews and Christians regard him as being their spiritual leader.

Verses 83 - 98

وَأَنَّ مِنْ شَيْعَتِهِ لِإِبْرَاهِيمَ ﴿٨٣﴾ إِذْ جَاءَ رَبَّهُ بِقَلْبٍ سَلِيمٍ ﴿٨٤﴾ إِذْ قَالَ
لِأَبِيهِ وَقَوْمِهِ مَاذَا تَعْبُدُونَ ﴿٨٥﴾ أَتِفْكَآ إِلَهَةً دُونَ اللَّهِ تُرِيدُونَ ﴿٨٦﴾
فَمَا ظَنُّكُمْ بِرَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٨٧﴾ فَنَظَرَ نَظْرَةً فِي النُّجُومِ ﴿٨٨﴾ فَقَالَ
إِنِّي سَقِيمٌ ﴿٨٩﴾ فَتَوَلَّوْا عَنْهُ مُدْبِرِينَ ﴿٩٠﴾ فَرَاغَ إِلَى إِلَهِهِمْ فَقَالَ
لَا تَأْكُلُونَ ﴿٩١﴾ مَا لَكُمْ لَاتَنْطِقُونَ ﴿٩٢﴾ فَرَاغَ عَلَيْهِمْ ضَرْبًا
بِالْيَمِينِ ﴿٩٣﴾ فَأَقْبَلُوا إِلَيْهِ يَزْفُونَ ﴿٩٤﴾ قَالَ اتَّعَبُدُونَ مَا تَنْجِتُونَ
﴿٩٥﴾ وَاللَّهُ خَلَقَكُمْ وَمَا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٩٦﴾ قَالُوا ابْنُوا لَهُ بُيُوتًا فَأَلْفَوْهُ
فِي الْجَحِيمِ ﴿٩٧﴾ فَرَادُوا بِهِ كَيْدًا فَجَعَلْنَاهُمُ الْأَسْفَلِينَ ﴿٩٨﴾

And certainly from his adherents was Ibrāhīm. [83] (Remember) when he came to his Lord with a pure heart, [84] when he said to his father and his people, "What is that which you worship? Do you wish (to have) fallacious gods other than Allah? [86] Then, what is your opinion about the Lord of the worlds?" [87]

Then, he cast a look at the stars, [88] and then said, "I feel indisposed" [89] So they departed from him, turning their backs. [90] And he made his way to their gods and said to them, "Why would you not eat? [91] What is wrong with you that you do not speak?" [92] Then he attacked them striking with his right hand. [93] Then, they (the idolaters) came to him rushing. [94] He said, "Do you worship what is carved by yourselves, [95] while Allah has created you and what you make?" [96] They said, "Build for him a structure, and throw him

into the blazing fire." [97] So, they intended to bring harm to him, but We made them the lowest (by frustrating their plan). [98]

Commentary

After having related the event concerning Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام the Qur'ān mentions two events from the blessed life of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. Both events highlight the great sacrifices Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام offered for the sake of Allah alone. Out of these, the first event mentioned in the verses cited above relates to Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام being thrown into the fire. Its details have already appeared in Sūrah Al-Anbiyā' (21: 51-70). Yet, the way it has been described at this place, it needs some explanatory notes that appear below.

The word: شَيْعَةٌ (*shi'ah*) in verse 83: وَإِنَّ مِنْ شَيْعَتِهِ لِابْرَاهِيمَ (And certainly from his adherents was Ibrāhīm.) is used in the Arabic language for a group or party the individuals from which are similar to each other in basic concepts and methods - and here it is obvious that the pronoun in: شَيْعَتِهِ (*shi'atihi*) is reverting to Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام. Therefore, it would mean that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام adhered to the way of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام, the prophet preceding him, and that there was a perfect agreement between them on the basic principles of faith - and it is also possible that the religious codes they had could also be the same, or similar. Let us bear in mind that, according to some historical narratives, there is a gap of two thousand six hundred and forty years between them, and there was no prophet except Sayyidnā Hūd and Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام during this period. (Kashshaf, p. 48, v. 4)

In verse 84, it was said: إِذْ جَاءَ رَبَّهُ بِقَلْبٍ سَلِيمٍ (when he came to his Lord with a pure heart,). Here, 'coming to his Lord' means 'to turn to Allah, to zero in one's attention towards Him and to worship Him.' By placing the restriction of 'with a pure heart' it has been indicated that no act of devotion (*ibādah*) to Allah is acceptable until the heart of the devotee is cleansed pure from false beliefs and ill intentions. If a certain act of devotion is performed while laced with some false belief, then, no matter how hard the devotee has worked in this process, it will still not be acceptable. Similarly, if the main purpose of the devotee happens not to be the seeking of the sole pleasure of Allah - but, is a simple show off or some material gain, then, that act of devotion is not praiseworthy. The

passion with which Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام turned towards Allah was free of all such adulterations.

In verses 88 and 89, it was said: *فَنظَرَ نَظْرَةً فِي النُّجُومِ فَقَالَ إِنِّي سَقِيمٌ* (Then, he cast a look at the stars, and then said, "I feel indisposed" 37:88-89). There is a background to these verses. The people of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام used to have a festival on a particular day. When that day came, they invited Sayyidnā Ibrahim to go with them and enjoy the festival. Their purpose was that if he accompanies them in the festival, he might be impressed with them and forget about calling them to his faith. (ad-Durr-ul-Manthūr, Ibn Jarīr and others). But, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام had something else on his mind. He wanted to make use of this occasion to pursue an agenda of his own. He thought when all these people go to celebrate their festival, he would have the time to go into their temple and break their idols, so that when they returned, they would see the helplessness of their false gods with their own eyes. It was quite possible that this scenario makes someone's heart lit with the spark of true faith and, may be, he repents and shies away from shirk. This being his aim, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام refused to go with them. But, he chose a particular method of saying 'no' to his people when he cast a full, animated look at the stars (expressed in the text by saying: *فِي النُّجُومِ* [*fī-n-nujūm*: into the stars] as explained below) and then said that he was indisposed. His people took his excuse to be valid, left him alone and went away to enjoy their festival.

Several exegetic and juristic issues are related with this event. A gist is being presented here.

The purpose of casting a glance at the stars

The first debatable issue is to determine the purpose for which Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام cast a glance at the stars before he could give an answer. Some commentators have said that this happened as a matter of chance. When someone has something important on his mind, there are occasions he would start looking at the sky quite unintentionally. At the time Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام was invited to come to the festival, he was left thinking as to how could he excuse himself out of this invitation. It was in this state of indecision that he, quite involuntarily, cast a glance towards the stars and, only after that, came his response. This explanation of casting a glance towards the stars apparently seems to be

cloudless. But, in view of the style of the noble Qur'ān, it is difficult to call it correct. First of all because the style of the Qur'ān is such that it limits itself to the narration of only important and necessary units of events while it leaves off details that are unnecessary. Even in these very verses under study, several units of the events have been elided to the extent that its entire background was also not spelt out. Therefore, it is not possible to believe that the Qur'ān would have left out the background of this event, lest it becomes too long while it would take an absolutely involuntary action not even distantly related to the event and describe it in a whole verse. Secondly, if no particular wise consideration was in sight while casting a glance towards the stars, instead, it had happened involuntarily - then, according to the grammatical rules of the Arabic language, one would say: فَتَنظَرَ نَظْرَةً إِلَى النُّجُومِ and not: فِي النُّجُومِ as in the text.

This tells us that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام did have some particular expedient consideration before him in having a glance at the stars, and that is why the noble Qur'ān has mentioned it with such stress on its importance. Now the question is: What was that expedient consideration? In answer, most commentators have said that the people of Ibrāhīm عليه السلام believed in astrology and used to do everything they had to do by looking at stars. The purpose behind the answer that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام gave by looking at the stars was to let his people understand that the statement being given by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام about his indisposition was not something unfounded, instead, what he was saying was being said on the basis of his assessment of the movement of stars. Although, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام was not a believer in astrology personally, but the method he used functionally in order to avoid his participation in the festival was precisely what would appear trustworthy in their sight - and since he made no reference to astrology verbally, nor did he declare that his aim was to seek help from his knowledge of stars - instead, what he did was no more than having looked at the stars rather fully - therefore, this also had no aspect of some lie in it.

Here, one may doubt that this act of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام might have encouraged disbelievers who were not only believers in astrology, in fact, took stars to be effective agents in the events of the world. But, this doubt can be answered by saying that the likelihood of an encouragement was possible only when Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام would have not clearly

warned them on their erroneous conduct later on. Here, this entire plan was being enacted for the sole purpose that the invitation to pure monotheism be communicated to them in the most effective manner possible. Hence, it was after a short while that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام laid bare every possible error of their conduct before his people. Therefore, there is no question of providing encouragement to disbelievers simply on the basis of this ambiguous act. Here the purpose was to get rid of the compulsion of having to participate in the festival so that effort could be made to create a conducive atmosphere to present the call of true faith. This method of considered ambiguity for the purpose in sight is based on nothing but wisdom - and no reasonable objection can be raised against it.

This explanation of casting a glance towards the stars has been reported from most commentators. Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavi has also gone by this very Tafsīr in Bayān-ul-Qur'ān.

Astrology: Its status in Islam

Another question which comes under this verse relates to the status astrology has in the Shari'ah of Islam. A brief answer to this question is being submitted here.

At least this much is a settled matter that Allah Ta'ālā has placed specific properties in the Moon, Sun and the stars that affect human lives. Some of these are such as could be observed by everyone, for instance, the feeling of being hot or cold due to the Sun being near and far or the high and low tides of the seas due to the waxing and waning of the Moon and similar other phenomena. Now, some commentators just limit themselves to saying that the properties of these stars are no more than what we can gather from common observation - while there are others who say that there are some additional and particular properties in the position and movement of stars which affect most human matters. The moving of some star in a particular constellation becomes for some human beings the cause of happiness and success while the cause of sorrow and failure for some others. Then there are some people who believe that stars are the sole effective agents in the case of all successes and failures. And there are still others who say that there is no effective agent but Allah Ta'ālā, however, He has endowed stars with such properties, therefore, very much like other causes, they too serve as yet another cause of human successes and failures.

As for those who believe in stars being effective agents, and hold that events and revolutions of the world depend on stars alone, and they alone decide what happens in the world - their notion is wrong and false without any doubt. In fact, this belief takes one to the borderline of *shirk* (the ascribing of partners to the pristine divinity of Allah). This was the kind of belief the people of Arabia entertained in the matter of rains. According to them, a particular star (called: نوء : *naw*) brought rains and it was an effective agent as far as rains are concerned. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has strongly refuted this belief the detailed description of which appears in *aḥādīth*.

Now, there remains the thinking of people who, for all intents and purposes, do believe that Allah Ta'ālā is the ultimate effective agent in world events, yet they also subscribe to the view that the Almighty has endowed stars with such properties which affect human lives in the degree of a general cause. For example, as far as rain is concerned, it is Allah alone who brings it, but clouds happen to be the obvious cause of rains. Similarly, the real fountainhead of all successes and failures is no other but the will of Allah Ta'ālā. But, these stars become the cause of those successes and failures. Hence, this thinking is no *shirk* - and neither do the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth confirm or reject it. Therefore, it is not too far out to think that Allah Ta'ālā might as well have embedded some such effects in the position, movement, rising and setting of stars. But, the acquiring of the knowledge of astrology in order to pursue and discover these effects, and then placing reliance on this knowledge, and then issuing decrees for the future on that basis is, after all, prohibited and impermissible and *aḥādīth* forbid it. According to a narration of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd رضي الله عنه, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

إِذَا ذُكِرَ الْقَدْرُ فَامْسِكُوا وَإِذَا ذُكِرَتِ النُّجُومُ فَامْسِكُوا وَإِذَا ذُكِرَ أَصْحَابِي فَامْسِكُوا
(تخريج احياء العلوم للعراقي بحواله طبراني وهو حديث حسنه العراقي)

When destiny is mentioned - observe restraint; and when stars are mentioned - observe restraint; and when my Companions are mentioned - observe restraint [that is, do not deliberate or debate or dwell on differences]. 'Iraqi on *Iḥyā'-ul-'Ulum*, with reference to Ṭabarānī, and rating as 'ḥasan')

And Sayyidnā 'Umar رضي الله عنه said:

تَعَلَّمُوا مِنَ النُّجُومِ مَا نَهْتَدُونَ بِهِ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ ثُمَّ أَمْسِكُوا (احياء علوم الدين للغزالي)

Acquire knowledge of stars to the extent you are guided right on land and at sea - then, stop. (Iḥyā'-ul-'Ulum -Ghazzālī)

This prohibition does not necessitate rejection of properties and effects of stars. But, any relentless digging into these properties and effects - and wasting precious time while hankering after these is what has been prohibited. Imām al-Ghazali has, while discussing this subject in Iḥyā'-ul-'Ulum, identified several elements of wisdom behind this prohibition.

The first wise consideration under which astrology has been declared as blameworthy and prohibited lies in a person's accelerated devotion to it. Experience bears out that once this happens, he gradually starts taking stars as the be-all and end-all of everything, and this false perception then drags him on to the polytheistic belief of taking stars as the real effective agents.

Then there is yet another wise consideration behind it. Even if Allah Ta'ālā has placed some properties and effects in the stars, we have, on our part, no certain source of knowledge about these, except through wahy or revelation. It appears in *aḥādīth* about Sayyidnā Idrīs عليه السلام (Enoch) that Allah Ta'ālā had given him some knowledge of this nature. But, that knowledge based on Divine revelation (*wahy*) is no more there in this world. Now, whatever the so-called experts of astrology have with them is merely a collection of inferences, conjectures and whims based on which no certain knowledge can be acquired. This is the reason why countless predictions of astrologers keep being proved false. Someone has made a lively comment on this field of knowledge by saying:

مفيده، غير معلوم و معلومه غير مفيد

The useful of it is unknown, and the known of it is useless!

'Allāmah 'Ālūsī has, in his Tafsīr Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī, has cited several examples from historical events where the way an event should have transpired under the accepted rules of astrology came, in reality, to transpire almost contrarily. Therefore, so many great people that devoted their lives to astrology were finally compelled to confess that the ultimate end of this field of knowledge is no more than conjectures and estimations.

A famous astrologer, Koshyar Dailami has written in his book al-Mujmal fi-l-Ahkam:

"Astrology is a field of knowledge not supported by evidence, proof, or argument. It has a lot of leeway for human scruples and conjectures."

(Ruḥ-ul-Ma'ānī, p. 116, v. 23)

'Allāmah 'Alūsi has also reported similar sayings from several other scholars of astrology. Nevertheless, this much is settled that astrology is not a field of knowledge that could offer any degree of certainty. Countless probabilities of errors lurk behind it. But, what actually happens is that people who pursue this field of knowledge end up giving it status of a science that is absolute and certain. On this very basis they arrive at their decrees for the future, and because of it they go on to entertain good or bad opinions about others. Moreover, far serious is the false pride in this field that, on some occasions, pushes its votaries to start claiming that they have the knowledge of the unseen (*al-ghayb*). And it goes without saying that everything pointed to here generates all sorts of corruption.

There is yet another reason for the prohibition of astrology in that it amounts to allowing dear life to be consumed in a pursuit that has no benefit in the real sense. When one cannot have something certain come out of it, how is it going to be helpful in doing so many things one has to do in this world? Now, running after something useless for no valid reason is totally against the spirit and temperament of the Shari'ah of Islam. Therefore, it has been prohibited.

How to explain the 'indisposition' of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام ?

The third problem that emerges from this verse relates to the statement of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. In response to the invitation of his people, he said: إِنِّي سَقِيمٌ (I feel indisposed). Now the question is: Was he really sick at that time? In the Qur'ān, there is no clarification about it. But, from a Ḥadīth of the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī it seems that he was not so sick at that time as would make him unable to go with his people. Therefore, we have to determine as to how could he say that.

The answer to that, according to the majority of commentators, is that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام had really employed the mode of توريه : *tauriyah* (equivocation). *Tauriyah* means: "To say something that is apparently

counter to the actual fact, but the speaker means a remote sense in it that matches the actual fact.' Here, the apparent sense of the remark made by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام is that 'Right now, I am sick.' But, this is not what he really meant. Now, what did he really mean? About this, commentators have expressed different opinions. Some said that it was prompted by his instinctive aversion at the sight of the polytheistic activities of his people. This view is supported by the fact that the word used here is: *سَقِيمٌ* ('*saqim*': indisposed), a word that is much lighter than: *مَرِيضٌ* (*marīḍ* : sick). This sense could be conveyed in English by saying: I am indisposed (as in the translation of the text). It is obvious that this sentence has ample room to incorporate the sense of instinctive aversion alluded to earlier.

And some commentators have said that by saying: *إِنِّي سَقِيمٌ* (*inni saqīm*), Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام intended to convey the sense of 'I am going to be sick' for the reason that, in the Arabic language, the form of active participle noun (*ism-u-l-fa'il*) is frequently used for the future tense. In the Qur'ān itself, it was said while addressing the Holy Prophet ﷺ: *إِنَّكَ مَيِّتٌ وَأِنَّهُمْ مَيِّتُونَ* (which can be literally translated in terms of the outwardly apparent words by saying: 'You too are dead and they too are dead.' But, as obvious, it means: "Certainly, you will die and they [too] will die - (Az-Zumar, 39:30). Similarly, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام had said: *إِنِّي سَقِيمٌ* (*inni saqīm*) only to convey the sense of 'I am going to be sick' and he said that because one has to fall sick some or the other time much before death comes. Even if someone does not suffer from a regular sickness, even then, one is temperamentally disturbed before death that is something inevitable.

If someone is not satisfied with these interpretations, then the best explanation is that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام was really somewhat indisposed at that time, but his indisposition was not such as would have prevented him from participating in the festival. Actually, he talked about his casual indisposition in a particular setting where his listeners thought he was suffering from some major disease because of which he was really unable to go with them. This explanation of the equivocation used by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام is most reasonable and satisfactory.

This explication also makes it clear that the use of the word: *كَذِبًا* (*kadhibah*: lie) for the statement: *إِنِّي سَقِيمٌ* (*inni saqīm*) uttered by

Sayyidnā Ibrahim, as is reported in the Ḥadīth of Bukhārī, actually means " (توريه : equivocation) which has the apparent form of a lie but it is no lie in terms of the sense intended by the speaker. In some narrations of this very Ḥadīth, the following words have also appeared:

مَا مِنْهَا كَذِبَةٌ إِلَّا مَا حَلَّ بِهَا عَنْ دِينِ اللَّهِ

Out of these, there is no lie that has not been spoken for the sake of defending and supporting the religion of Allah.

These words are self-explanatory. They tell us that the word '*kadhib*' or lie in the Ḥadīth carries a sense that is separate from its common meaning. A slightly detailed discussion regarding this very Ḥadīth has already appeared in the commentary on Sūrah Al-Anbiyā' under the verse: قَالَ بَلْ فَعَلَهُ كَبِيرُهُمْ (He said Rather, this is done by this chief of theirs - 21:63). (Ma'āriful-Qur'ān, volume VI)

The Islamic legal ruling on (equivocation)

Also from these very verses comes the ruling that resorting to *tauriyah* on occasions of need is permissible. One form of *tauriyah* is verbal, that is, saying something the apparent sense of which is counter to the actual fact, while the inward sense corresponds to it. Then there is the practical *tauriyah*, that is, to act in a manner that makes the onlooker interpret one's intention in a certain way while, in reality, one's intention is quite different. This is also known as: إِهَامٌ (*iham*). When Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام cast a glance towards the stars, it was *iham*. (as held by most commentators) and calling himself sick was *tauriyah* or equivocation.

On specific occasions of need, resorting to both these kinds of *tauriyah* stands proved from the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم in person. When he was on his journey of *hijrah*, and the disbelievers were looking for him frantically, someone en route asked Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضی اللہ عنہ about the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم. He answered by saying: هُوَ هَادٍ يَهْدِينِي (He is my guide. He shows me the way). From his answer, the listener gathered that he was referring to him as some usual pathfinder or guide (hired for this purpose in travel through unknown desert terrain). Therefore, he did not bother and went his way - although, Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضی اللہ عنہ had still not surrendered the truth of the matter that he was his religious and spiritual guide or leader.

Similarly, says Sayyidnā Ka'b Ibn Mālik رضی اللہ عنہ, 'when the Holy Prophet

ﷺ had to go in a certain direction for Jihad, he would, while coming out of Madīnah, rather than go in his intended direction, would start marching towards some other direction - so that onlookers do not find out the correct destination towards which he was really headed (Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim and others). This was practical tauriyah (equivocation) and *'iham*.

On occasions of good cheer and light humor too, *tauriyah* stands proved from the Holy Prophet ﷺ. According to narration from the Shamā'il of Tirmidhī, the Holy Prophet ﷺ humorously said to an old woman, "No old woman will go to Paradise." That woman became very anxious. Then he explained that he meant that the old women will not go Paradise in the state of their old age - yes, they will go there after having turned young.

Verses 99 - 113

وَقَالَ إِنِّي ذَاهِبٌ إِلَىٰ رَبِّي سَيَهْدِينِ ﴿٩٩﴾ رَبِّ هَبْ لِي مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ ﴿١٠٠﴾ فَبَشَّرْنَاهُ بِغُلَامٍ حَلِيمٍ ﴿١٠١﴾ فَلَمَّا بَلَغَ مَعَهُ السَّعْيَ قَالَ يَبْنَؤُا بِنِّي إِنِّي أَرَىٰ فِي الْمَنَامِ أَنِّي أَذْبَحُكَ فَانظُرْ مَاذَا تَرَىٰ ۗ قَالَ يَآبَتِ افْعَلْ مَا تَأْمُرُ سَتَجِدُنِي إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مِنَ الصَّابِرِينَ ﴿١٠٢﴾ فَلَمَّا أَسْلَمَا وَتَلَّهُ لِلْجَبِينِ ﴿١٠٣﴾ وَنَادَيْنَاهُ أَنْ يَا إِبْرَاهِيمُ ﴿١٠٤﴾ قَدْ صَدَّقْتَ الرُّءْيَا ۗ يَا آدَمُ أَنْتَ وَزَوْجُكَ وَالْحَائِمُونَ ﴿١٠٥﴾ إِنَّ هَذَا لَهُوَ الْبَلَاءُ الْمُبِينُ ﴿١٠٦﴾ وَفَدَيْنَاهُ بِذَبْحٍ عَظِيمٍ ﴿١٠٧﴾ وَتَرَكْنَا عَلَيْهِ فِي الْآخِرِينَ ﴿١٠٨﴾ سَلَّمَ عَلَيَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ ﴿١٠٩﴾ كَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿١١٠﴾ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١١١﴾ وَبَشَّرْنَاهُ بِإِسْحَاقَ نَبِيًّا مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ ﴿١١٢﴾ وَبَارَكْنَا عَلَيْهِ وَعَلَىٰ إِسْحَاقَ ۗ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِهِمَا مُحْسِنٌ وَظَالِمٌ لِنَفْسِهِ مُبِينٌ ﴿١١٣﴾

And he said, "I am going to my Lord. He will show me the way. [99] O my Lord, bless me with a righteous son."

[100] So, We gave him the good news of a forbearing boy.
 [101] Thereafter, when he reached an age in which he could work with him, he said, "O my little son, I have seen in a dream that I am slaughtering you, so consider, what do you think? " He said, "O my dear father, do what you have been ordered to do. You will find me, insha'Allah, (if Allah wills) one of those who endure patiently." [102] So, (it was a great episode) when both of them submitted themselves (to Allah's will), and he laid him on his forehead [103] and then We called out to him, "O Ibrāhīm, you did make the dream come true." This is how We reward those who are good in deeds.
 [104] This was indeed a trial that clearly demonstrated (their obedience). [106] And We ransomed him with a great sacrifice. [107] and We left for him (a word of praise) among the later people, [108] (that is)," Salam be on Ibrahim! [109] This is how We reward those who are good in deeds. [110] Surely, he is among Our believing servants. [111] And We gave him the good news of Iṣḥāq, a prophet from among the righteous. [112] And We did bless him, and Iṣḥāq - and among the progeny of both of them, some are good and some are utterly unjust to their own selves. [113]

Commentary

The sacrifice of a son

Another event in the blessed life of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام has been described in the verses cited above. This is the event of the sacrifice of his first-born son in the way of Allah.

Explanatory Notes on the verses

The first verse (99) opens with the words: ... وَقَالَ إِنِّي ذَاهِبٌ إِلَىٰ رَبِّي (And he said, "I am going to my Lord...). Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام said this at a time when he was totally disappointed by his countrymen, for nobody except Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام, his nephew, was willing to believe in him. The statement: دار الكفر (I am going to my Lord) means that he will leave the abode of disbelief and go to a place whereto Allah Ta'ālā has commanded him to go, a place where he will be able to worship his Lord in peace. So, he started on a journey accompanied by his blessed wife, Sayyidah Sārah رضي الله عنها and his nephew, Sayyidnā Lūṭ. After having passed through different areas of Iraq, he finally reached Syria. Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام had no children until then, therefore, he made the prayer mentioned in the next verse (100).

He said: رَبِّ هَبْ لِي مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ (O my Lord, bless me with a righteous son."- 100). His prayer was answered and Allah Ta'ālā gave him the good news of the birth of a son.

Thus, by saying 'forbearing' in: فَبَشَّرْنَاهُ بِغُلَامٍ حَلِيمٍ (So, We gave him the good news of a forbearing boy- 101), it was indicated that this newborn would demonstrate such patience, control and forbearance in his life as would be exemplary in the world. The birth of this son had a background of its own. When Sayyidah Sārah رضى الله عنها realized that she is not being blessed with children, she took herself to be barren. On the other hand, the Pharaoh had given his daughter named Hajirah as gift to Sayyidah Sārah, so that she could help her in household chores. Sayyidah Sārah passed on this very Hajirah as gift to Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام who married her. Then the son mentioned here was born to this Hajirah and he was named Isma'īl عليه السلام.

In verse 102, it was said: فَلَمَّا بَلَغَ مَعَهُ السَّعْيَ قَالَ يُبْنَىٰ لِإِنِّي أَرَىٰ فِي الْمَنَامِ أَنِّي أَذْبَحُكَ (Thereafter, when he reached an age in which he could work with him, he said, "O my little son, I have seen in a dream that I am slaughtering you, so consider, what do you think?"). From some narrations, it appears that this dream was shown to Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام for three consecutive days (Qurtubī). Then, it already stands settled that the dream of blessed prophets is a revelation (*wahy*). Therefore, this dream meant that Allah Ta'ālā was asking Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام to slaughter his firstborn son. For that matter, this command could have been revealed directly through an angel. But, the wisdom behind communicating it through a dream was to unravel the obedience of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام at its most sublime form. A command given through a dream could have a lot of room for interpretations and excuses by the human self. But, this was Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. He did not take to the way of excuses. On the contrary, he simply bowed down (sans interpretations, sans hesitations) before the command of his Lord. (Tafsīr Kabīr)

In addition to that, the purpose of the great Creator here was neither to have Sayyidnā Isma'īl عليه السلام be slaughtered actually, nor was it to make it binding upon Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام that he slaughters him ultimately, instead, the purpose was to give the command that he should, on his part, do everything necessary to slaughter him and take all steps leading to his slaughter. Now, had this command been given to him

verbally, it would disclose that the actual slaughter is not intended, and the element of test would have remained missing. Therefore, he was shown in a dream that he was slaughtering his son. From this Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام understood that what he was been commanded with is slaughter - and he was all set for it literally and comprehensively. Thus, the element of trial went the full circle, and the dream also came true. So, as said earlier, if this thing were to come through a verbal command, either there would have been no test, or the command would have to be abrogated afterwards.

How hard this test was! It is to allude to this aspect that Allah Ta'ālā has placed additional words in the statement here: **فَلَمَّا بَلَغَ مَعَهُ السَّعْيَ** (Thereafter, when he reached an age in which he could work with him, - 102). In other words, it could be said that he was commanded to sacrifice his son he had so wistfully prayed for at a time when this son was old enough to walk by the side of his father, and the days when he could become the right arm of his father were not far. Commentators say that the age of Sayyidnā Isma'īl عليه السلام was thirteen years at that time. Some others say that he had crossed the age of puberty. (Tafsīr Mazharī)

In the next sentence of verse 102, it was said: **فَانظُرْ مَاذَا تَرَى** (So consider, what do you think?) When Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام posed this question before Sayyidnā Isma'īl عليه السلام he really had no hesitation about carrying out the Divine command. In fact, he wanted to accomplish two things by doing so. Firstly, he wanted to test his son as to the extent to which he was ready to face this trial. Secondly, the noble prophets عليهم السلام always have a way of their own - they are prepared to carry out Divine commands at all times. But, they always opt for methods that are suitable in such obedience, methods that are based on wisdom and all possible convenience. Had Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام started laying down his son in readiness for slaughter without having said any thing to him or having heard any thing from him in advance, it would have caused difficulties for both of them. Now, this thing that he said to him was in the spirit and manner of a tender consultation with his son. What he intended thereby was to let his son become aware of the command of Allah in advance, so that he is all prepared to endure the pain of being slaughtered well before the zero hour comes. Moreover, even if there emerged some hesitation in the heart of his son, there will still be the time to make him understand

the situation. (Rūḥ-ul- Ma'ānī and Bayān-ul-Qur'ān)

But, that son was no less than the son of the Friend of Allah, and the one who himself was bound to rise to the office and station of a prophet. In his answer, he said: يَا أَبَتِ افْعَلْ مَا تُؤْمَرُ (O my dear father, do what you have been ordered to do - 102). Not only that this statement provides an evidence of the unique passion of Sayyidnā Isma'īl عليه السلام to surrender his life in the way of Allah, it also shows the kind of intelligence and knowledge Allah Ta'ālā had blessed him with at such a tender age. It should be borne in mind that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام had not referred to any command from Allah before him, in fact, had mentioned a dream only. But, Sayyidnā Isma'īl عليه السلام got the point. He understood that the dream of a prophet is a revelation (*wahy*) - and this dream too was, in reality, a form of Divine command as such. Hence, in his response, rather than mention the dream, he referred to the Divine order.

The proof of 'revelation not recited' (وحى غير متلو) : *wahy ghayr matluww*

Right from here comes a clear refutation of those who deny the authority of Ḥadīth and who do not accept the existence of any revelation that is not recited. They say that wahy or revelation is only that which has been revealed in the Scripture, the Book of Allah - other than that, no other form or kind of revelation exists. You have already noticed that the command to sacrifice his son was given to Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام through a dream, and Sayyidnā Isma'īl عليه السلام had declared it to be the command of Allah in very clear words. Now, if 'the revelation not recited' (*wahy ghayr matluww*) is nothing, then where did this command come from and in which Scriptures was it revealed?

After that, Sayyidnā Isma'īl عليه السلام also gave an assurance to his great father from his own side by saying: سَتَجِدُنِي إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مِنَ الصَّابِرِينَ (You will find me, *insha'Allah*, [if Allah wills] one of those who endure patiently."- 102). Just look at the extreme etiquette and modesty demonstrated by Sayyidnā Isma'īl عليه السلام in this brief statement of his. First of all, by saying "*insha'Allah*" (if Allah wills), he entrusted the matter with Allah Ta'ālā, and thus he eliminated any flair of having made a boastful claim through this promise. Then, he could have also said: 'You will, *insha'Allah*, find me enduring.' But, he did not say that. What he actually said was: "You will find me one of those who endure patiently."). Thereby he released the

hint that all this endurance and patience is no feat of his all alone, rather, there have been many more of those who have been enduring and patient - *insha'Allah*, he too will hope to become one of them. Thus, through this statement, he eliminated the possibility of any traces of pride, arrogance, egotism and conceit, rather replaced it with the finest in manners and modesty. (Rūḥ-ul-Maʿānī) From here we learn the lesson that no matter how much confidence one has in one's own self, he should never make tall claims that smack of pride and bragging. If there is a compulsive need to have to say something of this nature, due attention should be paid to the choice of words that are being said. The best course is to shift the focus from one's own person and say what shows trust in Allah. In manners and attitudes too, one should try not to cut loose from the norms of modesty to the best of one's ability.

The word: *أَسْلَمَ* (*aslama*: both of them submitted) in verse 103: *فَلَمَّا أَسْلَمَا* means to submit, bow down, become obedient, rendered ready to carry out the command. Hence, it releases the sense of having bowed down before the Divine command, that is, in plain words, the father resolved to slaughter the son and the son, to be slaughtered by him. At this place, the word used is: *لَمَّا* (*lamma*: when), but its apodosis or the complement of the condition has not been mentioned - in other words, it has not been said later on as to what happened when this thing came to pass. This releases a hint towards the uniqueness of this bold initiative of self-submission undertaken by the father and son - so unique that words just fail to convey a fuller description.

Some historical and exegetical reports tell us that the Shaitan tried to seduce Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام away from it three times and every time Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام pelted seven pebbles on him, and drove him away. Right through up to this day, on the three pillars of Minā, pebbles are thrown to commemorate this very endearing act. Finally, when both father and son reached the place of slaughter to offer this unique act of worship, Sayyidnā Ismaʿīl عليه السلام said to his father, "My dear father, tie me down well enough so that my body may not toss and turn too much; and also keep your dress protected, lest the drops of my blood spoil it which might reduce my reward with Allah, and moreover, if my mother were to see this blood, she will be virtually smitten with sorrow. And sharpen your knife, and run it fast over my throat, so that my last breath comes easy on

me, for death is hard; and when you return to my mother, pay my respects to her and should you wish to take my shirt to her, you are welcome to do so, may be it would give her the comfort she needs." Hearing these words coming from the lips of the only son a father has, who can imagine what would have been going on in his heart. But, here was Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. Like a mountain of fortitude, he says to his son, "Son, what a good helper you are for me in this task assigned by Allah." Saying this, he kissed his son and, with wet eyes, he tied him. (Maḏharī)

And then came the stage about which the text says: *وَتَلَّهُ لِلْجَبِينِ* (and he laid him on his forehead - 103). According to an explanation of this statement as reported from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه, 'he laid him down on his side in a manner that one edge of the forehead was touching the ground' (Maḏharī). Lexically, this explanation is weightier for the reason that the word: *جَبِينٌ* (*jabīn*) is applied to the two curvatures of the forehead while the middle part of the forehead is called: *جَبْهَةٌ* (*jabhah*). Therefore, Moulānā Thānavi has translated it carrying the sense of 'laying down on the side.' But, other respected commentators have explained it as 'laid him down on the ground face down.' Whatever be the case, the reason given in historical accounts for this manner of laying him down is that, initially, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام had laid him down face up. But, once he started moving the knife on his throat, it would not cut despite repeated efforts, because a copper plate had come as a barrier in between by the will of Allah. At that time, the son himself requested his father that he be laid down on the side face down for the reason that once he looked at him, his filial compassion unnerved his hand, and the throat is not cut as required. In addition to that, he said, when he looked at the knife, he too started feeling nervous. So Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام started using his knife in the manner he was told (Tafsīr Maḏharī). Allah knows best.

In verse 104, 105, it was said: *وَنَادَيْنَاهُ أَنْ يَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ قَدْ صَدَقْتَ الرَّءْيَا* (and then We called out to him, "O Ibrāhīm, you did make the dream come true."), that is, in accomplishing the task entrusted with him in obedience to the command of Allah, he left nothing undone, in fact, did it perfectly to the letter (more likely so because in the dream too, it was shown that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام is simply moving his knife to slaughter his son). Now that test was over, so he should let him go.

By saying: **إِنَّا كَتَلْنَاكَ نَجْرَى الْمُحْسِنِينَ** (This is how We reward those who are good in deeds - 110), the sense is, 'when a servant of Allah and is ready to sacrifice all personal thoughts and feelings, then, ultimately, We take care of him, so that he remains safe from whatever could have afflicted him here in this world, and as for the recompense and reward of the Hereafter, that We write down in his book of deeds.'

In verse 107, it was said: **وَفَدَيْنَهُ بِذَبْحٍ عَظِيمٍ** (And We ransomed him with a great sacrifice.). In Ḥadīth reports, it is said that on hearing this voice from the heavens, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm **عليه السلام** looked up and saw Sayyidnā Jibrā'il with a ram. From some reports, it appears that it was the same ram that was offered as sacrifice by Hābil (Abel), the son of Sayyidnā 'Ādam **عليه السلام**. Allah knows best. In short, a present of this ram of Paradise was made to Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm **عليه السلام**, and he sacrificed it in lieu of his son as commanded by Allah. This sacrificial animal was called: **عَظِيمٍ** ('azīm: great) because it had come by way of mercy from Allah, and no one can entertain any doubt about the acceptance of its sacrifice. (Tafsīr Maẓharī, and others)

Which son was to be slaughtered? Was it Sayyidnā Isma'īl **عليه السلام? Or, was it Sayyidnā Ishāq?**

The Tafsīr of the verses cited above has been described on the assumption that the son who was to be slaughtered was Sayyidnā Isma'īl **عليه السلام**. But, the truth of the matter is that there is a severe difference of opinion among commentators and historians about it. That this son was Sayyidnā Ishāq **عليه السلام** has been reported from among the Şaḥābah by Sayyidnā 'Umar, Sayyidnā 'Alī, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd, Sayyidnā 'Abbās, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Abbās and Sayyidnā Ka'b al-Aḥbār **رضي الله عنه**, and from among the Tabi'īn by Sa'īd Ibn Jubayr, Qatādah, Masrīq, 'Ikrimah, 'Atā', Muqātil, Zuhri and Suddiyy **رحمهم الله تعالى**. Counter to this is the narrations from Sayyidnā 'Alī, Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umar, Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah and Sayyidnā Abū-ṭ-Ṭufayl from among the Şaḥābah, and Sa'īd Ibn Musaiyyab, Sa'īd Ibn Jubayr, Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, Mujāhid, 'Umar Ibn 'Abd-ul-'Azīz, Sha'bi, Muḥammad Ibn Ka'b al-Qurazi from among the Tabi'īn from whom it has been reported that that this son was Sayyidnā Isma'īl **عليه السلام**. It is to be noted that the names of Sayyidnā 'Alī, Ibn 'Abbās and Sa'id ibn Jubayr

appear in both groups. This is because reports of both views are attributed to them. (Usmānī)

Out of the latter commentators, Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Jarīr at-Ṭabarī has preferred the first view, while Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Kathīr and others have not only gone by the second view, but have also refuted the first one. Here, it is not possible to present a critique of arguments advanced by the two groups. Nevertheless, in terms of the descriptive arrangement of the noble Qur'ān and the strength of Ḥadīth narrations, the weightier view seems to be that the son of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام who was commanded to be slaughtered was but Sayyidnā Isma'īl عليه السلام. Relevant proof appears below:

1. After having reported the whole event relating to the sacrifice, the noble Qur'ān says in verse 112: *وَبَشَّرْنَاهُ بِإِسْحَاقَ نَبِيًّا مِّنَ الصَّالِحِينَ* (And We gave him the good news of Iṣḥāq, a prophet from among the righteous). This clearly tells us that the son who was to be sacrificed under Divine command was someone else - other than Sayyidnā Iṣḥāq - and the glad tidings of the birth of Sayyidnā Iṣḥāq عليه السلام was given after the event of the sacrifice.

2. Mentioned in this very glad tidings relating to Sayyidnā Iṣḥāq عليه السلام is that he will be a prophet. In addition to this, it has been said in another verse that along with the glad tidings of the birth of Sayyidnā Iṣḥāq عليه السلام, it was also said that, later on, Sayyidnā Iṣḥāq will have a son - Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام: *فَبَشَّرْنَاَهَا بِإِسْحَاقَ وَمِنْ وَرَاءِ إِسْحَاقَ يُعْقُوبَ*: (so, We gave her the good news about Iṣḥāq, and about Ya'qūb after Iṣḥāq - Hud, 11:71). It clearly shows that he will live a long life to the extent that he will be blessed with an offspring. How could he, then, be commanded to slaughter that very offspring - before becoming a prophet - which would have given Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام the understanding that he has to become a prophet and the birth of Sayyidnā Ya'qūb عليه السلام is due to come from his loins, therefore, the act of slaughtering cannot bring death to him. It is obvious that, in this situation, neither would this have been some major trial, nor had Sayyidnā Ibrahim been deserving of any praise on its implementation. This element of trial is possible only in a situation that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام fully realizes that his son will die as a result of this act of slaughtering, and only then he takes the initiative of slaughtering him. This whole thing perfectly falls into place in the case of Sayyidnā Isma'īl عليه السلام, because Allah Ta'ālā had made no prediction about his remaining alive and becoming a prophet.

3. From the statement of the Qur'ān it seems that the son who was to be slaughtered under Divine command was the first son of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. Therefore, while migrating from his homeland, he had prayed for a son. In answer to this prayer, he was given the good news that he will have a son who will be forbearing. Then, about this very boy it was said that, by the time he grew old enough to work with his father, came the Divine order that he be slaughtered. This whole chain of events is telling us that this boy was the first son of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. Now, it was Isma'īl عليه السلام who was the first son of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام, while Sayyidnā Iṣḥāq عليه السلام was his second son. After that, no doubt remains about the fact that the son who was to be slaughtered under Divine order was but Sayyidnā Isma'īl عليه السلام.

4. Then, it is also nearly settled that this event of the sacrifice of a son has come to pass within the environs of Makkah al-Mukarramah. It is for this reason that the custom of sacrifice during the period of Ḥajj pilgrimage prevailed among the people of Arabia. In addition to that, the horns of the ram sent from Paradise as ransom for the son of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام have remained hanging in the Holy Ka'bah for years. Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Kathīr has reported several narrations in support, and has gone on to even quote 'Amir Sha'bi as saying: 'I have personally seen the horns of this ram in the Ka'bah' (Ibn Kathīr, p. 18, v. 4). And Sufyan says: 'The horns of this ram remained hanging in the Ka'bah continuously until when (during the time of Ḥajjāj Ibn Yūsuf) there was a fire in Ka'bah during which these horns were also burnt to ashes' (Ibn Kathīr, p. 17, v. 2). Now it becomes fairly obvious that Sayyidnā Isma'īl عليه السلام was the one living in Makkah al-Mukarramah - not Sayyidnā Iṣḥāq عليه السلام. Therefore, it is equally obvious that the command to slaughter related but to Sayyidnā Isma'īl عليه السلام - and not to Sayyidnā Iṣḥāq عليه السلام.

As for the narrations in which it has been said that different Ṣaḥābah and tabi'in have declared Sayyidnā Iṣḥāq عليه السلام as the *dhabih* (the one to be slaughtered), Ibn Kathīr has said:

'Allah knows best, but evidently all these sayings have come from Ka'b al-Aḥbār. When he embraced Islam during the period of Sayyidnā 'Umar رضي الله عنه, he started telling him reports from his old (Jewish) books. On occasions, Sayyidnā 'Umar listened to what he had to say. This provided room for others too. They too heard his

narrations and started passing them on. These narrations were a bunch of absurdities. This ummah does not need even one word out of it. Allah knows best. - Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr, p. 17, v. 4)

This reasoning of Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Kathīr is fairly acceptable, because the basis of taking Sayyidnā Ishāq عليه السلام to be the *dhabih* (the one to be slaughtered) rests on Isra'elite reports that take Sayyidnā Ishāq عليه السلام as *dhabih* instead of Sayyidnā Isma'īl عليه السلام. This event has been described in the current Bible in the following words:

"After these things God tested Abraham, and said to him, 'Abraham,' And he said, 'Here am I.' He said, 'Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering upon one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.'" (Genesis 22: 1,2)

Here, the event of the slaughter has been attributed to Sayyidnā Ishāq عليه السلام. But, a little justice and proper investigation would reveal that the Jews have, following their traditional prejudice, interpolated in the text of the Torah - because, the word "your only son" in the very text of Genesis quoted above is telling us that the son whose sacrifice Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام was ordered to make was his 'only' son. Later on, in the chapter, it also appears:

"you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me."
(Genesis 22:12)

In this sentence too, it is explicitly said that this son was the 'only' son of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. On the other hand, it is already established that Sayyidnā Ishāq عليه السلام was not his 'only' son. If the word 'only' can be applied to anyone, it has to be Sayyidnā Isma'īl عليه السلام alone. There are several other textual evidences from the Book of Genesis itself that bear testimony to the fact that the birth of Sayyidnā Isma'īl عليه السلام had taken place much before the birth of Sayyidnā Ishāq عليه السلام. For example:

"Now Sarai, Abram's wife, bore him no children. She had an Egyptian maid whose name was Hagar; and Sarai said to Abram, 'Behold now, the Lord has prevented me from bearing children; go in to my maid; it may be that I shall obtain children by her....And he went in to Hagar, and she conceived....And the angel of the Lord said to her, 'Behold, you are with child, and shall bear a son; you shall call his name Ishmael;...Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to Abram.'" (Genesis 16: 1-4 and 10-16)

In the next chapter, it appears:

"And God said to Abraham, 'As for Sarai your wife,...I will bless her, and moreover I will give you a son by her;...Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said to himself, " Shall a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old? Shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child? And Abraham said to God, ' O that Ishmael might live in thy sight!' God said, 'No, but Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac.'" (Genesis 17:15-20)

After that, the birth of Sayyidnā Ishāq عليه السلام has been described as follows:

"Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him." (Genesis 21:5)

It becomes very clear from the texts quoted above that Sayyidnā Ishāq عليه السلام was fourteen years younger than Sayyidnā Isma'īl عليه السلام - and during this period of fourteen years, he was the 'only' son of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. Contrary to this, there was no time in the life of Sayyidnā Ishāq عليه السلام when he could be taken as the 'only' son of his father. Now, after that, when the Book of Genesis mentions the sacrifice of the son in chapter 22, we see that the word 'your only son' as used here is testifying to the fact that it means Sayyidnā Isma'īl عليه السلام while some Jewish scribe has added the word: "Issac" with it so that the line of Ishāq - and not the line of Isma'īl عليه السلام - receives this honor.

In addition to that, in this very Book of Genesis in the Bible, where Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام has been given the good news of the birth of Sayyidnā Ishāq عليه السلام, it has also been mentioned there:

"I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of people shall come from her"(Genesis 17:16) *

Now, in the matter of a son about whom it has already been announced that he will have children and nations will come from his progeny, how can an order be given that he should be sacrificed? This too

*. These extracts are taken from the revised standard version of the Bible published by the British and Foreign Bible Society 1952. And the next sentence in Genesis 17:19 is more clear on the point that the long life of Sayyidnā Ishāq عليه السلام was predicted well before his birth. It says, " I will establish my covenant with him (Isaac) as an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him." (Muhammad Taqi Usmani)

tells us that this command related to Sayyidnā Isma'īl عليه السلام and not to Sayyidnā Ishāq عليه السلام.

After having seen these statements in the Bible, one comes to realize the truth of what Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Kathīr has said:

"It has been clearly stated in the sacred books of the Jewish people that, at the time Sayyidnā Isma'īl عليه السلام was born, the age of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام was eighty six years and when Sayyidnā Ishāq عليه السلام was born, his age was one hundred years. Then, it is also written in their books that Allah Ta'ālā had commanded Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام to slaughter his only son - and in another copy of the text, the word "firstborn" has been used instead of "only." So, the Jews have added the word "Ishāq" on their own by way of malignant imputation. There is no justification in declaring it as correct, because it is counter to what their books clearly say. They have added this word for the reason that Sayyidnā Ishāq عليه السلام is their venerable forefather, while Sayyidnā Isma'īl عليه السلام is that of the Arabs. So envy drove them to add this word, while now they explain "only" as meaning: "the son, other than whom, there is no one else present with you at that time" - because, Sayyidnā Isma'īl عليه السلام and his mother were not present there at that time (therefore, given that sense, Sayyidnā Ishāq could be called "only"). But, this interpretation is totally wrong amounting to a distortion of the text, because the word "only" is applied to a son whose father has no son other than him." - Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr, p. 14, v. 4.

The same Ibn Kathīr has also reported that someone from among the Jewish scholars had converted to Islam during the time of the pious caliph, 'Umar Ibn 'Abdul-'Azīz who asked him, "Which of the sons of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام was it who was commanded to be slaughtered?" He said, "By Allah, O Commander of the faithful, he was Sayyidnā Isma'īl عليه السلام. The Jews know it well. But, they say so because of their envy for you Arabs." (Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr, p. 14, v. 14)

In the light of these proofs, it is almost certain that Sayyidnā Isma'īl عليه السلام was the dhabih (the son Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام was commanded to slaughter). Allah is Pure and He knows best.

In the last verse, it was said: *وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِهِمَا مُحْسِنٌ وَظَالِمٌ لِّنَفْسِهِ مُبِينٌ* (and among the progeny of both of them, some are good and some are utterly unjust to their own selves.- 37:113). Refuted through this verse is the false pride of the Jews that being among the progeny of these noble prophets عليهم السلام

is in itself sufficient to bless one with merit and salvation. This verse openly declares that having lineal connection with a man of virtue is not a sufficient guarantee of one's salvation, in fact, this thing depends on one's own beliefs and deeds.

Verses 114 - 122

وَلَقَدْ مَنَّا عَلَىٰ مُوسَىٰ وَهَارُونَ ﴿١١٤﴾ وَنَجَّيْنَاهُمَا وَقَوْمَهُمَا مِنَ
الْكَرْبِ الْعَظِيمِ ﴿١١٥﴾ وَنَصَرْنَاهُمْ فَمَا كَانُوا هُمُ الْعَالِيِينَ ﴿١١٦﴾
وَأَتَيْنَاهُمَا الْكِتَابَ الْمُسْتَبِينَ ﴿١١٧﴾ وَهَدَيْنَاهُمَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ
﴿١١٨﴾ وَتَرَكْنَا عَلَيْهِمَا فِي الْأَخْرِينِ ﴿١١٩﴾ سَلَامٌ عَلَىٰ مُوسَىٰ
وَهِرُونَ ﴿١٢٠﴾ إِنَّا كَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿١٢١﴾ إِنَّهُمَا مِنْ
عِبَادِنَا الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٢٢﴾

And We did bestow favors upon Mūsā and Hārūn, [114] and We delivered them and their people from the great agony, [115] and We helped them, so they became victors, [116] and We gave them the clear book, [117] and guided them to the straight path. [118] And We left for them (a word of praise) among the later people, [119] (that is,) Salam on Mūsā and Hārūn! [120] This is how We reward those who are good in deeds. [121] Surely, both of them are among Our believing servants. [122]

Commentary

Described in the verses cited above is the third event relating to Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and Hārūn عليه السلام. It has appeared in details at several places. Here it serves as an indicator. The purpose is to tell how Allah Ta'ālā helps out His sincere and obedient servants, and how He bestows so many of His rewards on them. Mentioned here are His favors bestowed upon Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and Hārūn عليه السلام. These favors are of two kinds. First come positive favors that bring benefits as in: وَلَقَدْ مَنَّا عَلَىٰ مُوسَىٰ وَهَارُونَ (And We did bestow favors upon Mūsā and Hārūn - 37:114). This points out towards those beneficial favors. Then there are negative favors that save from loss or harm. Later verses spell out details of the other kind.

Verses 123 - 132

وَأَنَّ إِلْيَاسَ لَمِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿١٢٣﴾ إِذْ قَالَ لِقَوْمِهِ الْآتِقُونَ ﴿١٢٤﴾
 اتَّذَعُونَ بَعْلًا وَتَذَرُونَ أَحْسَنَ الْخَالِقِينَ ﴿١٢٥﴾ اللَّهُ رَبُّكُمْ وَرَبُّ
 آبَائِكُمُ الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿١٢٦﴾ فَكَذَّبُوهُ فَإِنَّهُمْ لَمُحْضَرُونَ ﴿١٢٧﴾ إِلَّا عِبَادَ
 اللَّهِ الْمُخْلِصِينَ ﴿١٢٨﴾ وَتَرَكْنَا عَلَيْهِ فِي الْآخِرِينَ ﴿١٢٩﴾ سَلَامٌ
 عَلَىٰ آلِ يَاسِينَ ﴿١٣٠﴾ إِنَّا كَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿١٣١﴾ إِنَّهُ
 مِنْ عِبَادِنَا الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٣٢﴾

And surely, Ilyās (Eliah) is one of the messengers. [123] (Remember) when he said to his people: "Do you not fear Allah? Do you invoke Ba'1, and ignore the Best of the creators, [125] that is, Allah who is your Lord and the Lord of your forefathers?" [126] Then they rejected him. Therefore, they will be arraigned - [127] except the chosen servants of Allah. [128] And We left for him (a word of praise) among the later people, [129] (that is,) "Salam on Ilyās (Ilyās). [130] This is how We reward those who are good in deeds. [131] Surely, he is from among Our believing servants. [132]

Commentary

Sayyidnā Ilyās عليه السلام

Described in the verses cited above is the fourth event relating to Sayyidnā Ilyās عليه السلام. Before we take up the explanation of these verses, a few bits of information about Sayyidnā Ilyās عليه السلام are being given below.

Sayyidnā Ilyās عليه السلام has been mentioned in the noble Qur'ān only at two places: Firstly, in Sūrah Al-An'ām (6:85) and secondly, in these very verses of Sūrah Aṣ-Ṣaffāt (37:123) and (37:130). As for the reference in Sūrah Al-An'am, his good name appears there only as part of a list of righteous prophets, and no event finds mention there. However, at this place in the present Sūrah, an event relating to his mission and call has been described very briefly.

Since details about the personal antecedents of Sayyidnā Ilyās عليه السلام do not find mention in the noble Qur'ān, nor do these appear in authentic

aḥādīth, different sayings and variant narrations about him are found in books of Tafsīr, most of which have been taken from Isra'īlī narratives.

A small group of commentators holds that 'Ilyās' is simply another name of Sayyidnā Idrīs عليه السلام (Enoch), and there is no difference between these two persons. Some others have also said that there is no difference between Sayyidnā Ilyās عليه السلام and Sayyidnā Khaḍīr عليه السلام (ad-Durr-ul-Manthūr, pp. 285, 286, v. 5). But, researchers have refuted these sayings. The Qur'ān too has mentioned Sayyidnā Idrīs and Sayyidnā Khaḍīr عليه السلام separately in a manner that it leaves no room for declaring these two as being the same. Therefore, what Hafīz Ibn Kathīr has adjudged as correct is but that both of them are two separate messengers (al-bidāyah wa-n-nihāyah, p. 339, v. 1).

When and where did he appear?

The Qur'ān and Ḥadīth also do not tell us as to when and where he appeared. But, historical and Isra'īlite narratives almost concur that he was sent to the Banī Isra'īl after Ḥizqīl عليه السلام (Ezekiel), and before Al-Yasā' عليه السلام. This was a time when the kingdom of Banī Isra'īl had split into two states. One part was called Yahudiyah (Judah) with its capital at Baytul-Maqdis (Jerusalem) while the other part was known as Isra'īl, and its capital was Samaria (present Nablus). Sayyidnā Ilyās عليه السلام was born at Jal'ād in Jordan. The name of the king who ruled the Isra'īl has been given as Ahab in the Bible and Ajīb or Akhib in Arab historical and exegetic writings. His wife Isabelle worshiped an idol called Ba'ī, and it was she who had put the entire Banī Isra'īl on the path of idolatry by raising a huge altar dedicated to Ba'ī in the country of Isra'īl. Allah Ta'ālā commanded Sayyidnā Ilyās عليه السلام to go in that area, preach pure monotheism and dissuade Israelites from indulging in idol worship (please see Tafsīr Ibn Jarīr, p. 53, v. 23; Ibn Kathīr, p. 19, v. 4; Tafsīr Maḥḥarī, p. 134, v. 8 and the Bible: Kings I: 16:29-33 and 17:1).

Sayyidnā Ilyās عليه السلام: The struggle with his people

Very much like other noble prophets عليهم السلام Sayyidnā Ilyās عليه السلام too had to engage in a severe struggle with his people. Since the noble Qur'ān is no book of history, therefore, rather than describe details of this struggle, it restricts itself to saying only that which was necessary for taking a lesson. In other words, his people belied him, and no one except a few chosen servants of Allah listened to Sayyidnā Ilyās عليه السلام, therefore,

they will have to face their terrible fate in afterlife.

At this stage, some commentators have described this struggle in details. Out of the customary books of Tafsīr, the most exhaustive mention of Sayyidnā Ilyās عليه السلام appears in Tafsīr Maḏharī with reference to 'Allāmah al-Baghawī. The events mentioned there have almost all been taken from the Bible. Some parts of these events in other books of Tafsīr as well have been described with reference to Wahb Ibn Munnabih and Ka'b al-Aḥbār رضي الله عنه, being those who report Isra'īlī narratives mostly .

In sum, the common factor that emerges from all these narratives is that Sayyidnā Ilyās عليه السلام, by asking Ahab, the king of Isra'īl, and his people to shun idolatry, invited them towards pure monotheism. But, except for a few votaries of truth, no one listened to him, in fact, tried to harass him in all sorts of ways, so much so that Ahab and his wife, Isabelle planned to kill him. He took refuge in a far out cave where he stayed for a considerably long period of time. After that he prayed that the people of Isra'īl be seized with famine, so that he may show them some miracles at his hand for removing the famine, may be, they would, then, come to believe. So, they were struck with a famine.

After that, following a command of Allah Ta'ālā, Sayyidnā Ilyās عليه السلام met Ahab and told him that the famine was there because of disobedience to Allah, and if he were to abstain from it even that late, that punishment could stand removed. Then this was, he told him, the best opportunity for him to test his veracity. He said, 'you say your god Ba'1 has four hundred and fifty apostles in this part of Isra'īl. Gather them together before me on a day of your choice. Let them offer their sacrifice in the name of Ba'1, and I shall offer my sacrifice in the name of Allah. The one whose offering the heavenly fire would come and burn to ashes will be the one whose faith will be true'. Everyone readily agreed to this proposal.

So, they gathered at Mount Carmel, the appointed place. The false apostles of Ba'1 offered their sacrifice and remained busy with their entreaties before Ba'1 from morning till afternoon. But, no answer came. After that, Sayyidnā Ilyās عليه السلام offered his sacrifice whereupon came the fire from the heavens and burnt the sacrifice offered by Sayyidnā Ilyās عليه السلام reducing it to ashes. Seeing this, many people fell prostrated in sajdah - the truth laid manifested before them. But, the false apostles of

Ba'1 still remained adamant. Therefore, Sayyidnā Ilyās عليه السلام had them killed in the valley of Kishon.

After this event came heavy rains. The whole region turned verdant. But Isabelle, the wife of Ahab, was still not ready to learn her lesson. Rather than believe in the message of Sayyidnā Ilyās عليه السلام, she actually turned more hostile against him by preparing to have him killed. When Sayyidnā Ilyās عليه السلام came to know about it, he left Samaria, and went into hiding once again. After the passage of some time, he started preaching in Judah, the other country of the Bani Isra'īl - because, the epidemic of idolatry had gradually reached there as well. Jehoram, the king out there also did not listen to him until he was destroyed following a prophecy of Sayyidnā Ilyās عليه السلام. A few years later, he returned to Isra'īl once again, and tried to reform Ahab and his son, Ahaziah. But they continued to stick to their misdeeds until came the time when they were hit by foreign intrusions and fatal diseases. Thereafter, Allah Ta'ālā recalled His prophet back unto Him.

Is Sayyidnā Ilyās عليه السلام alive?

Also debated among historians and commentators there is the issue whether Sayyidnā Ilyās عليه السلام is alive, or has he died? In the lengthy narrative reported in Tafsīr Maẓharī with reference to 'Allamah al-Baghawi, it has also been mentioned that Sayyidnā Ilyās عليه السلام was lifted towards the heavens mounted on a horse of fire, and that he is alive there like Sayyidnā 'Isā عليه السلام (Maẓharī, p. 141, v. 8). 'Allāmah as-Suyūṭī has also reported several narratives from Ibn 'Asakir, Hakim and others which indicate that he is alive. It has been reported from Ka'b al-Ahbar that four prophets are still alive: two on the earth - Sayyidnā Khaḍir and Sayyidnā Ilyās عليه السلام; and two in the heavens - Sayyidnā 'Isa and Sayyidnā Idris (ad-durr-ul-manthūr, p. 285, 286, v. 5). Indeed, some have gone to the extent of saying that Sayyidnā Khaḍir and Sayyidnā Ilyās get together in Baytul-Maqdis during the month of Ramaḍān and keep fasts. (Tafsīr Qurṭubī, p. 116, v. 15)

But, authentic scholars like Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Kathīr have not declared these narratives to be sound. About narratives of this nature, he writes:

وهو من الاسرائيليات التي لا تصدق ولا تكذب بل الظاهر ان صحتها بعيدة (البداية

والنهاية، ص ٣٣٨ ج ١)

This is one of those Isra'īlī (Judaic) narratives that are neither confirmed nor falsified. Instead, what is obvious is that (the proposition of) its soundness is remote.

In addition to that, he says:

"Ibn 'Asākir has reported several narratives of people who have met Sayyidnā Ilyās عليه السلام. But, none of these is satisfactory - either for the reason that the chain of authority cited therein is weak, or for the reason that people to whom these events have been attributed are unknown" - al-bidayah wa-n-nihayah, p. 339, v. 1)

It is fairly evident that this idea of Sayyidnā Ilyās عليه السلام having been lifted towards the heavens has been taken invariably from the Isra'īlī narratives. The Bible says:

"And as they still went on and talked, behold, a chariot of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them. And Elijah (Ilyas) went up by a whirlwind into heaven." (2 Kings 2:11)

For this reason, came the belief among Jews that Sayyidnā Ilyās عليه السلام will return to the earth once once again. Hence when Sayyidnā Yaḥyā عليه السلام was sent as a prophet, they doubted if he was Sayyidnā Ilyās عليه السلام. It appears in the Bible:

"And they asked him, 'What then? Are you Elijah?' He said, 'I am not.'" (Gospel of John 1:21)

It seems that scholars like Ka'b al-Aḥbār and Wahb Ibn Munabbih who were well versed in the religious background of the People of the Book would have described these very narratives before Muslims as a result of which this idea of Sayyidnā Ilyās عليه السلام being alive found currency among some Muslims. Otherwise, there is nothing in the Qur'ān, or the Ḥadīth, that provides any proof of his being alive or having been raised up unto the heavens. What we have here is only one narrative found in the Mustadrak of al-Ḥākim where it has been said that, on his way to Tabūk, the Holy Prophet ﷺ met Sayyidnā Ilyās عليه السلام. But, this report is, as held by Ḥadīth experts, 'mawdu' or fabricated or technically apocryphal. Ḥāfiẓ adh-Dhahabi says:

بل هو موضوع قَبَّحَ اللهُ من وضعه وما كنت احسب ولا أجوز أن الجهل يبلغ بالحكام التي ان يصحح هذا (درمنثور، ص ٢٨٦ ج ٥)

"In fact, this is fabricated. Cursed be whoever fabricated it. I had never imagined that the inadvertence of al-Ḥākīm could overtake him to the extent that he would admit this thing as sound - ad-Durr-ul-Manthur, p. 286, v. 5.

In short, it is not proved from any authentic Islamic report that Sayyidnā Ilyās عليه السلام is alive. Hence, in this matter, the safest (and the sanest) course is to observe silence. Particularly, in the case of Isra'īlī (Judaic) narratives, one should follow the teaching of the Holy Prophet ﷺ: 'neither confirm, nor falsify these.' The reason is that the Qur'ān has a purpose - that is, it should be understood, provide lessons and give good counsel. This purpose can be achieved fully even without having to do something like this. And Allah is Pure and High - He knows best. Now, we can turn to an explanation of the verses.

The word: *بعل* (*ba'l*) in verse 125: *أَتَدْعُونَ بَعْلًا* (Do you invoke Ba'l...) literally means husband, master etc. But, it was the name of a particular idol that the people of Sayyidnā Ilyās عليه السلام had taken to as the object of their worship. The history of the worship of *ba'l* (Baal) goes way back in time. It was worshipped in the country of Syria during the time of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and it used to be the most popular idol-god they had. Ba'labakk, (Baalbek or ancient Heliopolis in present Lebanon), the once famous city of Syria was also named after it. Some people think that Hubal, the well-known idol of the pre-Islam people of Ḥijāz, was this very *ba'l* (Qaṣaṣ-ul-Qur'ān, p. 28, v. 2).

In the next sentence of the same verse, it was said: *وَتَذَرُونَ أَحْسَنَ الْخَالِقِينَ* (Do you invoke Ba'l, and ignore the Best of the creators,). This refers to Allah Ta'ālā while the expression: *أَحْسَنَ الْخَالِقِينَ* (*aḥsanul-khāliqīn*: the best of the creators) never means that there could be, God forbid, some other creator as well. On the contrary, the drive and the sense of the statement is that He is the one most exalted of all those false objects of worship they had taken to as being some sort of a creator (Qurṭubī). Some commentators have said that the word: *خَالِقٍ* (*khāliq*: creator, maker) has been used here in the sense of *صَانِعٍ* (*sāni'*: maker), that is, 'He is far ahead and far better than all other makers.' What do all other makers really do? They do no more than take different components, put them together and here is something they have made. Bringing something out from nothingness into existence is what they do not have under their power and control -

and Allah Ta'ālā does. He has that inherent power to make what is not become what is. (Bayān-ul-Qurān)

Ascribing the attribute of creation to anyone other than Allah is not permissible

At this point, it should be borne in mind that خَلَقَ (*khalq*) means to create, that is, to bring something from the state of non-being into the state of being solely on the strength of the creator's inherent power. Therefore, this attribute is particular to Allah Ta'ālā. Ascribing it to someone else is not permissible. Hence, the custom prevailing in our time that the articles of writers, compositions of poets and paintings of painters are readily referred to as their 'creations' is simply not permissible. How can people who write become 'creators' of those articles? It is not correct. Allah is the *khāliq*, the creator. This is Him alone - no one else can be. Therefore, their good writings should be called articles or something else that alludes to their effort, imagination, research work or whatever applies as appropriate - but, not 'creation.'

In verse 127, it was said: فَكَذَّبُوهُ فَإِنَّهُمْ لَمُحْضَرُونَ : "Then they rejected him. Therefore, they will be arraigned." It means that they will have to taste the consequence of having belied the true messengers of Allah. It could also be referring to the punishment of the Hereafter as well as their sad end within this world. That the rulers of both the countries of Isra'īl and Judah had to face destruction as a result of their having rejected Sayyidnā Ilyās ؑ has been mentioned earlier. The detailed account of this destruction is present in Tafsīr Maḥzarī and in the Bible: Kings I, Chapter 22; Kings II; Chapter 1 and Chronicles II; Chapter 21.

In verse 128, it was said: إِلَّا عِبَادَ اللَّهِ الْمُخْلَصِينَ (except the chosen servants of Allah). Here, the word used is: مُخْلَصِينَ (*mukhlāsīn*) (pronounced with a fathah on the letter lam) which means chosen, elected, people Divinely identified as special. As such, these will be people whom Allah has elected to become recipients of the honor of having obeyed Him perfectly and made themselves deserving of the best returns and rewards from Him. Hence, it would be more appropriate to translate it in the sense of 'the chosen' rather than 'sincere.'

The word: إِيَّاسِينَ (*il yā sīn*) used in: سَلَامٌ عَلَىٰ إِيَّاسِينَ (Salam on il ya sin - 130) is also the very name of Sayyidnā Ilyās ؑ. The people of Arabia

are used to adding the letters 'yā' and 'nūn' with non-Arab names fairly often - for example, سِينَا (sinā: Sinai) could take the form of سِينِينَ (sinin). Similarly, here too, two letters have been added.

Verses 133 - 138

وَأَنَّ لُوطًا لَّمِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿١٣٣﴾ إِذْ نَجَّيْنَاهُ وَأَهْلَهُ أَجْمَعِينَ ﴿١٣٤﴾
 إِلَّا عَجُوزًا فِي الْغَيْرِينَ ﴿١٣٥﴾ ثُمَّ دَمَّرْنَا الْآخَرِينَ ﴿١٣٦﴾ وَأَنَّا كُمُ
 لَتَمُرُّنَّ عَلَيْهِمْ مُصْبِحِينَ ﴿١٣٧﴾ وَبِاللَّيْلِ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿١٣٨﴾

And surely, Lūṭ is one of the messengers. [133] (Remember) when We saved him and his family, all of them, [134] except an old woman among those remaining behind. [135] After that, We destroyed others [136] and you do pass over them at daybreak [137] and by nightfall. Would you still not understand? [138]

Commentary

Mentioned in these verses is the fifth event that relates to Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام. This event has appeared at several places earlier, therefore, no more details are needed. Here, the people of Makkah have been particularly admonished that they passed by the site of Sadum (Sodom) day and night while traveling with their trade caravans to the country of Syria, and Sadum was a place where this grave event came to pass, an event full of vital lessons, yet they failed to learn any. The time of morning and evening was particularly mentioned for the reason that the people of Arabia generally used to pass through here during these very hours. Says Qadi Abu-s-Sa'ud: 'Perhaps, this site of Sodom was located at a stage on this route that those who departed from here did so in the hours of the morning and those who arrived here did so at the time of the evening' (Tafsīr abi-s- Sa'ūd).

Verses 139-148

وَأَنَّ يُونُسَ لَمِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿١٣٩﴾ إِذْ أَبَقَ إِلَى الْفُلْكِ الْمَشْحُونِ ﴿١٤٠﴾ فَسَاهَمَ فَكَانَ مِنَ الْمُدْحَضِينَ ﴿١٤١﴾ فَالْتَقَمَهُ الْحُوتُ

وَهُوَ مُلِيمٌ ﴿١٤٢﴾ فَلَوْلَا أَنَّهُ كَانَ مِنَ الْمُسَبِّحِينَ ﴿١٤٣﴾ لَلَبِثَ فِي بَطْنِهِ إِلَى يَوْمِ يُبْعَثُونَ ﴿١٤٤﴾ فَنبَذْنَاهُ بِالْعَرَاءِ وَهُوَ سَقِيمٌ ﴿١٤٥﴾ وَأَنْبَتْنَا عَلَيْهِ شَجَرَةً مِّنْ يَقْطِينٍ ﴿١٤٦﴾ وَأَرْسَلْنَاهُ إِلَى مِائَةِ أَلْفٍ أَوْ يَزِيدُونَ ﴿١٤٧﴾ فَآمَنُوا فَمَتَّعْنَاهُمْ إِلَىٰ حِينٍ ﴿١٤٨﴾

And surely, Yūnus (Jonah) is from among the messengers. [139] (Remember) when he ran away towards the boat already loaded. [140] Then he participated in drawing lots (to offload one of the passengers) and was the one who was defeated. [141] Then the fish swallowed him while he was reproaching his own self. [142] Had he not been of those who proclaim Allah's purity, [143] he would have definitely lived in its belly till the day when the dead will be raised. [144] Then We cast him ashore in the open while he was ill. [145] and We caused a tree of ourds to grow over him. [146] And We had sent him (as messenger) to one hundred thousand, or more. [147] So, they believed, then, We let them enjoy for a time. [148]

Commentary

The last event described in this Sūrah is that of Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام. This event, along with its details, has appeared towards the later part of Sūrah Yūnus (please see Ma'āriful-Qur'ān, English, Volume IV, pages 573-588). However, a few necessary comments about these particular verses are being given below.

In the opening verse (139), it was said: وَإِنَّ يُونُسَ لَمِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ (And surely, Yūnus is from among the messengers). Was Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام ordained as a messenger much earlier than his encounter with the fish, or did it come to pass after that? This issue has been a subject of debate among some commentators and historians. Some of them think that he was made a messenger after this event. But, in view of the apparent order and style of the noble Qur'ān, and from most Ḥadīth narrations, it is more likely that he was invested with the mission of prophethood earlier. The event of the fish came later.

The word: أَبَقَ (*abaqa*) in the next verse (140): إِذْ أَبَقَ إِلَى الْفُلِّ الْمَشْحُونِ (when he ran towards the boat already loaded) has been derived from: أَبَقَ

(ibaq) which means 'escaping of a slave from his master'. Allah Ta'ālā has used this word for Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام for the reason that he had started off without waiting for the revelation from his Lord. The noble prophets are the close ones among the servants of Allah. The slightest slip from them causes the swiftest grip. Hence comes this strong expression ('abaqa': 'he ran').

Verse 141 opens with the statement: فَسَاهَمَ (fasahama: Then he participated in drawing lots...). These lots were drawn at a time when the boat was caught by a storm while in the middle of the waters. It was apprehended that its excessive weight might cause it to drown. It was decided that one person from the boat should be cast off into the waters. Lots were drawn to determine who would it be.

The Injunction of drawing lots

At this point, it should be borne in mind that the drawing of lots is a method of selecting somebody to do something through which one can neither prove someone's right, nor indict someone as a criminal. For example, no one can be proved to be a thief by drawing lots. Similarly, should two persons differ about the ownership of some property, it cannot be decided by drawing lots as to who owns it. However drawing of lots is permissible - rather, better - on an occasion where a person is totally entitled, Shari'ah-wise, to opt for any course out of the few permissible courses of action available. Now, it is up to him. He can, rather than go by his will and choice and select a course of action, arrive at a decisive line of action by drawing lots. For example, someone who has more than one wife and is going on a journey, then, he has the right to take the wife he elects to take with him. Now, rather than do this following his will and choice, if he were to draw lots, it would be better - so that no one is disheartened. The Holy Prophet ﷺ used to do that.

The purpose behind the drawing of lots in this event relating to Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام was not to label anyone as some culprit. In fact, to save a whole boat-full of passengers, anyone could have been cast away into the waters. So, the name of the person to be cast was determined by drawing lots.

Immediately next in the verse, it was said: " : فَكَانَ مِنَ الْمُدْحَضِينَ " and was the one who was defeated." The word: إِدْحَاضٌ (idhād) literally means to

defeat someone or to make him fail, lose. The sense is that it was his name that came up in the draw - and he threw himself into the waters. No one should raise the objection that it was some sort of a suicide plunge, for it is possible that the shore was near and he intended to swim ashore.

In verse 143, it was said: فَلَوْ لَا أَنَّهُ كَانَ مِنَ الْمُسَبِّحِينَ (Had he not been of those who proclaim Allah's purity,...). From this verse, it is wrong to assume that had Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام not been making tasbih, that fish would have been living right through the last day of Qiyāmah. Instead, the sense is that the very belly of this fish would have been made the grave of Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام.

Distress is removed by *tasbih* (remembrance) and *istighfar* (repentance)

From this verse we also learn that *tasbīḥ* (لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ سُبْحَانَكَ إِنِّي كُنْتُ مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ : the act of proclaiming the purity of Allah) and *istighfar* (... : the act of seeking forgiveness from Him) have a proven efficacy of their own. It has already appeared in Sūrah Al-Anbiyā' [21] that Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام, while in the belly of the fish, used to recite the following sentence of *tasbīḥ*:

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ سُبْحَانَكَ إِنِّي كُنْتُ مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ

There is no god but You - Pure are You - Indeed I was among the wrongdoers - Al-Anbiyā', 21:87.

By the Barakah of this very *Tasbīḥ*, Allah Ta'ālā had him delivered from this trial, and he came out safe and sound from the belly of the fish. Therefore, it has been continuously reported from pious elders that they recite this *tasbih* one hundred and twenty-five thousand times at the time they faced any individual or collective distress and, by virtue of its barakah, Allah Ta'ālā would have this distress removed from them.

According to a narration from Sayyidnā Sa'd Ibn Abī Waqqāṣ رضي الله عنه appearing in Abū Dāwūd, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: "Any Muslim who recites the prayer Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام had made while in the belly of the fish, that is: لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ سُبْحَانَكَ إِنِّي كُنْتُ مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ (*lā ilāha illā anta - subḥānaka - inni kuntu minaz-ẓālimīn*: There is no god but You - Pure are You - Indeed I was among the wrongdoers - 21:87) for any (permissible) objective, his du'a or prayer will be answered." (Tafsīr Qurṭubī)

In verse 145, it was said: فَتَبَدَّلَهُ بِالْعُرَاءِ وَهُوَ سَقِيمٌ (Then We cast him ashore in the open while he was ill.) The word: العراء (*al-'ara*) used in the text means an open land with no trees. Some narrations tell us that, at that time, Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام had become very weak because of having remained confined within the belly of the fish and that he had no hair left on his body.

Said next, it was: وَأَنْبَتْنَا عَلَيْهِ شَجَرَةً مِّنْ يَقْطِينٍ (and We caused a tree of gourd to grow over him. - 146). The word: يَقْطِينٌ (*yaqṭīn*) signifies every such tree that has no trunk. It appears in Ḥadīth narrations that it was a gourd creeper. The purpose of having a tree grow there was to make the provision of shade for Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام. The word: شَجَرَةٌ (*shajarah*: tree) at this place serves as an indicator of two possibilities: Either Allah had made this very plant of gourd grow with a trunk by way of a miracle, or it was some other tree on which the creeping plant of gourd was made to wind its way up, so that it could provide a thick shade, otherwise, having enough shade from a winding plant alone would have been difficult.

It was said in verse 147: وَأَرْسَلْنَاهُ إِلَىٰ مِائَةِ أَلْفٍ أَوْ يَزِيدُونَ (And We had sent him [as messenger] to one hundred thousand, or more). A difficulty may arise here. Is it not that Allah Ta'ālā is Knowing and Aware? Why would He have to express the doubt that the number of those people was 'one hundred thousand, or more?' It can be answered by saying that this statement has been made in congruity with the view of common people, that is, if an average person would have seen them, he would have said that their number is one hundred thousand or somewhat more than that (Maẓharī). Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavi has said that nothing is being doubted here in the text itself. They could be called one hundred thousand, and also more than that - for example, if one eliminates the fraction, their number was one hundred thousand, and if the fraction were also taken into account, it would be more than one hundred thousand. (Bayān-ul-Qur'ān)

The expression: إِلَىٰ حِينٍ (*ilā hīn*: for a time) in: فَآمَنُوا فَمَتَّعْنَاهُمْ إِلَىٰ حِينٍ ([147] So, they believed, then, We let them enjoy for a time.- 148) means that as long as they did not revert to their kufr and shirk, no punishment visited them.

Exposing the fraud of the Qadyani imposter

It has already been demonstrated in the Tafsīr of Sūrah Yūnus (Ma'āriful-Qur'ān, English, Volume IV), and it is clear from this verse too, that the reason why the punishment due to visit the people of Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام was averted was that his people had started believing on time - before it actually materialized. This puts the fraudulent claim of Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad Qāḍiāni (the false pretender to prophethood from Qadian located in Punjāb, now called Haryana in India) when he had challenged his adversaries that, should they continue to oppose him, it stood decreed that Divine punishment would descend upon them by such and such time. But, quite conversely, the adversaries became stronger and more vocal, yet the punishment never came. At that time, in order to salvage himself out from the disgrace of failure, the Qadiani imposter started saying that since his adversaries were really scared in their hearts, therefore, this punishment stood removed from them - as it had stood removed from the people of Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام. But, this verse of the noble Qur'ān declares this interpretation to be false and rejected. The reason is that the people of Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام had stayed safe from the punishment because of their *'imān*, belief and faith. Contrary to this was the case of the adversaries of Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad of Qāḍiān - not only that they did not believe in him, in fact, their struggle against him gained more strength and momentum.

Verses 149 - 166

فَاسْتَفْتَيْهِمُ الرِّبَّكَ الْبَنَاتُ وَلَهُمُ الْبَنُونَ ﴿١٤٩﴾ أَمْ خَلَقْنَا الْمَلَائِكَةَ
 إِنَاثًا وَهُمْ شَاهِدُونَ ﴿١٥٠﴾ أَلَا إِنَّهُمْ مِّنْ أَفْكِهَمُ لَيَقُولُونَ ﴿١٥١﴾ وَوَلَدَ
 اللَّهُ ۗ وَإِنَّهُمْ لَكَاذِبُونَ ﴿١٥٢﴾ أَصْطَفَى الْبَنَاتِ عَلَى الْبَنِينَ ﴿١٥٣﴾
 مَا لَكُمْ نَدَىٰ كَيْفَ تَحْكُمُونَ ﴿١٥٤﴾ أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿١٥٥﴾ أَمْ لَكُمْ
 سُلْطٰنٌ مُّبِينٌ ﴿١٥٦﴾ فَاتُوا بِكِتَابِكُمْ إِن كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِينَ ﴿١٥٧﴾
 وَجَعَلُوا بَيْنَهُ وَبَيْنَ الْجَنَّةِ نَسَبًا ۗ وَلَقَدْ عَلِمْتِ الْجِنَّةَ إِنَّهُمْ
 لَمُحْضَرُونَ ﴿١٥٨﴾ سُبْحٰنَ اللَّهِ عَمَّا يُصِفُونَ ﴿١٥٩﴾ إِلَّا عِبَادَ اللَّهِ

الْمُخْلِصِينَ ﴿١٦٠﴾ فَإِنَّكُمْ وَمَا تَعْبُدُونَ ﴿١٦١﴾ مَا أَنْتُمْ عَلَيْهِ بِفِتْنِينَ
 ﴿١٦٢﴾ إِلَّا مَنْ هُوَ صَالِ الْجَحِيمِ ﴿١٦٣﴾ وَمَا مِنَّا إِلَّا لَهُ، مَقَامٌ مَعْلُومٌ
 ﴿١٦٤﴾ وَإِنَّا لَنَحْنُ الصَّافُّونَ ﴿١٦٥﴾ وَإِنَّا لَنَحْنُ الْمُسَبِّحُونَ ﴿١٦٦﴾

So ask them, "Does your Lord have daughters while they have sons?" [149] Or, did We create the angels as females while they were witnessing? [150] Beware! They are the ones who, by way of a lie of theirs, (have the audacity to) say, [151] "Allah has children" - and they are absolute liars. [152] Is it that Allah has chosen daughters (for Himself) instead of sons? [153] What is the matter with you? How (arbitrarily) do you judge? [154] Then, is it that you do not think about it? [155] Or, is it that there is some open authority with you? [156] Then bring your book, if you are truthful. [157] And they have made up between Him and the Jinns some kinship, while the Jinns already know that they are bound to appear (before Him). [158] Pure is Allah from what they describe - [159] except the chosen servants of Allah. [160] So, you and those whom you worship - [161] none of you can make one turn away from Him - [162] except the one who is to burn in Jahannam. [163] And (the angels say,) "There is no one among us who does not have a known station, [164] and We, surely We, are those who stand in rows [165] and We, surely We, are those who proclaim Allah's purity." [166]

Commentary

Events relating to the noble prophets described earlier provided some good counsel and some lessons to learn. Now, once again, the text turns to the essential subject of the affirmation of pure monotheism (*tauḥīd*) and the refutation of ascribing partners to the pristine divinity of Allah (*shirk*). Then, described at this particular place is the *shirk* of a particular kind. The disbelievers of Arabia believed that angels were the daughters of Allah Ta'ālā, and the daughters of the chieftains of Jinns were the mothers of angels. According to 'Allāmah Wāḥidī, this belief was not restricted to the Quraish alone. It also prevailed among the tribes of Juhainah, Banū Salamah, Banū Khuza'ah and Banū Maliḥ (Tafsīr Kabīr, p. 112, v. 7)

In verses beginning with: فَاسْتَفْتِهِمْ (So ask them... -149) and ending at:

إِنَّ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ (if you are truthful - 157), arguments have been given in support of the refutation of this belief of the disbelievers of Arabia. In gist, it has been said here: To begin with, this belief of yours is totally wrong in terms of your own recognized practice and customs, since you yourself regard daughters to be a source of shame. Now, what is a source of shame for you personally, how could this thing be proved to be good for Allah Ta'ālā? Then, you have declared angels to be daughters of Allah. What proof do you have for saying so? There could be three kinds of arguments to prove a claim: (1) Observation (2) Report, that is, the saying of an entity or person whose veracity is established and (3) Reason. As far as observation is concerned, it is obvious that you have just not seen Allah Ta'ālā creating angels that could have given you the knowledge of the gender of angels. Therefore, you have no proof from observation with you. When it was said: أَمْ خَلَقْنَا الْمَلَائِكَةَ إِنَاثًا وَهُمْ شَاهِدُونَ (Or, did We create the angels as females while they were witnessing? - 150), this is what it means. As for a reported proof, you do not have that too because one only goes by the word of people who are trustworthy and whose veracity is well established. Quite contrary to this, there are those who hold this kind of belief but they are liars. Nothing they say can be a binding argument. When it was said: ... أَلَا إِنَّهُمْ مِّنْ أَفْكَهَمَ لَيَقُولُونَ (Beware! They are the ones who, by way of a lie of theirs, [have the audacity to] say, "Allah has children" - and they are absolute liars - 151,152), this is what it means. As for the rational argument, even that does not go in your favor because, in your view, daughters have a lower status as compared to that of the sons. Now, think of the great Being of Allah that holds the superior most status in the entire universe - how can this superior most Being like to have something of a lower status? When it was said: أَصْطَفَى الْبَنَاتِ عَلَى الْبَنِينَ (Is it that Allah has chosen daughters (for Himself) instead of sons? - 153), this is what it means. Now, this leaves only one likelihood unexplored - may be, you have been blessed with some scripture from the heavens through the medium of revelation (*waḥy*) in which you have been asked to believe as you do. So, if this be the case, come out and show us the proof - where is that revelation and where is that Book? When it was said: أَمْ لَكُمْ سُلْطٰنٌ مِّمَّنْ قَالُوا يَكْتٰبِكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ (Or, is it that there is some open authority with you? Then bring your book if you are truthful - 156, 157) this is what it means.

An *ilzāmi* (الزامي) answer (based on adversary's assumption) is more appropriate for the obstinate

From these verses we learn that it is more appropriate to tackle people bent on obstinacy with an *ilzāmi* response. An *ilzāmi* response means that their claim should be refuted through the analogy of some other view of things they themselves have. In doing so, it is never necessary to concede that we too subscribe to this other view, in fact, there could be occasion when that other view is also incorrect. But, it is only to drive some sense into the obstinate adversary that it is put to use functionally. Here, to refute their belief, Allah Ta'ālā has used their own view that the existence of daughters is a cause of disgrace. It is obvious that it does not mean that it is so with Allah Ta'ālā as well, nor does it mean that, had they called angels 'sons of God' rather than 'daughters of God,' it would have been correct. In fact, this is an *ilzāmi* response, and its aim is to refute their belief by citing their own claims. Otherwise, the real response to beliefs of this nature is no other but that which finds mention in the noble Qur'ān itself - that Allah Ta'ālā is independent and need-free and neither does He need any children, nor does it befit His Most Exalted State of Being.

In verse 158, it was said: *وَجَعَلُوا بَيْنَهُ وَبَيْنَ الْجِنَّةِ نَسَبًا* (And they have made up between Him and the Jinns some kinship). There are two explanations of this sentence. According to the first Tafsīr, this is a description of the false belief held by the Mushriks of Arabia that the daughters of the chieftains of the Jinns are mothers of the angels. As if, God forbid, the daughters of the chieftains of the Jinns have marital relations with Allah Ta'ālā and, as a result of this bond, angels have come to exist. Hence, it appears in an exegetical narration when the Mushriks of Arabia declared angels to be the daughters of Allah, Sayyidnā Abū Bakr رضي الله عنه asked, "Who is their mother?" They said, "Daughters of the Jinns" (Tafsīr ibn Kathīr, p. 23, v. 4). But, this Tafsīr leaves an unresolved difficulty behind: The verse is talking about the attribution of kinship between Allah Ta'ālā and the Jinns, while the marital relationship of a husband and wife is not based on kinship.

For this reason, another Tafsīr that has been reported from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās, Hasan al-Basri and Dahhak seems to be weightier. According to this Tafsīr, some of the people of Arabia also believed that, God forbid,

Iblis was a brother to Allah Ta'ālā who was the creator of good while he was the creator of evil. Here, this very false belief has been refuted (please see Tafsīr ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī and Tafsīr Kabīr).

Immediately next within verse 158 it was said: وَلَقَدْ عَلِمَتِ الْجِنَّةُ إِنَّهُمْ لَمُحْضَرُونَ (158)', while the Jinns already know that they are bound to appear (before Him).' Here, 'they' could be referring to the kinds of Mushriks who took Jinns and satans as equals of God, meaning thereby that the Jinns know that these Mushriks will appear before Allah Ta'ālā for being punished, and could also refer to the Jinns themselves. In this situation, the sense of the verse would come to be that 'the satans and Jinns you have taken to be associated with Allah in one or the other form already know very well that they are going to face a terrible fate in the Hereafter. For example, Iblis is perfectly aware of his evil end. Now, someone who himself believes that he has to taste his punishment could hardly be the equal of God and taking him to be so would certainly be a gross lack of good sense.

Verses 167 - 179

وَأِنْ كَانُوا لَيَقُولُونَ ﴿١٦٧﴾ لَوْ أَنَّ عِنْدَنَا ذِكْرًا مِنَ الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿١٦٨﴾
لَكُنَّا عِبَادَ اللَّهِ الْمُخْلَصِينَ ﴿١٦٩﴾ فَكَفَرُوا بِهِ فَسَوْفَ يَعْلَمُونَ
﴿١٧٠﴾ وَ لَقَدْ سَبَقَتْ كَلِمَتُنَا لِعِبَادِنَا الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿١٧١﴾ إِنَّهُمْ لَهُمْ
الْمَنْصُورُونَ ﴿١٧٢﴾ وَإِنَّ جُنَدَنَا لَهُمُ الْعَلِيُّونَ ﴿١٧٣﴾ فَتَوَلَّ عَنْهُمْ
حَتَّىٰ حِينٍ ﴿١٧٤﴾ وَأَبْصَرَهُمْ فَسَوْفَ يُبْصِرُونَ ﴿١٧٥﴾ أَفَبِعَذَابِنَا
يَسْتَعْجِلُونَ ﴿١٧٦﴾ فَإِذَا نَزَلَ بِسَاحَتِهِمْ فَسَاءَ صَبَاحُ الْمُنْذَرِينَ
﴿١٧٧﴾ وَتَوَلَّ عَنْهُمْ حَتَّىٰ حِينٍ ﴿١٧٨﴾ وَأَبْصُرْ فَسَوْفَ يُبْصِرُونَ
﴿١٧٩﴾

And they used to say, [167] "Had there been a scripture like that of the former ones with us, [168] certainly we would have been the chosen servants of Allah." [169] Then they disbelieved in it. So, very soon, they will come to know. [170] And Our Word has already gone

ahead in favor of Our servants - the messengers - [171] they are the ones who will have Allah's support, [172] and verily it will be Our army (of chosen servants) that prevails. [173] So, withdraw your attention from them for a time. [174] But, see them for they shall soon see. [175] Are they asking for Our punishment to come sooner? [176] So, when it descends in their courtyard, then, evil will be the dawn of those warned. [177] So, withdraw your attention from them for a time. [178] And watch them, for they shall soon see. [179]

Commentary

After having provided proofs of the basic beliefs of Islam, these verses now mention the obstinacy of the disbelievers. It has been said that, before the blessed appearance of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, these people used to crave for the coming of some prophet from Allah, so that they could follow him. But, when he did come, they started confronting him with a posture of obstinacy and hostility. After that, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been comforted that he should not worry about the pain these people cause to him. The time was coming very soon when he will prevail, and his oppressors will be defeated and punished. That this will unfold comprehensively in the Hereafter is already settled, but in the mortal world too, Allah Ta'ālā showed the spectacle that, in every Jihad from the battle of Badr up to the conquest of Makkah, His blessed rasul came out victorious and his adversaries, disgraced.

The sense of 'the victory of the people of Allah'

In verses 171-173, it was said: **وَلَقَدْ سَبَقَتْ كَلِمَتُنَا (الِى قَوْلِهِ تَعَالَى) وَإِنَّ جُنَدَنَا لَهُمُ الْعَالِيُونَ** (And Our Word has already gone ahead in favor of Our servants - the messengers - they are the ones who will have Allah's support, and verily it will be Our army that prevails). The sense of these verses is that it stands predetermined with Allah that His chosen servants, that is, the prophets would be the ones to prevail. This may raise a difficulty, for in the mortal world, some prophets did not. For an answer to this, it could be said that the majority of prophets consists of the noble souls whose people belied them and met their punishment while they were kept safe from it. There are only a few among the blessed prophets who, though, could not prevail outwardly and physically right up to the end of their tenure in this world, but they always enjoyed ascendancy in the field of logic and argument, and the ultimate intellectual victory remained always theirs.

However, the physical traces of this ascendancy were - due to some consideration of wisdom, such as a trial, or its likes - deferred until the Hereafter. Hence, as said by sage Thanavi, it is like the case of a highway robber, who starts harassing a high appointee of the state while on his journey. But, this appointee would never, by virtue of his God-given intellectual sobriety, stoop to the low-down robber, until he reaches the capital of his state where the robber will be seized and punished. Therefore, simply due to this temporary ascendancy, neither can we call that robber an authority, nor that authority a subject. In fact, given the true state of affairs, that robber - despite this temporary ascendancy - is still a subject, while that man of authority - despite his temporary lack of ascendancy - is still the authority he had been all along. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه has expressed this more briefly and lucidly by saying: **إِنْ لَمْ يُنْصَرُوا** (Those who are not helped to ascend in the present world are helped to ascend in the Hereafter) - Bayān-ul-Qur'ān, the Tafsīr of Sūrah al-Ma'idah (5).

But, it should always be borne in mind that no group of people achieves this supremacy or ascendancy, whether in the present world or in the Hereafter, simply by having particular racial traits, or by belonging to a religion only in name. In fact, this actually happens only when every human being makes himself a member of 'the army of Allah.' It necessarily implies that he or she should be committed to the obedience of Allah in every department of life as the objective of his or her life. Here, the word: "جُنُودَنَا" (Our army) is telling us very clearly that the person who embraces Islam will have to enter into a solemn pledge to devote his or her entire life in waging a struggle against the forces of self and Satan - and his or her supremacy, whether material or moral, whether in this world or in the Hereafter, depends on this condition.

In verse 177, it was said: **فَإِذَا نَزَلَ بِسَاحَتِهِمْ فَسَاءَ صَبَاحُ الْمُنْذَرِينَ** (So, when it descends in their courtyard, then, evil will be the dawn of the warned). The word: **سَاحَةٌ** (*sahah*) appearing in this verse literally means a courtyard, and the expression: **نَزَلَ بِسَاحَتِهِ** (*nazala bisahatihi*: descended in his courtyard) is an Arabic idiom that denotes the appearance of a calamity face to face, while the time of morning has been specified, as an attack would usually come at that hour among the people of Arabia. This also used to be the practice with the Holy Prophet ﷺ that, should he

reach the territorial jurisdiction of some enemy at the time of night, he used to postpone his attack until the morning (Maẓharī) According to Ḥadīth narrations, when the Holy Prophet ﷺ attacked the fort of Khaibar during the morning hours, he said: *اللَّهُ اكْبَرُ، خَرِبَتْ خَيْبَرُ، أَنَا إِذَا نَزَلْنَا بِسَاحَةِ* (Allāhu Akbar, Khaibar is destroyed. Verily, when we descend on the courtyard of a people, the morning of those who had been already warned is too bad).

Verses 180 - 182

سُبْحَانَ رَبِّكَ رَبِّ الْعِزَّةِ عَمَّا يَصِفُونَ ﴿١٨٠﴾ وَسَلَامٌ عَلَى الْمُرْسَلِينَ
﴿١٨١﴾ وَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٨٢﴾

Pure is your Lord, the Lord of all might and honor, from what they describe [180] and salam be on the messengers [181] and praised is Allah, Lord of all the worlds. [182]

Commentary

Sūrah Aṣ-Ṣaffāt has been concluded on these verses, and the truth of the matter is that it would take volumes to explain this beautiful finale. In sum, Allah Ta‘ālā has compressed all subjects of this Sūrah in these three verses. The Sūrah began with a description of tauhid, the theme of the Oneness of Allah, the essence of which was that Allah Ta‘ālā is free from everything the Mushriks attribute to Him. Accordingly, the first verse serves as an indicator of this very detailed subject. After that, described in the Sūrah there were events relating to the noble prophets. Accordingly, a hint towards these has been made in the second verse. After that, it was very openly and explicitly that the beliefs, doubts and objections of disbelievers were refuted, both in terms of report and reason and, along with that, it was also declared that supremacy will ultimately be the lot of the people of truth - and whoever listens to these statements with good sense and insight is bound to end up praising Allah Ta‘ālā. Accordingly, it is on this note of praise for Allah that the Sūrah has been concluded.

In addition to that, in these verses, the basic beliefs of Islam - *tauhid* (Oneness of Allah) and *risalah* (prophethood) - were mentioned clearly,

while the mention of the Hereafter also came up as a corollary, things the confirmation of which was the real purpose of the Sūrah. Along with it, given there was the teaching that it is naturally expected of a true Muslim that he or she would conclude every article, every address and every sitting by admitting and stating the greatness of Allah Ta'ālā, and by saying words of praise for Him. Accordingly, at this place, 'Allāmah al-Qurṭubī has, on his authority, reported this saying of Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī رضي الله عنه:

"I have heard it many times from the Holy Prophet ﷺ that he, after the Ṣalāh was over, used to recite these verses:

سُبْحَانَ رَبِّكَ رَبِّ الْعِزَّةِ عَمَّا يَصِفُونَ

"Pure is your Lord, Lord of great might and honor, from what they describe and salam be on the messengers and all praise belongs to Allah, Lord of the worlds - 180-182 - Qurṭubī.

In addition to that, there are several commentaries in which the following saying of saying of Sayyidnā 'Alī has been reported with reference to Imām al-Baghawī:

"Whoever wishes to have the best of return filled to the brim on the Day of Judgment should recite this at the end of every sitting attended:

سُبْحَانَ رَبِّكَ رَبِّ الْعِزَّةِ عَمَّا يَصِفُونَ

Ibn Abi Hatim has also reported this very saying from a narration of Sha'bi that ascends to the Holy Prophet ﷺ - Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr.

سُبْحَانَ رَبِّكَ رَبِّ الْعِزَّةِ عَمَّا يَصِفُونَ وَسَلَامٌ عَلَى الْمُرْسَلِينَ وَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ
الْعَالَمِينَ

By the grace of Allah Ta'ālā
The commentary on
Sūrah Aṣ-Ṣaffāt
Ends here.

Sūrah Ṣād

Sūrah Ṣād was revealed in Makkah and it has 88 verses and 5 sections

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

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

Verses 1 - 16

ص وَالْقُرْآنِ ذِي الذِّكْرِ ﴿١﴾ بَلِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فِي عِزَّةٍ وَشِقَاقٍ
 ﴿٢﴾ كَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ مِنْ قَرْنٍ فَنَادَوْا وَوَلَاتٍ حِينَ مَنَاصٍ ﴿٣﴾
 وَعَجِبُوا أَنْ جَاءَهُمْ مُنذِرٌ مِنْهُمْ وَقَالَ الْكُفْرُونَ هَذَا سِحْرٌ كَذَّابٌ
 ﴿٤﴾ أَجْعَلُ الْإِلَهَةَ الْهَآءِ وَاحِدًا ۖ إِنْ هَذَا لَشَيْءٌ عَجَابٌ ﴿٥﴾ وَأَنْطَلَقَ
 الْمَلَأُ مِنْهُمْ أَنْ امْشُوا وَاصْبِرُوا عَلَىٰ آلِهَتِكُمْ ۖ إِنْ هَذَا لَشَيْءٌ يُرَادُ
 ﴿٦﴾ مَا سَمِعْنَا بِهَذَا فِي الْمِلَّةِ الْآخِرَةِ ۖ إِنْ هَذَا إِلَّا خِتِلَاقٌ ﴿٧﴾
 ء أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْهِ الذِّكْرُ مِنْ بَيْنِنَا ۖ بَلْ هُمْ فِي شَكٍّ مِنْ ذِكْرِي ۖ بَلْ لَمَّا
 يَدُوقُوا عَذَابَ ﴿٨﴾ أَمْ عِنْدَهُمْ خَزَائِنُ رَحْمَةِ رَبِّكَ الْعَزِيزِ الْوَهَّابِ
 ﴿٩﴾ أَمْ لَهُمْ مُلْكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا ۚ فَلْيَرْتَقُوا فِي
 الْأَسْبَابِ ﴿١٠﴾ جُنْدًا مَا هُنَالِكَ مَهْزُومٌ مِنَ الْأَحْزَابِ ﴿١١﴾ كَذَّبَتْ
 قَبْلَهُمْ قَوْمُ نُوحٍ وَعَادٌ وَفِرْعَوْنُ ذُو الْأَوْتَادِ ﴿١٢﴾ وَثَمُودُ وَقَوْمُ لُوطٍ
 وَآصْحَبُ لَيْكَةِ ۗ أُولَٰئِكَ الْأَحْزَابُ ﴿١٣﴾ إِنْ كُلُّ إِلَّا كَذَّبَ
 الرُّسُلَ فَحَقَّ عِقَابِ ﴿١٤﴾ وَمَا يَنْظُرُ هَؤُلَاءِ إِلَّا صَيْحَةً وَاحِدَةً مَأْتِيهَا
 مِنْ فَوَاقٍ ﴿١٥﴾ وَقَالُوا رَبَّنَا عَجِّلْ لَنَا قِطْنَآ قَبْلَ يَوْمِ الْحِسَابِ ﴿١٦﴾

Ṣād. By the Qur'ān, (the book) of advice, (this is true,) [1] but those who disbelieve are (involved) in false pride and opposition. [2] How many a generation We have destroyed before them, so they cried out (for mercy), while no time was left for having refuge. [3] And they wonder that a warner has come to them from among themselves. And the disbelievers say, " This is a magician, a sheer liar. [4] Has he (not) turned all the gods into a single God? Certainly, it is a very strange thing." [5] And the leaders among them went forth saying (to their followers)," Walk away (from the Prophet) and stay firm on (adhering to) your gods. This (call of the Prophet) is surely something designed (for his personal benefit). [6] We never heard of it in the former faith (of ours). This is nothing but a false invention. [7] Is it (believable) that the message of advice has been sent down to him (alone) from among all of us?"_ The fact is that they are in doubt about My message; rather, they have not yet tasted My punishment. [8] Do they have the treasures of the mercy of your Lord, the Mighty, the Bountiful? [9] Or do they have the ownership of the heavens and the earth and what lies between them? Then let them ascend (to the sky) by ropes. [10] What is there (in Makkah) is just a host of the (opposing) groups that has to be defeated. [11] Even before them, the people of Nuḥ and 'Ad and Fir'aun (Pharaoh), the man of stakes, [12] and Thamud and the people of Lūṭ and the people of Aykah have rejected (the messengers). They were the (strong) groups. [13] All of them did nothing but declare the messengers as liars; hence, My punishment became due. [14] And these people are waiting for nothing but for a single Cry (the sound of the Trumpet to be blown on the Doomsday) that will have no pause. [15] And they say, " O our Lord, give us our share (of the punishment) sooner, before the Day of Reckoning." [16]

Commentary

The background of the revelation

The background of the revelation of the initial verses of this Sūrah was that Abū Ṭālib, the uncle of the Holy Prophet ﷺ was doing his best as his guardian, despite that he had not yet embraced Islam. When he fell sick, the chiefs of the tribe of Quraish held a consultative meeting in which Abū Jahl, 'Aṣ Ibn Wā'il, Aswad Ibn Muṭṭalib, Aswad Ibn 'Abd Yaghuth and several other chiefs participated. They discussed the