

Failure to return his deposited item is tantamount to breach of contract that is unlawful in Shari'ah. [[Maḏharī]]

Before the Holy Prophet ﷺ migrated, many non-believers used to keep their deposits with him. At the time of migration, he still had with him some of these deposits. As long as he was in Makkah, he kept them himself, but when he was migrating, he committed them to the care of Sayyidnā 'Alī ﷺ and did not take them with him to Madīnah. In fact, Sayyidnā 'Alī ﷺ was left behind for the sole reason of returning the deposits to the rightful people.

A Proven Prescription to avert calamities and achieve the objectives

According to the above Tradition, Sayyidnā 'Auf Ibn Mālīk Ashja'ī ﷺ and his wife were advised to recite لَا حَوْلَ وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ (There is no strength nor power but with Allah) abundantly to avert afflictions and obtain benefits. Mujaddid Alf Thānī رحمه الله تعالى says that abundant recitation of this formula is a proven prescription to avert all kinds of religious and mundane afflictions and to obtain all religious and mundane objectives and benefits. According to him, its proper way is to recite five hundred times لَا حَوْلَ وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ, and to recite Ṣalāh (*durūd*) one hundred times before, and one hundred times after the formula, and then to supplicate to Allah for one's need. [Tafsīr [Maḏharī]] Imām Aḥmad, Ḥākim [grading the chain as *ṣaḥīḥ*], Baihaqī, Abū Na'īm and others have transmitted on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Dharr ﷺ that one day the Messenger of Allah ﷺ continuously recited the verse وَمَنْ يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يَجْعَلْ لَهُ مَخْرَجًا وَيَرْزُقْهُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَحْتَسِبُ ('And whoever fears Allah, for him Allah brings forth a way out, and gives him provision from where he does not even imagine...2/3) until the reporter started feeling sleepy. The Holy Prophet ﷺ said: "Abū Dharr, if all people choose only this verse, it would be sufficient for them all." [Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī] 'Sufficient' in this statement means it would be sufficient for all people to accomplish their religious and mundane objectives, if they practice it.

(...And whoever places his trust in Allah, He is sufficient for him. Surely Allah is to accomplish His purpose. Allah has set a measure for every thing....65:3) In this verse Allah promises those who put their trust in Him that He shall suffice for them against all odds, because Allah will execute His

decisions that He made for them, in whatever way He wills and chooses. Allah set a measure for all things. It is in accordance with this set measure that He decrees all acts. Tirmidhī and Ibn Mājah record from Sayyidnā ‘Umar رضي الله عنه that Allah's Messenger ﷺ said:

لَوَأَنَّكُمْ تَوَكَّلْتُمْ عَلَى اللَّهِ حَقَّ تَوَكُّلِهِ لَرَزَقَكُمْ كَمَا يَرْزُقُ الطَّيْرَ تَغْدُوا خِمَاصًا وَتَرُوحُ
بَطَانًا.

"If you trust in Allah as He ought to be trusted, He will provide for you in the same way as He provides for the birds. They leave their nests while hungry in the mornings, but come back in the evenings with their bellies full."

Ṣaḥīḥs of Bukhārī and Muslim transmit on the authority of Sayyidnā Ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنه that Allah's Messenger ﷺ said: "Seventy-thousand of my followers will be admitted to Paradise without account." Among their other qualities, they will be characterised by having trust in Allah." [Maḏharī]

Tawakkul (Trust in Allah) does not mean to forsake the causes and means Allah has created for us to acquire things. One should utilise the means at our disposal. However, instead of relying solely on them, one should rather put his trust in Allah, in that no task shall be accomplished unless Allah wills it. After describing the virtues and blessings of *taqwā* and *Twakkul*, the next verses lay down some more rules about divorce and "iddah."

Rule [9]

وَالَّذِي يَخُصِّنَ مِنَ الْمَحِيضِ مِنْ نِسَائِكُمْ إِنْ ارْتَبْتُمْ فَعِدَّتُهُنَّ ثَلَاثَةُ أَشْهُرٍ وَالَّتِي لَمْ
يَحْضُنَّ وَأُولَاتُ الْأَحْمَالِ أَجَلُهُنَّ أَنْ يَضَعْنَ حَمْلَهُنَّ

(And those women from among you who have despaired of [further] menstruation, if you are in doubt, their "iddah is three months, as well as of those who have not yet menstruated. As for those having pregnancy, their term [of "iddah] is that they give birth to their child...65:4)

This verse deals with additional rules pertaining to the waiting-period of divorced women. It subdivides divorced women and their waiting-periods into three different categories. Under normal circumstances, the waiting-period of a divorced woman is three menstrual cycles as mentioned in Sūrah Al-Baqarah. In the case of women who have stopped menstruating for good on account of advanced age, or due

to some disease etc. their "*iddah* is three months instead of three menstrual cycles. The same is the "*iddah* of young women who have not yet started menstruating on account of being under age. The "*iddah* for women who are pregnant at the time of divorce continues until they give birth to their child irrespective of the length of the period.

The words *إِنْ ارْتَبْتُمْ* (if you are in doubt) refer to the doubt or confusion such women may have because the real "*iddah* is counted on the basis of menstruation, but these women's menstruation has ceased, so they are doubtful about how to count their "*iddah*.

وَمَنْ يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يَجْعَلْ لَهُ مِنْ أَمْرِهِ يُسْرًا (And whoever fears Allah, He brings about ease for him in his affair....65:4) The verse further speaks of the virtues and blessings of *taqwā* in that whoever has *taqwā*, Allah will make matters easy for him in this world as well as in the next world. Then the verse emphasises strict adherence to the above laws pertaining to divorce and waiting-period, thus: *ذَلِكَ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ أَنْزَلَهُ إِلَيْكُمْ* (This is the command of Allah that He has sent down to you...5) After this, the verse again draws attention to another virtue of *taqwā*. *وَمَنْ يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يَكْفِرْ عَنْهُ سَيِّئَاتِهِ وَيُعْظِمْ لَهُ أَجْرًا* (And whoever fears Allah, He will write off his evil deeds, and will give him a huge reward...65:5)

Five Blessings of *taqwā*

The merits and blessings of *taqwā* mentioned in the above verses may be summarised in five things: [1] He who has *taqwā* will be given a way out of difficulties and adversities; [2] He will be provided with all his needs from resources that he does not anticipate or expect; [3] Allah will make matters and tasks easy for him; [4] Allah will expiate his sins; and [5] He will grant him an immense reward.

Another blessing of *taqwā* mentioned by the Holy Qur'ān at another place is that a God-fearing person finds it easier to distinguish between right and wrong, thus: *إِنْ تَتَّقُوا اللَّهَ يَجْعَلْ لَكُمْ فُرْقَانًا* (...if you fear Allah, He will provide you with a criterion to distinguish between right and wrong...8:29) The next verses deal with further rules about the waiting period and maintenance of the divorced women and their other rights.

أَسْكِنُوهُنَّ مِنْ حَيْثُ سَكَنْتُمْ مِنْ وَجْدِكُمْ وَلَا تَضَارُّوهُنَّ لِنُصَيْقِهِنَّ عَلَيْهِنَّ (Provide to them [the divorced women] residence where you reside according to your means...65:6) This injunction is related to Rule [3] above which states that

divorced women must not be expelled from their homes. This verse states the positive aspect of the injunction, in that the husbands, according to their means, should let their divorced wives live in some portion of the residence where they themselves live. If the wife is given a revocable divorce, there is no need for any *ḥijāb* or veil. However, if she is given an irrevocable divorce, whether of minor degree [*bā'in*] or of major degree by pronouncing divorce thrice, then marriage tie stands broken. She is required to be in *ḥijāb* in the presence of her former husband. Therefore, the arrangement in the residence should be made in such a way that she lives in the same residence with full observance of the rules of *ḥijāb*.

Rule [10]: Do not Hurt Divorced Women during their "iddah

لَا تَضَارُّوهُنَّ (...and do not hurt them to straiten [life] for them...65:6) This verse sets down that all the possible needs of a divorced woman must not be harassed by taunts or by curtailing her needful things, so that she is compelled to leave the home.

Rule [11]: Maintenance of Divorcees during their "iddah

وَإِنْ كُنَّ أُولَاتٍ حَمْلٌ فَأَنْفِقُوا عَلَيْهِنَّ حَتَّى يَضَعْنَ حَمْلَهُنَّ (...And if they are pregnant, spend on them till they give birth to their child...65:6) This verse lays down the rule that if a divorcee is pregnant at the time of divorce, her maintenance is obligatory on the husband. On the basis of this verse, there is a complete consensus of the Ummah on this point. Similarly, if she is not pregnant, and the divorce given to her is revocable, her maintenance too is compulsory on the husband till the expiry of her "iddah. This point too is agreed upon by all the jurists of the Ummah. However, if a wife is given irrevocable divorce, whether a *bā'in* divorce or the divorce pronounced three times, or if a woman has got her marriage terminated by way of *khul'* [got herself separated from the husband for a compensation], will not have to be maintained by the husband according to Imāms Shāfi'ī, Aḥmad and others. However, according to Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, her maintenance is also incumbent upon the husband. He argues that just as she is entitled to residence during the term of "iddah as is provided in verse 6, she is entitled to sustenance too. The husbands are obligated to provide them with these necessities of life during "iddah. This is further supported by those Traditions in which it has been reported that when Sayyidnā 'Umar رضي الله عنه heard the report of Fāṭimah bint Qais who claimed that her husband was not obligated to maintain her

after divorce, he said: "We cannot abandon the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of the Prophet ﷺ, on the basis of this narration. [Muslim]

'The Book of Allah' apparently refers to this verse (6). According to Sayyidnā 'Umar رضي الله عنه, the verse includes maintenance. 'Sunnah' refers to the Tradition reported by Sayyidnā 'Umar رضي الله عنه himself and transmitted by Ṭaḥāwī, Darquṭnī and Ṭabarānī. Sayyidnā 'Umar رضي الله عنه reports that he heard the Messenger of Allah ﷺ say that women divorced by three pronouncements are also entitled to maintenance and lodging.

The details are available in Tafsīr [Maḥḥarī].

Rule [12]: Fees for Suckling the Child

فَإِنْ أَرْضَعْنَ لَكُمْ فَآتُوهُنَّ أُجُورَهُنَّ (...Then if they suckle the child for you, give them their fees...65:6). In other words, divorcees who are pregnant, their term of 'iddah ends with the birth of the child. Consequently, their maintenance is not incumbent upon the husband. However, if they are suckling the baby, it is permissible for the mother to claim a fee for suckling the baby from her former husband, and it is incumbent on him to pay it to her, if she claims it. The principle is that as long as the marriage between the parents of the baby is intact, it is the responsibility of the mothers to suckle the children as the Qur'an states وَالْوَالِدَاتُ يُرْضِعْنَ أَوْلَادَهُنَّ (And the mothers suckle their children...2:233) One cannot receive a fee for an act that is obligatory on him or her, because it amounts to *rishwah* (bribery) which in itself is unlawful to give or take. The period of 'iddah is akin to the marriage in this respect, because the husband is obligated to maintain her, and therefore she cannot claim a fee for suckling a child during this period too. But once she has delivered the baby, her term of 'iddah is over and she is absolutely released from the tie of marriage. Consequently, it is not incumbent upon the former husband to maintain her. In this instance, if she suckles the baby, the verse under comment permits giving and taking a payment for the service.

Rule [13]

وَاتِمِرُوا بَيْنَكُمْ بِمَعْرُوفٍ (...and consult each other [for determining the fee] with fairness...65:6) The word *I'timar* means 'to consult each other' and 'to accept each other's suggestion'. The verse directs the spouses to avoid any conflict in determining the fee for suckling. The divorced wife should not

demand more than the normal rate, nor should the former husband of the divorcee refuse to pay the normal fee. They are advised to settle the issue with mutual understanding and tolerance.

Rule/Injunction [14]

وَإِنْ تَعَاَسَرْتُم فَسْتَزِضْهُ لَهٗ أُخْرَىٰ (...And if you have a deadlock between you, then another woman will suckle him...65:6) In other words, if the husband and wife cannot agree on the fee of suckling with mutual consent, or the wife refuses to suckle the child even for a remuneration, then the mother cannot be forced by a court for the service of suckling. Normally, the mother has the most compassion for the child. Despite this, if she is refusing to suckle him, she probably has a genuine reason for that. If she has no genuine reason, and she is refusing merely on account of anger and displeasure, she is a sinner in the sight of Allah, but an Islamic court cannot force her to do the suckling. Likewise, if the husband, on account of abject poverty, is unable to pay the fee for suckling and a wet-nurse is willing to suckle the child without remuneration or for a lesser fee than what the divorcee mother is demanding, he cannot be forced to agree to the demand of the mother and get her to do the suckling. In fact, in either of the cases it is possible to have the child suckled by the wet-nurse. However, if the fee the mother is demanding is the same as the wet-nurse's remuneration, preference would be given to the mother rather than the wet-nurse. This is a point of consensus between all the Muslim jurists.

Ruling

If it is agreed that the wet-nurse would do the suckling, it is incumbent that the wet-nurse should do the suckling while the child is in the custody of the mother. It is not lawful to separate the mother and the baby, because the custody of the child is the right of the mother according to the law of Ḥiḍānah as stated in the authentic Traditions. It is not permissible to usurp this right from her. [Tafsīr [Maḏharī]].

Rule [15]: Quantum of Divorcee's Maintenance

لِيُنْفِقْ ذُو سَعَةٍ مِّن سَعَتِهِ ۖ وَمَن قُدِرَ عَلَيْهِ رِزْقُهُ فَلْيُنْفِقْ مِمَّا آتَاهُ اللَّهُ (A man of vast means should spend according to his vast means. And anyone whose sustenance is limited should spend from whatever Allah has given to him...65:7) In other words, in determining the quantum of the divorced wife's maintenance the financial position of the husband will be taken into

account. If the husband is wealthy, he should spend on his divorcee according to his affluence; and if he is indigent, he should spend according to his limited resources - even if the wife is wealthy. This is the ruling of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah. Other schools of jurisprudence hold differing views. [Tafsīr [Maḏharī]]

لَا يُكَلِّفُ اللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا مَا آتَاهَا ۚ سَيَجْعَلُ اللَّهُ بَعْدَ عُسْرٍ يُسْرًا (Allah makes no one liable beyond what He has given to him. Allah will soon bring ease after a difficulty....65:7) This is an elaboration of the preceding statement, in that Allah does not demand from anyone more than what he can afford. Therefore, if the husband is indigent, it is incumbent upon him to provide for her according to his level of indigence at that time. The wife, on the other hand, is advised to be content, for the time being, with the amount of sustenance her indigent husband is able to provide. She should not think that the present state of indigence will last for all times to come, because ease and difficulty are in the hands of Allah, and as such He can change indigence into affluence.

Special Note

The verse under comment bears an indication that Allah will create a condition of ease for husbands who try to provide for their wives the obligatory amount of sustenance to the best of their ability, and are not in the habit of keeping their wives under straitened circumstances. [Rūḥ-ul-Maʿānī] And Allah knows best!

Verses 8 - 12

وَكَانَ مِنْ قَرْيَةٍ عَتَتْ عَنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّهَا وَرُسُلِهِ فَحَاسِبْنَهَا حَسَابًا
شَدِيدًا وَعَذَّبْنَاهَا عَذَابًا نُكَرًا ﴿٨﴾ فَذَاقَتْ وَبَالَ أَمْرِهَا وَكَانَ عَاقِبَةُ
أَمْرِهَا خُسْرًا ﴿٩﴾ أَعَدَّ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ عَذَابًا شَدِيدًا ۖ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ يَا أُولَى
الْأَلْبَابِ ۚ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ۚ قَدْ أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ إِلَيْكُمْ ذِكْرًا ﴿١٠﴾ رَسُولًا يَتْلُوا
عَلَيْكُمْ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ مُبَيِّنَاتٍ لِيُخْرِجَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ
مِنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ ۖ وَمَنْ يُؤْمِنْ بِاللَّهِ وَيَعْمَلْ صَالِحًا يُدْخِلْهُ
جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرَى مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا ۖ قَدْ أَحْسَنَ اللَّهُ

لَهُ رِزْقًا ﴿١١﴾ اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَ سَبْعَ سَمَوَاتٍ وَمِنَ الْأَرْضِ مِثْلَهُنَّ
يَتَنَزَّلُ الْأَمْرُ بَيْنَهُنَّ لِتَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ۖ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ
قَدْ أَحَاطَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عِلْمًا ﴿١٢﴾

And how many a township rebelled against the command of their Lord, and against His messengers, so We called them to a severe account, and punished them with an evil punishment. [8] Thus they tasted the evil consequence of their acts, and the end of their conduct was loss. [9] Allah has prepared for them a severe punishment; so fear Allah O men of understanding who have believed! Allah has sent down to you a Reminder, [10] a messenger who recites to you the verses of Allah, making (the truth) clear, so that He may bring forth those who believe and do righteous deeds from the layers of darkness into the light. And whoever believes in Allah, and acts righteously, He will admit him to the gardens beneath which rivers flow, wherein such people will live forever. Allah has made for him a good provision. [11] Allah is the One who has created seven skies, and their like from earth. The Command descends among them, so that you may know that Allah is powerful over every thing, and that Allah has encompassed every thing in knowledge. [12]

Commentary

فَحَاسَبْنَهَا حِسَابًا شَدِيدًا وَعَذَّبْنَهَا عَذَابًا نُكْرًا (so We called them to a severe account, and punished them with an evil punishment...65:8). The severe account and evil punishment of nations mentioned in this verse refers to what will happen in the Hereafter. However, the past tense has been employed presumably to indicate the occurrence of these events is as certain as if it has already been materialised. [Rūḥ]. The other possibility is that the *Hisāb* or 'account' in this context does not refer to interrogation, but to the determination of punishment, (in which case it may refer to the punishment faced by the infidels right here in this world.) Another possibility is that the 'severe account' will though take place in the Hereafter, it has already been recorded and is being recorded on daily basis in the ledger of deeds and is therefore described as 'called them to a severe account'. In this interpretation, the 'punishment' refers to the past nations who were destroyed by Divine punishment in this world because

they defied Allah's and His Messengers' commandments. In this case, only the next statement **أَعَدَّ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ عَذَابًا شَدِيدًا** (Allah has prepared for them a severe punishment...10) would refer to the terrible punishment of the Hereafter.

قَدْ أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ إِلَيْكُمْ ذِكْرًا. رَسُولًا (Allah has sent down to you a Reminder, a messenger...65:10-11). The verb *arsala* 'sent' needs to be understood preceding the object *rasūlan* 'a messenger' which appears at the commencement of verse [11]. The simplest way in which these verses can be interpreted is to translate them thus: 'Allah has sent down to you a Reminder, (the Qur'an and He has also sent to you) a messenger...65:11) Other commentators have preferred other interpretations. For instance some say that the word *dhikr* ('Reminder') refers to the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself, and the word 'messenger' is an explanatory complement to the word 'dhikr', because abundance of his remembering Allah made him a personified Remembrance of Allah. [Rūḥ]¹

Where are the Seven Earths and in What Form?

اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَ سَبْعَ سَمَاوَاتٍ وَمِنَ الْأَرْضِ مِثْلَهُنَّ (Allah is the One who has created seven skies, and their like from earth...65:12). This verse indicates that there are seven earths as there are seven heavens, but the question is where these earths are and in what shape or form. Are they in the form of seven layers one above the other, or each earth is separate from the other. If they form layers one above the other, is there a distance between two earths, just as there is a distance between two heavens? Are there separate creatures living on each earth, just as separate types of angels are residing in every heaven? Is there air, wind, atmosphere and so forth on each earth? Or, are these layers of earth joined and compact with each other? The Qur'an is silent on these questions. There are Traditions reported on these questions, but the leading authorities of Traditions disagree about their authenticity. Some scholars have authenticated them and others have graded them as 'fabricated'. Rationally all findings are possible, and none of our religious or mundane needs are dependent on resolving these issues, nor will we be questioned about them in the grave

[1] This explanation is based on the premise that 'dhikr' in this verse means 'Allah's remembrance'. However, it also means 'reminder'. Taken in this sense, the word 'messenger' in the verse can be easily interpreted as an explanatory complement to the word 'dhikr', because the Holy Prophet ﷺ is a 'Reminder' to the entire mankind. Our translation in the text is based on this connotation. (Muhammad Taqi Usmani)

or at Resurrection, so that we need to do research about the seven earths, their locale or their inhabitants. The safest position is to believe that there are seven earths as there are seven skies. Allah has created them with His Supreme Creative Power. Qur'ān has mentioned this much only. If the Qur'ān did not find it necessary to give a detailed account of it, there is no need for us to think about it or research it. This was the attitude of our pious predecessors. They formulated the following policy اِهْمُوا مَا اِيْهَمَهُ اللّٰهُ "Leave unexplained what Allah has left unexplained" as long as it does not contain any injunction for us to follow, nor does it concern our religious or mundane need. This commentary has been written for the common readers. Purely academic issues have not been included here which might not be needed for them.

يَنْزِلُ الْاَمْرُ بَيْنَهُنَّ (The Command descend among them...65:12) The verse purports to say that Divine commands and decrees are revealed and work in the seven heavens and in the seven earths. The Divine commands or decrees operate in two ways: [1] *Tashrīʿī*; and [2] *Takwīnī*. *Tashrīʿī* command refers to laws Divinely prescribed for people who are legally obligated to observe them. The Divinely legislated laws are revealed through the angels to the Prophets عليهم السلام to be passed on to the humans and *jinn*s. These laws pertain to articles of faith, worship, good morals, transactions and way of living. Adherence to them attracts reward and flouting them entails punishment. *Takwīnī* laws pertain to the Divine decrees in connection with the creation of the universe or bringing it into existence from the realm of non-existence, its gradual growth and development, its phenomena of depletion and replenishment, and the phenomena of life and death. These decrees encompass the entire Divine creation. Therefore, if it be proved that between two earths there is atmosphere and distance, and that some kind of creatures inhabits it, even if that kind of creature is not legally bound by the Sharīʿah laws, the description يَنْزِلُ الْاَمْرُ 'The Command descend among them...65:12) will still apply, because Allah's *Takwīnī* decrees encompass them as well. And Allah, the Pure and Exalted, knows best!

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah Aṭ-Ṭalāq
Ends here

Sūrah At-Tahrim (The Prohibiting)

This Sūrah is Madanī, and it has 12 verses and 2 sections

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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

Verses 1 - 5

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ لِمَ تُحَرِّمُ مَا أَحَلَّ اللَّهُ لَكَ ۖ تَبْتَغِي مَرْضَاتَ أَزْوَاجِكَ ۗ
وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿١﴾ قَدْ فَرَضَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ تَحِلَّةَ أَيْمَانِكُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ
مَوْلَاكُمْ ۗ وَهُوَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿٢﴾ وَإِذْ أَسَرَّ النَّبِيُّ إِلَىٰ بَعْضِ
أَزْوَاجِهِ حَدِيثًا ۚ فَلَمَّا نَبَّأَتْ بِهِ وَأَظْهَرَهُ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ عَرَفَ بَعْضُهُ
وَأَعْرَضَ عَنْ بَعْضٍ ۚ فَلَمَّا نَبَّأَهَا بِهِ قَالَتْ مَنْ أَنْبَاكَ هَذَا ۖ قَالَ نَبَّأَنِي
الْعَلِيمُ الْخَبِيرُ ﴿٣﴾ إِنْ تَتُوبَا إِلَى اللَّهِ فَقَدْ صَغَتْ قُلُوبُكُمَا ۚ وَإِنْ
تَظْهَرَا عَلَيْهِ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ مَوْلَاهُ وَجِبْرِيلُ وَصَالِحُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ
وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ ظَهِيرٌ ﴿٤﴾ عَسَىٰ رَبُّهُ إِنْ طَلَّقَنَّ أَنْ يُبْدِلَهُ
أَزْوَاجًا خَيْرًا مِّنْكَنَّ مُسْلِمَتٍ مُّؤْمِنَةٍ قَتَلَتْ تُغْنِي عَنْكِ سِتْرُكَ
تُحِبُّ وَأَبْكَارًا ﴿٥﴾

O Holy Prophet, why do you ban (on your self) something that Allah has made lawful for you, seeking the pleasure of your wives? And Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very Merciful. [1] Allah has prescribed (the way of) absolution from your oaths. And Allah is your protector, and He is the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.

[2] And (remember) when the Holy Prophet told one of his wives something in secret. So, when she disclosed it (to another wife), and Allah made it known to him, he told (the disclosing wife) part of it, and bypassed another part. So when he informed her about it, she said, "Who told you about this?" He said, "It is told to me by the All-Knowing, the All-Aware. [3]

(O two wives of the Holy Prophet,) If both of you repent to Allah, then (your conduct calls for it, because) your hearts have diverted. And if you back each other against him (the Holy Prophet), then Allah is his supporter, and Jibrīl and righteous believers and, after all that, angels are his helpers. [4] It is hoped that, if he divorces you, Allah will give him in your place wives better than you, submissive to Allah, believing, devout, penitent, steadfast in worship, fasting, previously married and virgins. [5]

Commentary

Cause of Revelation

It is recorded in Ṣaḥīḥ of Bukhārī and in other collection of Aḥādīth, on the authority of Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah رضي الله عنها, that it was a daily practice of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ to visit each of his wives after ‘aṣr prayer for a short time inquiring about their welfare. Once he visited Sayyidah Zainab رضي الله عنها and spent more time with her than normal and had some honey offered by her. Sayyidah ‘Ā’ishah رضي الله عنها says: "I developed some envy and in consultation with Ḥafṣah رضي الله عنها decided that when the Messenger of Allah ﷺ would visit any one of us, she should say to him 'you have had *Maghāfir*', (a herb that resembled gum with a slightly unpleasant smell.)"¹ They executed their plan. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "I have not had any *Maghāfir*. I only had some honey." The Holy wife said: "It is possible that the honeybee might have sat on the *Maghāfir* shrub and drank its nectar. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ, because of his natural dislike for unpleasant odour, swore and promised not to take honey any more. However, he did not want the feelings of Sayyidah Zainab رضي الله عنها to be hurt, and therefore he said to his wife that the incident should be kept secret and should not be recounted to anyone else. But she told about it to another wife.

[1] It should be noted here that these words were spoken by them in an interrogative accent, and therefore it was not a false statement. (Muhammad Taqi Usmani).

Some reports say that it was at the house of Sayyidah Ḥafṣah رضي الله عنها that he was served with honey, and that the wives who planned were Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah, Saudah and Ṣafiyyah رضي الله عنهن. Other reports recount the incident in other ways. It is possible that many incidents of similar nature might have taken place and these verses were revealed after them. [Bayān-ul-Qur'ān].

In brief, these verses tell us that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ banned a lawful thing [honey] on himself by swearing an oath. If such an act is done for a genuine need or expedience, [*maṣlahah*], it is permissible; it is not a sin. But the incident does not show that there was no such need for him to have the trouble of baning a lawful thing on himself. He had done this for the pleasure of his holy wives. In such circumstances, it was not necessary for him to have pleased them. Therefore, the verse, compassionately addresses the Holy Prophet ﷺ **يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ لِمَ تُحَرِّمُ مَا أَحَلَّ اللَّهُ لَكَ ۚ تَبْتَغِي مَرْضَاتَ أَزْوَاجِكَ ۖ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ** (O Prophet, why do you ban (on your self) something that Allah has made lawful for you, seeking the pleasure of your wives? And Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very Merciful...66:1) According to the principles of general stylistics, the Qur'ān does not address the Holy Prophet ﷺ by his name but by his Prophetic title thus: 'O Prophet' which is his special honour. Although this is a loving question posed by way of compassion, it could have created the misunderstanding that he has committed a major error and he is being questioned about it. The concluding phrase allays this suspicion: **وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ** meaning that even if it would have been a sin (for the sake of argument), then 'Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very Merciful.'

Ruling

There are three ways in which one can prohibit a 'lawful thing' for himself, the details of which were given under verse [87] of Sūrah Al-Mā'idah in Ma'āriful Qur'ān Vol.3/pp239-241. **يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَحَرِّمُوا طَيِّبَاتِ مَا أَحَلَّ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ** 'O those who believe, do not make unlawful good things that Allah has made lawful for you__[5:87] The three ways may be summarised here thus: [1] If someone holds a lawful thing as unlawful as part of his religious belief, it is *kufr* and an enormous sin. [2] If he does not believe it as unlawful in religion, but bans something on himself by swearing an oath without any need to do so, it is a sinful act, and it is necessary for him to break the oath and expiate, which will be discussed

later. However, If this is done for some need or advantage, it is permissible but undesirable. [3] If someone neither believes a lawful thing to be unlawful, nor swears an oath to ban it on himself, but makes a resolve in his/her mind to abandon the lawful thing for ever. If this resolution for permanent abandonment is with the intention of reward, it would be an innovation (*bid'ah*) in the established religion and monasticism which is a reproachable sin. If such a restriction is not with the intention of reward, but rather for some other reason, such as for treatment of a physical ailment or spiritual malady, it is absolutely permissible. Reports about some noble Ṣūfīs who abandoned some lawful things fall under this last category.

In this incident, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ swore an oath to abstain from honey. After the revelation of the verse, he broke the oath and expiated for it. As reported in Ad-Durr-ul-Manthūr, he emancipated a slave in payment of his expiation. [Bayān-ul-Qur'ān]

قَدْ فَرَضَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ تَحِلَّةَ أَيْمَانِكُمْ (Allah has prescribed [the way of] absolution from your oaths....66:2). This verse reminds that where it is necessary or better to break the oath, Allah has prescribed a way to absolve oneself from the liability of the oath by expiation, the details of which are given in other verses.

وَإِذْ أَسَرَّ النَّبِيُّ إِلَى بَعْضِ أَزْوَاجِهِ حَدِيثًا (And [remember] when the Prophet told one of his wives something in secret...66:3). The Holy Prophet ﷺ confided a certain secret in one of his wives. According to most versions of the authentic report, the 'secret' in this verse refers to the ban the Holy Prophet ﷺ imposed on himself about honey, but at the same time he did not want Sayyidah Zainab's رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا feelings to be hurt and therefore he directed the wife to keep it secret from others, but the disclosing wife divulged the secret to another wife, as follows in the next verse. Although there are some other reports that explain the 'secret' in some other way, what has been mentioned above is in accordance with the most authentic narrations.

فَلَمَّا نَبَّأَتْ بِهِ وَأَظْهَرَهُ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ عَرَفَ بَعْضُهُ وَأَعْرَضَ عَنْ بَعْضٍ (So, when she disclosed it [to another wife], and Allah made it known to him, he told [the disclosing wife] part of it, and bypassed another part...66:3). In other words, when the disclosing wife divulged the secret to another wife, and Allah disclosed

this fact to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, he complained to the disclosing wife about her disclosure, but he did not convey to her the whole information. Instead, he communicated part of it to her and withheld part of it. This was because of the Holy Prophet's ﷺ magnanimity and high morals. If he had disclosed the entire information he had received from Allah, it would have embarrassed her most profoundly. Who was the disclosing wife and who was the one to whom the secret was disclosed? The Qur'ān is silent on their identity and does not name them. According to the best received narratives, it would appear that it was Sayyidah Ḥafṣah رضي الله عنها whom the Holy Prophet ﷺ directed to keep the matter secret, and she divulged it to Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضي الله عنها, as recorded in Bukhārī on the authority of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه which will be narrated later.

Some narratives report that when Sayyidah Ḥafṣah رضي الله عنها divulged the secret, the Holy Prophet ﷺ decided to divorce her, but Allah sent Jibrā'il عليه السلام to him, preventing him from divorcing her on the ground that she offered many prayers and kept fasts abundantly. Her name appears in the list of his wives in Paradise. [Maḥzarī]

إِنْ تَتُوبَا إِلَى اللَّهِ فَقَدْ صَغَتْ قُلُوبُكُمَا [O two wives of the Prophet,] If both of you repent to Allah, then [your conduct calls for it, because] your hearts have diverted....66:4). The reference here is made to two of his blessed wives who, as mentioned above in brief, contrived to draw the Holy Prophet ﷺ into swearing an oath and making the aforementioned promise to abstain from honey. Who are they? Bukhārī and other collections of Traditions record a lengthy Tradition about this on the authority of Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه who narrates that he was always on the look-out to enquire of Sayyidnā 'Umar رضي الله عنه as to who were the two wives to whom reference had been made in the above verse. So, when Sayyidnā 'Umar رضي الله عنه was on his way to pilgrimage, the former joined him. One day, in the course of the journey, the latter went to answer the call of nature. When he returned, the former had arranged water for the latter's ablution. He poured water on his hands. Whilst pouring the water for ablution, he enquired as to who were the two wives to whom reference is made in the dual verb إِنْ تَتُوبَا (If both of you repent) Sayyidnā 'Umar رضي الله عنه asked him in surprise: 'Do you not know who they were?' Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه said: 'No!' Sayyidnā 'Umar رضي الله عنه said they were Ḥafṣah and 'Ā'ishah رضي الله عنها, and then proceeded to recount a lengthy story related to this incident which also contained some incidents

that took place earlier. The details of the incident are available in Tafsīr Maḥzarī. This verse addresses the two blessed wives of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and requires them to turn to Allah as their hearts have deviated, albeit what they did, stem from their love for the Holy Prophet ﷺ, but in the process they, in consultation with one another, adopted a way that hurt the Holy Prophet ﷺ. This is a sin for which repentance was necessary.

وَإِنْ تَظْهَرَا عَلَيْهِ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ مَوْلَاهُ وَجِبْرِيلُ (And if you back each other against him [the Prophet], then Allah is his supporter, and Jibrīl and righteous believers and, after all that, angels are his helpers....66:4). The current verse warns the wives that if they do not repent and please the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, they will not cause any loss to him, because Allah is his Protector, and so are Jibril, every right-acting believer and, furthermore, the other angels too will come to his support, and it will be the wives themselves who will suffer loss.

عَسَىٰ رُءُؤُهُ إِنْ طَلَّقَكُنَّ أَنْ يُبَدِّلَهُ أَزْوَاجًا خَيْرًا مِنْكُنَّ (It is hoped that, if he divorces you, Allah will give him in your place wives better than you, submissive to Allah, believing, devout, penitent, steadfast in worship, fasting, previously married and virgins....66:5). The verse refutes the possible thought of the wives that if they are divorced, the Holy Prophet ﷺ will probably not get women better than themselves. The verse under comment responds to their assessment of the situation. It purports to say that nothing is beyond Allah's power. If he divorces them, Allah will give him in exchange better wives than he has at the moment. This does not necessarily imply that there were better wives than the present holy wives at that time. Possibly such women were not available at that point of time, but, should the need have arisen, He could make other women better than they are. These verses specifically dealt with the holy wives of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, their deeds, their moral reform, their discipline and training. Similar injunctions are given in the verses that follow for the general body of Muslims and believers.

Verses 6 - 7

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا قُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَأَهْلِيكُمْ نَارًا وَقُودُهَا النَّاسُ
وَالْحِجَارَةُ عَلَيْهَا مَلَائِكَةٌ غِلَاظٌ شِدَادٌ لَا يَعْصُونَ اللَّهَ مَا أَمَرَهُمْ

وَيَفْعَلُونَ مَا يُؤْمَرُونَ ﴿٦﴾ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَا تَعْتَذِرُوا الْيَوْمَ
إِنَّمَا تُجْزَوْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٧﴾

O those who believe, save yourselves and your families from a fire, the fuel of which is human beings and stones, appointed on which are angels, stern and severe, who do not disobey Allah in what He orders them, and do whatever they are ordered to do. [6] O those who disbelieve, do not make excuses today. You will only be recompensed for what you have been doing. [7]

Commentary

قُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَأَهْلِيكُمْ (O those who believe, save yourselves and your families from a fire...66:6). This verse addresses the general body of Muslims and enjoins upon them to safeguard themselves and their families from a fire of Hell whose fuel is people and stones. Then the verse goes on to describe the intensity and horror of the Hell-Fire. Towards the end of it the angels in charge of it, whose name is Zabaniah, are described. They are harsh and terrible from whom no inmate of Hell will be able to rescue himself by force, power, strength, flattery or bribery.

The word أَهْلِيكُمْ (your families) comprehends wife, children and slaves [males as well as females]. It is not inconceivable to include full-time servants in the imperative like slaves. When this verse was revealed, Sayyidnā 'Umar رضي الله عنه inquired: "O Messenger of Allah, we understand how to save ourselves from Hell, that is, we guard ourselves against sins and carry out the Divine injunctions, but how do we safeguard our families from Hell?" The Messenger of Allah ﷺ replied: "Instruct them to refrain from deeds that Allah has prohibited, and ask them to carry out deeds that Allah has enjoined. This will rescue them from the Hell-Fire."

[Rūḥ-ul-Ma'ānī]

Education and Training of Wife and Children:

Every Muslim's Responsibility

The jurists have pointed out that, according to the verse under comment, it is the responsibility of every Muslim to educate the wife and children in matters of Shar'ī obligations, and in matters of *ḥalāl* and *ḥarām* and train them diligently to act upon them. A *ḥadīth* says, "May

Allah shower His mercy upon a person who says: 'O my wife and children, (be mindful of) your prayers, your fasting, your alms, your indigent, your orphan, your neighbour! It is hopeful that Allah will gather all these with him in Paradise' 'Your prayers, your fasting' and so on' implies 'Take care of them. Do not ignore them.' The phrase **مَسْكِينِكُمْ يَتِيمِكُمْ** 'Your indigent, your orphan and so on' implies 'Fulfil their rights towards them willingly and readily.' Righteous elders have said that the person deepest in punishment on the Day of Judgement will be the one whose family is ignorant and unaware of the religion. [Rūḥ]

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَا تَعْتَذِرُوا الْيَوْمَ إِنَّمَا تُجْزَوْنَ مَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ (O those who disbelieve, do not make excuses today. You will only be recompensed for what you have been doing....66:7) After advising the general body of believers, the current verse turns attention to the non-believers who are asked not to try to make excuses, because they will not be accepted. They will be told that they are merely being repaid for what they did.

Verses 8 - 12

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا تَوْبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ تَوْبَةً نَّصُوحًا ۖ عَسَىٰ رَبُّكُمْ أَن يُكَفِّرَ عَنْكُم سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ وَيُدْخِلَكُم جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ ۚ
يَوْمَ لَا يُخْزِي اللَّهُ النَّبِيَّ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ ۖ نُورُهُمْ يَسْعَىٰ بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَبِأَيْمَانِهِمْ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا أَتِمِّمْ لَنَا نُورَنَا وَاغْفِرْ لَنَا ۖ إِنَّكَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿٨﴾ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ جَاهِدِ الْكُفَّارَ وَالْمُنَافِقِينَ وَاغْلُظْ عَلَيْهِمْ ۚ وَمَا وَاهُمْ جَهَنَّمَ ۚ وَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيرُ ﴿٩﴾ ضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا امْرَأَتَ نُوحٍ وَامْرَأَتَ لُوطَ ۚ كَانَتَا تَحْتَ عَبْدَيْنِ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا صَالِحِينَ فَخَانَتُهُمَا فَلَمْ يُغْنِيا عَنْهُمَا مِنَ اللَّهِ شَيْئًا وَقِيلَ ادْخُلَا النَّارَ مَعَ الدَّٰخِلِينَ ﴿١٠﴾ وَضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا امْرَأَتَ فِرْعَوْنَ إِذْ قَالَتْ رَبِّ ابْنِ لِي عِنْدَكَ بَيْتًا فِي الْجَنَّةِ وَنَجِّنِي مِنَ فِرْعَوْنَ وَعَمَلِهِ وَنَجِّنِي مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١١﴾ وَمَرْيَمَ ابْنَتَ

عَمْرَانَ الَّتِي أَحْصَنَتْ فَرْجَهَا فَنَفَخْنَا فِيهِ مِنْ رُوحِنَا وَصَدَّقَتْ
بِكَلِمَةٍ رَبِّهَا وَكُتِبَ وَكَانَتْ مِنَ الْقَتِيلِينَ ﴿١٢﴾

O those who believe, turn to Allah with a faithful repentance. It is hoped from your Lord that he will write off your faults, and will admit you to the gardens beneath which rivers flow, on the Day when Allah will not disgrace the Prophet and those who believed with him. Their light will run before them and to their right hands. They will say, "Our Lord, perfect for us our light, and forgive us. Indeed you are powerful over every thing." [8] O Prophet, carry out *jihād* (struggle) against the disbelievers and the hypocrites, and be harsh with them. And their final abode is *Jahannam* (Hell), and it is an evil end. [9]

Allah has cited for the disbelievers the example of the wife of Nūḥ and the wife of Lūṭ. Both were married with two of Our righteous slaves, but betrayed them. So they could not avail them at all, and it was said, "Enter the Fire along with those who enter." [10] And Allah has cited for the believers the example of the wife of Fir'aun (the Pharaoh), when she said, "My Lord, build for me, near You, a house in the Paradise, and deliver me from Fir'aun and his deeds, and deliver me from the unjust people.", [11] and (also the example of) Maryam, daughter of 'Imrān who guarded her chastity, so We breathed into her Our spirit, and she testified to the truth of the words of her Lord and His books, and she was one of the devout. [12]

Commentary

تُوبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ تَوْبَةً نَصُوحًا (...turn to Allah with a faithful repentance...66:8). The word *taubah*, literally, means 'to turn' or 'to return', in the sense of turning or withdrawing from sins. In the terminology of the Qur'ān and *Sunnah*, it signifies 'to regret committing sins in the past and to firmly resolve abstaining from them in future'. *Taubah* is qualified in the verse by the word *نصوح* *naṣūḥ*. If it is taken as the infinitive of *naṣaḥa* / *naṣīḥah*, it signifies 'to make pure and sincere'; and if it be derived from *naṣāḥah*, it signifies 'to repair clothes by sewing'. In terms of the first meaning, the expression *naṣūḥ* signifies sincere/faithful [repentance], free from pretence and hypocrisy. In this interpretation, a sinner is

required to regret the sins he has committed and give them up purely for the pleasure of Allah and for fear of Divine chastisement. In terms of the second meaning, *nāṣūḥ* would signify that 'the sinner is required to repair the torn clothes of righteous deeds'. Sayyidnā Ḥasan Baṣrī ؓ says that *taubatan nāṣūḥā* signifies that a person should regret his past evil actions, and make a firm resolve never to repeat them. *Kalbī* says the phrase *taubatan nāṣūḥā* signifies that a person should pray for pardon with his tongue, regret in his heart, and should prevent the limbs of his body from committing sins in the future.

Sayyidnā 'Alī ؓ was asked as to what is '*taubah*' and he replied that it consists of six elements: [1] to regret one's past evil deeds; [2] to carry out Divine duties that were missed; [3] to restore the rights that were usurped; [4] to ask forgiveness of a person who has been wronged by him physically or verbally; [5] to make a firm resolve of avoiding the sin in future; and [6] to consume one's self in obedience of Allah as one thus far consumed one's self in His disobedience. [Maḏharī]. In fact, all of the conditions of '*taubah*' put forward by Sayyidnā 'Alī ؓ are recognized by all the scholars. However, some have described them concisely and others in details.

عَسَىٰ رَبُّكُمْ أَن يُكَفِّرَ عَنْكُمْ (It is hoped from your Lord that he will write off your faults...66:8). The verb '*asā*' means 'it is hoped'. In this context, it purports to mean 'promise', but the expression of 'hope' is used to indicate that *taubah* or any other righteous deeds are not the just and equal price for the Paradise or the divine forgiveness. In fact, one compensation for man's good deeds has already been given to him in this world in the form of worldly blessings. Therefore, as regards the law of equality, it is not necessary that he is further compensated by the Jannah. It entirely depends on Divine grace and favour as is mentioned in a Ḥadīth which says: 'Your actions alone cannot salvage you.' The Companions inquired: 'O Messenger of Allah, not even you?' He replied: 'No, not even me unless the Divine grace and mercy covers me.' [Bukhārī and Muslim as quoted by Maḏharī]

ضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا امْرَأَتِ نُوحٍ (Allah has cited for the disbelievers the example of the wife of Nūḥ and the wife of Lūṭ...66:10). Towards the end of this Sūrah, Allah has set forth examples of four women. The first example comprises two women who were the wives of two Holy Prophets

عليهما السلام. They, in matters of religion, opposed their husbands and secretly sided with the unbelievers and pagans. As a result, they ended up in the abyss of Hell, and their marital relation with the prophets could not save them from the punishment. The name of the wife of Nūḥ عليه السلام is said to be Wāghilah, while the name of the wife of Lūṭ عليه السلام is said to be Walihah. [Qurtubī] Some scholars have attributed other names to them.

The third woman is the one who was the wife of the Pharaoh, the worst disbeliever and claimant of godhead, but she believed in Mūsā عليه السلام. She was given such a high rank by Allah that she was shown her place in the Paradise, right here in this world, and the infidelity of her husband did not prove to be an impediment in her achieving this high rank.

The fourth woman is Maryam عليها السلام. She was not wife of anyone, but her faith and virtuous deeds earned for her such a high degree that she was invested with perfections of the prophets, even though she was not a prophet according to the majority of scholars. Verse [11] serves as a warning to the unbelievers who think that they will attain salvation merely by their companionship with believers, the good company will not rescue them in the Hereafter if they persist in their disbelief. So likewise, a disbeliever's disbelief will not harm a believing relative. Therefore, the *auliyas*' and *ambiyas*' wives should not carelessly take for granted that they will attain salvation on account of their husbands nor should the wife of a disbeliever think that his disbelief will harm her. Every person, man or woman, should be concerned about his/her own faith and action.

(And Allah has cited for the believers the example of the wife of Fir'aun (the Pharaoh), when she said, "My Lord, build for me, near You, a house in the Paradise...66:11) This is the example of the wife of Fir'aun (the Pharaoh) whose name was 'Āsiyah bint Muzāḥim. When Mūsā عليه السلام accomplished his task in defeating the sorcerers who embraced Mosaic faith, she too embraced the Mosaic faith and became a Muslim. Fir'aun ordered that she should be tortured severely and tormented harshly. According to some reports, her hands and feet were pegged with nails to the ground and a huge rock was placed on her chest, so that she might not be able to move. In this state she supplicated to Allah as mentioned in this verse. According to other reports, it was suggested that a huge rock be dropped on her. They had hardly dropped the rock and she prayed to

Allah as quoted in the verse. Allah then showed Sayyidah 'Āsiyah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا her house in Paradise. and while looking at this vision her soul departed. When the rock fell on her body, it was lifeless. [Maḏharī].

وَصَدَّقَتْ بِكَلِمَاتِ رَبِّهَا وَكُتِبَ (and she testified to the truth of the words of her Lord and His books, and she was one of the devout....66:12) The phrase 'Words of her Lord' refers to scriptures that were revealed to the Holy Prophets. The word *kutub* [Books] refers to the well-known celestial books - *Injīl*, *Zabūr* and *Torah*. The concluding statement وَكَانَتْ مِنَ الْقَانِتِينَ (and she was one of the devout....66:12) describes the quality of Sayyidah Maryam عليها السلام. The word *qānitīn* is the plural of *qānit* and signifies 'devout and obedient'. Sayyidnā Abū Mūsā رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ narrates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Whilst many men have attained spiritual perfection, among women only Sayyidah 'Āsiyah, wife of Fir'aun, and Sayyidah Maryam, daughter of 'Imrān عليها السلام, achieved this perfection." [Bukhārī and Muslim as quoted by Maḏharī]. Apparently, 'perfection' in this context refers to 'characteristics of Prophethood'. Despite being a woman, she achieved them. [Maḏharī]. And Allah knows best!

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah At-Taḥrīm
Ends here

Sūrah Al-Mulk

(The Kingdom)

This Sūrah is Makki, and it has 30 verses and 2 sections

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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

Verses 1 - 30

تَبَرَكَ الَّذِي بِيَدِهِ الْمُلْكُ ۚ وَهُوَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿١﴾ ۚ الَّذِي
 خَلَقَ الْمَوْتَ وَالْحَيَاةَ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا ۗ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ
 الْغَفُورُ ﴿٢﴾ ۚ الَّذِي خَلَقَ سَبْعَ سَمَاوَاتٍ طِبَاقًا ۚ مَا تَرَىٰ فِي خَلْقِ
 الرَّحْمَنِ مِنْ تَفَوُّتٍ ۖ فَارْجِعِ الْبَصَرَ ۖ هَلْ تَرَىٰ مِنْ فُطُورٍ ﴿٣﴾ ۚ ثُمَّ
 ارْجِعِ الْبَصَرَ كَرَّتَيْنِ يَنْقَلِبْ إِلَيْكَ الْبَصَرُ خَاسِئًا وَهُوَ حَسِيرٌ ﴿٤﴾ ۚ
 وَلَقَدْ زَيَّنَّا السَّمَاءَ الدُّنْيَا بِمَصَابِيحَ وَجَعَلْنَاهَا رُجُومًا لِلشَّيَاطِينِ
 وَأَعْتَدْنَا لَهُمْ عَذَابَ السَّعِيرِ ﴿٥﴾ ۚ وَلِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِرَبِّهِمْ عَذَابُ
 جَهَنَّمَ ۖ وَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيرُ ﴿٦﴾ ۚ إِذَا أُلْقُوا فِيهَا سَمِعُوا لَهَا شَهِيقًا وَهِيَ
 تَفُورُ ﴿٧﴾ ۚ تَكَادُ تَمَيِّزُ مِنَ الْغَيْظِ ۖ كُلَّمَا أُلْقِيَ فِيهَا فَوْجٌ سَأَلَهُمْ
 خَزَنَتُهَا أَلَمْ يَأْتِكُمْ نَذِيرٌ ﴿٨﴾ ۚ قَالُوا بَلَىٰ ۖ قَدْ جَاءَنَا نَذِيرٌ ۖ فَكَذَّبْنَا
 وَقُلْنَا مَا نَزَّلَ اللَّهُ مِنْ شَيْءٍ ۖ إِنَّا أَنْتُمْ إِلَّا فِي ضَلَالٍ كَبِيرٍ ﴿٩﴾ ۚ وَقَالُوا
 لَوْ كُنَّا نَسْمَعُ أَوْ نَعْقِلُ مَا كُنَّا فِي أَصْحَابِ السَّعِيرِ ﴿١٠﴾ ۚ فَاعْتَرَفُوا
 بِذُنُوبِهِمْ ۖ فَنُفِخَ فِي السُّحُفِ لِأَصْحَابِ السَّعِيرِ ﴿١١﴾ ۚ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ

بِالْعَيْبِ لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةٌ وَأَجْرٌ كَبِيرٌ ﴿١٢﴾ وَأَسِرُوا قَوْلَكُمْ أَوِ اجْهَرُوا بِهِ ۖ
 إِنَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ ﴿١٣﴾ أَلَا يَعْلَمُ مَنْ خَلَقَ ۖ وَهُوَ اللَّطِيفُ
 الْخَبِيرُ ﴿١٤﴾ هُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْأَرْضَ ذَلُولًا فَامْشُوا فِي
 مَنَاكِبِهَا وَكُلُوا مِنْ رِزْقِهِ ۚ وَالْيَهُ النُّشُورُ ﴿١٥﴾ ءَأَمِنْتُمْ مَنْ فِي
 السَّمَاءِ أَنْ يَخْسِفَ بِكُمُ الْأَرْضَ فَإِذَا هِيَ تَمُورُ ﴿١٦﴾ أَمْ أَمِنْتُمْ مَنْ
 فِي السَّمَاءِ أَنْ يُرْسِلَ عَلَيْكُمْ حَاصِبًا ۖ فَسَتَعْلَمُونَ كَيْفَ نَذِيرِ
 ﴿١٧﴾ وَلَقَدْ كَذَّبَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ فَكَيْفَ كَانَ نَكِيرِ ﴿١٨﴾ أَوَلَمْ
 يَرَوْا إِلَى الطَّيْرِ فَوْقَهُمْ صَفْتٍ وَيَقْبِضْنَ ۚ مَا يَمْسِكُهُنَّ إِلَّا الرَّحْمَنُ ۚ
 إِنَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ بَصِيرٌ ﴿١٩﴾ أَمِنْ هَذَا الَّذِي هُوَ جُنْدٌ لَكُمْ يَنْصَرُّكُمْ
 مِنْ دُونِ الرَّحْمَنِ ۚ إِنَّ الْكَافِرُونَ إِلَّا فِي غُرُورٍ ﴿٢٠﴾ أَمِنْ هَذَا الَّذِي
 يَرْزُقُكُمْ إِنْ أَمْسَكَ رِزْقَهُ بَلْ لَجُّوا فِي عُتُوٍّ وَنُفُورٍ ﴿٢١﴾ أَفَمَنْ
 يَمْشِي مُكِبًّا عَلَى وَجْهِهِ أَهْدَىٰ أَمَّنْ يَمْشِي سَوِيًّا عَلَىٰ صِرَاطٍ
 مُسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿٢٢﴾ قُلْ هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْشَأَكُمْ وَجَعَلَ لَكُمُ السَّمْعَ وَالْأَبْصَارَ
 وَالْأَفْئِدَةَ ۚ قَلِيلًا مَّا تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾ قُلْ هُوَ الَّذِي ذَرَأَكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ
 وَإِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُونَ ﴿٢٤﴾ وَيَقُولُونَ مَتَىٰ هَذَا الْوَعْدُ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ
 ﴿٢٥﴾ قُلْ إِنَّمَا الْعِلْمُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ ۖ وَإِنَّمَا أَنَا نَذِيرٌ مُبِينٌ ﴿٢٦﴾ فَلَمَّا رَأَوْهُ
 زُلْفَةً سَيِّئَتْ وُجُوهُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَقِيلَ هَذَا الَّذِي كُنْتُمْ بِهِ تَدَّعُونَ
 ﴿٢٧﴾ قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ أَهْلَكْنِي اللَّهُ وَمَنْ مَعِيَ أَوْ رَحِمَنَا ۖ فَمَنْ يُجِيرُ
 الْكَافِرِينَ مِنْ عَذَابِ إِلِيمٍ ﴿٢٨﴾ قُلْ هُوَ الرَّحْمَنُ أَمَّنَّا بِهِ وَعَلَيْهِ
 تَوَكَّلْنَا ۖ فَسَتَعْلَمُونَ مَنْ هُوَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُبِينٍ ﴿٢٩﴾ قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ
 أَصْبَحَ مَاؤُكُمْ غَوْرًا ۖ فَمَنْ يَأْتِيكُمْ بِمَاءٍ مَعِينٍ ﴿٣٠﴾

the whole universe), and He is powerful over every thing, [1] the One who created death and life, so that He may test you as to which of you is better in deeds. And He is the All-Mighty, the Most-Forgiving, [2] Who has created seven skies, one over the other. You will see nothing out of proportion in the creation of the Raḥmān (the All-Merciful). So, cast your eye again. Do you see any rifts? [3] Then cast your eye again and again, and the eye will come back to you abased, in a state of weariness. [4] And We have decorated the nearest sky with lamps, and have made them devices to stone the devils, and We have prepared for them the punishment of Hell. [5] And for those who disbelieve, there is the punishment of *Jahannam*, and it is an evil end. [6] When they will be thrown in it, they will hear a terrible sound from it, and it will be boiling, [7] seeming as if it will burst out of fury. Whenever a group is thrown into it, its keepers will say to them, "Had no warner come to you?" [8] They said, "Yes, a warner had come to us, but We had rejected, and said, 'Allah has not revealed any thing. You are only in great error'." [9] And they will say, "Had we been listening or understanding, we would not have been among the people of Hell." [10] Thus they will confess their sin. So, be the people of Hell away (from Allah's mercy). [11] Surely, for those who have awe of their Lord without seeing (Him), there is forgiveness and a big reward. [12] And whether you keep your talk secret or make it aloud, He knows well what lies in the hearts. [13] Is it (imaginable) that He who has created (them) will not have (such a) knowledge, while He is the Knower of the finest things, the All-Aware? [14] He is the One who has made the earth submissive for you, so walk on its shoulders, and eat out of His provision, and to Him will be the Resurrection. [15] Have you become fearless of Him who is in the sky if He makes you sink into the earth, and it starts trembling at once? [16] Or, have you become fearless of Him who is in the sky if He looses a violent wind with stones against you? So, you will soon come to know how was My warning! [17] And of course, those before them (also) rejected (the truth). So, how was My censure? [18]

Have they not looked to the birds above them spreading their wings, and (at times) they fold (them) in? No one holds them up except the Raḥmān (the All-Merciful). Surely He is watchful of every thing. [19] Now, who is

there to become a force for you to help you, except the Raḥmān? The disbelievers are in nothing but delusion. [20] Or, who is there to give you sustenance, if He withholds His sustenance? Still, they persist in rebellion and aversion. [21] Then, tell me whether the one who walks falling down (frequently) on his face is better guided or the one who walks on a straight path? [22]

Say, "He is the One who has originated you, and made for you the ears and the eyes and the hearts. How little you pay gratitude" [23] Say, "He is the One who has scattered you on the earth, and to Him you will be assembled." [24] And they say, "When will this promise (of the Day of Judgment) be fulfilled, if you are true?" [25] Say, "The knowledge (of that day) is only with Allah, and I am only a plain warner. [26] Then, once they will see it approaching, the faces of the disbelievers will be turned awkward, and it will be said, "This is what you were calling for!" [27] Say, "Tell me, if Allah destroys me and those who are with me (as you wish), or has mercy on us (as we wish), who can (in either case) save the disbelievers from a painful punishment?" [28] Say, "He is the Raḥmān; we have believed in Him, and in Him we placed our trust. So, you will soon come to know who is in an open error." [29] Say, "Tell me if your water were to vanish into the earth, who will bring you a flowing (stream) water? [30]

Commentary

The Virtues of Sūrah Al-Mulk

Prophetic Tradition has named this Sūrah as Wāqiyah (protector) and *Munjiyah* (saviour) as well. In a Tradition, the Holy Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said:

هِيَ الْمَانِعَةُ الْمُنْجِيَةُ تَنْجِيهِ مَنْ عَذَابِ الْقَبْرِ

"It [the Sūrah] is the protector and saviour which will rescue and redeem him who recites it from the torment of the grave." [Transmitted by Tirmidhī who has graded it as 'ḥasan, gharīb' as quoted by Qurṭubī]

Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ reports that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

"It is my heart's desire that Sūrah Al-Mulk be in every believer's heart." [[Tha'labī]

Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ؓ narrates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ

has said:

"Verily, there is a Surah in the Book of Allah (Qur'an) containing thirty verses that will intercede on behalf of him who recites it until he is rescued from Hell and admitted to Paradise; and it is Sūrah Tabārak." [Qurṭubī cites it from Tirmidhī].

تَبَرَّكَ الَّذِي بِيَدِهِ الْمُلْكُ وَهُوَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ (Glorious is the One in whose hand is the Kingdom [of the whole universe], and He is powerful over every thing...67:1). The word *Tabāraka* is derived from *barakah*, which literally means 'to grow' or 'increase'. When it is related to Allah, it signifies 'to be highest in all respects' and it conveys a meaning similar to *Allahu Akbar* 'Allah is the Highest'.

بِيَدِهِ الْمُلْكُ (in Whose hand is the Kingdom): The word *Yad* (hand) is attributed to Allah at many places in the Qur'ān, whereas He is beyond having a body, limbs or organs. As a result, the word must, of necessity, be taken as one of the *mutashābihāt*. We need to believe in its reality, but it is not possible for anyone to grasp its exact nature. It is improper to pursue this subject. The word *Mulk* (Kingdom) refers to the Kingdom of the whole universe, of the heavens and the earth and of the mortal world as well as of the Hereafter.


The verse under comment refers to four of the Divine attributes. Firstly, His existence; secondly, His comprehending all the attributes of perfection and being most Exalted; thirdly, His being the ruler of the heavens and earth; and fourthly, His having power over everything. The verses that follow are adduced as proofs of these attributes, which become clear by pondering over the creation of Allah. Therefore, the next verses refer to the various types of creation in the universe as proofs positive of the existence and Oneness of Allah and His all-encompassing knowledge and power. To begin with, reference is made to those proofs of the divine omnipotence that are available in human beings themselves who are the noblest creation in the universe. The words *الَّذِي خَلَقَ الْمَوْتَ وَالْحَيَاةَ* (the One who created death and life) are meant for this purpose, (as will be explained shortly). Then, several verses (3 to 5) invite consideration to the creation of heavens to find proofs of Allah's omnipotence. Thereafter, verses 15 and 16 call our attention to the creation of the earth and its

benefits. Lastly, the creatures living in the heavenly atmosphere, that is, the birds are mentioned in verse 19.

In short, the basic subject of the Sūrah is to prove the existence of Allah and His perfect knowledge and power by inviting consideration to the marvels of this universe. However, as a subsidiary subject, some other realities are also mentioned like punishment for unbelievers and reward for believers.

The proofs of the divine knowledge and power found in the man himself are indicated in the following two words:

The Reality of Life and Death

خَلَقَ الْمَوْتَ وَالْحَيَاةَ (...the One who created death and life...67:2) Out of the human conditions, only two phenomena, i.e. life and death are mentioned here, because they cover all of human conditions and actions of his entire life. The creation of 'life' is quite obvious, because life is a positive reality that can be the object of creation and bringing into existence. However, one may ask how 'death' can be 'created', while it is a negative concept that refers to a state of non-existence. In answer to this question, the leading commentators have come up with different explanations. The most plausible one is that 'death' is not a state of pure non-existence. It actually refers to the removal of soul from the body and its transfer from one place to another. Thus it is a positive phenomenon. Just as 'life' is a phenomenon that relates to a human body, 'death' too is a phenomenon that overtakes him. Sayyidnā ‘Abdullah Ibn ‘Abbās  and other leading commentators have mentioned that 'life' and 'death' are two corporal entities. 'Death' has the corporal shape of a ram, and 'life' that of a mare. This statement apparently interprets the authentic Tradition which states that when the inmates of Paradise will have entered Paradise, and the inmates of Hell will have entered Hell, death will be brought in the form of a ram and will be slaughtered near *Ṣirāt* (the Bridge) and it will be announced that there shall be no more death, and every one shall remain in the same state eternally as he or she will have attained. It may not necessarily be deduced from this Tradition that 'death' is a corporal entity in the mortal world also. There are many abstract conditions and actions in this world, which will assume concrete shapes and bodies in the Hereafter. This is verified by many authentic

Traditions. 'Death', which is a condition that overtake man, will also assume the shape of a concretised ram and will be slaughtered. [Qurṭubī]

Tafsīr Maẓharī has stated that although 'death' is a negative phenomenon, it is not pure non-existence. It is a state of non-existence for a thing that will at some time come into existence. All such non-existent things have shapes in the World of Similitudes *عالم المثل* [*Ālam-ul-Mithāl*] before coming into existence in the realm of creation *عالم الناسوت* [*Ālam-un-Nāsūt*]. Such non-existent things are called *الاعيان الثابتة* *al-A'yān-uth-Thābitah*. On account of these shapes, they do have some sort of existence even before they come into perceived existence. The existence of the World of Similitude [*Ālam-ul-Mithāl*] has been proved by the commentator through various *aḥādīth*. And Allah knows best!

Various Categories of Death and Life

It is stated in Tafsīr Maẓharī that Allah, with His Supreme Power and Consummate Wisdom, has divided His creation into different types. Each one is awarded 'life' befitting its type. The perfect and consummate life is awarded to man, which has been invested with the capability to recognise the Divine Being and His Attributes to a specific degree. It is on the basis of this recognition that he is made liable to carry out the sacred laws of Sharī'ah, which has been termed by the Qur'ān as a 'trust'. The heavens, the earth and the mountains feared to bear the burden of this trust but man, on account of his God-given capability, bore it. The antonym of this type of 'life' is the particular type of 'death', which is mentioned in the verse:

أَوْ مَن كَانَ مَيِّتًا فَأَحْيَيْنَاهُ

'Could it be that the one who was dead and We gave him life.
[6:122]'

In this verse, a non-believer is referred to as 'dead' and a believer as 'alive', because a non-believer has wasted his 'recognition of Allah' that was the essential characteristic of this type of life. In other types or species of creation, this quality of life is absent, but they do possess senses and capability of movement, which is the second category of life. The antonym of this degree of life is the 'death' referred to by the Qur'ān thus:

كُنْتُمْ أَمْوَاتًا فَأَحْيَاكُمْ ثُمَّ يُمِيتُكُمْ ثُمَّ يُحْيِيكُمْ

'...you were lifeless and He gave you life, then He will make you die, then make you live again. [2:28]

In this context, 'life' refers to the ability to sense and move, and 'death' refers to its cessation. Some of the existent entities do not even possess the ability of sensing and movement. They merely possess the capability of growth as in the case of trees and vegetables. 'Life' is attributed to them as well in a limited sense (of growing), and as opposed to this, their 'death' is to lose the ability to grow. In this sense, the Holy Qur'an has used the words 'life' and 'death' in the following verse:

يُحْيِي الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا

'...how He brings the dead earth back to life. [30:50]'

These degrees of life are confined to humankind, the animal kingdom and the vegetable kingdom. No other species of creation possesses these qualities of life. Therefore, idols made of stones are referred to in the Qur'an as

أَمْوَاتٌ غَيْرُ أَحْيَاءٍ

'- dead, having no life__[16:21]

Nevertheless, inorganic matters too have a special (though very limited) element of 'life', which is necessary to the concept of existence. It is due to this element of 'life' that the Holy Qur'an says:

وَأَنْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِلَّا يُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِهِ

'...And there is not a single thing that does not extol His purity and praise. [17:44]

This analysis also explains why 'death' in the above verse has been mentioned before 'life'. The reason seems to be that death or non-existence is the state that comes before life. In other words, everything that came into existence was in the beginning in a state of lifelessness or non-existence, then it was awarded life.

Another explanation of mentioning 'death' before 'life' could be that the verse itself has declared that the purpose of creating human death and life is 'test',

لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا

'...so that He may test you as to which of you is better in deeds.

[2]

This test is more important and is of greater significance in 'death' rather than in 'life', because the one who thinks of death constantly will have the tendency to do more and more righteous deeds. No doubt, the element of test is available in 'life' too, because every step of one's life reminds him of his own inability and powerlessness as against Allah's absolute power, which creates in him the tendency to act righteously. The thought of death, however, is most effective in correcting one's conduct. Sayyidnā 'Ammār Ibn Yāsir رضي الله عنه reports a Prophetic Ḥadīth which says:

كفى بالموت واعظا وكفى باليقين غنى

"Death is sufficient as a preacher, and certitude is sufficient as a cause of being free from needs." [Transmitted by Tabārānī]

This signifies that witnessing the death of friends and relatives is the most effective preacher. If that does not exert any influence on one, nothing else will. And he whom Allah has granted the wealth of faith and certitude is the most need-free person.

Sayyidnā Rabi' Ibn Anas رضي الله عنه has stated that the thought of 'death' makes man disgusted with this world and makes him inclined towards the Hereafter.

لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا (...so that He may test you as to which of you is better in deeds....67:2). It should be noted here that Allah did not say 'which of you does *more* deeds', but said 'which of you is *better* in deeds'. This indicates that it is not the quantity of actions that counts, but rather the quality of actions, that is, their being righteous and acceptable in the sight of Allah. That is why man's actions will not be counted on the Day of Judgement, but they will be weighed. In some instances, the weight of one action would be heavier than a thousand actions.

What is a Good Action?

Sayyidnā Ibn 'Umar رضي الله عنه said that once the Holy Prophet ﷺ recited verse [2] and when he reached the words "better in deeds", he stopped and explained that 'better in deeds' is the person who abstains most from

the things Allah has forbidden and is always ready to obey Him. [Qurṭubī]

فَارْجِعِ الْبَصَرَ هَلْ تَرَى مِنْ فُتُورٍ (So, cast your eye again. Do you see any rifts?...67:3). Apparently, this verse shows that it is possible to see the nearest sky with the naked eyes. Sky, in this context, does not necessarily refer to the bluish atmosphere seen over the earth. In fact, the sky may be very much higher than this, and the bluish colour may be that of the upper atmosphere, as claimed by the scientists. This, on the other hand, does not necessarily imply that the sky cannot be seen at all. It is possible that the bluish atmosphere, on account of being transparent, may not block the vision of the actual sky. However, if it is proved by any evidence that the sky cannot be seen with eyes, then the 'casting ones eyes' in this verse would refer to 'intellectual observation'. [Bayān-ul-Qur'ān]

وَلَقَدْ زَيَّنَّا السَّمَاءَ الدُّنْيَا بِمَصَابِيحَ وَجَعَلْنَاهَا رُجُومًا لِلشَّيَاطِينِ (And We have decorated the nearest sky with lamps, and have made them devices to stone the devils, and We have prepared for them the punishment of Hell....67:5). The word '*maṣābīḥ*' (translated above as 'lamps') stands for 'stars'. The fact that the sky is decorated with stars does not necessarily imply that they should be studded with them inside or under the sky. The decoration is available also to the situation when the stars are far below the sky in space as modern research has proved it by observation. This is not contradictory to the classical interpretation.

The statement '[We] have made them [stars] devices to stone the devils' probably implies that some fiery matters originating from the stars are used to shoot at them, and the stars themselves remain intact in their position. Since this illuminated matter seems to the common people as 'falling stars'. [Qurṭubī]. This further shows that devils who attempt to eavesdrop on celestial conversations for information are driven away before they can reach the stars. [Qurṭubī]. Thus far evidence and proofs of Allah's consummate knowledge and power were adduced with reference to the various types of creation. In the verses that follow the subject of punishment for unbelievers and of reward for believers and the obedient is taken up, thus:

وَلِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِرَبِّهِمْ عَذَابُ جَهَنَّمَ (And for those who disbelieve, there is the punishment of *Jahannam* ...67:6). The subject runs through seven verses.

Thereafter, the subject of Divine knowledge and power is revisited.

هُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْأَرْضَ ذَلُولًا (He is the One who has made the earth submissive for you ...67:15) The word *dhalūl* signifies 'submissive'. When *dhalūl* is used for an animal, it means that it is not insolent when someone is riding it. The word *manākib* is the plural of *mankib*, which means 'shoulder', which in animals refer to the upper part of their front legs. Normally, this is not the part of the animals where a rider would sit to ride them. Their back or neck are involved in riding. But an animal that offers its shoulders as well to the riders is very obedient and submissive. Therefore, the verse says that Allah 'has made the earth submissive for you, so walk on its shoulders'. Allah has made the structure of earth such that it is not liquid like water so that it flows, nor is it like mud, mire or slime, because if the earth were to be in any of these states, it would not have been possible for man to live in it. Nor is it made hard like rocks or iron, for in that state it would not have been possible for him to plough the fields to sow his crops and derive various other types of benefit from the earth. Wells and rivers could not have been dug. It would not have been possible to dig trenches into the ground to lay foundations of huge buildings. With such well-balanced infrastructure, He granted him tranquillity that it is possible for buildings to stand on it and for people, moving on its surface, to avoid slipping.

وَكُلُوا مِنْ رِزْقِهِ (...and eat out of His provision ...67:15). After directing man to travel on earth, it is said 'eat out of His provision'. This probably indicates that commercial trips carried out for import and export are the doors for obtaining livelihood from Allah.

وَالْيَوْمِ النَّشْورِ (...and to Him is the Resurrection...67:15). This warning tells us that man is permitted to draw benefits of eating, drinking and living from the earth, but he is reminded at the same time not to be neglectful of death and life-after-death. Eventually, he will have to leave this world for the Hereafter. Whilst living on the earth, he must prepare for life-after-death. In this verse, man is warned that eventually he will return to Allah on the Day of Resurrection. The next verse warns that the Divine punishment can overtake him, even when living on the earth.

ءَأَمِنْتُمْ مَنْ فِي السَّمَاءِ أَنْ يَخِفَّتْ بِكُمْ الْأَرْضُ فَإِذَا هِيَ تَمُورُ (Have you become fearless of Him who is in the sky if He makes you sink into the earth, and it starts

trembling at once?...67:16). It means: Though Allah has granted the earth such a balanced infrastructure that man cannot go into it without digging, yet Allah has the power to make the earth swallow up all the communities living on its surface.

The next verse warns people of another type of punishment:

أَمْ أَمِنْتُمْ مَنْ فِي السَّمَاءِ أَنْ يُرْسِلَ عَلَيْكُمْ حَاصِبًا ۖ فَسَتَعْلَمُونَ كَيْفَ نَذِيرٍ (Or, have you become fearless of Him who is in the sky if He looses a violent wind with stones against you? So, you will soon come to know how was My warning! - 67:17). In other words, they at the moment feel secure that the Supreme Being in the heaven will not release against them a sudden squall of stones together with violent wind. Soon they will realise how true the Divine warning was, but by the time they realise its veracity it would be too late. Now that they are safe, sound and secure, it is the time for them to give it a thought.

The next verse refers to the former nations who denied and rejected the truth and how they were annihilated by Divine scourge. Every person needs to draw a lesson from the punishment meted out to them.

وَلَقَدْ كَذَّبَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ فَكَيْفَ كَانَ نَكِيرٍ (And of course, those before them [also] rejected [the truth]. So, how was My censure?...67:18)

The next verse turns once again to the central theme of the Sūrah, that is, the description of various forms and functions of Allah's creation to prove His Oneness, His knowledge and power. Thus far human souls, forms and functions of the sky, the stars, the earth and so on were discussed. The next verse mentions birds that fly about in the atmosphere above us.

أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا إِلَى الطَّيْرِ فَوْقَهُمْ صَفَّتٍ وَتَبْفِضْنَ ۖ أَلا مُمْسِكُهُنَّ إِلَّا الرَّحْمَنُ ۚ إِنَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ بَصِيرٌ (Have they not looked to the birds above them spreading their wings, and (at times) they fold (them) in? No one holds them up except the Raḥmān (the All-Merciful). Surely He is watchful of every thing...67:19)

This verse invites attention to the fact that the birds have weight, and in terms of the law of gravity, weighty bodies should fall down on the earth, if they are released from above. Normally, it is not possible for the air to hold them up. But Allah, through His consummate power, has created these birds in such a way that they can hold themselves up in the

air. Apparently, they have no intellect, but Allah has taught them the art to make the air carry their burden and to fly in it by manoeuvring their wings in such a way that at times they outspread them and at other times they fold them back. In this way they subjugate the air to their benefit. It is obvious that enabling air to hold them up, designing the wings of the birds on this particular shape and teaching them the art of controlling the air, all these functions were possible only by Allah's Supreme Creative Power.

Thus far the conditions of various categories and species of existent beings were analysed and considered in order to provide evidence of Divine existence, His Oneness, His unique knowledge and power. If a fair-minded person were to consider them carefully, he will have no choice but to believe in Allah. From the next verse up to the end of the Surah, the non-believers and the unrighteous people of all categories are warned of the Divine scourge. First, they are admonished that if Allah decides to punish any nation, there is no power in the world that can stop Him. There is no fighting force or army of soldiers that can come to the support of the disbelievers and save them. Thus the next verse says:

أَمَّنْ هَذَا الَّذِي هُوَ جُنْدٌ لَّكُمْ يَنْصُرُكُمْ مِنْ دُونِ الرَّحْمَنِ ط إِنَّ الْكَافِرُونَ إِلَّا فِي غُرُورٍ (Now, who is there to become a force for you to help you, except the Raḥmān? The disbelievers are in nothing but delusion...67:20).

Then the next verse warns the disbelievers that the sustenance Allah grants them by sending down rain from the clouds and by growing plants/ vegetation in the earth is not their personal property. It is a gift and bounty from Allah. If He wills, He can withhold it. This is the import of the following verse:

أَمَّنْ هَذَا الَّذِي يَرْزُقُكُمْ إِنْ أَمْسَكَ رِزْقَهُ بَلْ لَجُوا فِي عُتُوٍّ وَنُفُورٍ (Or, who is there to give you sustenance, if He withholds His sustenance? Still, they persist in rebellion and aversion. [67:21]).

The last sentence of the verse purports to express the unbelievers' sad state of affairs. They neither consider the Signs of Allah nor do they pay heed to other people's good advice. They obstinately persist in insolence and deviation from the Truth.

Next, the conditions of non-believers and believers on the field of

Resurrection are described. It is mentioned that the unbelievers will be brought to the field of Resurrection, crawling on their faces instead of walking on their feet. Bukhārī and Muslim record on the authority of Sayyidnā Anas رضي الله عنه that the noble Companions asked the Messenger of Allah ﷺ: "How will the non-believers walk on their faces on the Day of Resurrection?" The Messenger of Allah ﷺ replied: "Is Allah who made them walk on their feet not powerful enough to make them walk on their faces and their heads?" The following verse depicts the scene of such crawling:

أَفَمَنْ يَمْشِي مُكِبًّا عَلَى وَجْهِهِ أَهْدَىٰ أَمَّنْ يَمْشِي سَوِيًّا عَلَىٰ صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيمٍ (Then, tell me whether the one who walks falling down [frequently] on his face is better guided or the one who walks on a straight path...67:22).

The phrase 'the one who walks on a straight path' refers to the believer who is rightly guided. The next verse describes the manifestation of Divine power and wisdom in the creation of man, thus:

قُلْ هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْشَأَكُمْ وَجَعَلَ لَكُمُ السَّمْعَ وَالْأَبْصَارَ وَالْأَفْئِدَةَ ط قَلِيلًا مَّا تَشْكُرُونَ (Say, "He is the One who has originated you, and made for you the ears and the eyes and the hearts. How little you pay gratitude"...67:23).

Specifying ears, eyes and Heart

Of all the human sense organs, only three are mentioned here on which depends knowledge and perception of the external world. Philosophers have identified five sources of knowledge and perception that are called 'five senses': to see, hear, smell, taste or feel something. Allah has equipped man with 'nose' to smell, with 'tongue' to taste, with 'ears' to hear and with 'eyes' to see; Allah has spread 'skin' throughout man's body to feel. But out of the five physical senses, only two have been mentioned, namely, ears and eyes, because man receives a very limited range of knowledge by smelling, tasting and feeling. Man depends for information largely on hearing and seeing. Of the two organs, his sense of hearing is mentioned first, because a careful analysis shows that most of the information gathered in human life is through hearing, not so much by seeing. The third organ mentioned specifically is the 'heart', because that is the centre of knowledge. Knowledge received through hearing and seeing depends on the human 'heart', unlike the theory of the philosophers and scientists who believe that the centre of knowledge is the

human 'brain'.

After this, the non-believers are threatened with punishment. Towards the end of the Sūrah, a statement is once again repeated to remind them which purports to say: 'O you who live on the earth, dig wells and drink water from it to quench your thirst and grow plants and vegetation, do not forget that none of these things is your personal property. They are a Divine gift. He sent down water, and loaded it in the form of ice and reserved it on the peaks of mountains, so that it may not putrefy. Then He caused the congealed water to melt gradually and allow it to seep or soak into the earth through the pores or small interstices of the mountains and allowed a network of melted water to spread throughout the earth without any pipeline. Whenever man requires, he could dig a few meters deep into the earth from its upper surface to obtain water. This is a Divine gift. If He wills, He could send the water down into the depths of the earth, and it would not be accessible to anyone. This is the import of the following verse.

قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ أَصْبَحَ مَاؤُكُمْ غَوْرًا فَمَنْ يَأْتِيكُمْ بِمَاءٍ مَعِينٍ (Say, "Tell me, Should your water vanish into the earth, who will bring you a flowing [stream] water?"... (67:30).

In other words, if all the water, which people draw from the wells easily, were to disappear into the depths of the earth, do they have any power through which they will be able to obtain pure running water? Obviously, the answer is negative.

It is recorded in a Tradition that when a person recites this verse, he should say

اللَّهُ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ "Allah, the Lord of the worlds" That is, it is Allah alone who can bring it back to us. None of us has the power.

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah Al-Mulk
Ends here

Sūrah Al-Qalam

(The Pen)

This Sūrah is Makki. It contains 52 verses and 2 sections

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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

Verses 1 - 52

نَ وَالْقَلَمِ وَمَا يَسْطُرُونَ ﴿١﴾ مَا أَنْتَ بِمَجْنُونٍ ﴿٢﴾
 وَإِنَّ لَكَ لَأَجْرًا غَيْرَ مَمْنُونٍ ﴿٣﴾ وَأَنْتَ لَعَلَى خُلُقٍ عَظِيمٍ ﴿٤﴾
 فَسَتُبْصِرُ وَيُبْصِرُونَ ﴿٥﴾ بِأَيِّكُمْ الْمَفْتُونُ ﴿٦﴾ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ
 بِمَنْ ضَلَّ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ ۖ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ ﴿٧﴾ فَلَا تُطِعِ
 الْمُكَذِّبِينَ ﴿٨﴾ وَذُوا لَوْ تَذَهْنُ فَيَذَهَبُونَ ﴿٩﴾ وَلَا تُطِعْ كُلَّ
 حَلَّافٍ مَهِينٍ ﴿١٠﴾ هَمَّازٍ مَشَّاءٍ بِنَمِيمٍ ﴿١١﴾ مَنَّاعٍ لِلْخَيْرِ مُعْتَدٍ
 أَتِيمٍ ﴿١٢﴾ عُتْلٍ ۚ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ زَنِيمٍ ﴿١٣﴾ أَنْ كَانَ ذَا مَالٍ وَنَبِينٍ ﴿١٤﴾
 إِذَا تَنَلَّى عَلَيْهِ ائْتِنَا قَالَ أَسَاطِيرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿١٥﴾ سَنَسِمُهُ عَلَى
 الْخُرْطُومِ ﴿١٦﴾ إِنَّا بَلَوْنَهُمْ كَمَا بَلَوْنَا أَصْحَابَ الْجَنَّةِ ۚ إِذْ أَقْسَمُوا
 لَيَصْرِمُنَّهَا مُصْبِحِينَ ﴿١٧﴾ وَلَا يَسْتَنْوُونَ ﴿١٨﴾ فَطَافَ عَلَيْهَا
 طَائِفٌ مِّن رَّبِّكَ وَهُمْ نَائِمُونَ ﴿١٩﴾ فَأَصْبَحَتْ كَالصَّرِيمِ ﴿٢٠﴾
 فَتَنَادُوا مُصْبِحِينَ ﴿٢١﴾ أَنْ اغْدُوا عَلَىٰ حَرْثِكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ
 ﴿٢٢﴾ فَانْطَلَقُوا وَهُمْ يَتَخَفَتُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾ أَنْ لَا يَدْخُلْنَهَا الْيَوْمَ عَلَيْكُمْ

مَسْكِينٌ ﴿٢٤﴾ وَعَدُوا عَلَىٰ حَرٍِّ قَدِيرِينَ ﴿٢٥﴾ فَلَمَّا رَأَوْهَا قَالُوا إِنَّا
لَضَالُّونَ ﴿٢٦﴾ بَلْ نَحْنُ مَحْرُومُونَ ﴿٢٧﴾ قَالَ أَوْسَطُهُمْ أَلَمْ أَقُلْ
لَكُمْ لَوْلَا تُسَبِّحُونَ ﴿٢٨﴾ قَالُوا سُبْحَنَ رَبِّنَا إِنَّا كُنَّا ظَالِمِينَ ﴿٢٩﴾
فَاقْبَلْ بَعْضُهُمْ عَلَىٰ بَعْضٍ يَتَلَوْمُونَ ﴿٣٠﴾ قَالُوا يَوْمَلْنَا إِنَّا كُنَّا
ظَالِمِينَ ﴿٣١﴾ عَسَىٰ رَبَّنَا أَنْ يُدْخِلَنَا خَيْرًا مِنْهَا إِنَّا إِلَىٰ رَبِّنَا رَاغِبُونَ
﴿٣٢﴾ كَذَلِكَ الْعَذَابُ ۖ وَلَعَذَابُ الْآخِرَةِ أَكْبَرُ لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ
﴿٣٣﴾ إِنَّ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ جَنَّاتٍ النَّعِيمِ ﴿٣٤﴾ أَفَنَجْعَلُ
الْمُسْلِمِينَ كَالْمُجْرِمِينَ ﴿٣٥﴾ مَا لَكُمْ نَدَّ كَيْفَ تَحْكُمُونَ ﴿٣٦﴾ أَمْ
لَكُمْ كِتَابٌ فِيهِ تَدْرُسُونَ ﴿٣٧﴾ إِنَّ لَكُمْ فِيهِ لَمَّا تَخَيَّرُونَ ﴿٣٨﴾ أَمْ
لَكُمْ أَيْمَانٌ عَلَيْنَا بِالِغَةِ إِلَىٰ يَوْمِ الْقِيَمَةِ ۖ إِنَّ لَكُمْ لَمَّا تَحْكُمُونَ
﴿٣٩﴾ سَلِّمُوا إِلَيْهِمْ بِذَلِكَ زَعِيمٌ ﴿٤٠﴾ أَمْ لَهُمْ شُرَكَاءُ ۚ فَلْيَأْتُوا
بِشُرَكَائِهِمْ إِنْ كَانُوا صَادِقِينَ ﴿٤١﴾ يَوْمَ يُكْشَفُ عَنْ سَاقٍ
وَيُذْعَنُ إِلَى السُّجُودِ فَلَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ ﴿٤٢﴾ خَاشِعَةً أَبْصَارُهُمْ
تَرْهَقُهُمْ ذِلَّةٌ ۖ وَقَدْ كَانُوا يُدْعَوْنَ إِلَى السُّجُودِ وَهُمْ سَلِيمُونَ ﴿٤٣﴾
فَذَرْنِي وَمَنْ يُكَذِّبُ بِهَذَا الْحَدِيثِ ۖ سَنَسْتَدْرِجُهُمْ مِنْ حَيْثُ
لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٤٤﴾ وَأُمْلِي لَهُمْ ۖ إِنَّ كَيْدِي مَتِينٌ ﴿٤٥﴾ أَمْ تَسْأَلُهُمْ
أَجْرًا فَهُمْ مِنْ مَّغْرَمٍ مُثْقَلُونَ ﴿٤٦﴾ أَمْ عِنْدَهُمُ الْغَيْبُ فَهُمْ يَكْتُبُونَ
﴿٤٧﴾ فَاصْبِرْ لِحُكْمِ رَبِّكَ وَلَا تَكُنْ كَصَاحِبِ الْحُوتِ إِذْ نَادَىٰ
وَهُوَ مَكْظُومٌ ﴿٤٨﴾ لَوْلَا أَنْ تَدْرَكَهُ نِعْمَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِ لَنُبِذَ بِالْعَرَاءِ وَهُوَ
مَذْمُومٌ ﴿٤٩﴾ فَاجْتَبَاهُ رَبُّهُ فَجَعَلَهُ مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ ﴿٥٠﴾ وَإِنْ يَكَادُ
الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَيُزْلِقُونَكَ بِأَبْصَارِهِمْ لَمَّا سَمِعُوا الذِّكْرَ وَيَقُولُونَ إِنَّهُ
لَمَجْنُونٌ ﴿٥١﴾ وَمَا هُوَ إِلَّا ذِكْرٌ لِلْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٥٢﴾

Nūn, by the pen and what they write, [1] with the grace of your Lord, you are not insane. [2] And you will definitely have a reward that will never end. [3] And you are surely on exalted quality of character. [4] So, you will see, and they will see [5] which of you is demented. [6] Surely your Lord knows best who has strayed from his way, and He is well-aware of those who are on the right path. [7] So, do not obey those who reject (the true faith.) [8] They wish that you become flexible (in your faith), and they will become flexible (in their hostile attitude.) [9] And do not obey any contemptible one who swears much, [10] a slanderer who goes about with calumnies, [11] one who prevents good, (and who is) transgressor, sinful, [12] harsh, (and) after all that, notorious, [13] (do not obey such a person merely) because he is a man of wealth and sons. [14] When Our verses are recited to him, he says, "(These are) the tales of the ancient." [15] We will soon brand him on the snout. [16] We have tested them as We had tested the Owners of the Garden, when they had sworn an oath that they would pluck its fruits on the next morning, [17] and did not make any exception (by saying '*insha'allah*'). [18] Then, there whirled around it a whirl (of calamity) from your Lord, while they were asleep. [19] Thus, on the next morning, it was like a harvested field. [20] So, they called out each other as the morning broke, [21] saying, "Set out early, if you are going to pluck (the fruits)." [22] So they set out while they were whispering to each other, [23] saying, "Let no poor man enter into it upon you today." [24] And in early hours they rushed quickly, while they were (assuming themselves) powerful (to pluck the fruits and prevent the poor.) [25] But when they saw it (the place of the ruined garden), they said, "We have missed the way." [26] (Then, once they realized that the garden is the same, but it has been destroyed, they said,) "No, but we are deprived (of the fruits)." [27] Said he who was the best among them, "Did I not say to you, 'Why do you not pronounce *tasbiḥ* (Allah's purity)?" [28] They said, "We pronounce the purity of our Lord. No doubt, we were wrongdoers." [29] Then, (at the beginning,) they started reproaching one another; [30] (and at last,) they said, "Woe to us! In fact, we (all) were outrageous. [31] We hope that our Lord will give us in exchange something better than this. Truly we turn to Allah." [32]

In this way the punishment comes. And, of course, the

punishment of the Hereafter is even greater, if they but realize! [33] Surely, for the God-fearing are the gardens of bliss. [34] Otherwise, shall We make the obedient like the sinners? [35] What has happened to you? How do you judge? [36] Do you have a book in which you read [37] that for you there is what you choose? [38] Or do you have oaths sworn by Us, remaining effective up to the Day of Judgment, that you will get what you decide? [39] Ask them which of them stands surety for that. [40] Or do they have associate-gods (who have guaranteed safety for them? Then, let them bring their associate-gods, if they are true, [41] on the Day when the Shin will be exposed,¹ and they will be called upon to prostrate themselves, but they will not be able to. [42] With their eyes downcast, they will be enveloped by ignominy. And they used to be called upon to prostrate when they were healthy (but they did not.) [43]

So, leave Me alone with those who reject this discourse. We will draw them on little by little (towards Hell) from a way they do not know. [44] And I give them respite. Indeed, My plan is firm. [45] Is it that you ask them for a fee, due to which they are burdened with debt? [46] Or do they have the (knowledge of the) Unseen, and they write it down? [47]

So, remain patient with your Lord's judgment, and be not like the Man of the Fish,² he cried out while he was

- (1). This is the literal translation of the Qur'anic phrase used here. The exegetes have explained it in two different ways. Some of them are of the view that, according to the Arabic usage, 'exposure of the shin' is an idiomatic expression for a severe state of distress. When a person is confronted with such a distress, he normally lays his shins bare. Therefore, exposure of the shin has been taken as indicative of such a state. Given this interpretation, the verse means that on the day when the disbelievers will face the severe distress, they will be called upon to prostrate themselves, but they will not be able to do so, because their backs will be made flat, with no elasticity to bow down. Some other commentators, however, take the phrase in its literal sense. They say that the 'Shin' referred to here is the Shin of Allah Ta'ala, which is one of His attributes, the exact nature of which is neither known to anybody, nor discoverable in this world. (But obviously, it is not like the shins of human beings). According to this interpretation, the verse means that, at some stage on the Day of Judgment, Allah Ta'ala will expose this attribute of His which is called 'Shin', and they will be called upon to prostrate before it. This interpretation is supported by an authentic *hadith* reported by Bukhari and Muslim.
- (2). It refers to Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام who was devoured by a fish after he left his nation. Full description of the event has been given in Surah Yūnus.

in anguish. [48] Had not a favour from His Lord come to his help, he would have been cast in the wilderness in a reproachable state. ³ [49] Then his Lord chose him, and made him one of the righteous. [50]

And indeed the disbelievers seem to trip you up with their glances ⁴ when they hear the Reminder, and say, "He is a madman indeed." [51] And it is nothing else but a Reminder for all the worlds. [52]

Commentary

Linkage of Sūrahs

The preceding Sūrah dealt with the existence of Allah, His Oneness, and His knowledge and power, and adduced, as a positive proof of these attributes, was the fact that Allah is the Creator of death and life, and of the entire universe through whose component parts there runs the beautiful order that pervades the cosmos. He has created man to serve a sublime object and to achieve a noble goal. But man in his ingratitude has always rejected the Divine Message and consequently has been incurring Divine scourge. This is mentioned, in Sūrah Al-Mulk, with particular reference to the pagans of Makkah. The present Sūrah deals with the truth of the Holy Prophet's ﷺ claim, and gives sound and solid proof of it. Thus it rebuts the criticisms and taunts of the pagans against the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Their first criticism was that he is [God forbid!] insane whereas he was perfectly sane person, an embodiment of knowledge and a paragon of virtues. Another reason why they probably called him insane is that whenever an installment of revelation descended upon the Holy Prophet ﷺ, a physical change came over him. For instance the

- (3). According to the explanation given to this verse by Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanawi, 'Favour from His Lord' means the acceptance of his repentance, and 'wilderness' refers to the place where he was thrown by the fish. If this verse is read in juxtaposition with Verses 143,144 of Sūrah As-Şaffāt, the sense appears to be that if Yūnus عليه السلام had not offered *tasbiḥ* and *taubah*, he would have remained in the belly of the fish for good, and if he had repented, but was not favoured by Allah with the acceptance of his *taubah*, he would have been cast by the fish into the wilderness, due to his repentance, but in a reproachable state. However, since Allah favoured him with accepting his *taubah*, he was no more reproachable. Some other scholars, however, suggest that 'wilderness' in this verse refers to the plain of Ḥashr, and the verse means that if Allah had not accepted his *taubah*, he would have been cast into the plain of Ḥashr in a reproachable state.
- (4). It means that they glare at you with such a hatred and anger as if they were to make you slip from your standpoint due to their aversion.

colour of his face would change and become red, or he would sometimes snore or he would at other times appear to be in grief, or there were times when he would hang his head down. When any of these states was over, he would recite the revealed verses to the people. This matter was beyond the understanding and perception of the pagans. Therefore, they regarded this experience of receiving revelation as insanity. Or they called him insane presumably because he put forward to his people and to the whole world that there is no object worthy of worship except Allah. He put it to them that their self-carved idols cannot be gods because they are insensate and lacking knowledge; and they lack the ability to benefit or harm anyone. His voice of Truth sounded alone yet with this lone voice of Truth without any apparent means and support, he stood unwaveringly against the whole world. People without any insight or foresight did not think that it was possible for him to achieve his goal and they called it insanity. Some called him insane for the sake of calling him insane, without any reason. Having no excuse to refute the teachings of Allah's Messenger, all the pagans could do was to dub him insane. The initial verses of Sūrah Al-Qalam refute under emphatic oath their false charges.

ن وَالْقَلَمِ وَمَا يَسْطُرُونَ. مَا أَنتَ بِمَجْنُونٍ (Nūn, by the pen and what they write, with the grace of your Lord, you are not insane....68:2). The letter Nūn is one of the isolated letters that have been revealed at the beginning of many Sūrahs. They are the secret signs and symbols and mysteries of Allah. Allah alone knows their hidden meaning, or Allah made their mysterious meanings known to His Messenger. The Ummah is not permitted to investigate the hidden meaning of such isolated letters.

Pen and its Significance

In the phrase *wal-qalami*, the *waw* is the particle of oath [translated here as 'by the pen']. 'Qalam' refers to 'pen', and there are three types of pen: [1] the pen of destinies; [2] the pen of angels; and [3] the pen of human beings. It could refer to any or all of these types of pen. A pen is an object that is used for writing anything [as is the view of Abū Ḥatīm Al-Bustī]. According to Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ, it specifically refers to the pen of destinies. Sayyidnā 'Uḇādah Ibn Ṣāmīt ؓ narrates regarding the pen of destinies that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "The first thing Allah created was the pen, and He told it to write, and when it asked Him what it should write, He told it to write what was predestined, so it wrote

what would take place to all eternity." [Transmitted by At-Tirmidhī, saying that this is a Tradition whose chain of narrators is *gharīb*]. Sayyidnā ‘Abdullāh Ibn ‘Umar رضي الله عنه narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Allah recorded the destiny of all creatures 50000 years before creating the heavens and the earth." [Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim]. Qatādah رحمه الله تعالى says that pen is a great gift of Allah that He has endowed upon His servants. Some scholars say that Allah first created the pen, and that was the pen of decrees which recorded the destinies of the entire universe and all the creatures. Then He created the second pen that is used by the inhabitants of the earth. The second pen is referred to in Sūrah Iqra’ in verse [96:4], thus: **عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ** '{He who} taught by the pen'. And Allah knows best!

If *qalam* 'pen' in the verse under comment refers to the pen of destinies, its greatness and its superiority over everything is quite obvious and swearing by it is quite understandable. If it is taken to refer to all pens in general, including the pen of destinies, the pen of angels, and also the pen of human beings, swearing an oath by it is apt because all great tasks are accomplished by pen. In the conquests of territories, pen play a mighty role: 'The pen is mightier than the sword' goes the famous saying. Abū Ḥatim Al-Bustī has encapsulated this idea in two short verses:

إذا أقسم الابطال يوما بسيفهم وعدّوه ممّا يكسب المجد والكرم

When the brave people swear by their sword some day,
And count it among things that give honour and veneration to men,

كفى قلم الكتاب عزّا ورفعة مدى الدهر إن الله أقسم بالقلم

The writers' pen is sufficient for their honour and superiority
For all times to come, because Allah has sworn oath by the pen

In any case, it is immaterial whether the pen in the verse refers to the pen of destinies or it refers to the pen of creation in general. Then it swears an oath by **مَا يَسْطُرُونَ** 'what they write [1]'.

In other words, swearing an oath by what the pens have written or what they will record in the future, Allah refutes the unbelievers' false charge of madness that they made against the Holy Prophet ﷺ, thus:

مَا أَنْتَ بِنِعْمَةِ رَبِّكَ بِمَجْنُونٍ (with the grace of your Lord, you are not insane....68:2). The verse contains the phrase **بِنِعْمَةِ رَبِّكَ** (with the grace of your Lord....68:2). It states not only the claim, but also evidence to support

and substantiate the statement of claim. [See special note below.] Man is required to turn the pages of history, and he will realize that a person as great as the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, upon whom Allah has conferred great blessings and grace, cannot be insane. Calling such a sane person insane is itself insanity

Special Note

Scholars have explained the Qur'ānic concept of 'oath': Wherever Allah has sworn an oath by an object or a phenomenon, its subject has been cited as evidence or testimony to support and substantiate the claim. Here the phrase مَا يَسْطُرُونَ 'what they write [1]'. Is the proof of the claim, that is, world history has been cited as testimony for critics to look into the pages of history, if they can ever find a person of such lofty calibre as the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, with high morals insane. He takes care of other people's sanity. The next verse reinforces the subject.

وَأَنَّ لَكَ لَآجِرًا غَيْرَ مَمْنُونٍ (And you will definitely have a reward that will never end....68:3). The verse exposes the absurdity of the charge of madness. It purports to say that the actions of a madman produce no useful result, but the Holy Prophet ﷺ will eminently succeed in fulfilling the object of his Divine mission, and in bringing about a wonderful revolution in the lives of his degenerate and demented people. This is the significance of the words in the verse 'and for you is a reward that will never end.' No insane person is ever rewarded for his actions. The next verse constitutes a further eloquent comment on the charge of insanity imputed to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, thus:

وَأَنَّكَ لَْعَلَىٰ خُلُقٍ عَظِيمٍ (And you are surely on exalted quality of character.....68:4). In this verse, the demented people are invited to think carefully about the lofty morals of the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

The Holy Prophet's ﷺ Exalted Quality of Character

Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ has said that 'exalted quality of character' signifies a 'great religion, and it is Islam, a religion dearest to Allah'. Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها was asked about the Holy Prophet's ﷺ character. She replied: "The Holy Prophet's ﷺ character was the Qur'ān itself". In other words, he is the living example of the Qur'ān that teaches high morals. Sayyidnā 'Alī ؓ said that 'exalted quality of character' signifies the 'good manners which the Qur'ān has taught'. All these

interpretations have almost the same significance. That is to say, not only that the Holy Prophet ﷺ is not an insane person, but he is the sublime and noblest of men possessing in full measure all the moral excellence that combine to make their possessor a perfect image of his Creator. The Holy Prophet's ﷺ humanity was of the most perfect character. He was a complete embodiment of all good moral qualities that a man is capable of possessing. The Holy Prophet ﷺ himself said:

بعثت لاتمم مكارم الاخلاق

"I have only been sent to perfect noble character/conduct." [Abū Ḥayyān].

Sayyidnā Anas ؓ said:

"I served Allah's Messenger for ten years, and he never said a word of displeasure to me, nor did he ever say to me concerning something I had done: 'Why did you do that?' And he never said to me concerning what I had not done: 'Why did you not do this?'" [Bukhārī and Muslim].

Obviously, a ten-year period is a long time during which some unpleasant or objectionable thing might have happened.

Sayyidnā Anas ؓ said:

"As a result of the Holy Prophet's ﷺ noble character, any slave-girl of Madīnah would hold his hand and take him wherever she would like to."

Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضي الله عنها said: "Allah's Messenger never struck anyone with his hands except when he was fighting in *jihād* in the cause of Allah." It is confirmed that when he fought *jihād* in the cause of Allah, he killed unbelievers. Otherwise he did not hit any servant, nor any woman. He would never take revenge for any harm or mistake done. He would only implement *Shar'ī* punishment on those who violated Allah's laws. [Transmitted by Muslim].

Sayyidnā Jābir ؓ says that the Messenger of Allah was never asked for anything for which he said 'No'. [Bukhārī and Muslim].

Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضي الله عنها said:

"Allah's Messenger was never vulgar, never pretended to be vulgar and he never shouted in the marketplaces. He never

responded to evil by evil, but always pardoned and overlooked."

Sayyidnā Abū-ḡ-Dardā' ؓ narrates that Allah's Messenger ﷺ said:

"Noble character will be the heaviest thing on a Muslim's scale of good deeds on the Day of Resurrection. Allah detests the rude and foul-mouthed person." [Transmitted by Tirmidhī, grading it as a Tradition which is 'ḡasan'].

Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها narrates that Allah's Messenger ﷺ said:

"Indeed by virtue of good character, a believer can attain the status of votaries who spend their nights in worship and their days in fasting." [Abū Dāwūd].

Sayyidnā Mu'ādh Ibn Jabal ؓ narrates that when he placed his foot into the stirrup of his mount, as he was departing for Yemen as the governor of that province, Allah's Messenger ﷺ advised him:

يَا مَعَاذَ أَحْسَنُ خُلُقِكَ لِلنَّاسِ

"O Mu'ādh, display your best character with people."
[Transmitted by Mālik].

All narratives cited here have been adopted from Tafsīr Maḡharī.

فَسَتُبْصِرُ وَيُبْصِرُونَ. بِآيِكُمُ الْمَفْتُونُ (So, you will see, and they will see which of you is demented....68:5-6). The word *maftūn*, in this context, means 'demented'. In the preceding verses, the Holy Prophet ﷺ was accused of being an insane and demented. This verse turns tables upon the accusers of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and making a prophecy, tells them in challenging words that time will show whether it was he or they who suffered from insanity, or whether his claim to be Allah's Messenger was the outpouring of heated brain, or whether they themselves were so demented as not to read the signs of time, and thus refuse to believe in him. These were the unfortunate, wretched ones who did not see the light of Truth and were thus disgraced and defeated in this world. But, on the other hand, there were thousands of other lucky ones who, at first did not see the light of Truth and denounced him as demented, soon saw the light and embraced the Faith of Islam. They took the love and obedience of the Holy Prophet ﷺ as the capital asset of success, prosperity and happiness.

وَدُّوا لَوْ تُدْهِنُ فَيُدْهِنُونَ. فَلَا تُطِيعِ الْمُكَذِّبِينَ. (So, do not obey those who reject [the true faith]. They wish that you become flexible [in your faith], and they

will become flexible [in their hostile attitude.]...68:8-9]. The interpretation of this verse as adopted in this translation is based on the interpretation of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه as reported by Qurṭubī.

Ruling

This verse indicates that any such compromise with the unbelievers is tantamount to *mudāhanah fid-dīn*, flexibility in religion, and this is forbidden. [Maḏharī]. Such a pact of leniency in matters of religion is not permissible, unless compelled by necessity.

وَلَا تُطِيعُ كُلَّ حَلَّافٍ مَّهِينٍ ﴿١٠﴾ هَمَّازٍ مَّشَّاءٍ بِنَمِيمٍ ﴿١١﴾ مَنَاعٍ لِلْخَيْرِ مُعْتَدٍ أَلِيمٍ ﴿١٢﴾ عُتْلٍ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ زَنِيمٍ ﴿١٣﴾

(And do not obey any contemptible one who swears much, a slanderer who goes about with calumnies, one who prevents good, [and who is] transgressor, sinful, harsh, [and] after all that, notorious,...68:10-13)

The word *zanīm* refers to 'a person whose legitimate birth from a father is not proved'. The person referred to in this verse was of doubtful birth or his lineage was uncertain.

The preceding verse prohibited any compromise with the unbelievers in general in matters of religion. The current verse prohibits specifically yielding to such mean leader of falsehood as Walīd Ibn Mughīrah, who possessed the base characteristics as listed in verses [10] to [13], the worst mischief-maker. [As transmitted by Ibn Jarīr on the authority of Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه. Having described this person's bad manners and his arrogance in several verses that follow, verse [16] says:

سَنَسِمْهُ عَلَى الْخُرْطُومِ (We will soon brand him on the snout...68:16). That is, as, disbelievers, out of pride and false sense of power rejected the Divine Message in this world, Allah will disgrace and humiliate them on the Day of Resurrection so that the earlier and later generations will be able to see it. His nose has been described by way of reproach as *khurṭūm* (snout). This refers specifically to the long nose of a pig or a trunk of an elephant.

إِنَّا بَلَوْنَهُمْ كَمَا بَلَوْنَا أَصْحَابَ الْجَنَّةِ (We have tested them as We had tested the Owners of the Garden....68:17). The preceding verses rebutted the criticisms of pagan Arabs levelled against Allah's Messenger ﷺ and gave reasons why the charges are not only unfounded, but also absurd. The

present set of verses mentions a story of the past and the unbelievers of Makkah are threatened with punishment. 'Testing them' could refer to the forthcoming story, in which the owners of a garden were blessed with Divine favours, but they behaved ungratefully. As a result, a punishment came upon them and the favours were destroyed. The greatest Divine favour upon the Makkans was the advent of the Holy Messenger ﷺ. Besides, their businesses flourished and they prospered. This was a test for them to see whether they would behave gratefully to Allah and believe in Him and in His Messenger ﷺ, or whether they would obstinately persist in disbelief. In the other case, they should draw lessons from the story of the owners of the orchard, lest they be visited by a similar punishment on account of ingratitude. This interpretation would apply even in the case where these verses are taken as Makkī, but most commentators take them to be Madanī. The 'test' referred to here is the terrible famine that held Makkah in its grip, as a result of the Holy Prophet's ﷺ prayer against them, for several years during which time people died of hunger and starvation, they were forced to eat carrion and leaves of trees till the Makkans begged the Holy Prophet ﷺ to pray for their deliverance from the scourge. This incident took place after the migration.

The Story of the Owners of a Garden

Some elders, such as Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ, mentioned that this orchard was in Yemen. According to one version of Sayyidnā Sa'īd Ibn Jubair's narration, it was about six miles away from Ṣan'ā', the famous capital city of Yemen. Other scholars think that it was in Ethiopia [formerly known as Abyssinia] [Ibn Kathīr]. They were from amongst the People of the Book. This incident took place a while after the Ascension of Sayyidnā 'Īsā ؑ. [Qurṭubī].

They are referred to as the 'Owners of the Garden' in the above verse. The description of the story given in the verses indicates that they did not only have a garden, but they also had large tracts of land which they cultivated and had fields of crops. Possibly, side by side with the orchard there were tracts of cultivated land and fields of crops in between the trees. However, they were called the owners of the garden on account of the popularity of the garden. The incident is reported according to the narration of Muḥammad Ibn Marwān on the authority of Sayyidnā Ibn

‘Abbās عليه السلام as follows: There was a garden about two *farsakhs* (six miles) away from Ṣan‘ā’ of Yemen. Its name was *Ḍarawān*. This garden was set up by a pious and righteous person. His practice was to pick the fruits or harvest the crops with sickle. He would give some of the crop to the poor and indigent who gathered grains for themselves and did their living.

Likewise, when the crop was thrashed, and the grain separated from the chaff, he would leave the grain for the poor. So also when fruits were picked from the trees of the orchard, some fruits would fall down, and he would leave them for the indigent. For this reason, the poor always gathered at the orchard at the time of picking the fruit, and separating the grain from the chaff. When the righteous person passed away, he had three sons who inherited the orchard and crop-fields. They held a family meeting and discussed that their family has grown large, and the produce of the orchard and land is not sufficient for them. Therefore, it is no longer possible for them to spare any fruit or grain for the poor. According to other narratives, these boys, like other youngsters, felt that their father was a fool to give so much of fruits and grains to them. They thought it was necessary to put a stop to this. The rest of the story is told in the following verses of the Qur’ān.

إِذْ أَقْسَمُوا لَيَصْرِمُنَّهَا مُصْبِحِينَ وَلَا يَسْتَثْنُونَ (...when they had sworn an oath that they would pluck its fruits on the next morning, and did not make any exception (by saying '*inshā'allah*').... 68:17-18). In other words, they swore that they would harvest very early in the morning and return with it before the throng of poor people could arrive at the garden. They had so much of confidence in their plan that they did not say the redeeming words 'If Allah wills' whereas it is *sunnah* to say '*inshā'allah*' when one mentions that one will do a particular work tomorrow.

وَلَا يَسْتَثْنُونَ (and did not make any exception (by saying '*inshā'allah*'). [68:18]). The word *isthisnā* in the original Arabic means 'to make an exception by saying "*inshā'allah*". However, some scholars interpret this word, in this context, to mean that 'they would devour the entire harvest themselves, with no exception for the poor. [Maḏharī].

فَطَافَ عَلَيْهَا طَائِفٌ مِّن رَّبِّكَ (Then, there whirled around it a whirl (of calamity) from your Lord, while they were asleep....68:19). The word 'whirl' refers to 'a whirl of calamity' as a result of which Divine

punishment overtook the garden in a sudden and swift sweep. Some narratives report that it was a fire which burnt every standing crop, and reduced it to black ashes.

وَهُمْ نَائِمُونَ (...while they were asleep.... 68:19). In other words, the devastating disaster overtook the entire garden while its owners were asleep.

فَاصْبَحَتْ كَالصَّرِيمِ (Thus, on the next morning, it was like a harvested field....68:20). The word *ṣarm* means 'to harvest or to collect a crop from the fields'. The word *ṣarīm* in the context of the verse is used in the sense of *masrūm* or *maqṭū'*, meaning 'harvested or cut'. This signifies that the fire burnt the field and stripped it bare. The word *ṣarīm* also means 'night'. From this point of view, the verse signifies 'the field became burnt up and black like night'. [Maḏharī].

فَتَنَادَوْا مُصْبِحِينَ (So, they called out each other as the morning broke 68:21). This means that they starting waking up each other in the early morning that they should set out early if they wanted to harvest.

وَهُمْ يَتَخَفَتُونَ (...while they were whispering to each other ... 68:23). They were speaking in a low voice, lest a poor man should hear their talk and accompany them.

وَعَدَوْا عَلَى حَرْدٍ قَدِيرِينَ And in early hours of the day they rushed quickly, while they were (assuming themselves) powerful (to pluck the fruits and prevent the poor.) [68:25]'. The word *ḥard* means 'to prevent' and 'to express anger'.⁵ In other words, they thought they had the power to pick the fruit for themselves and prevent the poor people from having a share in it, and even if they do come to the garden, the owners of the garden decided to chase them out.

فَلَمَّا رَأَوْهَا قَالُوا إِنَّا لَضَالُونَ (But when they saw it [the place of the ruined garden], they said, "We have missed the way."....68:26). In other words, when they did not find their garden on that spot, they first thought that they must have lost their way and gone to the wrong place. But when they saw the surroundings, they realized that it was the right place they have gone to, but the garden had been burnt up and destroyed. So, they

(5). This word also means 'to rush quickly'. This meaning of the word has been adopted in the translation of the text. (Muhammad Taqi Usmani)

exclaimed: *بَلْ نَحْنُ مَحْرُومُونَ* "No, but we are deprived [of the fruits]....68:27)

قَالَ أَوْسَطُهُمْ أَلَمْ أَقُلْ لَّكُمْ لَوْلَا تُسَبِّحُونَ (Said he who was the best among them, "Did I not say to you, 'Why do you not pronounce *tasbīḥ* (Allah's purity)?"....68:28). The middle brother was the best of them. He was righteous like his father. It used to please him to spend in the cause of Allah. He was not niggardly or stingy like the other brothers. He had advised them to recite *tasbīḥ* which, literally, means to pronounce Allah's purity. He told them that they were withholding the share of the poor with the fear that their fruit will be depleted and will not be replenished by Allah, if they gave the poor their share. He told them that Allah is pure from such pettiness. Instead, those who spend in the way of Allah, He will not only make their wealth full again or replace what they have spent, but also will give them over and above what they have spent. [Mazhari].

قَالُوا سُبْحَنَ رَبِّنَا إِنَّا كُنَّا ظَالِمِينَ (They said, "We pronounce the purity of our Lord. No doubt, we were wrongdoers."..... 68:29). Neither of the brothers had paid heed to this brother's advice at that point. But when the damage was done, they admitted that Allah is Pure, Free from any qualities of weaknesses and shortcomings, and that they were the wrongdoers, in that they were unjust to the poor intending to deprive them of their share and devour it themselves.

Warning

Although the best of the three brothers offered the right advice, he joined the other brothers in following their wrong opinion. So he suffered the same loss. This indicates that anyone who prevents other people from committing sins but does not abstain from them himself and joins them in doing the wrong acts, he will suffer the same fate as the others.


فَاقْبَلْ بَعْضُهُمْ عَلَىٰ بَعْضٍ يَتَلَوْمُونَ (Then, (at the beginning,) they started reproaching one another;..... 68:30). That is to say, at the beginning they made admission of guilt, but then they turned to face each other in mutual accusation, blaming each other for the punishment that visited them, whereas the crime was not committed by only a single person from among them, but it was committed jointly by all or most of them.

A note of caution

A common misdeed, in our days, is that when a calamity befalls a

group of people due to their collective conduct, an additional scourge that befalls them is that, (instead of reforming themselves,) they start wasting their time in accusing each other.

فَالُوا يَوْمَئِذٍ إِنَّا كُنَّا ظَهِينَ ([and at last,] they said, "Woe to us! In fact, we [all] were outrageous....68:31). At the beginning, they accused one another of the sin. Then when they considered the matter carefully, they admitted that they were all on the wrong. As a result, they lamented and admitted their guilt that amounted to repentance. On the basis of this repentance they hoped that Allah will give them in exchange a garden better than the one destroyed.

Imām Baghawī reports from Sayyidnā ‘Abdullāh Ibn Mas‘ūd  that, according to his information, when these brothers repented truly, Allah blessed them with a better vineyard that bore such large bunches of grapes that a single bunch could be loaded on a mule. [Maḏharī].

كَذَلِكَ الْعَذَابُ (In this way the punishment comes. And, of course, the punishment of the Hereafter is even greater, if they but realize!....68:33). After a brief reference to the famine faced by the Makkans and a detailed account of the People of the Garden whose garden was burnt as a punishment, the present verse sets down a general rule. When a Divine punishment visits, it visits in this way, and this kind of punishment in the mortal world does not serve as an expiation for the punishment in the Hereafter. The punishment of the Hereafter is greater and more severe.

The following verses give a description of the reward of the righteous, followed by refutation of another false claim of the pagans of Makkah. They denied that Resurrection will ever occur. They thought the story of Resurrection and accountability is fiction. Even if that does happen, they thought, they will get the same type of blessings and wealth as they have in this world. Several verses respond to their false belief. In verse [35] Allah poses the rhetorical question to the disbelievers: 'Shall We make the obedient like the sinners?' [35] This is a strange sort of assertion for which they have no authority, nor proof nor any celestial book. Nor is there any promise from Allah that they will get the same type of blessings.

A Rational Proof of Resurrection

These verses give a solid proof to the necessity of the Day of Judgement, because accountability, rewarding the righteous and

punishing the evil are all rationally necessary. It is witnessed by every person in this mortal world, and no one can deny, that the wicked, the evil, the unjust, the thieves and the bandits generally lead a comfortable and enjoyable life in the mortal world. A thief or a bandit sometimes in one night gains so much of wealth that a righteous person might not gain as much in his entire life. The former has no fear of Allah or the Hereafter, nor does he have any sense of shame. He fulfills his selfish desires as he likes - by hook or by crook. The latter fears Allah, and if he does not have that, his sense of shame among his brotherhood overwhelms him. In short, in the mortal world the wicked and the evil ones seem to be successful, and the good people seem to be unsuccessful. If there does not arise an occasion where fair play and justice is established - where the good people would be rewarded and the evil ones would be punished? It would be meaningless to refer to evil as evil. There would be no reason to stop a person from fulfilling his selfish desires and doing the evil acts. On the other hand, justice will have no meaning or significance. How will the believers in God's existence respond to the following question: Where is God's justice?

One may argue that a criminal is apprehended, he is exposed to disgrace and is punished. This distinguishes the innocent persons from the evil ones right here in this world. Laws and statutes of a governments establish standards of justice and fair play. But this is incorrect, because it is not possible for a government to keep an eye on every one, everywhere and in all circumstances. Wherever it does happen, it is not an easy task to gather the necessary judicial evidence, so that the guilty person may be convicted and punished. And even if the judicial evidence could be gathered, there are several escape doors through which the guilty person could get away, such as force, bribery, intercession and pressure. If we review the punishment history of the present-day governments and courts, it would appear that nowadays only those people are punished who are fools, brainless and helpless or without support. They are not cunning enough to find a loophole in the legal system, or an escape route, nor do they have enough money to pay for bribery, nor do they have an influential person to back them or intercede on their behalf or they cannot use these things because of their foolishness. The rest of the criminals are moving freely.

This verse: *أَفَنَجْعَلُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ كَالْمُجْرِمِينَ* (Otherwise, shall We make the obedient like the sinners?... 68:35). Clarifies that it is rationally necessary that there should come a time when people will have to give account of their deeds, a place where the guilty ones will find no escape routes, an ideal world where there will be absolute justice and fair play, where good and evil will be clearly distinguished. If this is not the state of affairs in the Hereafter, then no evil should be evil, and no sin should be sin in this mortal world. Divine justice would thus be rendered meaningless.

Since it is established that Resurrection is a reality and inevitable, the reward of good deeds is a reality and the punishment of evil deeds is a reality, the verses that follow describe the horrors of the Day of Judgement and the punishment of the evil ones, including the description of the exposure of the Shin [*kashf-us-sāq*] in Verse 42 (the explanation of which may be seen in the foot-note given in the translation of that verse.)

فَدَرَبْنِي وَمَنْ يُكَذِّبُ بِهَذَا الْحَدِيثِ (So, leave Me alone with those who reject this discourse. We will draw them on little by little (towards Hell) from a way they do not know.... 68:44). Here the phrase 'So, leave me alone' in the original Arabic is an idiomatic expression which signifies 'Rely on Allah'. The disbelievers often demanded Divine punishment arguing that if they are really guilty in the sight of Allah, and if He has the power to punish, then why the punishment does not befall them forthwith. These were heart-rending demands on account of which the thought probably must have crossed the mind of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and he might have prayed to Allah to punish them sometime, in the hope that the rest of the people might draw lessons and amend their conduct. On that occasion, Allah revealed [in verse, 45] that He is the best aware of the wisdom behind His decisions. He does not punish them immediately, but He gives them respite to test them and to give them an opportunity to believe.

Towards the end, the story of Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام is concisely told that when his people constantly demanded punishment, he became indignant and prayed for the punishment to be sent down. The signs of the punishment started appearing. Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام left the place and transferred himself elsewhere. In the meantime the entire nation wept, wailed, sincerely repented and begged refuge from the Divine punishment. Allah pardoned them and took away the punishment. Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام felt embarrassed and thought that if he goes back

to his people, they might think he was a liar. As a result, without the clear permission of Allah, he acted purely on his *ijtihad* [independent judgement] that he would not go back to his people. At this, Allah, in order to caution him, created a situation where he had to undertake sea voyage, and then was lowered into the sea where he was swallowed up by a fish. Being thus cautioned, Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام sought the Divine pardon. Consequently, Allah once again opened the doors of the former blessings to be restored to him. Full description of the event has been given in Sūrah Yūnus (Verse 10:98) and other Sūrahs. The Holy Prophet ﷺ is comforted by this story not to be impressed by people's demands nor to be anxious to get them punished hastily. Allah's wisdom is profound and unfathomable. Allah alone knows what is in the best interests of the world. Allah should be trusted and relied on.

وَلَا تَكُنْ كَصَاحِبِ الْحُوتِ (So, remain patient with your Lord's judgment, and be not like the Man of the Fish...68:48). It refers to Sayyidnā Yūnus عليه السلام. He is named here as 'Man of Fish' because he was devoured by a fish and remained in its belly for some time.

وَأِنَّ يَكَادُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَيُزْلِقُونَكَ بِأَبْصَارِهِمْ (And indeed the disbelievers seem to trip you up with their glances when they hear the Reminder, and say, "He is a madman indeed.....68:51). The verb '*layuzliqūnaka*' is derived from *izlāq* which means 'to trip up or to cause someone to fall or make a mistake' [*Rāghib*]. The verse says to the Holy Prophet ﷺ that disbelievers cast angry looks at him that they might frighten him into giving up his mission or intimidate him into yielding to their pressure tactics. When they listen to Divine words, they call him a madman. But far from it, his teaching contains the quintessence of wisdom - the Qur'an puts it thus:

وَمَا هُوَ إِلَّا ذِكْرٌ لِلْعَالَمِينَ (And it is nothing else but a Reminder for all the worlds.... 68:52). Divine words are a Reminder and an admonition for the entire universe. The Reminder will lift the people from the lowest depths of degradation to the highest summits of greatness and glory. It would also cleanse them and free them from moral blemishes and raise their spiritual stature. Is it possible for an insane person to receive and deliver such a Sublime Divine Message? Can a Prophet of such a high caliber be called a madman? The earlier verses of this Sūrah rebutted the charge of insanity against the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Towards the end of the Sūrah, the same charge of lunacy is rebutted again in a different style.

Imām Baghawī رحمه الله تعالى and some other commentators have reported another event as background of this verse. The evil eye is a reality which causes loss, illness and destruction. Authentic Traditions report that it is a reality. The Arabs also believed that an evil eye is a reality. There was a person famous in Arabia to cast an evil eye on camels or animals to cause instant death or destruction. The pagans of Arabia were enemies of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and in every possible way they were after persecuting him and killing him. They left no stone unturned in harming him. They even contemplated afflicting him with an evil eye. They therefore decided to secure the services of the particular person who could effectively cast an evil eye. He was instructed to cast the evil eye on the Messenger of Allah ﷺ so that he would become ill. He exerted himself to the utmost, but to no avail. Allah protected him and he was unaffected. The verses were revealed in connection with this incident.

Special Note

Sayyidnā Ḥasan Baṣrī reports that if anyone is affected by the evil eye, these verses (51 & 52) may be recited and blown on the person: the ill effect will be dispelled.

Alhamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah Al-Qalam
Ends here