

Sūrah al-Anbiyā' (2)

Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāhī

Section IV: Verses (34-47)

Readers may look up verse 8 earlier. It was stated there that the adversaries make fun of Muḥammad (sws): how can he be God's messenger when he is a human being? He also has no distinction over them in wealth and status. They would further contend that if he had to make them accept his status as a messenger of God, then he should show them a sign that proved his veracity. In the foregoing verses, an answer is given to this demand. Now in the succeeding verses, the Prophet (sws) is being assured that he should ignore their mockery. The time is approaching when they will see the veracity of every claim he is making and all their arrogance will vanish.

Readers may proceed to study these verses in the light of this background.

Text and Translation

وَمَا جَعَلْنَا لِبَشَرٍ مِّن قَبْلِكَ الْخُلْدَ أَفَإِن مِّنْ فَعُهُمُ الْخُلْدُونَ ﴿٣٤﴾ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ذَائِقَةُ الْمَوْتِ ۖ وَنَبْلُوكُمْ بِالشَّرِّ وَالْخَيْرِ فِتْنَةً ۖ وَإِنَّا تُرْجِعُونَ ﴿٣٥﴾ وَإِذْ أَرَاكَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِن يَتَّخِذُونَكَ إِلَّا هُزُوًا أَهَذَا الَّذِي يَذْكُرُ آلِهَتَكُمْ ۖ وَهُمْ يَذْكُرُ الرَّحْمَنَ هُمْ كَافِرُونَ ﴿٣٦﴾ خُلِقَ الْإِنسَانُ مِنْ عَجَلٍ ۖ سَأُورِيكُمْ آيَاتِي فَلَا تَسْتَعْجِلُونِ ﴿٣٧﴾ وَيَقُولُونَ مَتَىٰ هَذَا الْوَعْدُ إِن كُنتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿٣٨﴾ لَوْ يَعْلَمُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا حِينَ لَا يَكْفُفُونَ عَنْ وُجُوهِهِمُ النَّارَ وَلَا عَنْ ظُهُورِهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يُنصَرُونَ ﴿٣٩﴾ بَلْ تَأْتِيهِمْ بَغْتَةً فَتَبْهَتُهُمْ فَلَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ رَدَّهَا وَلَا هُمْ يُنظَرُونَ ﴿٤٠﴾ وَلَقَدْ اسْتَهْزَىٰ بِرُسُلٍ مِّن قَبْلِكَ فَحَاقَ بِالَّذِينَ سَخِرُوا مِنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِءُونَ ﴿٤١﴾ قُلْ مَن يَمْلِكُكُمْ بِاللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ مِنَ الرَّحْمَنِ ۖ بَلْ هُمْ عَنْ ذِكْرِ رَبِّهِمْ مُّعْرِضُونَ ﴿٤٢﴾ أَمْلَهُمُ الْهَيْئَةُ تَنْعُهُمْ مِّنْ دُونِنَا ۖ لَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ نَصْرَ أَنْفُسِهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ مِّنَّا يُصْحَبُونَ ﴿٤٣﴾ بَلْ مَتَّعْنَا هَؤُلَاءِ وَآبَاءَهُمْ حَتَّىٰ طَالَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْعُمُرُ ۖ أَفَلَا

يَرَوْنَ أَنَّا نَأْتِي الْأَرْضَ نَنْقُصُهَا مِنْ أَطْرَافِهَا أَفَهُمُ الْغَالِبُونَ ﴿٣٤﴾ قُلْ إِنَّمَا أُنذِرُكُمْ بِالْوَحْيِ وَلَا يَسْمَعُ الصُّمُّ الدُّعَاءَ إِذَا مَا يُنذَرُونَ ﴿٣٥﴾ وَلَكِنَّ مَسْئَلَهُمْ نَفْعَةً مِّنْ عَذَابِ رَبِّكَ لِيَقُولُوا يَوْمَئِذٍ إِنَّا كُنَّا ظَالِمِينَ ﴿٣٦﴾ وَنَضَعُ الْمَوَازِينَ الْقِسْطَ لِيَوْمِ الْقِيَمَةِ فَلَا تُظْلَمُ نَفْسٌ شَيْئًا وَإِنْ كَانَ مِثْقَالَ حَبَّةٍ مِّنْ خَرْدَلٍ أَتَيْنَا بِهَا وَكَفَى بِنَا حَاسِبِينَ ﴿٣٧﴾

And before you too, We never gave any mortal eternal life. So, if you die, will they remain forever? Each soul will certainly taste the flavour of death. And We are trying you people through sorrow and joy as a test and to Us shall be your return. (34-35)

And when these disbelievers look at you, they only make fun of you. They say: “So, is this the one who degrades your deities?” And as for themselves, they even reject the Merciful God’s mention. (36)

Impatience is the substance human beings are made of. So, I shall soon show you people My signs. Thus, do not show haste to Me. And they say: “When will this promise be fulfilled, if you are truthful?” Would that these disbelievers could be aware of the time when they will not be able to shield their faces from the torment of the fire nor from their backs and neither will they be helped from anywhere. In fact, it will suddenly come upon them and terrify them. Neither will they be able to drive it away nor will they be given respite. (37-40)

And before you also, messengers have been mocked. Then those of them who mocked them were surrounded by that which they had been mocking. Ask them: Who is protecting you from the punishment of the most Merciful God by the night and day? In fact, these people are turning away from the warning of their Lord. Do these people have some other deities besides Us which will save them? Neither will they be able to help themselves nor would they have any support against Us. (41-43)

In fact, the real thing is that We provided means and resources of the world to them and to their forefathers until a long period passed over them in this situation. Yet, do they not see that We are moving towards the land [of Makkah] by diminishing it from its borders. So, are these people going to remain dominant? (44)

Say: I am only informing you through revelation, but the deaf do not listen to a call when they are warned. And if even any flare of your Lord’s torment touched them, they will call out: “Alas, Our

misfortune! Indeed, We were unjust to our souls.” (45-46)

And on the Day of Judgement, We shall place the balance of justice. Then not the slightest injustice shall any soul suffer and if a person has a deed of the size of even a mustard seed, We shall bring it forth. And We are sufficient to take account. (47)

Explanation

وَمَا جَعَلْنَا لِبَشَرٍ مِّن قَبْلِكَ الْخُلْدَ ۖ أَفَأَن يَمُوتَ فَهُمْ الْخَالِدُونَ ﴿٤٥﴾ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ذَائِقَةُ الْمَوْتِ ۖ وَنَبْلُوكُمْ بِالشَّرِّ وَالْخَيْرِ فِتْنَةً ۖ وَإِلَيْنَا تُرْجَعُونَ ﴿٤٦﴾

In verse 3 earlier, an objection of the disbelievers on Muḥammad (sws) has been cited: why should they believe him to be a prophet when he is a mortal like them who eats and drinks and will ultimately pass away like them? There this objection was answered in a different way. Here once again this objection is taken up and responded to. This time the mental state of those who were raising this objection is criticized. It is stated that eternal life is not a necessary trait of a messenger. The Prophet (sws) is told that before him every human being whether he was a prophet or not met death and in future this will keep happening. None lived forever. If he dies one day, they too will not have an everlasting life. Death is an essential part of every mortal's life. The implication is that this objection could only have carried weight if they themselves had eternal lives. In that case, they could have asked why immortals should believe in a mortal prophet. However, when they too are mortal, why do they demand an immortal prophet?

The words “and We are trying you people through sorrow and joy as a test and to Us shall be your return” are an answer to this objection from another angle. Just as they objected to the Prophet (sws) being a human being, they also said that if God wanted a messenger to be from human beings, He would have selected some affluent person of Makkah or Ṭā'if; why did He choose someone who was poor and had no status? The Qur'an

1. And before you too, We never gave any mortal eternal life. So, if you die, will they remain forever? Each soul will certainly taste the flavour of death. And We are trying you people through sorrow and joy as a test and to Us shall be your return.

has answered this question in different ways. Here too it has taken up the answer from a new angle. It is stated that just as it is not essential for a messenger to be a superhuman, it is also not essential that he be a person of wealth and status. In this world, affluence is neither a proof of a person being close to God nor poverty a sign of him being inferior. Here, affluence and poverty, grief and joy are trials. Through them, the Almighty tests His servants and distinguishes the good from the evil. When He blesses someone with wealth and status, He tests his sense of gratitude. When He makes someone poor, He tests his patience. Then, everyone is to return to Him and He will give His final verdict regarding their fate. People who when blessed with wealth think that they are favoured ones of God and go as far as to believe that it is solely their right to become God's messengers are hugely mistaken.

In this verse, al-Zamakhsharī² regards the word فَتَنَةً to connote emphasis in the verb. However, in my view, it is an accusative of reason (*maf'ūl lahū*). I have presented my research on this word in the exegesis of Sūrah Ṭāhā.

وَإِذَا رَأَى الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِنْ يَتَّخِذُونَكَ إِلَّا هُزُوءًا ۖ أَهَذَا الَّذِي يَذْكُرُ آلِهَتَكُمْ ۖ وَهُمْ يَذْكُرُونَ ۝³

This verse points to the style and tone in which those people made fun of the Prophet (sws). A word to the effect بِالسُّوءِ is suppressed after the expression يَذْكُرُ آلِهَتَكُمْ implying that he mentions them in a degrading way. It was as if the Almighty did not even like to mention the word “degrading” for these idols. The pronoun of address يَذْكُرُ آلِهَتَكُمْ in is to incite their masses. They did not say “he degrades our idols.” On the contrary, they used the words “he degrades your idols.”

The sentence “and as for themselves, they even reject the Merciful God's mention” refers to the fact that they have such a great sense of honour for the idols made from mud that wherever they spot God's Messenger they start teasing and mocking him;

2. Al-Zamakhsharī, *Al-Kashshāf*, vol. 3, 117.

3. And when these disbelievers look at you, they only make fun of you. They say: “So, is this the one who degrades your deities?” And as for themselves, they even reject the Merciful God's mention.

however, as for the Merciful God – the real deity – they do not even like to hear His mention let alone any sense of honour for Him. It may be kept in mind that people who get incriminated with any form of polytheism, such is their hearts' perversion that their sense of honour for their deities becomes so sharp that they are prepared to fight everyone who points a finger at them; however, for God Almighty, their sense of honour completely vanishes. Such is their insensitivity to it that even if someone abuses Him in front of them, they do not feel any anger.

خُلِقَ الْإِنْسَانُ مِنْ عَجَلٍ ۖ سَأُورِيكُمْ آيَاتِي فَلَا تَسْتَعْجِلُونِ ﴿٢٥﴾ وَيَقُولُونَ مَتَى هَذَا الْوَعْدُ
إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿٢٦﴾⁴

The word “human beings” here refers to those people who made fun. Such is their uncouth nature that they are mentioned in a general way. They are told that if there is a delay in God’s punishment, it is because of God’s grace. He wants people to benefit from this respite by seeking forgiveness and mending their ways; however, human beings are very impatient; instead of benefitting from this period, they seek to hasten God’s punishment. After that they are threatened that they should refrain from making haste; very soon they will see signs from God which will persuade them that what the messenger is warning them is destined to come before them in this world as well as the next.

لَوْ يَعْلَمُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا حِينَ لَا يَكْفُونُ عَنْ وُجُوهِهِمُ النَّارَ وَلَا عَنْ ظُهُورِهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يُنصَرُونَ ﴿٢٧﴾⁵

This verse expresses regret at their attitude. It will lead them to the doom it mentions. They will be helplessly stranded in it.

بَلْ تَأْتِيهِمْ بَغْتَةً فَتَبْهَتُهُمْ فَلَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ رَدَّهَا وَلَا هُمْ يُنظَرُونَ ﴿٢٨﴾⁶

These people are told that they should not ask for its time of

4. Impatience is the substance human beings are made of. So, I shall soon show you people My signs. Thus, do not show haste to Me. And they say: “When will this promise be fulfilled, if you are truthful?”

5. Would that these disbelievers could be aware of the time when they will not be able to shield their faces from the torment of the fire nor from their backs and neither will they be helped from anywhere.

6. In fact, it will suddenly come upon them and terrify them. Neither will they be able to drive it away nor will they be given respite.

arrival because none knows about it. It will suddenly descend upon them.

وَلَقَدْ اسْتَهْزَأَ بِرُسُلٍ مِّن قَبْلِكَ فَحَاقَ بِالَّذِينَ سَخِرُوا مِنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِءُونَ ﴿٧﴾

In order to assure the Prophet (sws), historical evidence is cited in this verse. He is facing nothing new and the fate of such people will also be nothing new.

It is evident from the words “then those of them who mocked them were surrounded by that which they had been mocking” that only those people are destroyed in the decisive torment that visits nations who deny their messenger and insist on this denial. This established practice of God has been mentioned at various instances in this exegesis.

قُلْ مَنْ يَكْفُوكُم بِاللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ مِنَ الرَّحْمَنِ ط بَلْ هُمْ عَنْ ذِكْرِ رَبِّهِمْ مُّعْرِضُونَ ﴿٨﴾

The verse admonishes them: what army do they have to protect themselves from the torment they are arrogantly demanding.

The last part expresses sorrow at their misfortune. Their arrogance stands on a foundation that has no base. It is not that they have made any arrangement to protect themselves from God’s torment because of which they are being haughty; they are in fact ignoring God’s reminder by being indifferent to their fate.

أَمْ لَهُمْ آلِهَةٌ تَتَنَعَّمُ مِن دُونِنَا لَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ نَصْرَ أَنفُسِهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ مِنَّا يُصْحَبُونَ ﴿٩﴾

It should be kept in mind that the self-made idols of the polytheists were all imaginary. If anyone of them existed, about it the verse states that how can it save others if it cannot even save itself?

7. And before you also, messengers have been mocked. Then those of them who mocked them were surrounded by that which they had been mocking.

8. Ask them: Who is protecting you from the punishment of the most Merciful God by the night and day? In fact, these people are turning away from the warning of their Lord.

9. Do these people have some other deities besides Us which will save them? Neither will they be able to help themselves nor will they have any support against Us.

بَلْ مَتَّعْنَا هَؤُلَاءِ وَآبَاءَهُمْ حَتَّى طَالَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْعُمُرُ أَفَلَا يَرَوْنَ أَنَّ نَاتِي الْأَرْضِ نَنْقُصُهَا مِنْ أَطْرَافِهَا أَفَهُمُ الْغَالِبُونَ ﴿١٠﴾

This verse refers to the real reason of their arrogance. They think that the respect and authority they have has been inherited by them from their forefathers and thus they are its rightful heirs: they have been born with these favours and they will continue to enjoy them; after them, their progeny will inherit them. This baseless notion made them indifferent to the waning of the messenger and they regarded all his admonitions to be a bluff. There is nothing that can challenge their political authority.

After benefiting from God's favour for a long time, the hearts of these ingrates have hardened. In Sūrah al-Ḥadīd, this is mentioned thus:

وَلَا يَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ مِنْ قَبْلُ فَطَالَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْأَمَدُ فَقَسَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ
(٥٧: ١٦)

And be not like those who were given the Book before this; so, a long period passed on them and their hearts hardened. (57:16)

The word “land” in the verse under discussion refers to Makkah. In verse 41 of Sūrah al-Ḥajj, Muslims are permitted to wage war to liberate the house of God from the occupation of the disbelievers: *الَّذِينَ إِنْ مَكَّنَّاهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ أَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوُا الزَّكَاةَ وَأَمَرُوا بِالْبِعْرُوفِ وَنَهَوْا* *الَّذِينَ إِنْ مَكَّنَّاهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ أَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوُا الزَّكَاةَ وَأَمَرُوا بِالْبِعْرُوفِ وَنَهَوْا* ¹¹ *عَنِ الْفُسْكَارِ* ¹¹ *وَاللَّهُ عَاقِبَةُ الْأُمُورِ*. Here too the word *الْأَرْضِ* is used for Makkah. Same is the case in verse 41 of Sūrah al-Ra‘d. Various aspects related to it have been discussed in detail there.

In the verse under discussion, signs of the dominance of Islam are referred to which by that time had become evident. The

10. In fact, the real thing is that We provided means and resources of the world to them and to their forefathers until a long period passed over them in this situation. Yet, are they not seeing that We are moving towards the land [of Makkah] by diminishing it from its borders. So, are these people going to remain dominant?

11. We will help those people who if We grant them sovereignty in this land, they shall be diligent in the prayer, pay *zakāh*, command good and forbid evil. And the fate of all matters is in the hands of God alone.

conflict between truth and falsehood was going on in Makkah at that time. As far as the city was concerned, the forces of truth were still facing oppression; however, Islam was spreading fast in its whereabouts especially in Madīnah. It was gradually becoming clear that the time for evil and falsehood was about to expire. Proceeding from its suburbs and whereabouts, Islam was slowly tightening its grip on the city of Makkah. By pointing towards this scenario, it is said that its borders are being gradually diminished by God and the hold of the disbelievers in this city is weakening. In the last part of the verse “so are these people going to remain dominant,” the Qur’ān raises the question of dominance of Islam: will these disbelievers hold sway or will the adherents to Islam do so? If any sign is needed, why don’t they observe what is happening around them.

قُلْ إِنَّمَا أُنذِرُكُمْ بِالْوَحْيِ ۖ وَلَا يَسْمَعُ الصُّمُّ الدُّعَاءَ إِذَا مَا يُنذَرُونَ ﴿١٢﴾ وَلَئِنْ مَسَّتْهُمْ
نَفْحَةٌ مِّنْ عَذَابِ رَبِّكَ لَيَقُولُنَّ يُرِيدُنَا إِتَّكُنَّا ظَالِمِينَ ﴿١٣﴾

In response to the demand of signs of torment from him, the Prophet (sws) should tell them that he is informing them through divine revelation. This is because instead of being inflicted by a calamity, they use their intellect to contemplate how they can secure themselves from God’s wrath. This is in fact something beneficial to them and should have invoked their sentiments of gratitude. However, instead of duly valuing it, they are inviting their doom.

The words “but the deaf do not listen to a call when they are warned” sound an assurance to the Prophet (sws): if these people are not valuing this favour, it is their own misfortune. Their intellect and hearts are deaf. When the deaf are informed of an imminent danger, they do not hear this call and ultimately fall in the pit they are being warned of.

The implication of the second of the above cited verses is that today these people are stubbornly demanding a sign as if they have all the armoury to face it. However, all this obduracy is

12. Say: I am only informing you through revelation, but the deaf do not listen to a call when they are warned. And if even any flare of your Lord’s torment touched them, they will call out: “Alas, Our misfortune! Indeed, We were unjust to our souls.”

until the time of its appearance. If even a minor part of God's wrath manifests itself, they will realize their vulnerability. The word نَفْعَةٌ is not defined to show if they face even a small part of God's torment, their resistance will vanish, what to speak of His whole punishment.

وَنَضَعُ الْمَوَازِينَ الْقِسْطَ لِيَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ فَلَا تُظْلَمُ نَفْسٌ شَيْئًا وَإِنْ كَانَ مِثْقَالَ حَبَّةٍ مِّنْ خَرْدَلٍ أَتَيْنَا بِهَا وَكَفَى بِنَا حَاسِبِينَ ﴿١٣﴾

Exegetes have generally interpreted the لِيَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ to connote فِي. However, in my opinion, it signifies the consequence and objective. In other words, for the manifestation of the consequence of the Day of Judgement, God will place the balance. It may be kept in mind that the Day of Judgement is not an objective in itself: it is essential for the manifestation of God's justice.

The noun of كَانَ in وَإِنْ كَانَ is suppressed because of concomitant indication.

The feminine pronoun in أَتَيْنَا بِهَا refers to حَبَّةٍ.

The last part of the verse refers to the fact that God does not need the help of anyone to call people to account. If people think that this task is beyond Him, then this is their misunderstanding. And if some others think that He is dependent on their deities to find out information only they are privy to, this again is a wrong notion.

In Sūrah Luqmān, this topic is referred to thus:

يُبْنَىٰ إِنَّهَا إِنْ تَك مِثْقَالَ حَبَّةٍ مِّنْ خَرْدَلٍ فَتَكُنْ فِي صَخْرَةٍ أَوْ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ أَوْ فِي الْأَرْضِ يَأْتِ بِهَا اللَّهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَطِيفٌ حَبِيرٌ (٣١ : ١٦)

My son! If an act is of the size of a mustard seed, God will it bring forth even if it is in a mountain pass or in the heavens or the earth. Indeed, God is very Discerning and all-Knowing. (31:16)

13. And on the Day of Judgement, We shall place the balance of justice. Then not the slightest injustice shall any soul suffer and if a person has a deed of the size of even a mustard seed, We shall bring it forth. And We are sufficient to take account.

Section V: Verses (48-77)

Earlier in verse 24, it was stated through the tongue of the Prophet (sws): “This is the teaching of those who are with me and of those also who were before me.” Now those prophets are mentioned in a sequence who were the founders of their respective nations. Just before Muḥammad (sws), Moses (sws) was the messenger who was bestowed *sharī‘ah* from God.¹⁴ Thus he is mentioned the foremost and his brother Aaron (sws) too is referred to in this regard who was his helper. After that Abraham (sws) is mentioned who was the founder of nations and the leader of both branches of his progeny – the Israelites and the Ishmaelites. Thus, during his mention, Isaac (sws), Jacob (sws) and Lot (sws) too are alluded to. After this, Noah (sws), who occupies the status of Adam the second, is mentioned. A reference to all these prophets is like a reference to the whole sequence of guidance. The purpose is to explain to the adversaries of the Prophet (sws) that they are being given the same guidance as the one given to people by his predecessors. Their prophet too has the same traits as the ones of earlier prophets. At the same time, they are reminded that they will meet the same fate as that of the rejecters of the previous prophets if they persist in their denial.

Readers may now proceed to study these verses in the light of this background.

Text and Translation

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى وَهَارُونَ الْفُرْقَانَ وَضِيَاءً وَذِكْرًا لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿٦٧﴾ الَّذِينَ يَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ بِالْغَيْبِ وَهُمْ مِّنَ السَّاعَةِ مُشْفِقُونَ ﴿٦٨﴾ وَهَذَا ذِكْرٌ مُّبَارَكٌ أَنزَلْنَاهُ أَفَأَنْتُمْ لَهُ مُنْكَرُونَ ﴿٦٩﴾ وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ رُشْدَهُ مِن قَبْلُ وَكُنَّا بِهِ عَلِيمِينَ ﴿٧٠﴾ إِذْ قَالَ لِأَبِيهِ وَقَوْمِهِ مَا هَذِهِ الشَّيَاطِيلُ الَّتِي أَنْتُمْ لَهَا عَاقِبُونَ ﴿٧١﴾ قَالُوا وَجَدْنَا آبَاءَنَا لَهَا عِبَادِينَ ﴿٧٢﴾ قَالَ لَقَدْ كُنْتُمْ أَنْتُمْ وَآبَاؤُكُمْ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ ﴿٧٣﴾ قَالُوا أَجِئْتَنَا بِالْحَقِّ أَمْ أَنْتَ مِنَ اللَّاعِبِينَ ﴿٧٤﴾ قَالَ بَلْ رَبُّكُمْ رَبُّ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ الَّذِي فَطَرَهُنَّ ۖ وَأَنَا عَلَىٰ ذَلِكُمْ مِنَ الشَّاهِدِينَ ﴿٧٥﴾ وَتَاللَّهِ لَأَكِيدَنَّ أَصْنَامَكُمْ بَعْدَ أَنْ تُوَلُّوا مُدْبِرِينَ ﴿٧٦﴾ فَجَعَلَهُمْ جُذُا ۖ أَكْبِيرًا ۖ إِنَّهُمْ لَعَلَّهُمُ الْيَبْرِ جَعُونَ ﴿٧٧﴾ قَالُوا مَن فَعَلَ هَذَا

14. It may be noted that Jesus (sws) was only a follower of the Mosaic *sharī‘ah*.

بِالْهِتَمَاتِ إِنَّهُ لَبِىِّنَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٤٩﴾ قَالُوا سَبِعْنَا فَتَى يَذْكُرُهُمْ يُقَالُ لَهُ إِبْرَاهِيمُ ﴿٥٠﴾ قَالُوا فَاتُّوا بِهِ عَلَىٰ أَعْيُنِ النَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَشْهَدُونَ ﴿٥١﴾ قَالُوا ءَأَنْتَ فَعَلْتَ هَذَا بِالِهَتِنَا يَا إِبْرَاهِيمُ ﴿٥٢﴾ قَالَ بَلْ فَعَلَهُ كَبِيرُهُمْ هَذَا فَاسْأَلُوهُمْ إِنْ كَانُوا يَنْطِقُونَ ﴿٥٣﴾ فَرَجَعُوا إِلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ فَقَالُوا إِنَّكُمْ أَنْتُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ ﴿٥٤﴾ ثُمَّ نَكَسُوا عَلَىٰ رُءُوسِهِمْ لَقَدْ عَلِمْتُمْ مَا هَؤُلَاءِ يَنْطِقُونَ ﴿٥٥﴾ قَالَ أَفَتَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مَا لَا يَنْفَعُكُمْ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَضُرُّكُمْ ﴿٥٦﴾ أَفِ لَكُمْ وَلَيْسَ تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٥٧﴾ قَالُوا حَرِّقُوهُ وَانصُرُوا آلِهَتَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ فاعِلِينَ ﴿٥٨﴾ قُلْنَا يَنَارُ كُونِي بَرْدًا وَسَلَامًا عَلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ ﴿٥٩﴾ وَأَرَادُوا بِهِ كَيْدًا فَجَعَلْنَاهُمُ الْأَخْسَرِينَ ﴿٦٠﴾ وَنَجَّيْنَاهُ وَلُوطًا إِلَى الْأَرْضِ الَّتِي بَرَكْنَا فِيهَا لِلْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٦١﴾ وَهَبْنَا لَهُ إِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ نَافِلَةً ۖ وَكُلًّا جَعَلْنَا صَالِحِينَ ﴿٦٢﴾ وَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ آيَةً يُهَدُّونَ بِأَمْرِنَا وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْهِمْ فِعْلَ الْخَيْرَاتِ وَإِقَامَ الصَّلَاةِ وَإِيتَاءَ الزَّكَاةِ وَكَانُوا لَنَا عَابِدِينَ ﴿٦٣﴾ وَلُوطًا اتَيْنَاهُ حُكْمًا وَعِلْمًا وَنَجَّيْنَاهُ مِنَ الْقَرْيَةِ الَّتِي كَانَتْ تَعْمَلُ الْفَحْشَىٰ ۚ إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا قَوْمَ سَوْءٍ فَسَقِينَ ﴿٦٤﴾ وَأَذَلْنَاهُ فِي رَحْمَتِنَا ۚ إِنَّهُ مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ ﴿٦٥﴾ وَنُوحًا إِذْ نَادَىٰ مِنْ قَبْلُ فَاسْتَجَبْنَا لَهُ فَنَجَّيْنَاهُ وَأَهْلَهُ مِنَ الْكَرْبِ الْعَظِيمِ ﴿٦٦﴾ وَنَصَرْنَاهُ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا ۚ إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا قَوْمَ سَوْءٍ فَأَغْرَقْنَاهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ ﴿٦٧﴾

And to Moses and to Aaron We gave the distinguisher between good and evil and a light and a reminder for the God-fearing. For those who fear their Lord without seeing Him and are afraid of the Hereafter. (48-49)

And this too is a blessed reminder that We have revealed. Then will you people only remain its rejecters? (50)

And before this, We gave Abraham his share of guidance and We knew him very well. When he said to his father and to the people of his nation: "What are these idols you are so devoted to?" They replied: "We have found our forefathers worshipping them only." He said: "You and your forefathers both have remained in evident error." They asked: "Whatever you are presenting before us, is it something serious or are you just jesting?" He said: "In fact, it is your Lord Who is the Lord of the heavens and the earth Who created them and I am among those who bear witness to it before you. And by God! When you leave from here and go away, I have a plan for your idols." Thus, Abraham smashed them all to pieces except for their one big one

so that they turn to it only. (51-58)

They said: “Who has done this with our idols? Indeed, he is very cruel.” People said: “We had heard a youngster called Abraham mentioning them.” They said: “Bring him before everyone so that they too bear witness.” They asked: “Abraham! Did you do this to our idols?” He replied: “In fact, this chief of theirs has done it. So, ask them, if they can speak.” At this, they realized a little and said to one another: “Indeed, it is you who are the wrongdoers.” But then they dropped their heads. They said: “You do know that they cannot speak.” He said: “Do you worship those instead of God who can neither benefit nor harm you. Shame on you and also on those you worship instead of God. Do you people not understand?” (59-67)

They said: “Burn him in the fire and rise to help your deities if you intend to do something.” We commanded: “O Fire! Become cool and safe for Abraham.” And they tried to contrive a plot against him; so, We foiled them. (68-70)

And We saved him and Lot, taking them to a land in which We had placed blessings for the people of the world. And We gave him Isaac and in addition Jacob also. And We made each of them righteous. And We made them leaders who would guide people according to Our direction. And We directed them to do pious deeds, be diligent in the prayer and pay the *zakāh* and they were the ones who only worshipped Us. (71-73)

And We blessed Lot with the power of decision-making and knowledge. And We delivered him from that settlement whose people were involved in abominable acts. They were a very wicked and dreadful people. And We admitted him into Our special mercy. Indeed, he was among the righteous. (74-75)

And We blessed Noah with Our guidance as well. Recall when, before this, he prayed. So, We accepted his prayer and delivered him and his people from a grave calamity, and, to help him, took revenge from the people who denied Our revelations. Indeed, they were a very wicked people. So, We drowned all of them. (76-77)

Explanation

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَىٰ وَهَارُونَ الْفُرْقَانَ وَضِيَاءً وَذِكْرَ اللَّامِتَّقِينَ ﴿٧٦﴾ الَّذِينَ يَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ

بِالْغَيْبِ وَهُمْ مِّنَ السَّاعَةِ مُشْفِقُونَ ﴿١٥﴾

The word الْفَرْقَانَ refers to the standard that distinguishes good from evil. Here it refers to the Torah. Before the Qur'ān, it occupied the status of the Book of God, and it is the Book of God that acts as a standard to distinguish good from evil. Precisely for this reason the Qur'ān too has been given this name. The word ضِيَاءٌ means “light.” The words ضِيَاءٌ and نُورٌ are used for the Book of God because it delivers people from mental, moral, ideological and practical quagmires and brings them into light. The word ذِكْرٌ means “a reminder.” Just as this word has been used for the Qur'ān at many instances, here it is used for the Torah. I have referred to the various aspects it encompasses in the exegesis of Sūrah Ṭāhā. Since these scriptures remind people of various facts based on the world within them and that around them as well as on history, they are called by this name.

The implication of this verse is that like the Torah, the Qur'ān too will be of benefit to those whose inner light – the light of intellect and nature – has not been extinguished. They are ones who fear God and the Hereafter. This topic has been discussed in detail in the opening verses of Sūrah al-Baqarah. For this reason, I am restricting myself to hints only.

وَهَذَا ذِكْرٌ مُّبْرَكٌ أَنزَلْنَاهُ أَفَأَنْتُمْ كَذِبُونَ ﴿١٦﴾

The implication of this verse is that just as God gave Moses (sws) the Torah, He similarly revealed the Qur'ān too. Though, like the rain of mercy, it is a blessing for everyone, only they will benefit from it who have the ability. The last part of the verse addresses the Quraysh. In other words, they are told they should contemplate what they are really denying.

The account of Moses (sws) has been discussed in detail in the previous section of verses. For this reason, here it is briefly referred to. After this, the account of Abraham (sws) is brought up in detail.

15. And to Moses and to Aaron We gave the distinguisher between good and evil and a light and a reminder for the God-fearing. For those who fear their Lord without seeing Him and are afraid of the Hereafter.

16. And this too is a blessed reminder that We have revealed. Then will you people only remain its rejecters?

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ رُشْدَهُ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَكُنَّا بِهِ عَلِيمِينَ ﴿١٧﴾

The word رُشْدُ means “guidance and comprehension of God.” The way it occurs with an accusative pronoun here has incorporated a special meaning in it. The implication is that God gave Abraham (sws) the guidance and comprehension he was worthy of. There are various stages of this guidance and comprehension. The Almighty bestows it in proportion to a person’s abilities in accordance with his status. The extent and share of guidance given to Abraham (sws) has been explained under verse 124 of Sūrah al-Baqarah. It is towards that share that this verse points.

The last part of the verse under discussion implies that the high status that God bestowed on Abraham (sws) was after he proved worthy of it by passing through very stringent trials. This also is a stern comment on those who do not find in themselves the strength to even follow the easiest of practices of Abraham (sws) but want to be ascribed to him. On the basis of this ascription, they even think that they deserve a high status in both this world and the next. It is stated that God does not give any person a status he does not deserve. Whatever He bestows on anyone is on the basis of that person’s ability and capacity.

إِذْ قَالَ لِأَبِيهِ وَقَوْمِهِ مَا هَذِهِ التَّمَاثِيلُ الَّتِي أَنْتُمْ لَهَا عِقْفُونَ ﴿١٨﴾

From this verse begins a mention of an incident that occurred earlier on in the life of Abraham (sws). It shows his bravery and courage as well as the guidance and comprehension he was bestowed upon by the Almighty. He was born in an idol-worshipping family and his father was a person who carved out idols. However, he was blessed with the light of monotheism which until now has continued to light up the world and will continue doing so until the Day of Judgement. His words mentioned in this verse challenge the beliefs of his family early in his life. The humiliation they carry for the idols and the sarcasm

17. And before this, We gave Abraham his share of guidance and We knew him very well.

18. When he said to his father and to the people of his nation: “What are these idols you are so devoted to?”

found in عَفُورٌ for the thick-headedness of his father and his nation is not hidden to anyone who appreciates the finer aspects of language. At such a tender age, only that person can raise this slogan of monotheism who is specially blessed by God and whose splendour and majesty of faith is devoid of any fear or greed.

قَالُوا وَجَدْنَا آبَاءَنَا لَهَا عِبِدِينَ ﴿٥٥﴾ قَالَ لَقَدْ كُنْتُمْ أَنتُمْ وَآبَاؤُكُمْ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ ﴿٥٦﴾¹⁹

The greatest argument that has always been presented in favour of such foolishness has been its origin from the forefathers. In spite of being so silly, it carries a lot of weight for the common masses. It appeals to their sentiments of tribal support and communal honour. As a result, adopting any different path or inviting towards it is a tall order. However, mere blows could not have extinguished the light God had blessed Abraham (sws) with. His answer mentioned in the verses under discussion reflect this. A mistake does not become guidance merely becomes it has been instituted by someone's forefathers. In fact, it must be judged on the basis of human nature and intellect.

قَالُوا اجْعَلْنَا بَالِحَ الْحَقِّ أَمْ أَنْتَ مِنَ اللَّعِينِينَ ﴿٥٥﴾ قَالَ بَلْ رَبُّكُمْ رَبُّ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ الَّذِي فَطَرَهُنَّ وَأَنَا عَلَىٰ ذَلِكُمْ مِنَ الشَّاهِدِينَ ﴿٥٦﴾²⁰

The word حَقٌّ here means something that is serious and well thought of. Such was the strange nature of these words of Abraham (sws) for his people that they could not believe that any person in his senses could utter them. They thought that he was a young man with a raw mind and had said something impulsively without giving it any serious thought. That is why they posed the question referred to in the verse. They regarded this declaration of Abraham (sws) to be a non-serious expression and a matter of jest so that it does not have any impact on the masses. But Abraham (sws) took a second step in this regard by telling them that their stone-carved

19. They replied: "We have found our forefathers worshipping them only." He said: "You and your forefathers both have remained in evident error."

20. They asked: "Whatever you are presenting before us, is it something serious or are you just jesting?" He said: "In fact, it is your Lord Who is the Lord of the heavens and the earth Who created them and I am among those who bear witness to it before you."

idols cannot be their Lord; in fact, their Lord is the God of the heavens and the earth Who has created them and that he invites them to this fact and proclaims it among them. The word شَهِادَة here refers to a declaration and proclamation. It is used in this meaning at several instances in the Qur'ān.

21 ﴿وَتَاللّٰهِ لَا كَيْدَ لَكُمْۢ بَعْدَ اَنْ تَوَلُّوا۟ مُدْبِرِيۡنَ﴾

At this juncture, Abraham (sws) said these words to his nation. The word كَيْدٌ has been discussed at various places. It refers to a measure or a step done against a rival in secret.

It is evident from the words “when you leave from here and go away” that Abraham (sws) had made this assertion in some gathering within the temple. He just insinuated at his intention and hid his real scheme. Details are forthcoming in the circumstances it manifested itself. However, before reading about it, it is appropriate to take a look at the style of Abraham’s reasoning that was explained under verses 76-79 of Sūrah al-An‘ām. Just as Abraham (sws) would use subtle sarcasm in his arguments, he would also try to lead his addressees gradually to the conclusion he wanted them to grasp. They would not even be able to imagine from where he would bring his arguments and leave them speechless. Ultimately, they would only be left with the option of confessing defeat. This is a very special feature of his reasoning.

On this occasion too, he resorted to this style of reasoning. Grabbing an opportunity at night time, he smashed the idols into small pieces and just left the large one intact. He reckoned that he would put the blame on it if they questioned him. He thought that he would ask them to inquire from these oppressed ones about their ordeal. Obviously, the only answer they would have would be that these idols cannot speak. He would then tell them that if they can neither inform them about the calamity that struck them nor avert it themselves, how can they regard them to be deities? It is this scheme which Abraham (sws) called as كَيْدٌ. The aspects of sarcasm, humour and gradual reasoning found in it are quite evident. Details of how this scheme left his adversaries with no excuse to deny the truth are forthcoming.

21. “And by God! When you leave from here and go away, I have a plan for your idols.”

22 ﴿فَجَعَلَهُمْ جُودًا إِلَّا كَيْدَ الْإِلَهِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ﴾

The word جُودٌ refers to something that has been smashed to bits and pieces. This verse mentions the hidden scheme of Abraham (sws) that he adopted to fulfil his objective. If they realized their folly, he would be able to say to them in a conclusive way that when those small and big idols could not speak, how could they regard them to be their deities?

23 ﴿قَالُوا مَنْ فَعَلَ هَذَا بِآلِهَتِنَا إِنَّهُ لَبِئْسَ الظَّالِمِينَ﴾

This verse is composed of two separate sentences. Their amazement and anxiety are evident from the first, and their anger and fury from the second. In other words, when they saw what had happened to their idols, a question arose in their minds as to who was responsible for this? Then they expressed rage by regarding such a person to be cruel.

24 ﴿قَالُوا سِعْنًا فَنَّى يَذْكُرُهُمْ يُقَالُ لَهُ إِبْرَاهِيمُ﴾

Ultimately, people who were aware of Abraham's views, his above cited message and his challenge said that it must be him who had done it because they had heard him mention the idols in a degrading way. They suppressed the word “degrading” the way it is suppressed in verse 26. It is as if they did not even want to refer to their idols in such words.

The threat sounded by Abraham (sws) regarding the idols was done in an emphatic way and before people. It was not a secret plan. His message of monotheism too was declared openly by him. Many people knew his views. But they thought that these were mere expressions of an enthusiastic individual and nothing more than a rush of blood, as is referred to earlier. They never thought that he would take such a step. For this reason, they neither imposed any restriction on him nor took any measure to protect their idols. They must have thought that however much a

22. Thus, Abraham smashed them all to pieces except for their one big one so that they turn to it only.

23. They said: “Who has done this with our idols? Indeed, he is very cruel.”

24. People said: “We had heard a youngster called Abraham mentioning them.”

person may be averse to their idols, he could never dare to make such a dangerous move against them. But when this incident took place, those who were aware of him said that it had to be his work since they had heard him degrade their deities.

It is evident from the words “a youngster called Abraham” that although many people were aware of his message, he was not that well-known in the nation that people be aware of him personally. However, his name had reached various circles and he was beginning to be known as someone who had rebellious tendencies against their ancestral religion. It was because of this that he was referred to in a degrading way by those who knew him.

قَالُوا فَاتُّبَاهِ عَلَىٰ أَعْيُنِ النَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَشْهَدُونَ ﴿٢٥﴾

Once Abraham (sws) had been accused of this move against their idols, he was summoned in public by the chiefs of his nation so that the matter came to everyone’s notice. This must have been done because the crime in their opinion was a grave one. It had a very stern punishment in their law. For this reason, they must have thought that an inquiry should be publicly conducted against him so that people know the gravity of the crime and the punishment pronounced a means of teaching a lesson to all and sundry. It may be kept in mind that in those times, such verdicts were delivered by religious chiefs. If ever there was a government in place, it would only implement these verdicts.

قَالُوا أَنْتَ فَعَلْتَ هَٰذَا بِإِلَهِنَا يَا ابْنِ هِيمَ ﴿٢٦﴾ قَالَ بَلْ فَعَلَهُ كَبِيرُهُمْ هَٰذَا فَاسْأَلُوهُمْ إِنَّ
كَانُوا يَنْطِقُونَ ﴿٢٦﴾

Abraham (sws) was thus summoned to the court of the religious chiefs before the public and then ensued the conversation the verse mentions.

By giving the answer cited, he completely cornered the elders of his nation and they were not left with anything but to confess defeat. Verse 65 and 66 ahead depict their response.

People who think that the words “in fact, this chief of theirs

25. They said: “Bring him before everyone so that they too bear witness.”

26. They asked: “Abraham! Did you do this to our idols?” He replied: “In fact, this chief of theirs has done it. So, ask them, if they can speak.”

has done it” of Abraham (sws) constitute a lie or is a statement of fear on his part have failed to understand the subtle eloquence of this sentence. The question of fear cannot even arise because if he had boldly declared monotheism in the temple of his nation, announced a move against the idols and then right in the middle of the court proceedings cursed the idols and their worshippers by the words “shame on you” (verse 67), then regarding such a proponent of the truth to be a cowardly person is absolutely illogical. How can such a person be scared of any danger?

As for his statement being regarded as a lie, then regardless of the debate that he could or could not lie, the words do not bespeak this inference. What can be said about it is that his words constituted a very subtle form of sarcasm, meaningful mockery and a gradual sequence of argumentation. It does not have the slightest semblance of any falsehood in it. It is precisely for this reason that his own people never even accused him of lying. They could have easily done so if they really thought that he was lying. So, when his enemies dared not regard him a liar, why should we dare to do so?

Some people were led to form this view because of a ḥadīth in which it is stated that Abraham had lied three times. Once of these lies is the one referred to in the verse under discussion. In my opinion, they have misunderstood this ḥadīth.

The word كَذَب occurs in many meanings in the Arabic language. If it is said كَذَب فلان, then just as it means “he lied” it also means “he made a mistake” as well “he implied a double-meaning.” The meaning intended at an instance is always determined by the context. As for the last of the above referred to meanings, it implies that what is said before one’s rival makes him misunderstand what the speaker intends to convey. The manner of gradual argumentation to corner a rival mentioned earlier is also a type of it. Some very subtle and well-intended examples of such double-meaning statements are found in the Qur’ān and also in the conversations of our illustrious predecessors of the past. In Sūrah Yūsuf, some very telling examples can be seen too. Another subtle example is the words of Abraham (sws) اِنِّى سَقِيمٌ mentioned in verse 89 of Sūrah al-Şāffāt where it shall be explained. Not only is this manner of speaking flawless, at times it is a very effective measure resorted to by the righteous. I can present examples from classical Arabic

literature in support of this meaning in which the word كذب is ascribed to Abraham (sws), but this will prolong the discussion. I will wait for an opportune moment to present it.

It may be kept in mind that the words “in fact, this chief of theirs has done it” of Abraham (sws) form a very clear argument to refute polytheism that has been mentioned in the Qur’ān in various styles. If it is accepted that there are several big and small deities who govern this universe, there is no reason for the chief deity to accept others as his partners. And if because of some temporary benefit, he does accept them, it is quite probable that one day he just dismantles their partnership. It is this reality which Abraham (sws) tried to teach through the move he made. It will also become evident from later verses that his addressees even understood it though they could not accept it. Nevertheless, this whole exercise is a very sagacious one undertaken to refute and put to shame polytheism and its proponents. There is not the slightest reason to regard it as a lie.

27 ﴿فَرَجَعُوا إِلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ فَقَالُوا إِنَّكُمْ أَنْتُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ﴾

The verse implies that this measure undertaken by Abraham (sws) did startle them and they did turn towards their innate guidance; they started to say to one another that they call this young person to be a wrongdoer whereas he has proven them to be wrongdoers: their deities do not even have the strength to ward off a calamity that strikes them or even state it before others.

28 ﴿ثُمَّ نَكَّسُوا عَلَىٰ رُءُوسِهِمْ لَقَدْ عَلِمْتُمْ مَا هَٰؤُلَاءِ يَنْطِقُونَ﴾

The word نكس means to topple something on its head. In other words, they did open their eyes for a while as a result of this warning from Abraham (sws) but then their heads dropped down and uttered what the verse says. Even people who are such ignorant at times see the light as a result of an incident or a warning, but their bias and prejudice does not let them accept the truth. As a result, they again become deaf and blind and revert to their ill-ways.

27. At this, they realized a little and said to one another: “Indeed, it is you who are the wrongdoers.”

28. But then they dropped their heads. They said: “You do know that they cannot speak.”

29. قَالَ أَفَتَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ مَا لَا يَنْفَعُكُمْ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَضُرُّكُمْ ﴿٢٩﴾

Once his addressees made the confession referred to in the previous verse, Abraham (sws) struck a telling blow by continuing in the same vein and uttering these words. They could only have had the required impact after the helplessness of the idols had become evident. In the absence of this, these people would have had several excuses to make. However, now that their idols were before them in shattered pieces, their worshippers were left shell-shocked and had nothing to say.

30. أَفِ لَكُمْ وَلِبَاءُ تَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٣٠﴾

The expression أَفِ لَكُمْ connotes extreme hate and aversion. It was uttered once Abraham (sws) had conclusively communicated the truth to his people and they were not left with any excuse. The last part of the verse is a reflection on their foolishness: what is the benefit of worshipping such stone idols who cannot even defend themselves? How can help them?

31. قَالُوا حَرِّقُوهُ وَانصُرُوا آلِهَتَكُمْ إِن كُنتُمْ فَاعِلِينَ ﴿٣١﴾

When the idol-worshippers and the temple-pundits saw that they had been exposed, they incited the masses to rise in support of their deities. It seems that this appeal was very effective and some suggestions too came to the fore about they should now deal with Abraham (sws). However, the pundits were not satisfied with these suggestions. They opined that burning him would be the most effective measure. They thought that this was the only effective way to deal with this mess.

32. قُلْنَا إِنَّا نُكُونُ بِرَذَاوَسَلْنَا عَلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ ﴿٣٢﴾

As a consequence of this decision, Abraham (sws) was thrown into a fire but God made him secure from its ill-effects. How

29. He said: "Do you worship those instead of God who can neither benefit nor harm you."

30. "Shame on you and also on those you worship instead of God. Do you people not understand?"

31. They said: "Burn him in the fire and rise to help your deities if you intend to do something."

32. We commanded: "O Fire! Become cool and safe for Abraham."

exactly was this done is not mentioned in the Qur'ān? The effects of all elements of nature are under God's control and hence if the fire was deprived of its effects, it is not improbable at all. He has the power to alleviate the effect of poison when He wants to. Even today we witness such out of the ordinary happenings.

33. **وَأَرَادُوا بِهِ كَيْدًا فَجَعَلْنَاهُمُ الْأَخْسَرِينَ** ﴿٣٣﴾

The pundits conspired to have Abraham (sws) cast in the fire. Verse 98 of Sūrah al-Şaffāt also refers to it. There I will, God willing, explain it. This conspiracy failed and after that Abraham (sws) migrated from that place.

34. **وَنَجَّيْنَاهُ وَلُوطًا إِلَى الْأَرْضِ الَّتِي بَارَكْنَا فِيهَا لِلْعَالَمِينَ** ﴿٣٤﴾

The land referred to here is Canaan. In other words, when matters reached the extent that Abraham (sws) could not stay in his country, God saved him and Lot (sws) from the evil of their nations and took him to this land. Lot (sws) was Abraham's nephew. Even though the circle of preaching of both was different, both accompanied each other in this migration. Until migration both invited their respective nations to the truth. After migration, both went to different areas. What happened to Abraham's people after he left them is not known.

وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ إِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ نَافِلَةً ۖ وَكُلًّا جَعَلْنَا صَالِحِينَ ۚ وَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ أَسْبَاطَ ۖ يَهُدُونَ بِآمِرِنَا وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْهِمْ فِعْلَ الْخَيْرَاتِ وَإِقَامَ الصَّلَاةِ وَإِيتَاءَ الزَّكَاةِ وَكَانُوا لَنَا عِبِيدِينَ ﴿٣٥﴾

These verses mention the favours God blessed Abraham (sws) with one after the other after he had migrated. It was for the sake of God that he had left his family and near ones. So God blessed him with sons and grandsons in return. The relatives he had left were absolutely wretched and worthless. God replaced them with

33. And they tried to contrive a plot against him; so, We foiled them.

34. And We saved him and Lot, taking them to a land in which We had placed blessings for the people of the world.

35. And We gave him Isaac and in addition Jacob also. And We made each of them righteous. And We made them leaders who would guide people according to Our direction. And We directed them to do pious deeds, be diligent in the prayer and pay the *zakāh* and they were the ones who only worshipped Us.

pious and worthy individuals. The words “in addition” refer to the fact though God granted Ishmael (sws) to Abraham (sws) as a result of his supplication, He also blessed him in addition with Isaac (sws) and Jacob (sws) and after that a series of prophets came in their progeny.³⁶ The words **وَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ أَيْمَّةً** indicate that these prophets were founders of nations and were their leaders. Though each prophet is a leader by virtue of his status, there have been such prophets who had none except their shadow as their follower. Both Isaac (sws) and Jacob (sws) were in fact leaders of their nation and appointed by God.

The expression **إِقَامَ الصَّلَاةِ** is actually **إِقَامَةُ الصَّلَاةِ**. The ة has been dropped in deference to the beat and rhythm of the verse. Such reductions are common in Arabic. By pointing out the components of the message of these prophets, the purpose is to show that their message was the same as that of the Qur'ān. All prophets worshipped God only and never submitted themselves to anyone but Him. The implication is that those who claim to be their followers should evaluate their own beliefs and deeds and see how far they have strayed from their teachings.

وَلَوْ طَآئِفَةٌ مِّنْهُمْ كَانَتْ تَأْتُونَ بِلَاغٍ مِّنْهُم بِالْحَقِّ لَوَجَدُوا عِندَهُ خُزَيْنًا مَّا يُذْخِرُ لِكُلِّ فِتْنَةٍ آيَاتٍ ۚ وَرَحِمْنَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ إِذْ قَالَ لِقَوْلِهِ رَبِّ اجْعَلْنِي مُسْلِمًا مُّسْلِمًا ۖ وَرَحِمْنَا يَسَعَ إِذْ قَالَ لِقَوْلِهِ رَبِّ اجْعَلْنِي مُسْلِمًا مُّسْلِمًا ۖ وَرَحِمْنَا هَارُونَ إِذْ قَالَ لِقَوْلِهِ رَبِّ اجْعَلْنِي مُسْلِمًا مُّسْلِمًا ۖ وَرَحِمْنَا لُوطَ إِذْ قَالَ لِقَوْلِهِ رَبِّ نَجِّنِي مِمَّا يَصْنَعُونَ ۚ إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا قَوْمًا سَٰغِيًّا ۚ

Earlier Lot (sws) was mentioned in connection with Abraham (sws). Now he is mentioned independently. “Knowledge” here refers to the knowledge of prophethood. As far as the “power of decision making” mentioned in the verse is concerned, it is the consequence of purity in intellect and nature. “Knowledge” is the consequence of divine revelation. The people whom God chose

36. Under verses 100-112, it will be explained that God rewarded Abraham (sws) with Ishmael (sws) as a result of his supplication and Isaac (sws) and Jacob (sws) as a result of offering Ishmael (sws) for sacrifice. The way the Jews and have distorted this historical fact has been exposed by my mentor Farāhī.

37. And We blessed Lot with the power of decision-making and knowledge. And We delivered him from that settlement whose people were involved in abominable acts. They were a very wicked and dreadful people. And We admitted him into Our special mercy. Indeed, he was among the righteous.

for this status were the best of human beings. They developed their innate abilities until their inner self was fully refined and became worthy of receiving divine revelation. Then when God sent them this revelation, their inner light was supplemented by this divine light.

The details of how Lot (sws) was delivered from the city whose people were involved in abominable acts have already been referred to: he too migrated to Syria along with Abraham (sws). The word “delivered” has been used to show that he was rendered safe from the punishment that visited his people. The expression “abominable acts” primarily refers to their homosexuality. However, the plural shows that such an evil habit is never alone: wherever it surfaces in a nation, it brings with it a host of other evils too. Here they are not named because such is their heinous nature that they are not even worthy of mention. The words “they were a very wicked and dreadful people” point to the reason God delivered His special servant from them and punished them. God did not want His pious and righteous people to stay among the wicked and wretched ones. The word “mercy” refers to the success they achieved in this world by being rendered secure and also the success they will achieve in the Hereafter.

38 ﴿وَنُوحًا إِذْ نَادَىٰ مِنْ قَبْلُ فَاسْتَجَبْنَا لَهُ فَنَجَّيْنَاهُ وَأَهْلَهُ مِنَ الْكَرْبِ الْعَظِيمِ ۚ﴾

The accusative form of نُوحًا is due to the meaning that emanates from the previous verses. The implication would be: “Just as We showed mercy to the afore-mentioned prophets, delivered and helped them, in a similar way, We delivered Noah too and came to His help.”

The verse refers to the final supplication of Noah (sws) that is mentioned in Sūrah Nūḥ and which makes the heart tremble. The way this supplication was accepted will be mentioned in detail in that *sūrah*. Here, readers may just read the last verses of this supplication:

مَبَاطِئَتِهِمْ أُغْرِقُوا فَأَذْخَلُونَا ۖ إِنَّهُمْ لَيَجِدُوا لَهُمْ مِّنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ أَنْصَارًا وَقَالَ نُوحٌ

38. And We blessed Noah with Our guidance as well. Recall when, before this, he prayed. So, We accepted his prayer and delivered him and his people from a grave calamity.

رَّبِّ لَا تَذَرْ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ مِنَ الْكَافِرِينَ دَيَّارًا إِنَّكَ إِن تَذَرَهُمْ يُضِلُّوا عِبَادَكَ وَلَا يَلِدُوا
إِلَّا فَاجِرًا كَفَّارًا رَبِّ اغْفِرْ لِي وَلِوَالِدَيَّ وَلِمَنْ دَخَلَ بَيْتِي مُؤْمِنًا وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَ
الْمُؤْمِنَاتِ وَلَا تَرِدِ الظَّالِمِينَ إِلَّا تَبَارًا. (٧٢: ٢٥-٢٨)

Because of their misdeeds the people of Noah were drowned and were cast into the fire. And they could not find anyone to help them against God. And Noah said: “O Lord! Leave not one of these disbelievers in the land. If You spare them, they will mislead Your servants and will beget none but sinners and disbelievers. Forgive me, Lord, and forgive my parents and everyone who enters my house as a believer and forgive all believing men and believing women and increase these disbelievers only in ruin.” (72:25-28)

I have presented my research on the word أَهْل under verse 132 of Sūrah Tāhā. It refers not only to a person’s family but also to his companions and followers.

The expression “a grave calamity” refers to the affliction Noah (sws) and his followers suffered at the hands of the enemies of the truth and also the great torment which finally completely destroyed them.

وَنَصَرْنَاهُ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا قَوْمَ سَوْءٍ فَأَغْرَقْنَاهُمْ أَجْبَعِينَ ﴿٣٩﴾

The preposition *مِنْ* after *نَصَرْنَا* shows that a verb to the effect (We took revenge) is understood to be present here. Thus an accurate translation would be: “We helped him and took revenge from the people who denied Our revelations.”

The verse very concisely refers to their crimes. Details can be seen in the earlier *sūrahs*. They will also be found ahead in Sūrah Nūh. Here readers may keep in mind the fact that the extent of time period in which Noah (sws) tried to warn his nation bears no parallel. In Sūrah Nūh, the way he compassionately and devotedly went upon trying to awaken his nation from their slumber can be seen. However, so hard-hearted were these people that nothing could impact them. Ultimately, they were punished for this and the

39. And, to help him, took revenge from the people who denied Our revelations. Indeed, they were a very wicked people. So, We drowned all of them.

whole nation was drowned by the Almighty. It was as if the whole nation was a pile of filth that was cleansed from the face of the earth by water from heavens and the earth at God's behest. After that, God once again made Noah (sws) and his followers inhabit the earth. In order to fully grasp this account, it would have been better if its description in the Torah could be studied. However, a more appropriate place for this study is Sūrah Nūḥ.
