

Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl (2)

Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī

Section IV (Verses 22-39)

Earlier in verse 9, it was stated إِنَّ هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ يَهْدِي لِلَّتِي هِيَ أَقْوَمُ وَيُبَشِّرُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ الَّذِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ الصَّالِحَاتِ أَنَّ لَهُمْ أَجْرًا كَبِيرًا¹. After that, the discourse shifted to some other related issues. Now it is once again connecting to the original and the path which the Qur'ān outlines in leading people to God is explained. This is the straight path followed by human nature and intellect and it is this path which brings into existence the life of justice and goodness which God likes and on which is based the foundation of a righteous society. Readers may revise in their minds verse 90 of Sūrah al-Naḥl in which bases of the do's and don'ts of the Qur'ān are delineated:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحْسَانِ وَإِيتَاءِ ذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَيَنْهَىٰ عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ
وَالْبَغْيِ يَعِظُكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ. (٩٠:١٦)

God enjoins you to justice, goodness and spending on the kindred, and forbids lewdness, evil and arrogance. He admonishes you so that you may take heed. (16:90)

The succeeding verses are actually an explanation of the above cited verse.

Readers may now proceed to study them.

Text and Translation

لَا تَجْعَلْ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهًا آخَرَ فَتَقْعَدَ مَذْمُومًا مَّخْذُولًا ﴿٣٦﴾ وَقَضَىٰ رَبُّكَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا

1. Indeed, this Qur'ān shows the way which is absolutely straight and gives glad tidings to the believers who do righteous deeds that for them is a great reward and those who do not believe in the Hereafter, for them We have prepared a painful torment.

إِيَّاهُ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا ۖ إِنَّمَا يُبْلَغُنَّ فِيكَ الْكِبَرُ أَحَدُهُمَا أَوْ كِلَاهُمَا فَلَا تَقُلْ لَهُمَا آفٍ وَلَا
تَنْهَرُهُمَا وَقُلْ لَهُمَا قَوْلًا كَرِيمًا ﴿٢٣﴾ وَخَفِضْ لَهُمَا جَنَاحَ الذُّلِّ مِنَ الرَّحْمَةِ وَقُلْ رَبِّ ارْحَمْهُمَا
كَمَا رَبَّيْنِي صَغِيرًا ﴿٢٤﴾ رَبُّكُمْ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا فِي نُفُوسِكُمْ ۖ إِنَّ تَكُونُوا صَالِحِينَ فَإِنَّهُ كَانَ لِلَّهِ الْوَاسِعِينَ
عَفْوًا ﴿٢٥﴾ وَأَتَاكَ الْغُرُبَىٰ حَقَّهُ وَالْبَنِينَ وَالْأَبْنَ السَّبِيلَ وَلَا تُبْدِرْ تَبْدِيرًا ﴿٢٦﴾ إِنَّ الْبُذْرَيْنِ
كَانُوا إِخْوَانَ الشَّيْطَانِ ۖ وَكَانَ الشَّيْطَانُ لِرَبِّهِمْ كَفُورًا ﴿٢٧﴾ وَإِنَّمَا تَعْرِضُ عَنْهُمْ ابْتِغَاءَ رَحْمَةٍ مِّنْ
رَّبِّكَ تَرْجُوهَا فَقُلْ لَهُمْ قَوْلًا مَّيْسُورًا ﴿٢٨﴾ وَلَا تَجْعَلْ يَدَكَ مَغْلُولَةً إِلَىٰ عُنُقِكَ وَلَا تَبْسُطْهَا
كُلَّ الْبَسْطِ فَتَقْعُدَ مَلُومًا مَّحْضُورًا ﴿٢٩﴾ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَن يَشَاءُ وَيَقْدِرُ ۚ إِنَّهُ كَانَ
بِعِبَادِهِ خَبِيرًا بَصِيرًا ﴿٣٠﴾ وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا أَوْلَادَكُمْ خَشْيَةً إِمْلَاقٍ ۖ نَحْنُ نَرْزُقُهُمْ وَإِيَّاكُمْ ۖ إِنَّ
قَتْلَهُمْ كَانَ خِطَاً كَبِيرًا ﴿٣١﴾ وَلَا تَقْرَبُوا الزَّوْجَ إِنَّهُ كَانَ فَاحِشَةً ۖ وَسَاءَ سَبِيلًا ﴿٣٢﴾ وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا
النَّفْسَ الَّتِي حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ ۖ وَمَن قَتَلَ مَظْلُومًا فَقَدْ جَعَلْنَا لَوْلِيٍّهُ سُلْطَانًا فَلَا يَسْرِفُ
فِي الْقَتْلِ ۚ إِنَّهُ كَانَ مَنْصُورًا ﴿٣٣﴾ وَلَا تَقْرَبُوا مَالَ الْيَتِيمِ إِلَّا بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ حَتَّىٰ يَبْلُغَ أَشُدَّهُ ۚ
وَ أَوفُوا بِالْعَهْدِ ۚ إِنَّ الْعَهْدَ كَانَ مَسْئُولًا ﴿٣٤﴾ وَ أَوفُوا الْكَيْلَ إِذَا كُنْتُمْ وَزَنُوا بِالْقِسْطَاسِ
الْمُسْتَقِيمِ ۚ ذَلِكَ خَيْرٌ وَأَحْسَنُ تَأْوِيلًا ﴿٣٥﴾ وَلَا تَقْفُ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ ۚ إِنَّ السَّمْعَ وَالْبَصَرَ وَ
الْأَفْوَادَ كُلُّ أُولَٰئِكَ كَانَ عَنْهُ مَسْئُولًا ﴿٣٦﴾ وَلَا تَنْشِ فِي الْأَرْضِ مَرَحًا ۚ إِنَّكَ لَن تَخْرِقَ الْأَرْضَ وَ
لَن تَبْلُغَ الْجِبَالَ طُولًا ﴿٣٧﴾ كُلُّ ذِيكَ كَانَ سَيِّئُهُ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ مَكْرُوهًا ﴿٣٨﴾ ذَلِكَ مِمَّا أَوْحَىٰ إِلَيْكَ
رَبُّكَ مِنَ الْحِكْمَةِ ۖ وَلَا تَجْعَلْ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهًا آخَرَ فَتُلْقَىٰ فِي جَهَنَّمَ مَلُومًا مَّدْحُورًا ﴿٣٩﴾

Serve no other deity except God, lest you are left blameworthy and ill-fated. And it is the verdict of your Lord to worship none but Him and to treat your parents very well. If either or both of them attain old age before you, show them no sign of impatience, nor scold them and speak to them with decency, and with softness lower arms of tenderness on them and keep praying: "Lord! be merciful to them the way they nursed me in childhood." Your Lord fully knows what is in your hearts. If you remain obedient, He is very forgiving to those who turn to Him. (22-25)

And give to the near of kin his due, and also to the destitute and the traveller. And do not squander your wealth wastefully, for the wasteful are brothers of devils; and the Devil is extremely ungrateful to his Lord. And while waiting for your Lord's bounty

which you are hopeful of, if you have to ignore them, then speak to them softly. And neither tie your hand with your neck nor leave it totally loose that you earn reproach and be reduced to indigence. Indeed, it is your Lord Who gives abundantly to whomsoever He pleases and sparingly to whomsoever He pleases. Indeed, He is aware of His servants and observes them. (26-30)

And do not kill your children for fear of poverty. We provide for them and for you as well. Killing them is indeed a heinous crime. And do not even go near adultery because it is blatant lewdness and a very evil path. And do not wrongfully kill any person whose life has been held sacred by God and he who is slain unjustly, We have given his guardian the authority. Then he should not exceed limits in killing because he has been helped. And do not even go near the wealth of an orphan except in a way that is better for him until he reaches his age of maturity. And keep your promises because you shall be held accountable for promises. And when you measure give full measure, and weigh with correct scales. This is better and fairer as far as the consequences are concerned. And do not go after what you know not because ears, eyes and heart – each of them shall be questioned. And do not walk arrogantly on the earth; neither can you split apart the earth, nor can you reach the height of the mountains. The evil of each of these things to your Lord is very displeasing. (31-38)

These are from the counsels of wisdom which your Lord has revealed to you. And serve no other deity besides God, lest you should be cast into Hell blameworthy and condemned.² (39)

2. The way almost all these things are mentioned in the Torah is worth knowing. Their necessary part is cited below:

The LORD said to Moses, Speak to the entire assembly of Israel and say to them: Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy. 'Each of you must respect your mother and father, and you must observe my Sabbaths. I am the LORD your God. Do not turn to idols or make metal gods for yourselves. I am the LORD your God. When you sacrifice a fellowship offering to the LORD, sacrifice it in such a way that it will be accepted on your behalf ... When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Do not

Explanation

لَا تَجْعَلْ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهًا آخَرَ فَتَقْعُدَ مَذْمُومًا مَّخْدُورًا ۖ وَلَا

It has been explained at a number of instances in this exegesis that at times addressing singular entities also connotes addressing plural ones. In this case, it is as if each and every person of a group is spoken to. Here too, the same style is adopted. Thus in the middle of these section of verses, the plural address is also used that evidences the actual nature of address. In this regard, if the Prophet (sws) has also been addressed somewhere, it is in his capacity of the leader of the believers and the address is not specific to him.

The word فَتَقْعُدَ here has the same meaning as other incomplete verbs as فَتَكُونُ and فَتَصِيرُ.

This verse forms the basic statute of the justice and straight path the Qur'ān invites people to: since only God is the master and giver of livelihood, people should not associate others with Him in His rights and in His divinity as this would be against justice and an oppressive practice. It is for this reason that the Qur'ān (31:13) has termed polytheism as a great injustice.

The words “lest you are left blameworthy and ill-fated” depict

go over your vineyard a second time or pick up the grapes that have fallen. Leave them for the poor and the foreigner. I am the LORD your God. Do not steal. Do not lie. Do not deceive one another. Do not swear falsely by my name and so profane the name of your God. I am the LORD. Do not defraud or rob your neighbor. Do not hold back the wages of a hired worker overnight. Do not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block in front of the blind, but fear your God. I am the LORD. Do not pervert justice; do not show partiality to the poor or favoritism to the great, but judge your neighbor fairly. Do not go about spreading slander among your people. Do not do anything that endangers your neighbor's life. I am the LORD. Do not hate a fellow Israelite in your heart. Rebuke your neighbor frankly so you will not share in their guilt. Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people, but love your as yourself. I am the LORD. Keep my decrees. (Leviticus, 19, 1-19)

3. Serve no other deity except God, lest you are left blameworthy and ill-fated.

the consequence of associating someone with God. The locus (*ẓarf*) of *يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ* is *فَتَقَعْدُ* which is suppressed here. In other words, people themselves will be responsible for this fate. Not only will their alleged deities not help them, they will go on to curse them.

وَقَضَىٰ رَبُّكَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا ۖ إِمَّا يَبْلُغَنَّ عِنْدَكَ الْكِبَرَ أَحَدُهُمَا أَوْ كِلَاهُمَا فَلَا تَقُلْ لَهُمَا آفٌ وَلَا تُنْهَرُهُمَا وَقُلْ لَهُمَا قَوْلًا كَرِيمًا ٤

The verse implies that it is the prerogative of God to inform mankind if anyone shares His rights or not. Thus, He has informed them that they cannot share anyone in them and only worship Him. After God, if there is anyone who has the greatest right, it is the parents. This is because they are the means of a person's coming into existence and his nurturing. But God has not allowed him to associate even them with Him in worship. His obligation towards them, in fact, is that he treats them with kindness. The word *إِحْسَانًا* is a stressed object from a suppressed verb and would mean that parents should be treated with ultimate kindness. The context of the discourse here shows of its own accord that if there was a possibility for anyone to be associated with God, it was the parents. But when God did not allow them, how can any other being be allowed.

The word *آفٌ* expresses aversion of the heart and *نَهَرَ* means “to scold someone.” The sentence “If either or both of them attain old age before you, show them no sign of impatience, nor scold them and speak to them with decency” actually explains the kind treatment referred to by the first part of the verse.

Old age has been specifically mentioned in the verse because it is this period in which people regard their parents to be a burden and forget their sacrifices and selfless behaviour in their childhood. Obedient and respectful children remember that the way they were once nurtured by their parents when they were nothing but a lump of meat and bones, in a similar manner, their parents have now been consigned to them when they are no more

4. And it is the verdict of your Lord to worship none but Him and to treat your parents very well. If either or both of them attain old age before you, show them no sign of impatience, nor scold them and speak to them with decency.

than skeletons; it is now their duty to repay them their favours. However, not everyone remembers this. These verses are in fact a reminder for this reality. In fact, the truth is that parents deserve love, respect and good behaviour whatever their age.

Here is may be kept in mind that just as the previous verse refers to the greatest justice, in this verse the greatest act of kindness is mentioned and is the second pillar of foundational teachings of the Qur'ān.

وَاحْفَظْ لَهُمَا جَنَاحَ الذَّلِّ مِنَ الرَّحْمَةِ وَقُلْ رَبِّ ارْحَمْهُمَا كَمَا رَبَّيْنِي صَغِيرًا⁵

The word ذَلٌّ means “obedience” and “compliance.” The metaphorical use of the word جَنَاحَ for it carries subtle insinuation: just as parents hide and protect their children the way birds do under their wings, in a similar manner, children too should hide and protect their parents in their wings of love and obedience. By qualifying this obedience with the words مِنَ الرَّحْمَةِ its origin and motive is pointed to: it should arise from love and affection for them; no other motive should be present. This is because if they can be repaid to some extent for their love and affection, then it is through sentiments of love and affection. Without these sentiments, no person can discharge his obligation towards his parents in a worthy manner.

The supplication referred to in the verse is a right of the parents. It also reminds a person of the rights of his parents imposed on him and it is also a motive of the emotions of love and affection that are needed in dealing with them.

رَبُّكُمْ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا فِي نُفُوسِكُمْ⁶ إِنَّ تَكُونُوا صَالِحِينَ فَإِنَّهُ كَانَ لِلأَوَّابِينَ غَفُورًا

It is not an easy task at all to treat old parents with love and affection the way the Qur'ān has directed its followers. It is not merely outward compliance with their parents which is demanded from them. In fact, purity of heart, inner warmth and fondness is also demanded from them. It is because of this difficulty that the

5. And with softness lower arms of tenderness on them and keep praying: “Lord! be merciful to them the way they nursed me in childhood.”

6. Your Lord fully knows what is in your hearts. If you remain obedient, He is very forgiving to those who turn to Him.

Qur'ān has explained the real thing required is inner love and full compliance. If this is present, then God is fully aware of what is in the hearts. With its presence, if some minor mistake emanates by accident, then it can be atoned by repentance and turning towards God. People who continue to ask for forgiveness on such mistakes will be forgiven by Him.

وَأَتْ ذَا الْقُرْبَىٰ حَقَّهُ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالسَّبِيلَ وَلَا تُبَذِّرْ تَبْذِيرًا ﴿٦﴾ إِنَّ الْمُبَذِّرِينَ كَانُوا
إِخْوَانَ الشَّيَاطِينِ ۖ وَكَانَ الشَّيْطَانُ لِرَبِّهِ كَفُورًا ۖ⁷

This verse states the third foundational directive. The word *حَقَّ* (right) used here shows that the responsibility stated is not just a moral one; it is an obligation that must be fulfilled by every person who has wealth. If a person does not discharge this right, he will be regarded as guilty of violating rights.

After kinfolk, the second level is occupied by the needy. Kinfolk become worthy of this right merely on the basis of kinship. For the needy, it is merely their need that makes them eligible for this. If a person who is needy also belongs to a person's kinfolk, then his right will be two fold. Moreover, a mention of the needy right after the kinfolk also shows their status and rank in an Islamic society. Next, travellers are mentioned. It is obvious that a traveller becomes eligible just because he is travelling; it is not essential that he be in need, otherwise, there was no need to mention him separately. There is no doubt that travelling in itself is a state that makes a person eligible for help even if a person is not a needy in the juristic sense.

It is also obvious that when others have a right in the wealth of a person, he cannot have the permission of squandering his wealth. The right attitude in this regard is that a person should spend with moderation and caution on his permissible needs and regard himself to be responsible for the remaining wealth towards fulfilling the needs of others. A person who is not cautious and moderate regarding his needs will always be engrossed in fulfilling his own needs while disregarding others.

An obvious right imposed on a person who is blessed with

7. And give to the near of kin his due, and also to the destitute and the traveller. And do not squander your wealth wastefully, for the wasteful are brothers of devils; and the Devil is extremely ungrateful to his Lord.

God's favours is to be grateful to Him and to spend only on things which please Him. However, Satan lures people to his ways and makes them spend on things which take them further away from God and nearer to his own self.

8 ﴿وَأَمَّا تَعْرِضْنَ عَنْهُمْ ابْتِغَاءَ رَحْمَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكَ تَرْجُوهَا فَقُلْ لَهُمْ قَوْلًا مَّيْسُورًا ۝٨﴾

This verse provides guidance to people in the case when they are not in a position to fulfil the rights just mentioned.

9 ﴿وَلَا تَجْعَلْ يَدَكَ مَغْلُولَةً إِلَىٰ عُنُقِكَ وَلَا تَبْسُطْهَا كُلَّ الْبَسْطِ فَتَقْعُدَ مَلُومًا مَّحْسُورًا ۝٩﴾

Tying one's hands to one's neck signifies extreme stinginess and leaving them loose signifies squandering wealth.

Earlier in verses 26-27, prohibition of squandering wealth is mentioned. Here the balanced attitude in this regard is explained to dispel any misconceptions: a person should spend with moderation on his permissible needs and also fulfil the rights of others. The word *تَقْعُدَ* here is in the same meaning as verse 22. The implication is that the consequence of this attitude will be such that a person will end up blameworthy of not being able to fulfil the rights of others because of indigence.

10 ﴿إِنَّ رَبَّكَ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَن يَشَاءُ وَيَقْدِرُ ۖ إِنَّهُ كَانَ بِعِبَادِهِ خَبِيرًا بَصِيرًا ۝١٠﴾

Here after *يَقْدِرُ* the words *لِمَن يَشَاءُ* are suppressed as well because of concomitant indications.

This verse explains that the constriction or abundance in wealth is not dependent on the plans of a person. It is dependent entirely on God's will and wisdom. He is fully aware of the wealth of His people and also watches over them. The right attitude in this regard is that a person should cautiously spend on his own needs and also fulfil the rights of others. He should not take any step that is against moderation.

8. And while waiting for your Lord's bounty which you are hopeful of, if you have to ignore them, then speak to them softly.

9. And neither tie your hand with your neck nor leave it totally loose that you earn reproach and be reduced to indigence.

10. Indeed, it is your Lord Who gives abundantly to whomsoever He pleases and sparingly to whomsoever He pleases. Indeed, He is aware of His servants and observes them.

وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا أَوْلَادَكُمْ حَشِيَّةَ إِمْلَاقٍ نَحْنُ نَرْزُقُهُمْ وَإِيَّاكُمْ إِن قَتَلْتَهُمْ كَانَ خَطَاً كَبِيرًا ﴿٣١﴾¹¹

What is stated in this verse is a corollary of what is mentioned in the previous one: when God is the real sustainer, who has the right to kill someone fearing poverty. The verse alludes to the evil Arab custom of burying alive infant girls in the time of *jāhiliyyah*. The psyche behind this was that since a woman was not an earning member of the family, one should not have to bear the burden of her up-bringing. The Qur'ān here has struck a blow at the real motive of this heinous crime and ended this barbarity. The campaign of family planning on going in current times and to implement which all kinds of new suggestions are being floated may not be barbarous in the apparent form; however, its underlying philosophy is the same as the one found in the barbarity of the Arab *jāhiliyyah*. Like those times, today also a society thinks that it sustains and nourishes people. The Qur'ān has clarified that the real sustainer is God. The savage Arabs understood this fact and also reformed themselves but who can make the uncouth intelligentsia of today understand it?

وَلَا تَقْرَبُوا الزَّوْجَ إِنَّهُ كَانَ فَاحِشَةً وَسَاءَ سَبِيلًا ﴿٣٢﴾¹²

Until verse 31, the things urged and asserted by the Qur'ān in verse 90 of Sūrah al-Naḥl – justice, goodness and spending on the kindred – have been dealt with. In the succeeding verses, the things proscribed – lewdness, evil and rebelliousness – are discussed.

Among the proscribed things, adultery is mentioned the foremost because this evil destroys the roots of a righteous society. The institution of family is the basis of such a society. A righteous family based on natural sentiments can only come into being when the relationship of the children with their parents is based on true lineage and pure blood ties. If these things are not present, then a family is not a family; it is rather a herd of animals devoid of natural and spiritual sentiments. A herd of animals can never lay the foundations of a righteous society nor

11. And do not kill your children for fear of poverty. It is We provide for them and for you as well. Killing them is indeed a heinous crime.

12. And do not even go near adultery because it is blatant lewdness and a very evil path.

become a forerunner to it.

Because of these evils, the Qur'ān has placed adultery the foremost among the prohibited things. It has stopped people from it in words such that all motives and factors leading to it are abstained from. Thus the words it uses are “do not even go near adultery.” It means that people should stay away from things that may induce them to indulge in this shameful act. Here only a principle statement is given; for this reason, no details are given. Details will come in Sūrah al-Nūr which is the last *sūrah* of this chapter. While explaining it, I will, God willing, elucidate the things which the Qur'ān has prohibited because they lead a person to it.

The words “because it is blatant lewdness and a very evil path” state the reason for its prohibition. In other words, no logic is needed to prove its shameful nature. It is a universally acknowledged vulgarity. Ever since time immemorial, mankind has not condoned extra-marital relations between men and women. Strong restrictions have always been imposed on it and those who indulged in them were always looked down upon. The words “evil path” refer to the fact that it is a deviant way from the one which the Qur'ān is calling people to. People who tread this path end up uprooting the foundations of an upright family, an upright society and ultimately an upright government.

وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا النَّفْسَ الَّتِي حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ ۖ وَمَنْ قَتَلَ مَظْلُومًا فَقَدْ جَعَلْنَا لَوْلِيَّهِ
سُلْطَانًا فَلَا يُسْرِفُ فِي الْقَتْلِ إِنَّهُ كَانَ مَنْصُورًا¹³

In other words, a person can only be killed when the *sharī'ah* orders for his killing because of some crime. If anyone is killed without such a legal basis, then it would be great injustice. In such a case, the heirs of the victim have full authority to either take *qishāṣ* or *diyat* or even forgive the perpetrator. Giving full authority to them means that the government shall necessarily implement the will of the heirs in this regard. The words “then he should not exceed limits in killing because he has been helped”

13. And do not wrongfully kill any person whose life has been held sacred by God and he who is slain unjustly, We have given his guardian the authority. Then he should not exceed limits in killing because he has been helped.

provide guidance to the heirs of the victim: since they have the support of the government, it is not permissible for them that they exceed limits in taking revenge. For example, if they kill others too besides the murderer or adopt ways of killing that are prohibited by God like burning or mutilating the corpse.

Also evident from this verse is that in Islamic law, the real claimants in murder are the heirs of the victim and not the government. The only job of the latter is to correctly enforce the will of the former. A government is a claimant in only those cases when a victim does not have heirs or he has heirs but for some reason they are disinterested in the cause of the victim. In existing laws, the government has the sole right. The heirs have no say whatsoever. In my opinion, these existing laws are devoid of many blessings provided by Islamic law. I have discussed this issue in detail in another book.¹⁴ Repeating it here would be needless.

وَلَا تَقْرَبُوا مَالَ الْيَتِيمِ إِلَّا بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ حَتَّىٰ يَبْلُغَ أَشُدَّهُ ۚ وَأَوْفُوا بِالْعَهْدِ ۚ إِنَّ الْعَهْدَ
كَانَ مَسْئُولًا¹⁵

Earlier people have been stopped from adultery and its allurements in an emphatic manner, here they are stopped in the same manner from dispensing the wealth of orphans in an unjust way. The only intervention of their guardians in their wealth permissible is that which is done for their upbringing, development and protection. Any other intervention is tantamount to embezzlement because the wealth is a trust in the hands of the guardians.

This protection provided by guardians should only be until the orphans reach maturity. As soon as they do, they are in charge of their wealth and it must be handed over to them.

Together with the directive of prohibition of being dishonest in the wealth of the orphans, prohibition is also sounded regarding other covenants and promises.

14. Reference is to his book *Islāmi Riyāsat mayn Fiqhī Ikhtilāfāt awr un ka Ḥal* (Juristic Differences and how to resolve them in an Islamic State).

15. And do not even go near the wealth of an orphan except in a way that is better for him until he reaches his age of maturity. And keep your promises because you shall be held accountable for promises.

Included in these covenants are all types of promises whether they are written or naturally understood. Whatever their nature, if they are not against the *sharī'ah*, they must be fulfilled. In the explanation of Sūrah al-Mā'idah, I have stated that the *sharī'ah* itself is a covenant between God and His creatures. The continued existence of an upright family, an upright society and an upright government depends on fulfilling these covenants.

وَأَوْفُوا الْكَيْلَ إِذَا كِلْتُمْ وَزَنُوا بِالْقِسْطَاسِ الْمُسْتَقِيمِ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ خَيْرٌ وَأَحْسَنُ تَأْوِيلًا ﴿١٦﴾

It needs to be noted that when a nation which takes to dishonesty and deceit in weighing and measuring, then seemingly a few of its individuals may end up earning profit in their own consideration; however, in fact, they raze down the foundation of truthfulness and justice which guarantee the continued existence of an upright society.

وَلَا تَقْفُ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ ۚ إِنَّ السَّمْعَ وَالْبَصَرَ وَالْفُؤَادَ كُلُّ أُولَٰئِكَ كَانَ عَنْهُ مَسْئُولًا ﴿١٧﴾

The words *قَفَوْتَهُ قَفَوْتُ إِثْرَهُ* means “I came following it.” The verse stops people from following conjectures about things of which they have no knowledge.

This verse prohibits blaming and slandering people. The society which the Qur'ān wants to create is founded on trust and giving others the benefit of the doubt. For this reason, a person should not say things that are based on conjecture or rumour that can damage the repute of a person.

وَلَا تَمْشِ فِي الْأَرْضِ مَرَحًا ۚ إِنَّكَ لَن تَخْرِقَ الْأَرْضَ وَلَن تَبْلُغَ الْجِبَالَ طُولًا ﴿١٨﴾

The word *مَرَحَ* means “to walk arrogantly.” A person who walks in this manner, walks stamping his feet on the earth and raising his neck high. The implication of the verse is that one's status is not even that of an ant or an insect in the vast expanse of the earth that God has spread out and one's status is not even

16. And when you measure give full measure, and weigh with correct scales. This is better and fairer as far as the consequences are concerned.

17. And do not go after what you know not because ears, eyes and heart – each of them shall be questioned.

18. And do not walk arrogantly on the earth; neither can you split apart the earth, nor can you reach the height of the mountains.

that of a squirrel before God who has created the towering mountains, so then what is the meaning of being arrogant before Him? One should try to recognize one's status and always surrender oneself to the majesty and splendour of God.

It needs to be kept in mind that the external mannerism of a person reflects his inner-self. It is a proof of the fact that such a person has no idea of God's power and majesty. People who have this conception are humble and down to earth. Instead of walking arrogantly, they humbly walk with their heads bowed down.

كُلُّ ذٰلِكَ كَانَ سَيِّئُهُ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ مَكْرُوٰهًا ﴿١٩﴾

This is a reference to everything that is said above. The word *مَكْرُوٰه* is not spoken in the juristic sense. It is used in its literal meaning implying that a person who is guilty of any of them will end up hated by the Almighty.

ذٰلِكَ مِمَّا اَوْحٰى اِلَيْكَ رَبُّكَ مِنَ الْحِكْمَةِ ۚ وَلَا تَجْعَلْ مَعَ اللّٰهِ اٰخَرَ فَتُلْقٰى فِيْ جَهَنَّمَ مَلُوْمًا مَّدْحُوْرًا ﴿٢٠﴾

The word *ذٰلِكَ* points to all what is said earlier. All of them are a part of wisdom. In other words, they are sound and abiding truths which have strong foundations in a person's intellect, nature and in the *sharī'ah*. God is informing people of them through His messenger so that they can lead their lives on a sound footing.

Here, at the end, the topic of monotheism is once again reminded of. It was also discussed in verse 22 from where this section of verses actually began. It is as if it is being said that as long as the wall formed of monotheism that encircles these teachings is intact, the teachings themselves are intact. There are a number of instances in the Qur'ān where the teachings it mentions begin and end with monotheism. In fact, such examples are also found in the Torah. Had it not been to keep the discussion concise, I would have referred to them here.

19. The evil of each of these things to your Lord is very displeasing.

20. These are from the counsels of wisdom which your Lord has revealed to you. And serve no other deity besides God, lest you should be cast into Hell blameworthy and condemned.

Section V (Verses 40-57)

In the succeeding verses, the real reason for the aversion of the disbelievers of the Quraysh is pointed out. Since they were not willing to give up their self-claimed deities and accept the hereafter, they had a dislike for the Qur'ān and the Prophet (sws). In this regard, as a parenthetical sentence, Muslims are directed to show wisdom and sagacity in preaching. While reacting to the attitude of their rivals, they should not utter any such word that may further increase their aversion.

Readers may now proceed to study these verses.

Text and Translation

أَفَاصْفُكُمْ رَبُّكُمْ بِالْبَيْنِينَ وَاتَّخَذَ مِنَ الْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنَاثًا ۚ إِنَّكُمْ لَتَقُولُونَ قَوْلًا عَظِيمًا ﴿٤٠﴾ وَ
لَقَدْ صَرَّفْنَا فِي هَٰذَا الْقُرْآنِ لِيَذَّكَّرُوا ۚ وَمَا يَزِيدُهُمْ إِلَّا نُفُورًا ﴿٤١﴾ قُلْ لَوْ كَانَ مَعَهُ آلِهَةٌ كَمَا
يَقُولُونَ إِذَا أَلْتَبَعُوا إِلَىٰ ذِي الْعَرْشِ سَبِيلًا ﴿٤٢﴾ سُبْحَنَهُ وَتَعَالَىٰ عَمَّا يَقُولُونَ عُلُوًّا كَبِيرًا ﴿٤٣﴾
تُسَبِّحُ لَهُ السَّمَوَاتُ السَّبْعُ وَالْأَرْضُ وَمَنْ فِيهِنَّ ۚ وَإِنْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِلَّا يَسْبِيحُ بِحَمْدِهِ وَلَكِنْ لَا
تَفْقَهُونَ تَسْبِيحَهُمْ ۚ إِنَّهُ كَانَ حَلِيمًا غَفُورًا ﴿٤٤﴾ وَإِذَا قَرَأْتَ الْقُرْآنَ جَعَلْنَا بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَ
الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ حِجَابًا مَّسْتُورًا ﴿٤٥﴾ وَجَعَلْنَا عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِمْ أَكِنَّةً أَنْ يَفْقَهُوهُ وَفِي
آذَانِهِمْ وَقْرًا ۚ وَإِذَا ذُكِّرَتْ رَبِّكَ فِي الْقُرْآنِ وَحْدَهُ وَلَوْ أَنَّ أَهْلَ الْبُرْجَانِ يُفْقَهُونَ ﴿٤٦﴾ نَحْنُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا
يَسْتَعْبِقُونَ بِهِ إِذْ يَسْتَعْبِقُونَ إِلَيْكَ وَإِذْ هُمْ نَجْوَىٰ إِذْ يَقُولُ الظَّالِمُونَ إِنْ تَتَّبِعُونَ إِلَّا رَجُلًا
مَّسْحُورًا ﴿٤٧﴾ أَنْظِرْ كَيْفَ ضَرَبُوا لَكَ الْأَمْثَالَ فَضَلُّوا فَلَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ سَبِيلًا ﴿٤٨﴾ وَقَالُوا إِذَا
كُنَّا عِظَامًا وَرُفَاتًا ۖ إِنْآ لَنَسْبَعُونَهُنَّ خَلْقًا جَدِيدًا ﴿٤٩﴾ قُلْ كُونُوا حِجَارَةً أَوْ حَدِيدًا ﴿٥٠﴾ أَوْ خَلْقًا
مِمَّا يَكْبُرُ فِي صُدُورِكُمْ ۖ فَسَيَقُولُونَ مَنْ يُعِيدُنَا ۖ قُلِ الَّذِي فَطَرَكُمْ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ ۖ فَسَيُنْغِضُونَ
إِلَيْكَ رُءُوسَهُمْ وَيَقُولُونَ مَتَىٰ هُوَ ۖ قُلْ عَسَىٰ أَنْ يَكُونَ قَرِيبًا ﴿٥١﴾ يَوْمَ يَذُّوكمُ فَتَسْتَجِيبُونَ
بِحَمْدِهِ وَتَنْظُنُونَ أَنَّ لَيْسْتُمْ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا ﴿٥٢﴾ وَقُلْ لِّعِبَادِي يَقُولُوا الَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ ۚ إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ
يَنْزِعُ بَيْنَهُمْ ۚ إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ كَانَ لِلْإِنْسَانِ عَدُوًّا مُّبِينًا ﴿٥٣﴾ رَبُّكُمْ أَعْلَمُ بِكُمْ ۚ إِنَّ يَشَاءُ يَرْحَمْكُمْ
أَوْ أَنْ يَشَاءُ يُعَذِّبْكُمْ ۚ وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ عَلَيْهِمْ وَكِيلًا ﴿٥٤﴾ وَرَبُّكَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۚ
وَلَقَدْ فَضَّلْنَا بَعْضَ النَّبِيِّينَ عَلَىٰ بَعْضٍ ۖ وَآتَيْنَا دَاوُدَ رُبُورًا ﴿٥٥﴾ قُلِ ادْعُوا الَّذِينَ زَعَمْتُمْ مِنْ

دُونِهِ فَلَا يَمْلِكُونَ كَشْفَ الضُّرِّ عَنْكُمْ وَلَا تَحْوِيلًا ﴿٥١﴾ أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ يَبْتَغُونَ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمُ
الْوَسِيلَةَ أَيُّهُمْ أَقْرَبُ وَيَرْجُونَ رَحْمَتَهُ وَيَخَافُونَ عَذَابَهُ ۚ إِنَّ عَذَابَ رَبِّكَ كَانَ مَحْذُورًا ﴿٥٢﴾

Has your Lord reserved sons for you and taken daughters from angels for Himself? This is something very grave that you say. And We have explained in this Qur'ān in a variety of ways so that they receive a reminder. However, this is only increasing their aversion. Say: If there had been other deities with God as these people claim, they would have definitely sought to dethrone Him. He is pure and far above what they say. The seven heavens, the earth and whatever they contain all glorify Him only, and there is nothing which does not praise Him while glorifying Him, yet you do not understand their glorification. Indeed, He is very Benevolent and most Forgiving. (40-44)

And when you recite the Qur'ān, We place an unseen barrier between you and those people who do not believe in the Hereafter and put a cover on their hearts and make them hard of hearing so that they may not understand or hear it. And when you mention your Lord alone in the Qur'ān, they turn away in hatred. And We know full well when they listen to you the reason they listen to you and when they whisper to one another when these unjust say: "You people are only following a person who is under a spell." See what sarcasm they heap on you. These people have lost their way. They are not finding any way. (45-48)

And they say: "When we become bones and are reduced to bits, we will be raised to life again?" Say: Whether you become stones or iron or any other substance which in your view is even harder than them. Then they will say: "Who will give us life again?" Say: He who created you the first time. Then they will shake their heads before you and ask: "When would this happen?" Say: It may well be that its time is near. The day He calls you, you will obey His directive while praising Him and you will think that you stayed for only a short while. (49-52)

And tell My servants: Say only that which is better. Indeed, Satan keeps implanting evil suggestions among them. Indeed, Satan is an open enemy of human beings. Your Lord knows you full well. If He wants, He will show mercy to you or if He desires, He will afflict you with a torment. And We have not sent you to be responsible for them. And your Lord knows full well what is in the heavens and earth. And We have given superiority to some

prophets over others and We gave the Psalms to David. (53-55)

Say: Try to invoke those whom you regard as deities besides God. Neither will they be able to ward off any calamity from you nor defer it. Those whom they invoke themselves fervently try to find their Lord's nearness as to who among them could become the nearest. And they look forward to their Lord's mercy and fear His torment. Indeed, the torment of your Lord is a thing to be feared. (56-57)

Explanation

21 أَفَأَصْفُكُمْ رَبُّكُم بِالْبَنِينَ وَاتَّخَذَ مِنَ الْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنَاثًا إِنَّكُمْ تَقُولُونَ قَوْلًا عَظِيمًا ﴿٢١﴾
The word *إِصْفَاءٌ* means to “to choose someone or something exclusively.”

The earlier section of verses ended on a refutation of polytheism. Here this topic is taken up again in a new style. It may be kept in mind that the Idolaters of Arabia regarded angels to be the daughters of God and worshipped them with the motive that they intercede for them before their father. Here God has directed their attention to their compounded foolishness.

The words “this is something very grave that you say” imply that what they say is not mere foolishness; it is foolishness after foolishness: they choose for God what they do not like for their own selves. In other words, they have demoted God to even below their own status.

22 وَلَقَدْ صَرَّفْنَا فِي هَٰذَا الْقُرْآنِ لِيُبَيِّنَ لَكُمْ وَيُرْسِلَ إِلَيْكُمْ مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ مَآثِرًا وَيَدُلُّكُمُ إِلَى الصِّرَاطِ الْمُسْتَقِيمِ ﴿٢٢﴾

The word *تَصْرِيفٌ* means “to circulate.” Here it means to explain the reality in different styles and multiple ways. Thus, for example, the topic of monotheism has been mentioned in the Qur’ān in so many different styles that the most thick-headed of persons, if he is not stubborn, can fully understand it. However, people who are stubborn and belligerent and are not willing to accept the truth, become more averse to what is being told them the more it is clarified. This is because they take this clarification

21. Has your Lord reserved sons for you and taken daughters from angels for Himself? This is something very grave that you say.

22. And We have explained in this Qur’ān in a variety of ways so that they receive a reminder. However, this is only increasing their aversion.

to be their defeat and humiliation.

قُلْ لَّوْكَانَ مَعَ الْإِهَةِ كَمَا يَقُولُونَ إِذَا الْأَبْتَعُوا إِلَىٰ ذِي الْعَرْشِ سَبِيلًا ﴿٢٣﴾

By analogy to the kings and kingdoms of this world, the Idolaters of Arabia regarded God to be the supreme deity and a king having a crown and a throne. They believed in many other deities too but regarded them to be subservient to God. They believed that those deities shared in God's divinity and became a means of procuring God's nearness for those who worshipped them. This verse refutes this very belief they held.

The implication of the verse is that if they regard God's kingdom to be analogous to their own earthly kingdoms, they can observe that every now and then they break and new ones form. In a similar way, if God also had partners, why would they have sat peacefully? Why would they have not forced their way to defeat the supreme God? Yet, in this world they see that neither the sun leaves its path nor the earth its orbit. At another instance, this fact is stated thus: (٢٢:٢١) لَوْ كَانَ فِيهِمَا آلِهَةٌ إِلَّا اللَّهُ لَفَسَدَتَا (were there other gods in the sky and earth besides God, they would have become disrupted, (21:22)).

سُبْحَنَهُ وَتَعَالَىٰ عَمَّا يَقُولُونَ عُلُوًّا كَبِيرًا ﴿٢٤﴾

The implication of this verse is that God is above these foolish conjectures they make about Him. These speculations have no link with His higher attributes.

تُسَبِّحُ لَهُ السَّمَوَاتُ السَّبْعُ وَالْأَرْضُ وَمَنْ فِيهِنَّ ۚ وَإِنْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِلَّا يُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِهِ وَلَكِنْ لَا تَفْقَهُونَ تَسْبِيحَهُمْ ۚ إِنَّهُ كَانَ حَلِيمًا غَفُورًا ﴿٢٥﴾

The real meaning of تسبيح is to absolve someone of negative traits. In other words, it absolves God of all those ascriptions

23. Say: If there had been other deities with God as these people claim, they would have definitely sought to dethrone Him.

24. He is pure and far above what they say.

25. The seven heavens, the earth and whatever they contain all glorify Him only, and there is nothing which does not praise Him while glorifying Him, yet you do not understand their glorification. Indeed, He is very Benevolent and most Forgiving.

which contradict His splendour and His majestic attributes. If it is qualified by the word *حده*, then the purpose is to affirm all higher attributes in Him.

The implication is that God has blessed people with the freedom to exercise their will in a certain sphere. By misusing this freedom, they can heap whatever accusations on God they want to. However, the seven heavens and the earth and all the creatures found between them all glorify God though they may not understand this.

Such is the grave nature of their ascribing partners to God that the heavens would have fallen on them. Yet God is very benevolent and forgiving. In spite of their misdeeds, He is continuing to give them respite.

وَإِذَا قَرَأْتَ الْقُرْآنَ جَعَلْنَا بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ حِجَابًا مَّسْتُورًا²⁶

This words dispels the wonder at why in spite of something being repeated in the Qur'ān in various styles and ways, as pointed out be verse 41, these people are not being able to understand it. And why are these people in awe because of it.

وَجَعَلْنَا عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ أَكِنَّةً أَنْ يَفْقَهُوهُ وَفِي آذَانِهِمْ وَقْرًا²⁷ وَإِذَا ذُكِّرْتُمْ رَبَّكَ فِي الْقُرْآنِ وَحْدَهُ وَلَوْ أَنَّ

The word *أَكِنَّةً* is the plural of *اكنان* and means “a covering.” The expression *أَنْ يَفْقَهُوهُ* is actually *كَرَاهَةً أَنْ يَفْقَهُوهُ*. In other words, a governing noun is suppressed before *أَنْ*. After the words *وَفِي آذَانِهِمْ وَقْرًا*, there is a suppression of *أَنْ يَسْمَعُوهُ*, as evidenced by concomitant indications.

This verse is actually a further explanation of the previous one. The last part indicates the second reason for their aversion: like the hereafter, these people also have a dislike for monotheism. For this reason, as soon as they hear the Qur'ān, they turn and flee.

26. And when you recite out the Qur'ān, We place an unseen barrier between you and those people who do not believe in the Hereafter and put a cover on their hearts.

27. And make them hard of hearing so that they may not understand or hear it. And when you mention your Lord alone in the Qur'ān, they turn away in hatred.

The fact their hearts have a covering and they have become hard of hearing is actually a reference to the established practice of God mentioned under verse 7 of Sūrah al-Baqarah. It mentions why their hearts are sealed from accepting guidance. Readers can look up its explanation. Reproducing it here will only lengthen the discussion.

نَحْنُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا يَسْتَبْعُونَ بِهِ إِذْ يَسْتَبْعُونَ إِلَيْكَ وَإِذْ هُمْ نَجْوَى إِذْ يَقُولُ الظَّالِمُونَ إِنَّا تَتَّبِعُونَ إِلَّا رَجُلًا مَّسْحُورًا ﴿٢٨﴾

The implication of the verse is that these people do not listen to the Qur'ān to understand it and benefit from it. The reason they listen to it is to raise objections and criticism. They want to find some flaw in it in order to spread vicious propaganda against it.

أَنْظُرْ كَيْفَ ضَرَبُوا لَكَ الْأَمْثَالَ فَضَلُّوا فَلَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ سَبِيلًا ﴿٢٩﴾

The expression ضرب مثل hear means “to pass sarcastic remarks.” For parallels, readers can look up verses 8-9 of Sūrah al-Furqān.

The implication of the verse is that they do not find any way to raise objections on the Prophet (sws) and the Qur'ān. For this reason, they have lost their way. They do not want to accept his call and at the same time do not find any point of rejection. As a result, everyone is uttering foolish things to vent his frustration. Some call him a soothsayer, some a madman and some a magician. The Prophet (sws) should be patient on what they say and leave them to themselves. The truth shall soon come before them.

وَقَالُوا إِذْ أَكُنَّا عِظَامًا وَرُفَاتًا إِنْ أَتَانَا بَعُوثُنَّ خُلُقًا جَدِيدًا ﴿٣٠﴾

This verse cites their view about the far-fetched nature of the hereafter.

قُلْ كُونُوا حِجَارَةً أَوْ حَدِيدًا ﴿٣١﴾ أَوْ خُلُقًا مَّيًّا يَكْبُرُ فِي صُدُورِكُمْ ۖ فَسَيَقُولُونَ مَنْ يُعِيدُنَا

28. And We know full well when they listen to you the reason they listen to you and when they whisper to one another when these unjust say: “You people are only following a person who is under a spell.”

29. See what sarcasm they heap on you. These people have lost their way. They are not finding any way.

30. And they say: “When we become bones and are reduced to bits, we will be raised to life again?”

قُلِ الَّذِي فَطَرَكُمْ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ ۖ فَسَيُنْغِضُونَ إِلَيْكَ رُءُوسَهُمْ وَيَقُولُونَ مَتَى هُوَ ۖ قُلْ عَسَى أَنْ يَكُونَ قَرِيبًا ۝٣١

The question posed “Who will give us life again?” in the verse is not meant to be asked. In their minds, they already have answered it in the negative. However, the Qur’ān has given its answer thus: “He who created you the first time.” It is very concise, yet very comprehensive. The implication is that when God easily created them from nothingness the first time, how could He face any difficulty in recreating them?

The word *إنغاض* means “to shake one’s head.” In other words, even after this answer is given to them by the Prophet (sws), they will not be satisfied. They will sarcastically ask about the time of this event. The response “it may well be that its time is near” to this remark portrays the fact that only God knows about this time. Not even a prophet is privy to it. Yet what is certain to happen is bound to happen. It may take time but it cannot be ignored merely because its time is not known. No one knows about his time of death. But a person who denies death merely because its time of arrival is not known must be regarded as foolish.

يَوْمَ رَدُّ عُرُوكُمْ فَتَسْتَجِيبُونَ بِحَدِيثٍ وَأَتَّظُنُونَ أَنْ لَبِثْتُمْ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا ۝٣٢

The Idolaters of the Quraysh are directly addressed here. On the Day of Judgement, all truths will be fully unveiled before them. They will think that they had just slept a while ago and now woken up. Such will be the nature of this period of time which they today think is too long. In other words, it is as if the Day of Judgement looms on the head of every person who dies. He will have no recollection of the time he had spent in Barzakh.

وَقُلْ لِّعِبَادِي يَقُولُوا الَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ ۚ إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ يَنْزَغُ بَيْنَهُمْ ۚ إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ كَانَ

31. Say: Whether you become stones or iron or any other substance which in your view is even harder than them. Then they will say: “Who will give us life again?” Say: He who created you the first time. Then they will shake their heads before you and ask: “When would this happen?” Say: It may well be that its time is near.

32. The day He calls you, you will obey His directive while praising Him and you will think that you stayed for only a short while.

It is evident from earlier verses that the rivals of the Prophet (sws) were using all their weapons of sarcasm and scorn. Whenever they found an opportunity, they would disparage Muslims and also misbehave with the Prophet (sws). An example of such behaviour is mentioned in verse 47. This situation entailed that Muslims be given guidance so that they were not induced to do something in response to their disparaging attitude which could damage their preaching. They were told not to reply to the foolish banter of their opponents. They were only to try to communicate to them what was true and correct and remember that Satan was their open enemy. He was always waiting for the slightest of opportunities to sow seeds of dissension between them. Precisely the same guidance is given to them in the same background in Sūrah al-Nahl in the following words:

أَدْعُ إِلَى سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحُكْمَةِ وَالنُّوعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ وَجَادِلْهُمْ بَاتِّقِ هِيَ أَحْسَنُ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ ضَلَّ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ. (١٦: ١٢٥)

Call men to the path of your Lord with wisdom and kindly exhortation and debate with them in the most befitting manner. Indeed, your Lord best knows those who stray from His path and those who are rightly guided. (16:125)

Similarly, verses 198-201 of Sūrah al-A'rāf also discuss this topic. They can be looked up if more explanation is needed.

رَبُّكُمْ أَعْلَمُ بِكُمْ إِنَّ يَشَاءُ يَرْحَمَكُمُ أَوْ إِنَّ يَشَاءُ يُعَذِّبْكُمْ وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ عَلَيْهِمْ وَكِيلًا ﴿٣٤﴾

This verse points to the bounds of preaching for the believers and the Prophet (sws) so that they are not hurt by the attitude of the disbelievers. Their only responsibility is to communicate the truth. God knows who is worthy of His mercy and deserves His

33. And tell My servants: Say only that which is better. Indeed, Satan keeps implanting evil suggestions among them. Indeed, Satan is an open enemy of human beings.

34. Your Lord knows you full well. If He wants, He will show mercy to you or if He desires, He will afflict you with a torment. And We have not sent you to be responsible for them.

mercy after being guided. He also is aware of those who are worthy of punishment because of going astray. It is not the responsibility of the Prophet (sws) and his companions to necessarily convert others into believers. In other words, the Prophet (sws) is not required to force them to become believers and should not think that he is responsible for their good or evil deeds. His responsibility is to only deliver the truth. Its acceptance or rejection is the job of his addressees. God will hold him accountable for this obligation only. So why should he be needlessly worried?

وَرَبُّكَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَن فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَٱلْأَرْضِ ۖ وَلَقَدْ فَضَّلْنَا بَعْضَ النَّبِيِّۦنَ عَلَىٰ بَعْضٍ وَآتَيْنَا
دَاوُدَ زَبُورًا ۖ

35



In the heat of discussion, the biased attitude of regarding one's leaders to be superior to others is the foremost source of creating disorder. People start to exaggerate and emphasize in eulogizing their heroes. They are not prepared to accept the superiority of others as they consider this to be their defeat. It seems that this mischief had erupted in those times or there was a strong chance of its eruption. This was particularly so because the Jews had launched themselves in opposing the Muslims with all their mean tactics, as has been indicated earlier. They were standing behind the Idolaters and fully supporting them. They were especially prone to stirring this propaganda of superiority, as is mentioned in verse 253 of Sūrah al-Baqarah. In order to nip this propaganda, the Qur'ān has guided Muslims saying that God is aware of whatever is in the heavens and the earth. He knows the status and rank of everyone. Others are not aware of this. As for the superiority of prophets, it is relative and not absolute. For example, God spoke with Moses (sws), gave Jesus (sws) clear signs and helped him through Gabriel, and bestowed the Psalms on David (sws). This is the correct view regarding prophets and Muslims must adhere to it. So, while acknowledging the aspects of Muḥammad's superiority, they should also accept the distinctive features of other prophets. Readers can look up what I

35. And your Lord knows full well what is in the heavens and earth. And We have given superiority to some prophets over others and We gave the Psalms to David.

have written while explaining verse 253 of Sūrah al-Baqarah. The distinctive feature of the Psalms given to David (sws) was that it is the only versified divine book and entirely composed of hymns and holy glorification.

قُلْ ادْعُوا الَّذِينَ رَعَيْتُمْ مِنْ دُونِهِ فَلَا يَمْلِكُونَ كَشْفَ الضُّرِّ عَنْكُمْ وَلَا تَحْوِيلًا ﴿٣٦﴾

The previous three verses, as referred to earlier, were parenthetical in nature. They served the purpose of an on the spot admonition and guidance. Now the discourse once again connects back to verses 51-52. Earlier it was said that the time of punishment – which they were demanding – may well be near. Now they are asked to call their alleged partners of God if they think that they can help them. They will neither be able to ward off any calamity nor turn it away to some other place for a while.

أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ يَبْتَغُونَ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمُ الْوَسِيلَةَ أَيُّهُمْ أَقْرَبُ وَيَرْجُونَ رَحْمَتَهُ وَيَخَافُونَ
عَذَابَهُ ۚ إِنَّ عَذَابَ رَبِّكَ كَانَ مَحْذُورًا ﴿٣٧﴾

This is a reference to the angels.



36. Say: Try to invoke those whom you regard as deities besides God. Neither will they be able to ward off any calamity from you nor defer it.

37. Those whom they invoke themselves fervently try to find their Lord's nearness as to who among them could become the nearest. And they look forward to their Lord's mercy and fear His torment. Indeed, the torment of your Lord is a thing to be feared.