

QUR'ANIC EXEGESIS

Sūrah al-Mu'minūn (3)

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Section IV: Verses (51-67)

In the succeeding verses, it is explained that God gave the same religion to all the messengers but their nations split it up. Now each of them is engrossed with what it has and is not willing to hear anything against it. After that, Muḥammad (sws) is assured and asked to give some more respite to his people; they are very happy at their worldly achievements and think that they have gained a lot. The fact is that they are only preparing their doom without realizing it. The real achievements are today being reaped by those who fear God and are professing faith in His revelations. Indeed, they are the destined winners of this course. As far as the megalomaniacs are concerned, very soon the time will come when they will lament their misfortune but to no avail.

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

Text and Translation

يَا أَيُّهَا الرُّسُلُ كُلُّوا مِنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَاعْمَلُوا صَالِحًا ۚ إِنِّي بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٥١﴾ وَإِنَّ هَذِهِ
أُمَّتَكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَأَنَا رَبُّكُمْ فَاتَّقُونِ ﴿٥٢﴾ فَتَقَطَّعُوا أَمْرَهُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ زُبُرًا ۚ كُلُّ حِزْبٍ بِمَا لَدَيْهِمْ
فَرِحُونَ ﴿٥٣﴾ فَذَرَهُمْ فِي غَبَرَتِهِمْ حَتَّىٰ حِينٍ ﴿٥٤﴾ أَيَحْسَبُونَ أَنَّنَا نُنِدُّهُمْ بِهِ مِنْ مَّالٍ وَبَيْنِينَ ﴿٥٥﴾
نُسَارِعُ لَهُمْ فِي الْخَيْرَاتِ ۚ بَلْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿٥٦﴾ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ هُمْ مِنْ خَشْيَةِ رَبِّهِمْ مُشْفِقُونَ ﴿٥٧﴾ وَ
الَّذِينَ هُمْ بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٥٨﴾ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ بِرَبِّهِمْ لَا يُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٥٩﴾ وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْتُونَ مَا
آتَاوْا وَقُلُوبُهُمْ وَجِلَةٌ أَنَّهُمْ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ رَاجِعُونَ ﴿٦٠﴾ أُولَٰئِكَ يُسْرِعُونَ فِي الْخَيْرَاتِ وَهُمْ لَهَا سَابِقُونَ ﴿٦١﴾
وَلَا تَكُفُّ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وَسْعَهَا وَلَدَيْنَا كِتَابٌ يَنْطِقُ بِالْحَقِّ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ ﴿٦٢﴾ بَلْ قُلُوبُهُمْ فِي

عَمْرَةً مِّنْ هَذَا وَلَهُمْ أَعْمَالٌ مِّنْ دُونِ ذَلِكَ هُمْ لَهَا عِشْلُونَ ﴿٥١﴾ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا أَخَذْنَا مُتْرَفِيهِمْ بِالْعَذَابِ إِذَا هُمْ يَجْعَرُونَ ﴿٥٢﴾ لَا تَجْعَرُوا الْيَوْمَ ۖ إِنَّكُمْ مِنَّا لَا تَنْصَرُونَ ﴿٥٣﴾ قَدْ كَانَتْ آيَتِي تُشْلَىٰ عَلَيْكُمْ فَكُنْتُمْ عَلَىٰ آعْقَابِكُمْ تُنْكِرُ صَوْنَ ﴿٥٤﴾ مُسْتَكْبِرِينَ ۖ بِهِ سِيرَاتُنْهُجُرُونَ ﴿٥٥﴾

O Messengers! Eat pure things and do righteous deeds. I fully know whatever you do. And this *ummah* of yours is a single *ummah* and I am your Lord. So, keep fearing Me. (51-52)

Thus, the *ummahs* split among them their religion into pieces. Now each group is engrossed in whatever it has. So, leave them for some days in this frenzy of theirs. Do they think that We are increasing their wealth and children, then We are increasing their well-being? In fact, they are unaware of the actual reality. (53-56)

Indeed, those who are always scared of their Lord's fear and who believe in the revelations of their Lord and who do not associate partners with their Lord and those who when give something for His cause, give with their hearts trembling that they have to return to their Lord – it is these people who are taking lead in good works and they shall certainly acquire them – and We do not burden a soul beyond its capacity and with Us is a book which shall accurately disclose and not the slightest injustice shall they suffer. (57-62)

In fact, their hearts are indifferent to it and they have some other involvements besides this. They shall remain engrossed in them until when We seize their affluent with torment, they will start pleading. Do not plead and implore now. We shall not the slightest help you now. When My revelations were recited to you, you would turn to run away with arrogance, as if you are leaving a story-teller. (63-67)

Explanation

يَا أَيُّهَا الرُّسُلُ كُلُوا مِنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَاعْمَلُوا صَالِحًا ۚ إِنِّي بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٥١﴾¹

This is a reference to the guidance given by God to all His messengers. The purpose is to show that the messengers followed that guidance and invited their respective people to follow it. However, their people because of their polytheistic superstitions proscribed wholesome and pure edibles and

1. O Messengers! Eat pure things and do righteous deeds. I fully know whatever you do.

regarded unwholesome and impure edibles as allowed. Thereby they disobeyed their messengers and took to disbelief.

The last part of the verse “I fully know whatever you do” carries both assurance and warning: if people do good deeds, they are in God’s knowledge and will be fully rewarded by Him, and if they do evil deeds, these too are in God’s knowledge and they will not be left by Him without punishing them.

وَإِنَّ هَذِهِ أُمَّتُكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَأَنَا رَبُّكُمْ فَاتَّقُونِ ﴿٥٢﴾ فَتَقَطَّعُوا أَمْرَهُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ زُبُرًا كُلٌّ حِزْبٍ
بِسَالِدَتِهِمْ فَرِحُونَ² ﴿٥٣﴾

All messengers of God have invited people to the same religion and all the messengers form a single *ummah* and tried making people into a single *ummah* as well. God alone is the Lord of all.

In other words, instead of accepting this actual reality, these *ummahs* split this single religion into pieces because of mutual malice and now each is engrossed in what it has. In verses 92-93 of Sūrah al-Anbiyā’ after referring to the message of all prophets, precisely the same premise is stated thus: وَتَقَطَّعُوا أَمْرَهُمْ وَإِنَّ هَذِهِ أُمَّتُكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَأَنَا رَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُونِ بَيْنَهُمْ (All this is a one *ummah* of yours and I only am your Lord. So, worship Me alone. And they tore their religion into pieces between themselves).

The same topic has been mentioned in even more detail in Sūrah al-Baqarah in these words:

كَانَ النَّاسُ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً ۖ فَبَعَثَ اللَّهُ النَّبِيِّنَ مُبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنذِرِينَ ۖ وَانزَلَ مَعَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ لِيُخْطَمَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ فِيمَا اخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ ۖ وَمَا اخْتَلَفَ فِيهِ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ أُوتُوهُ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَتْهُمْ الْبَيِّنَاتُ بَغْيًا بَيْنَهُمْ. (٢: ٢١٣)

Mankind was just a single community. [Then differences arose between them.] So, God sent forth prophets as bearers of glad tidings and as warners, and with them He sent down the Book as the decisive truth so that it may settle between people the matter in which they had differed with one another. And only they differed in it to whom it was given after very clear admonitions had come to them because of

2. And this *ummah* of yours is a single *ummah* and I am your Lord. So, keep fearing Me. Thus the *ummahs* split among them their religion into pieces. Now each group is engrossed in whatever it has.

malice for one another. (2:213)

Here readers may well try to fully understand the stance of the Qur'ān regarding the prophets and their nations. Though this has been fully explained in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Baqarah and Sūrah al-Anbiyā, yet by not properly understanding it people have been inflicted with great misconceptions. For this reason, the following details are presented.

The Qur'ān does not accept that the prophets and messengers who came to this world invited people towards separate religions and created separate *ummahs*. On the contrary, it claims that every prophet struggled to set up only one *ummah* – the Muslim *ummah*. When nations spoiled this religion, God sent other prophets and messengers to reform this state of affairs. Those prophets and messengers did not present anything but the real religion; they expended all their efforts to make people adhere to the real religion and if and when it was according to God's wisdom, they explained the requirements of the religion even further. The Qur'ān is the last rung of this blessed ladder. It has presented the real religion – to which Adam (sws) and Noah (sws) all the way to Jesus (sws) called people – in its original pristine form. Whatever aspects of this religion that needed completion were completed by the last prophet of God who came in accordance with the prophecies of the previous ones. As such, all nations have this same religion. However, because of prejudice and narrow-mindedness, nations opposed it and now each group is engrossed in whatever part it has, however much adulterated and incomplete it may be. It may be kept in mind that this has been stated as an assurance to the Prophet (sws): he should not fret over them for such unfortunate are they that they do not want to benefit from their own lost treasure.

فَذَرُهُمْ فِي غُرُورِهِمْ حَتَّىٰ حِينٍ³

The word *غُرُورٌ* means the frenzy of indifference. The verse addresses the Prophet (sws) and tells him that he has cautioned and prodded them to a great extent and they still are not prepared to mend their ways; so, now he should leave them alone for soon they will see the fate of this negligence. The expression *حَتَّىٰ حِينٍ*

3. So, leave them for some days in this frenzy of theirs.

refers to the time period that has been prescribed for them and which is now about to expire.

أَيَحْسَبُونَ أَنَّنَا نُنَادِيهِمْ بِهِمْ مِنْ مَّالٍ وَبَنِينَ ﴿٥٧﴾ نُسَارِعُ لَهُمْ فِي الْخَيْرَاتِ بَلْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿٥٨﴾⁴

The words *مَالٍ وَبَنِينَ* signify worldly affluence in a comprehensive way. The implication is that the real reason of their frenzy and negligence is their worldly riches and prosperity and this has lulled them into a deep slumber. They think that this life of luxury is proof of their success and these successes and triumphs will continue to increase and therefore they should not spoil their jubilation by the warnings of a warner. The verse informs them that they have drawn a wrong conclusion with regard to their prosperity. What they regard to be their success is actually a noose that is going to gradually tighten around their neck: this respite is going to soon end and they will then be seized by God. Unfortunately, because of their thick-headedness they do not realize this.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ هُمْ مِنْ خَشْيَةِ رَبِّهِمْ مُشْفِقُونَ ﴿٥٩﴾ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٦٠﴾ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لَا يُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٦١﴾ وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْتُونَ مَا آتَاوْا وَقُلُوبُهُمْ وَجِلَةٌ أَنَّهُمْ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ رَاجِعُونَ ﴿٦٢﴾
أُولَٰئِكَ يُسْرِعُونَ فِي الْخَيْرَاتِ وَهُمْ لَهَا سَابِقُونَ ﴿٦٣﴾⁵

Here readers should take another look at the first ten verses of the *sūrah*. The believers who were given glad tidings of success there are mentioned here again in slightly different words. Following are their traits that have been enumerated here. These are the traits of those Muslims who, in seeking the pleasure of God, had turned away from all worldly attractions even if it meant endangering their lives.

4. Do they think that We are increasing their wealth and children, then We are increasing their well-being? In fact, they are unaware of the actual reality.

5. Indeed, those who are always scared of their Lord's fear and who believe in the revelations of their Lord and who do not associate partners with their Lord and those who when give something for His cause, give with their hearts trembling that they have to return to their Lord – it is these people who are taking lead in good works and they shall certainly acquire them.

Their first quality is that they fear God all the time. This is evident from their prayers. Thus, earlier in verse 2, it was said: **فِي هُمْ صَلَاتِهِمْ خُسُوعُونَ**.

Their second quality is: **هُمْ بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ يُمْنُونَ**. They do not make fun of God's revelations like the arrogant; in fact, when these revelations are recited to them by God's messenger they believe in them and follow them.

Their third quality is: **هُمْ بِرَبِّهِمْ لَا يُشْرِكُونَ**. They fully trust their Lord and do not associate anyone with Him.

Their fourth quality is: **يُؤْتُونَ مَا آتَاوْا قُلُوبُهُمْ وَجِلَّةً أَنْهُمْ إِلَى رَبِّهِمْ رَاجِعُونَ**. They spend for the cause of God and never do this to show off and to show conceit; they always do so to seek His pleasure since one day they will have to face Him. The words **أَنْهُمْ إِلَى رَبِّهِمْ رَاجِعُونَ** (that they have to return to their Lord), in my opinion, occur as an explanation of **وَجِلَّةً**. They explain the reason of the fear they have in their hearts.

The words **أُولَئِكَ يُسْرِعُونَ فِي الْخَيْرَاتِ وَهُمْ لَهَا سَابِقُونَ** imply that it is these people who are trying to take the initiative in doing righteous deeds and will be rewarded for them and not those who regard the respite given to them as their success and are actually blindly running into the tunnel of their destruction. This verse occurs in contrast to verse 56 (**نَسَارِعُ لَهُمْ فِي الْخَيْرَاتِ**) earlier and an explanation of verse 1 (**الْمُؤْمِنُونَ أَفْذَحَ قَدْ**) of this *sūrah*.

A comparison between the two verses shows that in verse 56, it was said: "We are increasing their well-being" and here the words are: "it is these people who are taking lead in good works." This comparison refers to the fact that whatever a person gets in this world is from God and it is not given to him as a gift; it is rather a trial for him. However, whatever a person will get in the Hereafter will be the consequence of his efforts; thus whoever wants to take the lead, should take the lead in this sphere and not in the one everything of which is temporary and given as a trial.

وَلَا تُكْفِرْ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وَسْعَهَا وَلَدَيْنَا كِتَابٌ يَنْطِقُ بِالْحَقِّ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ⁶

As a parenthetical sentence, this verse gives assurance and glad tidings to the believers similar to the glad tidings given to

6. And We do not burden a soul beyond its capacity and with Us is a book which shall accurately disclose and not the slightest injustice shall they suffer.

them at the end of Sūrah al-Baqarah. The implication is that this no doubt is a trial but they should rest assured that God does not put those who take the lead for His cause in a trial that is beyond their capacity. They should be content that whatever hardships, whether great or small, they are bearing for God's cause are written in a register with Him. On the Day of Judgement, that register will present the exact record of the deeds of people; everyone will be judged accordingly and will suffer not the slightest injustice.

بَلْ قُلُوبُهُمْ فِي غَمْرَةٍ مِّنْ هَٰذَا وَلَهُمْ أَعْمَالٌ مِّنْ دُونِ ذَٰلِكَ هُمْ لَهَا عَمِلُونَ ﴿٣٧﴾ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا
أَخَذْنَا مَّتَرَفِيهِمْ بِالعَذَابِ إِذَا هُمْ يَجْعَرُونَ ﴿٣٨﴾⁷

This sentence beginning with **بَلْ** (in fact) relates to the misconception of the arrogant stated earlier: they regarded their prosperity and affluence to be a proof of their good deeds in this world and of their good fate in the Hereafter. Earlier, after stating this misconception, the discourse had shifted to the believers. Now once again the same topic is brought up. It is said that the hearts of these people are indifferent to the warnings of the messenger and they are engrossed in their frenzied engagements. They find no attraction in the deeds of the believers mentioned in verses 57-60. The deeds that interest them are some others and they are absorbed in them. Ultimately, when God's scourge seizes them, they will implore and beg but to no avail.

The word **يَجْعَرُونَ** means "implore and plead." **مَّتَرَفِينَ** means "the rich and the prosperous." The punishment of denying a messenger actually comes for the rich because it is they who have real malice and animosity for his warnings. However, others who do not belong to their category but have become pawns in the hands of these rich because of their own misdeeds are also included in the sphere of this punishment. Thus, they too are subjected to this scourge.

لَا تَجْعَرُوا الْيَوْمَ إِنَّكُمْ مِنَّا لَا تَنْصُرُونَ ﴿٣٩﴾ قَدْ كَانَتْ آيَتِي تُشَلَّىٰ عَلَيْكُمْ فَكُنْتُمْ عَلَىٰ

7. In fact, their hearts are indifferent to it and they have some other involvements besides this. They shall remain engrossed in them until when We seize their affluent with torment, they will start pleading.

The implication of the verse is that after their attitude of aversion in the previous world, they should not expect any lenience from God. Nor will there be anyone else beside Him who could be of help to them. In the anecdote of the Pharaoh too, exactly the same situation had arisen: he too had acknowledged the Lord of Moses (sws) and Aaron (sws) when he was surrounded by stormy waves but this was not deemed acceptable. He was scolded that the time for accepting faith had expired.

It has been referred to earlier that this statement in the verse could be uttered from the mouth and could also be a portrayal of the situation.

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مُسْتَكْبِرِينَ ۖ بِهِ سِرَاتُ الْهَاجِرُونَ

Our exegetes have faced a lot of difficulty in the interpretation of this verse. It would require great space to cite their opinions and then critically evaluate them. For this reason, I will just present my own interpretation here.

The preposition *بِ* after *مُسْتَكْبِرِينَ* evidences the fact that this word encompasses the meaning of making fun. Examples of this usage can be seen in the previous sections of this exegesis. A group of exegetes regard the antecedent of the pronoun to be *آيَاتِ* (revelations) mentioned in the previous verse, and interpret it to refer to *ذِكْرُ* (reminder) and *كِتَابُ* (the book). This interpretation cannot be regarded as linguistically incorrect. The words *آيَاتِ*, *ذِكْرُ* and *كِتَابُ* are mentioned synonymously in the Qur'ān. However, in my opinion, this is over-stretching and is not needed. At times, the antecedent of a pronoun is not mentioned in words; it is evident from the discourse and concomitant indications determine it. Examples of this usage occur both in the Qur'ān and in classical Arabic poetry. Several examples of it can be seen in the previous sections of this book and some very eloquent ones are coming up in the last chapter. For this reason, I believe that the antecedent of this pronoun is the messenger whose

8. Do not plead and implore now. We shall not the slightest help you now. When My revelations were recited to you, you would turn to run away.

9. With arrogance, as if you are leaving a story-teller.

rejection and being mocked at is discussed in this *sūrah* and whose recital of verses is mentioned in verse 66 earlier in the words: قَدْ كَانَتْ آيَاتِي تُشَلَّىٰ عَلَيْكُمْ.

The word سَرِيَّا means “a story-teller.” It can be the object of the verb and can also be regarded as *hāl* (state) from the genitive pronoun in بِهِ. Several examples of such types of *hāl* have occurred earlier in this exegesis.

The word تَهَجَّرُونَ is used in its conventional meaning: “to leave.” There is no need to interpret it in a different way.

If one feels satisfied with this parsing of the discourse, then what is said from لَا تَجْرُوا الْيَوْمَ until now can thus be stated in simple words: There is no use in pleading and shouting; neither will God hear your wailings nor can anyone else save you from Him; the time to please Him was when His messenger of delivering His revelations; but such was their senselessness that they would evade him with great arrogance while making fun of him as if he was a story-teller not worth listening to.

It may be kept in mind that when the Prophet (sws) narrated the anecdotes of the previous nations to the affluent people of the Quraysh, they made fun of him instead of learning a lesson. They would try to lead away their masses saying that the prophet (sws) had nothing but anecdotes of the past.

Section V: Verses (69-92)

In the succeeding verses, the disbelievers are rebuked on their careless attitude. After that, the Prophet (sws) is sounded assurance: he is not to lose hope because of their stubbornness and arrogance; he is on the right path and these people have deviated from it; they will observe their fate with their eyes. If God inflicts any calamity on them to warn them, even then they will not realize. In fact, as soon as the calamity leaves them, they will return to their ill-ways. After this, the signs found within a human being and the ones outside him are referred to so that people should reflect and stop behaving in an indifferent way. However, in response, those people regarded all the warnings of the messenger to be anecdotes of the past. After this, their attention is directed at their contradictory views by posing a question: on the one hand, they accept and declare the truth, but

then they lose their sense and state the opposite and wander away into error.

Readers may now proceed to study these verses.

Text and Translation

أَفَلَمْ يَدَّبَّرُوا الْقَوْلَ أَمْ جَاءَهُمْ مَّا لَمْ يَأْتِ آبَاءَهُمُ الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿٦٨﴾ أَمْ لَمْ يَعْرِفُوا رَسُولَهُمْ فَهُمْ لَهُ
مُنْكَرُونَ ﴿٦٩﴾ أَمْ يَقُولُونَ بِهِ جِنَّةٌ بَلْ جَاءَهُمُ بِالْحَقِّ وَ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لِلْحَقِّ كُرهُونَ ﴿٧٠﴾ وَلَوْ اتَّبَعَ
الْحَقُّ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ لَفَسَدَتِ السَّمَوَاتُ وَ الْأَرْضُ وَ مَنْ فِيهِنَّ بَلْ أَتَيْنَهُمْ بِذِكْرِهِمْ فَهُمْ عَنْ ذِكْرِهِمْ
مُعْرِضُونَ ﴿٧١﴾ أَمْ تَسْأَلُهُمْ خَزَاجًا فخرِجْ رِبَّكَ خَيْرٌ ۖ وَ هُوَ خَيْرُ الرَّازِقِينَ ﴿٧٢﴾ وَ أَنْتَ لَتَنذِرُوهُمْ
إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿٧٣﴾ وَ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ عَنِ الصِّرَاطِ لَنُكَيِّمُونَ ﴿٧٤﴾ وَ لَوْ
رَحِمْنَاهُمْ وَ كَشَفْنَا مَا بِهِمْ مِنْ عِزٍّ لَلْجُورِ فِي طُعْيَانِهِمْ يَعْمَهُونَ ﴿٧٥﴾ وَ لَقَدْ أَخَذْنَاهُمْ بِالْعَذَابِ فَمَا
اسْتَكْبَرُوا لِلرِّبِّهِمْ وَ مَا يَنْصَرِعُونَ ﴿٧٦﴾ حَتَّى إِذَا فَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ بَابًا ذَا عَذَابٍ شَدِيدٍ إِذَا هُمْ
فِيهِ مُبْلِسُونَ ﴿٧٧﴾ وَ هُوَ الَّذِي أَنشَأَ لَكُمْ السَّمْعَ وَ الْأَبْصَارَ وَ الْأَفْئِدَةَ قَلِيلًا مَّا تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٧٨﴾
وَ هُوَ الَّذِي ذَرَأَكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَإِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُونَ ﴿٧٩﴾ وَ هُوَ الَّذِي يُحْيِي وَ يُمِيتُ وَ لَهُ اخْتِلَافُ اللَّيْلِ وَ
النَّهَارِ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٨٠﴾ بَلْ قَالُوا مِثْلَ مَا قَالَ الْأَوَّلُونَ ﴿٨١﴾ قَالُوا إِذَا مِتْنَا وَ كُنَّا تُرَابًا وَ
عِظَامًا إِنَّا لَنَبْعُوثُوهُنَّ ﴿٨٢﴾ لَقَدْ وَعَدْنَا نَحْنُ وَ آبَاؤُنَا هَذَا مِنْ قَبْلُ إِن هَذَا إِلَّا آسَاطِيرُ
الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿٨٣﴾ قُلْ لِّمَنِ الْأَرْضُ وَ مَنْ فِيهَا إِن كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٨٤﴾ سَيَقُولُونَ لِلَّهِ قُلْ أَفَلَا
تَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٨٥﴾ قُلْ مَنْ رَبُّ السَّمَوَاتِ السَّبْعِ وَ رَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ ﴿٨٦﴾ سَيَقُولُونَ لِلَّهِ قُلْ أَفَلَا
تَتَّقُونَ ﴿٨٧﴾ قُلْ مَنْ يَبْدِئُ مَلَكُوتَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَ هُوَ يُجِيرُ وَ لَا يُجَارُ عَلَيْهِ إِن كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٨٨﴾
سَيَقُولُونَ لِلَّهِ قُلْ فَأَنَّى تُسْحَرُونَ ﴿٨٩﴾ بَلْ أَتَيْنَهُمُ بِالْحَقِّ وَ إِنَّهُمْ لَكَاذِبُونَ ﴿٩٠﴾ مَا اتَّخَذَ اللَّهُ
مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَ مَا كَانَ مَعَهُ مِنَ الْإِلَهِ إِذَا لَذَّهَبَ كُلُّ إِلَهِ بِمَا خَلَقَ وَ لَعَلَّا بَعْضُهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ سُبْحَنَ
اللَّهِ عَمَّا يَصِفُونَ ﴿٩١﴾ عَلَيْهِمُ الْعَذَابُ وَ الشَّهَادَةُ فَتَعَلَّى عَمَّا يَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٩٢﴾

Have these people not reflected on this word? Or has that come to them which did not come to their earlier forefathers? Or have they not recognized their messenger; for this reason, they are denying him? Or they say: “He is inflicted a little by insanity. This is not insanity. In fact, he has brought the truth to them but most of them are averse to the truth. And had the truth been in accordance with their desires, the heavens and the earth and what

is between them all would have been destroyed. In fact, We have brought to them their share of reminder. But they are evading their reminder. (68-71)

Are you asking for some payment from them? The reward of your Lord is better for you and He is the best provider of sustenance. And indeed, you are calling them to a straight path. And those who do not believe in the Hereafter have gone astray from the straight path. [And if after inflicting them with a trial, We] had showed mercy to them and eliminated their hardship, they would have continued to wander about while being adamant on their rebelliousness. And We seized in torment those who were like them, but neither did they bow to their Lord nor did they plead. Until when We open the door of a harsh torment to them, they will totally lose hope in it. (72-77)

And it is He Who has made for you ears, eyes and hearts. Yet, very seldom are you grateful. And it is He Who has scattered you in the earth; then you will be gathered towards Him. And it is He Who gives life and death and in His control is the alternation of the night and the day. Then do you not understand? (78-80)

In fact, they have said the same thing what their predecessors had said. They say: “When we die and become clay and bones, will we be raised to life again? We and before us our forefathers too were threatened of it. These are only tales of the ancient.” (81-83)

Ask them: To whom belongs this earth and those in it, if you know? They will reply: “To God.” Say: So, do you not receive a reminder from it? Ask: Who is the Lord of the seven heavens and the glorious throne? They will say: “All these belong to God.” Say: So, do you not fear this God? Ask: Who is it that has authority over everything and He gives refuge but no one other than Him can give refuge, if you know? They will say: “All this is God’s authority alone.” Say: Then where do you lose your senses? (84-89)

In fact, We have brought the truth to them and they are absolute liars. God has not made anyone His offspring; and neither is there any other deity besides Him. If such was the case, each deity would have taken his creation and walked away, and would have attacked another. Exalted is God from such things they state. He knows the manifest and the hidden. And far aloft is He from what they associate with Him. (90-92)

Explanation

10  أَفَلَمْ يَدَّبَّرُوا الْقَوْلَ أَمْ جَاءَهُمْ مِمَّا يَأْتِ آبَاءَهُمُ الْأَوَّلِينَ

The purpose of this and the succeeding interrogative statements is to express sorrow on the attitude of the addressees and to rebuke them. The word الْقَوْلَ (word) here refers to the Qur'ān, evasion from which is mentioned in the previous verse. Since the statement here expresses sorrow and rebuke, it is left incomplete. At another, the Qur'ān (47:24) states that their hearts have been bolted. For this reason, its words are not able to penetrate into them. It is sheer ignorance to be startled and led away from the Qur'ān because it is against the traditions of their forefathers. These traditions in themselves are not necessarily correct. They must also conform to the norms of human nature and intellect. Moreover, these people are chided to look beyond them. Their real forefathers are Abraham (sws) and Ishmael (sws). They were proponents and preachers of this religion. Why don't these people follow these noble ancestors and why are they insisting on following those ancestors who were absolutely unaware of religion?

11  أَمْ لَمْ يَعْرِفُوا رَسُولَهُمْ فَهُمْ لَهُ مُنْكَرُونَ

This verse informs the Quraysh of a grave danger in the light of an established practice of God mentioned very clearly in the Qur'ān. According to this practice, the Almighty sends a messenger to conclusively communicate the truth to a nation who is from among them. If the nation professes faith in him, God makes it succeed and grants it authority in the land. On the other hand, if a nation denies the messenger, it is necessarily destroyed after this conclusive communication. For this reason, the coming of a messenger in a nation is a very delicate phase of its life. Its fate is decided in this period. Unfortunate are those who do not appreciate the precarious nature of this phase and show indifference to their messenger.

Thus the verse actually warns the Quraysh on their short-sightedness: have they not recognized their messenger and for this

10. Have these people not reflected on this word? Or has that come to them which did not come to their earlier forefathers?

11. Or have they not recognized their messenger; for this reason, they are denying him?

reason are continuing to deny him or are they denying him intentionally? In the latter case, this ploy will work badly for them.

أَمْ يَقُولُونَ بِهِ جِنَّةٌ ۚ بَلْ جَاءَهُمُ بِالْحَقِّ وَآكُثِرُ لَهُمُ لِلْحَقِّ كُرْهُونَ ﴿١٢﴾

The verse implies that if in order to fool their people they say that the messenger has been inflicted with lunacy, it is proof of their own lunacy. The messenger is in no such state. Whatever he is presenting is the absolute truth and each and every word uttered by him is going to come true. The fact is that these people have a strong aversion to the truth and for this reason are calling the messenger mad. When a patient regards the medicines of his doctor to be bitter and is not prepared to take them, instead of regarding himself wrong, he actually regards the doctor's advice to be sheer nonsense. Same was the case with those people. They were not prepared to leave their vices and adopt the blunt truth. Thus, they regarded the messenger to be insane so that this could hide their own insanity.

وَلَوْ اتَّبَعَ الْحَقُّ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ لَفَسَدَتِ السَّمَوَاتُ وَالْأَرْضُ وَمَنْ فِيهِنَّ ۚ بَلْ أَتَيْنَهُمْ بِذِكْرِهِمْ فَهُمْ عَنْ ذِكْرِهِمْ مُعْرِضُونَ ﴿١٣﴾

These verses explain the difference between the nature of personal desires and of the truth. Both are as far apart from one another as the East and the West. The demands and requisites of both are very different. If, as they want, the truth preached by the messenger follows their desires, the necessary consequence of this would be destruction of the whole universe. The reason for this is that they are advocates of evil instead of good, injustice instead of justice, vice instead of virtue, dishonesty instead of honesty – and most of all polytheism instead of monotheism and rejection instead of acceptance of the Day of Judgement. If all these values are replaced the way they desire, the whole moral

12. Or they say: "He is inflicted a little by insanity. This is not insanity. In fact, he has brought the truth to them but most of them are averse to the truth.

13. And had the truth being in accordance with their desires, the heavens and the earth and what is between them all would have been destroyed. In fact, We have brought to them their share of reminder. But they are evading their reminder.

system of this world will be disrupted. And if polytheism is also acknowledged in it, the system of this universe cannot survive even for a day. This reality is explained further ahead in verse 91 in these words: مَا اتَّخَذَ اللَّهُ مِنْ وَلَدٍ وَمَا كَانَ مَعَهُ مِنْ إِلَهٍ إِذَا لَدَّهَبَ كُلُّ إِلَهٍ بِمَا خَلَقَ وَلَعَلَّ بَعْضُهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ

The implication is that these people want the truth to the follow them while their own salvation lies in following the truth itself. The creator of the heavens and the earth cannot leave the universe to their mercy; these people should now themselves decide whether they want to follow the truth or end up being wiped out while adhering to falsehood. If they want life, then they must follow the truth whether it is sour or sweet. There is no other way that can give them life.

The words بَلْ أَتَيْنَهُمْ بِذِكْرِهِمْ فَهُمْ عَنْ ذِكْرِهِمْ مُعْرِضُونَ sound the same warning that was sounded earlier in verse 69 in different words thus: أَمْ لَمْ يَعْرِفُوا رَسُولَهُمْ. The implication is that if these people think that the Qur'ān is a story authored by a story-teller, they have totally misunderstood. This is their share of the reminder sent by God to them for conclusive communication of the truth. If they do not benefit from this reminder, they should keep in mind that they will meet the same fate as the nations before them which did not give due importance to God's reminder sent to them. The established practice of God has been referred to earlier that messengers were sent by Him to every nation to remind people of the hereafter. Nations which duly valued this reminder succeeded and those which did not were destroyed.

Here this established practice of God is alluded to and it is stated that these people are evading this reminder while being unmindful of its consequences.

14 ﴿٤٢﴾ أَمْ تَسْأَلُهُمْ خَرْجًا فَقَدْ أَرْبٰهُ رَبِّكَ خَيْرٌ ۖ وَهُوَ خَيْرُ الرَّٰزِقِينَ

This verse assures the Prophet (swws) and rebukes his opponents. The implication of the verse is that he is distributing free what he gained free and not asking them for any charges. If these people do not give importance to this favour, it is their own deprivation. If they think that they will be able to harm him by

14. Are you asking for some payment from them? The reward of your Lord is better for you and He is the best provider of sustenance.

not accepting his message, they are grossly mistaken. The Prophet (sws) is told that the reward of his Lord is the best for them and He is the best of providers. God's messengers are advocates of the truth; their preaching has all its provisions. Same is the example of the righteous that carry on with the task of these messengers.

وَإِنَّكَ لَتَدْعُوهُمْ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿١٥﴾ وَإِنَّ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ عَنِ الصِّرَاطِ لَنُكَيِّبُونَ ﴿١٦﴾

The straight path towards which the Prophet (sws) is calling people leads them to their actual destination but to adopt this path faith in the hereafter is needed. If they do not have this faith, why would they impose conditions and restrictions on their wants and desires? Only those people can sacrifice the near at hand pleasures of this life who are waiting for a day of reward. Those who have no such inclination will continue to follow their desires even if this takes them far away from the straight path.

This verse explains to the Prophet (sws) that it is not because the way to salvation preached by him has any confusion or doubt for these people because of which they are evading it; it is the absolute straight path; the problem lies in their hearts. They do not have belief in the hereafter and those who do not have this belief are bound to go astray. This aspect of the philosophy of religion should be understood that if this world is not understood to culminate in another, it will appear as most complex and incomprehensible. No one will be able to rightly navigate it. This fact has been alluded to at various instances in this exegesis.

وَلَوْ رَحِمْنَاهُمْ وَكَشَفْنَا مَا بِهِمْ مِنْ ضُرٍّ لَلَجُّوا فِي طُغْيَانِهِمْ يَعْمَهُونَ ﴿١٦﴾

A part of the conditional clause stated in this verse is suppressed in accordance with linguistic principles. If this suppression is unfolded, the complete sentence would be: "If for the purpose of admonition We made them pass through a trial so

15. And indeed, you are calling them to a straight path. And those who do not believe in the Hereafter have gone astray from the straight path.

16. [And if after inflicting them with a trial, We] had showed mercy to them and eliminated their hardship, they would have continued to wander about like while being adamant on their rebelliousness.

that they fear Me and then showed mercy to them by delivering them from this trial, they would have again taken to their rebelliousness and wandered about.” The implication is that for people of this mentality, the signs of punishment which they demand are of no avail. If ever they show submission, it is temporary. As soon as their days of trial pass, their leaders try to convince them that such circumstances befall nations and have nothing to do with their beliefs or characters.

At the same time, the Prophet (sws) is assured that if these people demand a sign of punishment, he should ignore them. No sign can be of benefit to such people.

17 ﴿وَلَقَدْ أَخَذْنَاهُمْ بِالْعَذَابِ فَمَا اسْتَكَانُوا لِرَبِّهِمْ وَمَا يَتَضَمَّرُونَ﴾¹⁷

This verse cites the reasoning in the light of history for what is stated in the previous verse: the past bears witness that people of this nature never learn a lesson from warnings. The implication is that if these people are warned too, the Prophet (sws) should not expect that they will mend their ways. The antecedent of the pronoun هُمْ is the not the Quraysh; it is the people of the previous nations who behaved similarly. It is common in Arabic for such pronouns to occur. Examples of this occur both in the Qur'an and classical Arabic literature. The eloquence in it is that seizing one is like seizing the other because both are guilty of the same crime.

The difference between اسْتَكَانَ and تَضَمَّرَ is that of the intrinsic and the extrinsic. The former signifies the humility of the heart and the latter refers to the wailing and crying that manifest itself as a result of the former. In my opinion, an incomplete verb is suppressed before يَتَضَمَّرُونَ.

18 ﴿حَتَّىٰ إِذَا فَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِم بَابًا ذَا عَذَابٍ شَدِيدٍ إِذَا هُمْ فِيهِ مُبْلِسُونَ﴾¹⁸

The implication of this verse is that these rebukes and warnings will not make them mend their ways until the time arrives when God sends down His harsh torment. This torment refers to the decisive punishment which, according to the established practice of God, visits every nation that denies its

17. And We seized in torment those who were like them, but neither did they bow to their Lord nor did they plead.

18. Until when We open the door of a harsh torment to them, they will totally lose hope in it.

messenger even after the truth had been conclusively conveyed to it and continues to stubbornly adhere to this denial. This practice of God has been explained at various instances in this exegesis. Once this punishment arrives, not much respite is given to such a nation. All its hopes and supports end, as is indicated in the last part of the verse.

19 ﴿هُوَ الَّذِي أَنشَأَكُمُ السَّبْعَ وَالْأَبْصَارَ وَالْأَفْئِدَةَ قَلِيلًا مَّا تَشْكُرُونَ﴾

The earlier discourse was addressed to Prophet Muḥammad (sws) and the warning and threat it had for the Quraysh was in an indirect way. Now they are directly addressed. Faculties have been granted to them so that their ears hear the words of counsel and wisdom being narrated to them, their eyes are able to observe God's signs in the world within and around them and their hearts can reflect on the consequences that emanate from these and which are being very clearly presented to them. This only is the proper use of the ears, eyes and hearts but such is their misfortune that instead of asking for proofs for the truth, they are asking for the lash of punishment. In other words, if instead of seeking guidance from intellect and reason, people only spring into action when forced by a whip, what is the difference between them and animals?

The words “yet, very seldom are you grateful” express yearning and sorrow. The foundation of gratitude is acknowledgement of favours and acknowledgement of favours means that a person tries to truly benefit from it and be grateful to the provider of these favours.

20 ﴿هُوَ الَّذِي ذَرَأَكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَإِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُونَ﴾

Attention is directed here to the Day of Judgement: they should not remain under the misconception that they will die and decay in the earth and nothing will happen after that. When a farmer sows seeds in his field, the purpose is to harvest the crop that will emerge. In a similar way, He Who has scattered people in the earth, will gather them one day and people should remember that they will only be gathered to His place. How can

19. And it is He Who has made for you ears, eyes and hearts. Yet, very seldom are you grateful.

20. And it is He Who has scattered you in the earth; then you will be gathered towards Him.

someone else share his harvested crop? Reflection shows that in a few words the possibility and need of the Day of Judgement as well as argument in favour of monotheism is also stated.

وَهُوَ الَّذِي يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ وَلَهُ اخْتِلَافُ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ²¹

The expression اخْتِلَافُ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ means the coming of the day and night one after the other with amazing punctuality. The Qur'ān has directed attention to this sign at many instances.

The coming of the day and night with such precision in timing shows that this universe is subject to the laws of God and the night and day do not have any authority of their own. The fact that none else can interfere in their passage shows that, in reality, only the peerless God controls them.

Despite being fundamentally different in nature from one another, there exists complete harmony between the night and day. This is ample testimony to the fact that only one intent controls this universe – intent that is all powerful and all wise. It creates harmony among its conflicting elements and uses them for the collective good of this universe.

Getting up in the morning after a comfortable night's sleep is a reminder of the hereafter for every person: in a very similar way, the Almighty will awaken people from their slumber in Barzakh whenever He intends.

Besides the above inferences, there are others also which the Qur'ān has presented in the wake of the alternation of night and day, and I have tried to explain them in this exegesis.

بَلْ قَالُوا مِثْلَ مَا قَالَ الْأَوَّلُونَ²² قَالُوا إِذَا مِتْنَا وَكُنَّا تُرَابًا وَعِظَامًا إِنَّنَا لَسَبُعُونَ

لَقَدْ وُعِدْنَا نَحْنُ وَآبَاؤُنَا هَذَا مِنْ قَبْلُ إِنْ هَذَا إِلَّا أَسَاطِيرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ²²

The implication of these verses is that all that is said above is clear and obvious but such is their misfortune and such is their senseless stance that they regard all this as fables of the past that

21. And it is He Who gives life and death and in His control is the alternation of the night and the day. Then do you not understand?

22. In fact, they have said the same thing what their predecessors had said. They say: “When we die and become clay and bones, will we be raised to life again? We and before us our forefathers too were threatened of it. These are only tales of the ancient.”

mean nothing and say precisely what their predecessors had said.

قُلْ لِّمَنِ الْأَرْضُ وَمَنْ فِيهَا إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٨٢﴾ سَيَقُولُونَ لِلَّهِ قُلْ أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٨٣﴾

This verse points to the contradictory views of the disbelievers: on the one hand, they regard God to be the creator and owner of the heavens and the earth as well as One Who has sole authority, and on the other hand, either say things that are entirely opposite to this view or reject the necessary consequences of it. It has been explained at appropriate instances in this exegesis that the Idolaters of Arabia regarded God to be the creator and owner and the sole controller of the heavens and in the earth. However, at the same time, they were inflicted with all sorts of polytheistic practices alluded to at various places in this exegesis. As for the Day of Judgement, they, in the first place regarded it to be very improbable and if they did believe in it hypothetically, they thought that their intercessors would save them from God's punishment. A little deliberation shows that today's Muslims are also inflicted with similar contradictory views. They acknowledge God but at the same time reject its necessary consequences. They stake claim to faith but blatantly say and do what is exactly opposite to it.

The words "if you know" are a type of sarcastic remark on their contradictory view. This is because knowledge which is an amalgam of contradictions is actually extreme ignorance. If they believe that all these objects and entities of the universe are under God's sole control, why don't they revisit their views and beliefs? How can they deny monotheism after this? From where have they fabricated these deities and intercessors? Why do they regard the Day of Judgement to be a weird happening? Why do they show such aversion to the preaching of the messenger?

قُلْ مَنْ رَبُّ السَّمَوَاتِ السَّبْعِ وَرَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ ﴿٨٤﴾ سَيَقُولُونَ لِلَّهِ قُلْ أَفَلَا تَتَّقُونَ ﴿٨٥﴾

The expression "glorious throne" signifies God's absolute authority. Just as the people of Arabia regarded God to be the

23. Ask them: To whom belongs this earth and those in it, if you know? They will reply: "To God." Say: So, do you not receive a reminder from it?

24. Ask: Who is the Lord of the seven heavens and the glorious throne? They will say: "All these belong to God." Say: So, do you not fear this God?

creator and owner of the earth, they also regarded Him to be the owner of the seven heavens and the sole authority in the universe. Like other idolatrous nations of the world, they never regarded the heavens and the earth to have separate deities. The verse states that if these people reply that it is God Who is the creator of the heavens and the earth, the Prophet (sws) should ask them as to why they do not fear Him if they create disruption and disorder in His system. If His punishment visits them because they do not obey His directives and laws and associate partners with Him without any justification, who can stop Him from doing so?

قُلْ مَنْ بِيَدِ مَلَكُوتِ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَهُوَ يُجِيرُ وَلَا يُجَارُ عَلَيْهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٨٨﴾ سَيَقُولُونَ
 اللَّهُ قُلْ فَأَنِّي تُسْحَرُونَ ﴿٨٩﴾²⁵

The word مَلَكُوت here means “the reins of authority.” The polytheists of Arabia worshipped various idols. However, they never thought that these idols had such authority as to save them from God’s punishment. In fact, they worshipped angels regarding them to be daughters of God because they thought that making them happy meant that God would be happy with them. The words “if you know” imply that in the mythology they themselves have fashioned, they have not given this status to anyone; but if here is someone and they know and believe in him, they should name him. It is then stated that if these people do not regard anyone besides God to have the reins of authority, the Prophet (sws) should ask them who has weaved this spell of magic on them that has made them lose their sense and they are invoking others besides God.

بَلْ أَتَيْنَهُم بِالْحَقِّ وَإِنَّهُمْ لَكَاذِبُونَ ﴿٩٠﴾ مَا اتَّخَذَ اللَّهُ مِنْ وَلَدٍ وَمَا كَانَ مَعَهُ مِنْ إِلَهٍ إِذَا
 تَذَهَبَ كُلُّ إِلَهٍ بِمَا خَلَقَ وَلَعَلَّ بَعْضُهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ سُبْحَنَ اللَّهُ عَمَّا يُصِفُونَ ﴿٩١﴾ عَلِيمُ الْغُيُوبِ
 وَالشَّهَادَةُ فَتَعَلَّى عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٩٢﴾²⁶

25. Ask: Who is it that has authority over everything and He gives refuge but no one other than Him can give refuge, if you know? They will say: “All this is God’s authority alone.” Say: Then where do you lose your senses?

26. In fact, We have brought the truth to them and they are absolute liars. God has not made anyone His offspring; and neither is there any

A concluding comment is made in these verses on the questions and answers cited earlier. What they believe in contradicts their acknowledgements. For this reason, what God has presented in this Qur'ān is the absolute truth and they are absolute liars because they are denying their own beliefs with their very tongues. Had there been other partners of God, this universe would have been disbanded ages ago for the reason stated.

We are aware of the sanguine battles of the gods in Greek and Hindu mythologies. The Greeks believed that man was created by the sun and woman by the earth. Imagine if the sun took away the men created by it, what would have happened to the women of the earth? The Qur'ān has directed attention to the fact that this universe is intact because it has only one creator and master who is governing it. If there were others who shared this governance, it would have been impossible to keep it intact.

Section V: Verses (93-118)

Coming up are the concluding verses of the *sūrah*. The Prophet (sws) is given glad tidings that the time of God's help and triumph over his enemies is near. The believers will succeed and the Prophet's enemies will face humiliation both in this world and in the next. The Prophet (sws) is urged to ignore their mischief for some more time since their fate is about to be decided. As soon as they meet this fate, they will realize that the respite they were regarding to be a lengthy one and as a result became more audacious to play their mischief, has passed in the blink of an eye. At that time, they will severely regret what they have done.

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

Text and Translation

قُلْ رَبِّ إِمَّا تُرِيدُنِي مَا يُعْدُونَ ﴿٩٣﴾ رَبِّ فَلَا تَجْعَلْنِي فِي الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٩٤﴾ وَإِنَّا عَلَىٰ أَنْ
نُرِيكَ مَا نَعِدُهُمْ لَقَادِرُونَ ﴿٩٥﴾ اذْفَعْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ السَّيِّئَةِ ۖ نَحْنُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا يَصِفُونَ ﴿٩٦﴾

other deity besides Him. If such was the case, each deity would have taken his creation and walked away, and would have attacked another. Exalted is God from such things they state. He knows the manifest and the hidden. And far aloft is He from what they associate with Him.

وَقُلْ رَبِّ اَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ هَٰزِلِ الشَّيْطَانِ ﴿٩٤﴾ وَاَعُوذُ بِكَ رَبِّ اَنْ يَّحْضُرُونِ ﴿٩٥﴾ حَتَّىٰ اِذَا جَاءَ اَحَدَهُمُ الْمَوْتُ قَالَ رَبِّ ارْجِعُونِ ﴿٩٦﴾ لَعَلِّي اَعْمَلُ صَالِحًا فِيمَا تَرَكْتُ كَلَّا اِنَّهَا كَلِمَةٌ هُوَ قَائِلُهَا وَمِنْ وَرَآيِهِمْ بَرْزَخٌ اِلَىٰ يَوْمٍ يُبْعَثُونَ ﴿٩٧﴾ فَاِذَا نَفَخَ فِي الصُّورِ فَلَا اَنْسَابَ بَيْنَهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ وَلَا يَتَسَاءَلُونَ ﴿٩٨﴾ فَمَنْ ثَقُلَتْ مَوَازِينُهُ فَاُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٩٩﴾ وَمَنْ خَفَّتْ مَوَازِينُهُ فَاُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ خَسِرُوا اَنْفُسَهُمْ فِي جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدُونَ ﴿١٠٠﴾ تَلَفَحَ وُجُوهُهُمُ النَّارَ وَهُمْ فِيهَا كَالِحُونَ ﴿١٠١﴾ اَلَمْ تَكُنْ اِلَٰهِي تَتْلُو عَلَيَّكُمْ كُتُبَكُمْ فَاَنْتُمْ بِهَا تُكَذِّبُونَ ﴿١٠٢﴾ قَالُوا رَبَّنَا غَلَبَتْ عَلَيْنَا شِقْوَتُنَا وَكُنَّا قَوْمًا ضَالِّينَ ﴿١٠٣﴾ رَبَّنَا اَخْرِجْنَا مِنْهَا فَاِنْ عُدْنَا فَاِنَّا ظَالِمُونَ ﴿١٠٤﴾ قَالِ اٰحْسَبُوا فِيهَا وَلَا تُكَلِّمُونَ ﴿١٠٥﴾ اِنَّهٗ كَانَ فَرِيقٌ مِّنْ عِبَادِي يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا اٰمَنَّا فَاغْفِرْ لَنَا وَارْحَمْنَا وَاَنْتَ خَبِيرُ الرَّحِيْمِ ﴿١٠٦﴾ فَاَتَّخَذَتْهُمْ سَخِرِيًّا حَتَّىٰ اَنْسَوْكُمْ ذِكْرِي وَكُنْتُمْ مِنْهُمْ تَضْحَكُونَ ﴿١٠٧﴾ اِنِّىۤ اَنْزَلْتُهُمْ اِلَیْكُمْ اَلْيَوْمَ بِمَا صَبَرُوا اِنَّهُمْ هُمُ الْقَائِلُونَ ﴿١٠٨﴾ قُلْ كَمْ لَبِثْتُمْ فِى الْاَرْضِ عَدَدَ سِنٍ ﴿١٠٩﴾ قَالُوا لَبِثْنَا يَوْمًا اَوْ بَعْضُ يَوْمٍ فَمَسَّ الْعَادِيْنَ ﴿١١٠﴾ قُلْ اِنْ لَّبِثْتُمْ اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا لَّوْ اَنْتُمْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١١١﴾ اَفَحَسِبْتُمْ اَنْنَا خَلَقْنَكُمْ عَبَثًا وَاَنْكُمْ اِلَيْنَا لَا تُرْجَعُونَ ﴿١١٢﴾ فَتَعَلٰى اللّٰهُ الْمَلِكُ الْحَقُّ لَا اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ رَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْكَرِیْمِ ﴿١١٣﴾ وَمَنْ يَّدْعُ مَعَ اللّٰهِ اِلٰهًا اٰخَرَ لَا بُرْهَانَ لَّهٖ بِهِ ۚ فَاِنَّا حِسَابُهُ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِ ۚ اِنَّهٗ لَا يُفْلِحُ الْكَافِرُونَ ﴿١١٤﴾ وَقُلْ رَبِّ اغْفِرْ وَارْحَمْ وَاَنْتَ خَبِيرُ الرَّحِيْمِ ﴿١١٥﴾

Pray: My Lord! If you show me the torment with which they are being threatened, Lord! do not include me among these unjust people. And, indeed, We are capable of showing you the torment with which We are threatening them. (93-95)

Gracefully ignore their pranks. We are fully aware of whatever evil they are uttering. And keep praying: Lord! I seek your refuge from the prompting of the devils and my Lord! I seek your refuge that they come to me. (96-98)

Until when the death of any of them hovers over, he will say: "Lord! Send me back that I may earn good deeds in what I have left behind." Certainly not! This is merely a statement that he is uttering. And in front of them will be a barrier until that Day when they will be raised. Then when the trumpet is sounded, neither will mutual relationships avail them that Day nor will they be able to seek help from one another. Thus, those whose

scales are heavy shall only succeed and those whose scales are light, it is they who have put themselves in loss. They shall forever remain in Hell. Fire shall burn down their faces and in it their faces shall be distorted. Were not My revelations read out to you; then you would deny them? They will say: "Our Lord! Our misfortune had enveloped us and we remained astray. Our Lord! Take us out just once from this Hell; after that if we still repeat what we did, we shall indeed be among the unjust." It shall be ordered: "Be off with you! Remain in it and do not talk to Me." There was a group among My servants who would pray: "Our Lord! We have professed faith; so, forgive us and have mercy on us and you are best of those who show mercy." So, you made fun of them until this pleantry of yours made you forget My remembrance and you continued to ridicule them. Today, I have rewarded them for their perseverance so that it is they only who have succeeded. (99-111)

One who says will say: "By the count of years, how long would you have stayed on earth?" They will reply: "A day or a part of the day; but you ask this to those who have kept count." One who says will say: "You only stayed for a short while. Would that you knew!" (112-114)

Then, do you think that We have created you without a purpose and you will not be returned to Us? So, very exalted is God, the real sovereign. None is a deity except Him; Master of the glorious throne. And anyone who invokes some other deity with God about which he has no evidence, his account rests with his Lord. And the disbelievers shall never succeed. And pray: Lord! Forgive me and have mercy on me; you are the best of those who show mercy. (115-118)

Translation

قُلْ رَبِّ إِمَّا تُرِيدُنِي مَا يُوعَدُونَ ﴿٩٣﴾ رَبِّ فَلَا تَجْعَلْنِي فِي الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٩٤﴾

When the Quraysh were threatened of the punishment that visits a nation that denies its messenger, asked the Prophet (swws) to bring it if he was truthful. The Qur'ān has responded to this demand at a number of places. For example, in verse 46 of Sūrah Yūnus, it is said: *وَأَمَّا نُرْيِكَ بَعْضَ الَّذِي نَعِدُهُمْ أَوْ نَتَوَقَّعُكَ فَاِلَيْنَا مَرْجِعُهُمْ* (We

27. Pray: My Lord! If you show me the torment with which they are being threatened, Lord! do not include me among these unjust people.

shall either show you a part of that torment or give death to you and their return will be to Us). Similarly, in verse 40 of Sūrah al-Ra'd, it is stated: وَإِنْ مَّا نُرِيَنَّكَ بَعْضَ الَّذِي نَعِدُهُمْ أَوْ نَتَوَقَّعِيَنَّكَ فَإِنَّا بِكَ أَعْلَمُ وَعَلَيْنَا الْحِسَابُ (And We shall show you some part of the torment We are informing them of and give you death and your responsibility is only to communicate; taking account is Our responsibility). The same subject is discussed in verse 77 of Sūrah al-Mu'min too. It is evident from these verses that as far as the promise of punishment for the disbelievers is concerned, it is an absolute reality. The question whether it will appear in the life of the Prophet (sws) or after him has been left vague in these verses. However, the verse under discussion is referring to the fact that the time of conquest and dominance for him and his followers is very near. It will come within his life. The necessary consequence of this is destruction of his enemies. This is evident from the fact that the verse urges the Prophet (sws) to pray that if the promised doom visited these unjust people in his lifetime, God should protect him. The glad tidings found in this prayer for the Prophet (sws) and the warning for his enemies are fully evident. It is also a historical fact that his enemies were totally routed in his lifetime and when he left this world, he left it with the declaration: truth has arrived and evil has perished (جَاءَ الْحَقُّ وَزَهَّقَ الْبَاطِلُ).

28. وَإِنَّا عَلَىٰ أَنْ تُرِيكَ مَا نَعِدُهُمْ قَدِيرُونَ ﴿٢٨﴾

These words emphasize the glad tidings mentioned in the previous verse. The reason was that by that time circumstances were still very adverse. The Prophet (sws) and his companions were being forced to migrate from Makkah, as a result of the wave of persecution let loose by his enemies. It was not easy at all to imagine at that time that light would soon make this darkness vanish. It was in order to do away with this uncertainty that the words of this verse sound assurance to the Prophet (sws). They unequivocally let him know that circumstances can never impede God's intent.

Urging the Prophet (sws) to pray in these words does not merely show the intensity of the torment, as has been generally

28. And, indeed, We are capable of showing you the torment with which We are threatening them.

understood. It also insinuates migration requesting God to open this way for them in case this torment was due to come in his own life. In other words, he has been given glad tidings in the form of a prayer that God has already made arrangements of protecting him from this torment.

29 ﴿إِذْفَعُم بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ السَّبِيَّةِ ۖ نَحْنُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا يَصِفُونَ﴾²⁹

These words urge the Prophet (sws) to show patience and forgive and ignore his opponents. He should continue to respond to their ill-ways in a magnanimous way. He should not be sad at their taunts and harassment. God will take them to task for every single mischief they are working. He should consign their matter to Him. The time of the decision is at hand.

30 وَقُلْ رَبِّ أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ هَٰزِلِ الشَّيْطَانِ ﴿٩٤﴾ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ رَبِّ أَنْ يَحْضُرُونِ ﴿٩٥﴾³⁰

These words teach him the prayer to acquire patience for himself and the strength to forgive his enemies. The word الشَّيْطَانِ refer to devils both the jinn who whisper evil suggestions in the heart of people and also those among human beings whose attitude is under discussion here.

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءَ أَحَدَهُمُ الْمَوْتُ قَالَ رَبِّ ارْجِعُونِ ﴿٩٦﴾ لَعَلِّي أَعْمَلُ صَالِحًا فِيمَا تَرَكْتُ ۖ كَلَّا ۚ إِنَّهَا كَلِمَةٌ هُوَ قَائِلُهَا وَمِنْ وَرَائِهِمْ بَرْزَخٌ إِلَىٰ يَوْمِ يُبْعَثُونَ ﴿٩٧﴾³¹

The implication of this verse is that these people are not going to abstain from mischief-mongering until death overtakes any of them. They will only be awakened from their slumber when they face the new circumstances of the next world. At that time, they will earnestly utter what is stated in these verses. Alas, their request to be sent back will merely turn out to be an expression

29. Gracefully ignore their pranks. We are fully aware of whatever evil they are uttering.

30. And keep praying: Lord! I seek your refuge from the prompting of the devils and my Lord! I seek your refuge that they come to me.

31. Until when the death of any of them hovers over, he will say: "Lord! Send me back that I may earn good deeds in what I have left behind." Certainly not! This is merely a statement that he is uttering. And in front of them will be a barrier until that Day when they will be raised.

of regret and will not the slightest avail them. The time of action for them will stand expired for it is restricted to the previous world only. As soon as they pass away from this world, they will face a barrier which will only be lifted once they are raised to life on the Day of Judgement for accountability. The words **إِنَّهَا كَلِمَةٌ هُوَ قَائِلُهَا** can also mean that this person may utter these words but if he is sent back, he will continue to do what he did earlier. There are parallel verses in the Qur'ān that support this interpretation. However, in my opinion, the interpretation I have adopted is the correct one. Very evident examples of this are found in the *sūrahs* of the last chapter.

فَإِذَا نْفَخَ فِي الصُّورِ فَلَا أَنْسَابَ بَيْنَهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ وَلَا يَتَسَاءَلُونَ ³²

This is a portrayal of the extent each person will be involved in his own affairs. No familial ties or relationship will be of any avail nor will they have the time to even seek help. The word **تَسَاءَل** here means “to seek mutual help from one another.” The biggest support a person can have in this world at time of adversity is his family and tribe. For the Arabs, this support had a special significance. Whenever a person in hardship would call out for help, every member of the tribe would offer this help even if it meant sacrificing his life.

فَمَنْ ثَقُلَتْ مَوَازِينُهُ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ ³³ **وَمَنْ خَفَّتْ مَوَازِينُهُ فَأُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ**
خَسِرُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ فِي جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدُونَ ³³ **تَلْفَحُ وَجُوهُهُمُ النَّارُ وَهُمْ فِيهَا كَالِحُونَ** ³³

On that day, only deeds – and not relationships – will be any avail.

أَلَمْ تَكُنْ إِيَّائِي تَشْلَى عَلَيْهِمْ فَكُنْتُمْ بِهَا تُكَذَّبُونَ ³⁴ **قَالُوا رَبَّنَا غَلَبَتْ عَلَيْنَا شِقْوَتُنَا وَ**

32. Then when the trumpet is sounded, neither will mutual relationships avail them that Day nor will they be able to seek help from one another.

33. Thus those whose scales are heavy shall only succeed and those whose scales are light, it is they who have put themselves in loss. They shall forever remain in Hell. Fire shall burn down their faces and in it their faces shall be distorted.

كُنَّا قَوْمًا ضَالِّينَ ﴿١٠٠﴾ رَبَّنَا أَخْرِجْنَا مِنْهَا فَإِنْ عُدْنَا فَإِنَّا ظَالِمُونَ ﴿١٠١﴾³⁴

The first of these verses expresses the response of God when these people would wail and cry. Thereafter their confession and request are cited.

قَالَ اخْسَئُوا فِيهَا وَلَا تُكَلِّمُونِ ﴿١٠٢﴾³⁵

The word *خَسَأَ* expresses disgracefully dismissing someone from one's presence.

إِنَّهُ كَانَ فَرِيقٌ مِّنْ عِبَادِي يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا آمَنَّا فَاغْفِرْ لَنَا وَارْحَمْنَا وَأَنْتَ خَيْرُ الرَّاحِمِينَ ﴿١٠٣﴾ فَاتَّخَذْتُمُوهُمْ سَخِرِيًّا حَتَّىٰ أَنْسَوْكُم ذِكْرِي وَكُنْتُمْ مِنْهُمْ تَضْحَكُونَ ﴿١٠٤﴾ إِنِّي جَزَيْتُهُمُ الْيَوْمَ بِمَا صَبَرُوا إِنَّهُمْ هُمُ الْفَاقِرُونَ ﴿١٠٥﴾³⁶

These verses are an expression of self-pride and honour because of which God – so prone to honour – will stop these mean people from uttering any further words.

The word “group” in “a group among My servants” indicates that here specially the poor Muslims are being referred to. It was because of their poverty and helplessness that the arrogant Quraysh persecuted and ridiculed them. They would make fun of the invocation and prayer of mercy uttered by those impoverished Muslims. The word *سَخِرِيٌّ* means “the thing or the person who is made fun of.” Mocking someone is an expression of arrogance; however, if someone's prayer is mocked, this arrogance is enhanced several times. It is tantamount to making fun of God Himself.

The words “until this pleasantry of yours made you forget My

34. Were not My revelations read out to you; then you would deny them? They will say: “Our Lord! Our misfortune had enveloped us and we remained astray. Our Lord! Take us out just once from this Hell; after that if we still repeat what we did, we shall indeed be among the unjust.”

35. It shall be ordered: “Be off with you! Remain in it and do not talk to Me.”

36. There was a group among My servants who would pray: “Our Lord! We have professed faith; so, forgive us and have mercy on us and you are best of those who show mercy.” So, you made fun of them until this pleasantry of yours made you forget My remembrance and you continued to ridicule them. Today, I have rewarded them for their perseverance so that it is they only who have succeeded.

remembrance” refer to the fact that such was the extent of their jest and mockery that they did not get the time to think that God was fully watching their misdeeds with His patient and grateful servants; one day, He would definitely take revenge for each and every act of misdemeanour they had committed.

The last verse urges them to now open their eyes to the reality: they are right now facing what they have made themselves forget. Despite the wave of persecution and oppression, mockery and ridicule let loose by them, the servants of God adhered to His servitude. Today they shall be fully rewarded for their perseverance and it is they who shall achieve real success. Here readers may keep in mind the opening verses of the *sūrah*: “those believers succeeded who show humility in their prayer.” It is ending on the same note with which it began. This style of ‘*awd ‘alā al-bad*’ (return to the beginning) is found at many instances in the Qur’ān, and is among the most prominent proofs of coherence in the Qur’ān.

How much have these verses impacted the poor among the Muslims who in those times were being oppressed and persecuted! How much they must have been comforted and strengthened at these words of affection by their honourable God.

قُلْ كَمْ لَبِثْتُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ عَدَدَ سِنِينَ ﴿١١٢﴾ قَالُوا لَبِثْنَا يَوْمًا أَوْ بَعْضَ يَوْمٍ فَسَلِ الْعَادِّينَ ﴿١١٣﴾
قُلْ إِنْ لَبِثْتُمْ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا لَّوَأَنْتُمْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١١٣﴾³⁷

These verses imply that soon their misconception about the delay in the Day of Judgement will be dispelled, and the life they thought was a long one would end in the blink of an eye.

The word *قُلْ* will not be uttered by God or by an angel, as has been generally understood. It is actually in the sense of *قال قائل* (a speaker will speak). The words “but you ask this of those who have kept count” express aversion of the responders. The implication is that even a question about the life with which they are so enamoured today and whose longevity has infatuated them will be utterly disliked by them. The words “You only stayed for

37. One who says will say: “By the count of years, how long would you have stayed on earth?” They will reply: “A day or a part of the day; but you ask this to those who have kept count.” One who says will say: “You only stayed for a short while. Would that you knew!”

a short while. Would that you knew” will also be spoken from someone among them. It carries rebuke and longing. What is implied is that they stayed in the world for a short while but the time for this comprehension has now passed.

This topic is also discussed in verses 102-104 of Sūrah Ṭāhā. There it specified that this conversation will take place among them:

يَتَخَفَتُونَ بَيْنَهُمْ إِنْ لَبِثْتُمْ إِلَّا عَشْرًا نَحْنُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا يَقُولُونَ إِذْ يَقُولُ أَمْثَلُهُمْ طَرِيقَةً إِنْ لَبِثْتُمْ إِلَّا يَوْمًا. (٢٠: ١٠٢-١٠٤)

They will whisper to one another: “You have remained for only ten days in this world.” We very well know what they will say when he who they regard among them to be the most capable in estimating will say: “You have not remained for more than a day.” (20:102-104)

That this conversation will take place among them is also evident from verse 19 of Sūrah al-Kahf. There a dialogue is cited between the companions of the cave. As explained there, it is actually an example of how people will be awakened one day from sleep in Barzakh.

It is a fact that it is only as long as a person is living that he thinks that he will keep living. Once it passes, it becomes a dream of the past.

أَفَحَسِبْتُمْ أَنَّنَا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ عَبَثًا وَأَنْتُمْ إِيَّانَا لَا تُرْجَعُونَ ﴿٣٨﴾

The implication is that very wrong is their notion that they will not be returned to their Lord and not be held accountable for their deeds.

فَتَعَلَى اللَّهِ الْمَلِكُ الْحَقُّ ۚ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ رَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْكَرِيمِ ﴿٣٩﴾

This is a reminder of God’s attributes in order to dispel the misconception of the Idolaters regarding reward and punishment.

38. Then, do you think that We have created you without a purpose and you will not be returned to Us?

39. So, very exalted is God, the real sovereign. None is a deity except Him; Master of the glorious throne.

It is beyond God to do something without purpose and create something for His amusement in this manner. Since He is the real sovereign, how can it be possible that He does not administer justice between His servants and equate the oppressor and the oppressed? If there is no deity like Him, then no one should mislead himself by thinking that he can save himself from God's grasp through any intercession. The word "throne" signifies God's governance and the word "glorious" signifies His honour and benevolence. The implication is to ask how the governance of the benevolent and honourable God can be purposeless.

وَمَنْ يَدْعُ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهًا آخَرَ لَا بُرْهَانَ لَهُ بِهِ فَإِنَّا حِسَابُهُ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِ إِنَّهُ لَا يُغْلِبُ الْكَافِرُونَ ﴿١١٤﴾

These words further explain the subject of monotheism discussed earlier. In other words, those who associate partners with God are disbelievers and such disbelievers never succeed.

The *sūrah* began with the words "Those believers succeeded who ..." and is ending on the words "the disbelievers shall never succeed."

وَقُلْ رَبِّ اغْفِرْ وَارْحَمْ وَأَنْتَ خَيْرُ الرَّاحِمِينَ ﴿١١٥﴾

Here, at the end, the companions of the Prophet (sws) are urged through him to seek God's forgiveness and mercy. Deliberation shows that it is the same prayer which is referred to in verse 109 and which was made fun of by the disbelievers. It is evident from being advised to pray thus that the Prophet (sws) was to adhere to his stance and keep praying as told. It would open the doors of forgiveness and mercy for him. It is a glad tidings of victory and God's help in the garb of a prayer for the believers.

With these words, the exegesis of this *sūrah* stands completed. اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ وَارْحَمْ وَأَنْتَ خَيْرُ الرَّاحِمِينَ (Lord! Forgive me and have mercy on me; you are the best of those who show mercy).

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40. And anyone who invokes some other deity with God about which he has no evidence, his account rests with his Lord. And the disbelievers shall never succeed.

41. And pray: Lord! Forgive me and have mercy on me; you are the best of those who show mercy.