

Sūrah Maryam (2)

Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāhī

Section IV: Verses (41-63)

In the succeeding verses, a brief account of the life and teachings of Abraham (sws), Moses (sws), Ishmā'īl (sws) and Idrīs (sws) is mentioned. The purpose of this mention is to, on the one hand, clarify to the Christians that the prophets from among the lineage of Adam (sws), Noah (sws), Abraham (sws) and Jacob (sws) who have passed before Jesus (sws) all called their people to the same message as Muḥammad (sws) is calling them to. However, such unworthy descendents are they that they have lost the teachings of those prophets and have become incriminated with religious innovations and gone astray. On the other hand, the purpose of this mention is to warn the Quraysh that they claim to be descendents of Abraham (sws) and Ishmael (sws) and bearers of their religion while those prophets have no link to the religion they are today following in their name. The real religion of Abraham (sws) is the one which the Qur'ān is presenting before them.

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

Text and Translation

وَاذْكُرْ فِي الْكِتَابِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ ۖ إِنَّهُ كَانَ صِدِّيقًا نَبِيًّا ﴿٤١﴾ إِذْ قَالَ لِأَبِيهِ يَا أَبَتِ لِمَ تَعْبُدُ مَا لَا يَسْمَعُ وَلَا يُبْصِرُ وَلَا يُغْنِي عَنْكَ شَيْئًا ﴿٤٢﴾ يَا أَبَتِ إِنِّي قَدْ جَاءَنِي مِنَ الْعِلْمِ مَا لَمْ يَأْتِكَ فَاتَّبِعْنِي أَهْدِكَ صِرَاطًا سَوِيًّا ﴿٤٣﴾ يَا أَبَتِ لَا تَعْبُدِ الشَّيْطَانَ ۚ إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ كَانَ لِلرَّحْمَنِ عَصِيًّا ﴿٤٤﴾ يَا أَبَتِ إِنِّي أَخَافُ أَنْ يَمَسَّكَ عَذَابٌ مِنَ الرَّحْمَنِ فَتَكُونَ لِلشَّيْطَانِ وَلِيًّا ﴿٤٥﴾ قَالَ أَرَأَيْتَ إِنْ هَاتَيْنِ لَكَ ابْنَيْكَ يَمْرُؤَيْنِ ۖ لَنْ يَنْتَهِيَ تَحْتَهُ لَازِحَتُكَ وَاهْجُرْنِي مَلِيًّا ﴿٤٦﴾ قَالَ سَلِمَ عَلَيْكَ ۖ سَأَسْتَغْفِرُ لَكَ رَبِّي ۚ إِنَّهُ كَانَ بِي حَفِيًّا ﴿٤٧﴾ وَأَعْتَرَلَكُمْ وَمَا تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَأَدْعُوا رَبِّي عَسَىٰ أَلَا أَكُونَ بِدُعَاءِ رَبِّي شَقِيًّا ﴿٤٨﴾ فَلَمَّا اعْتَرَلَهُمْ وَمَا يَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَهَبْنَا لَهُ إِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ ۖ وَكُلًّا جَعَلْنَا نَبِيًّا ﴿٤٩﴾ وَ

وَهَبْنَا لَهُمْ مِنْ رَحْمَتِنَا وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُمْ لِسَانَ صِدْقٍ عَلِيًّا ﴿٤٥﴾ وَادْكُرْ فِي الْكِتَابِ مُوسَى إِنَّهُ كَانَ مُخْلَصًا وَكَانَ رَسُولًا نَبِيًّا ﴿٤٦﴾ وَنَادَيْنَاهُ مِنْ جَانِبِ الطُّورِ الْأَيْمَنِ وَقَرَّبْنَاهُ نَجِيًّا ﴿٤٧﴾ وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ مِنْ رَحْمَتِنَا أَخَاهُ هَارُونَ نَبِيًّا ﴿٤٨﴾ وَادْكُرْ فِي الْكِتَابِ إِسْمَاعِيلَ إِنَّهُ كَانَ صَادِقَ الْوَعْدِ وَكَانَ رَسُولًا نَبِيًّا ﴿٤٩﴾ وَكَانَ يَأْمُرُ أَهْلَهُ بِالصَّلَاةِ وَالزَّكَاةِ وَكَانَ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِ مَرْضِيًّا ﴿٥٠﴾ وَادْكُرْ فِي الْكِتَابِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ إِنَّهُ كَانَ صِدِّيقًا نَبِيًّا ﴿٥١﴾ وَرَفَعْنَاهُ مَكَانًا عَلِيًّا ﴿٥٢﴾ أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنَ النَّبِيِّينَ مِنْ ذُرِّيَةِ آدَمَ وَمِنْ حَمَلِ نَمُوحَ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَةِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَمِمَّنْ هَدَيْنَاوْا اجْتَبَيْنَا إِذَا تُتْلَى عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُ الرَّحْمَنِ خَرُّوا سُجَّدًا وَبُكِيًّا ﴿٥٣﴾ فَخَلَفَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ خَلْفٌ أَضَاعُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَاتَّبَعُوا الشَّهْوَاتِ فَسُوفَ يَلْقَوْنَ عَذَابًا ﴿٥٤﴾ إِلَّا مَنْ تَابَ وَآمَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَأُولَئِكَ يَدْخُلُونَ الْجَنَّةَ وَلَا يُظْلَمُونَ شَيْئًا ﴿٥٥﴾ جَنَّتٍ عَدْنٍ الَّتِي وَعَدَ الرَّحْمَنُ عِبَادَهُ بِالْغَيْبِ إِنَّهُ كَانَ وَعْدُهُ مَأْتِيًّا ﴿٥٦﴾ لَا يَسْعَوْنَ فِيهَا لَعْوًا إِلَّا سَلَامًا وَلَهُمْ فِيهَا زُفُفٌ بَكْرَةٌ ﴿٥٧﴾ عَشِيرَاتٍ ﴿٥٨﴾ تِلْكَ الْجَنَّةُ الَّتِي نُورِثُ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا مَنْ كَانَ تَقِيًّا ﴿٥٩﴾

And mention the account of Abraham in the Book. Indeed, he was an upright person and a prophet. Recall, when he said to his father: “Father! Why do you worship those things that neither hear nor see and cannot be of any benefit to you? Dear Father! In truth, that knowledge has come to me which has not come to you. So, follow me, I shall show you the straight path. Father! Do not worship Satan. Surely, Satan is very defiant to God, the Most Gracious. Dear Father! I fear that some torment of the Most Gracious God may seize you and you end up becoming the companion of Satan.” (41-45)

He replied: “Are you giving up my deities? If you do not desist, I shall stone you to death. So, get away me forever.” (46)

Abraham said: “Okay then peace be to you. I shall pray to my Lord to forgive you. He is very Merciful to me. I forsake you and those also that you worship besides God. And I shall only worship my Lord. I am hopeful that I shall not remain deprived after worshipping my Lord.” (47-48)

Thus, when he abandoned them and they also whom they worshipped instead of God, We blessed him with Isaac and Jacob and made each of them a prophet and granted them a share of Our blessings and bestowed on them fame, lofty and

permanent. (49-50)

And mention the account of Moses in the Book. Indeed, he was a chosen person and a messenger and a prophet. And We called him from the blessed side of Ṭūr and called him close to whisper. And with Our grace gave him his brother Aaron by making him a prophet. (51-53).

And mention the account of Ishmael in the Book. Indeed, he was true to his promises and a messenger and a prophet. He would urge his people to the prayer and the *zakāh* and was a likeable person to His Lord. (54-55)

And mention Idrīs in the Book. Indeed, he was an upright person and a prophet. And We made him rise to a lofty status. (56-57)

These are the people whom God blessed from among His messengers from among the progeny of Adam and from the progeny of those whom We had boarded with Noah and from the progeny of Abraham and Israel and from among those whom We guided and chose. When the revelations of the Merciful God were recited to them, they would prostrate and fall down weeping. Then, after them, those people succeeded them who squandered the prayer and followed their desires. So, soon they will face the consequences of going astray. Only those are an exception to this who repent, accept faith and do righteous deeds. It is these people who shall enter Paradise and shall not face the slightest injustice. Eternal orchards promised to His servants by the Most Merciful God in that world which is hidden from the eyes. Indeed, His promise is destined to be fulfilled. They shall not hear any nonsensical talk in it. Salutations of peace shall be there for them everywhere. Their sustenance shall be available in it for them morning and evening. This is the Paradise that We shall give in inheritance to those among Our servants who fear God. (58-63)

Explanation

وَاذْكُرْ فِي الْكِتَابِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ إِنَّهُ كَانَ صِدِّيقًا نَبِيًّا ﴿٦١﴾¹

Since Abraham (sws) is the head of both branches of prophethood and messengerhood that began with Isaac (sws) and Ishmael (sws), his account and teachings are mentioned the foremost so that the truth is conclusively conveyed to both the

1. And mention the account of Abraham in the Book. Indeed, he was an upright person and a prophet.

Israelites and the Ishmaelites.

Most exegetes interpret the book to be the Qur'ān. Though this can be regarded as plausible too, in my opinion, it refers to previous scriptures. Here and in later verses too where the accounts of the prophets are mentioned, it refers to the Torah and the Gospel. The purpose is to show that the teaching of all celebrated prophets of God is the same as that of the Qur'ān. Those who are denying the Qur'ān are in fact denying their own prophets and scriptures.

If the book is regarded to be the Qur'ān, it would mean that that the accounts of these prophets should be narrated to those who are their followers so that they learn a lesson. It is a blessing for them. If they do not benefit from these accounts, they will deprive themselves from God's favours and not harm anyone else.

In either of the two interpretations, the overall implication of the verse will not change much.

Here the upright nature of Abraham (sws) has been specially highlighted. The reason is that here both the People of the Book and the Idolaters of Arabia are being rebuked on inventing a whole new religion in spite of claiming to be Abraham's progeny and the inheritors of the religion preached by him. They have totally disfigured his teachings. Abraham (sws) was not one who was insincere to God like them. He was extremely upright and very sincere. He passed the tests he was put through by God. It was because of this success that he was made the head of communities by God. The People of the Book and the Idolaters of Arabia are told that if they want to be worthy successors and inheritors of Abraham (sws), then this is only possible if with full sincerity they fulfil what they promised God through Abraham (sws). Without doing this, neither do they deserve to be ascribed to him nor will have the share in the leadership that God has promised Abraham (sws) and his progeny.

In Sūrah al-Baqarah, the uprightness of Abraham (sws) and his reward are mentioned thus:

وَإِذْ ابْتَلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ رَبُّهُ بِكَلِمَاتٍ فَأَتَتْهُنَّ ۖ قَالَ إِنِّي جَاعِلُكَ لِلنَّاسِ إِمَامًا ۖ قَالَ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِي ۖ قَالَ لَا يَنْتَالُ عَهْدِي الظَّالِمِينَ. (١٢٤:٢)

And recall when Abraham was put to trial by His Lord in a few things and he fulfilled them. His Lord said: "I have decided to appoint you the leader of nations." "And what of

my descendants?" asked Abraham. He replied: "My covenant does not apply to those who are unjust to themselves." (2:124)

The word **كِبَات** here obviously refers to the tests Abraham (sws) was put through and passed cent per cent. These tests are mentioned in detail in the Qur'ān and I have referred to them in the explanation of Sūrah al-Baqarah. In recognition of his success in these tests, he was given the title of *ṣiddīq* (upright) by God and was bestowed the leadership of nations by Him. At the same time, it was made clear to him that this status was not linked to lineage; on the contrary, it was linked to character and conduct. Only they among his progeny will deserve this status who are true to this title of their progenitor. Those who are unjust to their souls and become proponents of polytheism and disbelief will have no share in it, whether they are from the progeny of Isaac (sws) or Ishmael (sws).

All these implications of the word *ṣiddīq* must be understood in order to fully grasp the meaning of the verse under discussion. Without this understanding, the real purport of the discourse will be lost.

إِذْ قَالَ لِأَبِيهِ يَا أَبَتِ لِمَ تَعْبُدُ مَا لَا يَنْفَعُ وَلَا يُضِرُّ وَلَا يُغْنِي عَنْكَ شَيْئًا ﴿٢٦﴾ يَا أَبَتِ إِنَّي قَدْ جَاءَنِي مِنَ الْعِلْمِ مَا لَمْ يَأْتِكَ فَاتَّبِعْنِي أَهْدِكَ صِرَاطًا سَوِيًّا ﴿٢٧﴾ يَا أَبَتِ لَا تَعْبُدِ الشَّيْطَانَ إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ كَانَ لِلرَّحْمَنِ عَصِيًّا ﴿٢٨﴾ يَا أَبَتِ إِنَّي أَخَافُ أَنْ يَمَسَّكَ عَذَابٌ مِنَ الرَّحْمَنِ فَتَكُونَ لِلشَّيْطَانِ وَلِيًّا ﴿٢٩﴾

This is a summary of Abraham's conversation with his father after he had been chosen as a messenger. The repetition of the word **يَا أَبَتِ** (O Father) shows how compassionately and affectionately he spoke to him. Evident from every sentence is the concern and love an obedient son should have for his father who has gone astray. Also evident from this is that Āzar is the name of

2. Recall, when he said to his father: "Father! Why do you worship those things that neither hear nor see and cannot be of any benefit to you? Dear Father! In truth, that knowledge has come to me which has not come to you. So, follow me, I shall show you the straight path. Father! Do not worship Satan. Surely, Satan is very defiant to God, the Most Gracious. Dear Father! I fear that some torment of the Most Gracious God may seize you and you end up becoming the companion of Satan."

Abraham's (sws) father and not his paternal uncle, as claimed by the Jews. This opinion has been accepted without much deliberation by our exegetes. Later the Sabā'ī's have created a propaganda from it. This view narrated in the Torah has been refuted by me earlier.³

In his speech about monotheism, Abraham (sws) in a logical sequence has directed the attention of his father to certain facts.

The very first thing he has questioned is the logic of worshipping idols carved with their own hands? Making someone a deity is not a matter of jest and entertainment. It relates to the biggest need of human beings. They believe in God and worship Him because He listens to their pleadings, delivers them from sorrows and helps them in every difficulty. So, what use to them are these self-carved idols they worship, which neither see nor hear nor are of any benefit to them? This, in other words, is a proof of polytheism being an absolute falsehood because its apparent form whatever its inner one clearly shows that it is blatant foolishness and has no relation to intellect and human nature.

The second thing he has said is that determining God's partners is not a matter of conjecture. A person believes in one God because his nature, intellect, the world inside him and the one around him bear witness to Him. Every person who is upright is compelled to believe in Him but what is the compulsion in believing in His partners without any reason? What can be relied upon in this matter is العلم ie. true knowledge which comes from God through divine revelation. Abraham (sws) called upon his father to not follow mere conjecture in such an important matter; rather he should follow him. He is presenting true knowledge to him which he has received from God. From this knowledge, guidance will be obtained for the straight path that takes people to God. The expression "straight path" means that this path will make a person independent of any means and take him directly to God. In other words, this path is the path of monotheism.

The third thing that he has explained is that as is evident from the account of Adam (sws) and Satan the greatest malice and enmity the latter has is for the straight path of monotheism. He has sworn that he will expend all his force to lead away the progeny of Adam (sws) from this straight path and make them

3. See: *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān*, vol, 3, 88-89.

entangled in polytheism. If a person faithfully obeys such a rebel of God, then this is like worshipping the rebel, and unfortunate are those who leave God and worship Satan.

The fourth thing which he has explained is that until then they had an excuse that God's guidance had not reached them but now that it has reached them, they do not have any excuse. Hence, he fears that they will now be seized by God and by becoming companions of Satan reach the fate which is destined for his friends.

قَالَ أَرَأَيْتَ أَنْتَ عَنِ الْهَتَمِ يَا بَرَهَيْمُ ۚ كَيْنَ لَمْ تَنْتَهَ لِأَرْجَمَتَكَ وَاهْجُرْنِي مَلِيًّا ﴿٣٦﴾⁴

The word مَرِيءٌ refers to a long interval of time. The actual expression in my opinion is وَاهْجُرْنِي هَجْرًا مَلِيًّا ie. get lost and never show your face to me again.

As soon as Āzar heard Abraham's speech, he became furious.

It should be kept in mind that in tribal societies, fathers had the same unlimited authority over their sons as masters had over their slaves. Just as masters could kill their slaves for a crime, in a similar way fathers could give any punishment to their sons and daughters. No one could stop them if they wanted to kill them, stone them to death or bury them alive.

قَالَ سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكَ ۖ سَأَسْتَغْفِرُ لَكَ رَبِّي ۖ إِنَّهُ كَانَ بِي حَفِيًّا ﴿٣٧﴾ وَأَعْتَرْتُكُمْ وَمَا تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَأَدْعُوا رَبِّي عَسَىٰ أَلَا أَكُونَ بِدُعَاءِ رَبِّي شَقِيًّا ﴿٣٨﴾⁵

The word سَلَامٌ here refers to the farewell salutation. Just as it is a very blessed way to greet people when meeting them, at the time of departing too it is a very affectionate way of expressing farewell.

The word حَفِيٌّ refers to someone who is very affectionate, caring and kind.

In spite of such a callous attitude from his father, the promise by Abraham (sws) to pray for his forgiveness shows how soft, sympathetic and loving he was. It is evident from other instances

4. He replied: "Are you giving up my deities? If you do not desist, I shall stone you to death. So, get away from me forever."

5. Abraham said: "Okay then peace be to you. I shall pray to my Lord to forgive you. He is very Merciful to me. I forsake you and those also that you worship besides God. And I shall only worship my Lord. I am hopeful that I shall not remain deprived after worshipping my Lord."

in the Qur'ān that he kept making this prayer until the Almighty stopped him.

However, besides this affection and sympathy, he was equally alive to the sense of honour a person should have for the cause of the truth. He did not offer any compromise because of his gracious behaviour or because of any fear and expressly declared his acquittal from them and from their deities.

The emphasis, lack of concern at what people would say and trust in God is evident from every word of this declaration of acquittal by Abraham (sws). In the first place, Abraham (sws) used the plural form **وَاعْتَرَكُمُ** which shows that he not only proclaimed acquittal from his father but also from all his companions, associates and members of the family. With it, by uttering the words **وَمَا تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ** (and those also whom you call instead of God) he included all their deities in the declaration. It was as if he rejected them as well. Then he did not merely give a negative statement. He followed it up with a positive one: **وَإِذْعُوبَاتِي** (I will only call my Lord) implying that he did not recognize any other deity. At the end, he expressed his unshakable trust in the Almighty by saying that he had never been denied after calling his Lord and it was hoped that He would help and guide him in that trial as well. On the one hand, is this softness and, on the other, this sternness. It is in fact this amalgam of soft and stern attitude which distinguishes a preacher of truth from others. Unless a person is soft as wax and hard as a rock, he cannot serve the cause of truth in any way.

فَلَمَّا اعْتَرَكَهُمْ وَمَا يَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَهَبْنَا لَهُ إِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ ۖ كُلًّا جَعَلْنَا نَبِيًّا ۖ⁶

The above stated declaration of Abraham (sws) was tantamount to migration. Thus, after this proclamation he migrated from them. The way Isaac (sws) and Jacob (sws) are mentioned in the verse shows that they were born to Abraham (sws) as a reward for his migration. Someone who leaves his house, father and relatives for God is worthy of being lauded and rewarded. The purpose is to make the world see that those who make such sacrifices for God are blessed with majesty and splendour in this world. Thus Abraham (sws) was a recipient of

6. Thus, when he abandoned them and they also whom they worshipped instead of God, We blessed him with Isaac and Jacob and made each of them a prophet.

these favours. Such was the splendour of his children who became prophets that each of them became the forerunner of a series of prophets in his descendents until the Day of Judgement. Jacob (sws) has been mentioned with Isaac (sws) even though he is a grand child of Abraham (sws) to show that the father, the son and the grandson were all prophets. If Joseph (sws) is also added to this, a whole family of prophets can be seen. None except Abraham (sws) has this status in the annals of mankind.

A question may bother the mind here is that among the progeny of Abraham (sws) only Isaac (sws) – from whom began a series of prophets the foremost – is mentioned but Ishmael (sws) is not mentioned. It was from him that the Ishmaelites sprang and to them belonged Muḥammad, the last and final prophet of God. This lack of mention seems queer too because the greatest blessing of migration – as proven by my mentor Imām Farāhī in his book *Fī man huwa al-dhabīḥ* – was Ishmael (sws). In my opinion, the reason for this lack of mention is that he is mentioned ahead independently. In this *sūrah*, as has been referred to earlier, the real addressees are the Idolaters of Arabia. The People of the Book are mentioned in a secondary manner. This entails that Ishmael (sws) be mentioned in an independent manner and not in a secondary one so that it fully engages the attention of the Arabs.

It should be kept in mind that Zacharias (sws) is mentioned as a prelude to the mention of Jesus (sws). John (sws) was born to him when he was very old and his wife was infertile. Then after mentioning the birth of Jesus (sws), Abraham (sws) was mentioned: he too was blessed with children in old age. Thus it is stated in the Qur'ān that when Abraham (sws) was given glad tidings of a child, his wife expressed amazement in precisely the same manner as the one expressed by Zacharias (sws) when he received glad tidings of John's birth. By alluding to both these prophets before and after mentioning Jesus (sws), the Qur'ān in a secondary way has informed people that examples of miraculous birth existed before the times of Jesus (sws) too. Ascribing divinity to someone just because of this reason is mere foolishness.

7 وَهَبْنَا لَهُمْ مِّن رَّحْمَتِنَا وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُمْ لِسَانَ صَدِّقٍ عَلِيًّا ﴿٧﴾

The word رَّحْمَتِ refers to all the blessings and favours received

7. And granted them a share of Our blessings and bestowed on them fame, lofty and permanent.

by Abraham (sws) and his progeny including prophethood and messengerhood, the details of which have been mentioned in Sūrah al-Baqarah.

The word لِسَان means “fame” and “repute.” The word صِدْق has the element of permanence in it. The expression لِسَانٌ صِدْقٍ is similar to قَدَرٌ صِدْقٍ (10:2). The implication is that God greatly augmented the effects of Abraham’s preaching and he received such abiding respect and fame that thousands of years have passed ever since but it has not diminished. Hundreds and thousands of celebrated prophets and righteous people have arisen from this blessed clan and kept alive Abraham’s mission. At the end, Muḥammad (sws) was assigned as God’s messenger from the progeny of Ishmael (sws) to revive the teachings of Abraham (sws). As a result, that fame and loftiness has become eternal. All this is a result of Abraham’s supplication mentioned thus in verse 84 of Sūrah al-Shu‘arā’: ⁸وَجَعَلْنَا لِيِلسَانٍ صِدْقٍ فِي الْآخِرِينَ

وَإِذْ كُنَّا فِي الْكِتَابِ مُوسَى إِنَّهُ كَانَ مُخْلَصًا وَكَانَ رَسُولًا نَّبِيًّا ⁹

After Abraham (sws), Moses (sws) is mentioned as a celebrated prophet among his descendents from Isaac (sws). The fact that he was a prophet and a messenger is very evident since he was sent in this capacity both to the Pharaoh (sws) and his nation and to the Israelites. The word مُخْلَص here refers to a very distinctive trait of his personality. This word is used for a person who is chosen for some special task. Considering this general meaning of the word, every prophet is a chosen person because he is chosen for a divine mission. Thus it is stated about prophets in verse 46 of Sūrah Ṣu‘ād: ¹⁰إِنَّا أَخْلَصْنَاهُمْ بِخَالِصَةٍ ذِكْرَى الدَّارِ. The question thus arises about the nature of Moses’ distinctive trait specially when the title of مُخْلَص is not used for any prophet in the Qur’ān except him. In the opinion of this writer, the answer to this question is that this distinction relates to his singular status in conversing with God. Thus, in verse 164 of Sūrah al-Nisā’ وَلَقَدْ كَلَّمَ اللَّهُ مُوسَى تَكْوِينًا (and God spoke to Moses directly) I have endeavoured

8. And let those who come later continue to fondly remember me.

9. And mention the account of Moses in the Book. Indeed, he was a chosen person and a messenger and a prophet.

10. For a special mission – reminding of the Hereafter – We had deputed them.

to explain it. In the succeeding verse too, this aspect is referred to: *وَقَرَّبْنَاهُ نَجِيًّا*.¹¹ Calling him close to whisper was a distinction none else than Moses (sws) possessed.

¹² *وَنَادَيْنَاهُ مِنْ جَانِبِ الطُّورِ الْأَيْمَنِ وَقَرَّبْنَاهُ نَجِيًّا ۖ*

The word *الْأَيْمَنِ* means “the right side” as well as “sacred and blessed.” In my opinion here it refers to the latter meaning. This is evident from parallel verses of the Qur’ān. Thus, in Sūrah Ṭāhā, the words used are:

فَلَمَّا أَتَاهَا نُودِيَ يُمُوسَىٰ إِنَّنِي أَنَا رَبُّكَ فَأَخَذَ نَعْلَيْكَ ۖ إِنَّكَ بِالْوَادِ الْمُقَدَّسِ طُوًى وَأَنَا
اخْتَرْتُكَ فَاسْتَبِعْ بِمَا يُوحَىٰ (٢٠ : ١١ - ١٣)

Then when he reached near it, a voice called: “Moses! It is I, your Lord. So, take off your shoes because you are in the sacred valley of Ṭuwā. And I have chosen you. So, listen to what is being revealed to you.” (20:11-13)

It is evident from this that the voice heard by Moses (sws) was from the sacred valley of Ṭuwā. It was called sacred because it was here that God manifested His splendour before Moses (sws) and conversed with him. The sacred nature of this valley was something worthy of mention. There seems to be no logical reason to interpret the word to refer to its other meaning.

Consider next the expression: *وَقَرَّبْنَاهُ نَجِيًّا*. The word *نَجِيًّا* means whispering in secrecy and also refers to the person who is spoken to through whispers and confided in. The word actually explains the distinction of Moses referred to in the previous verse. The conversation between God and Moses (sws) is termed as whispering in secrecy. The reason for this is that whenever God has spoken to his prophets, it is through His trusted angel Gabriel; never directly. This is a singular distinction Moses (sws) has. However, even at this instance he was not able to see God as per his desire. The reason for this is that in this universe no human being or jinn or even inanimate objects like mountains have the capacity to tolerate the splendour of God manifesting before them.

Details of the conversation that took place between God and

11. And We called him close to whisper.

12. And We called him from the blessed side of Ṭūr and called him close to whisper.

Moses (sws) are not mentioned here. Sūrah Ṭāhā mentions them.

13. **وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ مِنْ رَحْمَتِنَا أَخَاهُ هَارُونَ نَبِيًّا**

Another favour received by Moses (sws) was that he was helped in his mission of prophethood by his brother Aaron (sws). This help was not something voluntary on the part of Aaron (sws). He was deputed by a God as His prophet. Being helped by a prophet is also another distinction which no other prophet except Moses (sws) had. This favour was bestowed on him at his own request because he was assigned to a tyrant like the Pharaoh and to organize a worthless lot of people as the Israelites. He was anxious at this two-fold responsibility. He had prayed:

وَاجْعَلْ لِي وَزِيرًا مِّنْ أَهْلِ هَارُونَ أَخِي اشْدُدْ بِهِ أَزْرِي وَأَشْرِكْهُ فِي أَمْرِي كَيْ تُغْفِرَ لِي
كَثِيرًا وَتَذَكِّرَكَ كَثِيرًا (٢٠ : ٢٩-٣٤)

He prayed: "Lord! Open my chest for me and make my task easy for me and free my tongue from its impediment so that people are able to understand what I say. And by appointing my brother Aaron from my family a helper for me strengthen my back, and make him share my responsibility so that as much as possible we are able to extol and glorify you and spread your word far and wide." (20:29-34)

God accepted this prayer of Moses and this has been mentioned in Sūrah Ṭāhā as a great favour. In the verse under discussion, this favour is referred to as well. It may be kept in mind that the Jews had blamed Moses (sws) for some grave sins. However, the Qur'ān has presented him as a prophet who did not commit any such sins.

14. **وَادْكُرْ فِي الْكِتَابِ إِسْمَاعِيلَ إِنَّهُ كَانَ صَادِقَ الْوَعْدِ وَكَانَ رَسُولًا نَّبِيًّا**

Now Ishmael (sws), the head of the other branch of Abraham's progeny, is mentioned. The Quraysh claimed to be his descendents and followers of his religion. The first prophet in

13. And with Our grace gave him his brother Aaron by making him a prophet.

14. And mention the account of Ishmael in the Book. Indeed, he was true to his promises and a messenger and a prophet.

this branch was Ishmael (sws) and the last was Muḥammad (sws). The purpose of mentioning him was to urge the Idolaters of Arabia to reflect on the practice and message of Ishmael (sws) and how far they had gone away from them and still claimed to be his true heirs. This arrogance had made them oppose the Qur'ān even though it reflects the message of Abraham (sws) and Ishmael (sws).

The expression صَادِقُ الْوَعْدِ refers to a special trait of Ishmael (sws): he was true to his promise. Obviously this refers to the promise he made with Abraham (sws) regarding his consent to be sacrificed. When Abraham (sws) asked his opinion about the dream he saw in which he was slaughtering him, he told him without any hesitation to go ahead and that he would be steadfast in this commitment. When the time of fulfilling this promise arrived, without any reluctance, he placed his neck below the knife of his father. The knife was about to do its work when God stopped Abraham (sws) and informed him that it was just a test. Both were regarded to be upright and sincere by the Almighty.

In apparent form, the expression صَادِقُ الْوَعْدِ is composed of only two words. However, it is a comprehensive portrayal of a true believer who submits to God. A servant of God who is true to what he has promised to Him and is prepared to sacrifice his life for it has truly attained the pinnacle of faith and submission to God. As for those who are indulging in gaining worldly benefits because of being descendents of Abraham (sws) and Ishmael (sws) and bragging about their association with them, they should see their hideous fate in the reflection of the mirror which the Qur'ān has placed before them

15. وَكَانَ يَأْمُرُ أَهْلَهُ بِالصَّلَاةِ وَالزَّكَاةِ ۖ وَكَانَ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِ مَرْضِيًّا ﴿١٥﴾

The extent of faith Ishmael (sws) had is evident from the trait with which he is referred to in the last verse. Now, people claiming to be his recipients are told that he would direct his followers to pray and pay *zakāh*. As referred to earlier, these two worship rituals comprehensively signify all the rights of God as well as those of human beings. All the *sharī'ah* is based on these two worship rituals. He who adhered to them adhered to religion

15. He would urge his people to the prayer and the *zakāh* and was a likeable person to His Lord.

and he who neglected them neglected the whole of religion.

The words “he was a likeable person to His Lord” is a comprehensive statement of praise and needs no addition. Its true implication is that Ishmael (sws) was precisely what a servant of God should be in the sight of God. Who can be more outstanding a person than he about whom the Almighty himself bears witness that he conforms to His liking.

It may be kept in mind here that their frenzied enmity with Islam had made the Jews distort the history of Abraham (sws) and Ishmael (sws). In particular, they had hidden the history of the latter in such a way so that no one is able to get wind of it. However, my mentor Ḥamīd al-Dīn Farāhī has exposed all these distortions and interpolations and revived the history of both these celebrated personalities in his tract *Who was Sacrificed by Abraham*.¹⁶ Those who would like study the true worth of the statements given by the Qur'ān about them are advised to deeply study this tract.

17 وَأَذْكُرْ فِي الْكِتَابِ إِدْرِيسَ إِنَّهُ كَانَ صِدِّيقًا نَبِيًّا ۖ وَرَفَعْنَاهُ مَكَانًا عَلِيًّا ﴿٥٦﴾

I could find nothing reliable about Idrīs (sws) in the scriptures of the Jews and in Bible history. All that our past exegetes have written about him is based on conjecture and thus it is useless to cite it. The way the Qur'ān has mentioned him shows that he was mentioned in the scriptures of the People of the Book and all kinds of true and false stories circulated about him. Now, either just as many Arabicized names of prophets have changed their original forms so much that the name of Idrīs cannot be recognized or he was mentioned in the earliest copies of the Torah but later copies became devoid of this mention. It may also be kept in mind that the Torah vanished a number of times and was written a number of times through its oral redaction. For this reason, there exist discrepancies in its copies as well as it has been a subject of continuous additions and deletions. In my opinion, just as the Qur'ān has shed light on a lot of lost content of the Torah – many examples of which have passed in earlier *sūrahs* – the case of Idrīs (sws) is one of these lost episodes

16. The book is originally in Arabic by the name *Fī man huwa al-Dhabīh* and its Urdu translation has been done by me.

17. And mention Idrīs in the Book. Indeed, he was an upright person and a prophet. And We made him rise to a lofty status.

recovered by the Qur'ān. His character too was an example for entire mankind. For this reason, the Qur'ān has mentioned him in his true perspective and revived his history.

He has been praised in exactly the same words as Abraham (sws): صِدِّيق (upright). The implications of this trait have been elaborated earlier. Obviously, Idrīs (sws) must have gained this status after passing through many trials. What is also worth noting is that here he is mentioned alongside Ishmael (sws), as is the case in verse 85 of Sūrah al-Anbiyā': وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِدْرِيسَ وَذَا الْكِفْلِ كُلٌّ مِّنَ الصَّابِرِينَ¹⁸. He too has been regarded as steadfast like Ishmael (sws). Deliberation on both these instances shows a deep similarity between both these prophets. For this reason, they are mentioned together. Both had to pass through tough trials in which they showed perseverance. As a reward for passing through these trials, Idrīs was given the lofty status the verse mentions.

أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِم مِّنَ النَّبِيِّينَ مِن ذُرِّيَّةِ آدَمَ وَمِمَّنْ حَمَلْنَا مَعَ نُوحٍ وَمِن ذُرِّيَّةِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَمِمَّنْ هَدَيْنَا وَاجْتَبَيْنَا إِذَا تُتْلَىٰ عَلَيْهِم آيَاتُ الرَّحْمَنِ خَرُّوا سُجَّدًا وَبُكِيًّا ﴿٨٥﴾ فَخَلَفَ مِنْ بَٰعْدِهِمْ خَلْفٌ أَضَاعُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَاتَّبَعُوا الشَّهْوَاتِ فَسُوفَ يَلْقَوْنَ عَذَابًا ۝۱۹

These verses state the real purport for which all the previous prophetic accounts have been narrated. The addressees of the Qur'ān of those times – whether they were the Idolaters of Arabia or the People of the Book – all of them ascribed themselves to one of these prophets. They also believed that in the progeny of Adam (sws), Noah (sws), Abraham (sws) and Jacob (sws), it is those people who were the fountainheads of

18. And We also showed favour to Ishmael, Idrīs and Dhū al-Kifl. All these were among the steadfast.

19. These are the people whom God blessed from among His messengers from among the progeny of Adam and from the progeny of those whom We had boarded with Noah and from the progeny of Abraham and Israel and from among those whom We guided and chose. When the revelations of the Merciful God were recited to them, they would prostrate and fall down weeping. Then, after them, those people succeeded them who squandered the prayer and followed their desires. So, soon they will face the consequences of going astray.

God's guidance. By referring to the preaching and character of all of them, the Qur'ān has expressed sorrow at their successors: they claimed to be the progeny of Abraham (sws) and Jacob (sws) and the followers of Moses (sws) and Jesus (sws) but they had distorted and disfigured the religion of these celebrated prophets.

The fact stated in the verse that when God's revelations were recited to these prophets they would fall down in prostration while crying is a sarcastic comment on these followers. Their case was the opposite: when the verses of the Qur'ān were be recited to them, they would arrogantly negate them and make fun of them.

The word **خُلَفَٰءُ** here means "unworthy successors." The difference between **خُلَفَٰءُ** and **خَلَفَ** is that the latter is not used in the positive sense. The reason they were called unworthy successors was that ascription to prophets and being their inheritors is not something that relates to lineage and family. It relates to the guidance brought by them. Obviously after neglecting and forsaking the prayer, they lost the actual connection with religion. It is only the prayer, if offered in the right way, which reminds a person of the covenant he has made with his Lord. If it is forsaken, it is certain that a person will succumb to the lures of Satan. Details of what the Idolaters and the People of the Book did with this basic directive of religion have been mentioned in Sūrah al-Baqarah, Āl-i 'Imrān and al-An'ām. Repetition will just prolong the discussion here.

A point worthy of note here is that it is not stated that they squandered the prayer and the *zakāh*; it is stated that they squandered the prayer and followed their desires. The worship ritual of *zakāh* is not stated here even though in the teachings of all prophets referred to earlier both the prayer and *zakāh* are mentioned. One does wonder why it was not stated that they squandered the *zakāh* as well. This change of style is referring to a specific fact: what actually stops a person from giving charity and spending in the way of God are his desires. Once a person starts to dwell in his desires, he becomes a slave to them to the extent that he is not left with the capacity to spend in the way of God. In other words, here the real motive that stops a person from charity is pointed out.

The verb in **فَسَوْفَ يَلْقَوْنَ غَيًّا** actually signifies its consequence. In

other words, they will meet their deviance actually means that they will encounter the consequence of their deviance. This refers to the fact that in the hereafter they will reap what they had sown in this world and no injustice will be done to them.

إِلَّا مَنْ تَابَ وَآمَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَأُولَٰئِكَ يَدْخُلُونَ الْجَنَّةَ وَلَا يُظْلَمُونَ شَيْئًا ﴿٢٠﴾ جَنَّتٍ
عَدْنٍ الَّتِي وَعَدَ الرَّحْمَنُ عِبَادَهُ بِالْغَيْبِ ۚ إِنَّهُ كَانَ وَعْدُهُ مَأْتِيًا ﴿٢١﴾ لَا يَسْمَعُونَ فِيهَا لَغْوًا
إِلَّا سَلَامًا ۖ لَهُمْ فِيهَا بُكْرَةٌ وَعِشَاءٌ ﴿٢٢﴾ تِلْكَ الْجَنَّةُ الَّتِي نُورِثُ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا مَنْ كَانَ

تَقِيًّا ﴿٢٣﴾

The word مَأْتِيًا signifies that the promised fate mentioned will necessarily be met by every person. No one should have any doubt about it

The verse states that the clatter of opposition and animosity against the truth and its bearers so rampant here will be silenced in the next world. People will not hear any foolish talk there. They will merrily greet one another. Angels too will congratulate the dwellers of Paradise.

The expression بُكْرَةٌ وَعِشَاءٌ (morning and evening) obviously refers to the mornings and evenings of Paradise, the reality of which will only become evident there. The sustenance referred to for the believers will be that they will be able to see God and earn His attention and affection. Had it not been for the fear of prolonging the discussion, I would have cited certain narratives in which this topic is effectively elaborated. The word sustenance (رِزْقٌ) is used for blessings of God and His favours at certain instances in the Qur'ān (see, for example verse 37 of Sūrah Āl-i 'Imrān). Other divine scriptures too use this word in this connotation.

20. Only those are an exception to this who repent, accept faith and do righteous deeds. It is these people who shall enter Paradise and shall not face the slightest injustice. Eternal orchards promised to His servants by the Most Merciful God in that world which is hidden from the eyes. Indeed, His promise is destined to be fulfilled. They shall not hear any nonsensical talk in it. Salutations of peace shall be there for them everywhere. Their sustenance shall be available in it for them morning and evening. This is the Paradise that We shall give in inheritance to those among Our servants who fear God.

The implication of the last verse is that not every person who claims to go to Paradise will actually go there. Only they will go there who abide by the limits of God. This sentence is a sarcastic remark on those who had totally routed God's religion but still staked a claim to Paradise.

