94. They will make excuses to you when you return to them. Say, 'Make no excuses; we shall not believe you. Allah has already informed us of the facts about you. And Allah will observe your conduct, and also His Messenger; then you will be brought back to Him Who knows the unseen and the seen, and He will tell you all that you used to do.'

95. They will swear to you by Allah, when you return to them, that you may leave them alone. So leave them alone. Surely, they are an abomination, and their abode is Hell—a fit recompense for that which they used to earn.

1244. Commentary:
This verse was revealed when the Holy Prophet had not yet returned to Medina from his expedition to Tabuk.

1245. Commentary:
The words "لا تعرضا عنهم (that you may leave them alone) mean, that you may pardon them and not call them to account, whereas the expression "لتركهم (so leave them alone) means, turn yourselves away from them and have nothing to do with them. So the same word "أرض (leaving alone and turning away) has been used here in two different senses.

On his way back from Tabuk, one of those men who had remained behind met the Holy Prophet and offered excuses for not being able to go with him, but the Holy Prophet refused to listen to him. On the other hand, it is on record that in the case of some, he did accept their excuses on his return to Medina. This apparent disparity in the attitude of the Holy Prophet with regard to different persons may be explained by the fact that those who had stayed behind (hypocrites as well as believers) were of various types. The hypocrites were of three classes: (a) 'Abdullah bin Ubayy and his party; (b) the hypocrites among the Arabs of the desert (9:90 above); and (c) the hypocrites who had built the Masjid Dirar with the intention of making it the centre of their activities against Islam (9:107 below). Similarly, the believers who had stayed behind were also of three classes: (1) those to whom the Quran has referred in 9:91 above i.e. the weak, the sick and the poor; (2) those who were not wholly inexcusable but who possessed no excuse valid enough to justify their staying behind (9:102 below); and (3) those who possessed no excuse at all. As these stayers-behind belonged to different categories, therefore they were treated differently.
96. "They will swear to you that you may be pleased with them. But even if you be pleased with them, Allah will not be pleased with the rebellious people.

97. The Arabs of the desert are the worst in disbelief and hypocrisy, and most apt not to know the ordinances of the Revelation which Allah has sent down to His Messenger. And Allah is All-Knowing, Wise.\footnote{1246}

98. And among the Arabs of the desert are those who regard that which they spend for God as a fine and they wait for calamities to befall you. On themselves shall fall an evil calamity. And Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.\footnote{1247}

99. And among the Arabs of the desert are those who believe in Allah and the Last Day and regard that which they spend as means of drawing near to Allah and of receiving the blessings of the Prophet. Aye! it is for them certainly a means of drawing near to God. Allah will soon admit them to His mercy. Surely, Allah is Most Forgiving, Merciful.\footnote{1248}

\footnote{1246} Important Words: 
\footnote{1247} Important Words: 
\footnote{1248} Important Words:
100. And as for the foremost among the believers, the first of the Emigrants and the Helpers, and those who followed them in the best possible manner, Allah is well pleased with them and they are well pleased with Him; and He has prepared for them Gardens beneath which flow rivers. They will abide therein for ever. That is the supreme triumph.

101. And of the desert Arabs around you some are hypocrites; and of the people of Medina also. They persist in hypocrisy. Thou knowest them not; We know them. We will punish them twice; then shall they be given over to a great punishment.

Commentary:

The verse mentions two distinctive qualifications of prominent believers: (1) `الابق` i.e. those who are foremost in spiritual rank, outstripping others in faith and actions; and (2) `اول` i.e. those who are the first to believe, others only following them.

The Companions of the Holy Prophet are thus held up here as models for others, being both foremost in rank and the first to believe. Nay, even those who sincerely followed in their footsteps became the favoured ones of God. Incidentally, the verse also constitutes a forcible refutation of the Shia accusations against the first three Successors of the Holy Prophet and his prominent Companions.

1249. Important Words:

- `الابق` (foremost) is the plural of `الابق` being derived from `られない`. They say `لم يلبس` i.e. he got or went or came before him or ahead of him; he outstripped him in a race, etc. So `الابق` is one who outstrips others in faith and actions (Lane).

1250. Important Words:

- `مريدوا` (persist) is from `مرد (marada) which means, he exalted himself; he was insolent and
102. And there are others who have acknowledged their faults. They mixed a good work with another that was evil. It may be that Allah will turn to them with compassion. Surely, Allah is Most Forgiving, Merciful.1251

103. Take alms out of their wealth, so that thou mayest cleanse them and purify them thereby. And pray for them; thy prayer is indeed a source of tranquillity for them. And Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.1252

Audacious in pride and in acts of disobedience; he was excessively proud or disobedient or rebellious; he was refractory; or he outstripped others in pride or disobedience. They say مرد على شني i.e. he became accustomed or inured to a thing and persisted in it. The expression مرد را على الفاق means, they have become accustomed or inured to hypocrisy and persist in it; or they have become insolent and audacious in hypocrisy. مردا with about the same meaning. مردا (marida) with different vowel point at the central letter, means, it (a tree, etc.) was or became destitute of leaves (Lane & Aqrab)

Commentary:
The reference in the opening part of this verse is particularly to the five tribes of the desert living near Medina, viz., Juhaina, Muzaina, Ashja', Aslam and Ghifar (Ma'ani, iii. 361). After the death of the Holy Prophet the hypocrites from among the neighbouring tribes gathered together and made a raid on Medina (Khuldun, ii. 66).

The word “twice” occurring in the sentence, We will punish them twice, does not refer to the form of punishment but to the period thereof which is explained in 9:126 below, where the Quran says, do they not see that they are tried every year once or twice? Thus the word “twice” occurring in the present verse signifies that the hypocrites would be punished in a period ranging from one to two years i.e. if the punishment comes twice a year, they will have it in one year; if it comes once, they will have it in two years.

1251. Commentary:
The verse refers to those Muslims who did possess an excuse, but it was not strong enough to justify their staying behind (see note on 9:95 above). Their number, according to different reports, varied from seven to ten. As a self-inflicted punishment for their offence, these men bound themselves to the pillars of the Mosque at Medina, and when the Holy Prophet entered it to offer Prayers, they begged him to pardon them, to which he replied that he could not do it unless so commanded by God. When, however, this verse was revealed, they were ordered to be released.

1252. Commentary:
The persons referred to in the preceding verse brought a part of their property and begged the Holy Prophet to take the same as alms, but he told them that he had no instructions to accept anything from them, whereupon this verse was revealed, allowing him to accept their alms and to pray for them.
104. Know they not that Allah is He Who accepts repentance from His servants and takes alms, and that Allah is He Who is Oft-Returning with compassion, and Merciful?\(^{2153}\)

105. And say, 'Work, and Allah will surely see your work and also His Messenger and the believers. And you shall be brought back to Him Who knows the unseen and the seen; then He will tell you what you used to do.'\(^{1254}\)

106. And there are others whose case has been postponed for the decree of Allah. He may punish them or He may turn to them with compassion. And Allah is All-Knowing, Wise.\(^{1255}\)

\(^{a42:26. b9:94. c9:118.}\)

1253. **Commentary:**

The repentant Muslims are here told that the right course for them was to become God's true worshippers, for it is only the righteous servants of God who are entitled to forgiveness and mercy.

1254. **Commentary:**

Though the party of Muslims referred to in the preceding verses repented and their repentance was accepted, yet they are here told that repentance cannot be complete unless one shows, by one's later actions, that one has really and truly reformed oneself. These men are therefore warned in this verse that their future actions would be particularly watched.

1255. **Important Words:**

مرجون (whose case has been postponed) is derived from مر، which again is derived from مر، i.e. he postponed, put off or delayed the affair. مرجلون (مرجلون) means, those who have been delayed or put off or postponed, i.e., the consideration of whose case has been postponed or deferred (Lane & Aqrab).

**Commentary:**

The reference here is to yet another party which consisted of three Medinite Muslims, Hilāl, Murāra and Ka'b. The Holy Prophet deferred pronouncing his decision regarding them. This he did to keep them in a state of suspense for some time. The feeling of extreme uneasiness caused by the state of suspense served as a sort of atonement for their remissness and they were subsequently pardoned (see 9:118 below). In the meantime the Quran proceeds to speak of other people.
107. And among the hypocrites are those who have built a mosque in order to injure Islam and help disbelief and cause a division among the believers, and prepare an ambush for him who warred against Allah and His Messenger before this. And they will surely swear: 'We meant nothing but good'; but Allah bears witness that they are certainly liars.

1256. Important Words:

(To prepare an ambush) is derived from ارمد which again is derived from رعد. They say ارمد i.e. he sat or lay in wait for him in the way; or he watched or waited for him. ارمد means, he prepared for him the thing or affair. ارمد عليه means, he charged him with the watching or guarding of such a thing. ارمد or ارمرد means, a place or way, etc. where one lies in wait, or watches, for an enemy. ارمد therefore means, to prepare a place where one may wait, or lie in ambush, for the enemy (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:
The verse refers to a plot hatched by one Abū 'Amir, a member of the Khazraj tribe of Medina and an arch-enemy of Islam. After the Battle of Badr, Abū 'Amir fled to Mecca and there incited the Meccans and other Arabs to avenge the defeat of Badr. He was with the Meccan army at Uhud. Learning that there were certain hypocrites in Medina, he entered into correspondence with them, with a view to plotting against Islam. It was his accomplices who built the so-called mosque at Qubā, a suburb of Medina, to carry on their secret and mischievous propaganda against Islam. The building was completed when the Holy Prophet was about to leave for Tabūk. The builders of the "mosque" requested him to consecrate it by saying Prayers therein. The Holy Prophet, who so far knew nothing of their evil designs, promised to do so on his return from the expedition. But in the meantime, the present verse was revealed to him, and on his return to Medina he ordered the "mosque" (which has come to be known as مسجد ضرار i.e. the harmful mosque) to be set on fire and razed to the ground.

The reference in the words, and prepare an ambush for him who warred against Allah and His Messenger, is to Abū 'Amir, who, since the Battle of Badr, had been inciting the Arabs against the Muslims and had personally taken part in the Battle of Uhud. He is also said to have been present at the Battle of the Ditch and of Hunain. At last, he fled to Syria, designing and hoping, to enlist the help of the Greeks against Islam, but he died at Kinnisrin, an exiled wretch. Abū 'Amir is reported to have prayed for the death of the Holy Prophet in the words: امات الله الكاذب متروبا وحيدا غريا i.e. "May God make him who is the liar of us two die, driven away, alone and in exile". When the Holy Prophet heard of this prayer of Abū 'Amir, he calmly exclaimed, "Let it be so". The prayer met with wonderful acceptance, proving that it was Abū 'Amir himself who was the liar and not the Holy Prophet (Khamis, ii. 144).
108. Never stand to pray therein. A Mosque which was founded upon piety from the very first day is surely more worthy that thou shouldst stand to pray therein. In it are men who love to become purified, and Allah loves those who purify themselves.\footnote{1257}

109. Is he, then, who founded his building on fear of Allah and His pleasure better or he who founded his building on the brink of a tottering water-worn bank which tumbled down with him into the fire of Hell? And Allah guides not the wrongdoing people.\footnote{1258}

\footnote{1257. Commentary: According to some traditions the words, A mosque which was founded upon piety from the very first day is surely more worthy, refer to a mosque at Qubā which was built on the site where the Holy Prophet had alighted before entering Medina on the day of his arrival from Mecca; while, according to others, these words refer to the Mosque which the Holy Prophet himself built at Medina and which later came to be known as the Mosque of the Prophet'. The wording of the verse seems to support the latter view.}

\footnote{1258. Important Words: جرف (water-worn bank) is derived from جرف, i.e. he carried away or removed the whole or greater part of the thing. The Arabs say جرف, i.e. time (fortune) destroyed his wealth and reduced him to poverty. جرف, a bank of a valley, the lower part of which is excavated by water and hollowed out by torrents so that it remains unsound or weak with its upper part overhanging; an abrupt water-worn bank or ridge; the side of the bank of a river that has been eaten by the water so that parts of it continually fall down (Lane & Aqrab). حار (tottering) is the active participle from حار, which is both transitive and intransitive and means, he demolished, or pulled down or pulled to pieces, a building; or it (building) fell to pieces or broke down and collapsed. حار which is originally حار, therefore, means, falling or tumbling down; or cracking without falling; or cracking in its hinder part, remaining yet in its place; tottering to fall (Lane & Aqrab).}

Commentary:
The verse most vividly contrasts the two buildings, 'the Mosque of the Prophet' and the 'harmful mosque'. Whereas the former is founded on the firm bed-rock of piety and of God's own pleasure, the other rests on the water-worn tottering bank of hypocrisy and disbelief.
110. This building of theirs, which they have built, will ever continue to be a source of disquiet to their hearts, unless their hearts be torn to pieces. And Allah is All-Knowing, Wise.

111. Surely, Allah has purchased of the believers their persons and their property in return for the Heavenly Garden they shall have; they fight in the cause of Allah, and they slay and are slain—an unfailing promise that He has made incumbent on Himself in the Torah, and the Gospel, and the Quran. And who is more faithful to his promise than Allah? Rejoice, then, in your bargain which you have made with Him; and that it is which is the supreme triumph.

1259. Commentary:

The words, unless their hearts be torn to pieces, are intended to hint that as the hearts of the hypocrites will never be cut into pieces, so the disquietude of their hearts will continue for ever. Or, the words signify that the disquietude of their hearts will cease only when they repent so deeply that their hearts are, as it were, torn up with regret and repentance.

1260. Commentary:

The words, an unfailing promise that He has made incumbent on Himself in the Torah and the Gospel and the Quran, mean that the Torah, the Gospel and the Quran contain clear promises of divine favour and assistance for those who strive in the cause of God with their persons and property. The promise is general, but was to apply to Muslims alone after Islam had abrogated other religions. These words may also mean that the people of whom God purchased their lives and property in exchange for Heaven, viz., the Companions of the Holy Prophet of Islam, have been spoken of and commended in all the three Books i.e. not only in the Quran, but in the Torah and the Gospels as well.
112. They are the ones who turn to God in repentance, who worship Him, who praise Him, who go about in the land serving Him, who bow down to God, who prostrate themselves in Prayer, who enjoin good and forbid evil, and who watch the limits set by Allah. And give glad tidings to those who believe.  

1261. Important Words:

السائحون (who go about in the land serving Him) is the plural of سائح which is the active participle from سح which means, it flowed. They say ساح على وراء الأرض i.e. the water flowed or ran freely on the surface of the earth. ساح means, he went or journeyed through the land for the purpose of devoting himself to the service of religion, etc. سائح means, one who journeys through or goes about the land as a devotee or otherwise; one who goes forth or journeys through the land to war against disbelievers or to seek knowledge; one who fasts much and keeps to the mosques (Lane).

Commentary:

The present verse, which is a continuation of the previous one, shows that it is the Companions of the Holy Prophet and those who follow them righteously that are meant here.

The noble qualities of believers as mentioned in the verse under comment have been put in order of merit. The first stage of spiritual development is that of أعمدة i.e. repentance of one's sins. The second stage is that of عادة i.e. divine worship, which implies that after having repeated of his sins, a Muslim becomes resigned to the will of God. The third stage is that of حم i.e. glorifying God, which means that a Muslim is not only resigned to the will of God but he praises and glorifies Him even in adversity.

The fourth stage pertains to the attribute of حم which means that in this stage a believer forsakes his home for the sake of God and devotes his whole attention to Him. The fifth spiritual stage which a Muslim attains is that of راكب which signifies that he begins to serve God with all his soul and body, every part of his body being dedicated to His service. See also note on 2:44. In the sixth stage the believer becomes a ساجد (one who falls prostrate before God) which symbolizes the highest stage of nearness to God, when a believer not only severs, as it were, his connection with the world, but also loses his ownself, and throws himself on the earth, mixing with the dust. The Holy Prophet is reported to have said that in the attitude of prostration a believer is in a position of extreme nearness to God.

When a true believer has reached the stage of ساجد i.e. close nearness to God, his next duty is to bring the straying sheep into the fold of the Master. So now he becomes God's preacher, enjoining what is good and forbidding what is evil. This is the seventh stage to which a true Muslim can and should rise. The next, and in a way the final, stage is that of God's Khalifa i.e. a divine Reformer, which is referred to in the words, “who watch the limits set by God,” i.e. those who are, as it were, the guardians of the Law of God. The expression إخانة حرارة الله may also mean, those who strictly observe the ordinances of God.
113. It is not for the Prophet and those who believe that they should ask of God forgiveness for the idolaters, even though they may be kinsmen, after it has become plain to them that they are the people of Hell.1262

114. And Abraham's asking forgiveness for his father was only because of a promise he had made to him, but when it became clear to him that he was an enemy to Allah, he dissociated himself from him. Surely, Abraham was most tender-hearted, and forbearing.1263

1262. Commentary:

When a true believer is he who possesses the qualities mentioned in the preceding verse, he can never hesitate to sever his connection with disbelievers if and when called upon to do so. It is in two ways that it can become 'plain' that an idolater or a disbeliever is an inmate of Hell: firstly, if and when God informs His Prophet through some revelation that a certain idolater will not believe and will die as a disbeliever; secondly, when an idolater actually dies without repenting of idolatry. In either case it is not permissible to pray for such idolaters. In ordinary circumstances, however, it is not disallowed to pray for disbelievers. The Holy Prophet is reported to have once said, 'There lived a Prophet who, even though he was severely wounded by his people, went on praying to God, saying, 'My Lord, forgive my people, for they know not what they are doing.'" It was really to himself that the Holy Prophet referred in this saying. He was referring to the treatment he received at the hands of the people of Ta'if, and to the prayer that he, while bleeding and wounded, offered for them.

1263. Important Words:

{المتیرا} (most tender-hearted) is the intensive adjective from {المتیرا}. They say, {المتیرا}, or {المتیرا}, i.e. he said, "Ah! or Alas!; he moaned or uttered a moan; or he gave prolonged utterance to distress or complaint. {المتیرا} means, one who is often saying, "Ah! or Alas! from a motive of love or pity or fear; one often moaning or mourning or sorrowing; compassionate or tender-hearted; one often praying; one who praises God greatly or glorifies Him much; one who addresses himself with earnest supplication to God, confident that his prayer will be accepted; one inviting much or often to what is good (Lane).

Commentary:

The preceding verse declares that praying for disbelievers, after it has become clear that they are inmates of Hell, is forbidden. The present verse explains a prayer which Abraham offered for his idolatrous father on the basis that he had made a promise to do so. Abraham, however, was not slow in dissociating himself from his father as soon as it became clear to him that he was an enemy of God. The verse ends with words expressive of high praise for Abraham. See also 6: 75.
115. And it is not for Allah to cause a people to go astray after He has guided them until He makes clear to them that which they ought to guard against. Surely, Allah knows all things well.

116. Surely, it is Allah to Whom belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth. He gives life and causes death. And you have no friend nor helper beside Allah.

117. Allah has certainly turned with mercy to the Prophet and to the Emigrants and the Helpers who followed him in the hour of distress after the hearts of a party of them had well-nigh swerved. He again turned to them with mercy. Surely, He is to them Compassionate, Merciful.

1264. Commentary:
It is clear from this verse that the word تاب (turned with mercy) does not necessarily mean "turning with mercy by way of accepting repentance". It also means, as in the present verse, "bestowing favour upon a person, or being gracious to him", for it has been used here with regard to the Holy Prophet and those who cheerfully followed him in the hour of distress. Indeed, in the case of the Holy Prophet and his faithful followers it was not an occasion for granting forgiveness but for bestowing reward. As it was an "hour of distress" for the Muslims, the expedition to Tabuk is rightly known as غزوة الفاتورة (Ghazwat al-'Usra) i.e. the expedition of distress.
118. And He has turned with mercy to the three whose case was deferred, until the earth became too strait for them with all its vastness, and their souls were also straitened for them, and they became convinced that there was no refuge from Allah save unto Himself. Then He turned to them with mercy that they might turn to Him. Surely, it is Allah Who is Oft-Returning with compassion and is Merciful.

1265. Commentary:
The reference here is to Ka'b bin Malik, Hilal bin Umayya and Murara bin Rabia already referred to in 9:106. These were sincere Muslims but failed to join the expedition to Tabuk, and therefore the Holy Prophet, on his return to Medina, ordered their complete social ostracism. They continued under this interdiction for no less than fifty days, when on their sincere repentance, and after they had come out of this severe ordeal successfully, they were granted pardon, as mentioned in this verse. One of these three men, Ka'b bin Malik, relates his own story, which may be summed up as follows:

"Hitherto it had been a custom with the Holy Prophet to conceal the object of an intended expedition to the very last. But the journey now to be undertaken was so distant and the heat of the season so excessive and the enemy against whom he was called upon to march so powerful that he thought it necessary to give his followers a timely warning so that they might be able to make the necessary preparation.

"I went to the market every day to make the needful purchases, but came back without doing anything, thinking that I would do the necessary preparation next day, for I was well able to do so. In this way I went on postponing from day to day until the army started from Medina. Even then I thought I would be able to make the necessary arrangements next day and join the army on the way. But the next day also I did nothing and put off till the day following. The result of this procrastination was that the army had travelled such a long distance from Medina that I had to give up the idea of making any attempt to join it from behind.

"When I heard that the Holy Prophet was coming back to Medina, grief seized me. On his return to Medina, those who had remained behind came to him and offered false excuses for their absence. He accepted their excuses, pardoned them, and left their cases in the hand of God. I also went to him and saluted him and he smiled with the smile of one who is angry and asked me the reason of my absence. I replied, 'By God, if there had been another person in your place, O Prophet of God, I think I might have escaped his anger by offering an excuse, for I am clever in argument. But, by God, I know that if I tell you a false story, you will be pleased with me, but in that case the All-Knowing God will bring about circumstances which will make you angry with me; and if I speak to you the truth, you may feel angry, but I hope God will pardon me. By God, I have no pretext to offer for my absence; I was never stronger and never better off than I was at the time when I stayed behind.'

The Holy Prophet said, 'As for this man, he has
R. 15 119. O ye who believe! ˹fear Allah and be with the truthful.\(^{1266}\)

spoken the truth.' Then he said to me, 'Go away, until God gives His decision about you.' On enquiry, I learnt that the Holy Prophet had said the same thing to two other persons, Murāra b. Rabī'ā and Hilāl b. Umayya. He laid all the three of us under an interdict, forbidding the Faithful to hold any intercourse with us. My two companions, who were old and weak, did not leave their homes. I was strong and healthy and went about from place to place but no one spoke to me. Everybody shunned me or regarded me with an altered mien. I sought the Mosque, sat down near the Prophet, and saluted him, but my salutation was not returned. While I was in this predicament, there came to me a messenger with an epistle from the King of the Banū Ghassān, expressing his sympathy with me in my present plight and inviting me to his court, where he promised to treat me with respect and honour. 'This is another trial', said I to myself, and repairing to a burning oven, I cast the King's letter into the fire, saying to the messenger, 'This is my reply to the letter.'

"On the forty-first day came the further command that we should separate even from our wives, whereupon I sent away my wife to her parents, and was left all alone to undergo in its severest rigour the punishment meted out to us. My heart was dying away and the whole world appeared to grow narrow to me. My other companions also were in a pitiable condition. They kept weeping day and night in their homes. At last, on the fifty-first day, the Prophet of God received a revelation bringing the welcome news that God had turned to us with mercy and had accepted our repentance. A friend on horseback came galloping to me to be the first to convey to me the happy news, but another friend forestalled him by ascending the nearest hill and crying therefrom at the top of his voice: 'Rejoice, O Ka'b b. Mālik.' I concluded that I was pardoned and hastened to the Holy Prophet and found him in the Mosque. He received me with a radiant countenance and said, 'Rejoice, O Ka'b, for this is the happiest day that has ever dawned upon you since you were born.' My soul was lifted up from the depths of despondency and in the transports of gratitude, I offered my whole wealth in atonement of my error. 'Nay,' said the Holy Prophet, 'Keep a part of your wealth and give away the rest, to be spent in the cause of God.' I also said to the Holy Prophet, 'It is through my speaking the truth that God has done me this favour. So I make a solemn promise that I will never speak but the truth so long as I live.' And by God, I have strictly adhered to this promise to the present day and hope God will help me to observe this promise in the future as well" (Bukhārī ch. on Maghāzi).

The above narration forcefully leads one to the conclusion that:

(1) The Holy Prophet kept strict discipline among his followers but this discipline was tempered with mercy;

(2) In spite of this discipline the Holy Prophet was loved and revered by his followers to an extraordinary degree;

(3) His true followers always strove their best to set an unparalleled example of sacrifice, devotion and piety.

1266. **Commentary:**

This verse directly following the verses that speak
120. It was not proper for the people of Medina and those around them from among the Arabs of the desert that they should have remained behind the Messenger of Allah or that they should have preferred their own lives to his. That is because there distresses them neither thirst nor fatigue nor hunger in the way of Allah, nor do they tread a track which enrages the disbelievers, nor do they cause an enemy any injury whatsoever, but there is written down for them a good work on account of it. Surely, Allah suffers not the reward of those who do good to be lost.\textsuperscript{1267}

121. And they spend not any sum, small or great, nor do they traverse a valley, but it is written down for them, that "Allah may give them the best reward for what they did."\textsuperscript{1268}

\textsuperscript{1267} Important Words:

\textit{مَرَّة} (track) is derived from \textit{عَرَّب}. They say \textit{عَرَّب} \textit{مَرَّة} \textit{i.e.} he trod upon the thing with his feet or he trampled upon the thing. \textit{مَرَّة} therefore, means, a place trod upon; a footprint or footprint (Lane).

\textbf{Commentary :}

The verse relates some of the great advantages which would have accrued to the laggards behind, if they had accompanied the Holy Prophet to Tabuk. See also the following verse.

\textsuperscript{1268} Commentary:

See the preceding verse with which the present one is linked up.
122. *It is not possible for the believers to go forth all together. Why, then, does not a party from every section of them go forth that they may become well-versed in religion, and that they may warn their people when they return to them, so that they may guard against evil?*

123. **O ye who believe! fight such of the disbelievers as are near to you and let them find hardness in you; and know that Allah is with the righteous.**

124. And whenever a Sūra is sent down, there are some of them who say: 'Which of you has this Sūra increased in faith?' But those who believe have their faith increased thereby and they rejoice.

1269. **Commentary:**
As weaknesses in faith and works resulted from lack of knowledge and training, the present verse speaks of the way in which such weaknesses could be removed. The Arabs of the desert were quite ignorant of the teachings of Islam (9:97). The verse suggests a practical method of instructing them in the tenets and principles of the Faith. A certain number from every tribe or section were required to come to Medina for instruction in the teachings of Islam, and then go back to their respective people and teach them what they had themselves learned. It was indeed the easiest, the most effective and practical method of learning the principles and teachings of the New Faith and imparting them to others.

1270. **Commentary:**
The words, *such of the disbelievers as are near to you*, signify those hypocrites who lived among the Muslims and intermixed with them. Muslims were enjoined to fight them as a class and not each and every one of them individually. They were to fight them by exposing their malpractices and hypocritical deeds and by bringing these to the notice of the Holy Prophet.

The words, *and let them find hardness in you*, mean that, like a hard thing which refuses to receive impressions, a Muslim should not allow himself to be influenced by his evil desires and the evil persons who surround him.

1271. **Commentary:**
The question, *which of you has this Sūra increased in faith?,* refers to the contention of the hypocrites that the Quranic Sūras increase none in faith. This objection of the hypocrites is answered in the words that follow,
125. But as for those in whose hearts is a disease, it adds further filth to their present filth, and they die while they are disbelievers.\textsuperscript{1272}

126. Do they not see that they are tried every year once or twice? Yet they do not repent, nor would they be admonished.\textsuperscript{1273}

127. And whenever a Sūra is sent down, they look at one another, saying, ‘Does any one see you?’ Then they turn away. Allah has turned away their hearts because they are a people who would not understand.\textsuperscript{1274}

\textsuperscript{1272} Commentary: Divine revelation is like rain-water. If the seed is good and the soil favourable, rain is sure to help in producing a good crop; but if the seed and the soil are bad, the crop is bound to be bad in spite of good rain. As the soil of the hearts of the hypocrites was unclean and corrupt, the water of divine revelation only served to add to their filth; for with the coming down of heavenly rain the filth that lay hidden in the hearts of the disbelievers also came out.

\textsuperscript{1273} Commentary: The hypocrites are here asked the pertinent question: Is not the fact that events are taking place every now and then by which their faith is tried and true and sincere Muslims are distinguished from those insincere and false, sufficient to open their eyes to the truth that God Himself is the author of Islam, and that in order to protect His religion and make it prosper, He is always separating the faithful from the faithless, so that Muslims may become purged of all dross and impurities and Islam may come to possess a band of sincere and devoted followers? This fact alone, they are told, is sufficient to increase and strengthen the faith of those who have the seed of truth in their hearts. The verse also helps to explain 9:101 above, where it is said that God will punish the hypocrites “twice”.

\textsuperscript{1274} Commentary: The hypocrites used to sit among Muslims when worldly matters were being discussed; but when the recital of the Quran began, they would quietly slink away. The verse means to say that as these men refuse to listen to the word of God and turn away from it, so, as a punishment for this act of theirs, God has turned away their hearts from truth. This helps to explain expressions like “leading astray” etc., used about God in the Quran. His “leading astray” only means that when evil-minded men go astray and persist in their evil course, God leaves them alone and allows them to wander away from the truth, stamping them as lost.
128. Surely, a Messenger has come unto you from among yourselves; grievous to him is that you should fall into trouble; he is ardently desirous of your welfare; and to the believers he is compassionate and merciful.  

129. But if they turn away, say, "Allah is sufficient for me. There is no God but He. In Him do I put my trust, and He is the Lord of the mighty Throne."

1275. **Commentary:**

This verse applies to both believers and disbelievers, the opening part of it applying to the latter and the closing part to the former. To disbelievers the verse says: It grieves the Prophet to see you fall into trouble i.e. although you subjected the Prophet to all manner of persecutions and privations, yet his heart is so full of the milk of human kindness that no amount of persecution on your part can make him bitter against you or make him wish you ill. He is so kind and sympathetic to you that he cannot bear to see you turn away from the path of righteousness and thus put yourselves in trouble. To believers the verse says: The Prophet is compassionate and merciful i.e. he cheerfully shares with you your sorrows and afflictions. Moreover, like an affectionate father he treats you with kindness and mercy.

The attributes "compassionate and merciful" applied here to the Holy Prophet are also applied to God. As a matter of fact, the attributes of God are of two kinds: (1) *رحمان* i.e. those that make Him distinct from His creation e.g. *رحمن* (One Whose mercy extends to all); these are never applied to any one except God. (2) *رحب* i.e. those in which He resembles other beings e.g. (Merciful); for mercy is an attribute which

may be shared, in however meagre a degree, by others also.

1276. **Commentary:**

The verse, which is the last of the present Sūra, purports to say to disbelievers that it is for their own good that the Prophet invites them to truth and that their refusal to listen to him would do him no harm.

The clause, *He is the Lord of the mighty Throne,* implies a beautiful and dignified refutation of the charge that the Prophet was aiming at temporal power. The clause may mean something like this: "I seek the establishment of no temporal kingdom in Arabia or anywhere else. On the contrary, my aim and object is the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth, in the wake of which material prosperity and temporal power, very much greater than the kingdom of Arabia, are destined to come to me and my followers and no power on earth can stop that".

The words, *In Him do I put my trust, and He is the Lord of the mighty Throne,* with which the Sūra comes to an end, also provide the essence of the spirit of Islam, i.e., (1) that the God of Islam is Supreme over all, and (2) that a true Muslim should put his trust in Him alone.

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CHAPTER 10

YŪNUS

(Revealed Before Hijra)

Place And Time Of Revelation

This Sūra was revealed at Mecca. Some Commentators have ascribed some of its verses to the Medinite period, but their opinion is not based on facts; they have made the inference merely from the subject-matter of the verses.

Title And Connection

The Sūra is named Yūnus (Jonah) not because, as some think, it contains an account of the Prophet of that name but because the subject-matter of the whole Sūra is based on a particular incident in the life of the Prophet Yūnus. Many Sūras of the Quran have been named after certain Prophets or certain objects. This has not been done in a haphazard manner. The Sūras have been given those names in order to show that their contents have a bearing on those persons or things whose names they bear.

On pondering over the contents of the Quran we notice not only that its verses are inter-related but also that every Sūra is connected with the one preceding it and the one following it. Moreover, certain groups of Quranic Chapters are linked with other groups. Thus we find that a perfect order runs throughout the Quran. The different Chapters of the Quran are related to one another in more ways than one; and when we consider their order and arrangement, we are left in no doubt that the Quran is indeed a great miracle of diction.

This Sūra possesses a threefold connection with the previous one. Firstly, it is a continuation of the previous Chapter. Two subjects were mentioned in the concluding portions of the previous Sūra: (a) the revelation of the Book and its denial (9:127); (b) the coming of the Messenger of God and the benefit derived from him (9:128). The same subject is continued in the present Sūra. First, it mentions the importance of the Book (10:2) and next it refers to the divine Messenger (10:3).

Secondly, this Sūra completes the subject-matter of the previous Sūra. In Chapter 9 (which is not really a separate Chapter but forms part of Chapter 8) reference was made to the fact that the time of the prosperity of Islam had come and God's promises were going to be fulfilled in all their glory and power. So men were exhorted to turn to the purification of their hearts that their repentance might be accepted. As doubt might arise in the hearts of some
people that on account of the enormity of their sins their repentance might not be accepted by God, Chapter 10 stresses the fact that God's mercy dominates and transcends all things but it requires the highest form of repentance to draw that mercy.

Thirdly, all the Chapters of the Quran from Chapter 2 to Chapter 9 (which are really seven in number; for, as stated above, Chapter 9 is not a separate Chapter but forms part of Chapter 8 and was written separately only on account of the specific importance of its subject-matter) deal with one kind of subject, while with Chapter Yunus (Ch. 10) begins a new group of Suras, ending with Ch. 18. This second group deals with a distinct and separate theme, yet its subject-matter is closely connected with that of the first group. In the first group the truth of Islam is established by reference to the Holy Prophet and his work, and an appeal is made for the acceptance of Islam in view of the superiority of its principles, the excellence of its teachings, the vastness of the spiritual knowledge which it holds out to seekers after truth, the wisdom underlying its teachings and its extraordinary influence. In the second group, comprising Suras 10 to 18, emphasis is laid on the need of prophethood, the importance of religion and the object of the Holy Prophet's advent by referring particularly to the criteria of prophethood, the claims and history of previous Prophets and to the arguments based upon and supported by human reason and common sense.

Thus the subject-matter of the two groups is very closely related to one another. The only difference is that in the first group reference is made to the prophecies which were made at the advent of the Holy Prophet or which had been made by previous Prophets and were fulfilled in due time, thus bearing witness to the truth of the Holy Prophet and of Islam. In the second group the truth of Islam has been explained on its own merits and on the basis of the canons of prophethood.
1. "In the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful." 1277

2. "Alif Lam Ra. These are the verses of the Book that is full of wisdom." 1277A

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1277. Commentary:
See 1:1.

1277A. Important Words:
The abbreviated letters (Alif Lam Ra) stand for the words i.e. I am Allah Who is All-Seeing. For a detailed discussion of the abbreviations see 2:2.

Commentary:
The placing of the particle (these), which relates to something remote and distant, before the words verses of the Book which evidently are not remote, is not without reason. Various explanations have been given for this: Firstly, it has been said that the revelation of the Quran had been promised in previous Scriptures and the word (these) has been used in reference to those verses of previous Scriptures which contained prophecies about the Quran and which have seen their fulfilment in the Quranic verses. Secondly, according to some Commentators, God had with Him the complete Book written beforehand and it was out of that Heavenly Book that He revealed verses from time to time. The reference in the pronoun is thus to the original Book with God. Thirdly, other Commentators say that this particle has been used to denote the remoteness of the Quran in respect of its high rank. The use of the particle is thus meant to express the great eminence of the verses of the Quran.

Besides the above explanations, there is yet another, more obvious and better. In the verse that follows, the words, Is it a matter of wonder for men that We have inspired a man from among them, have been used to represent disbelievers as thinking that it was impossible that God should have chosen from among them a man to whom He should have sent His revelation. The pronoun is meant to remove this misgiving of disbelievers, who are told that the thing which they consider to be so remote and impossible has actually come to pass. This meaning is supported by another verse of the Quran which says, They think it to be far off, but We know it to be nigh (70:7, 8). The expression, full of wisdom, further points out that, not only is there no improbability or strangeness in God's revelation being sent to man, but also the seemingly improbable prophecies made in the Quran are also sure to be fulfilled in the near future.

The word (full of wisdom), for which see 2:130, also points to three distinct qualities of the Quran: (a) that it is full of wisdom, comprising the basis of all spiritual knowledge and inculcating all truths; (b) that it embodies teachings suited to all occasions and all circumstances; and (c) that it gives true judgement in all religious differences.
3. “Is it a matter of wonder for men that We have inspired a man from among them, saying, ‘Warn mankind and give glad tidings to those who believe that they have a true rank of honour with their Lord’? The disbelievers say, ‘Surely, this is a manifest enchanter.’

1278. Important Words:

قدم (rank) is the substantive noun from قدم (qadima) i.e. he went before the people or he preceded them; or he took precedence of them; or he led them so as to set an example; (قدما) (qadima-hu) means, he came to or arrived at the town. قدما على غرة means, there is strength or rank or good footing for Zaid, with Bakr. They say فلان على قدم عامم i.e. such a one is on an excellent footing or foundation. فلان على قدم فلان means, such a one is the successor of such a one (literally, such a one treads in the footsteps of such a one). قدم means, the human foot; precedence, or preference; rank, footing or foundation (Aqrab & Lane).

Commentary:

It is generally believed that the occasion for the revelation of this verse was when disbelievers ironically said that God could find no one better to act as His Messenger than the orphan boy of Abü Ta‘lib. Though no great value can be attached to this or that incident as being the cause of the revelation of a particular verse, the incident referred to above at least throws some light on the treatment which the Meccans meted out to the Holy Prophet and the contempt in which he was held by them after he had laid claim to prophethood. To call the Holy Prophet the orphan boy of Abü Ta‘lib, who was his uncle and guardian, and not to call him after his own father, was intended to insinuate that a man who was the son of an unnamable person and who had been brought up by another could not aspire to be a Messenger of God.

The verse also brings to light the important fact that those who become morally depraved lose all sense of self-respect as well as all confidence in themselves, for here the disbelievers are represented as looking upon themselves as being so degenerate that they could not think that anyone from among them could come and rescue them from the morass of degradation into which they had fallen and that only someone from outside could improve them. This tragic fact also holds good in the case of present-day Muslims. They, too, are anxiously waiting for Jesus to come down from the heaven to take them out of the slough of despair and degradation and are refusing to accept the heavenly Reformer whom God raised from among themselves to lead them to moral perfection and spiritual glory.

The words, give glad tidings to those who believe that they have a true rank of honour with their Lord, embody a promise that whoever acts upon the teachings of the Holy Prophet will achieve all kinds of prosperity and glory. This was another cause of surprise for disbelievers. According to them, the followers of the Holy Prophet lacked those qualities that go to make a people great and prosperous. They, therefore, wondered how Muslims dared hope to succeed in
4. "Verily, your Lord is Allah Who created the heavens and the earth in six periods, then He settled Himself on the Throne; He governs everything. There is no intercessor with Him save after His permission. That is Allah, your Lord, so worship Him. Will you not, then, be admonished?"

"Surely, this is a manifest enchanter, signify that when disbelievers heard the above announcement, they said that Muhammad had succeeded in representing falsehood as truth, because he knew how to take advantage of the weakness of man. He had inspired the cowardly with fear and had held out false hopes to the greedy, and had thus managed to bring people over to his side. This is the very criticism which is levelled at the Holy Prophet by modern Christian writers. They also allege that Muhammad converted the ignorant Arabs to his faith by threatening with punishment those of them who disbelieved and tempting those who were credulous and greedy with promises of bliss and happiness. If that was indeed a strategem, where is the religion which does not promise Heaven to its believers and Hell to disbelievers? If to speak of blessings which are the inevitable result of the acceptance of truth be called tempting a people with false promises, then no religion is safe from the charge of holding out such temptation. And what will Christian critics say of Jesus, who promised the keys of Paradise to Peter and to his other followers and threatened disbelievers with deprivation of the kingdom of God? (Matt. 16: 15-19; 18: 3 & 19: 28, 29).

1279. Important Words:

- **یا (Throne)**. See under 7: 55.
- **درَّ (He governs)** is derived from **یا (dabbara)** which again is derived from **یا (dabar)**. They say **یا i.e., he followed behind his back or he simply followed him with respect to time, place or rank. درَّ (dabbara)** means, (1) he considered the issues or results of the affair or the case; (2) he performed or executed the affair with thought or consideration; (3) he devised or planned the affair; (4) he governed, managed, conducted or regulated the affair (Lane, Taj & Aqrab).

Commentary:

In the verse under comment, the word **یا (periods)**, of which the singular is **یا (period)**, does not refer to the period which is determined by the rising and setting of the sun, for the obvious reason that the verse speaks of a time when the sun had not yet come into existence. The word is used here in the sense of time absolutely (see 1: 4). Many eminent authorities (e.g. Mujahid, Ahmad bin Hanbal and Ibn 'Abbâs) have held that here **یا (period)** stands for a thousand years (see Kathir & Ma'ani, under 7: 55).

They have drawn this inference from 22: 48.
where a day is spoken of as equal to a thousand years. They are certainly right in holding that the word \( \text{يَمُن} \) in this verse does not denote the period of time determined by the rotation of the earth, but they are not right in holding that it stands here for a thousand years, for according to the Quran there is also a \( \text{يَمُن} \) (period) which is equal to fifty thousand years (70: 5). If we compute the period of six days by this standard, it will mean that the creation of the heavens and the earth was completed in 300,000 years. But we cannot presume that God has disclosed to us the extent of all His days. If some of God’s days extend over a thousand years, and others over fifty thousand years, there may be still others which extend over millions or billions of years. Science has discovered the fact that it took the heavens and the earth millions of years to be evolved into their present shape. A vision of the eminent Muslim scholar Muhyi al-Din Ibn ‘Arabi also leads to a similar conclusion (see under 2: 31). Hence the truth is that we cannot definitely determine the length of the “six days” during which the creation of the heavens and the earth was completed. All that we can say is that God brings about different changes in different periods, some taking a thousand years, others fifty thousand years, and yet others even longer periods, but that, taken all together, the creation of heavens and earth was completed in six periods. See also 7: 55.

It will be invariably seen that when a certain verse of the Quran is found liable to objection, the very next verse or passage provides an answer to that objection. Often the question is not mentioned and only the answer is given. These answers serve as a link between what passes in the mind of the reader and the contents of the Quran. Thus the reader finds that as soon as a question arises in his mind, he is given the answer there and then. Those who are not acquainted with this psychological trait of the Quran are inclined to say that there exists no order or arrangement in the Quranic verses, while the fault is all their own, for they do not care to ponder over the Quranic verses. The verse under comment answers a question that arises from the previous verse. That question is, how can Muslims prosper when there are no outward signs of their prosperity? In fact, the previous verse had given promise of lasting success to Muslims—and that at a time when they enjoyed no peace even in their own homes and were surrounded on all sides by powerful enemies. The objection was bound to arise, how could Muslims prosper in such adverse circumstances, and disbelievers naturally thought that promises about the future prosperity of Muslims were nothing but a delusion and a mirage. This implied objection has been answered in the present verse, in which it is pointed out that signs of future developments need not be visible at the outset, and that in this respect the spiritual system resembles the physical system. So attention is drawn to the creation of the heavens and the earth in six periods, and it is hinted that, if it were necessary for the divine word to be fulfilled all at once, then the heavens and the earth should also have come into existence all at once. But the fact is that their creation took six long cycles to become perfect and complete. If the creation of the heavens and the earth out of invisible atoms in a period extending over millions of years does not belie that God is their architect, how can the fact that means for the full expansion of Islam did not come into existence with the very announcement of his mission by the Holy Prophet, show that its triumph is doubtful, or that its foundations have not been laid by God? Divine works are brought about through a perfectly planned system and often have their bases hidden from the human eye.

It appears from this and other verses of the Quran that it is a law of God, working both in the physical and the spiritual world, that all things find their completion and consummation at the seventh stage. They pass through six stages of development and then become perfect.
and complete at the seventh stage. The movement set on foot by the Holy Prophet was likewise to pass through six stages of development and was to see its completion in the seventh stage and so it actually came to pass (for details and fuller discussion see Tafisir Kabir by Hazrat Khalifatul Masih II, under 10:4).

The words, then He settled Himself on the Throne, point to the fact that, just as after the creation of the physical universe God settled Himself on the Throne and all its affairs began to be conducted through the set laws of nature, so, after the establishment of Islam on earth, all spiritual progress will be attainable only through it.

The words, He governs everything, have been added to show how God governs the universe and conducts its affairs. Elsewhere the Quran says, When He decrees a thing He does only say to it, 'Be' and it is (2:118). These words do not mean that after God ordains a certain thing, it at once comes into being in its full-fledged form and that there is no intervening period between God's decree and the coming into being of the decreed thing in its fully developed form. It only means that when God decrees a thing, nothing can stop its fulfilment. Indeed, God's decree is often fulfilled in subtle ways. The words, He governs everything, thus point to the working of the universe and to the means which God uses to fulfil His decree and will. For, as explained under Important Words, تُدْرِب (governing) gives a number of meanings including consideration or performance of a thing with a well thought-out and planned regulation.

The word عرش (Throne), for which see 7:55, needs some explanation. On careful consideration of all relevant verses and facts it becomes clear that this word represents the transcendent attributes of God, i.e., such attributes as are not found in any other being and are technically known as مفاتح تشبهٍ. These attributes are eternal and unchangeable and are manifested through God's other attributes known as مفاتح تشبهٍ i.e., such attributes as are found more or less in other beings also. The former attributes are said to be the bearers of the عرش (Throne). In 69:18, we read that eight (attributes) shall bear the Throne of the Lord above them on that day. The number "eight" in this verse refers to the eight attributes through which God will manifest Himself on the Day of Judgement, just as He is manifesting Himself through His four attributes (mentioned in 1:2-4) in the present world. These four attributes, which belong to the group of مفاتح تشبهٍ (Lord of the worlds). الرحم (Merciful) and ملك يوم الدين (Lord of the Day of Judgement). On the Day of Judgement the four corresponding transcendent attributes, i.e., مفاتح تشبهٍ will also come into operation. The مفاتح تشبهٍ may be called attributes of similitude, because these attributes are similar to the attributes manifested by human beings. For instance, as kings display their majesty by seating themselves on their thrones, similarly the glory of God lies in His being the "Lord of the Throne." But on the Day of Judgement this attribute will manifest its transcendent phase and no other being will bear to God the slightest resemblance in that respect.

Some scholars have erroneously inferred from certain verses of the Quran that عرش (Throne) is something created. This inference, among other verses, is drawn from 69:18, in which angels are represented as "bearing" the Throne of God. It is wrongly considered that, having been represented as being "borne" by angels, the عرش must be something material. But the truth is that the word حمل (bearing) is used not merely to denote the bearing of a material thing in the physical sense but also figuratively. Thus in 33:73 man is spoken of as "bearing" the Law which was offered to him by God as a trust; but the Law of God is not a material thing. The expression only means that man accepted and acted upon the Law of God and thereby helped to bear it aloft by revealing its manifold beauties and excellences. Similarly, the bearing of the عرش (Throne) by angels means
only that its true reality is disclosed and manifested through them. It is evident that man cannot understand and realize the transcendent attributes of God except through His attributes of similitude, i.e., such as are manifested in relation to His creatures and are shared by them. Thus the attributes of God as are manifested in relation to His creatures are, as it were, the bearers of His transcendent attributes, which means that the former kind of attributes help man to understand and realize the latter kind of attributes.

Another verse which has given rise to the idea that the عرش (Throne) is created is 23:87, in which God is spoken of as "the Lord of the seven heavens and the Lord of the Great Throne." It is argued that as God is the رض (Lord) of the عرش (Throne), therefore He must be its Creator, for the word رض (Lord) also means creator. But رض (Lord) does not necessarily mean creator; it also means owner or possessor. So رض عرش would mean "the Possessor or Owner of the Throne." God has been spoken of as ذراع الرحم (the Possessor of mercy) in 18:59. But mercy is an attribute of God and has not been created by Him. The description of God as the Possessor of "mercy" or as the Owner of عرش (Throne) does not therefore imply His creation of either of them.

It may be asked, if the word رض (Lord) has been used in the sense of or ماحب ذر (Owner or Possessor), why has not either of the two latter words been used instead of رض (Lord)? The answer is that the use of the word رض does fulfil an additional purpose. Some philosophers look upon God only as the first cause. According to them, the attributes of God are working spontaneously and automatically and are not subject to the will of God. The Quran has, therefore, used the word رض (Lord) in relation to عرش in order to show that the attributes of God do not work involuntarily but according to His will, for the word رض conveys the idea of control coupled with ownership.

Another verse from which it has been erroneously inferred that the عرش is something created is 11:8. It has been argued that as in that verse عرش is spoken of as "being on water," which is a created element, therefore it must itself be something created. But it must be remembered that the word "water" in 11:8 does not mean material water. The عرش (Throne) could not be said to have been resting on water before the creation of the heavens and the earth, for water forms part of the earth and evidently could not have existed before the creation of the latter. Again, for a material throne to be represented as resting on the surface of water after the creation of the heavens and the earth appears to be quite absurd. Moreover, as all words of the Wise God are full of deep wisdom, what possible purpose can be served by the mention of a thing which does not, in any way, concern or interest us? The disclosure that the Throne of God rested on water does not even reveal the glory or majesty of God, because we are kept in the dark as to the nature and reality of this resting of the Throne on water. So neither does "water" here mean material water nor does "Throne" mean a material throne. In fact, "water" in the language of revealed Scriptures often means the word of God. In this sense, the verse would signify that the Throne of God rests on the word of God, which means that it is beyond man fully to comprehend and realize the majesty and glory of God except with the help of His word.

That the عرش really represents the transcendent attributes of God is also clear from 23:117, where we read: There is no God but He, the Lord of the Exalted Throne. These words show that the "unity of God" and "His Exalted Throne" are intimately connected, for it is the transcendent attributes of God which constitute the real proof of divine unity. The other attributes being shared by man in different degrees, it requires a good deal of reasoning to convince a person of ordinary intelligence of divine unity by means of these attributes.
5. *To Him shall you all return. The promise of Allah is true. Surely, He originates the creation; then He reproduces it, that He may reward those who believe and do good works, with equity; and as for those who disbelieve, they shall have a drink of boiling water, and a painful punishment, because they disbelieved.*

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In the words, *There is no intercessor with Him save after His permission*, some light is thrown on the subject of intercession, which has been dealt with at some length in 2:49 and 2:256. Suffice it here to say that the word *شفعَة* (intercessor) is derived from *شفع* which means the connecting or the joining together of two like things. In view of this meaning it would be wrong to say that belief in intercession can in any way encourage a sinner to sink deeper in sin. Nothing is farther from the Islamic conception of *شفعَة* (intercession) than this baseless notion. According to Islamic teaching only those good people who lack a requisite number of good works to make them heirs to the grace and mercy of God but who, at the same time, have a true spiritual connection with His Prophet can avail themselves of intercession; and not those habitual sinners who deliberately break the commandments of God and have no true connection with His Prophet.

1280. **Commentary:**

The purpose for which man has been created is that he should attain nearness to God. It is to this fact that the words, *The promise of Allah is true*, refer; and we are told that at last all men will attain nearness to God and thus will be fulfilled the real object for which man has been created.

In the words, *He originates the creation, then He reproduces it*, the reproduction spoken of refers firstly, to the fact that, after death, man will be given a new life in which his actions in this life will be rewarded; and, secondly, that even in the present life one generation of men will succeed another so that the good deeds of a preceding generation may not be wasted and may benefit their successors.

The word *صالحة* (good) which, besides meaning good and righteous, also means proper and suitable to the occasion (see 2:26), points to a great secret of individual as well as national progress. It is not only good works that lead to the material and moral well-being of individuals and communities but deeds done at suitable occasions conforming to the exigencies of time and circumstances are also essential. The present-day degradation of Muslims supplies an apt though tragic illustration of the neglect of this hard truth. At a time when strong intellectual effort was needed, Muslim divines confined their attention to mere outward acts of religious devotion and neglected other activities which were equally essential for the advancement of the community. It was their duty to inspire Muslims with a passion for work to make them active and energetic, to improve their standard of morality to induce them to attain proficiency in modern sciences and to teach them how to work in collaboration with others in matters of common interest. But they failed to do so, with the result that their
6. aHe it is Who made the sun radiate a brilliant light and the moon reflect a lustre, and ordained for it stages, that byou might know the number of years and the reckoning of time. Allah has not created this but in truth. He details the Signs for a people who have knowledge.\(^{1281}\)

religious devotions alone could not save them. It is mostly by \(\text{صِلَاةُ الْحَرَامِ} \) i.e. good works done in conformity with the exigencies of occasion and circumstances, that nations rise and prosper. Muslims ignored this immutable divine law and came to grief.

For an explanation of "\(\text{جَمَعُ} \) (boiling water) see under 6:71.

1281. Important Words:

- \(\text{ضَياء} \) (brilliant light) is the substantive noun from \(\text{ضَيِّئَة} \) i.e. it became bright. \(\text{ضَيِّئ} \) means, the fire burned brightly or, transitively, the fire lit up (the surroundings, etc.). \(\text{ضَياء} \) means, light; bright or brilliant light. It is synonymous with \(\text{نور} \) though, according to some, it has a more intensive signification than \(\text{نور} \). Some lexicologists consider \(\text{ضَياء} \) or \(\text{نور} \) as signifying the rays that are diffused by what is termed \(\text{نور} \). According to others these two words are synonymous in their original application but \(\text{ضَياء} \) or \(\text{نور} \) is more forcible according to usage. According to yet others \(\text{ضَياء} \) or \(\text{نور} \) signifies that light which subsists by itself, as that of the sun or fire, and \(\text{نور} \) that which subsists by some other thing as does the light of the moon i.e. reflected light (Lane & Aqrab). The truth appears to be that whereas \(\text{ضَياء} \) or \(\text{نور} \) signifies strong light, \(\text{ضَياء} \) or \(\text{نور} \) is a more general term denoting light as opposed to darkness. This is why \(\text{نور} \) is one of the names of God. \(\text{نور} \) is also more extensive and more penetrating as well as more lasting in its significance (Muḥiṭ).

Commentary:

The verse points to a very wise natural law. We can judge the amount of space traversed by a body only by the change of its position relative to other bodies. So this verse purports to say that God has appointed stages for the sun and the moon that we may be able to make a reckoning of time. In other words, He has caused these heavenly bodies to move and has appointed stages for their motion so that by observing the motion of these bodies we may be able to know that a certain amount of time has passed and that we have moved on from our original position. All reckoning and all calendars depend on the movements of the sun and the moon. The moon moves round the earth and thereby we are able to know the measure of months. The earth moves round the sun and also rotates on its own axis, thus enabling us to measure our years as well as our days. The Arabic words rendered here as, "that you might know the number of years and the reckoning of time," may also be translated as "that you might know the number of years and the principles of mathematics." In fact all fundamental principles and basic rules of mathematics are based on and derived from the movements of heavenly bodies like the sun, moon etc.

The verse is also pregnant with a deep spiritual import. Just as in the physical world the sun and the moon enable us to prepare our calendars and make a right estimate of our works and their results, similarly through the suns and moons of the spiritual universe, i.e. the Prophets, we can measure the value of our labour and its results. Without the Prophets of God there can be no true awakening and no realization of the spiritual
7. Verily, “in the alternation of night and day, and in all that Allah has created in the heavens and the earth there are Signs for a God-fearing people.”

progress made by man, just as without the sun and the moon it would be impossible to form an idea about time or to measure it. The Prophets of God are like the sun and the moon in the spiritual world. They reveal the capacity for spiritual progress that lies latent in human nature and make men understand and realize their inborn faculties and capabilities and the limitless field of spiritual progress that lies before them. Without Prophets, there could be no real spiritual progress in the world.

The words (in truth) signify that God has not created the heavens and the earth only to satisfy a caprice. He has created them to fulfill an eternal and noble object. The Prophets and Messengers of God are as much needed for the spiritual growth of man as are the sun and moon for that of the physical world.

1282. Commentary:

In the present verse the words, for a God-fearing people, have been substituted for the expression, for a people who have knowledge, occurring in the previous verse. This has been done because though the natural phenomenon of the alternation of day and night is known even to the most ignorant person, it is only the God-fearing that derive real spiritual benefit from a reverent study of it. Similarly, the ordaining of various stages for the moon and the sun, of which the previous verse spoke, was not so easy a thing as to be perceived and understood by each and every person and therefore only those endowed with knowledge could benefit by it. Hence it is that where the Quran speaks of the alternation of day and night, it uses the words “God-fearing people”; and where it refers to the stages of the moon and the sun it uses the words “a people who have knowledge”.

The phenomenon of the alternation of day and night continues without interruption. Day is followed by night and night by day. This phenomenon resembles the rise and fall of nations. The days of their glory and prosperity are followed by the nights of their decline and degradation. No nation has ever enjoyed perpetual glory, nor has any people for ever floundered and groped in the darkness of degradation and decline. But the analogy must not be too far stretched, for the verse does not speak of the “length” of days and nights but only of their “alternation”. A people may make their day of prosperity long and shorten their night of decline. So let no people delude themselves with the idea that, because periods of light and darkness or, for that matter, of prosperity and decline, must follow one another, therefore, if they are overtaken by spiritual night it is only inevitable and that soon the day will dawn. For the night may become long or even too long. Similarly, it is in the power of man to postpone the coming of the night. Indeed, although nations are subject to the law of growth and decay, this does not mean that they should make no effort to check and arrest the process of decay and retrieve their lost prosperity. By implication the Meccans are told in this verse that God has caused the day of glory to dawn upon them through the Holy Prophet and it is now for them to work out their destiny and carve a bright future for themselves while it is yet day and before the darkness of night again overtakes them.
8. "Those who look not for the meeting with Us and are content with the life of this world and feel at rest therewith, and those who are heedless of Our Signs—

9. It is these whose abode is Fire, because of what they earned.

1283. Important Words:

البحث (look for) is derived from رجاء which has two contrary meanings i.e. (1) he hoped, and (2) he feared. They say: "I hoped for him or it; and I feared not thee" (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary

It is a characteristic of the style of the Quran that it uses words and expressions that are apparently simple but embody a vast variety of meanings. As the Arabic language is most adapted to serve this purpose, God has bestowed upon it the honour of being the language of the Quran. (looking for) is one such word and means both hope and fear. The use of this word in the present verse has therefore made it rich with deep meaning.

The study of human nature reveals the important fact that all human progress is bound up with the instincts of hope and fear. Our best efforts are inspired by one or other of these two instincts. Some persons labour and sweat, actuated by hopes of acquisition and aggrandizement; others work out of fear lest they should come to grief. The present verse contains an appeal to both classes. To those for whom the incentive to work is hope, the verse says, "Why don't you hope to meet God and shape your conduct according to, and in anticipation of, that meeting; because on the hope of that meeting depends all your material prosperity as well as your moral and spiritual advancement."

To those whom fear alone can incite to action, it says, "Why don't you fear and try to escape God's punishment which, if it overtakes you, will destroy you outright." Thus in one single word the Quran has exhorted to action both and, for that matter, all classes of men.

In the words, are content with the life of this world and feel at rest therewith, is beautifully given the Islamic point of view with regard to material progress. Islam is not opposed to the search for, or attainment of, material prosperity. What it disapproves is that one should make the acquisition of the things of this world the aim and end of one's existence and should have no thought for the Hereafter. Secondly, Islam disapproves the idea that after one has attained prosperity, one should give up all further effort at making still more progress. As a matter of fact, the good of the Hereafter, coupled with material prosperity, is spoken of in the Quran as one of the favours of God and every Muslim is exhorted to pray for it (2:202).

The words, those who are heedless of Our Signs, throw further light on the subject, viz., that God is displeased with only those who are wholly engrossed in the pursuit of material things and consign all spiritual things to oblivion.

1284. Commentary:

The verse uses the words يكسبون (they earn) and not يعملون (they do) to point to the philosophy of sin. Only a wrongful act done deliberately or repeatedly deserves to be punished. He is not
10. But as for those who believe, and do good works,—their Lord shall guide them because of their faith. Rivers shall flow beneath them in the gardens of bliss.1285

1285. Commentary:

The words, *their Lord shall guide them*, show that true guidance is achieved only through true faith. Mere actions are of no value, unless they are accompanied by the purification of the heart. The man who has a mind to steal but who finds no opportunity to do so cannot be called honest. Similarly, if a person’s heart is inspired by fear of beings other than Allah, even although he does not outwardly worship them, he cannot be called a true worshipper of God. But it would be wrong to infer from this that Islam attaches no importance to the doing of good actions and holds “faith” to be sufficient. What Islam emphasizes is that good works should be accompanied by faith, which is another name for the purification of the heart. It is impossible for a man with a pure heart to fail to do good works. The heart of man is beyond all external control. His actions can be controlled, but not his heart; God has, therefore, made guidance dependent on something which is entirely in one’s own power and totally beyond the control of others. So, by adding the words, *because of their faith*, the Quran alludes to the fact that a man’s actions will be rewarded according to the degree of his faith. The deeds of two persons may be equal and analogous to all outward appearance, but their rewards may be entirely different according to the measure of the faith, sincerity and love which inspire their actions. This is indeed a point worth remembering.

The word *بeneath* (beneath) is also used figuratively, denoting subordination. Taken in this
11. Their prayer therein shall be, 'Glory be to Thee, O Allah!' and their greeting therein shall be, 'Peace.' And the conclusion of their prayer shall be, 'All praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds.'

1286. Commentary
The verse purports to say that on having been endowed with the rewards of Heaven and on experiencing its supreme bliss, the believers will at once cry out, Glory be to Thee, O Allah. This glorification will be spontaneous and instinctive, because in Heaven the true reality of things will become manifest to all. Even in this life a true believer praises and glorifies God whenever he sees a praiseworthy thing, the inward reality of which he does not know. He does so because he knows that no work of God is devoid of wisdom. But in Heaven, the reality of all things will become apparent to man. He will come to realize on the basis of his personal observation and experience that every work of God is founded in deep wisdom. The realization of this eternal truth will make him exclaim instinctively and involuntarily, Glory be to Thee, O Allah.

The verse proceeds to say that believers in Heaven will salute each other with the greeting of peace. In fact, all our sufferings (i.e. lack of peace) in this world are due to our ignorance of the true reality and properties of things and, as these will be disclosed to us in Heaven, we shall attain there complete and real peace, for we shall then become secure against all harm by knowing the true properties of all things and will get complete freedom from trouble and pain. Hence, after glorifying God on learning the realities of things and experiencing the complete bliss of Heaven, believers will go about exclaiming, "There is peace here, nothing but peace," for, after attaining perfect knowledge of things, they will no longer suffer by making wrong use of them.

Finally, when believers will see perfect peace reigning in Heaven and will have vented their happy feelings to one another, they will turn again to God and the conclusion of their prayer will be, "All praise be to Allah, Who has placed us in such a place of perfect bliss."
2. And if Allah were to hasten for men the ill they have earned as they would hasten on the acquisition of wealth, the end of their term of life would have been already brought upon them. But We leave those who look not for the meeting with Us to wander distractedly in their transgression.1287

1287. Important Words:

الخير (wealth) is a common Arabic word giving among others the following meanings: (1) good, moral or physical, actual or potential; (2) a thing that all desire, being profitable or useful; (3) wealth or property; (4) good fortune, happiness or prosperity (Lane).

Commentary:

Some difference of opinion exists among Commentators as to the meaning of the first part of this verse. This difference has arisen owing to the word خير (wealth) being misconstrued as “good” or “virtue,” which it does not always mean. The word خير as shown under Important Words, also means wealth or property, and it is in this sense that it has been used in the present verse. The verse thus means that disbelievers have directed all their energies to the earning of wealth and have altogether neglected God. Their conduct demands that evil should overtake them. But God is slow to punish. If He had been as quick in punishing as their conduct deserves, they would have been destroyed long ago. But God gives people respite to repent and mend their ways. If, however, the word خير be taken in the sense of “good,” then the pronoun م in the expression استباحهم would be taken as the object of the word استباحهم and not as the subject, and in this case the verse would mean that if God had been as quick to inflict punishment as He is to bestow good, then they would already have been destroyed; but God, being Forgiving and Merciful, gives them time to repent.

The words, But We leave those who look not for the meeting with Us to wander distractedly in their transgression, do not mean that God desires to leave the transgressors in their transgression, but that, in spite of their transgression, He grants them respite so that they may not die in a state of transgression but may have a chance to correct themselves and escape punishment.

As already pointed out in 10:4 above, the Quran sometimes omits to mention a question and only indirectly alludes to it by giving the answer. Thus this verse shows that 10:4 was a reply to the demand of the disbelievers for a speedy decision. All these verses therefore occur in a perfectly natural order and contain a reply to an implied question.
13. And when trouble befalls a man, he calls on Us, lying on his side, or sitting, or standing; but when We have removed his trouble from him, he goes his way as though he had never called on Us for the removal of the trouble that befell him. Thus it is that the doings of the extravagant are given a fair appearance in their eyes. 1288

a30:34:39:9, 50.

1288. Important Words:

**مَلِبَّ (the extravagant)** is the plural of **مَلِبَّ** which is the active participle from **مَلِبَّ** which again is derived from **مَلِبَّ** meaning, he was ignorant; or he was unmindful or heedless. **مَلِبَّ** means, the wheat or food became cankered or eaten away. **مَلِبَّ** means, he exceeded or transgressed the just or right limit or measure; he acted extravagantly or immoderately. They say **مَلِبَّ** in the eyes, such a one was hasty in respect of his property i.e. he expended his property extravagantly without keeping within proper bounds. **مَلِبَّ** means, he exceeded the due bounds or just limits in slaying. **مَلِبَّ** which is the noun-infinitive from **مَلِبَّ**, also signifies the committing of many faults, offences, or crimes and sins. **مَلِبَّ** means, one exceeding or transgressing the right limit or measure; one unmindful, negligent or heedless; one denying or disacknowledging the favours or benefits or the Unity or the Prophets or the Law of God; a disbeliever or an unbeliever (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

This verse describes the different attitudes which a man assumes when he is stricken with distress. Sometimes the blow is so hard that he falls to the ground. This state is described in the words, **lying on his side**. Again, sometimes distress renders a man restless and uneasy. This state is described in the words, **sitting or standing**, because the constant changing of posture is a sure sign of restlessness.

The verse means that, although disbelievers continue to demand that if the Prophet of Islam is really sent by God, they should be visited with punishment for their rejection of him, yet when divine punishment actually overtakes them, they are seized with despair. It thus embodies two important lessons. The first is that we should not be hasty in attacking the motives of other people, because the verse clearly says that the disbelievers do not commit evil deeds deliberately, knowing them to be so, but only do what appears good in their eyes, i.e., their evil deeds are the result of faulty reasoning and defective vision. It may be asked here, why then will disbelievers be punished for doing what appears good in their eyes. The answer to that question is that the verse does not say that the evil deeds of each and every individual appear good in his sight but that it is only to the extravagant that they so appear. The offence of the disbelievers lies in the fact that they become extravagant, and so they justly deserve to suffer the consequences of an extravagant life.

The second important lesson contained in this verse is that the plea of good motives is not always acceptable and therefore it cannot always save a person from the consequences of his actions. It is only when the motives themselves become vitiated on account of
14. And We destroyed the generations before you when they did wrong: and there came to them their Messengers with clear Signs, but they would not believe. Thus do We requite the guilty people.¹²⁸⁹

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¹²⁸⁹. Important Words:

القرون (the generations) is the plural of القرآن which gives a number of meanings: (1) part or division of time; (2) people of one time; (3) a generation coming after another; (4) a people that is destroyed so as to leave no remnant behind it; a century (Aqrab and Lane).

Commentary:

This verse brings to light some eternal divine truths. One is that it is always a life of wrongdoing i.e. the contravention of the law of nature or that of Shari'at that brings about the downfall and destruction of a people. The entire history of the world bears eloquent testimony to this great truth. The other divine law hinted at in this verse is that divine punishment does not overtake a people unless a Prophet of God first appears among them to warn them of their evil ways and of the divine punishment that will come upon them, if they do not follow him and give up their wicked practices. Thus it is the mercy of God and not His punishment that is meant to be emphasized in this verse, because we are told that when God sees that a certain people have made themselves deserving of His punishment on account of their evil lives, He, out of His great mercy, sends to them a Prophet so that they may follow him and, by reforming themselves, escape the impending punishment and become heirs to His favours. It is only when they reject the divine Messenger and, instead of mending their ways, begin to persecute him that God sends down punishment on them.

Punishments again are of two kinds: (1) those that are the result of contravention of the laws of nature, and (2) those that come when the law of Shari'at is flouted. The latter class of punishments never occur unless a people begin to lead wicked lives and unless a Prophet is first made to appear among them. Punishments of this kind are known by certain characteristics. For instance, (a) their occurrence is generally foretold by previous announcements based on divine revelation; (b) they assume the form of an unusual and extraordinary upheaval in nature such as a succession of earthquakes or the widespread outbreak of virulent epidemics; and (c) they occur after a Warner has made his appearance. The other class of punishments, such as the rise and fall of nations from natural causes, are due only to the contravention of the ordinary laws of nature. These must always be distinguished from the first-mentioned class of punishments.

985
15. Then, "We made you their successors in the earth after them, that We might see how you would act."

16. And when Our clear Signs are recited unto them, "those who look not for the meeting with Us say, "Bring a Quran other than this or change it." Say, 'It is not for me to change it of my own accord. I only follow what is revealed to me. Indeed, I fear, if I disobey my Lord, the punishment of an awful day.'"

1290. Important Words:

(successors) is the plural of  خلف which is the active participle from خلف. They say i.e. he came after, succeeded or remained after him. خلف means, a successor; a vicegerent or deputy; one appointed to take the place of another who has been before him (Lane). See also 2:31; 7:70 & 7:170.

Commentary:

The verse gives rise to a natural question, viz., when a people is made to succeed another people only when the former is superior to the latter who have met with a merited downfall, what is the significance of the words, that We might see how you would act? The answer to this question is that good works are of two kinds: (1) those that bring about and lead to the glory of a people; and (2) those that are needed to maintain that glory. There are people who acquit themselves excellently in the acquisition of greatness but, once they have attained it they fail to maintain a high standard of national morality and fall a victim to sloth and lack of discipline. Moreover, the works of a people are further divided into two more categories. Some actions are virtuous by themselves, while others serve only as a basis for, and help to maintain, good deeds. By adding the clause, that We might see how you would act, the Quran means to say that God made you heirs to His favours on account of such of your initial good deeds as were needed to merit greatness, and now He will see how you do those deeds which guard and perpetuate your good actions. The truth is that the latter kind of good deeds are far more difficult to perform than the former. One of the principal causes of the decline of nations is that, while they are ready to undergo all sorts of sacrifices in order to attain honour and greatness, they do not make similar efforts to preserve and perpetuate the same willingness for sacrifice and the same love for righteousness among their posterity. The result is that with the passing of one or more deserving generations the process of decay and degeneration sets in, till at last the doomed nation falls into the abyss of ruin and destruction.

If Muslims had borne this great truth in mind, they would not have sunk to their present degradation. If even now they hearken to the voice of God and His Messenger and act upon the great truth embodied in this verse, they may yet regain their lost glory.

1291. Important Words:

(accord) is derived from قيد. They say
he came face to face with him; he found or met him.

Tāhā al-lāh means, he went in the direction of the fire, or towards the fire. Jāms al-lāh means, he sat facing him or opposite to him.

Fālaq means, he did it himself; he did it of his own accord, i.e., without being led to it by someone else or without being forced to do it (Aqrab).

Commentary:

Signs (آيات) are of two kinds: (1) simple Signs, and (2) clear or manifest Signs. To the first class belong all things, even the smallest atom of the universe, because every one of these things points to the existence of a Creator, though it is our own reasoning faculty that draws the inference that every created thing must have a Creator. But the Signs shown at the hands of Prophets speak for themselves. They are shown to establish the truth of things hidden from our eyes, viz. the existence of God, the Day of Resurrection, the truth of the Prophets, and the nature of divine attributes. As these Signs serve as evidence for matters that concern belief, they have been spoken of as آيات (clear Signs), while the Signs from nature are spoken of simply as آيات (Signs). All pestilences, for example, are آيات, while a pestilence predicted by a Prophet of God to prove the truth of his claim is آيت i.e., a clear and manifest Sign, for such a pestilence serves its purpose much more clearly and definitely than a general one.

The words, those who look not for the meeting with Us say, Bring a Quran other than this or change it, show that when the leaders of disbelief saw that the hearts of their followers were becoming gradually inclined towards the truth and they were beginning to accept the New Faith, they became anxious and, in order to incite their followers against the Prophet, assumed the garb of peacemakers. As men naturally love peace, the leaders of disbelief exploit this natural human desire and suggest a compromise, viz., that the Prophet should introduce no new teaching but should only assume the leadership of the people which would maintain the homogeneity of the community and save it from discord or dissension. If, however, this proposal should not meet with the Prophet’s acceptance, he should at least omit from his teachings such portions as offend against the cherished ideas of the people. When making these proposals, the ring-leaders know full well that the Prophet would never accede to these unreasonable demands, which cut at the very root of his divine mission, and that in this way the people would come to think that he was too narrow-minded to give up even some of his ideas for the sake of national unity and concord. Thus they think they would succeed in making the people ignore the important fact that truth and the acceptance of a divine Call were much more precious than mere patched-up unity and that the decline of nations was always due to the denial of divine truth. In reply to these demands of his opponents the Holy Prophet is commanded to say in this verse that he could not change a teaching which was revealed by God and which was the only means of their regeneration, for such change, instead of proving useful, was sure to prove ruinous.

The expression “of my own accord” occurring in the words, It is not for me to change it of my own accord. I only follow what is revealed to me, contains a subtle hint that divine teachings are always in accordance with the condition of the people for whom they are sent, and hence nobody can change them of his own accord. If the Holy Prophet should himself change the teachings revealed to him, it would lead to the ruin of the people because divine teachings, being in fitness of prevailing circumstances, can alone bring about a real spiritual and moral reformation among men and any change in these teachings would certainly be not to their good
17. Say, 'If Allah had so willed, I should not have recited it to you nor would He have made it known to you. I have indeed lived among you a whole lifetime before this. Will you not then understand?'

The words, *Bring a Quran other than this or change it*, may also refer to the prophecies of punishment and destruction contained in the Quran. Disbelievers naturally did not like these prophecies and wanted them to be changed. The verse tells them that they could have these warnings changed only if they changed their own condition, because if a change takes place in them, the nature of the warnings would automatically change.

The words, *I only follow what is revealed to me*, may also mean, "In respect of the Quran I follow nothing but what is revealed to me" i.e. not only are all the words of the Quran divine but its divisions into verses and Sūras as well as the arrangement thereof are also divine. Incidentally this also does away with the objection raised by certain critics of Islam that the opening verse of each Sūra, viz. سَمِّهِ اللهُ عَلَىٰ مَالِكَةٍ مِّلَّةٍ was not of divine origin but was placed there by the Prophet himself.

Some Christian writers pretend to see in this verse an effort on the part of the Holy Prophet to avoid the objection which the alleged abrogation of certain verses of the Quran was erroneously considered to give rise to. By the words, *It is not for me to change it of my own accord, I only follow what is revealed to me*, the Holy Prophet is supposed by these writers to have disclaimed all responsibility for abrogation in the Quran. But this assumption is absurd. Far from justifying abrogation, the verse shows that not a single verse of the Quran has ever been abrogated. When disbelievers demanded that the Holy Prophet should make some alteration in the Quran, they did not mean that they would accept it after the demanded changes had been made. Their object in making such a demand was that, if the Holy Prophet agreed to make any change in the Quran in compliance with their demand, they would at once say that it was not the word of God but his own composition which he altered at will to meet their wishes. But if he refused to accede to their demand, they would get a ready tool to incite the masses against him, condemning him as one who had no regard for national peace and harmony. Christian writers seem to forget the fact that if, as alleged by them, certain verses of the Quran had already been replaced by others, disbelievers had no need to resort to the above device, but could justify their objection on the basis of the abrogation that had already taken place in the Quran and could seize on it as evidence of the Quran not being the word of God. Thus the verse under comment incidentally furnishes evidence that there has been no abrogation in the Quran.

The words, *the punishment of an awful day*, signify a national disaster. The words mean that the teachings which are revealed by God are for the good of the people themselves and it is on acting upon them that all progress depends. So, if any change is made in these teachings, it is sure to prove detrimental to the best interests of the entire people.

1292. Commentary:

The argument against the abrogation theory which was begun in the previous verse is continued in the present one. Such commandments may be abrogated as are needed only for a particular time, the commandments changing with the change of circumstances. But, if any commandments were to be
changed without any change having taken place in the circumstances of men, then it would be a proof of the fact that such commandments were misplaced and their promulgation quite useless.

It is regarding this fact that the Holy Prophet is made to say to the disbelievers, “If the teachings given by me had not been useful and some other teachings had been more adapted to bring about a change in you, then I would not have delivered these teachings to you, neither would God have revealed them to me.”

The words, I have indeed lived among you a whole lifetime before this. Will you not then understand?, embody a great criterion to test the truth of a claimant to prophethood. The Holy Prophet is here asked to refer disbelievers to the period of life he had already passed among them as proof of his sincerity and the truth of his claims. If the period of his life before he claimed to be a Prophet had presented an extraordinarily high standard of truthfulness and integrity and between that period and his claim to prophethood there was no interval during which it might be supposed that he had fallen from that high standard of moral excellence, his claim to prophethood must be accepted as coming from a highly moral and truthful man. When even the Prophet’s opponents admitted that all his lifetime he had been a singularly upright man and had even won from them the title of al-Amin (the Trusty or Truthful), he could not suddenly turn an imposter. How was it possible that one who was the most upright and righteous of men a day before should have become a hardened liar the next day (for there is no greater liar than he who forges lies about God). Naturally a person confirmed in a certain course of conduct through habit or temperament takes a long time to develop in himself a major change for either good or evil. How then could the Prophet of Islam suddenly turn into an imposter? There never was a time when the Prophet’s life was hidden from the gaze of his compatriots. He was a resident of Mecca, belonged to a well-known Meccan tribe, and was popularly known in the city as al-Amin (the Trusty or Truthful). In view of these established historical facts, the Quran, as it were, says to the disbelievers, “You ascribe to Our Messenger the most heinous of all lies, viz., forging lies against God, but you cannot produce any evidence to show when this change for the worse developed in him. On the contrary, you admit that right up to the time when he claimed to be a Prophet, he continued to live among you day and night; and you looked upon him as an exceptionally righteous and truthful man. How then can you now say that all of a sudden he has begun to forge lies against God?”

The words, before this, are intended to point to the great psychological fact that the objections of the Holy Prophet’s enemies after he laid claim to prophethood should carry no weight with right-thinking people, because it always happens that after a person has announced himself to be a Messenger of God, men naturally turn against him and begin to impute to him all sorts of evil things. The fact that the Emperor Heraclius asked of Abü Sufyân, when the latter was brought before him at Jerusalem, what his people thought of the Prophet before he laid claim to prophethood, also shows that he too had realized the force of this great argument.

The words, Will you not then understand?, draw our attention to the established psychological truth that a sudden change does not come upon a man except either (1) through some physical injury, etc. (for instance when a man happens to receive a blow on the head causing loss of memory or change in manners, etc.) or (2) through some great spiritual influence. History provides instances when a great shock or calamity has made a person give way
18. *Who is then more unjust than he who forges a lie against Allah or he who treats His Signs as lies? Surely, the guilty ones shall never prosper.*

This verse brings to light two eternal truths. The first of these is that both those who fabricate lies against God and those who reject and oppose His Messengers are highly unjust and can never escape God's punishment. The second is that impostors and false prophets cannot succeed in fulfilling the object of their mission. It is indeed possible that a false prophet may temporarily succeed in securing a number of followers or in amassing wealth. But even in this case he will not be regarded as having succeeded in fulfilling his mission, because the amassing of wealth or the securing of a number of followers has never been the mission of a Prophet of God. The true mission of a divine Messenger is either to introduce and establish a new Law or to strengthen the old one, and unless he succeeds in achieving this object, he cannot be said to have been successful in his mission. This is a criterion the truth of which cannot legitimately be disputed or denied. The apparent failure of a true Prophet like John the Baptist or the apparent success of a claimant like Bahaullah can be fully explained with the help of this touchstone. John came with the mission of announcing the coming of the Messiah, which was in the nature of strengthening the old Law, and he was successful in that mission. On the other hand, Bahaullah, even if he be taken to have come only as a divine Messenger and not as God's incarnation as he declared himself to be, claimed to have brought a new law that was to replace the Quranic Dispensation and therein he utterly failed, for his law has not been truly established even in a single household, not to speak of a whole people or country.
19. And they worship, instead of Allah, that which neither harms them nor profits them; and they say, 'These are our intercessors with Allah.' Say, b 'Would you inform Allah of something He knows not in the heavens or in the earth?' Holy is He, and high exalted above all that which they associate with Him.1294

20. And mankind were but one community, then they differed among themselves; and had it not been for a word that had gone before from thy Lord, it would have already been judged between them concerning that in which they differed.1295

1294. Commentary:

The real cause of Shirk (idolatry) lies in failure on the part of men to understand the object and purpose of their creation. A Mushrik (idolater) has a false conception of the person and attributes of God and of his own great inborn capacities and capabilities. He entertains the foolish belief that he cannot have access to God without the aid of an intermediary, and also that God cannot condescend to come to him except through the medium of those who have already attained His nearness. Islam is opposed to both these views. It does not allow us to entertain any such suspicion about God, nor does it permit us to underrate our own natural powers. God has created man that he may attain His nearness and He does not tolerate that anyone should intervene between Him and His creatures. Even the Prophets of God are not intermediaries. They are only divine Messengers and Warners, and their intercession is also based on divine sanction. See also 2:49.

The expression, Would you inform Allah of something He knows not, contains an excellent refutation of Shirk (idolatry). It purports to say that if God had appointed anyone as intercessor either in the heavens or in the earth, a declaration would have been made by Him to that effect. But no such announcement has ever been made by God. It is the people themselves who declare that such and such a person has been appointed as an intercessor, and so they, as it were, inform God of something which He does not know.

The words, Holy is He, are meant to point out that it is incompatible with the perfection of God that He should first create man for a certain purpose and then should Himself place obstacles in his way, or should reveal no guidance to warn him of those obstacles.

1295. Commentary:

The expression, And mankind were but one community, then they differed among themselves has three meanings: (1) That God caused men to follow the one true path in the beginning of creation but then they deviated from it. God not only endowed man with
21. And they say, "Why has not a Sign been sent down to him from his Lord?" Say, 'The unseen belongs only to Allah. So wait; I am with you among those who wait.'

The capacity to find the right path but also directed him to it through revealed guidance; but man forsook that path and fell into error. 

(2) That they are being always and continuously shown the right path through divine Messengers but then differences arise among them. God sends someone as His Messenger among them and, through him brings them to the path of truth but again they begin to differ. (3) That in their opposition to the divine Messenger disbelievers always take the same course and thus form one community. All through the ages people have opposed the Prophets and have differed and disagreed with them.

The latter part of the verse points out that if God had not laid it down as a law that He always sends a Prophet before punishing the wicked, or that He has created mankind for guidance and spiritual progress, He would have quickly punished evil-doers and destroyed all of them.

1296. Commentary:

It is the invariable practice of the opponents of the Prophets of God to accuse them of having brought no Sign. In spite of the fact that this Sūra opens with the words, *These are the verses (lit. Signs) of the Book that is full of wisdom*, the Holy Prophet’s opponents charged him with having shown no Sign. This shows that it is not given to everybody to see and realize heavenly Signs. Only those who possess spiritual eyes can see them.

It should be remembered that whenever disbelievers demand a Sign, they mean a Sign in the form of ‘divine punishment,’ except when the words used by them clearly refer to something else. In the verse under comment too the word means divine punishment.

Another important point that emerges from this verse is that it is not necessary that the time of the fulfilment of a prophecy should be defined and announced beforehand. If it had been necessary to do so, the Quran would not have said that God alone knew the time when divine punishment would come and that people should wait for it even as the Prophet does.

The words, *I am with you among those who wait*, contain a beautiful reply to the disbelievers’ demand for the coming of a speedy punishment. The Holy Prophet is made to say to disbelievers that it is he and not they who should have been impatient at the delay in the coming of the threatened punishment; for it is he who is being subjected to mocking for this delay and when he is patiently waiting for God’s decree, why should they not?
322. And when We make people taste of mercy after adversity has touched them, behold, they begin to plan against Our Signs. Say, 'Allah is swifter in planning.' Surely, Our messengers write down all that you plan.

1297. Important Words:

- **plan** is the infinitive noun from the verb **makara** which means, he practised deceit, guile or circumvention secretly; he practised an evasion, an artifice, a trick, an expedient or device; he planned or plotted.
- **did him harm or mischief clandestinely.**
- **God requited him for his practising deceit, etc.** is praiseworthy or otherwise according to its object (Lane).

Commentary:

In v. 20 it was said that as God had created men that He might show them mercy, so He was merciful to them. In v. 21 it was said that people demanded punishment, but God deferred and delayed the sending down of punishment that they might have time to repent. The present verse says that not only does God always delay His punishment, but when at last He sends it, He does so intermittently and piecemeal in order that the disbelievers may realize that the punishment was due to their opposing His Prophet and may desist from their evil course and thus save themselves. But the wicked take no warning and do not benefit by it. They only show some fear when they are being actually visited with punishment but, as soon as there is an abatement or remission, they revert to their evil course. The verse points out that God’s decree can come into operation at once, even before the evil machinations of the disbelievers take effect, but out of His boundless mercy He purposely delays His punishment because, being All-Powerful, He knows He can punish them whenever He likes and, being All-Knowing, there is no likelihood of His forgetting the evil deeds of disbelievers.

It may be asked why it is that sometimes when the punishment of God occurs, some righteous people also suffer along with the wicked. The answer to this question is that man is a social animal and he influences and is in turn influenced by his environment. As such, he is bound to partake of the joys and sorrows of those among whom he lives. This is the reason why the righteous sometimes suffer along with the wicked, and also why divine punishment is often deferred so that the few good of heart may benefit from that postponement.

It will be noted that whereas in the verse God ascribes the bestowal of “mercy” to Himself, no such mention is made with regard to “adversity.” This is to point out that whereas mercy comes from God, adversity is the result of man’s own evil actions.
23. He it is Who enables you to journey through land and sea until, when you are on board the ships and they sail with them with a fair breeze and they rejoice in it, there overtakes them (the ships) a violent wind and the waves come on them from every side and they think that they are encompassed, then they call upon Allah, purifying their religion for Him, saying, 'If Thou deliver us from this, we will surely be of the thankful.'

1298. Important Words:

- (violent) is the active participle from . They say i.e., the wind blew violently or vehemently. means, the she-camel went quickly with her rider, as if she were the wind.means, the time destroyed them. means, he cut the corn before its attaining maturity. means, wind blowing violently or vehemently. means, a day violent in respect of wind and storm (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

The verse purports to say that on the part of God the system of punishing and showing mercy goes hand in hand, as does on the part of disbelievers the habit of acting wickedly in time of ease and repenting temporarily when punishment overtakes them. But disbelievers always ignore the fact that, just as a pleasant breeze sometimes develops into a violent gale and causes widespread destruction, similarly, the remission that is granted to them may prove the prelude to their destruction. To bring home to disbelievers this patent truth, their attention is drawn to the comforts and perils of a sea-voyage.

It is worthy of note that whereas the verse uses the pronoun “you” in the second person in the first two clauses, it suddenly changes to a pronoun of the third person (them, they) in the third and the following clauses. This is not without purpose. The first two clauses referred to both believers and disbelievers, for it is both for believers and disbelievers that God has provided the means of travel by land and sea. Hence the pronoun “you” has been used in the first two clauses. But as in the following clauses it has been pointed out that a section of the people become ungrateful, therefore here the second person has been changed into the third person, in order to show that it is only disbelievers that become ungrateful.

a17:67; 29:66; 31:33.
24. But when He has delivered them, lo! they begin to commit excesses in the earth wrongfully. O ye men, your excesses are only against your own selves. Have the enjoyment of the present life. Then to Us shall be your return; and We will inform you of what you used to do. 1299

25. The likeness of the present life is only as water which We send down from the clouds, then there minglest with it the produce of the earth, of which men and cattle eat till, when the earth receives its ornament and looks beautiful and its owners think that they have power over it, there comes to it Our command by night or by day and We render it a field that is mown down, as if nothing had existed there the day before. Thus do We expound the Signs for a people who reflect. 1300

1299. Commentary:
As stated in the preceding verse, disbelievers temporarily mend their ways when they are seized with punishment but, as the present verse points out, they revert to the paths of transgression and iniquity when the punishment passes away, forgetting that their acts of transgression will only tell against themselves. The words, your excesses are only against your own selves, point out that the Law is not a curse but a mercy of God, sent down for the well-being of mankind. Therefore, he who defies or infringes the Law, only harms himself.

The words, Have the enjoyment of the present life, are intended to signify that even the rejectors of truth may have temporary benefits and may even enjoy their state of rejection just as a diseased person temporarily enjoys the things forbidden him. But the result is always disastrous.

1300. Important Words:
- حصاد (a field that is mown down) is derived from حصاد meaning, he reaped or cut with the scythe seed-produce or plants or herbage. They say حصاد بالسيف i.e. he mowed them down with the sword; he slew them; he exerted his utmost power or exceeded ordinary bounds in slaying them; he exterminated them with the sword. The Arab proverb من زرع الزمر حصاد الدنيا means, he who sows evil reaps repentance. حصاد means, reaped seed-produce; grain that is reaped; seed-produce torn up and carried away by the wind; slain or mown down with the sword, like seed-produce when reaped. حصاد means, time or season of reaping; what remains on the ground after the crop has been reaped; what falls off and becomes...
26. And Allah calls to the abode of peace, and guides whom He pleases to the straight path.\textsuperscript{1301}

Commentary:
The life of this world has been likened here to rain-water. The verse purports to say that when rain descends from heaven, it causes various kinds of vegetation to grow. Some of them are useful for man and others for animals. But man, instead of ascribing this to the favour of God, looks upon it as the fruit of his own industry and skill. When, however, in consequence of his pride and vanity, a sudden visitation from God destroys all the produce of the earth, he cannot prevent or delay its destruction, let alone possess the power to produce it which he so vaingloriously claimed to have. The moral of the parable is that when nations become proud and vain, i.e., when they take life lightly, their decline sets in and they come to grief.

Water in this verse may also be taken to stand for the word of God. In this sense, the verse would mean that the word of God brings about mighty changes in the life of those who accept and follow it and various new sciences come into existence as a result of its study and new discoveries are made in the material as well as in the spiritual world. The revelation of the Quran gave birth not only to highly spiritual and righteous men but also to eminent philosophers and scientists. But when Muslims became vain and refused to acknowledge their debt to the word of God and began to look upon themselves as the real originators and creators of all these sciences, they fell from the high pedestal of material and spiritual glory to the depths of degradation and degeneration.

1301. Important Words:
\textit{سلام} (peace) is the noun-infinitive from \textit{سلم} which means, he was or became safe or secure; he escaped; he was or became free. They say \textit{سلم} i.e., he became safe, secure or free from evils of any kind or from fault, defect, imperfection, blemish or vice. Therefore means, safety, security, immunity or freedom from faults or from defects, imperfections, blemishes or vices; or simply safety, security, immunity or freedom; peace; obedience; Heaven. It is also one of the names of God (Lane & Aqrab). See also 2:209 & 3:20.

Commentary:
As shown under Important Words, the word \textit{سلام} means, peace, obedience, Heaven and God. Therefore the words, \textit{Allah calls to the abode of peace}, will mean also that (1) God lays down obedience as a characteristic of believers; and (2) God makes believers heirs to the blessings of Heaven; and (3) God places true believers in a position from where they see God face to face.

The words, \textit{and guides whom He pleases to the straight path}, here mean that there is a special class of people whom God attracts to Himself by the shortest route because a "straight path" is necessarily the shortest. This class comprises the Prophets and other chosen ones of God.
27. a For those who do good deeds, there shall be the best reward and yet more blessings. And b neither darkness nor ignominy shall cover their faces. It is these who are the inmates of Heaven; therein shall they abide.  

28. And as for those who do evil deeds, the punishment of an evil shall be the like thereof, and ignominy shall cover them. They shall have none to protect them against Allah. And they shall look as if their faces had been covered with dark patches of night. It is these who are the inmates of Fire; therein shall they abide.

1302. Important Words:

حسنى (the best reward) is derived from حسن which means, he became good, beautiful or pleasing. حسن (al-حسن) is feminine of حسن and means, that which is better or best; the good ultimate state or condition appointed for the Faithful; Paradise; victory; sharpness or keenness or activeness (Aqrab & Lane). See also 7 : 81.

رهق (shall cover) is derived from رهق. They say رهق i.e. he or it covered him, or came upon him or reached or overtook him or drew near to him. The expression لَا رهق و جوهره نتر means, there shall not come upon or overspread their faces blackness or darkness. رهق (الصلاة) means, the time of Prayer came upon us (Lane).

فرش (darkness) is derived from فرش (qatara) which means, (1) it (meat, etc.) exhaled its scent, smell or odour; (2) it was barely sufficient. They say فرش انار i.e. the fire smoked. فرش العدة means, his means of subsistence were straitened or made scanty. فرش (qatarun) means, dust, the dust of an army; a dust-colour overspread with blackness; blackness or darkness. فرش (qatrun) means, what is barely sufficient to sustain life (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

Since the word الحسن means, a happy end, victory, keenness and activeness, the Arabic clause rendered as, For those who do good deeds there shall be the best reward, would mean that believers will come to a happy end; that they will attain success, and that God will make them keen and active.

The word زيادة (yet more) signifies that believers will have God Himself as their reward, the word الالهى (also meaning the view or vision of God) confirming that inference.

1303. Important Words:

عصم (One who protects) is the active participle from عصم which means, he or it prevented or hindered; or he defended or protected or he or it preserved or kept. عصم الله من المكره: means, God protected him from evil. عصم الله: means, he held fast to God. عصم: means, he defended or preserved himself; or he refrained or abstained. عصم: means, protection from that which causes destruction of man; faculty of avoiding acts of disobedience with possession of power to commit them; inability to disobey.
29. And remember the day when We shall gather them all together, then shall We say to those who ascribed partners to God, “Stand back in your places, you and your ‘partners.’” Then We shall separate them widely one from another, and their ‘partners’ will say, “Surely, it was not us that you worshipped.”

Commentary:
The verse embodies several important truths:
(a) whereas the reward of good is manifold, the reward of evil is only the like thereof; (b) those who break the law of God cease to be inspired by high ideals and great ambitions. They become mere imitators of others, losing all initiative and never aspiring to be the leaders of men; (c) having thus fallen and incurred the displeasure of God, they forfeit His assistance, which is so necessary to raise them from the depths of degradation into which they sink; (d) the iniquities and transgressions of evil-doers cannot long remain hidden but sooner or later become exposed and known to the world.

1304. Important Words:
ما كُمْ (Stand back in your places). See 6:136.
شرككم (your partners). This expression does not mean, “those who share your attributes or your power or wealth.” It simply means, “the partners or deities you associate with God.” So is the case with the expression شركهم (their partners).
زالتا (We shall separate them widely) is from زال. They say زال or إزال which is he put it or set it apart or away; he removed or separated it. ما زال زيداً means, Zaid ceased not or continued to be standing. زيد (zayyala) gives the same meaning as إزال but in a more intensified sense. زال means, he separated it (a party or company of men, etc.) much or greatly or widely (Lane).

Commentary:
The verse speaks of those alleged “partners” whom people set up as equals to God without their knowledge or desire or sanction, e.g., the angels, or Prophets or saints such as Rama, Jesus, etc. The next verse supports this inference in which it is clearly stated that these “partners” will call God to witness that they were utterly ignorant of the fact that they had been set up as equals to, or co-partners with, Him. The verse further points out that idolaters possessed no evidence for the allegation that the Prophets and saints of the past favoured their deification.
30. 'So Allah is now sufficient as a witness between us and you. We were certainly unaware of your worship.'

31. "There shall every soul realize what it shall have sent on before. And they shall be brought back to Allah, their true Master, and all that they used to forge will be lost to them."

32. Say, 'Who provides sustenance for you from the heaven and the earth? Or who is it that has power over the ears and the eyes? And who brings forth the living from the dead and brings the dead out of the living? And who governs all affairs?' They will say, 'Allah.' Then say, 'Will you not then seek His protection?'

1305. Commentary:
This verse clarifies and supports the interpretation put on the preceding verse.

1306. Important Words:
لا (shall realize) is derived from لا. They say i.e., he tried or proved or tested him with something good or evil; he knew it or became acquainted with it. بُلِّأ also means, I smelt it (Lane).

Commentary:
The verse implies that it is not given to man fully to comprehend and realize the reality and details of everything in this world. It is only in the next world that the veil shall be completely lifted from all things and their real nature will come to light and judgement will be pronounced regarding all matters by God Who is the real Master of all creation.

1307. Commentary:
This verse explains in a beautiful manner the relation between divine revelation and human reason. It says that all physical or spiritual sustenance is provided by heaven and earth acting in concert. Neither of them can do it singly. For example, if heaven should continue to send down rain but the earth should lack the necessary power and capacity of bringing forth vegetation, the rain would produce nothing. On the other hand, if no rain falls, then the fertility of the soil alone will not suffice to produce vegetation. Exactly in the same way human reason, which is like soil, cannot produce spiritual vegetation, which serves as spiritual food for man, unless the water of divine revelation comes to its aid from heaven. It is, therefore, vain to hope that man can attain to God by the help of reason alone, without the aid of divine revelation.

The verse proceeds to say that it is foolish to think that God should have given eyes and ears to men but should have failed to provide for them the task they were meant to perform.
33. Such is Allah your true Lord. So what would you have after discarding the truth except error? How then are you being turned away from the truth?

That task is provided through divine guidance. Similarly, the verse draws our attention to the process of life and death in this world. Not unoften the living come out of the dead and things which to all outward appearance are dead begin to show signs of life and vice versa. Is it not then possible that there should sometimes gush forth a fountain of life from a dead heart? When such a possibility exists, why should not God grant respite to the sinful so that such of them as possess the germs of life may revive.

The verse continues the argument in the words, And who governs all affairs?, meaning that it is inconceivable that a being who is entrusted with the conduct of an affair should himself seek to destroy it. No wise man can ever think of undoing his own handiwork. How then can God wish to destroy the universe which is the means for the manifestation of His powers and attributes. He would far rather save it than destroy it. This is why He is slow in punishing.

There exists an extremely beautiful and intelligent order in this verse. It begins with a reference to sustenance, which is the means of the preservation of life. Then it speaks of the organs of sight and hearing, which are the means of acquiring wisdom and knowledge. After that the verse speaks of the system of life and death, pointing to man’s power of action which naturally comes into operation after the acquirement of wisdom and understanding. Last of all, it speaks of the government or management of affairs which is needed when one begins to exercise the power of action, for means, conducting an affair in an ordered and regulated manner and maintaining proper balance between different acts. In short, all the four means which are needed for the achievement of the purpose of man’s existence have been mentioned here in their natural order. Now can there be a being so unreasonable as to first create life and endow man with feelings and the necessary capabilities for work and also provide a well-regulated order in his actions, and then, having endowed him with all these gifts, leave him alone and give him no instructions to employ these great gifts for the attainment of a particular object? A man with even a grain of sense can see that such a thing is impossible. And it is equally impossible that, after having done all this, God should be hasty in bringing about destruction or awarding punishment.

Sometimes even Christian commentators of the Quran feel constrained to admire the beauty and force of its teachings. Commenting on this and the following few verses, the Rev. E.M. Wherry says: “This passage contains very cogent reasoning against idolaters. These teachings account for much of the success of Islam as a missionary religion.” It is a pity, however, that even in the face of such admissions some Christian writers should have the hardihood to ascribe the success of Islam to the sword and the so-called “temptations” which Islam is alleged to have offered to its followers.

1308. Commentary:

The words ربُكمْ الحقَّ (your true Lord) point to the perfection of man after going through a gradual process of evolution, a subject referred to in the previous verse. This is hinted in the word رب (Lord) which means, One Who brings things to a state of perfection by degrees. By qualifying the word رب (Lord) by the adjective الحقَّ (true), which means, necessarily existing by his own essence or really
34. "Thus is the word of thy Lord proved true against those who rebel, that they believe not."  

35. Say, 'Is there any of your associate-gods who originates creation and then reproduces it?' Say, 'It is Allah alone Who originates creation and then reproduces it. Whither then are you turned away?'

existing (Lane), the verse is intended to point to the fact that there are two kinds of rabb (lords): (1) those that are not everlasting and are subject to the law of decay and death, their nourishing being temporary and imperfect; (2) He Who is necessarily existing and is free from death. This is Allah, Who is not only our Rabb but is also Eternal and Everlasting. His bringing up of man is therefore perfect and free from all limitations, and lost indeed is the man who abandons Him and has recourse to other lords and masters.

1309. Commentary:  
The verse points to the natural law that he who rebels against the authority of God and defies His Prophets is deprived of opportunities to believe.

1310. Commentary:  
The real test of a creator is his ability to reproduce what he has once created; otherwise the claim is open to serious objection and can be made by anyone. The verse under comment thus contains an incontrovertible argument against polytheism, viz., that a creator is one who is able to reproduce his creation. In fact, not only creation but reproduction or repetition thereof is the true test of divinity, because, firstly, it is the only infallible proof of God's being the Creator, and secondly, because it provides the basis of the actual working of the universe. After having laid down this test of divinity, the Quran asks idol-worshippers, who among their so-called deities is the author of this system of creation and reproduction which has been working from the beginning?

It is also clear from this verse that when God had brought into existence a consummate and unending system of creation, He could not have, after having given guidance to a certain generation, deprived the succeeding generations of it. He Who originated creation and continued the system of reproduction could not possibly make such an invidious distinction between one generation and another.
36. Say, 'Is there any of your associate-gods who leads to the truth?' Say, 'It is Allah Who leads to the truth. Is then He Who leads to the truth more worthy to be followed or he who finds not the way himself unless he be guided? What, then, is the matter with you? How judge ye?'

37. "And most of them follow nothing but conjecture. Surely, conjecture avails nothing against truth. Verily, Allah is well aware of what they do."

1311. Important Words:

- یحیی (finds the way himself) which is really یحیی (from یحیی) i.e. he found or followed the right way is the intransitive form of یحيى which means, he directed him aright or caused him to take or follow the right way. یحیی (which is really یحیی, the letter ی having been merged into the letter ی) means, he became rightly directed; he followed or found the right way; he went aright (Lane).

Commentary:
The untenability of their position is brought home to idolaters in this verse. The verse asks them the pertinent question: If God does not send guidance, is it their idols who do so? If the latter have ever sent guidance for men, their votaries could say, with some justification, that God might have entrusted the task of guidance to these idols or deities. But the fact is that not a single instance is on record where an idol or a false deity has ever been credited with the sending down of guidance for mankind. It is indeed strange that, whereas idolatry is so rife in the world, there is not a single book on earth which is alleged to have been revealed to any person by any of the false deities. The world has witnessed all sorts of lies invented by men, but nobody has ever dared to forge the lie that such and such a book has been revealed to him by such and such an idol or deity. Now when the sending down of guidance has never been even falsely ascribed to any idol or deity, how can the idolaters, in the face of guidance having been revealed to mankind in all ages, deny that it is the Almighty God Who sends it down for humanity?

The words, Is then he who leads to the truth more worthy to be followed, may also refer to the Prophets of God who are sent to guide men to the truth. In this case the latter part of the verse would mean, "who is more worthy to be followed, a Prophet of God or the false deities and their votaries who themselves stand in need of guidance and cannot (in opposition to the teaching of the Prophets) offer any revealed teaching?"

1312. Important Words:

- ِیِقِت (conjecture) is used in different senses: (1) doubt or uncertainty; (2) thought, supposition or conjecture; (3) preponderant belief (or strong presumption) with the admission that the contrary may be the case; (4) knowledge or certainty (Lane).
38. And this Quran is not such as might be devised by any one except Allah. On the contrary, it fulfils that which is before it and is an exposition of the Law of God. There is no doubt about it. It is from the Lord of all the worlds.  

Commentary:

The word which, as stated under Important Words, gives different meanings, is here used in the sense of either “doubt or uncertainty” or “conjecture or supposition,” for it cannot be taken in the other two senses, because truth and knowledge never contradict each other nor can there be any real conflict between truth and a strong presumption. A presumption which is based on reason can be held only so long as the truth is hidden. Once the truth becomes disclosed and manifest, there remains no room for presumption. A presumption which is based on reason can be held only so long as the truth is hidden. Once the truth becomes disclosed and manifest, there remains no room for presumption. A presumption which is based on reason can be held only so long as the truth is hidden. Once the truth becomes disclosed and manifest, there remains no room for presumption. A presumption which is based on reason can be held only so long as the truth is hidden. Once the truth becomes disclosed and manifest, there remains no room for presumption. A presumption which is based on reason can be held only so long as the truth is hidden. Once the truth becomes disclosed and manifest, there remains no room for presumption. A presumption which is based on reason can be held only so long as the truth is hidden. Once the truth becomes disclosed and manifest, there remains no room for presumption. A presumption which is based on reason can be held only so long as the truth is hidden. Once the truth becomes disclosed and manifest, there remains no room for presumption. A presumption which is based on reason can be held only so long as the truth is hidden. Once the truth becomes disclosed and manifest, there remains no room for presumption.

By using the words, most of them, the Quran does not mean that some idolaters possess real grounds for their idolatrous views. The expression has been used to point to the two classes of idolaters. One class consists of those who hold to their idolatrous views merely through greed or bigotry, while in their heart of hearts they know that idolatry possesses no true or reasonable basis. The other class—a large majority—however, sincerely believe in the plurality of gods, though such belief is not based on reason, commonsense or observation, but has its origin only in fancy and superstition.

The Quran again teaches a great truth in this verse, viz., that we should not regard all those who hold views different from ours as wilful liars or dishonest persons. Most people sincerely believe their religion to be true, though their beliefs are due to the weakness of their intellect or lack of proper thinking. Such people do not make a full and sustained effort to find the truth and are mentally sluggish and indolent.

1313. Commentary:

The previous verse dealt with the subject that it was necessary for God to have sent down revelation for the guidance of mankind and that it is not in the power of anyone else to provide such spiritual guidance. From a discussion of the subject in principle, the Quran in this verse turns to the particular question, whether the Quran could be the word of man. It answers this question in the negative and gives five very cogent reasons to show that it is indeed the revealed word of God.

The first argument hinted at in the words, except Allah, is that the Quran comprises such subjects as are beyond the power of man to know and as can be revealed by God alone. Now among the things which are known to God alone are matters which pertain to the unseen, viz., prophecies about great events of the future; and there can be no doubt about the divine origin of a book which contains things which are known to God alone.

The second argument given here to prove the divine origin of the Quran is that not only do
its own prophecies contradict the idea of its having been forged and fabricated by a man but the prophecies of the previous Prophets also establish its divine origin. This is hinted at in the words, *it fulfils that which is before it*; and obviously no man-made book has the power to fulfill in itself prophecies foretold in previous Scriptures.

It is a peculiar characteristic of the Quran that, instead of speaking of former Prophets as bearing witness to the truth of the latter Prophets, it represents the latter as fulfilling what the former Prophets have said, the reason being that whereas former Prophets do indeed predict the advent of the Prophets that are to come after them, the latter Prophets establish the truth of the former Prophets by making their appearance exactly at the time and in the manner foretold. The best way of expressing this idea is the one that has been followed by the Quran. For, to say that the former Prophets bear testimony to the truth of such and such a Prophet or of such and such a revelation, is not so effective as to say that it is only by means of the present revelation or the present Prophet that the truth of the former Prophets can now become established. This is a line of reasoning which the followers of the former Prophets dare not reject.

The third argument embodied in this verse is hinted at in the words, *an exposition of the Law*, i.e., the Quran explains and expounds the teachings of previous Scriptures. This also constitutes a very strong proof of the truth of the Quran. The previous Scriptures require the help of the Quran for the exposition and elucidation of their teachings. The Torah, the Gospels, the Vedas, the Zend-Avesta, all discuss such great spiritual problems as the unity of God, revelation, divine attributes, prophethood, life after death, moral and spiritual conditions, etc., but none of these books deals with these questions in such a manner as to make them perfectly clear and understandable, and their ambiguities and obscurities have to be explained with the help of the Quran. So in the verse under comment the claim is made that the Quran explains and clarifies those parts of previous Scriptures about which so much vagueness and obscurity exists and disbelievers are told that, if they deny the divine origin of the Quran, they will have to admit that the All-Knowing God Himself was unable to put so much spiritual knowledge in all the former revealed books as this human being (the Prophet of Islam) has succeeded in placing in this small Book, the Quran. So the followers of other Faiths will have either to admit the divine origin of the Quran or deny previous Scriptures also.

The fourth argument given in this verse is contained in the words, *There is no doubt about it*, which means that the Quran contains all the reasons and arguments needed to prove its divine origin and does not require the help or support of any outside person or book for that purpose. It deals with various social, moral and spiritual problems in such a perfect and exhaustive manner that he who ponders over it dispassionately can readily see that the Quran makes no claim which it does not support with cogent reasons and powerful arguments. This constitutes irrefutable evidence of the fact that this Book has indeed proceeded from God; for the Quran demands our belief in many unseen things and it is not in the power of man to prove unseen things by intellectual reasoning alone without the help of observation and experience. But obviously man cannot provide bases of observation and experience for things unseen. Only God can do it.

The fifth argument of the divine origin of the Quran as given in this verse is contained in the words, *It is from the Lord of all the worlds*. This is to hint that by means of the Quran the divine attribute of *Rabb al 'Alamin* (Lord of all the worlds) has been made manifest to all mankind,
39. Do they say, 'He has forged it'? Say, 'Bring then a Sûra like unto it, and call for help on all you can besides Allah, if you are truthful.' 1314

The Quran is not meant to satisfy the needs and requirements of a particular people or a particular period only, as were the previous Scriptures, but is meant for all nations and all ages. Now it is impossible for a human being to produce a book which should satisfy the requirements of all mankind for all time. Man is naturally influenced by his environment and ordinarily foresees and seeks to meet his immediate needs only. It is God alone Who can give such teachings as are equally useful for all times and all peoples and as are unaffected by changes in time and in the conditions and circumstances of man. The Quran embodies such teachings.

1314. Commentary:

Notwithstanding the great excellences of the Quran mentioned in the preceding verse, disbelievers had the hardihood to allege that it was a fabrication of the Holy Prophet. The verse under comment asks, if a book with such excellences as the Quran possesses could be a human fabrication, then why do disbelievers not produce a similar one themselves? Similar challenges have been made in the Quran at different places, in different words. At one place the Quran calls upon disbelievers to produce a book like the whole of the Quran; at another it challenges them to produce ten Chapters comparable to the Quranic Sûras; at yet another place it requires them to produce even a single Sûra like those of the Quran. This shows that each of the passages containing these challenges deals with the subject from a different standpoint and offers a different challenge. In the verse under comment, for instance, the pronoun "it" in the expression ﷺـ (like unto it) does not refer to the whole of the Quran but only to the previous verse of the present Sûra. As we have seen, the previous verse has advanced five arguments to show that the Quran is the revealed word of God and in the present verse disbelievers are told that if they still persist in looking upon the Quran as the word of man, then let them produce a book which, let alone all the five arguments embodied in the previous verse, should possess only one of them. It is a patent fact, however, that not one of these five arguments about the divine origin of the Quran is to be found in any work of man. This is a claim which nobody has ever dared to contradict, nor is there a possibility of future contradiction. The challenge stands for all time. The heavens and the earth may pass away, but no man will ever be able to produce a book like the Quran.

If the word Sûra in this verse be taken to mean a Chapter, then the verse would mean that disbelievers are called upon to produce even a Chapter comparable with the Quran. But then the challenge will not be so pointed. For, in that case disbelievers would be called upon to bring a full Chapter characterized by all the five qualities mentioned in the previous verse, while in the other case they are required to produce any composition containing only one of the five qualities. For a detailed treatment of this important subject see 2:24.
40. Nay, but they have rejected that the knowledge of which they did not compass nor has the true significance thereof yet come to them. In like manner did those before them reject the truth. But see what was the end of those who did wrong! 1315

41. And of them there are some who believe therein, and of them there are others who do not believe therein, and thy Lord well knows those who act corruptly. 1316

1315. Commentary:
The verse means that it is no wonder that disbelievers look upon the Quran as a fabrication (see the preceding verse). When a man does not understand a thing fully, he is prone to deny it. As disbelievers did not comprehend the Quranic teaching and found it to be contradictory to many of their confirmed views and cherished notions, they rejected it forthwith. The words, they have rejected that the knowledge of which they did not compass, may also mean, 'they hastened to reject the Quran before even trying to understand it or knowing its true significance.'

The words, nor has the true significance thereof yet come to them, may lead some to think that if a long period must elapse before the reality and true significance of some of the things promised by the Prophets could be known, then it would not be wrong to disbelieve in them in the beginning when that reality could not yet be known. But such an inference would be manifestly wrong. The verse does not mean that in the beginning the Prophets do not possess those proofs and arguments which can help seekers after truth to know and recognize their truth. What it means is that those who, in spite of witnessing Signs which go to establish the truth of a Prophet, attach importance to certain other matters to which they wrongly give undue weight, should not be in a hurry to deny the truth of the Prophet on that score only but should wait till those matters about which they entertain doubts are clarified.

The Rev. Mr. Wherry, quoting Brinckman, says that on the basis of this verse no blame could attach to the Meccans for rejecting the Quran, because, according to the Quran itself, they were not yet in full possession of the required knowledge. But the reverend gentleman did not trouble to consider that it is one thing to be unable to possess full knowledge about a certain thing and quite another not to try to acquire such knowledge. The Quran does not say that disbelievers were unable to get sufficient knowledge by which they could know the truth of the Holy Prophet, but that they never tried to acquire such knowledge and rejected him on the ground that he was a common man like themselves.

1316. Commentary:
The verse says that in spite of the hostile attitude of disbelievers, they will not all remain unguided. Some of them will change their minds and accept the truth. Only those who persist in their evil ways and continue to act corruptly to the last will deprive themselves permanently
42. And if they accuse thee of lying, say, ‘For me is my work and for you is your work. You are not responsible for what I do and I am not responsible for what you do.’

43. And among them are some who give ear to thee. ‘But canst thou make the deaf hear, even though they understand not?’

of faith and guidance. The verse gives the reason why divine punishment was delayed, which is that there was not only the likelihood of some of the opponents of Islam eventually accepting it but that God knew for a fact that some of them would actually become sincere Muslims. He, therefore, refrained from sending His punishment earlier.

The verse constituted a powerful prophecy which was fulfilled in due course. If the Meccans had been destroyed immediately after they rejected the Holy Prophet, how would men like Khālid bin Walid, ‘Amr bin al-‘Āṣ, ‘Ikrima bin Abī Jahl and many other brave and valiant champions of Islam, have accepted the true Faith?

1317. Commentary:

This verse throws interesting light on the catholicity and broad-mindedness of Islam. Disbelievers are told here that if they prefer to reject the Holy Prophet, they are at perfect liberty to do so. In fact, whenever there exists a difference of views between two parties, each party has the right to show the other to be in error. But this difference should not be allowed to go further, and one party should not compel the other party to accept its views.

The verse declares that when it is well known that believers and disbelievers are two distinct and separate parties and there is no likelihood of the one being mistaken for the other, and when their ways of working are also different, then there is no reason why compulsion should be resorted to. Compulsion may only be exercised when the conduct of one party is likely to bring discredit to the other party. But, situated as they are, the works of a Prophet and of his followers bring no discredit to disbelievers, nor do the actions of disbelievers bring any discredit to believers. Therefore, there is no justification for either of the two classes to bring compulsion to bear on the other.

The verse is also capable of another interpretation. It may mean that the works of the Holy Prophet are quite distinct from those of the disbelievers and there is no similarity between the two. This being so, the result would show whose works are right and whose wrong. When there is similarity between the works of two parties, it is difficult to determine definitely the cause of the progress or degeneration, as the case may be, of one party or the other. But when there exists absolutely no similarity between the works of two parties, everybody is in a position to fix responsibility for the result.

1318. Commentary:

This and the following verses, give the reason why disbelievers reject the truth. We are told that their rejection is not based on any sound ground or solid reason but is due only to their bigotry and perverseness. Disbelievers appear to listen to the Holy Prophet, but they
44. And among them are some who look towards thee. But canst thou guide the blind even though they see not? 1319

45. Certainly, Allah wrongs not men at all, but men wrong their own souls. 1320

1319. Commentary:
In this verse the expression لا يضرون (they see not) does not mean that disbelievers do not possess the faculty of sight, because a reference to this fact has already been made in the word "blind." What it means is that they do not also possess the perceptive faculty of the mind, i.e., understanding and intelligence. In the previous verse, disbelievers were spoken of as devoid of "understanding" in addition to their being devoid of "the faculty of hearing." and in the present verse they are spoken of as destitute of "perceptive faculty of the mind," in addition to their being blind. The two verses taken together thus point out that disbelievers cannot possibly find the right way when they are not only devoid of the power of hearing but also of spiritual sight.

The verse also implies that we should not judge others merely by their outward appearance. One judging only by appearance will be tempted to object why punishment does not seize the disbelievers at once. But God knows that there are among them some who are ultimately to become Muslims. On the other hand, there are some who appear as if they would accept the truth, but in spite of possessing ears they hear not and in spite of possessing eyes they see not, and always go on criticizing. But God knows who is going to believe and who not, and He knows also who deserves to be punished and who merits a good reward. So He has reserved to Himself the right when and whom to punish. This is how the present and the previous verses explain the words, thy Lord well knows those who act corruptly, occurring in v. 41.

1320. Commentary:
This verse forms a fitting sequel to the preceding ones. It says that God Who has sent the Prophet and should, on account of his rejection by disbelievers, naturally be disposed to inflict swift punishment on them, is granting them respite and does not desire to punish them soon, but disbelievers themselves demand a speedy punishment. God does not wish to do wrong to them, i.e., He does not like to destroy them while there is yet time for them to repent and accept guidance, but they themselves demand punishment and thus wrong their own souls.

This verse also furnishes an explanation of all such verses from which some people conclude that men are prevented from accepting guidance because they are predestined to be misguided and that it is God Who makes men commit all the sins they commit. All such conclusions are based on the supposition that God acts
46. And on the day when He shall gather them together, it will appear to them as though they had not tarried in the world save for an hour of a day. They will recognize one another. Losers indeed are those who deny the meeting with Allah and would not follow guidance. 1321

47. And if We show thee in thy lifetime the fulfilment of some of the things with which We have threatened them, thou wilt know it; or if We cause thee to die before that, then to Us is their return, and thou wilt see the fulfilment in the next world; and Allah is witness to all that they do. 1322

unjustly towards His creatures. The present verse contradicts this baseless supposition by expressly stating that God never acts unjustly towards His creatures. On the contrary, He affords them all possible opportunities to accept the truth.

1321. Commentary:
Disbelievers have been several times spoken of in the Quran as having stayed in the world only for an hour of a day. In all such verses it is not the actual time of their staying in the world that is meant. It is only their being engrossed in worldly affairs and idle pursuits that is implied. The day is primarily meant for work and, inasmuch as disbelievers spend most of their time in earning the paltry goods of the world or pass their time in hunting after enjoyment and do not make any effort to win the pleasure of God, it may be rightly said of them that they have lived in the world only for a day, even though they may have actually lived for thousands of years, for they do not benefit by their lives and do not put their days to the right use for which they are meant. If it had been meant to give the actual period of time for which disbelievers stayed on earth, there was no need of specifying the time of the day, for time can be measured by night also.

The words, who deny the meeting with Allah, supply the reason why disbelievers pass their life in negligence. It was due to their lack of faith in meeting with God, which indeed is a great incentive to good works. Both those who obey through fear and those who obey from motives of love are prompted to do good works because they know that one day they will stand before God when they will have to render an account of their deeds. When this faith is wanting, negligence is the natural consequence.

1322. Important Words:
ā l was originally lā an which means “If.” The added particle  lā is technically known as  tā‘idār (redundant). But these so-called redundant words are not without purpose. They are used to emphasize or intensify the meaning of the word to which they are added. The change effected in the sense of the particle  an by the addition
48. And *for every people there is a Messenger. So when their Messenger comes, it is judged between them with equity, and they are not wronged.*

Commentary:

This verse lays down the important principle that prophecies containing warnings and threats of coming punishment are subject to revocation. The verse shows that prophecies are of two kinds: (1) those that are conditional, as appear from the words *إِنَّ (if) and *وَلَوْ (or) used in the verse; (2) those that are revocable or subject to cancellation, as hinted at in the words *بِمَعْنَى (some) and *أَنَّا (We show thee in thy lifetime). The word *بِمَعْنَى (some) definitely shows that the present verse speaks of only those prophecies that were meant to be fulfilled during the lifetime of the Holy Prophet, for the prophecies which related to the time subsequent to his death, were obviously not meant to be fulfilled during his lifetime and therefore did not need to be mentioned in the present context. Incidentally, the verse also points to the possibility that no prophecy of punishment might be fulfilled in the lifetime of the Holy Prophet, for it was possible that all those to whom he preached his Message might believe in him and thus there might be no occasion for punishment. The verse is so worded as to show the absolute power of God; otherwise, ordinarily, all men do not believe.

The verse also shows that it is not necessary that prophecies should have a time-limit, for the time given for the fulfilment of the prophecies referred to here is unrestricted, extending even to the period subsequent to the death of the Holy Prophet. Nay, even if an apparent time-limit is prescribed, which in the present case is the lifetime of the Holy Prophet, the time-limit is only of secondary importance, for the verse definitely admits the possibility of some of these prophecies remaining unfulfilled during the lifetime of the Prophet.

It further emerges from this verse that only such prophecies are liable to be revoked or cancelled as relate to matters of detail, for the prophecies which concern fundamental principles and are general in character are never revoked. An instance of the prophecies of this class is to be had in the well-known verse, *Allah has decreed: of a certainty I will prevail, I and My Messengers* (58: 22); while the prophecies which are liable to be cancelled, are those to which the verse under comment relates, for here the words are, *the things with which We have threatened them.* This shows that the prophecies comprising threats and warnings about impending punishment are liable to be cancelled, while those containing promises of a general character not applying to a particular Prophet but embodying a general rule that applies to all the Prophets of God can never be cancelled and must be fulfilled.

1323. Commentary:

It is wrong to infer from this verse that only one Messenger is sent to a people. It is the appearance of a Messenger and not the number of such Messengers that is meant here. In other words, the verse tells us that no people is left without a
49. And they say, 'When will this promise be fulfilled, if you are truthful?'

50. Say, I have no power for myself over any harm or benefit, save that which Allah wills. For every disbelieving people there is an appointed term. When their term is come, they cannot remain behind a single moment, nor can they get ahead of it.'

1324. Commentary:
Strange, indeed, are the ways of disbelievers! In the preceding verse it was indirectly stated that rejection of, and separation from, a Prophet of God lead to ruin, while those who accept a Prophet are saved. At this disbelievers, instead of seeking God's mercy, at once begin to ask when the threatened punishment will come. They do not seem to be satisfied with anything except punishment.

1325. Commentary:
This verse embodies a reply to the disbelievers' demand for punishment (mentioned in the preceding verse). The Holy Prophet is bidden to ask them how he could fulfil their demand for punishment when personally he possessed no power either to do good to, or avert evil from, himself. How clearly this and similar other verses show that the real object of the Quran is to uphold the unity of God! The Quran cannot bear any human being, even the greatest of all the Prophets, to be regarded as equal to God.

The word (people) in this verse means those who disbelieve and not people generally as referred to in v. 48. The verse means to say that there comes a time when disbelievers meet their inevitable end and their place is taken by another people who follow the divine Messenger. In other words, the Holy Prophet is made to say to disbelievers that, though it is not in his power to bring punishment on them, yet, as it is the immutable law of God that when a people take to evil ways they decline and fall, they will not be allowed to go unpunished and on their ashes a new people shall arise and a new era of truth shall dawn.
51. Say, 'Tell me, if His punishment comes upon you by night or by day, how will the guilty ones run away from it?' 1326

Is it then when it has befallen you that you will believe in it? 'What! Now! And before this you used to demand its speedy coming?' 1327

Then will it be said to those who did wrong, 'Taste ye the abiding punishment. You are not required save for that which you used to earn.' 1328

1326. Important Words:

اِمَّرَ (Tell me) means, have you considered; or tell me you; or simply, tell me (Lay).

Commentary:
The words, by night or by day, contain a subtle allusion to the destruction of the people of Mecca, on whom punishment was to come both during the day and at night. At the Battle of Badr, which was the first pitched battle fought between Muslims and Meccans and in which the foundations were laid of the latter's complete destruction, they had a fore-taste of their ruin “by day” while at the Battle of the Ditch, which was the last real trial of strength between the two parties, the circumstances which caused their ruin were brought into existence “by night.” The punishment which was to overtake the Meccans by night has been mentioned here before that which was to overtake them by day, because the former was to deal to them a blow which was to end their power for all time.

The verse also constitutes a rebuke to disbelievers that they should not indulge in futile discussion as to the time and form of the promised punishment but should try to escape it by effecting a change in their lives.

1327. Commentary:

This verse contains an effective reply to those who demand the Sign of punishment. They are told that the real object for which Signs are shown is that they should benefit by them. But what sense is there in demanding the Sign of punishment when, with the actual coming of destructive punishment the door of repentance is finally closed and readiness to believe becomes a useless thing?

The words, you used to demand its speedy coming, signify that those who desire to hasten punishment set a seal on their own disbelief and desire to die in that state. How then can they, consistently with their attitude, turn to belief when the punishment of death stares them in the face?

1328. Important Words:

الحَدَدُ (the abiding punishment). 

(derived from عَدَّ (khalada) means, he or it remained or stayed; or he or it remained or stayed long. كَرَيْنَا لَالْإِرْضَ (he inclined and clove to the earth (Taj & Aqrab).

Commentary:
The expression حَدَدُ (the abiding punishment) means, a punishment that will come to stay with and cleave to disbelievers. It does
54. And they enquire of thee, 'Is it true?' Say, 'Yea, by my Lord! It is most surely true; and you cannot frustrate it.'

55. And if every soul that does wrong possessed all that is in the earth, it would surely offer to ransom itself therewith. "And they will conceal their remorse, when they see the punishment. And judgement shall be passed between them with equity and they shall not be wronged."

not mean a punishment which knows no end and which can in no circumstances be removed. The word لد (khalid) i.e. lasting, thus only expresses the firm adherence of the punishment to those afflicted by it, so that it will not be averted and will, as it were, stick to evil-doers.

1329. Commentary:
Such is the way of the wicked that, when the truth is brought home to them and they cannot refute it, they have recourse to scoffing and mocking. Accordingly, we are told in this verse that when disbelievers will be unable to answer arguments placed before them, they will have recourse to scoffing and, pretending to assume a serious attitude, will enquire whether what has been said is really true. The pseudo-enquiry referred to here is the same as contained in 78:2, 3 and alludes to the punishment which is to overtake the disbelieving people. The Holy Prophet is bidden not to mind their ridicule but to warn them that what they have been told is true and will certainly come to pass. By using the words وَرَيْف (by my Lord), the Quran adduces the then weak condition of the Holy Prophet as evidence of his truth and reminds disbelievers that from the way in which God had been gradually furthering and promoting the Prophet’s cause, it could be easily seen that the time was not far off when Islam would completely triumph and the enemy would find himself utterly beaten.

1330. Important Words:
- الْكَتَبُ (they will conceal) gives two contrary meanings: (1) he concealed it; (2) he manifested or revealed it, or he made it known (Lane).

Commentary:
Man is so made by nature that punishment has two different effects on him. It increases the obstinacy and refractoriness of some, while it renders others humble and docile. But the punishment inflicted by God is never such as to produce doubtful results. Its effect is straight and certain. It breaks the pride of the arrogant. The reason of the difference between the punishment inflicted by God and that inflicted by man is that the latter affects only the body, man having no power to inspire the heart with awe, while the former affects both the body and the heart. The verse purports to say that when God’s punishment overtakes men, it strikes awe into their hearts and they become prepared to save themselves by making every sacrifice in their power, and, as it always descends on the right person and on the right occasion, men realize its justice and therefore become repentant and begin to bring about a real change in their lives.
56. Know ye!  
To Allah, surely, belongs whatever is in the heavens and the earth. Know ye, that Allah's promise is surely true! But most of them understand not.  

57. He it is Who gives life and causes death, and to Him shall you be brought back.

The verse may have another meaning also. God's punishment descends only on those who oppose His teachings. Such people have no high ideals. They are mean and niggardly and it is only their base desires that prompt them to oppose the truth. Thus the verse purports to say that those on whom God's punishment descends are incapable of manifesting any magnanimity of heart, and in time of trouble seek to save their skins by sacrificing anything, even their personal or national honour, which men of high ideals always try to save even at the cost of their lives. This, the verse hints, is evidence of their being in error; for if they had been in the right, they would not have stooped to such meanness. See Important Words.

The words "ءَمَرَوْا الْثَمَامَةَ (they will conceal their remorse) may also be rendered as, "they will manifest or express their remorse."

1331. Commentary:

The verse points to a great truth. As all that is in the heavens and the earth belongs to Allah it is vain and foolish to try to please Him or His Messengers by offering them bribes (see the preceding verse). The Prophets of God cannot be prevented from carrying out their mission for the sake of bribes. The Meccans, desiring to stop the preaching of the Holy Prophet against idolatry, offered him every kind of bribe; but the only reply which all those bribes and temptations elicited from him was to the effect that even if they placed the sun on his right and the moon on his left, he would not give up his mission (Hishām & Zurqānī).

The fact is that as kings and potentates need the things of this world, therefore bribes and ransoms please them, but God Himself being the Creator of all things, ransoms have no value for Him except that one should offer the sacrifice of one's own self, which finds ready acceptance with Him, for such sacrifice is a means of self-purification.

1332. Commentary:

Disbelievers wondered how an ordinary individual like the Prophet of Islam would triumph in face of the united opposition of his numerous and powerful enemies. This verse is intended to set their doubts at rest by pointing to the rise and fall of nations and individuals in this world and draws their attention to the fact that it is inconceivable that a Messenger of the All-Powerful God Who gives life and causes death should not succeed.
58. O mankind! There has come to you an exhortation from your Lord and a cure for whatever disease there is in the hearts, and “a guidance and a mercy to the believers.”

1333. Important Words:

وَعَالَة (an exhortation) is derived from وَعَالَة. They say وَعَالَة i.e. he reminded him of that which should soften his heart by the mention of reward or punishment; he exhorted or admonished or warned him; he gave him good advice or counsel; he reminded him of the results of affairs; he put him in fear. وَعَالَة means, an exhortation or admonition or warning of the nature detailed above; sincere exhortation or warning; the exhortation which leads to repentance and reformation (Lane & Aqrab).

اِلْكُلْمَات (the hearts) is the plural of اِلْكُلْمَات which means, the breast, chest or bosom; the mind; the upper part of the front of a thing. Sometimes اِلْكُلْمَات is taken to signify the heart because it lies in the bosom (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

The verse sheds some light on the secret of the Holy Prophet’s phenomenal success. It tells us that it was not due to vast armies, great riches or large numbers of followers, but to this excellent Book, the Quran, whose teaching cannot long be resisted and to which sooner or later man is bound to turn for guidance, for it is an “exhortation from your Lord” and a “cure for whatever disease there is in the hearts” as well as a “guidance and a mercy.”

The Quran is وَعَالَة (an exhortation), for (a) it contains teachings which proceed from a genuine desire to impart good counsel. So when people see that the Prophet seeks no personal aggrandizement by promulgating these teachings but only their own good and their own welfare, they will not fail to be attracted by it; (b) the Quranic teaching is calculated deeply to affect and touch the human heart. It lays so much stress on the love and fear of God that even the most hard-hearted man cannot remain unaffected by it; (c) it has set forth in a beautiful manner all those principles and rules of conduct which lead to reformation and success.

The Quran, as the verse tells us, is also وَعَالَة (cure) for all spiritual diseases and maladies. No matter how low a man may fall, there continues to arise in his mind a yearning for truth, a desire to know the reality of things; and it is when his mind is distracted by doubts and misgivings and he seeks satisfaction on questions concerning spiritual matters that the Quran comes to his rescue and dispels all his doubts, with the result that he becomes irresistibly drawn to it.

The Quran is also a “cure” for what is in the heart in the sense that it satisfies the cravings of the heart. It is in the nature of man that, when he reads about great spiritual men and learns how the great depths of religious teachings were disclosed to them, he is moved by the desire that what he believes in only as a matter of faith should become converted into a certainty and a matter of personal experience and that he should also realize what holy men in the past had realized. This is a desire which disquiets many a heart and those whose hearts are seized with this longing will find solace in this Book, and they will find therein the guidance which will lead them to God,
59. Say, ‘All this is through the grace of Allah and through His mercy; therein, therefore, let them rejoice. “That is better than what they hoard.”

The Quran is also “a guidance and a mercy,” which, besides other meanings, also signifies the means of rise and progress in the world. Some men are so dull of understanding that they cannot comprehend the value or depth or niceties of spiritual knowledge and the philosophy of religion. It is only the splendour of material progress that attracts their attention. For the satisfaction of such persons, God shows special material favours to those who believe in this Book.

The four points mentioned above led to the extraordinary success of Islam and, for that matter, to the success of all true religions. Those gifted with quick intelligence and true perception recognized the truth of Islam merely on finding that its teaching had the good of mankind as its only objective and that it had its basis in a sincere desire to see mankind directed to the right path. But those whose perceptive powers were less acute and less fine had their doubts satisfied by the rational arguments contained in the Quran. Those who were still slower to understand became convinced of the truth of Islam when they saw the great moral and spiritual change that its teaching brought about in the lives of its followers. And those possessed of the lowest or meanest understanding, whom riches and worldly progress alone could convince, saw the truth of Islam in the material glory and worldly grandeur that fell to the lot of its followers.

It may well be asked here what the Quran means by saying that it is a cure for whatever disease there is in the hearts, when it is the brain that is the source and fountain-head of all thoughts. In this respect it must be remembered that spiritual matters have a very deep and subtle connexion with the human heart. The experience of all spiritual men has established the fact that the heart is the seat of things pertaining to the spirit. But just as it is difficult to get a true knowledge of the soul and to ascertain the nature of its connexion with the body by material means, similarly, it is difficult to understand the connexion that exists between the soul and the human heart by the aid of physical laws. So in this matter we have naturally to rely on the testimony of those who have experience and their unanimous testimony is that the heart plays a great part in spiritual matters. This testimony is by no means inconsistent with the fact that the brain is the centre of thinking. It is quite possible that changes in the blood should have a bearing on the thoughts being good or bad, and as it is through the heart that the circulation of the blood is regulated, it is quite understandable that the heart should exercise a subtle influence on the thoughts of man. It is an admitted fact that food exercises a deep influence on man’s thoughts, and obviously this influence cannot be exercised except through the heart. In this sense, the heart may also be said to be the seat and source of thoughts. The Quran refers to this subject where it says: O ye Messengers, eat of the good and pure things and (as a result thereof) act righteously (23: 52).

1334. Commentary:
This verse reminds us that the blessings mentioned in the preceding verse can be attained only through the grace and mercy of God, and therefore he who has faith in God should not
60. Say, 'Have you considered that Allah sent down provision to you, then you made some of it unlawful and some lawful?' Say, 'Has Allah permitted you that or do you invent lies against Allah?'

61. What think those who invent lies against Allah of the Day of Resurrection? Surely, Allah is Gracious towards mankind, but most of them are not thankful.

1335. Commentary:

In v. 58 it was stated that the Holy Prophet has been given a Book which possesses the power to remove doubts and misgivings. In proof of this claim the Quran in the present verse refers to a rule of conduct which people before Islam observed with regard to eatables, merely because it came to them from their forefathers, though reason revolted against it. Eating and drinking is one of the primary needs of mankind and it is the first duty of a religion to guide men in this respect. Before the advent of Islam, however, the world possessed no right guidance on this subject. Men followed no fixed principle or law, declaring one thing lawful and another unlawful as they desired. It stands to reason, however, that there should be some medical, moral or religious grounds for the declaration of some things as lawful and others as unlawful. An arbitrary classification into clean and unclean things without valid reason is to belie God's creation. There are sure to arise doubts in the minds of men with regard to such arbitrary classification, and only that religion can successfully remove such doubts which lays down and expounds definite laws and regulations with regard to eatables. Islam has clearly done that. So it excels other religions in this respect also that it has laid down definite laws and regulations according to which things belonging to a certain category are treated as lawful and clean and those belonging to another category as unlawful and unclean, and has not laid down its teachings in an arbitrary manner.

1336. Important Words:

يوم القيامة (of the Day of Resurrection). In this expression the particle في (of or about) is understood before the word يوم (Day).

Commentary:

The verse purports to say that no man can forge lies against God, if he has any faith left in Him. So matters like eatables should not be treated lightly. In fact, forging lies against God in such
62. And thou art not engaged in anything, and thou recitest not from Him any portion of the Quran, and thou do no work, but We are witnesses of you when you are engrossed therein. And there is not hidden from thy Lord even an atom’s weight in the earth or in heaven. And there is nothing smaller than that or greater, but it is recorded in a clear Book. 1337

The verse may be interpreted as containing another argument of the fact that the religion of disbelievers is based on no sound reason. That argument lies in their denial of the Day of Resurrection. The verse points out that the very thought that on a certain day sinners will have to render an account of their deeds sends a shudder through them, and so they deny the very existence of such a day. But the denial of a thing cannot disprove its existence. It is foolish to deny the infliction of punishment on the basis of fear. Moreover, the Day of Resurrection is meant to serve as an incentive to spiritual progress, and not to frighten men. It is just like an examination, the object of which is not that students should fail but that they should work hard and make themselves deserving of promotion and prizes. But those who do not work hard must fail.

1337. Important Words:

- شان (anything) is the substantive noun from شان. They say i.e., I pursued his way or course, doing as he did. They say i.e., he is a man of great importance. The Arabs say i.e., it is his business or his way or nature to do such a thing. شان means, a thing, an affair or a business; state, condition, quality or manner; importance attached to a person or thing (Lane & Aqrab).

- عربت (is hidden) is formed from عرب which means, he or it was or became distant or remote or absent; he or it became hidden or concealed; he or it went away or departed. They say i.e., the camels went away to a distance in the pasturage not returning in the evening. عربت means, the forbearance of such a one quitted him. عربت means, the land was or became destitute of inhabitants (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

The present is one of the most remarkable verses of the Quran. It appears as if God is making His address from the Throne of His Majesty and Glory. Whereas on one side of Him are seated the Holy Prophet and his followers, on the other are the disbelievers. The words, And thou art not engaged in anything and thou recitest not from Him any portion of the Quran, refer to the Holy Prophet and Muslims, and the words, and you do no work but We are witnesses of you when you are engrossed therein, are addressed to disbelievers. The verse reminds believers that mere acceptance of truth or mere preaching
63. Behold! the friends of Allah shall certainly have no fear, nor shall they grieve. —

of the word of God is not sufficient. It is the way in which one carries belief into practice and the motives behind actions that really count. A true believer, therefore, should always be subjecting his intentions and deeds to strict scrutiny. So let not those who have believed delude themselves with the idea that the mere profession of faith and the preaching of it would win them the pleasure of God and attract His help. They will have to show by the sincerity of their motives and the purity of their conduct that they really deserve it. The verse embodies the great lesson that unless good actions are performed with pure motives and done in the right manner they cannot produce good results or win the pleasure of God. To the other side, also, the stern warning is issued that their denial of the truth and mocking and scoffing at it as well as their activities against the religion of God are not going unnoticed and they will meet with the fate they deserve.

The words لَا اَلْخَوُفُ عَلَيْهِمْ (shall have no fear) mean that believers do not fear that any real harm will ever befall them. The words do not mean that no danger will ever confront them. Similarly, the expression لَا وَلاَمْ شَيْءٌ يَخُفُونَ (nor shall they grieve) means that believers will suffer no grief on account of what they did in the past. Thus both the future and the past have been made secure for the Faithful. This is a wonderful position, for no power on earth can guarantee true peace and security to a person regarding both his future and his past. It is God alone Who can do that. It is a pity, however, that instead of turning to God people seek security where they cannot find it.

The words لَا اَلْخَوُفُ عَلَيْهِمْ and لَا وَلاَمْ شَيْءٌ يَخُفُونَ (smaller and greater) have been used to point out that whereas some things remain hidden on account of their smallness, there are others, parts of which remain hidden owing to their largeness. For instance, one can see only a part of a big mountain and not the whole. The Quran, therefore, rightly says that on the one hand God’s vision is so sharp and penetrating that nothing, however, small it may be, can remain hidden from Him; and on the other hand, His vision is so comprehensive that no part of a thing, however, big it may be, can escape His sight.

Moreover, science has established the fact that both seeing and hearing depend on vibrations and that there is a limit to perception by both eye and ear. The eye does not react to vibrations which fall short of a certain limit, nor to those which are beyond a certain limit. The same is the case with the ear. The ear cannot hear a sound which is communicated to it by vibrations which are less than thirty per second or which exceed forty per second. Thus, even scientifically, it is proved that certain things escape the comprehension of both the ear and the eye by reason of either their smallness or their bigness. But, says the Quran, it is not so with God, Who sees all things in their entirety.

1338. Commentary:

The words لَا اَلْخَوُفُ عَلَيْهِمْ (shall have no fear) mean that believers do not fear that any real harm will ever befall them. The words do not mean that no danger will ever confront them. Similarly, the expression لَا وَلاَمْ شَيْءٌ يَخُفُونَ (nor shall they grieve) means that believers will suffer no grief on account of what they did in the past. Thus both the future and the past have been made secure for the Faithful. This is a wonderful position, for no power on earth can guarantee true peace and security to a person regarding both his future and his past. It is God alone Who can do that. It is a pity, however, that instead of turning to God people seek security where they cannot find it.

The words خَوُفُ (fear) and حُزُنُ (grief) have indeed been used in the Quran on certain occasions with regard to Prophets, but the fear or grief of the Prophets is not about themselves, but about others, and to feel fear or grief about others is a commendable thing and not a punishment. It is in this sense that the word حُزُنُ (grief) has been used with regard to Prophet Jacob in 12: 85 and the word خَوُفُ (fear) with regard to Zechariah in 19: 6.
64. Those who believed and kept to righteousness—

1339. Commentary:

This verse gives a description of the "friends of God" referred to in the preceding verse. They are (1) perfect in faith and (2) observe the highest standard of righteousness. The Holy Prophet has also given a description of the "friends of God," which may be taken as an explanation of this verse and may therefore be given here. He is reported to have said: "On the Day of Judgement the 'friends of God' will be brought in the presence of God in three classes. First of all, a person from among the first group will be presented to God Who will say to him, 'O My servant, wherefore didst thou do good works?' To this question he will reply, 'O my Lord, Thou didst create Heaven, its trees and its fruits, its flowing streams and beautiful maids, its manifold bounties and sundry other things. Thou hast prepared these for those who are obedient to Thee. So in order to attain these blessings, O my Lord, I passed my nights praying and my days fasting.' Upon this God will say to him, 'O My servant, thou didst good works in order to get Heaven. So here it is, enter it and please thyself. It is an act of grace on My part that I have saved thee from the Fire, and it is an act of grace on My part that I have granted thee Heaven. So enter it and those that are with thee.' Then a person from among the second group will be presented before God Who will say to him, 'O My servant, wherefore didst thou do good works?' To this he will reply, 'O my Lord! Thou didst create Hell and its burning fire, its hot winds and boiling water, and Thou didst prepare many other dreadful things for those who are disobedient to Thee. So out of the fear of these things, I stood up praying at night and fasted during the day.' Then God will say to him, 'O My servant, thou didst good works, fearing Hell-fire; so I have liberated thee from it and it is an act of grace on My part that I caused thee to enter Heaven.' So he and those with him will enter Heaven. Then a person out of the third group will be presented before God Who will say to him, 'O My servant, wherefore didst thou do good works?' To this he will reply by saying, 'O my Lord, I did all I did solely out of love for Thee and out of a yearning to meet Thee. By Thy glory, I stood up praying at night, and fasted during the day, out of a yearning for Thee.' Then God will say to him, 'Thou didst good works out of love for Me and out of a yearning for Me. So have your reward.' Then the Lord of Glory and Majesty will manifest Himself to him and say, 'Here I am, have a look at Me,' and will say, 'As an act of grace, I liberate thee from the Fire and I grant thee Paradise. I will send to thee My angels to visit thee and will Myself greet thee with the greeting of peace.' Upon this he and his companions will enter Paradise" (Kathir, v. 5, p. 122). It is, of course, apparent that the person chosen from each group will be the best man in the group and will be presented to God as its representative.

There are also other sayings of the Holy Prophet bearing on the different grades of the "friends of God." The following saying is quoted by Abū Dāwūd on the authority of Abū Huraira: "Of the servants of God there are some whom even the Prophets and the Martyrs envy." On being asked by his Companions who were those lucky people, the Holy Prophet said, "They are men who love one another only for God's sake. The goods of this world or the ties of kinship are not the incentives of their love. Their faces will shine with light and they will be seated on luminous pulpits. When others will be fearful, they will be free from fear, and when others will bewail their past misfortunes, they will enjoy peace of mind" (Dāwūd).
65. aFor them are glad tidings in the present life and also in the Hereafter—there is no changing the words of Allah—that indeed is the supreme triumph.\textsuperscript{1340}

66. And let not their words grieve thee. Surely, all power belongs to Allah. He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing.\textsuperscript{1341}

The statement that even the Prophets envy such persons does not mean that such persons are superior to Prophets, for the Prophets are themselves the best “friends of God.” It simply means that the Prophets are particularly pleased with the condition of these persons and desire that such friends of God should be found in large numbers among their own followers.

\textsuperscript{1340.} Commentary:

In reply to a question as to what was meant by the expression, \textit{glad tidings in the present life}, the Holy Prophet is reported to have said: “It means a true dream or vision that a believer sees with regard to himself, or what others see with regard to him.” The term \textit{مثبتات بشرى} (glad tidings) is, however, of general application and may be used with regard to the revelations and visions of the Prophets as well as those of saints and other believers, and the verse under comment refers to both these kinds of visions and revelations (Jarir & Kathir).

The words, \textit{there is no changing the words of God}, may mean two things: (a) that the granting of \textit{بشرى} (glad tidings) is an eternal law of God, and being eternal, it must prove true in the case of Muslims also; and (b) that this is a special promise meant for Muslims and God has decreed that this promise will never change. This implies that there are certain prophecies which do not belong to the category of the “words of God” as used here, and are liable to be changed, but there are certain others which belong to the category of the “words of God” and these never fail to be fulfilled.

The expression, \textit{that indeed is the supreme triumph}, may mean either that the receiving of “glad tidings” is a great achievement, or the fact that the “words of God” do not change is a great secret of success. The verse is capable of bearing both these interpretations. That the receiving of “glad tidings” is really a great triumph is self-evident. As for the immutability of the “words of God,” i.e., the laws of nature, one can easily see that the whole working of the universe is based on it. Everything is governed by certain fixed and immutable laws. For example, fire burns and water assuages thirst. If these laws had been subject to change, the whole system of the universe would have gone to pieces. It is, therefore, on the unchangeability of the laws of nature that all progress depends.

\textsuperscript{1341.} Commentary:

In v. 63, it was said that the “friends of God” never grieve, but here the Holy Prophet is bidden not to grieve. This apparent inconsistency has already been explained under v. 63, where it has been noted that the “friends of God” entertain no grief on their own account. Nor was the grief of the Holy Prophet referred to here a personal grief. It was solely due to the
67. Behold! whoever is in the heavens and whoever is in the earth is Allah's. Those who call on others than Allah do not really follow these 'partners'; they follow only a conjecture, and they do nothing but guess.

68. He it is Who has made for you the night dark that you may rest therein, and the day full of light. Surely, therein are Signs for a people who listen.


fact that people had made God the target of their objections. He is, therefore, asked not to grieve on that account, for those objections are futile and cannot affect the honour of God. The verse thus shows how great, on the one hand, was the love of the Holy Prophet for God, inasmuch as objections of disbelievers against Him filled him with great grief, and, on the other hand, it tells us how great was God's love for the Holy Prophet, inasmuch as He consoles him on that account and asks him not to feel grieved at the attacks which ignorant people make against Him.

1342. Important Words:

*خَرَصُونَ (they guess) is derived from خَرَصَ which means, (1) he guessed or he made a conjecture; (2) he lied or he forged a lie (Tāj & Aqrab).

Commentary:

This verse embodies a twofold consolation for the Prophet. Firstly, he has been told that, apart from a natural concern for them on account of their wrong beliefs, he need not worry or grieve over what disbelievers do, because their case is in the hands of the Almighty God Who possesses the power to punish them or to lead them to the right path. Secondly, the verse hints that the idolatrous beliefs of disbelievers have no foundation in fact and are consequently doomed to perish sooner or later. The Holy Prophet should, therefore, feel no anxiety on their account.

The word "not" in the clause, "do not really follow" is used both as an interrogative pronoun meaning "what" and as a negative particle meaning "no or not." In the former case the sentence would mean, "what do those who call on 'partners' beside Allah follow?" Taken in the latter sense, it would mean, "those who call on others than Allah do not really follow these 'partners.'" Thus, according to the former interpretation, the so-called 'partners' whom people worship beside God are spoken of with the contempt they deserve; while, according to the latter interpretation, their very existence is denied, hinting that truly speaking there are no 'partners' and the idolaters follow nothing but mere conjecture.

1343. Commentary:

The words 'night' and 'day' have been used here metaphorically, the night being the time of rest and the day that of work. Just as night affords the fatigued and jaded physical faculties of man an opportunity for recuperation, and fits him for the ensuing day's work, so do the intervals of sleep and stagnation in the lives
69. "They say, 'Allah has taken unto Him a son.' Holy is He! He is Self-Sufficient. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth. You have no authority for this. Do you say against Allah what you know not? 1344

of nations serve as time of rest and recuperation for them and prepare them for their time of day and work with refreshed spirit and renewed vigour.

In this way the people to whom the Holy Prophet gave his Message are reminded that, now that the Spiritual Sun has risen, they should avail themselves of its light and work hard to bring about a change in their condition. It is to point to this great lesson that the verse first speaks of the night and then of the day.

It seems strange that while the verse makes a reference to "the day full of light," it concludes with the seemingly incompatible words "therein are Signs for a people who listen." The word "listen" in preference to the more appropriate word "see" has been used to remind the people that when they had derived no benefit from the light of the Spiritual Sun that had shone on them and had refused to use their eyes, they should at least make use of their ears so that they might receive a new life by benefiting from the experience of others.

1344. Commentary:

In v. 67 it had been hinted that in the false doctrines of disbelievers lie hidden the seeds of their destruction. In the present verse, the Quran proceeds to refute the doctrine of the plurality of gods, the most heinous of all false beliefs, and of the various forms of this doctrine it selects the belief that God has a son. This doctrine differs from other known polytheistic dogmas in that, whereas in other forms of Shirk, idolaters claim only that they can attain nearness to God through the instrumentality of their gods, by this doctrine a person is believed to be an actual partner in godhead.

Four arguments have been given here in refutation of the doctrine that any one can be a son of God. The first is contained in the words, Holy is He, which mean that God is free from all defects and imperfections. But the belief that God has a son presupposes the presence of carnal passions in Him as well as His being subject to the laws of decay and death, for only such beings or things are perpetuated in their progeny as are subject to decay and death. The earth, the sun and the moon, for instance, have no issue because they are above the familiar law of death and decay; but animals and plants wither and die. Therefore they produce their substitutes which take their place when they are gone. Thus the existence of the progeny of a thing presupposes its mortality.

The second argument is embodied in the words, He is Self-Sufficient, which mean that in His work of running the universe God does not need anybody’s help. Progeny, besides saving a person from extinction, helps him to carry on his work. But God being Self-Sufficient needs no helper in that respect either.

The third argument is contained in the sentence, To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth. Sometimes one can make or originate a thing but lacks the power or ability to keep it in his possession or under his control and therefore needs assistance. But God does not need anybody’s help to keep
70. Say, "Those who invent a lie against Allah shall not prosper."

71. "They will have some enjoyment in this world. Then to Us is their return. Then shall We make them taste a severe punishment, because they used to disbelieve.

72. And recite unto them the story of Noah, when he said to his people, "O my people, if my station with God and my reminding you of your duty through the Signs of Allah offend you—and in Allah do I put my trust—muster then all your designs, you and your 'partners'; then let not your course of action be obscure to you; then carry out your designs against me and give me no respite."

the universe in His possession or under His control.

The fourth argument is implied in the expression, You have no authority for this, which signifies that the doctrine of the plurality of gods is based on no sound or solid ground. Its whole basis lies in the fancy and caprice of men. This fact alone constitutes an argument against this foolish doctrine. All efforts to find some real evidence in support of Shirk, do not go beyond mere indulgence in idle philosophical discussion, and no real basis has so far been found for it.

The argument embodied in the words, Do you say against Allah what you know not?, is given in 13:34, in the words, Would you inform Him of what He does not know in the earth? The difference in the wording is due to the fact that in the verse under comment it is pointed out that Shirk springs from the ignorance of man and is not based on any sound reasoning, while in 13:34 it is said that the doctrine of Shirk involves the charge of ignorance on the part of God, for it means that He failed to know and make known the existence of gods and it was left to idolaters to disclose the godhead of their deities by the force of their own knowledge.

1345. Important Words:

- غم (obscure) is the noun-infinitive from غم. They say غم, i.e., he covered it or concealed it; he or it grieved him or caused him to mourn.
- غم (obscure) means, the new moon was veiled or concealed from the people by clouds, or otherwise, so that it was not seen. غم (obscure) means, the affair was or became obscure, confused, dubious, or vague to him such as it could not be understood. غم (obscure) means, perplexity, obscurity, dubiousness or confusedness. They say غم (obscure) i.e., he is in a state of perplexity or darkness in respect of his affair.
means, a dubious, obscure, confused or vague case (Lane & 'Aqra).  

Commentary:
As already pointed out, the Sūrās which open with the abbreviated letters أَلَ (I am Allah Who is All-Seeing) deal chiefly with historical events in the lives of various Prophets and draw inferences therefrom (see note on v. 2). This Sūra also begins with أَلَ and we find that the Quran here follows a rational discussion with particular reference to the case of Noah in order to remind people that, although Noah's opponents did all sorts of mischief and left no stone unturned to bring him to naught, yet God did not destroy them at once but granted them respite for a long time, and it was only when their wickedness exceeded all limits and when those who were destined to believe in him had believed, that God sent down His punishment on them and brought about their destruction.

The case of three Prophets—Noah, Moses and Jonah—has been mentioned in this Sūra by way of illustration. Noah's history constitutes an illustration of the total destruction of the enemies of truth; that of Moses illustrates the destruction of one people and the salvation of another; while that of Jonah forms an example of the complete deliverance of an iniquitous people from God's punishment when they repented and prayed for His forgiveness. By citing these three distinct examples with reference to the Holy Prophet, the Quran intends to point out that there are three ways of God's dealings with the enemies of His Prophets: (1) that sometimes He brings about their total destruction, as was the case with the people of Noah when all his enemies were destroyed with the exception of only a few; (2) that sometimes He destroys some and saves others who believe in His Prophet, as was the case in the time of Moses when Pharaoh and his people were drowned and the Israelites were saved; (3) that sometimes He saves all when they repent and beg for His mercy, as happened with the people of the Prophet Jonah. By citing these examples the Quran means to exhort the people of the Holy Prophet to follow the example of the people of Jonah and be saved and not to court destruction like the people of Noah or that of Moses.

From the above it will also be seen that the accounts of the lives of the various Prophets as given in the Quran are not mere interesting stories. A careful perusal of the accounts of the three Prophets mentioned above, in the order in which they are given in this Sūra, clearly shows that their life-story is epitomized in the life of the Holy Prophet. Many of the incidents in his life bear a striking resemblance to those in the lives of these Prophets. He played the part of Noah at Mecca, that of Moses at Medina and that of Jonah on his re-entry into Mecca. This is enough to show that the accounts of the Prophets as given in the Quran are not mere stories but constitute great prophecies about important events in the life of the Holy Prophet.

Incidently, the verse lays down five rules which lead to the completion and consummation of a plan and which if carefully observed must lead to success: (1) to "muster one's designs" i.e., to decide upon a course of action after mutual consultation and full deliberation; (2) to organize in a well-knit and disciplined body all "partners" or confederates, i.e., those who hold analogous views and have faith in the success of the programme decided upon; (3) to chalk out a detailed and clear programme leaving no "obscenity" or dubiosity, about it; (4) to carry out the agreed design collectively by collating all available resources so that the full strength of the community may be brought to bear upon the enemy at the same time; and (5) to "give no respite" to the enemy to recuperate and recover after the attack is launched. These are the means of success to which Noah has drawn the attention of his enemies in this verse. But at the same time he warns them that even if
73. "But if you turn back, remember I have not asked of you any reward. My reward is with Allah alone, and I have been commanded to be of those who are resigned to Him."1346

they employed all these methods against him, they would not succeed, for they did not possess the sixth and the most important ingredient of success, which was certainty of faith in God and trust in Him, without which all these methods were of no avail against a divine Messenger.

Marvellous indeed is the faith which Prophets of God have in the truth of their mission and in the unfailing character of the promises and assurances which they receive from God! Not only do they not mind the hostility of their enemies but they even challenge the latter to use all their power and employ all their resources to destroy them, because they are perfectly convinced that success will come to them in the end, and such invariably happens to be the case. This fact alone should establish their truth; but the blind will not see nor will the deaf hear.

1346. Commentary:

It is a common objection against the Prophets of God that they seek to gain ascendancy over men by raising the standard of revolt against the existing order of things with a view to establishing a new order under their own leadership. It is this baseless charge that is refuted in this verse. God's Prophets never seek self-aggrandizement. On the contrary, they choose the path of suffering and service. They pass their days in hardship and privation. Their life is a model of rigid discipline willingly undergone. Had their activities been prompted by a desire to gain power and dominion over men, they would not have subjected themselves to a hard and disciplined life, a life of prayer, fasting and renunciation. They do demand obedience of others, but they themselves are always the first to forego their desires and their ambitions in the service of their Lord and of humanity. It is not the desire for power but the passion for service and self-abnegation that has mastery of them. This is not an empty assertion, unsubstantiated by the established facts of history; for though the Prophet Noah, in whose mouth are put the words, I have not asked of you any reward, did not get the opportunity to subjugate his enemies, yet the Holy Prophet of Islam who was, like Noah, a Prophet of God, did show by actual practice that God's Prophets desire no reward for their service in the form of riches or dominion. The fact is too well-known to need a reference that when Mecca lay prostrate at the Prophet's feet, he forgave his most inveterate enemies with a magnanimity unparalleled in the history of the world. He demanded no fine and asked for no indemnity from the defeated Meccans or their allies. The only words he uttered were: "Go, you are a free and forgiven people."
74. But they rejected him, so We saved him and those who were with him in the Ark. And We made them inheritors of Our favours, while We drowned those who rejected Our Signs. See then, how evil was the end of those who had been warned!  

75. Then We sent, after him, other Messengers to their respective peoples, and they brought them clear proofs. But they would not believe in them, because they had rejected them before. Thus do We seal the hearts of transgressors.  

76. Then did We send, after them, Moses and Aaron to Pharaoh and his chiefs with Our Signs, but they behaved arrogantly. And they were a sinful people.

1347. Commentary:  
This verse tells us that there is a basic difference between the punishment of those who are given a previous warning and that of those who have had no such warning. The words, how evil was the end of those who had been warned, point to this difference. Those warned of the coming punishment of God never escape except by removing the cause of punishment. The words, We made them inheritors of Our favours, contain a veiled warning for believers. When one people have been destroyed, those who take their place must prove themselves to be deserving of God’s favours, if they wish them to continue.  

1348. Commentary:  
This verse makes it quite clear that it is not God Who arbitrarily seals up the hearts of disbelievers but it is the disbelievers themselves who, by their stubborn and unjustified refusal to listen to the word of God, become deprived of their power to see and accept the truth. They themselves are the architects of their evil destiny and not God Who only proclaims the things already brought about by their own persistent transgression. The act of sealing up the hearts of disbelievers is attributed to God because He is the Final Judge Who pronounces the verdict.  

1349. Commentary:  
A Prophet of God is rejected for two reasons. Either the people to whom he preaches his Message look upon his claim as too big, thinking that God cannot speak to a man; or, behaving arrogantly, they think it to be beneath their dignity to follow his lead. This happened with Moses. Some of those to whom he delivered his Message rejected his claim because they thought it impossible that God should have condescended to speak to a mortal; others thought it incompatible with their dignity to obey a man of no consequence like Moses.
77. And when there came to them the truth from Us, they said, 'This is surely a manifest enchantment.'

78. Moses said, 'Do you say this of the truth when it has come to you? Is this enchantment? And the enchanters never prosper.'

The clause, they were a sinful people, may have two meanings: (1) They were already a sinful people and therefore they rejected Moses. Taken in this sense, the words furnish the reason why they behaved with arrogance and paid no heed to the truth. (2) They became sinful in consequence of their rejection of Moses. Both interpretations explain why people reject the truth. Evil is born of evil and also leads to it; and therefore those who lead a sinful life cannot accept the truth. Again, the goodness and godliness of a person sometimes make him proud and prompt him to reject the truth. The rejection of truth is therefore no light matter, and one should think a thousand times before one rejects a claimant to prophethood.

1350. **Important Words:**

- **(enchantment)** means, producing what is false in the form of truth; embellishment by falsification and deceit; enchantment or fascination (Lane). See also 2:103 & 7:110.
- **(manifest)** has three meanings: (1) manifest, apparent or clear; (2) that which makes a thing clear or manifest; (3) that which separates, disunites or severs (Lane). See also 2:169.

**Commentary:**

In the two simple words they lie hidden almost all the stratagems and machinations that the enemies of the Prophets of God employ to defeat and discomfit them. People with a religious bent of mind are told by them that the new teaching is nothing but a manifest enchantment which would corrupt the religion of the land, whereas those nationalists who profess to have the material good of their country at heart are frightened away from it by being told that the new teaching is manifest enchantment, i.e., the acceptance of it would create dissension and discord among the different communities in the land and would thus give a death-blow to the national cause. (For the meaning of the word **manifest** see Important Words). This double weapon has always been used against heavenly Messengers—from Moses right up to the Holy Prophet—and it was employed in our own times against Ahmad, the Promised Messiah, Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement. His opponents accused him of misleading people by deceitful teachings and of creating discord among Muslims, naively forgetting that discord had already eaten into the national entity of Islam and the efforts of Ahmad were all directed to uniting the broken threads of the Faith.

1351. **Commentary:**

The expression, *Is this enchantment?*, constitutes an effective refutation of the charge implied in the words **manifest enchantment** in the preceding verse. Moses is described here as asking his people how his teaching could be called an enchantment when it crushed all falsehood, deceit and trickery. The words, **And the enchanters never prosper**, provide
79. They said, 'Hast thou come to us that thou mayest turn us away from what we found our fathers following, and that you two may have greatness in the land? But we will not believe in either of you.'

80. And Pharaoh said, 'Bring to me every expert magician.'

81. And when the magicians came, Moses said to them, 'Cast ye what you would cast.'

1352. Important Words:

(Thou mayest turn us away) is derived from . They say i.e. he twisted or wrung or turned him or it in a way different from his or its proper direction. means, he turned him from his opinion (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

The two charges briefly referred to in the words (manifest enchantment) in v. 77 have been explained in the present verse. The first charge implied in the word (enchantment) was that Moses wanted to turn his people away from the truth. In this verse the opponents of Moses are described as saying that he wanted to turn them away from the religion of their forefathers which, in their opinion, as also in the opinion of all enemies of God's Prophets, was the truth. Their second objection is hinted at in the word i.e. he sought to sow dissensions among the people. This charge has been expressed here in the allegation that Moses and Aaron desired to have dominion in the land, which could be secured only by creating disruption in the existing order of things.

1353. Commentary:

One error leads to another. Pharaoh and his people called Moses an enchanter (v. 77), and the result was that, instead of following the right course for the investigation of the truth, they set about finding out sorcerers to oppose him and thus were caught in the very net which they thought they had laid for Moses.

1354. Commentary:

This verse, as may be wrongly construed, does not mean that on seeing the sorcerers Moses became prepared to meet them in the contest. He knew that they were mere sorcerers and that whatever they might do
And when they had cast, Moses said, 'What you have brought is mere sorcery. Surely, Allah will make it vain. Verily, Allah does not allow the work of mischief-makers to prosper.'

And Allah establishes the truth by His words, even though the sinners be averse to it.

And none obeyed Moses, save some youths from among his people, because of the fear of Pharaoh and their chiefs, lest he should persecute them. And of a truth Pharaoh was a tyrant in the land and surely he was of the transgressors.

would be useless and unworthy of his notice. He therefore treated them with the contempt they deserved by saying, Cast ye what you would cast, hinting that their sorcery was not worthy of notice. He, however, did not think it proper to refuse to accept their challenge outright, knowing that when the actual contest began the hollowness of their work would itself become exposed and it would then be time for him to bring home to them the falsity of their work. This he actually did, as is announced by him in the succeeding verse, What you have brought is mere sorcery. Surely, Allah will make it vain.

Commentary:
See note on the preceding verse.

The "words of God" include both "glad tidings" and "warning," and it is by means of these two that God establishes the truth. Moses has expressed a great truth in this verse. He says that God does not need deceit and falsehood for the propagation of His religion but causes it to be spread and established by His immutable decree and command. These words embody a great moral truth that the goodness of a right cause does not justify the use of dishonest means for its propagation. The popular saying that the end justifies the means has never been the dictum of God's Prophets and their true followers. Truth spreads and triumphs by its own inherent strength and not by falsehood.

Commentary:
It appears from this verse that all the Israelites had not believed in Moses. Only a part of them had really believed in him. The rest followed him from only political or national considerations. The pronoun "his" in the clause, from among his people, may also refer to Pharaoh. In that case the clause would mean that some youths of the people of Pharaoh also believed in Moses. But the former interpretation seems to be more correct and is therefore preferable.
85. And Moses said, 'O my people, if you have believed in Allah, then in Him put your trust, if you indeed submit to His will.'

This verse also brings to light the fact that not unoften an appreciable number of the people to whom a Prophet of God preaches his Message become convinced of his truth, but they dare not profess their faith openly for fear of their leaders and chiefs. The pronoun "their" in the words "their chiefs" may refer either to the Israelites or to the people of Pharaoh. Preferably it refers to the people of Pharaoh. The chiefs of the people of Pharaoh have been called the chiefs of the Israelites because the latter were a subject people. But the pronoun need not necessarily be taken as referring to any particular people. The great men of a country are regarded as chiefs not merely because they belong to any particular community but also because, being members of the Government, they possess influence and authority. Hence the high officials of the State, whether they belonged to the people of Pharaoh or the Israelites might rightly be called the chiefs of the Israelites and it was through both that Pharaoh tyrannized over the Israelites.

The words, Pharaoh was a tyrant in the land, show that Pharaoh was not a wise and sagacious monarch. He had embarked upon a policy of open repression and persecution which was calculated to incite the people to rebellion. This policy eventually led to the downfall of the dynasty.

1358 Commentary:

The verse respresents Moses as advising his people to realize that their work, viz., the work they were engaged in under his leadership, was God's own work. This shows that Islam recognizes no narrow nationalism but requires its followers to work for God and His religion. This is calculated to bring about a great change in a Muslim's outlook on life. It helps him to think in terms of God, religion and righteousness and raises him above the narrow outlook of nationalism.

The words, if you indeed submit to His will, preceded by the expression, if you have believed in Allah, are not redundant but have been used to express an additional idea. When the word اسلام (submission) is used along with the word إمان (belief), then the latter word signifies sincerity and firmness of faith while the former expresses only outward submission to authority. In other words, إمان expresses "obedience of the heart," while اسلام signifies "outward or practical obedience." In this sense the verse would mean, "If you have acquired faith with regard to God and now you desire to taste the fruits thereof practically, then put your trust in God and entrust all your affairs to Him."

The verse thus teaches us that inner faith must be followed by a real outward change in the life of a person. For a true believer إمان comes first and اسلام afterwards. But in the case of those weak of faith, اسلام takes precedence over إمان because the weak of faith first begin with an outward expression of obedience and then gradually acquire heartfelt conviction. Thus in the case of a true believer purity of heart precedes purity of actions. But the reverse is the case of one who is weak of faith, for such a person stands in need of outside support for the purity of his heart. The purity of his actions, therefore, precedes the purity of his heart. It is to this fact that the Quran refers when it addresses the people of the desert in the words: Say, ye believe
86. And they said, 'In Allah do we put our trust. Our Lord, make us not a trial for the wrongdoing people.'

87. 'And deliver us by Thy mercy from the disbelieving people.'

88. And We spoke to Moses and his brother, saying, 'Take, ye two, some houses for your people in the town, and make your houses so as to face one another and observe Prayer. And give glad tidings to the believers.'

In view of the different meanings of the word نَيْة given under Important Words the Quranic expression انَّجَلُوا بِيَوْمِ نُيَاهُ نْيَا may mean: (1) that the Israelites were instructed to live together so as to be able to help one another in time of need, because this object is only attainable when people build their houses near or facing each other; or (2) that the Israelites should have all their houses facing one direction, which figuratively means that they should be united by the bonds of brotherhood and should have a common goal or ideal; or (3) that all their houses should be of one class or kind, hinting thereby that there should exist a real tie of brotherhood between the rich and the poor and all should pull together as one team, because there can be no real tie of brotherhood when some members of a community live in palatial dwellings and others in wretched hovels.

To sum up, the verse lays down the following seven wise principles by following which a people can rise and prosper:— (1) they should lead a corporate life; (2) they should be united; (3) they should fully co-operate with one another; (4) they should possess discipline and organization; (5) there should be no invidious distinction between the different classes; (6) they should continually invoke the help of
89. And Moses said, 'Our Lord, Thou hast bestowed upon Pharaoh and his chiefs embellishment and wealth in the present life, with the result, our Lord, that they are leading men astray from Thy path. Our Lord! destroy their riches and attack their hearts—and they are not going to believe until they see the grievous punishment.'

Commentary:

The verse does not mean that God gave wealth and splendour to Pharaoh and his chiefs so that by means of these things they might lead men astray from His path. It simply means that God bestowed upon Pharaoh and his chiefs the gifts of this world and the result was that, instead of being thankful to Him for His manifold favours, they began to lead men astray from His path. The verse is, in fact, a forceful expression by Moses of regret and condemnation.

In his words of prayer, Our Lord, destroy their riches and attack their hearts, which form a parenthetical clause, Moses wishes Pharaoh and his chiefs no evil; on the contrary, the words constitute a pathetic prayer for their good. Realizing that they had become so hardened in disbelief that nothing but God’s severe punishment could make them believe, Moses prayed to God to send down His punishment on them not to destroy them but to turn their hearts to truth. So the words, seemingly containing a prayer for the destruction of Pharaoh and his chiefs, in reality embody a prayer for mercy though couched in apparently harsh words.
90. God said, 'Your prayer is accepted. So be ye twain steadfast, and follow not the path of those who know not.'

The clause "attack their hearts" has wrongly been interpreted by some as "harden their hearts." According to Arabic idiom, the words only mean "attack their hearts," signifying that some affliction should befall them to turn their hearts to truth. The word "زينة" (embellishment) occurring in the foregoing clause and, as "زم" here signifies progeny and children (see Important Words), therefore attacking their hearts would mean attacking their progeny. Now an attack upon the progeny of a people may be made in two ways: either by the children being smitten with some calamity or misfortune, or by making the children renounce the Faith of their forefathers and go over to the new Faith. It was in the latter way that the hearts of disbelievers were attacked in the time of the Holy Prophet, for their children embraced Islam. In the time of Moses, however, his enemies were punished with the death of all their first-born children (Exod. 12:29).

It is worthy of note here that in the first part of the verse where mention is made of the favours of God, the word "زينة" (embellishment), which here stands for "children," is placed before "امورال" (wealth), while in the prayer where reference is made to punishment, "امورال" (wealth) is mentioned before "زينة" (hearts) which here stands for "children," thus reversing the previous order. The reason for this change in the order of words is that while mentioning His favours God has put "زينة" (embellishment), which represents children, before "امورال" (wealth), because of its being the more important of the two, but when referring to punishment, the lesser calamity has been mentioned first, hinting thereby that if disbelievers mended their ways after suffering a financial loss, they might still be spared the punishment concerning their progeny. This change in the order of words, besides revealing the wisdom underlying the arrangement of words in the Quran, also throws interesting light on the tender-heartedness of Moses.

1362. Commentary:
It seems strange that when the offering of prayer is spoken of, Moses alone is mentioned as having prayed (see the preceding verse); but when in the present verse the acceptance of prayer is mentioned, God has joined Aaron with Moses by using the pronoun "كما" (lit. you both). This is so because Moses, though apparently praying alone, had joined Aaron in his prayer by using the words "ربنا" (Our Lord) in the preceding verse.

The words, "follow not the path of those who know not," contain an explanation of a previous injunction calling on Moses and Aaron to be steadfast. The words do not mean that the Prophets of God sometimes follow the wishes of disbelievers. They only imply a warning to Moses and Aaron to be on their guard against the machinations of their enemies and to refrain from indulging in discussions which might turn their attention away from their real goal, as their enemies desired.
91. And aWe brought the children of Israel across the sea; and bPharaoh and his hosts pursued them wrongfully and aggressively, till, when the calamity of drowning overtook him, he said, ‘I believe that there is no God but He in Whom the children of Israel believe, and I am of those who submit to Him.’

92. cWhat! Now! while thou wast disobedient before this and wast of those who create disorder.

1363. Commentary:
The verse throws interesting light on an important political question. Islam enjoins Muslims to obey their rulers. If, however, the latter deny to them religious freedom and resort to compulsion in matters of faith, Muslims are enjoined to emigrate from their country rather than offer resistance to the established authority. But what should they do if the authorities do not even permit them to emigrate and force them to remain in the country and suffer persecution? The verse under comment supplies an answer to this question by saying that Pharaoh pursued the Israelites “wrongfully and aggressively,” which means that in preventing the Israelites from emigrating Pharaoh was doing a thing to which he had absolutely no right. Thus if rulers prevent an oppressed subject people from peacefully leaving a country, the latter would be justified in resisting and opposing them by all legitimate means and in that case defiance of the authority will not be held as a breach of the law or an act of rebellion. Even as nobody is allowed to defy and break the law of the land in which he lives, similarly no Government has a right to compel any person to live under it while denying him freedom of religion and conscience.

The words, He in Whom the children of Israel believe, spoken by Pharaoh at the time of his drowning, show the utterly abject state of his mind at that time. If he had said that he believed in the God of Moses, he might be considered to have had some sense of dignity left in him because, having been brought up in the royal household and being the leader of his people, Moses was entitled to respect even from worldly considerations; but to say that he believed in Him in Whom the children of Israel believed—the very children of Israel whom it was his pride to trample under foot—bespeaks the great depth of abasement to which the proud Pharaoh had fallen.

1364. Commentary:
The eloquent words, What! Now!, show that it is only in specified circumstances that faith proves to be of any avail. When truth becomes quite clear and there remains no doubt or ambiguity about it, faith loses all value. In fact, it is only effort and sacrifice that make a person deserving of reward, and where these are absent, man forfeits all title to it.
93. So this day We will save thee in thy body alone that thou mayest be a Sign to those who come after thee. And surely many of mankind are heedless of Our Signs.\textsuperscript{1365}

1365. \textbf{Commentary:}

Divine rewards, indeed, are pregnant with deep import. Pharaoh believed at a time when his faith was nothing more than a body without a soul: therefore, God rescued only his body from destruction, not letting his soul benefit by it. The body was saved from destruction that it might serve as a lesson for the generations to come.

It is remarkable that the Quran alone speaks of this fact. The Bible makes no mention of it, nor does any book of history. But in how wonderful a manner the word of God has proved true! After the lapse of more than 3,000 years the body of Pharaoh has been discovered and it now lies in a preserved state in a museum at Cairo. The body shows Pharaoh to have been a lean, short-bodied man, with a countenance expressive of anger and stupidity. How far removed is the present age from the time when Pharaoh lived; yet God the Almighty not only saved his body but has also preserved it to the present age.

This verse supplies very strong testimony to the divine origin of the Quran and to its distinct superiority over the Bible. The Pentateuch professes to give the history of the time of Moses and it is claimed that it was written in his own time. Yet the Quran, which came about 2,000 years after the Torah, has mentioned some incidents (including the present one) which are not mentioned in the Bible but which subsequent events have proved to be true. This establishes the truth of the Quran and the unreliability of the Pentateuch beyond any shadow of doubt.

The verse also points to the supreme moral lesson that we should hasten to accept the truth as soon as it comes to us and should not vacillate or procrastinate, as Pharaoh did.

It further shows that God does not allow even the slightest act of virtue to go unrewarded. Pharaoh believed at the time of his death, when his faith was but a shell without a kernel, yet even that act was not allowed to go quite unrewarded, for, though his soul was lost, his body was saved. His body may now prove the means of guiding many to truth; possibly it may spiritually benefit him also. This is perhaps why the famous Muslim saint, Muhyi al-Din Ibn 'Arabi, holds that Pharaoh may be spared the punishment of Hell. The idea may not be right but it certainly provides food for thought.

Some Commentators are of the opinion that the name of the drowned Pharaoh was Rameses. But this does not appear to be right. Moses was certainly born in the time of Rameses II and was brought up by him (Exod. 1 : 11), but it was in the reign of his son, Merneptah (Meneptah), that he was entrusted with the mission of a Prophet (Exod. 2 : 23). See also Jew. Enc., vol. 8, page 500, & Enc. Bib., under Pharaoh and under Egypt.
R. 10 94. And We assigned to the children of Israel an excellent abode and We provided them with good things, and they differed not until there came to them the knowledge. Surely, thy Lord will judge between them on the Day of Resurrection concerning that in which they differed. 

1366. Commentary:

Among the “good things” mentioned in this verse as having been bestowed on the Israelites, divine revelation occupied the foremost place, for it mostly pertains to the spirit and comes direct from God. The words “good things” may also be taken in their material sense. In Egypt the Israelites worked as labourers and lived an ignoble life. But after their deliverance from bondage, God provided them with the good things of this world.

By the word سُبْحَانَكَ (knowledge) in the clause, until there came to them the knowledge, is here meant the Quran and not the Torah, for there passed no interval between the revelation of the Torah and the formation of the Israelites into an organized community. Thus they cannot be said to have disagreed among themselves after its revelation.

When the Holy Prophet of Islam was about to make his appearance, the Jews held the belief that a Prophet like unto Moses was to appear very soon; but when the Promised Prophet did actually appear, they differed and disagreed as to whom the prophecies about the Promised Prophet applied. Some Jews denied that the prophecies had found fulfilment in the Prophet of Islam, while others sought to deny the very existence of any such prophecies in the Bible.

That the disagreement referred to in this verse was the one which arose among the Israelites after the Quran was revealed is also clear from the next verse which says: And if thou, (O addressee) art in doubt concerning that which We have sent down to thee (viz. the Quran). This verse clearly shows that in the verse under comment the “knowledge” after the coming of which the Israelites differed among themselves refers to the Quran.

The Jews were so ardently expecting the Prophet who was to be the like of Moses (Deut. 18:18) and who was to appear in Arabia amongst the descendants of Ishmael, the brethren of the Israelites, that some of them had even migrated to Arabia and had settled in Medina that they might be among the first to believe in him when he made his appearance. It is a strange irony of fate that these very Jewish settlers of Arabia proved to be his bitterest enemies when the Promised Prophet actually made his appearance.
95. And if thou art in doubt concerning that which We have sent down to thee, ask those who have been reading the Book before thee. Indeed the "truth has come to thee from thy Lord; be not, therefore, of those who doubt.  

96. And be not thou of those who reject the Signs of Allah, or thou shalt be of the losers.

97. 'Surely, those against whom the word of thy Lord has taken effect will not believe.  

98. Even if there come to them every Sign, till they see the grievous punishment.

1367. Commentary:
The words, if thou art in doubt, cannot refer to the Holy Prophet, for the divine Messenger to whom the word of God is revealed can never entertain any doubt about it. Nor can these words be said to refer to any of his Companions, for we read in 12: 109, Say, this is my way; I invite unto Allah on sure knowledge— I and those who follow me. It is therefore wrong to say that the Prophet or his Companions, who are represented here as possessing sure knowledge, ever entertained doubt about the truth of the Quran. The persons addressed here are undoubtedly those who differed among themselves after “knowledge” (the Quran) had come to them. See v. 94.

The objectors are further told that if, as they assert, this Book (i.e. the Quran) gives rise to doubts, they should enquire from those who have benefited by reading and acting upon it. They will then find how it has illuminated their hearts and raised them to the highest pinnacles of spiritual glory.

By saying, ask those who have been reading the Book before thee, the verse also makes it clear that a revealed book alone does not make a perfect guide and that a Teacher is needed who, by his superior spiritual knowledge and practical example, should lay bare its hidden beauties and excellences.

1368. Commentary:
By ٍکم (word) is here meant the word of warning or threat. The verse means that those who have become deserving of punishment and have made no effort to escape it in spite of warning, will not believe.

1369. Commentary:
This verse shows that the Signs of God do not benefit those who have no desire to benefit by them. They treat even the greatest of Signs as mere fraud. Hence the assertion of disbelievers made in the time of every Prophet that no Sign has been shown to them is no evidence
99. Why was there no other people, save the people of Jonah, who should have believed so that their belief would have profited them? When they believed, We removed from them the punishment of disgrace in the present life, and We gave them provision for a while.¹³⁷⁰

of the absence of any Sign. One should not be misled by such baseless assertions but should ponder over the claims of a Prophet independently and form one's own judgement about them. One should judge the Signs of the Prophet according to the criteria by which divine Signs are judged.

¹³⁷⁰. Important Words:

 Jonah, the name of a Prophet who lived in the 9th Century B.C., is supposed to be derived from اواس, i.e. he was or became sociable, amiable or friendly with him; he was or became cheerful, gay or gladdened by his presence or company (Lane). See also Commentary below.

Commentary:
For those who are accustomed to pondering over the deep meanings of the Quran, this verse possesses remarkable evidence of the greatness of God's mercy. The almost pathetic words breathe a strong desire that the world should follow divine guidance. The verse expresses the deepest regret at the disbelief of the people by asking why there had not been other people who, like the people of Jonah, should have believed in the truth and escaped divine punishment. The case of the people of Jonah possesses a strong similarity with that of the people of the Holy Prophet. The people of Nineveh first bitterly opposed Jonah so much so that they were threatened with divine punishment and Jonah prophesied their early destruction; but later they repented and were saved. In the same way, the people of Mecca opposed the Holy Prophet bitterly and persistently, but at the fall of Mecca they submitted to him and were consequently saved from divine punishment. Later, all of them believed in his mission and became the inheritors of divine grace. In this way the Holy Prophet came to bear a great resemblance to the Prophet Jonah.

Jonah is a Prophet who has been mentioned in six different places in the Quran. In 37:140 he has been spoken of as a heavenly Messenger; in 6:87 and 4:164 he has been reckoned among the Prophets of God; in 21:88 and 68:49 he has been called "the man of the fish" (i.e. "he of the fish" or "the man of the fish"), in allusion to the incident of the fish. Reference has also been made to him in the words of the Holy Prophet who is reported to have said on one occasion, "Do not declare me to be better than Jonah, son of Amittai" (Muslim). The saying does not mean that the Holy Prophet was not superior to the Prophet Jonah, for he uttered these words before he had been informed by God of his superior spiritual rank. Later on, however, he himself said اما سيد ولاد آدم, i.e. "I am the chief of the children of Adam," meaning thereby that he was the best of all mankind and the Head of the human race (Tirmidhi, ch. on al-Manaqib).

The above saying of the Holy Prophet can also be explained in another way, which has a particular bearing on the verse under comment,
100. And if thy Lord had enforced His will, surely, all who are in the earth would have believed together. Wilt thou, then, force men to become believers? 1371

The superiority referred to in this saying may not mean superiority in all respects but superiority in one respect only, viz., that all the people of Jonah finally believed in him—a distinction which till then was not shared by any other Prophet. Hence the Holy Prophet hesitated to ascribe unqualified superiority to himself over Jonah until he had seen the end of his people. But subsequent events conferred this distinction on him also, as, like the people of Jonah, all his people too finally believed in him.

In the Bible Jonah is spoken of as an Israelite Prophet (2 Kings 14: 25), who was bidden to go to Nineveh and “cry” against it. But fearing that the Ninevites may repent he fled to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. The Quran differs from the Bible on these points. The Prophets of God are, according to the Quran, incapable of disobeying Him in the way in which Jonah is represented to have done in the Bible. They are held out, in the Quran, as models whose example other people should follow (4: 65 & 6: 91). Disobedience to God is therefore the last thing of which a Prophet is capable. Again, it appears from the Quran that Jonah was sent to his own people, i.e., to a people to whom he belonged. According to Jewish tradition, however, he was a Jew but was sent to the people of Nineveh, which was the capital of Ashur. So in the light of the Quranic version Jonah was either not an Israelite or he was sent not to Nineveh but to a section of his own people. Biblical scholars themselves are not agreed as to Jonah’s being an Israelite. In the two points on which the Quran differs from the Bible, reason favours the Quran.

1371. Commentary:

As the previous verse expressed a desire on the part of God that all men should believe, therefore there is likely to arise in the minds of some people the question why God, Who is All-Powerful, does not carry out His wish and force all men to believe. This question has been very beautifully answered in this verse, which says that if God had exercised compulsion to carry out His wish, He would not have confined His compulsion to one people but would have guided all who are in the earth. But He does not resort to compulsion and has left the matter of faith to the option of individuals, although He desires all His creatures to follow guidance and rise spiritually.

The clause, Wilt thou then force men to become believers?, is capable of two interpretations: (1) It may be taken as an argument in support of the statement made in the first part of the verse. In this case it would mean that God cannot resort to compulsion in the matter of faith, for to compel a person to accept a certain religion can serve no useful purpose. The Quran thus asks the Holy Prophet if he would like to force men to accept His Faith against their will and, implying an answer in the negative,—for the Prophet would never countenance compulsion—the verse declares that God, Who knows the secrets of all hearts, cannot have recourse to compulsion. (2) The verse may also be taken to be addressed to each and every
101. And no soul can believe except by the permission of Allah. And He makes His wrath descend on those who would not use their reason.1372

102. Say, "Consider what is happening in the heavens and the earth. But Signs and Warners avail not a people who will not believe.1373

103. "What then do they expect save the like of the days of punishment suffered by those who passed away before them? Say, "Wait then, and I am with you among those who wait."1374

believer and to say to him that the denial of truth by disbelievers should not so enrage any one as to make him resort to compelling men to accept it, arguing that when God, Who is the Lord and Master of all beings, does not use force, no mortal has any right to do so. Whichever of these two interpretations may be put upon this verse, it is clear beyond any shadow of doubt that Islam does not allow the use of force for its propagation.

1372. Commentary:
The subject-matter of the preceding verse is continued here. The words, And no soul can believe except by the permission of Allah, provide the reason why compulsion should not be resorted to in matters of faith. The verse points out that it is not possible to attain true belief by the mere profession of certain doctrines with the tongue but by the permission of God i.e., by the observance of certain definite and fixed laws of God. Hence it is inconceivable that a person can be made a true believer by compulsion. You cannot intimidate or compel a person into believing a certain thing against his will. It is against the law of nature and against all known workings of the human mind.

The expression, He makes His wrath descend on those who would not use their reason, means that mere lip-profession of those who accept a thing without reason is of no value whatever. On the contrary, such men earn only the wrath of God for their insincere and hypocritical professions.

1373. Commentary:
The words, Consider what is happening in the heavens and the earth, mean that the factors which are destined to lead to the success and prosperity of the cause of the Holy Prophet are already apparent both in the heavens and the earth and so no compulsion is needed to help a naturally prospering cause. The words, But Signs and Warners avail not a people who will not believe, make the point still clearer, for they establish the fact that when the Quran asks men to consider the happenings of the universe it often means Signs and Warners.

1374. Important Words:
 أيام (days) means here days of divine punishment. See also 1:4.
104. Then shall We save Our Messengers and those who believe. *Thus does it always happen; it is incumbent on Us to save believers. 1375

105. Say, "O ye men, if you are in doubt as to my religion, then know that I worship not those whom you worship besides Allah, but I worship Allah alone. Who causes you to die, and I have been commanded to be of the believers. 1376

Commentary:
Disbelievers are here told that, as in the end divine punishment does overtake those who persist in rejecting the Prophets of God, therefore they need not demand its speedy arrival, because it is sure to come at its fixed time. It is strange that whereas disbelievers, who in the early days of the preaching of a new Message are the stronger party, display great impatience for the early coming of divine punishment, the Prophet and his followers, who are the weaker party, do not wish that punishment should come soon. This impatience on the part of disbelievers, and equanimity and calmness on the part of believers are themselves constitute a proof of the believers being in the right. The words put in the mouth of the Holy Prophet, viz., Wait then, and I am with you among those who wait, signify that, although I am being made the target of your tyrannies, yet I am waiting patiently. Why then should you, who are the stronger party and are leading peaceful lives, show such impatience?

1375. Commentary:
Though the preceding verse referred only to the Holy Prophet, the verse under comment uses the word "Messengers" in the plural number in the expression, Then shall We save Our Messengers. The reason for using the plural number instead of the singular is twofold. Firstly, every Prophet represents in principle all other Prophets and the success or failure of one means the success or failure of them all. So if the Holy Prophet had come to grief and the cause of Islam had failed, the truth of all the Prophets would have become doubtful and obscure. Secondly, the use of the plural number also hints at the fact that in future, too, Prophets will appear among Muslims but these Prophets will be ummati Prophets, i.e., subservient to, and followers of, the Holy Prophet. The substitution of the word "believers" at the end of the verse in place of the word "Messengers" at its beginning also supports this interpretation, for it makes it clear that, while on the one hand these Prophets will be full-fledged heavenly Messengers, on the other, they will be believers in the Holy Prophet.

1376. Commentary:
The Holy Prophet is here made to say to disbelievers, "You say you have doubts concerning my religion, whereas my acting on this very religion has given me an invincible conviction of faith. I wonder why this religion
106. "And I have also been commanded to say: 'Set thy face toward religion as one ever inclined to God, and be not thou of those who ascribe partners to Him.'

107. "And call not, beside Allah, on any other that can neither profit thee nor harm thee. And if thou didst so, thou wouldst then certainly be of the wrongdoers.'

108. "And if Allah touch thee with harm, there is none who can remove it but He: and if He desireth good for thee, there is none who can repel His grace. He causes it to reach whomsoever of His servants He wills. And He is the Most Forgiving, Merciful.

should give rise to doubts in your minds?"

The expression, causes you to die, has been employed here to hint that the God of Islam was in the end going to punish disbelievers.

1377. Commentary:

The expression, be not thou of those who ascribe partners to Him, does not mean, "do not worship false deities," for such an injunction is unnecessary after one has become ever inclined to God. The truth is that the word حنيف has been used here in opposition to the word شرک therefore the clause does not mean that the Holy Prophet should not worship idols (which he never did), but that he should not give the least thought or attention to things or beings other than God, for that too will constitute an act of شرک for a person of his spiritual eminence. Thus the Holy Prophet isbidden here to avoid even the slightest and the most hidden form of شرک.

1378. Commentary:

This verse further explains the one that precedes it. The words, And call not, beside Allah on any other, etc., do not mean that we should not call beside God on such things as can do us neither harm nor good. What is meant is that whatever is beside God possesses no independent power to do us harm or good, so we should not put our reliance on anything beside Him. The word طلیمین (wrongdoers) is here used in the sense of مشارکین i.e., those who associate gods with God in any sense. This meaning is supported by a saying of the Holy Prophet which is to the effect that it is a form of شرک (Bukhārī, ch. on Tafsîr).

1379. Commentary:

This verse sheds light on the fact that good and evil are of two kinds. There is a kind of good or evil which comes into being under the general divine law. It is subject to the laws of nature and therefore can be brought about or averted, through the efforts of man himself by defying or obeying the laws of nature, as the case may be. But there is another kind of good or evil
109. Say, 'O ye men, now has the truth come to you from your Lord. So whoever follows the guidance follows it only for the good of his own soul, and whoever errs, errs only against it. And I am not a keeper over you.\textsuperscript{1380}

110. And follow that which is revealed to thee and be steadfast until Allah give His judgement. And He is the Best of judges.\textsuperscript{1381}

which is brought about only by the special decree of God. By saying this, the verse hints that God's dealings with the Holy Prophet are subject to God's special decree. This is why all the schemes and machinations of his enemies proved utterly futile.

\textsuperscript{1380} Commentary:
The Holy Prophet is asked to tell disbelievers that personally he would gain or lose nothing by their good or bad actions because he had not been appointed a keeper over them. His duty was confined to the delivery of the Message entrusted to him.

\textsuperscript{1381} Commentary:
This, the concluding verse of the present \textit{Sûra}, briefly refers to the subject with which it began. The Holy Prophet is here told that the decree of God is bound to come to pass, for God is not only خير الحال كرين (Wise) but also خير الخกายم (the Best of judges). So the Prophet should continue preaching the word of God and bear the persecution of his enemies with patience and fortitude until the decree of God was fulfilled.

In the words, \textit{He is the Best of judges}, the Quran hints at the fact that God's decree is going to prove the best for His Prophet. Accordingly, we find that when that decree actually came to pass, the world was simply taken aback. Those who were thirsty for the Prophet's blood became his most devoted followers; and the entire country of Arabia like unto the people of Jonah believed in him, and tribesmen from all parts of the land hastened to do him homage as their lord and master.
CHAPTER 11

HŪD

(Revealed Before Hijra)

Place And Date Of Revelation.

This is a Meccan Sūra. According to Ibn 'Abbās, Al-Hasan, 'Ikrima, Mujāhid, Qatāda and Jābir bin Zaid, the whole of it was revealed at Mecca. Ibn 'Abbās, according to one report, however, makes an exception in the case of verse 13 which, he says, was revealed at Medina. According to Muqātil, the whole Sūra belongs to the Meccan period, with the exception of vv. 13, 18, & 115.

Subject-Matter Of The Sūra.

The Sūra discusses at length one of the subjects dealt with in the previous Sūra. In the latter it was said that God deals with the enemies of His Prophets in three ways: (1) Some are completely destroyed; (2) others are wholly spared; and (3) yet others are partly destroyed and partly spared. In the present Chapter, the Quran discusses the first category and states how God completely destroyed certain people so that no trace of them was left and He raised in their place another people who did not constitute the continuation of any previous people but introduced a new era.

The Sūra also points out that one of the attributes of God is that He watches the evil actions of men and deals with them according to their actions. It further says that He makes provision for the guidance of men as circumstances demand and, as that provision is made for the good of man himself, therefore when he does not benefit by it, he perishes spiritually just as he would perish physically for lack of food. Again, it is pointed out that just as mankind does not come to an end when one generation of men passes away because it is succeeded by another generation, similarly, when one religious movement perishes, its place is taken by another.

The Sūra further tells us that though worldly progress is possible even when people keep away from God, yet only those people are granted permanence in the earth who are honest not only in their worldly affairs but are also true to God. In other words, it is only those who are obedient to God and maintain their connection with Him whose name is perpetuated in world history. Then the Sūra proceeds to give reasons why believers triumph over disbelievers and why the latter invariably perish in their struggle against the former. It illustrates this divine practice by referring to different peoples who were once mighty in power and strong in numbers, but who met with destruction when they rose against the apparently humble followers of God's Messengers. Among them are mentioned the peoples of Noah, Hūd, Šāliḥ,
Lot and Shu'aib. Pharaoh and his people, who behaved arrogantly towards Moses and oppressed the Israelites, have also been mentioned. Reference has also been made to the great Patriarch Abraham, but that only incidentally in the course of the story of Lot. This has been followed by a brief account of Moses in his relationship not with the Israelites but with Pharaoh, which resulted in the destruction of Pharaoh and his arrogant people.

Then the believers are warned against associating with the people for whom divine punishment has been decreed; for an association with such people would naturally involve them in the punishment meant for the latter. Thereafter, the Holy Prophet has been comforted and asked not to worry about the destruction of his people; for if his people were going to be destroyed, the people of many a Prophet before him were also destroyed. Lastly, the Holy Prophet has been cheered by the prophecy that great prosperity awaits his followers.

So many instances of divine punishment have been cited in this Sūra and such emphasis has been laid on the great responsibilities of the Holy Prophet that he is reported to have said: “The Chapter Hūd has prematurely aged me” (Manthūr), meaning that the contents of the Sūra had weighed so heavily on his mind that he had begun to feel early signs of physical weakness.
1. "In the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful." 1382

2. "Alif Lām Rā. "This is a Book, whose verses have been made unchangeable and then they have been expounded in detail. It is from One Wise, and All-Aware." 1383

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1382. Commentary:
See 1:1; 10:2; 12:2; 13:2; 14:2; 15:2; 3:8; 10:2.

1383. Important Words:
- لس (Alif Lām Rā). For these abbreviated letters see 2:2 and 10:2.
- حكم (made unchangeable) is formed from حكم which is derived from حكم. They say حكم i.e., he prevented or restrained him from acting in an evil manner; or he turned him from wrongdoing. حكم means, he made it firm, stable, strong or sound; he put it into a firm, stable, strong, sound or good state; it made him characterized by wisdom. حكم is the verb of (All-Aware), which means, he knew or had knowledge of a thing with respect to its real state. حكماً (khabara) also means, he tried or tested or made experiment of it. حكمة means, knowing; possessing knowledge or information or possessing much knowledge with respect to internal qualities of things; informed. It is one of the attributive names of God meaning, He Who knows what has been and what is and what will be; or He Who well knows the internal qualities of things (Lane).

Commentary:
A comparison of this verse with 3:8 shows that the verses of the Quran which have been spoken of as منشآت (susceptible of different interpretations) in the latter verse are here described by the word فصل (have been expounded in detail). Thus the present verse helps to make clear that the term منشآت in 3:8 represents the details of the Quranic teachings, and it is these detailed teachings which the opponents of Islam seek to criticize. The fundamental teachings of Islam are so unassailable that even its most inveterate enemy finds it difficult to take exception to them. But, in order to know the whole truth about Islam, a study of both its fundamental teachings and their details is necessary, and when the details are subordinated to the fundamentals, no ground is left for doubt or misgiving. For instance,
3. It teaches that you should worship none but Allah. "I am to you a Warner, and a bearer of glad tidings from Him." 

The Quranic teaching about the punishment of various offences is sometimes criticized; but, when this question is considered in the light of its fundamental teachings, one is constrained to admit its absolute superiority. The fundamental teaching of Islam on this point is that the offender should be punished when punishment is calculated to produce good results, but that he may be pardoned and mercy shown to him when mercy is likely to lead to the desired results (42:41). This is the basic teaching of Islam about punishment, which may be inflicted or withheld as occasion demands. Similarly, Islam permits resort to arms in certain cases, which to some appears to be objectionable, but we cannot shut our eyes to the hard fact that sometimes war becomes unavoidable for the establishment and maintenance of justice and equity. The permission, on certain occasions, to have recourse to arms is thus like the surgeon’s operation which may superficially appear to be cruel but is in reality an act of mercy.

The expression, It is from One Wise and All-Aware, means that these teachings proceed from One Who is both Wise and Knowing and therefore they can be relied upon as really useful and beneficial. As this Chapter contains repeated references to divine punishments, therefore, in order to forewarn the reader that these punishments were meted out to offenders under the divine attribute of “wisdom” and were not inflicted unjustly, it opens with the divine attribute of (Wise). Similarly, by mentioning the divine attribute of (All-Aware), the Quran reminds the reader that the Divine Possessor of this attribute, being fully aware of the true reality of things, cannot forego the punishment which the wickedness of evil-doers rightly demands.

1384. Commentary:
The words, you should worship none but Allah, apparently show God to be selfish and standing in need of man’s worship. Nothing can be farther from truth than such an idea. God needs no worship from man. On the contrary, it is man himself who needs the worship of God for his own moral and spiritual benefit (29:7 & 49:18), because worship does not consist merely in certain outward acts but extends to all those spiritual strivings which help to make man reflect in his person divine attributes. In fact, as the Arabic word (worship) means full and total obedience and submission to God’s will, it is clear that one who obeys God with thorough submissiveness and humility of heart and follows the will of his Creator fully and completely will not fail to imbibe divine attributes and attain to the highest spiritual stature. This is something in which lies man’s own good. God gains nothing from it. The mention in the Bible of man having been created in the image of God (Gen. 1:27) also points to the same great truth, i.e., that man has been created so that he may develop in himself the attributes of God. The words of the Bible must not, however, be taken literally, for God is free from all form.

The injunction to worship God alone means that God should always be kept in view, because the complete picture of an object can be drawn only when that object is held constantly before the eye. Hence, worship means constant viewing of the attributes of God and the imprinting of them on the mind. It is clear that in so
4. And that you seek forgiveness of your Lord, and then turn to Him. He will provide for you a goodly provision until an appointed term. And He will grant His grace to every one possessed of merit. And if you turn away, then surely I fear for you the punishment of a dreadful day.

1385. Important Words:

- کر (dreadful) is derived from کر which means, he or it was or became great in estimation or rank or dignity; or he or it became big or large in corporeal substance or in years. They say i.e. the affair was or became of great moment. کر علیه الإیام means, the affair was or became difficult, hard, severe, grievous, distressing or burdensome to him. کر means, great in corporeal substance; or in estimation or rank or dignity; great and noble; a lord or chief; greatest or oldest ancestor; old or advanced in age; also full-grown and adolescent; the most knowing or learned of a people; difficult, severe, grievous, distressing and burdensome. It is synonymous with علم with the difference that, whereas the latter word generally means great in comparison with others, the former means great in itself. The word is considered to be synonymous with preferred which means, the Incomparably Great (Lane).

Commentary:

In the previous verse, the attention of man was drawn to the object of his creation. But as he has to face many obstacles and impediments which hinder the realization of his ideal, he has therefore been advised in the present verse to seek God's help for the removal of those obstructions and hindrances which, in the form of the dross and rust of sin, continue to accumulate round his heart and eventually completely cover it. The Arabic word used here is استغفار (seeking forgiveness), which literally means "to pray to God that He should cover up." In this sense of the word the injunction embodied in the verse signifies that we should always pray to God that He should cover up and suppress those of our evil inclinations and desires which hinder us from attaining His nearness.

The expression, then turn to Him, means that when we have successfully suppressed and overcome our evil desires, we should turn to God that He may engender in our hearts such love for Himself as may help us to attain His nearness. This shows that it is only when evil
5. "To Allah is your return; and He has power over all things."

6. Now surely, they fold up their breasts that they may hide themselves from Him. Aye, even when they cover themselves with their garments, He knows what they conceal and what they reveal. Surely, He is well aware of what is in their breasts.

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\(\text{See 10:5. } 2:78; 16:24; 27:75; 28:70; 36:77.\)

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desires, which excite the displeasure of God, have been successfully suppressed and the love of God becomes engendered in our hearts that we can truly turn to Him. Incidentally, the verse also shows that the stage of توبة (turning to God) comes after استغفار (seeking forgiveness and praying to God for the removal of the evil effects of our sins and the suppression of our evil inclinations).

Those who think that the Islamic doctrine of توبة (turning to God) encourages sin are utterly ignorant of its real significance. It is indeed foolish to think that the man who is engaged in making a sincere effort to remove the evil effects of his sins and to suppress his evil desires is making only a lip-profession. In fact, توبة (repentance) does not consist in merely uttering words of repentance. It is an act of sincere and whole-hearted turning to God after His protection has been sought against the evil effects of past sins. What better way than this can there be to attain the nearness of God?

The words, an appointed term, mean the period ordained by God for the followers of a Prophet. The words, He will grant His grace to everyone possessed of merit, refer to spiritual blessings in both this life and the life to come.

A thing is said to be كبر (lit. great) both with regard to its extensiveness and its intensity and gravity. Hence the words, the punishment of a dreadful (lit. great) day, mean that in case the people rejected God’s teaching, they would be visited with a punishment which would not only be of long duration but would also be most distressing, so that it would indeed be hard for disbelievers to bear.

1386. Commentary:
The expression, To Allah is your return, means that since you have finally to return to God and render your account to Him, there is no reason why you should not make preparation for that great meeting now. The words, He has power over all things, hint that since God has the power to give reward as well as to inflict punishment, there is no reason why you should not make yourselves deserving of His reward rather than of His punishment.

1387. Important Words:

- يتور (fold up) is derived from تور. They say تور لسي i.e. he doubled or folded or bent the thing; he turned one part of it upon the other; he drew one of its two extremities to the other; he joined or adjoined one of the things to the other. كا زيدا means, he turned Zaid away or back from his course, or from the object of his want.

- كا مدرعه (lit. he folded his breast or bosom) means, he concealed enmity in his breast or bosom; or he folded up what was in it, in concealment. The expression أنهم يتورون مدرعه means, surely they infold and conceal in their bosoms enmity and hatred; or
they bend their breasts or bosoms and fold up and conceal what is therein (Lane & Aqrab).

(they cover themselves with their garments). is derived from which is again derived from which means, it covered or concealed or overwhelmed.

Astathum Thum or Astathum Thum means, he covered himself with his garment in order that he might not see or hear; or he put his garment as a covering over his ears—a phrase denoting a refusal to hearken, or, as some say, an allusion to running (Lane).

Commentary:

In the previous verse, mention was made of the obstacles which of themselves happen to come in the way of men, and of the means to remove them, while the present verse speaks of the obstacles which men themselves put in their way and which can be removed only if they desire to have them removed.

The expression (they fold up their breasts) means that disbelievers keep their doubts and objections hidden in their minds and do not disclose them to others and have them removed. This is why they cannot see the right way. Unless one seeks the satisfaction of doubts by disclosing them to others who are in a position to remove them, one can never attain to truth.

The expression (they cover themselves with their garments) is used when a person turns a deaf ear to another man and refuses to see the truth. Thus the second reason why disbelievers were debarred from accepting the truth was that they refused to listen to the Holy Prophet. They not only themselves abstained from listening to the Holy Prophet but also prevented others from doing so, declaring that what he preached was magic and would captivate their hearts if they hearkened to it (see 21: 4; 41: 27; 46: 8; 74: 25). This attitude of disbelievers in refusing to listen to the Holy Prophet was even more injurious for them than their keeping doubts hidden in their hearts, because there is a possibility, however remote, that a person who does not disclose his doubts to others may some time happen to listen to a discourse dealing with the subject about which he entertains doubts and may thus have them removed by chance, but there is no hope for a person who refuses to listen to the truth.

The verse points to the fact that disbelievers have to deal with a Being Who knows even their secret ideas and therefore they cannot take shelter under the false plea that, as the truth was not explained to them, they deserved to be excused if they did not accept it. A person who tries to evade the truth and deliberately shuts his eyes to it cannot excuse himself on the score of ignorance. Such men are as guilty as those who refuse to accept the truth after it has been fully explained to them. They alone can legitimately bring forward the plea of ignorance who make an honest effort to understand and arrive at the truth, but somehow or other fail to do so, or whom the Message of truth does not reach though they are ready to welcome it.

The words, what they conceal and what they reveal, may also refer to the concealed hatred which disbelievers harbour in their minds against the heavenly Messenger and to their open acts of hostility towards him.

The expression, what is in their breasts, refers to the hidden thoughts that dominate men. As the uppermost part of anything is called its (Lane) and as the thoughts of a man naturally occupy the highest position in him—all his actions being subordinate to them—therefore, they are represented as being seated in his of which the plural is صدر. The verse thus means that God has sent His Messenger because He knew the innermost corrupt condition of the minds of disbelievers, which demanded that a heavenly Reformer should come. Therefore, they cannot say that they needed no Reformer.
7. And there is no creature that moves in the earth but it is for Allah to provide it with sustenance. And He knows its lodging and its home. All this is recorded in a clear Book.  

1388. Important Words:

ملتقى (lodging) and مستوطنة (home) not only mean a place of temporary settlement and of permanent abode but also final or determined limit of a thing both as regards time or place; appointed term; end of one's course (Lane). See also 6:99.

Commentary:
The verse declares that God has provided sustenance for all His creatures but it rests with them to make proper use of it. He has provided the means of subsistence for even the worms and reptiles that dwell in the bowels of the earth. Human reason is at a loss to know how and whence the worms and insects found in such unlimited numbers on and inside the earth get their food. There are many insects about the nature of even whose food man is in the dark, but all are getting their sustenance from nature. An interesting instance of how God makes provision for animals is furnished by the crops which men sow. While wheat makes an article of food for man, its stalk, leaves and husks provide food for animals. If God had not produced these things along with the grains of wheat, most men might have neglected their own ulterior interests and starved the dumb cattle.

God has created nothing without purpose. Even prickly shrubs form food for the camel and the goat, while the worms that grow in the human body get their food in the body itself. In fact, every species of worm, insect and animal has its particular food provided for it in nature. Even beasts of prey, which live on different kinds of animal diet seldom go hungry. Man who presumes to have solved the mysteries of the universe is not yet fully acquainted with all forms of life, to say nothing of knowing the different kinds of food on which they subsist. But God has made ample provision for them all.

What the Quran points out in this verse is that, when God has supplied the physical needs of the meanest of His creatures, He could certainly not have neglected to make provision for the moral and spiritual needs of the noblest of His creatures—man, who is the acme of His creation. It is unthinkable that when man was a mere clot of blood in the womb of his mother God supplied all his needs, but when he grew up to perfection and stood in need of guidance for the cultivation of his moral and spiritual faculties, He left him to his fate. Most assuredly God has provided both physical and spiritual sustenance for man; but it is for man to get it and make a proper use of it.

The words, He knows its lodging and its home, refer not only to the temporary and the permanent abode of every living thing but also to the utmost limit to which its powers can develop (see Important Words). The expression is thus intended to point out that only the Being Who knows the place where a thing lives and the utmost limits of its faculties can devise and provide the food best suited for it. To explain this point we may take the example of the body and the soul. We find that in teachings devised by human
8. And He it is Who created the heavens and the earth in six periods, and His throne rests on water, that He might prove you to know which of you is best in conduct. And if thou say, 'You shall surely be raised after death,' those who disbelieve will certainly say, 'This is nothing but clear deception.'

"7:55; 10:4; 25:60. b5:49; 6:166; 67:3.

beings, either only the needs of the permanent abode, which relates to the human soul, have been taken into consideration, and the needs of the body, which serves as a shell for the soul and is thus man's temporary abode, have been neglected; or the betterment of the temporary abode i.e., the body, has received the whole attention and the requirements of the soul have been lost sight of. The truth is that with the help of his intellect alone it is not possible for man to provide for both his material and spiritual needs; for he does not know what will happen after death, and his spiritual needs concern primarily his life in the Hereafter. It is only God Who does so.

1389. Commentary:

This verse reminds us how God has created things by a gradual process of evolution to bring man into existence and to make provision for his progress. This gradual process of evolution has culminated in the creation of man. This shows that the real object of the creation of the whole universe was that man should come into being. Man is the real object of the creation of the universe because he has been endowed with an unlimited capacity for spiritual progress. It is, therefore, inconceivable that God, having endowed man with unlimited powers, should have neglected to provide means for his unending spiritual growth and development. For an explanation of the expression (six periods) see 7:55 and 10:4.

As water has been repeatedly described in the Quran as the source of all life (see 21:31; 25:55; 77:21 and 86:7) the words, His Throne rests on water, signify that all the great attributes of God have found their manifestation through "life" (i.e., living creatures) and above all through man, who is the culminating point of all life. The words that follow, viz., that He might prove you to know which of you is best in conduct, also corroborate the above explanation; otherwise, how can the works of man be tested by the resting of the Throne of God on material water? Indeed the passage can bear no other interpretation than this that it is through living creatures that God's attributes are manifested and that God desires to see who benefits most by His attributes.

The words, His Throne rests on water, may also mean that the attributes of God are dependent for their manifestation on His word, which has been compared at several places in the Quran to water. Water stands, therefore, here for "the word of God" and the verse means that God has bound up the manifestation of
9. "And if We put off their punishment until a reckoned time, they would certainly say, 'What withholds it? Now surely, on the day that it shall come unto them, it shall not be averted from them, and that which they used to mock at shall encompass them."

His attributes with His word, which indeed is the source of all spiritual life. This subject is further explained in 58 : 22 where it is laid down that God's Messengers on whom His word descends and their followers who benefit by the divine word are granted power and dominion over their enemies.

The verse may also be said to embody what may be called the Islamic theory of evolution. In this case the word ُن (is) will be rendered as "was" (for which see 2: 35) and the verse would mean that God placed His Throne on water, viz., on the manifestation of life in this universe, so that the capacities of various animals might be compared and it might eventually become evident which of them deserved to be the aim and end of the whole of creation. In fact, the real and ultimate object of God in creating life was to bring into existence a being who might prove to be the best and highest manifestation of life fit to receive the impress of his Maker. This shows that the creation of man who was to prove the best of all creation, took place in the last cycle of life. Thus, although Islam does not accept the theory of evolution as commonly understood—that man is a development of a lower animal—yet it does teach that the creation of man formed the culminating point in the creation of life which began with the lower form of life and ended with the higher one, finding its consummation in man, and that this system of creation was from the very beginning intended to lead finally to the creation of man.

It is pointed out in the words, You shall surely be raised after death, that this system of creation itself shows that man should have a second life after death, for the creation of such a vast universe in which a being with a volition and independent will should live, makes it clear that the creation of that being is intended to serve a great purpose. But the life of this world is short-lived, a temporary place of tests and trials like the examination hall, over which hangs a veil of mystery and doubts, so much so that even the existence of God is sometimes denied. All this goes to prove beyond reasonable doubt that after this temporary abode of tests and trials man must pass on to his permanent or eternal abode of recompense. Hence (the verse says) how strange it is that, when people are told that creation has passed through a gradual process of development they readily admit it (even atheists accept the evolution theory) but when they are told what is but the natural sequence of this process, viz., that the life of man cannot come to a stop in this world, but must continue into another and higher life after death, they deny it.

1390. Important Words:

* (time) is derived from (amma). They say (amma-hū) i.e., he repaired or directed his course to him or it; he sought or aimed at it. 

* means, way, course or manner of acting; religion; a people or nation; a generation of men. It also means a time or a period of time as in 12: 46 (Lane).