10. And if We make man taste of mercy from Us, and then take it away from him, verily he is despairing, ungrateful.\textsuperscript{1391}

11. And if after an adversity has touched him We cause him to taste of prosperity, he will assuredly say, 'Gone are the ills from me.' Lo! he is exultant and boastful.\textsuperscript{1392}

12. Save those who are steadfast and do good works. It is they who will have forgiveness and a great reward.\textsuperscript{1393}

\textsuperscript{a}41:52. \textsuperscript{b}41:51. \textsuperscript{c}41:9; 84:26; 95:7.

**Commentary:**

The verse points out that just as most people are in doubt about the life after death, similarly they labour under a delusion with regard to divine punishment in this life. If punishment is delayed a little, they become impatient and begin to criticize and find fault with divine Messengers, although the nature of this world as being an abode of trials demands that divine punishment should be late in coming; for if there were no delay, the abode of trials would turn into a veritable abode of recompense.

It is strange that on the one hand people deny the existence of an abode of recompense and, on the other, by demanding from the Prophets of God a decisive punishment, admit that there should be such a thing as an abode of requital.

The words, that which they used to mock at shall encompass them, show that disbelievers, while demanding the speedy arrival of punishment, do not do so in earnest, but only ridicule the warnings of Prophets about the impending punishment. They should know that their scoffing and jeering shall recoil on themselves and will serve only to expedite the threatened punishment.

\textsuperscript{1391.} Commentary:

See the next verse.

\textsuperscript{1392.} Commentary:

Both attitudes of foolish elation and of abject despair described in this and the previous verses are assumed by those who give themselves up to disbelief and turn their backs on divine revelation. They are carried away by the smallest change in their fortunes, whether for good or ill. If some distress happens to afflict them, they give way to despair, while they become foolishly elated with pride if some success or happiness comes their way. This is due to their lack of proper understanding of the law of God, which is to the effect that this life is subject to change and that sorrows and periods of good fortune come upon man to try his mettle and make him improve his moral and spiritual condition. But a disbeliever who fails to understand the purpose of God, instead of benefiting by his state of prosperity or affliction, often lets it overwhelm him.

\textsuperscript{1393.} Commentary:

This verse is a continuation of the preceding one and points out that although people
lacking in true belief become elated or give way to despair at the smallest change in their circumstances, such is not the case with true believers. They do not allow sorrow or joy to get the better of them, but keep them under strict control. Sorrow cannot make them give way to despair and despondency. They remain patient under adversity and face it with courage. Nor can prosperity make them proud or haughty. On the contrary, they turn the favours of God to good account and increase in piety and righteousness.

The words, It is they who will have forgiveness and a great reward, describe the true recompense of believers. As they remain patient under adversities and afflictions which befall them in consequence of their own mistakes and faults, God rewards their patience by forgiving their errors and by covering up their faults and weaknesses. Similarly, as they do not become conceited and proud by reason of the favours which God confers on them, but employ them for righteous ends, therefore God adds to His favours by conferring upon them still greater blessings.

1394. Important Words:

Lālāk (thou art now perhaps). The word lālāk is used to denote either a state of hope or of fear, whether that state pertains to the speaker or to the addressee or to someone else. In the Quranic expression lālāk ūnūk mā yarhi al-bakr (thou art now perhaps going to abandon part of that which has been revealed to thee) the word lālāk has been used to signify that “the people imagine that thou art now perhaps going to abandon, etc.” (Mufradát). See also 2:22.

Kanz (treasure) is the noun-infinitive from kanz (kanaza). They say kanz al-mubr (i.e., he buried the property or treasure in the earth; he collected the property and treasured it, or he hoarded it or stored it in secret. Kanz al-amr means, he stuck or fixed the spear in the ground. Kanz al-tamar means, he stored or packed up the dates (in the receptacle). Kanz (kanz) means, treasure; property buried in the earth; any property whereof the portion that should be given in alms is not given; property that is preserved in a receptacle; anything abundant and collected together; gold and silver; a treasure of knowledge or science; that in which property is preserved or that in which property is buried or hoarded in secret (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

It is a peculiarity of Quranic diction that sometimes it omits to give the question and only gives the answer, the question being implied in the answer itself. The present verse constitutes an example of this style. In the previous verse believers were promised forgiveness and a great reward. Thereupon disbelievers asked the Holy Prophet in a jeering and ironical manner, “You say your followers will get a great reward and their sins will be forgiven,
We know nothing about the forgiveness of their sins. But where is the promised reward of which we do not see the slightest sign? You do not have even the money which you need so badly, nor do the angels descend from heaven to help you." The Quran turns the tables upon the disbelievers and answers their irony, with an irony, saying, "How weighty indeed is the objection of these people and perhaps, O Prophet, from fear of being unable to answer it, you would hide a part of Our revelation which contains prophecies regarding the prosperity and triumph of Islam!" meaning that such a thing can never be.

The verse is capable of another interpretation also. In this case the word 
would be taken to refer to the hope of disbelievers that the Holy Prophet may, out of fear of their objections, suppress part of the divine revelation. The verse declares such hopes to be vain and futile, for the Holy Prophet was "only a Warner," and the function and duty of a warner is only to issue the warning and deliver his message faithfully; he has no right to suppress any portion of the message. Again, by using the words "only a Warner" the verse also hints that the Holy Prophet did not claim to be God so that the treasures of the earth might be under his control; he was only a human being. If it be said here that believers who were promised "a great reward" (see the preceding verse) were also human beings like the Holy Prophet, it should be remembered that they were promised the reward not immediately but after they had established their title to it by displaying patience and steadfastness under trials and hardships for a considerable time. So disbelievers could demand from the Holy Prophet clear and palpable signs of the prosperity promised to him only when the promised time had come and not earlier. To come attended with power and glory in the very beginning is a sign of personal authority which belongs to God alone and not to any human being.

The words, Allah is Guardian over all things, are intended to point to the fact that all these promises will certainly come to pass. The Holy Prophet will assuredly get both (lit, covering up) and a great reward, and the angels of God will undoubtedly descend to bring his work to completion and make null and void the machinations of his enemies. Not only will he himself be favoured with a great reward, but his followers and disciples also would become rulers and kings. Any fair-minded and impartial person can see that both these promises were literally fulfilled.

Some hostile critics of Islam have pretended to infer from this verse that the Holy Prophet was actually prepared to abandon a portion of the Quran out of fear of the objections of his opponents. But the context spurns this baseless interpretation. Can any reasonable person imagine that the demand for the descent of helping angels or for the possession of a treasure was such that, on account of it, the Holy Prophet should, in any way, have become prepared to suppress part of divine revelation, or that he was unaware of the fact that he was only a Warner whose duty was to deliver the Message, whatever it might be? Again, did he not know that God had clearly spoken to him saying that He Himself was "Guardian over all things"? So the words, thou art now perhaps going to abandon part of that which has been revealed to thee, contain only a vain hope on the part of disbelievers that the Prophet might give up part of his revelation; they do not at all express any intention or readiness on his part to do so. Do not these critics know that when at Mecca a deputation of the Quraish waited on the Holy Prophet and asked him to give up preaching against their idols and threatened to crush him and his tribe in case he refused to do so, the prompt answer he gave was that even if they put the sun on his right

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14. "Do they say, 'He has forged it'? Say, 'Then bring ten Chapters like it, forged, and call on whom you can beside Allah, if you are truthful.'"\(^\text{1395}\)

an hair's breadth from the teachings which God had given him? Could he, whom the threats or cajolery of the Quraish at a time when he was extremely weak could not induce to give up his preaching, have become so unnerved by these silly objections as to become ready to conceal a part of the divine word?

The verse that follows also gives the lie to such an inference, for it contains a challenge to the world to produce ten Sūrās like any ten Sūrās of the Quran. If there had been any doubt in the Prophet's mind concerning any portion of the Quran, could that very portion possibly have been followed by a challenge like this? This challenge shows that he believed in the truth of every word of the Quran with a conviction firm as a rock.

1395. Commentary:

This verse corroborates the interpretation put on the previous one. The latter gave two answers to the disbelievers' vain hope that the Holy Prophet might abandon a portion of the Quran for fear of their objections, viz.: (1) that the Holy Prophet was only a Warner; he did not lay claim to godhead that he might be required to have with him treasures and angels; (2) that he was only the bearer of a Message from God and his duty was confined to delivering that Message to the people. Now disbelievers could have replied to these arguments by saying that his claim to have come from God was but an empty assertion and that he was an impostor, as he was not attended with any special power. The verse under comment answers this objection by saying that although the Holy Prophet did not possess treasures of gold or silver, yet he possessed vast spiritual treasures the like of which were not possessed by the whole world collectively; and that those treasures were embodied in the Quran. So if they objected that the Holy Prophet was not a true Prophet and that certain portions of his Message were defective and needed to be altered, then let them bring forward a work comparable not to the whole of the Quran, but only to ten such Chapters of it as they deemed to be defective. If, however, they could not produce a book comparable even to these so-called defective portions, which they thought needed to be changed, then they would have to admit that the Prophet of Islam did indeed possess a treasure the like of which none could produce. For full discussion of this subject, see under 2:24 where all similar verses of the Quran have been collectively treated.
15. And if they do not respond to you, then know that it has been revealed replete with Allah's knowledge and that there is no god but He. Will you then submit?

16. Whoso desires the present life and its embellishment, We will fully repay them for their works in this life and they shall not be wronged therein.

1396. Commentary:

Naturally the question arises here whether the challenge contained in the preceding verse was confined to the lifetime of the Holy Prophet or whether it extended even to later ages. This question has been answered in the present verse by the use of the plural pronoun “you” in the clause, And if they do not respond to you, thus showing that the challenge was not confined to the time of the Holy Prophet but extended to all time. If the challenge had been confined only to the lifetime of the Holy Prophet, the words used would have been “if they do not respond to thee” and not as they are. The use of the plural pronoun shows that Muslims in every age can deliver this challenge to disbelievers and the verse guarantees that the Quran will ever stand unrivalled in its manifold excellences.

The words, then know that it has been revealed replete with Allah’s knowledge, mean that if the opponents of Islam do not accept this challenge, it will clearly establish that the Quran comprises the special knowledge of God, and contains matters which are beyond human ken, being undiscoverable by man; hence their inability to produce a book like it.

The expression, that there is no god but He, indicates that the inability of men of all ages to produce a book like the Quran will also prove that there is no god beside Allah; for, if there had been other gods, they and their votaries would have accepted the challenge and, by producing through their cumulative efforts a work like the Quran, would have demonstrated the hollowness of this challenge. Complete silence on their part is sure evidence of the fact that there is no god beside Allah and that He has no equal.

It is disbelievers who are addressed in the closing words, Will you then submit, and they are asked whether they will not join the fold of Islam now that this unaccepted challenge has proved that the Quran is indeed the word of God.

1397. Commentary:

It is clear from this verse that those who desire the present life and its riches and strive after it get their full share of it. No one is deprived of what he strives after. The worldly prosperity and material advancement of Christian nations is sometimes adduced as an evidence of the truth of Christianity. This verse exposes the falsity of this inference. The attainment of worldly prosperity is no proof of the fact that one is following the right religion, for God has appointed laws for every kind of progress and anyone who observes the laws appointed for the material progress of man can attain worldly felicity. The mere attainment of worldly prosperity, unless it is attended by other clear signs, is therefore no
17. "Those are they who shall have nothing in the Hereafter save the Fire, and that which they wrought in this life shall come to naught, and vain shall be that which they used to do. 1398

18. "Can he, then, who possesses a clear proof from his Lord, and to testify to whose truth a witness from Him shall follow him, and who was preceded by the Book of Moses, a guide and a mercy, be an impostor? Those who consider these matters believe therein, and whoever of the opposing parties disbelieve in it, Fire shall be his promised place. "So be not thou in doubt about it. Surely, it is the truth from thy Lord; but most men do not believe. 1399

1398. Commentary:

Disbelievers are here told that if they do not embrace Islam, they will of course not be deprived of worldly goods which they might have earned by the sweat of their brow, but they will surely remain deprived of God's blessings.

The pronoun " (this) in "(in this) may refer to either the present life mentioned in the previous verse or the Hereafter in the verse under comment. In the former case, the clause, that which they wrought in this life shall come to naught, would mean that, as they had been rewarded in the present life for the works which they did for this life, therefore these works would prove of no avail to disbelievers in the life to come. In the latter case, the clause would mean that, as their deeds for the present life were in accordance with the laws of God, therefore, they got their reward for them; but as the deeds which they did for the next life were in defiance of divine laws, therefore they would do them no good and would fail to serve the purpose for which they were apparently meant.

1399. Commentary:

This verse embodies three important criteria.
by which the truth of the Quran and that of the Holy Prophet can be tested, and declares that he who satisfies these three criteria cannot be an impostor.

There are three classes of men whom a divine Message can possibly concern: (1) the contemporaries of a Messenger of God, to whom the Message is directly addressed; (2) the generations yet unborn who are to receive the Message in the future; (3) the past generations to whom their Prophet gave the news that a Messenger was to come. If these three classes of witnesses bear testimony to the truth of a claimant to prophethood, there can remain no doubt about his truth. The faith of the last-mentioned class of people, i.e., those who expect the advent of a Messenger of God, has its basis in past prophecies about his advent, while the first-mentioned class, i.e., the contemporaries of a claimant, judge his claim (a) by the touchstone whether he possesses in his own person any proof which testifies to his truth, or (b) by the prophecies of earlier Scriptures about the advent of a divine Messenger. Lastly, there is the second class of people, i.e., those yet unborn who in their time look upon the Signs witnessed by the contemporaries of a claimant as mere stories, and confine their scrutiny to the change brought about by the claimant—the fruit of his reformatory efforts. In fact, succeeding generations attach more importance to the fruits of the labours of a divine Messenger and to the results of his mission than to anything else. If his Message continues to bear fruit down to their time, they come to realize that it is a truly useful thing and concerns them as much as it did past generations.

In point of importance, pride of place belongs to internal evidence, that is, the evidence which a claimant possesses in his own person, because such evidence serves as a clear proof not only for the contemporaries of the claimant but also for the generations to come and because it relieves seekers after truth of the trouble of turning to other things for guidance, it being in itself a sufficient proof of the truth of the claimant. This kind of proof is referred to in the words, Can he who possesses a clear proof from his Lord be an impostor?

The second evidence, which is also second in importance, of the truth of a divine claimant pertains to the results produced by his Message and the fruits of his labours; for in the absence of this evidence, the practical value of a Message claimed to be divine becomes doubtful in the eyes of later generations. In fact, the intrinsic truth of a Message does not constitute a sufficient incentive for acting upon it. It has to be shown that it is also meant for the recipient and for the age in which he lives and that it has not been superseded by a later Message. The fact that a Message continues to bear fruit suffices to establish the fact that it is as practicable and as useful at present as it was in the past. This kind of evidence is referred to in the words, and a witness from Him shall follow him.

Last in point of importance is the evidence which relates to prophecies holding hope of a future Reformer and a future Message. The evidence of such prophecies is also useful, for it keeps the minds of men prepared for the acceptance of the Message, although naturally only those people benefit by it in whose time the expected Message actually makes its appearance. This kind of evidence is hinted at in the words, and who was preceded by the Book of Moses, a guide and a mercy.

All these three kinds of evidence have been adduced in this verse in support of the Holy Prophet and the Quranic Message. The Quran possesses strong internal evidence of its divine origin; the Scriptures that preceded it bear clear witness to its truth; and it was also to bear fruit in the future in a way that nobody could have any reasonable ground
to reject it. Similarly, the Holy Prophet who brought this Message also possesses this triple evidence which clearly proves him to be a true Messenger of God.

The words, *a witness from Him (God) shall follow him (the Holy Prophet)*, also point to the appearance of a great Reformer in the Latter Days who was to come as “a witness” to bear testimony to the truth of the Holy Prophet. It is worth noting that the person who was to appear after the Holy Prophet to bear testimony to his truth has been called a مُتَّبِعُ (a witness) and it is evident that a witness is needed only when the continued practicability and usefulness of a Message is called in question. It is evident, therefore, that after the advent of the Holy Prophet a Messenger was needed only at a time when there should arise about the Quran the question whether it was still worthy of being acted upon. It is well known that such a question never arose about the Quran during the last 1350 years, and it is only in the present time that doubts have begun to be expressed about this claim of the Quran with persistence from all quarters. There is a section of Muslims themselves who hold the view that some teachings of the Quran, particularly with regard to the five daily Prayers, the amputation of the hands of a thief, polygamy, purdah, usury, etc., need alteration or amendment. Then there are the followers of claimants like Bahá'u'lláh, who believe that the Law of Islam has become abrogated and they seek to introduce a new Law in its place. Last of all, the so-called higher critics of the West question the authenticity of some historical facts mentioned in the Quran as well as the practicability of some of its teachings. Such a state of affairs never existed before the present age and therefore, truly speaking, no “witness” was needed before now.

The words مَنْ (from Him) in the expression, *a witness from Him*, clearly show that the promised witness was to be a heavenly Messenger. This heavenly Messenger is Ahmad, the Promised Messiah, Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement, who appeared at a time when the teachings of Islam had begun openly to be declared unpractical and impracticable and the object of whose advent was to bear witness to the truth of Islam by means of clear proofs and fresh heavenly Signs.

It should also be remembered that the words, *a witness from Him shall follow him*, promised the appearance of a person who was to invite men to accept and follow the Quran and not of one who was to abrogate its teachings. Thus, incidentally, the verse furnishes an irrefutable argument against the claims of Bahá'u'lláh.

The third evidence in support of the truth of the Quran and of the Holy Prophet lies in the fact that their advent was predicted by previous Prophets. The Book of Moses forms the most conspicuous example of it. It contains clear prophecies about the Holy Prophet and the Quran. Among others, the reader is referred to Deut. 18:18.

The Book of Moses is here called “a guide” because it serves as a guide to the truth of Islam. It is “a mercy” in the sense that it has made it easy for men to accept the truth in four different ways: (1) by means of prophecies which point to the truth of the Holy Prophet; (2) by laying down criteria by means of which the truth of a Prophet can be tested; (3) by enabling men to compare the teachings of the two Books; and (4) by helping to explain the fundamentals of the Law.

The word الْحَرَابِ (opposing parties) generally signifies the parties that oppose the Prophets. As the Holy Prophet was raised for the whole of mankind, the words would here signify the followers of all the religions of the world other than Islam.

The words, *be not thou in doubt about it*, are
19. And who is more unjust than he who forges a lie against Allah. Such shall be presented before their Lord, and the witnesses will say, "These are they who lied against their Lord." Now surely the curse of Allah is on the unjust.¹⁴⁰⁰

20. Who turn men away from the path of Allah and seek to make it crooked. And these it is who disbelieve in the Hereafter.¹⁴⁰¹

¹⁴⁰⁰. Commentary:
The verse tells us that it is quite easy to distinguish a true claimant from a false one. Those who falsely lay claim to prophethood are most unjust and the unjust are under God's curse. So it is not difficult to distinguish between true and false prophets. One can know false prophets from their very appearance and their very circumstances.

The word "witnesses" may here refer to true Prophets who will give the lie to their rejectors by pointing to the accursed condition of false prophets and inviting comparison with them.

¹⁴⁰¹. Commentary:
The purport of this verse is that the enemies of truth not only hinder men from the path of God but also adopt ways and means by which the beauty of God's word may be spoiled or may remain hidden; and, instead of appearing attractive, it may look hideous and repulsive. This is the greatest weapon in the armoury of the enemies of truth.
21. Such can never frustrate God’s plans in the land, nor have they any friends beside Allah. Punishment will be doubled for them. They can neither hear, nor can they see.  

22. It is these who have ruined their souls, and that which they fabricated shall fail them.

23. Undoubtedly, it is they who shall be the greatest losers in the Hereafter.

1402. Commentary:

Those who forge lies against God (see v. 19) can never succeed in their wicked plans but only become involved in the meshes of their own schemes and stratagems.

God cannot be their friend and helper because of their fabricating lies against Him, and as God, the Lord of the universe, is angry with them, their own friends and sympathizers can be of no help to them.

The word ضعيف (will be doubled) being derived from ضعيف (for which see 3:131), which means both “the double of a thing” or “an unlimited addition,” is used here in both these senses. The punishment of disbelievers will be doubled in the sense that they will be punished both for their own sins and for the sins of those whom they misled. In the second sense, the verse means that their punishment will continue to increase absolutely; for by preaching and disseminating a false teaching they sowed the seeds of evil in the world, and as long as that evil subsists their punishment will continue.

1403. Important Words:

For the meaning of the word خسر (khasira) see 6:13. The word is really intransitive, though for the sake of convenience it has been translated here as transitive.

1404. Important Words:

(undoubtedly). They say i.e. he cut it or he cut it off. جرم لا لهmeans, he acquired or earned for his family. جرم also means, he committed a fault or sin or crime. The expression جرم لا means, there is no avoiding (lit. cutting) it; or it is absolutely necessary; verily or truly. It also sometimes gives the sense of “nay” (Lane).
24. Verily, those who believe and do good works, and humble themselves before their Lord—these are the inmates of Heaven; therein shall they abide.1405

25. The case of the two parties is like the case of the blind and the deaf, and the seeing and the hearing. Is the case of the two alike? Will you not then understand?1406

Commentary:
The verse purports to say that though disbelievers may do a slight harm to the Prophets of God in this life, in the life to come they alone will suffer.

1405. Important Words:
احترموا (humbled themselves) is derived from احترم. They say احترم ذكره meaning, the mention of him or it was or became concealed, i.e., he or it was or became obscure and of no repute or became concealed. 
احترم الله means, he was or became lowly, humble or submissive in heart and obedient to God; or he humbled or abased himself to his Lord; or he trusted his Lord. 
ختب (khabtun) means, a low or depressed tract of land; or a wide and low tract of ground; or a soft tract of ground which is easy to walk through (Lane).

Commentary:
The verse makes it clear that in order to attain to the highest stages of spiritual progress, mere faith and good works are not sufficient; perfect conviction, complete submission and full trust in God and sincere love for Him are also essential. Just as a child is happy and satisfied only when it is in the lap of its mother, similarly he who desires to make real spiritual progress should humble himself before God, place complete trust in Him and always turn to Him for help.

1406. Commentary:
This verse beautifully contrasts faith and disbelief. A believer is here represented as one who is in perfect possession of the faculties of sight and hearing, while the disbeliever is likened to a blind and deaf man. Certainly there is a world of difference between them. The epithets “blind” and “deaf” for disbelievers have not been used by way of abuse, but are meant to throw light on the real nature of disbelief.

The difference between a spiritually blind man and one who can see is that the former cannot see the spiritual light that comes from God, while the latter can. Similarly, whereas the former gropes, stumbles and falters on the way to his destination, the latter sees his way clear to it and reaches it directly. Moreover, a blind man cannot distinguish a friend from a foe, and might mistake one for the other, while the seeing man can never make such a mistake.

Similar differences exist between those who follow a true religion and those who reject it. The follower of a true religion knows the will of God, which serves as a beacon light for the spiritual wayfarer. But one who rejects the truth loses his spiritual vision and thus is deprived of the means to know the will of his Creator. Similarly, he who has accepted
the truth, being a seeker after divine revelation, does not stumble or stagger on the way to his destination, but arrives at it straight away. On the contrary, those who seek to find the truth by the unaided help of their own reasoning faculties may sometimes succeed in finding it, but after a good deal of stumbling and groping in the dark. The difference is well illustrated by the statutory prohibition in the United States of America of alcoholic drink in the past few years. Islam prohibited drinking outright, with the result that the Muslim world totally abandoned it. The non-Muslim world has only now begun to realize its evils after an experiment extending over hundreds of years. Another vital difference between a believer and a disbeliever is that the former takes his stand on the firm rock of some recognized truth about which there exists no dispute in his mind, but the latter does not know where he stands, with the result that in order to refute a truth, he sometimes happens to attack even those principles to which he himself subscribes. This is why the Quran repeatedly reminds its opponents that, while attacking Islam, they very often attack their own beliefs and principles.

Believers and disbelievers have also been here compared to the hearing and the deaf. The difference between a man who has ears and one who is deaf is that the former, being able to hear what others have to say, benefits by their experience, while the latter can derive no such benefit. This constitutes one of the chief differences between Islam and other Faiths, and between Muslims and non-Muslims. The teachings of Islam comprise all truths—even those that are found in other religions—and a Muslim is enjoined to get hold of truth wherever he finds it and to make it his own, while a non-Muslim remains contented with his own antiquated and outworn ideas and turns a deaf ear to all others. It is to this peculiarity of Islam that the Holy Prophet has alluded in his famous saying: "A word of wisdom is the lost property of a believer; he gets hold of it wherever he finds it" (Tirmidhi, ch. on 'Ilm).

In short, the sign of a true religion is that it is catholic and broad-minded and embraces in itself all truths; while a false religion is characterized by narrow-mindedness and perversity. Thus the very thing which is criticized by the opponents of Islam as one of its defects is claimed here as an excellence. Islam has been accused of plagiarism, but it answers this charge by saying that it is not like a deaf man who cannot hear and therefore is incapable of benefiting by the knowledge and experience of others, but, like a person who is in perfect possession of the power of hearing, it listens to what others have to say and thus supplements and perfects its own store of knowledge. This is why the Quran has not only collected in itself all such teachings of other divinely inspired religions as are fundamentally good and beneficial but has also added to them such new truths as are not to be found in any other Faith.

The epithets "hearing" and "deaf" point to another contrast also. In Islam, the door of divine revelation is open, and spiritually speaking only such an ear can be said to be gifted with the faculty of "hearing" as listens to the voice of God. In fact, it is for the purpose of hearing the sweet voice of God that the ear has been primarily created. So the ear which does not hear the voice of God is indeed a blind ear. Similarly, it is to point to this great difference that believers and disbelievers have been respectively likened to "the seeing" and "the blind." In Islam the door of heavenly Signs and miracles is ever open and he alone can be truly said to be "seeing" who sees the fresh Signs of God. The eye which refuses to see the Signs of God is indeed a blind eye.
26. And We sent Noah to his people, and he said, 'Truly, I am a plain Warner to you,'

27. ‘That you worship none but Allah. Indeed, I fear for you the punishment of a grievous day.’

1407. Important Words:

مين (plain) is derived from عين which again is derived from عين for which see 2:169. من gives three meanings: (1) plain and clear; (2) he who or that which makes a thing clear by giving reasons and arguments; (3) he who or that which cuts something asunder.

Commentary:

In the previous verse it was stated that disbelievers did not care either to ponder over the inglorious end to which false prophets and their followers came or to the great success attained by true Prophets. The former class of people were likened to the blind and the deaf and the latter to the hearing and the seeing. With the present verse begin some illustrations of these two classes of men. The first illustration is that of Noah, who was one of the great Prophets of God.

All Prophets of God are منين (plain Warners) i.e. (1) there is no secrecy about their teaching and manner of work. Unlike false pretenders they do not conceal their teaching. With them everything is fair and above board. (2) Their teaching is also based on reason and argument. Thus, unlike the warning of the false prophets, the warning of the true Prophets causes no despair or despondency, among their followers. The Holy Prophet has strongly condemned warnings which occasion despair. He is reported to have said: من تناول هناك القول فور هناك عموم. i.e. “He who says that the people have perished, it is really he himself who causes them to perish by so saying” (Muslim, ch. on al-Birr wa'l Sila). Such a person, in fact, makes people lose faith and confidence in themselves and makes them despair of their future. Lost in the slough of despond, they begin to think lightly of sin and iniquity and feel hopelessly discouraged and disheartened. It is the function of a divineReformer to tell people that he has with him the remedy of their corruption. Thus when Noah said that he was منين i.e., a plain Warner, he meant that all his work was above suspicion and that his warning was based on reason; that he had come not to dishearten his people, but to make them realize their true condition. He also meant that he not only warned them of impending punishment but also pointed out to them the way in which they could escape that punishment. It was to “worship none but Allah.”

1408. Commentary:

“A grievous punishment” is different from “the punishment of a grievous day.” The latter expression implies greater intensity. Certain punishments are very grievous, but there are certain “days” the remembrance of
28. "The chiefs of his people, who disbelieved, replied, 'We see in thee nothing but a man like ourselves, and we see that none have followed thee but those who, to all outward appearance, are the meanest of us. And we do not see in you any superiority over us; nay, we believe you to be liars.'
To sum up, the words ارادُنا إِلَى الْأَرْضَی mean: (1) the followers of Noah are mean to all outward appearance; or (2) their faith in Noah is insincere; or (3) their faith is the result of only superficial thinking.

The words, We see in thee nothing but a man like ourselves, mean, “There is nothing extraordinary in your outward appearance to distinguish you from us. You are just a human being like any other mortal. When therefore, there is nothing extraordinary in your outward appearance, how should we know that inwardly you have been endowed with exceptional powers which have helped you to gain access to Divine Presence, while we cannot?”

This is the common objection raised by the opponents of the Prophets. The enemies of Noah purported to say that if he possessed some special inward power from God, that ought to have caused some difference in his outward appearance and as a result of it he should have acquired knowledge of some worldly sciences also, but they saw no evidence of this. How could they then believe that his internal powers were different from, and superior to, theirs. In support of this argument the opponents of Noah might possibly have shown to him pictures of their holy men having extraordinary exteriors, such as the Hindu saints are believed to possess, for instance, a number of heads and several hands. In olden days, men could not conceive that a Prophet was like ordinary mortals in appearance. So the enemies of Noah, arguing that the outward must correspond with the inward and that there must be harmony between the two, raised against him the objection that if he was really a true Prophet, his outward appearance must have been different from theirs. Silly though the argument is, it must have won endorsement from the contemporaries of Noah.

The enemies of Noah further reinforce their argument by saying that while he himself possessed no special powers, and was a mortal like themselves, his followers were even worse than they. What success could he achieve, they asked, with adherents who, to all outward appearance, were the meanest of the society? The enemies of Noah thus argued that neither his own personal qualities nor those of his followers gave him the appearance of “superiority” over them.

The words, we believe you to be liars, embody the result of the arguments brought forward by Noah’s opponents, which is that he was a liar, for he had asserted his truth and superiority without any basis or proof.

It is a pity that men test the claims of a heavenly Messenger by their self-devised standards and, when he does not satisfy those standards, they deceive themselves with the idea that they had weighed his claims dispassionately and with an open mind and had found them to be false. Even in the present age when man has made great progress in knowledge, science and culture and has known many Prophets, he presumes to test the claims of God’s Messengers not by criteria laid down by Him but by his own false standards.
29. aHe said, "O my people, tell me if I stand on a clear proof from my Lord and He has bestowed upon me from Himself a great mercy which has been rendered obscure to you, shall we force it upon you, while you are averse thereto?  

30. b"And O my people, I ask not of you any wealth in return for it. My reward is due from Allah alone. And cI am not going to drive away those who believe. They shall certainly meet their Lord. But I consider you to be a people who act ignorantly."

1410. Important Words:

(shall we force it upon you) is derived from ٌمٌ which is derived from ام. They say ٌمٌ i.e. he kept close or held fast to the thing. ام means, the order became binding. ام means, he made him cleave to the thing. ام means, he obliged or compelled him to do the deed (Lane).

Commentary:

The words, which has been rendered obscure to you, mean that "the clear proof" and the "great mercy" have come to me in such a form that you cannot see them unless you ponder over them in the right spirit and on the right lines.

It is clear from this verse that in order to understand truth, one should think over it on right lines. Disbelievers cannot understand the truth because they reject it at the outset, without giving it the least consideration. In such circumstances, there can be no possibility of the truth being accepted except under compulsion. But, compulsion, as the last portion of the verse makes clear, cannot be resorted to.

1411. Commentary:

After referring to the prejudiced attitude of his opponents, Noah now proceeds to defend himself and his followers. In the first place, he asks what purpose he could possibly have in fabricating lies. Was it self-interest or personal aggrandizement that he was seeking? They knew that he asked for no reward from them. Then why should he have resorted to the abominable practice of forging lies? It might be argued that though Noah asked for no reward, he at least commanded the allegiance of his followers and that in itself constituted sufficient motive for his activities. But this objection, too, stands on no solid ground, because the Prophets of God are always the first to act upon the commandments which they enjoin upon others and they subject themselves to a greater discipline than they demand from their followers. They do not exult in the authority they enjoy. Theirs is only a life of sacrifice and service and not of dictatorial authority over others.

After having defended himself, Noah goes on to defend his followers. He repudiates the strictures of his opponents against them by
31. "And O my people, who would help me against Allah, if I were to drive them away? Will you not then consider?" saying that, as they had professed to believe in him, he had no right to drive them away merely on the basis of groundless mistrust and suspicion. Again, as he asked for no reward or recompense from anybody, the distinction of rich and poor did not exist for him and therefore he could not reject or spurn his followers on account of their being of humble origin. Only true and sincere faith carried weight with him, and that his followers possessed in abundance. Therefore, the objection that those who believed in him were poor and lowly was, besides being absurd, quite irrelevant.

Another objection which Noah's opponents levelled at his followers was that their faith was insincere. Noah rebutted this charge by saying that just as he did not demand any material benefit from them, they also did not demand anything from him. They only sought the favour of God Whom they were sure to meet, and He to Whom nothing is hidden would deal with them according to their faith. So, why should he question or doubt their sincerity?

The words, They shall certainly meet their Lord, also contain an answer to the taunt of disbelievers that Noah's followers had acquired no superiority over them by believing in him. Noah asked what greater superiority there could be than that his followers had attained nearness to God and had made great moral and spiritual progress, so much so that heavenly light shone in their faces. If in their ignorance his enemies could not see so patent a fact, the fault was their own.

The clause, But I consider you to be a people who act ignorantly, may refer to the sacrifices which the followers of Noah made in the cause of truth, for to believe in a Prophet in the beginning is not an easy matter. It is like plunging into fire. So Noah drew the attention of his opponents to the sacrifices of his followers and pointed out how unreasonable it was to hold their faith to be insincere in view of their great sacrifices for the sake of their faith.

1412. Commentary:

Noah says that his opponents wanted him to drive away his followers on account of their humble origin. But he could not displease God in order to win his opponents' pleasure by repelling away those who had believed in him for His sake. God was his help and support and without Him he could not acquit himself of the great task with which He had entrusted him. He therefore dared not incur God's displeasure by driving away his followers.
32. "And "I say not to you, 'I possess the treasures of Allah nor do I know the unseen,' nor say I, 'I am an angel.' Nor say I concerning those whom your eyes despise, 'Allah will not bestow any good upon them'—Allah knows best whatever is in their minds—Surely, I should then be of the unjust." 1413

33. They said, 'O Noah, thou hast indeed disputed with us long and hast disputed with us many a time; bring us now what thou threatenest us with, if thou art of those who speak the truth.' 1414

1413. Commentary:
In the first part of this verse Noah answers the objections of his opponents about himself in another form. He says that they taunt him for being a mere human being like themselves. But his claim is not inconsistent with his being a human being. He is only a Prophet, and it was not necessary for a Prophet to be different in kind from those to whom he was sent. On the contrary, it is necessary that he should be one of them and similar to them. If he had ascribed divinity to himself and had said that God had delegated His authority to him, then indeed they could have asked how a human being like them could discharge divine functions. But he has made no such claim. His only claim is that God had chosen him as an instrument for conveying to men the knowledge which He wishes to disclose to them.

The words, "Allah will not bestow any good upon them," contain a further answer to the objections of Noah's enemies about his followers. Noah says that they taunted his followers with being mean and lowly, but who could say what was going to happen in future or how God intended to bestow on these very poor people the blessings of heaven and earth. He further reinforces his argument by saying that truly mean is that person whose heart is corrupt, but the condition of the heart or the mind is known to God alone. They judged his followers by their outward condition while God, Who knew the real condition of their hearts, knew that they were not mean but the noblest of men. This is the significance of the words, "Allah knows best whatever is in their minds.

1414. Commentary:
As in the previous verses Noah had hinted at the future prosperity of his followers and it was evident that they could prosper only if their opponents perished and thus cleared the way for their prosperity, therefore Noah's enemies realized that the prophecy of the future prosperity of believers implied a prophecy about their own destruction. So they asked him to give up all other discussions and let them know when their threatened destruction would come to pass.
34. He said, "Allah alone will bring it to you, if He please, and you cannot frustrate God's purpose."  

35. 'And my advice will profit you not if I desire to advise you, if Allah desires to destroy you. He is your Lord and to Him shall you be made to return.'  

36. 'Do they say, 'He has forged it'? Say, 'If I have forged it, on me be my sin and I am clear of the sins you commit.'  

1415. Commentary:  
This verse embodies three important rules about prophecies foretelling the punishment of the enemies of God's Messengers: (1) that the time of their actual happening is generally not disclosed, being known only to God; (2) that they are conditional and can be deferred or revoked as God may desire; and (3) that whatever changes may take place in regard to prophecies of punishment, God's immutable purpose never changes, for disbelievers "cannot frustrate God's purpose."  

1416. Important Words:  
غريبكم (destroy you). See 7:17.  

Commentary:  
By the words, If Allah desires to destroy you, Noah means to say that though he ardently wishes his people to accept his Message and thus be saved, his love for them cannot exceed God's love for His creatures; and when God has decreed their destruction the doom must be accepted as not only inevitable but also justified, and he must submit to His decree.  

The verse also explodes the wrong notion commonly held that Noah prayed for the destruction of his people (71:27, 28), for it shows that it was not Noah who had prayed for their destruction but that God Himself had commanded him to do so.  

The words, He is your Lord, are intended to hint that God destroys a people only when He finds that their destruction is necessary and is good for others; otherwise, being their Lord and Master, He cannot wish them evil.  

1417. Commentary:  
The words, Say, If I have forged it, on me be my sin, refer to Noah and not to the Holy Prophet, and mean that God commanded Noah to tell his people that if in what he had said to them he had forged a lie against God, he would certainly be punished for it, so they need not worry about it. But if he was speaking the truth and was a true Messenger of God, then they had committed a great sin by rejecting him and would surely be called to account.
37. And it was revealed to Noah, 'None of thy people will believe except those who have already believed: grieve not therefore at what they have been doing.'

By saying, *I am clear of the sins you commit*, Noah clears himself of the charge of imposture in another way also. He points to his previous spotless life as proof of his truthfulness, for if he was free from the various sins in which his people were involved, he could not be expected to be so depraved as to forge lies against God, which was the most heinous of all sins.

1418. **Important Words**:

لا تتبلى (grieve not therefore). *Ttbl* is derived from *شبى* meaning, he was or became in a state of distress, etc. *يبلي* or *تابى* means, he was distressed at it; or he grieved at it (Lane). See also 2:178.

**Commentary**:

This verse throws some light on Noah's prayer referred to in 71:27, 28. In the verse under comment Noah is told that he would have no more converts from his people but that he should not grieve on that account. This shows that up to the time when this revelation was sent to Noah, he had not despaired of his people and was always worrying over their disbelief. So the prayer referred to in 71:27, 28 must have been offered not prior to, but after, this revelation. In this revelation he was informed of God's decision that no more persons from among his people would believe in him. All those who deserved to be rightly guided and who sincerely sought after divine guidance had already been converted. Hence the prayer of Noah was no more than a submission to God's decree. For, when God Himself had decided to destroy his wicked people, it was meaningless on Noah's part to pray for their destruction. So all that Noah's prayer meant was that God might carry out His decree about the destruction of his people, for he was now reconciled to it.

It often happens that a Prophet even after he has come to know of God's decision to destroy a people, continues to pray for them, hoping that God may alter His decree and the people may yet believe and be saved. Noah also continued to pray for his people until he saw that further postponement of the punishment was prejudicial to the best interests of the Faith. He then prayed that God might carry out His decree against his people.

Even if it be admitted that Noah did not merely ask God to carry out His decree but actually prayed for the destruction of his people, such a prayer cannot be held to be inconsistent with the dignity of a Prophet, for a prayer offered under divine command can in no case be said to be derogatory to his dignity. When the All-Knowing God Himself discloses to a Prophet the perversity of his people and their inevitable doom, then a prayer on his part that such people should remain deprived of divine guidance is no more than a simple statement of an existing fact.
38. "And build thou the Ark under Our eyes and as commanded by Our revelation. And address not Me concerning the wrongdoers. They are surely going to be drowned." 1419

39. And he was making the Ark; and every time the chiefs of his people passed by him, they mocked at him. He said, 'If now you mock at us, the time is coming when we shall mock at you even just as you mock now." 1420

1419. Important Words:

ابن (under Our eyes). ابن is the plural of ابن which has a large variety of meanings. Among other things it means: (1) the eye; (2) look or view, as the Quran says اتب تبن عنني that thou mightest be reared in my view; (3) the people or inmates of a house or dwelling, as they say ابن Sunday i.e. there is no one in it (the house); (4) brothers from the same father and mother; (5) one's protection and honour, as the Arabs say ابن انانت عنني انت i.e. thou art entitled to be honoured and protected by me (Lane).

Commentary:

In view of one of the meanings of the word ابن the expression ابن يبن may mean "with the help of the people of Our house." The people of Noah's house have been spoken of as "the people of Our house," because those who are near and dear to a Prophet are also dear to God. Noah was bidden to build an ark with the aid of the people of God's spiritual house (for spiritually the followers of a Prophet belong to God's own house).

Taking the word ابن in the sense of one's "protection" or "honour," the sentence would mean, "Make thou the Ark under Our protection," meaning that Noah's adversaries would jeer and mock at the building of the Ark, but he should pay no heed to their mockery, for he would be protected and honoured by God.

The verse may also allude to two kinds of arks, the physical ark which was to be built by Noah with the help of his followers, and the spiritual ark i.e. the ark of righteousness which God had bestowed on Noah's followers through him. Truly speaking, it is only the spiritual ark that can help to save a person from the punishment of God.

The words, address not Me concerning the wrongdoers, also show that Noah's prayer for the destruction of his people mentioned in 71:27-28 was not offered by him at his own initiative, for when he himself was praying for the destruction of the wrongdoers, there was no occasion for God to order him not to pray for their deliverance.

1420. Commentary:

Messengers of God are always mocked at because they bring teachings which the people of their time are not prepared to accept. But these people never pause to consider that if heavenly Messengers were not entrusted with extraordinary work, there would be no need for God to send Messengers. It is only because...
40. \(^{a}\) "Then you shall know who it is on whom will come a punishment that will disgrace him, and on whom will fall a lasting punishment."\(^{1421}\)

41. Tilt, \(^{b}\) when Our command came and the fountains of the earth gushed forth, We said, \(^{c}\) "Embark therein two of every kind, male and female, and thy family, except those against whom the word has already gone forth, and those who believe. And there did not believe and live with him except a few."\(^{1422}\)

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The words, a lasting punishment, signify a punishment which will not end with the present life but will continue in the life to come.

Scoffers are here told by Noah that their scoffing can do him no harm nor can it bring him into disgrace. Therefore he does not feel humiliated on account of their mockery, but it is they who have a real cause to feel humiliated, for they are about to be overtaken by a punishment which will not end in this life but will continue in the life to come and will be attended by a lasting disgrace.

**1422. Important Words:**

- فَأَتَتِ الْيَدِ (gushed forth). They say the kettle boiled or estuated.
- قَاتِلَ تَفْهِمَ (threw). He became agitated by a tendency to vomit.
- فيْتَ الْحَد (flowed forth). The water gushed forth and flowed. The vein became excited and flowed forth with blood (Lane & Aqrab).
- الْأَرْضُ (fountains of the earth) is derived from the root تَرْ وَ تَرْ وَ تَرْ and means, a sort of fire-place or oven in which bread is baked; the surface of the ground; the highest part of the earth; any place from which water pours forth, i.e. a fountain, etc.; a place where the water of a valley...
42. And he said, 'Embark therein. In the name of Allah be its course and its mooring. My Lord is assuredly Most Forgiving, Merciful.'

43. And it moved along with them on waves like mountains. And Noah cried unto his son, while he was keeping apart, 'O my son, embark with us and be not with the disbelievers.'

Commentary:

It should be remembered that the punishment which overtook the people of Noah was not merely due to the gushing forth of the water from a spring. But, as is clear from other passages of the Quran, the real source of the Deluge were the clouds. Rain fell in such abundance that there was water everywhere and as sometimes happens during heavy rain, water also began to gush forth from the depths of the earth, and springs and fountains began to sprout, and thus water, both from the heavens and the earth, flooded the whole land. In 54:12, 13, we read, Then We opened the gates of heaven with water pouring down; and We caused the earth to gush forth with springs: so the waters met for the purpose that had been decreed. Similarly v. 45 below also speaks of water from both the heavens and the earth. In fact, it appears from the Quran that Noah lived in a mountainous country where springs were found in abundance, for in v. 44 Noah’s son is represented as saying, I shall soon betake myself to a mountain which will shelter me from the water, which shows that Noah lived at the foot of a mountain. Obviously when floods were rising fast on all sides, his son could not think of going to a far-off mountain and taking shelter there.

The word َكِ (all) does not here mean all the animals of the earth. It only means all such animals as Noah needed. It has been similarly used in a restricted sense in other verses of the Quran as well. For instance, in 27:24, which speaks of the Queen of Sheba, we read, “She has been given everything.” But all Commentators are agreed in holding that by “everything” is here meant all that the Queen of Sheba needed and not everything in the literal sense of the word. If she had possessed “everything” in the literal sense of the word, she would have had in her possession everything existing in the world and Solomon dared not have said to her ambassador, Go back to them, for we shall surely come to them with hosts, against which they will have no power, and we shall drive them out from there in disgrace, and they will feel abased (27:38). Moreover, the Ark certainly was not big enough to carry a pair of all kinds of animals found in the world. The addition of the word “two” also shows that it was meant that as few animals were to be taken as were absolutely necessary.

The words, except those against whom the word has already gone forth, do not mean “except those of whom thou hast been informed,” but “except those against whom God’s judgement has already been passed.”

1423. Commentary:

Commentators differ as to whether the
44. He replied, 'I shall soon betake myself to a mountain which will shelter me from the water.' He said, 'There is no shelter for anyone, this day, from the decree of Allah, excepting those to whom He shows mercy.' And the wave came in between the two; so he was among the drowned.1424

45. And it was said, 'O earth, swallow thy water, and O sky, cease raining.' And the water was made to subside and the matter was ended. And the Ark came to rest on al-Jūdi. And it was said, 'Cursed be the wrong-doing people.'1425

Commentary:
The verse shows that the place where Noah lived was surrounded by mountains. This is why his son said that he would take shelter in a mountain. The word جبل (a mountain) used as a common noun points to the fact that there was a chain of mountains on one of which Noah's son wished to take shelter. In fact, the place appears to have been a valley with mountains rising on all sides. That such a place should become quickly flooded with heavy rain is not extraordinary. The words, which will shelter me from the water, show how bigoted men shut their eyes to stark realities to the last. The flood is rising, but Noah's son still entertains doubt about the truth of his father's Message.

The expression, And the wave came in between the two, is intended to hint that God spared Noah the pain of seeing his son being drowned before his eyes. He was drowned behind the screen of a high wave.

1424. Important Words:

- "آوى" (I shall betake myself). "آوى" is derived from آوى. They say آوى إلإ. i.e. he betook himself to or repaired or resorted to it; he betook himself to it or repaired to it for lodging, covert or refuge. آوى إلإ means, he took up his abode in the house; he lodged or dwelt in it. The Quranic expression، آوى إلإ أقتية إلى الكهف means, when the young men betook themselves to the cave for refuge. آوى إلإ means, a place to which one repairs for lodging, covert or refuge (Lane).

1425. Important Words:

- "لم يلم" (cease raining) is derived from لم. i.e. he displaced or uprooted. لم means, it (rain) left off; it cleared away. لم يلم means, O sky, cease raining. ولم "لم" means, he or it left him; he abstained or desisted from it.
They say, i.e. the fever passed away or left such a one (Lane & Aqrab).

بِدَأَ (curse) is the noun-infinitive from بدأ which means, he or it was or became distant, remote, or aloof; he went or withdrew himself to a distance; he alienated; it perished. They say لا بد وان بدأ عن i.e. mayest thou not perish, though thou be distant from me. The Arabs say إبده اللَّهُ i.e. may God alienate him, or estrange him from good or prosperity; or may God curse him. بدأ means, distance or remoteness; remoteness from probability or correctness i.e. improbability or strangeness; perdition or death; judgement and prudence; curse, excommunication or malediction. They say, بدأ الله i.e. may he be cursed, or may God alienate him from good (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

The verse makes it clear that water not only came out from the “fountains of the earth” (v. 41) but it also fell from the sky (i.e. the clouds) and thus both combined to deluge the land.

The mountain al-Jūdī is, according to Yaqūt al-Hamwī, a long chain of mountains on the eastern side of the Tigris in the province of Moṣul (Mu‘jam). According to Sale, “al Jūdī is one of those mountains which divide Armenia on the south from Mesopotamia and that part of Assyria which is inhabited by the Curds, from whom the mountain took the name of Cardu or Gardu, but the Greeks turned it into Gordyaei………..The tradition which affirms the ark to have rested on these mountains must have been very ancient, since it is the tradition of the Chaldeans themselves (Berosus, apud Joseph. Antiq.). To confirm it, we are told that the remainders of the ark were to be seen on the Gordyaean mountains. Berosus and Abydenus both declare that there was such a report in their time………… The relics of the ark were also to be seen here in the time of Epiphanius………… and we are told the Emperor Heraclius went from the town of Thamanin up to the mountain al-Jūdī and saw the place of the ark. There was also formerly a famous monastery, called the monastery of the ark, upon some of these mountains where the Nestorians used to celebrate a feast-day on the spot where they supposed the ark rested; but in 776 A.D. that monastery was destroyed by lightning” (Sale, pp. 179, 180).

Again, “Judī (Djūdī) is a lofty mountain mass in the district of Bohtān, about 25 miles N.E. of Jazirat ibn ‘Omar in 37°, 30’ N. Lat.…….. It owes its fame to the Mesopotamian tradition, which identifies it, and not Mount Ararat, with the mountain on which Noah’s ark rested. It is practically certain from a large number of Armenian and other writers that, down to the 10th century, Mt. Ararat was in no way connected with the Deluge. Ancient Armenian tradition certainly knows nothing of a mountain on which the ark rested; and when one is mentioned in later Armenian literature, this is clearly due to the gradually increasing influence of the Bible which makes the ark rest on the mountains (or a mountain) of Ararat. The highest and best known mountain there is Masik………..The tradition that Masik was the mountain on which the Ark rested, only begins to find a place in Armenian literature in the 11th and 12th centuries. Older exegesis identified the mountain now called Judī, or according to Christian authorities the mountains of Gordyene, as the apobaterion of Noah” (Enc. of Islam. Vol. 1. p. 1059).

Babylonian traditions also place the mount al-Jūdī in Armenia (Jew. Enc. under Ararat) and the Bible admits that Babylon was the place where the descendants of Noah lived (Gen. 11:9).
46. And Noah cried unto his Lord and said, 'My Lord, verily, my son is of my family, and surely Thy promise is true, and Thou art the Most Just of judges.'

47. He said, 'O Noah, he is surely not of thy family; he is indeed a man of unrighteous conduct. So ask not of Me that of which thou hast no knowledge. I advise thee lest thou become one of the ignorant.'

1426. Commentary:
This verse beautifully illustrates how the Prophets maintain a highly respectful attitude to God even under very hard trials. Noah had, by an error of judgement, thought that all the members of his family would be saved from the flood, but when he saw that his son was going to be drowned, he made his supplication to God in a most respectful way, appealing to Him in the name of His promise about the safety of his family. He was, however, careful to add that if his son was drowned, he would not think that God's promise was false but that he himself had misunderstood the divine words, for God's promise was ever true and His judgement always just.

1427. Important Words:
عمل (man of conduct) generally signifies work, deed or action; a motion of the whole or of a portion of the body or even of the mind; the utterance of a saying. The word عمل (lit. deed) may also mean ذر عمل i.e. the doer of a deed, which construction is permissible in the Arabic language when an intensified sense is intended (Lane & Muhit).

Commentary:
In a brief sentence, viz., he is surely not of thy family, God disclosed a great truth to Noah.

What He meant was that when He promised to save his family, He did not mean all members of the family, but only such of them as were righteous and believed in him, because, truly speaking, only those persons were members of his family who had established a true relationship with God through him.

The Quranic wordsMarcah J~ 41 rendered here as, he is indeed a man of unrighteous conduct, are capable of two interpretations. First, they may refer to the prayer of Noah. In that case, the clause would mean that this act of his, i.e., his prayer for his son, was مارد i.e., out of place, the word صاحب meaning "suitable, meet or proper." By using these words with regard to Noah's prayer, God meant to point out that as He had already pronounced His judgement and the hour of punishment had actually arrived, so the time for prayer had passed.

Secondly, the clause may refer to Noah's son. In that case, the word عمل (lit. deed) would be taken as meaning ذر عمل (the doer of a deed). This usage of the word is quite in harmony with Arabic idiom, according to which the infinitive is sometimes used in place of the active participle to impart emphasis. An Arab poet describing the restlessness of a she-camel who had lost her young ones says: نادى هم ابلال ر إدبار i.e., "She is so restless
that she has become the very act of moving forward and backward,” meaning the embodiment thereof. According to this meaning of the word لَجَ، the clause would mean that the reason why his son was not considered as belonging to his family was that he was a man of unrighteous conduct.

The words, ask not of Me, may mean either asking for a favour in prayer or simply inquiring. Taking the words in the former sense, the verse would mean that one should not pray for a matter of whose benefit one is not certain, for in such a case a man cannot know whether what he is praying for will prove a blessing or a curse. In such cases one should pray to God only generally to grant what is good in His sight. There are, however, certain matters about the goodness of which there can be no doubt, e.g., the pleasure of God or the welfare of the life to come. For such matters one can pray without qualification. The prayer of Noah for his son belonged to the former category. He did not know how his son would behave if he were saved. It was possible, nay it was most probable, that if he had been saved, the cause of religion would have materially suffered through him.

If the word “ask” be taken in the sense of “inquire,” the verse would mean that Noah was not to inquire about a matter which was beyond his power to comprehend or the disclosure of which was not considered proper. The words ما لا يَس لَكِ بِهِ علم do not, in this case, mean “that of which thou hast no knowledge,” for man always inquires about matters which he does not know. The words would therefore mean “that which thou canst not know,” either because they are beyond thy comprehension or because they cannot be disclosed to thee.

God’s reply to Noah given in the words, he is indeed a man of unrighteous conduct, shows that Noah was not aware of the misdeeds of his son, and the reason why Noah was advised to abstain from asking questions about his son was that such questions were calculated to expose the latter’s misdeeds, which was inconsistent with the God’s attribute of mercy as well as with His attribute of covering up or screening the faults of His creatures. Strange indeed are the ways of God! On the one hand He decreed that Noah’s son should be drowned, and on the other His mercy drew a veil over his misdeeds.

The clause, I advise thee lest thou become one of the ignorant, refers to Noah’s prayer to God to save his son, who was a member of his family and was apparently included among those whom God had promised to save, and means: “You, being the bearer of the word of God, must in future ponder over every aspect of the divine revelation received by you and should not act unknowingly.” In other words, the seeming indefiniteness of the prophecy was cited to serve the purpose of a warning to Noah, who was asked to learn a lesson from it and to remember that prophecies bear more than one meaning and that their true significance becomes known only when they are actually fulfilled.

It may be asked why, whereas Noah refers to a “promise” of God (see the preceding verse), actually there is no mention of a divine promise here. In this connection it may be noted that the words َبِسمِ اللهِ ابْكَرَب i.e. Embark therein in the name of Allah . . . (v. 42) did imply a divine promise, because sometimes a commandment is tantamount to an undertaking. When God directed Noah to make his people enter the Ark, the direction implied a promise by God to save those who entered it. Similarly, the words, except those against whom the word has already gone forth (v. 41), also point to a promise having been made by God. If the above-quoted words contained only a commandment and implied no promise, the names of excepted
48. He said, 'My Lord, I beg Thee to protect me from asking Thee that whereof I have no knowledge. And unless Thou forgive me and have mercy on me, I shall be among the losers.'

49. It was said, 'O Noah, descend then with peace from Us and blessings upon thee and upon peoples to be born of those with thee. And there will be other peoples whom We shall grant provision for a time, then shall a grievous punishment touch them from Us.'

persons should have been revealed to Noah so that these could have been refused entrance. The fact that the names of the excepted persons were not disclosed shows that all those who went into the Ark were meant to be saved.

1428. Commentary:

This verse shows the exalted spiritual position to which the Prophets of God attain. When Noah heard the divine remonstration, he not only withdrew his words, but solicited God's help against repeating such a mistake. In contrast to this, how pitiable is those who, though enjoying no spiritual status, yet boast and brag and make big claims and do not profit by the example of God's chosen servants.

The words, unless Thou forgive me, throw interesting light on the significance of the term استغفار (asking for forgiveness) when used about a Prophet of God. The verse mentions the استغفار of Noah. Now as the preceding verses clearly show Noah had committed no sin against the Law but only an error of judgement, which is human, yet in spite of this he is here reported to have offered استغفار.

This proves that the offering of استغفار is not the proof of one's sinfulness in all cases. It may be offered for protection against the consequences of human weaknesses or against errors of judgement.

1429. Commentary:

This verse shows that not only was the progeny of Noah saved from the Flood and was blessed by God and multiplied upon the earth, but the progeny of those believers who were with him in the Ark also prospered and multiplied. So the popular notion that only Noah's progeny survived and multiplied in the earth has no basis in fact. This statement of the Quran establishes its superiority over the Bible. All educated Christians now believe that the inhabitants of the earth are not all descended from Noah; but in holding this view they, in fact, subscribe to the statement of the Quran and reject that of the Bible, for the Bible clearly says that only Noah and his sons survived the Deluge and that it was their progeny that dwelt and multiplied in the earth (Gen. ch. 9). Accordingly, Christian writers divide the human race into three groups, viz. the descendants of Ham, Sam and Yapheth,
50. This is of the tidings of the unseen which We reveal to thee. Thou didst not know them, neither thou nor thy people, before this. So be thou patient; for the end is for the God-fearing.  

The three sons of Noah. But according to the Quran the children of those who believed in Noah also survived and multiplied in the earth, to say nothing of other races.

The clause, there will be other peoples whom We shall grant provision, may mean: (1) that even in the time of Noah there were other peoples who did not perish but who were given respite and then perished in due time; (2) that some of those who were saved with Noah and who received blessings became corrupt in due course and were then punished by God.

1430. Commentary:

The words, This is of the tidings of the unseen, are intended to hint that the Quranic accounts of the various Prophets are not meant as mere stories of the ancient peoples. They are given in the Quran because they contain a prophetic allusion to the analogous events that were to occur in the life of the Holy Prophet himself. This is what is implied in the words “the tidings of the unseen.” The concluding words of the verse, i.e., “the end is for the God-fearing,” lend further support to this inference. These accounts also serve to warn Muslims that they too will have to pass through the experiences of the followers of former Prophets and they warn disbelievers that they too shall meet a fate similar to that of the rejectors of past Prophets.

The words, So be thou patient, mean that just as the people of Noah were destroyed, so will a section of the Holy Prophet’s people be destroyed; and then of their seed and of the seed of their companions God will raise a people who will bear the standard of piety and righteousness in every age.

The story of the Deluge with some variations is to be found in the traditions and literature of various countries (see Enc. Rel. & Eth.; Enc. Bib. & Enc. Brit. under Deluge). The importance which is attached to it and the widespread credence it commands points to its being an historical event of very great importance. It cannot be denied that a great flood did take place some time in the remote past, that it was of an extraordinary nature and that it affected many nations of the earth. Its description as given in the Quran, however, shows that there was nothing unnatural about it.

The catastrophe seems to have taken place somewhere at the dawn of human civilization. The Holy Prophet of Islam spoke of Noah as the first Messenger of God, i.e., the first organizer of a religious community (Bukhārī, ch. on Anbiyā). The Bible also represents him as such (Gen 6:8). Hindu traditions, too, corroborate this fact, for they speak of Manu (who is the same as Noah), the Hindu hero of the Deluge, as the first man (Enc. Brit. under Manu). But they add that seven others were saved with him, which points to the fact that he was not the first man absolutely but only the first man of the first cycle of human civilization. These statements made in the Scriptures of three great religions of the world leave no doubt about the fact that Noah laid the foundations of human civilization and culture. In fact, with the progress and advance of a people in civilization, their numbers also
begin to grow with a corresponding decrease taking place in the numbers of less civilized communities living with them in the same land. It is a well-known historical fact that whenever a people, comparatively more advanced in culture and civilization, have come to settle in a country, they have either blotted out of existence the less civilized inhabitants of the land or have greatly weakened them. Thus it appears that when the descendants of Noah and those of his companions, who were the founders of human civilization, spread to other lands, because they were more powerful than the people already living there, they either exterminated them or absorbed them by breaking their power. In this way they must have introduced into all the countries they subjugated their own traditions and customs; and consequently the tradition about the Deluge which naturally impressed the subjugated people must also have come to be introduced into other lands. With the lapse of time, however, the immigrants ceased to have any connection with their original home and the catastrophe consequently came to be regarded as a local occurrence, with the result that local names of persons and places came to be substituted for the original names.

In short, the Deluge was not a universal visitation, nor should the traditions of different lands be taken to point to separate floods. It was confined to one land, but owing to the immigration of the descendants of Noah and his companions to other lands, the story spread far and wide and finally the Flood came to be regarded as a local occurrence in every country.

As for the place where the Deluge occurred see note on al-Jūdi in v. 45.

1431. Commentary:

European critics have denied the very existence of the ‘Adites. They say that none of the inscriptions that have so far been discovered in Arabia mention ‘Ad as the name of any people in that country, and therefore they allege that the Quran has only quoted one of the popular legends that were current among the Arabs in the Prophet’s time.

This objection is based on a misunderstanding. In fact, sections of the human race are generally known by two sets of names, one representing the whole race and the other some particular group thereof. “Aryan,” for instance, is the collective name of a whole race which comprises many groups and tribes. Now it would be absurd to infer that because inscriptions have been found bearing, for example, only such names as Chandra Gupta or Vikramaditya and no inscription is discovered bearing the name “Aryan,” therefore “Aryan” is only a fictitious name and no nation of that name ever existed.

In the same way ‘Ad was not the name of a single tribe but of a group of tribes, whose different sections rose to power at different times. They left behind them inscriptions bearing the name of particular groups. But they all belonged to the main ‘Ad family. The fact that this name is found in ancient books of geography also shows that a people of the
name of 'Ād did indeed live. The geographical works compiled in Greece state that in the pre-Christian era, Yemen was ruled by a tribe called Adramitai who were no other than the 'Ād who have been called 'Ādi Iram in the Quran. The termination of the Greek name is a noun-suffix, the real name being 'Adram which is a corruption of 'Ādi Iram.

Some European writers think that Adramitai stands for Ḥadramaut but this is incorrect, because Ḥadramaut is the name of a place while Adramitai is the name of a tribe. Moreover, the name Ḥadramaut occurs both in Greek and Latin books, and nowhere has it been given as Adramitai. In Greek books it is given as Adramoititai, while in Latin books it is given as Chatramotitai. It is not reasonable to think that in this particular case geographers abandoned a generally accepted spelling and invented a new form. Moreover, the same work which mentions the tribe of Adramitai also gives an account of Ḥadramaut (Adramoititai) which clearly shows that according to the author of that book, Adramitai and Adramoitai are two different names (Al-'Arab qabl al-Islām).

The Quran gives the following facts about the ‘Ādites:

1. They built lofty buildings, and no other people in Arabia attained to that height of power to which they had attained (89:9). The verse referred to above also shows that the tribe of ’Ād mentioned in the Quran was called Iram. This Iram section of the ‘Ādites possessed a powerful kingdom which lasted up to 500 B.C. Their language was Aramaic, which is akin to Hebrew. The Aramaic kingdom was established after the fall of the Semitic kingdom and it included in its boundaries the whole of Mesopotamia, Palestine, Syria and Chaldea and, according to certain authorities, it extended even beyond these limits. Archaeological researches have discovered traces of this kingdom.

2. The people of ‘Ād as mentioned in the Quran lived immediately after the people of Noah (7:70). This shows that the Semites and other peoples referred to in history as existing before the Aramites were also sections of the ‘Ādites.

3. They built monuments on elevated places (26:129). There still exist ruins of great buildings in Arabia. Only a few miles from Aden there can still be seen remains of lofty buildings erected on high hills.

4. It appears from 46:26 that the history of these people has now become wrapped in obscurity and only some remains of their buildings are to be seen.

5. The territory in which these people lived is called Ahqāf (46:22). Ahqāf, which literally means meandering and zig-zag sand-hills, is the name given to two parts of Arabia, one in the south, known as the Southern Ahqāf, the other in the north, called the Northern Ahqāf. These tracts are fertile, but as they lie near the desert, sand-hills are caused there by the sand of the desert having been heaped up by the wind. These sand-hills may not have existed in the time when these people lived there and may have come into being when ‘Ād were punished by a sand-storm.

6. From 69:7 it appears that the destruction of the ‘Ādites was caused by the blowing of a violent wind which continued to rage over their territory for seven days, burying their chief cities under heaps of sand and dust. This disaster broke the power of these peoples and brought about their fall. The words, so that thou mightest have seen the people therein lying overthrown (69:8), show that their habitations lie buried under mounds of sand and their ruins may still be brought to light if the ground is cleared of the sand-hills. This verse also shows that the territory received the name Ahqāf only when after the divine visitation they became buried under sand-hills.
52. 'O my people, a I do not ask of you any reward therefor. My reward is not due except from Him Who created me. Will you not then understand?1432

53. 'And O my people, b ask forgiveness of your Lord, then turn to Him, He will send over you clouds pouring down abundant rain, and will add strength to your strength. And turn not away sinners.'1433

54. They said, 'O Hūd, thou hast not brought us any clear proof, and we are not going to forsake our gods merely because of thy saying, nor are we going to believe thee.'1434

1432. Commentary:
This verse reveals on the one hand an independence of spirit and an absence of any selfish motive on the part of the Prophet Hūd and, on the other, represents him as helplessly crying for God's mercy. Such, indeed, is the true nature of all holy men. In their attitude towards the men of this world they display complete independence of spirit, but before God they exhibit such humility and lowliness as if they are virtually nothing.

1433. Important Words:
 مدارا (pouring down abundant rain) is derived from دار which means, it (the milk) was or became copious or abundant; or it flowed copiously or abundantly. They say دار للامة i.e., the she-camel yielded her milk, or made it to flow, copiously or abundantly. دار للماء means, the sky poured down rain abundantly. دار, means, a sky pouring down abundance of rain. دار means, continual and uninterrupted sustenance (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:
This verse shows that the chief occupation of the people of 'Ad was agriculture and that they depended on rain-water for the cultivation of their land, there being no wells or canals to irrigate it. It also hints that the acceptance of a Prophet of God improves and betters not only the moral and spiritual condition of a people but also their material condition and leads to all-round progress and prosperity.

1434. Commentary:
It is strange that a people who themselves followed the most unreasonable practice of setting up equals to God and of associating partners with Him should have demanded from Hūd evidence in support of his monotheistic teachings. The onus of proof in fact lay on those who practised Shirk and not on those who denied it. They themselves practised Shirk for which they possessed no reasonable basis; yet when arguments were given in refutation of their creed they denied them as if they were great believers in arguments and never accepted anything without them.
55. 'We can only say that some of our gods have visited thee with evil.' He replied, 'Surely, I call Allah to witness, and do ye also bear witness, that I am clear of that which you associate as partners with God. 1435

56. 'Beside Him. So devise plans against me, all of you and give me no respite; 1436

57. 'I have indeed put my trust in Allah, my Lord and your Lord. There is no creature that moves on the earth but He holds it by the forelock. Surely, my Lord stands on the straight path. 1437

The words, merely because of thy saying, are expressive of great contempt. The opponents of Hûd meant to say that they could not give up their deities for the sake of such a contemptible person as he. As a matter of fact, evil-minded persons are ever wont to put a wrong construction even on sincere motives. Hûd's opponents misunderstood his exhortations and thought that his real object was not to preach the truth but to gain mastery over them. So they replied by saying that they would not forsake their idols for his sake and were not going to obey him.

1435. Important Words:

اصتن (have visited thee) is derived from the root اشت. They say (as also عاجأ), i.e., he came to him; or he repaired to him, seeking his aid or bounty. عاجأ means, the affair or event came upon him or befell him. اشت said of a malady or of a diabolical possession, etc. means, it befell or betided him; or it attacked him; or it was incidental to him. اشت also means, he or it rendered him possessed or insane or unsound in intellect or in some limb (Lane).

Commentary:
The words, I am clear of that which you associate as partners with God, constitute a strong reply to the allegation of unbelievers that their gods had caused Hûd's mind to become deranged. He says to them in reply that if they think that any of their gods has afflicted his mental powers, then let them know that he roundly condemned all their false gods and evil practices, and so let their deities do their worst against him.

The expression, I call Allah to witness, means, "You have refused to listen to reason. So now I pray to God that He may distinguish the truth from falsehood by mighty Signs from heaven."

1436. Commentary:
This verse should be read along with the preceding one, of which grammatically it forms a part. It has been separated from the former to impart emphasis to the words, Beside Him.

1437. Important Words:

باقم (by its forelock). مثام is derived from
58. 'If, then, you turn away, `I have already conveyed to you that with which I have been sent to you, and `my Lord will make another people take your place. And you cannot harm Him at all. Surely, my Lord is Guardian over all things.'

They say i.e. he caught hold of the man by his forelock. اهذئي الشعر means, the hair grew long. توايمي نومي انام means, the chiefs or nobles among men. The Arabs say i.e., such a one has humbled and disgraced the other. The Quranic expression لبد من دابة الا هو أخذ ناحيتها signifies that God holds all creatures in absolute power (Aqrab & Mufradiit).

**Commentary:**

By the words, my Lord and your Lord Hiid means that when God, Who is your Lord and Master is also my Friend and Helper, then how can I fear you who are only His servants, for servants can do no harm to the friend of their master.

The words, but He holds it by the forelock, refer to an ancient custom of the Arabs. When vanquished people were brought as captives before their victor, he often caught hold of their forelock and shook it in token of victory. Another custom among them was that when the victor desired to show mercy to the vanquished, he sometimes shaved their forelocks and then set them free. So the clause may mean both these things. It may mean that every human being is in the power and under the control of God; or it may mean that as an act of grace God has created man free. Thus the Quran reminds him that he is completely in the power of God and that it is only through His bounty and favour that he is permitted a free life; otherwise by his sinful deeds he forfeits his title to it.

1438. **Important Words:**

**حمزة** (Guardian) is derived from حمزة. They say i.e., he kept it, preserved it, guarded it or protected it; he prevented it from perishing or becoming lost. حمزة المري means, he kept the secret. حمزة القرآن means, he kept or fulfilled his oath. حمزة القرآن means, he committed the Quran to memory or he retained the Quran in his memory. حمزة or حمزة means, a keeper, preserver, watcher or guardian of a thing; one who is careful, mindful, attentive or considerate. حمزة is one of the attributive names of God and means the Preserver of all things; He from Whose preservation nothing is excluded (Lane & Aqrab).

**Commentary:**

The opponents of God's Prophets, in their ignorance, often think that by rejecting the Message of a Prophet, they can do him any harm. But in no way can they harm a divine Messenger. In fact, the rejection of a message can either harm the person who sends the message or the person to whom the message is sent. It cannot harm the bearer of the message. So the Prophet Hiid says that he is only a Message-bearer, and therefore he would come to harm only if he failed to deliver his Message, but as he has faithfully delivered the Message he need fear no harm. Again, the rejection of the Message by the
59. And when Our command came, We saved Hūd and those who believed with him, by Our special mercy. And We saved them from a severe torment.\(^{1439}\)

60. And these were 'Ād. They denied the Signs of their Lord and disobeyed His Messengers and followed the bidding of every haughty enemy of truth.\(^{1440}\)

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people can do no harm to God, Who is the Sender of the Message, for He is All-Powerful. So the only people who can come to grief by the rejection of the Message are those who reject it. If the people to whom it is originally addressed do not accept it, some other people will accept it and it will make them prosper. The divine Message can never go in vain.

By the words, my Lord is Guardian over all things, Prophet Hūd means to say that God will guard the teachings which He has sent through him. They also mean that the works of disbelievers are in the custody of God and they will have to render an account of them before Him.

1439. Important Words:

غلظ (severe) is derived from لحا which means, it was or became thick, gross, bulky or coarse. غليظ means thick, gross, etc. It also means rough or rugged; dense or deep; rough manners or conduct; rude, unkind, hard, or ill-natured; vehement or severe; intensely painful (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:
The words, by Our special mercy, point to a law of God that when a general calamity overtakes a country, both good and bad people become involved in it. But, as in the time of a Prophet these calamities visit the earth in order to testify to his truth, God so ordains that believers more or less remain immune from them. This comparative immunity of believers from such visitations is due to the special grace and mercy of God, which become, as it were, particularly excited in the time of a heavenly Messenger.

The words عذاب غليظ (severe torment) are intended to hint that disbelievers will not get immunity from the calamities notwithstanding their efforts; for, like one who gets stuck in thick and deep mud, they will not be able to extricate themselves from it. See the different meanings of the word غليظ above.

1440. Commentary:
The word ذك (these) points to the worldly greatness and grandeur of the tribe of 'Ād. It has been used to hint that although the 'Ādites were a powerful people, yet when they behaved insolently and wickedly and rejected the divine Messenger, they came to nought.
61. And a curse was made to follow them in this world, and on the Day of Resurrection. Behold! the tribe of ʿĀd behaved ungratefully to their Lord. Behold! cursed are ʿĀd, the people of Hūd! 1441

62. And to the tribe of Thamūd We sent their brother Šāliḥ. He said, 'O my people, worship Allah; you have no God but Him. He raised you up from the earth, and settled you therein. So ask forgiveness of Him, then turn to Him whole-heartedly. Verily, my Lord is nigh, and answers prayers.' 1442

1441. Important Words:

اتبعوا (was made to follow) literally means, they were made to follow. تبع means, he followed him. تبع! means, he followed and overtook him. تبعاً also means, he made him follow another (Lane).

Commentary:
The word لمعة (curse) when ascribed to God means "removing to a distance" or "casting away from mercy." In this sense the first sentence of the verse would mean that God will remove or cast away disbelievers from His mercy and they will not attain His nearness nor see Him on the Day of Resurrection.

The words, the tribe of ʿĀd behaved ungratefully to their Lord, comprise an extremely touching sentence and indicate how perverse and ungrateful were the ʿĀd that they refused to listen to the voice of their رب (Lord), Who brought them into being and then nourished and sustained them. Nobility of character demanded that they should have been grateful to Him, but by rejecting His Message, they set the seal not only on their ingratitude but also on their folly, because they consigned to oblivion the patent fact that He Who gave them greatness and glory could also degrade and debase them.

1442. Important Words:

جواب (answers prayers) which literally means answerer of prayers, is derived from جاب. They say جاب i.e., he made a hole through it; or he tore it or cut it; or he hollowed it out. جاب also means, he traversed or crossed or cut through (the land) by journeying. جاب also means, he answered or replied to him. جاب دعاه means, He (God) answered his prayer or accepted his prayer. جواب means, one who answers or replies. جواب is one of the names of God and means, the Answerer of prayers; He Who recompenses prayers by gift and acceptance (Lane). See also 2:187

Commentary:
Šāliḥ, the name of the Prophet sent to the tribe of Thamūd, being an Arabic word, shows that the Thamūd were an Arab people. It is futile to say that Šāliḥ may be the translation of a foreign name, for the Quran has adopted all foreign names without translating them. The names Mūsā (Moses), Hārūn (Aaron), Yūnus
(Jonah) and Zakariyya (Zachariah) may be cited as examples. The Quran further states that the Thamūd were successors to the ‘Ād (7: 75) which means that the ‘Ād were also an Arab race. Again, the ‘Ād, in their turn, have been spoken of in the Quran as successors to the people of Noah. This shows that Noah was also raised in an Arab territory and belonged to the Arab race. In fact, even historically it has been proved that Noah was raised in Mesopotamia, which territory was in early times under Arab rule.

The above fact leads to an interesting inference that Arabic was the language used by man in the beginning of the world, for when Arabia is admitted to be the cradle of the human race, the language of that country will have to be admitted as the mother of all languages.

European scholars hold that in the beginning there was such a language as Samiri, from which sprang Arabic and which subsequently became changed and distorted into other tongues. It is also admitted that Samiri was spoken in the south of Arabia. But the truth is that the different languages spoken in Mesopotamia and Arabia are all offshoots of Arabic.

The clause, He raised you up from the earth, does not mean that the people of Šālih were created from the earth. It only means: “You were a lowly and despised people, no better than the earth. Then God raised you to a high position, granted you prosperity and eminence, gave you power and dominion and entrusted to you the task of bettering and improving the condition of the world. In view of your immense responsibility, you should pray for the forgiveness of your errors, so that if there has been any remissness on your part in the discharge of your duties, God may pardon it. In that case, you will receive additional grace from Him.”

The verse points to the fact that all things tend to revert to their original condition. Man has been created from the earth and so he tends to revert to it. He should, therefore, bear in mind that he is weak by nature and it is only through the grace of God that he can prosper. So he should repeatedly turn to God that he may be able to maintain progress. Otherwise, his connection with God will become severed and he will drift back to his original low condition. By saying that God is “nigh” the verse warns man that God is very near to him. If he rejects His Message, He can quickly punish him, for His forces do not take long to come. One must not think that though God is near to man, He does not interfere in his affairs. This is clearly wrong; for God does interfere in the affairs of men, answers the prayers of those who call on Him, and comes to their aid.

A note on the tribe of Thamūd will not be out of place here. This tribe has been mentioned by Greek historians. They place it in a period not long before the Christian era. Hijr or Agrā, as they call it, is given as the home of these people, whom they call Thamudeni. They mention a place near Hijr which, according to them, the Arabs called Fajj al-Nāqa. Ptolemy (140 B.C.) says that near Hijr is a place known as Badanata. Abū Ismā‘īl, author of the Futūḥ al-Shām, says: “The tribe of Thamūd filled the land between Bosra (in Syria) and Aden and ruled there. Perhaps they were migrating to the north.” The tribes of Ḥimyar and Sabā had gained ascendency in Yemen. When the Thamūd who ruled in the south of Ahqāf were ejected from their land, they began to move northwards, first to the Hijāz, then to Tehama and lastly to Hijr. The author of the Tamadduni ‘Arab, however, says, “This is but a mere conjecture.” See also Enc. Isl. under Thamūd.

In fact, the Arabs think that the Thamūd were a branch of the ‘Ād, and, like them, lived in Yemen, and when Ḥimyar rose to
power, they drove them towards the Hijāz. This view, however, is not supported by historical evidence, for no trace of them has yet been discovered in the south. Al-Hijr has also been known as Mada’īn Sirīh or the cities of Sirīh from ancient times and archaeological discoveries show that it had become subject to the Nabataeans, who were natives of Petra, previous to the Christian era. There have been discovered here many inscriptions in the Nabataean language, and some also in the Yemenite language. Scholars versed in Oriental literature have named these inscriptions as Thamūdiyya, i.e., inscriptions belonging to the Thamūd. These discoveries lend support to the view of those geographers who hold that the Thamūd had migrated from the south to the north; for if it had not been so, their language would not have borne a resemblance to the Yemenite language.

Al-Hijr, which seems to have been the capital of these people, lies between Medina and Tabūk, and the valley in which it is situated is called Wādī Qūrā. These people held sway here. Speaking of the Thamūd, the Quran says: Who hewed out the rocks in the valley (89:10). The Quran represents them as the immediate successors of the ‘Ād (7:75). From 40:31,32, it appears that the Thamūd lived before the time of Moses.

Another consideration leads us to the conclusion that they lived even before the time of Abraham. Toward the end of their days they ruled over northern Arabia and southern Palestine. It appears from the Quran that in the time of Moses, these territories were dominated by the Midianites, who were descended from Abraham, Midian being the son of Abraham from Keturah, his third wife (Gen. 25:1,2). The descendants of Keturah lived in these parts, when Joseph was taken from the well and carried to Egypt. This shows that the Thamūd had altogether been destroyed or their power had greatly declined before the time of Abraham, otherwise the Midianites would not have been able to take possession of their territory.

It is worthy of note that accounts of the Prophets Hūd and Sālih have been given at various places in the Quran and everywhere the order observed is the same, viz., the account of Hūd precedes that of Sālih, which is the true chronological order. This shows that the Quran gives accurately and in their true historical order the facts of history long consigned to oblivion and wrapped in obscurity. This refutes the objection frequently urged against the Quran that it fails to observe true historical order in the narration of the events of history. According to some, Thamūd is only another name for ‘Adī Thāniya or the second ‘Ād, while according to others they came after the second ‘Ād. For further discussion of this subject see “Tafsir Kabir” by Hazrat Khalifatul Masih II, vol. 3, p. 219, where, when speaking of the chronological order of the Prophets, it is only Hūd and Sālih, who are prehistoric Prophets, that are really meant.

There is a tradition to the effect that some Muslims read a poetic inscription about the Thamūd during the reign of Mu‘āwiya. This tradition is discredited by European critics. The inscription, however, was rediscovered by Captain Haines and Mr. Wellstedt, in 1834. It was published in the Royal Asiatic Society Journal and was reproduced by Mr. Forester in his works. It is in the Ḥimyari language, which was originally a south Arabian tongue. Modern Orientalists call it the Ḥimyari inscription. It was discovered at Ḥiṣn al-Ghurāb, a place near Aden. The following is a translation of it:

No. 1.

“We dwelt, living long and luxuriously in the Zenanas of this spacious mansion: our condition exempt from misfortune and adversity. Rolled in through our channel
The sea, swelling against our castle with angry surge; our fountains flowed, with murmuring fall, above

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The lofty palms: whose keepers planted dry dates in our valley date-grounds; they sowed the arid rice.

We hunted the mountain-goats, and the young hares, with gins and snares; beguiling, we drew forth the fishes.

We walked, with slow, proud gait, in needle-worked many-coloured silk vestments, in whole silks, in grass-green chequered robes.

Over us presided kings far removed from baseness, and stern chastisers of reprobate and wicked men. They noted down for us according to the doctrine of Heber.

Good judgements written in a book to be kept; and we proclaimed our belief in miracles, in the resurrection, in the return into the nostrils of the breath of life.

Made an inroad upon robbers, and would do us violence: collectively we rode forth . . . . we and our generous youth . . . with stiff and sharp-pointed spears; rushing onward

Proud champions of our families, and our wives; fighting valiantly, upon coursers with long necks, dun-coloured, iron-gray, and bright bay.

With our swords still wounding and piercing our adversaries; until, charging home, we conquered and crushed this refuse of mankind”.

No. 2.

“With hostile hate, the men of crime
We assailed; onward rushed
Our horses, and trampled them under foot.”

No. 3.

“Divided into parts, and inscribed from right to left, and marked with points, this song of triumph, Sarash and Dzerah.

Transpierced, and hunted down, and covered their faces with blackness. Aws the Beni Ac” (Historical Geography of Arabia, p. 382. See also Enc. of Islam under Hisn al-Ghurab).

It is clear from the above that the Thamūd were a civilized people and they possessed not only a code of laws but also recorded their decisions to serve as an authority in future cases, as is done in modern civilized countries. It is difficult to say whether the people to whom the above inscription refers lived before the Prophet Sāliḥ or after him, for possibly a section of the people of Hūd may have been left behind in southern Arabia. At any rate it is a proven fact of history that these people were part of Thamūd tribe and it was among them or among their brethren who had migrated to the north that Sāliḥ was raised.

From 7: 75 it appears that the Thamūd ruled over plains and hills. Again, from 26: 148, 149 we learn that their country abounded in springs and gardens wherein grew date-palms of excellent quality and that they also cultivated lands and grew corn. Thus the Quranic account of these people is fully corroborated by the inscription quoted above.

Their decline seems to have begun soon after the time of Sāliḥ, for only a few centuries after his time their name fails to find mention among conquering and victorious nations. Arabia was invaded by an Assyrian king (722-705 B.C.) and the name Thamūd is found mentioned among the conquered tribes in an inscription which he caused to be engraved in memory of his victory. Of the Greek historians, Didorus (80 B.C.), Pliny (79 B.C.) and Ptolemy make mention of the Thamūd,
63. They said, 'O Șâliḥ, Thou wast among us one in whom we placed our hopes. Dost thou forbid us to worship what our fathers worshipped? And we are surely in disquieting doubt concerning that to which thou callest us.'

64. He said, 'O my people, tell me, if I stand on a clear proof from my Lord, and He has granted me mercy from Himself, who then will help me against Allah, if I disobey Him? So you will not but add to my destruction.'

When Justinian, the Roman Emperor, invaded Arabia, his army included 300 Thamūdi soldiers, but before the advent of Islam this tribe had become altogether extinct.

1443. Commentary:

The people of Șâliḥ here complain that they had hoped that he, promising and talented as he was, would bring them prosperity and glory; but, quite contrary to their expectations, he was going to ruin them by forbidding them to worship what their fathers worshipped. This threw them into disquieting doubt about the truth of his mission.

The above-mentioned expression of opinion by the people of Șâliḥ about him was no flattery. He really was the centre of their hopes, as are all Messengers of God who impress their people with their extraordinary talents and great righteousness of conduct from their very childhood, and such was the Holy Prophet of Islam. Abû Bakr, 'Ali, Zaid and Khadija all believed in him before they had any knowledge of the details of his teachings or had seen any Sign in support of his mission. They accepted him on the basis of the evidence that his life was spotlessly pure.

The words, And we are surely in disquieting doubt concerning that to which thou callest us, mean that, just as the taste of the mouth of a man who is suffering from some internal malady becomes vitiated, similarly, the hearts of these people having become corrupt, the very teaching which had come to remove doubts and misgivings appeared to them as creating doubts in their minds.

1444. Commentary:

Șâliḥ here answers the objection of his people mentioned in the preceding verse to the effect that, but for the doubts created in their hearts by his teachings, they would have taken him as their chief. His reply is that if he is a true Messenger of God, it would do him no good to forsake divine teachings and ally himself with them; it would bring on him only ruin and destruction.
65. ‘And O my people, “this is the she-camel of Allah as a Sign for you, so let her alone that she may feed in Allah’s earth, and touch her not with harm lest a near punishment seize you.”’

1445. **Commentary:**

Many legends have been woven round this ʿṭ (she-camel) of Ṣāliḥ. There is nothing in the Quran to lend support to these fanciful stories. One of these legends, for instance, is that she was miraculously born out of a rock in answer to a prayer of Ṣāliḥ when his people demanded from him a miracle and that she became pregnant at the time of her coming out of the rock, giving birth to a young one immediately after. The Quran, however, nowhere states that there was anything miraculous about her birth. On the contrary, it is clear from 26:154 & 159 that the birth of the she-camel was nothing out of the ordinary and that it was not her birth but the freedom of her movements that was held out as a Sign. If the birth of the she-camel had been in any way miraculous, Ṣāliḥ, on the demand of his people for a Sign, would have certainly referred them to that extraordinary happening. But, instead, he simply answered that the promised Sign would be shown to them, if they interfered with her freedom.

There can be three answers to the question, in what sense was the she-camel a Sign:

1. It was a custom in Arabia, as in some other countries as well, that a chief or king would let loose an animal as an emblem of his power and authority and would proclaim that any molestation with its free movements would be severely punished. In accordance with this ancient custom, Ṣāliḥ proclaimed, saying: “This she-camel is for you a Sign. If you molest it, you will be held as defying the authority of God and will consequently be visited with divine punishment.”

2. Interference with a beast may mean interference with its rider. To prevent an animal from proceeding on its way amounts to preventing its rider from proceeding on his errand. So when Ṣāliḥ said, *let her alone that she may feed in Allah’s earth,* he meant that he himself should not be hindered from going about in Allah’s earth for the discharge of his duty of preaching his mission. Ṣāliḥ wanted to go about in the land preaching the word of God, but his people would not allow him to do so. So he told them that the she-camel on which he would go on the mission of preaching the Message of God must be allowed free movement and any interference with her would be regarded as defying God’s purpose and would be met with heavenly punishment.

3. Ṣāliḥ had learned to his sorrow that mixing with his people generally led to disturbance. So in order to avoid contact with them he decided to withhold his animals from the common pasture-lands and selected for himself another grazing ground, which did not belong to these people. Similarly, he abandoned the usual time when his people watered their animals and fixed another time for his own she-camel to drink. After having taken all possible precautions to avoid occasions for disturbance at great personal inconvenience, he told his people that if, even in spite of these precautions, there was any disturbance it would certainly be held as a sacrilegious act.
on their part which would bring down upon them divine punishment. This interpretation is supported by the fact that old historical records contain references to a valley named 
(he valley of the she-camel) which is also mentioned in a book of geography written in 150 B.C. Old Greek historians give its name as Badanata which seems to be a corruption of 
(El Fajj al-Niqa). The name of this valley indicates that fixed a valley for his she-camel to graze in, separate from the one used by his people, so that she might not mix with their herds and thus disturbance might be avoided.

It might be asked, why should a Prophet of God have behaved like worldly kings and potentates and let loose animals to go and graze where they chose. The present verse embodies an indirect answer to this question, for it is nowhere mentioned in the verse that 's she-camel was to graze in other people's fields. The verse only says, let her alone that she may feed in Allah's earth, which obviously refers to land which was not the private property of any individual. So it was no private land in which 's she-camel was to graze but God's waste, watered with rain from heaven and indebted to no human labour for its cultivation.

It may further be asked why a whole nation was destroyed for killing a mere she-camel. This objection is also based on a clear misconception, for the cause of divine punishment was not the killing of the she-camel as such but the fact that the killing of the beast constituted an open challenge to , threatening his life and declaring that his people were out to defy God's authority. So it was not the killing of the she-camel, but the threat to 's own life and the obstruction to his moving about freely in the land with a view to preaching God's word that brought punishment on his people. See also 7:78.

1446. Important Words:

1446. Important Words:

a7:78; 26:158; 54:30; 91:5.

Commentary:

All the precautions which took proved futile. His persecutors assaulted and killed his she-camel and thus challenged and insulted the proclamation of God, consequently bringing on themselves the threatened punishment.

The respite of three days was probably meant as a last chance for repentance of which the unlucky people, however, did not avail themselves.
67. And when Our command came, we saved Siilih and those who believed with him by Our special mercy, and We saved them from the ignominy of that day. Surely, thy Lord is Powerful, Mighty.\textsuperscript{1447}

68. And a punishment overtook those who had done wrong, and they lay prostrate in their houses.\textsuperscript{1448}

\textsuperscript{1447} Important Words:

- القوى (Powerful) is derived from قوى meaning, he was or became strong; vigorous, robust or sturdy. قوى عليه means, he had strength or power sufficient for it; or he had strength or power to endure it; he prevailed against it. قوى which is the noun-infinitive from this root means, strength, power, potency, might or force. القوى therefore means, powerful, strong, mighty. القوى is one of the attributive names of God, meaning, Powerful, Mighty, etc. (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

Every punishment is a disgrace in itself. The addition of the words, the ignominy of that day, therefore shows that there were some special elements of disgrace in the visitation that overtook the people of Siilih.

\textsuperscript{1448} Important Words:

- الصيحة (punishment) is derived from مسح which means, he called out or cried vehemently or he shouted with his utmost force or power. مسح عليه means, he rebuked him. مسح بهم means, they were frightened or terrified. صاحت بهم means, they perished. صاحت الشجرة means, the tree became tall. صيحة means, a loud cry; punishment, castigation or chastisement; a hostile or predatory incursion by which a tribe is surprised (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

Seven different words and expressions have been used in the Quran to describe the punishment which overtook the tribe of Thamûd. In the verse under comment and in 54:32, the word used is صيحة (punishment); in 7:79, رحم (an earthquake); in 26:159, مأمة (chastisement); in 27:52, دمرتم (We utterly destroyed them); in 51:45, رعد (thunderbolt; any destructive punishment); in 69:6, طاغية (an extraordinary punishment); and in 91:15, دمع عليهم (their Lord destroyed them completely). Though the words and expressions employed to describe the visitation seem to be different in form, yet they possess no discrepancy in meaning. The only words which appear to be contradictory are راجف, سايفا, سأيم and تاغيا. As, however, the last three also mean punishment, therefore if the tribe of Thamûd were destroyed by means of an earthquake, all the above words may be rightly used to describe that catastrophe.
69. "As though they had never dwelt therein. Behold! Thamûd behaved ungratefully to their Lord; Behold! cursed are the tribe of Thamûd."\(^{1449}\)

70. And surely Our messengers came to Abraham with glad tidings. They said, 'We bid you peace.' He answered, 'Peace be on you,' and was not long in bringing a roasted calf.\(^{1450}\)

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**1449. Commentary:**

This verse is in substance part of the preceding verse, from which it has been separated to emphasize the greatness of the calamity that overtook the tribe of Thamûd.

It is interesting to note that while in v. 61 the account of the 'Ad concluded with the words, Behold! cursed are 'Ad, the people of Hûd, the verse under comment, which concludes the account of the Thamûd in almost identical words, simply says, Behold! cursed are the tribe of Thamûd, omitting the words "the people of Šâliḥ." It would be wrong to assume that the words قوم هود (the people of Hûd) were added in v. 61 for the sake of rhyme. The Quran never adds or omits words simply for the sake of rhyme; every word added or omitted has a definite purpose. In v. 61 the words "the people of Hûd" have been added to the word "'Ad" for an historical reason, for 'Ad is in fact the name of two tribes, the first 'Ad and the second 'Ad, and the words "the people of Hûd" have been added to show that it is the first and not the second 'Ad (nor in fact both 'Ad) that are meant there. But as Thamûd was the name of one tribe only, the words "the people of Šâliḥ" have been omitted, for their addition would have served no useful purpose.

**1450. Important Words:**

Abraham, the Great Patriarch, was the son of Terah. He was born at Ur of the Chaldees. It is difficult to say when exactly he lived. He is said to have died at the age of 175. Abraham is the progenitor of the two great peoples, the Israelites and the Ishmaelites, who equally revere him. Abraham's real name was Abram but after the birth of Ishmael, according to God's own command, he came to be called Abraham which means the "Father of a multitude" or the "Father of many nations." One branch of his progeny, the Israelites, lived in Canaan and the other, the Ishmaelites, in Arabia. In fulfilment of his famous dream, Abraham took his son Ishmael and his wife Hagar to the desert of Arabia where the posterity of Ishmael grew and multiplied and where in fulness of time and in conformity with God's promise to Abraham, the Holy Prophet of Islam, the greatest of all Prophets, appeared "to bring back the erring flock into the Master's fold!" (Gen. 10: 26—25: 10, & Jew. Enc.). To this fact the Holy Prophet has himself referred in one of his famous sayings viz. "I am the prayer personified of Abraham." (‘Asâkîr).
Commentary:

There exists a difference of opinion as to who were the “messengers” to whom reference has been made in this verse. Some hold them to be human beings, while others think they were angels. The former view appears to be the correct one, though they have been called “angels” by some for their piety, as Joseph is called “an angel” in 12: 32. In this connection see also 17: 96.

The reason why God chose these men to convey news of the impending punishment to Lot (see vv. 75 & 78) is not clear from the context, but one explanation appears probable. Both Abraham and Lot, who were closely related, were strangers in that land, and it is quite possible that God sent His word to some pious men of that locality that they might take Lot to a safe place before the visitation actually overtook his people. It should also be remembered that these “messengers” did not come to give the first warning of the punishment. The people of Lot had already been threatened with punishment (15:13-15 & 15:65). The “messengers” came only to inform Lot that the appointed hour of the threatened punishment had arrived, and to take him to a place of safety.

The mention of Abraham has been made in this Sūra only incidentally, to serve as an introduction to the account of the Prophet Lot which follows. It is the story of Lot that is primarily meant to be mentioned here, for this Sūra gives an account of only those Prophets whose people were visited with divine punishment. The reason why the story of Lot has been introduced with a reference to Abraham is that Lot was one of those persons who had believed in Abraham and had migrated to Syria with him; and, though he himself was a Prophet of God, he was subordinate to Abraham, as Ishmael and Isaac were subordinate to him and as Aaron was subordinate to Moses. Hence, when the “messengers” came with the news of the impending destruction of Lot’s people, it was only in the fitness of things that God should have first conveyed the news to Abraham, to whom Lot was a subordinate Prophet.

As the news about the imminent destruction of Lot’s people was conveyed to Abraham in his capacity as the senior Prophet—he himself being not directly concerned with the matter—it was accompanied by glad tidings about the inauguration of a race of good and righteous people through the birth of a son to Abraham. This was done with a view to mitigating the severity of the shock Abraham was likely to feel at the news of the imminent destruction that was to overtake Lot’s people.

It is also worth noting that though Lot was a follower of Abraham before he was made a Prophet, he was invested with this rank not through the spiritual medium of Abraham but directly by God, as were also Ishmael and Isaac and Aaron. All those were subordinate Prophets, but the rank of prophethood was conferred upon them directly by God and not through the instrumentality of Abraham or Moses. It is a special privilege and prerogative of the Holy Prophet of Islam that his followers can attain to prophethood through his spiritual influence.

The verse also throws interesting light on the hospitality of Abraham, for he did not tarry to ask the strangers whether they had partaken of food but hastened to bring a roasted calf for them.
71. But when he saw their hands not reaching thereto, he knew not what they were, and conceived a fear of them. They said, 'Fear not, for we have been sent to the people of Lot.'

72. And his wife was standing by, and she too was frightened, whereupon We gave her glad tidings of the birth of Isaac, and, after Isaac, of Jacob.

Commentary:
Abraham at first took the "messengers" to be ordinary wayfarers, but when they refrained from eating of the roasted calf he had placed before them (see the preceding verse), he realized that they were on some special mission which he had failed to understand. He knew that as ordinary wayfarers they could not refuse his hospitality, for wayfarers in that arid land entirely depended on the hospitality of the inhabitants for their food.

The words, conceived a fear of them, do not mean that Abraham was afraid of the strangers but that, when they did not partake of the food, he feared that he might have done something against the etiquette of hospitality and thus had displeased them. He did not, however, express his fear, for such an expression would have implied that he perhaps took them to be mean and greedy. The guests, it appears, read Abraham's perturbed state of mind from the uneasy expression of his face, so they at once removed his anxiety by telling him that they were in no way displeased and that the reason why they did not partake of food was that their dreadful mission had made them disinclined to eat.

This answer of the visitors also shows that they were not angels; for had they been angels, they would have said that being not human they could not partake of the food.

Important Words:
1451. لوط (Lot) may etymologically be taken to have been derived from لاط (Lot). They say لاط (Lot) i.e. he concealed the thing. لاط means, it (the thing) stuck or adhered to it. Lawwata-a-hu (lawwata-a-hu) means, he smeared him or it with much perfume. The Prophet Lot, who was the contemporary of Prophet Abraham, was the ancestor of the Palestinian peoples, Moab and Ammon. As the son of Haran and the grandson of Terah, he was Abraham's nephew. He joined Abraham in the land of Canaan and in the time of famine went with him to Egypt. He preached to the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah but they refused to listen to him and ridiculed and persecuted him; and though Abraham, to whom Lot was a junior and subordinate Prophet prayed for these wicked people and interceded with God on their behalf, they were destroyed on account of their iniquities and transgression (Lane, Enc. Bri. & Jew. Enc.).

1452. ضحك (she was frightened) is formed from ضحك which means: (1) he laughed; (2) he
73. 'She said, 'Oh, woe is me! Shall I bear a child when I am an old woman, and this my husband is an old man? This is indeed a strange thing!' 1453

74. 'They said, 'Dost thou wonder at Allah's decree? The mercy of Allah and His blessings are upon you, O people of the house. Surely He is Praiseworthy, Glorious.' 1454

wondered; (3) he was frightened or he feared. معجزة المراة means, the woman menstruated (Lane & Mufradat).

Commentary:

When Abraham's wife, Sarah, heard the sad news of the impending destruction of Lot's people, she was naturally frightened and her heart became filled with pain and pity for them.

Sarah's feeling of pity for Lot's people pleased God and He hastened to give her the glad tidings of the birth of a grandson (Jacob) in addition to the announcement of a son (Isaac) that had already been made to Abraham in v. 70.

The present verse also incidentally shows that it was not Isaac but Ishmael whom Abraham offered for sacrifice, for according to it God promised not only a son (Isaac) but also a grandson to Abraham. Thus Isaac, the promised son, was not only to live and marry but also to have a son who was to be called Jacob. It cannot therefore be supposed that God, Who had Himself announced that Isaac was to live and marry and beget children, should have commanded that the self-same Isaac be offered for sacrifice.

1453. Important Words:

(old woman) is derived from which means, he lacked strength or power or ability.

1454. Important Words:

(Glorious) is derived from which means, he was or became glorious, noble, in a
75. And when fear left Abraham, and the glad tidings came to him, he began disputing with Us about the people of Lot. 1455

76. 'Indeed, Abraham was clement, tender-hearted, and oft-turning to God. 1456

77. 'O Abraham, turn away from this. Surely, the command of thy Lord has gone forth, and surely, there is coming to them a punishment that cannot be averted.' 1457

state of honour or dignity. مجد as an epithet of God signifies the Glorious or Great, or Great in dignity Who gives liberally or bountifully or the Bountiful and Beneficent. When used about it signifies exalted; sublime; noble (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:
The Shia section of Muslims do not include the wives of the Holy Prophet in his جماع (people of his house) while in this verse the term is definitely applied to the wife of Abraham, because no child had yet been born to her. In fact, whenever this term is used in the Quran in respect of a Prophet, it invariably includes his wife or wives.

1455. Commentary:
The fear of Abraham was not concerning his own person but concerning the people of Lot, an evidence of his great righteousness and nobility of character. The news first came to Abraham as a great shock. He did not know what to do. But when he was given the cheering news of the birth of a son who was to be the father of a great nation, he felt some relief and then began to plead with God for the doomed people.

1456. Important Words:
- ممّب (oft-turning) is derived from ممّب. They say ممّب, i.e. he came to him time after time. ممّب means, he acted as his substitute; he served for him. ممّب or ممّب means, he turned to God time after time; he returned from disobedience to God; he returned unto God repenting. ممّب means, one who turns to God time after time; one who turns to Him repenting; a person making another supply his or another's place (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:
The verse constitutes a brief but eloquent and powerful tribute to Abraham.

1457. Commentary:
The tone of the divine reply shows God's great regard for Abraham. Instead of directly rejecting his request, God lovingly asks him to let the matter go, for His decree has already come to pass and the punishment could not now be averted.
78. And when Our messengers came to Lot, he was grieved on account of them and felt helpless on their behalf and he said, ‘This is a distressful day.’

79. And his people came to him running towards him trembling with rage; and before this too they used to do evils. He said, ‘O my people, these are my daughters; they are purer for you. So fear Allah and disgrace me not in the presence of my guests. Is there not among you any right-minded man?’

1458. Important Words:

felt helpless on their behalf (drā'ah 'amāram) is a peculiar Arabic expression. The Arabs say 'amāram which literally means, he stretched forth his arm to it but his arm did not reach it and he was unable to do or accomplish the thing or affair; or he lacked the strength or power to do the thing; or he found no way of escape from what was disagreeable in the affair (Lane).

Commentary:

Some Commentators hold the view that Lot’s trouble was due to the visitors having stayed with him against his will, refusing to leave his house. The truth, however, seems to be quite the reverse; for, as the Bible clearly states, when the strangers reached near Lot’s residence, he himself invited them to it as his guests, but, probably fearing lest by their stay he might be inconvenienced, they asked to be excused. This naturally pained Lot (Gen. ch. 19).

1459. Important Words:

came running trembling with rage (harah'ah) is derived from harah‘ah (hara‘a) i.e. he went to him quickly and in a perturbed state of mind. Harah‘ah (hara‘a) means, the man went quickly; and uhri‘ah (uhr‘a) means, the man was made to tremble with rage, fear, cold or weakness; he was made to go fast. The Arabs say, yuhra‘ah i.e. the old man came fast and trembling or came running in a perturbed state of mind. (Aqrab).

Commentary:

In ancient times, generally every town had a separate government of its own, which was carried on by the chiefs of the place by mutual consultation as a sort of republic; or by a king whose authority was confined to one village or a number of villages. The two towns, Sodom and Gomorrah, with which Lot was connected had such a government. They possessed no established government in the modern sense of the word (Gen. ch. 14).

The inhabitants of these two towns had adopted the calling of the road and used to plunder wayfarers (Jew. Enc. under “Sodom”). A people who thus molested their neighbours naturally had to be on their guard against them.
and to be constantly apprehensive of reprisals. Besides, the people of Sodom were practically in a state of war with their neighbours (Gen. 14). Therefore they would not allow strangers to enter their towns, lest the latter should open the gates at night and let in the enemy. Lot, like all Prophets of God, being an hospitable man, naturally used to look after the comfort of strangers and entertain them (15: 71). His people, apprehensive as they were, repeatedly warned him to give up that practice. So when, on this occasion, he brought strangers into his house, his townsmen became infuriated and hastened to him with angry faces, because they thought they now had a suitable opportunity to punish him for giving shelter to strangers in defiance of their protests.

Some Commentators say that these visitors had come in the form of handsome boys and that Lot’s people came running to him with evil intent. But there is nothing in the context to warrant such an inference. On the contrary in 15: 71 we read that on seeing the strangers with Lot, his people demanded of him why he had brought these strangers when they had already forbidden him to do so. If they had come with an evil intention, they should have rejoiced at the sight of the strangers and not been displeased at seeing them. Moreover, vv. 15: 68-70 signify that Lot’s people rejoiced at having an opportunity to punish and disgrace him because he defied their protests. They were angry with him because he had brought in the strangers against their protests and were glad that they now had an opportunity to settle old scores with him once for all.

The words, before this too they used to do evil, show that in view of their past mischievous behaviour Lot feared lest his people should do any mischief and thus disgrace him in the presence of his guests. There is no reference here to any particular mischief. They were wicked people, therefore Lot was naturally afraid that they might do harm.

When the townsmen came to Lot running, he referred to his two daughters who had been married in the town and said, they are purer for you, meaning that if his people insulted his guests and turned them out, they would thereby disgrace themselves; but if they, really entertained fear that he might do them harm in league with the strangers, they had his daughters in their custody and they could wreak vengeance on him by punishing them. That was a better and purer course for them to adopt, for in that way they would also avoid the disgraceful act of insulting the guests.

There can be nothing more absurd than to say that Lot offered his daughters to his wicked people to satisfy their lust. Even the meanest of men would not do such a shameful and dishonourable act; then how could a noble Prophet of God, who must possess a far greater sense of honour than ordinary men, stoop to such a mean course? The absurd story given in the Bible seems to be responsible for so stupid an interpretation of this Quranic verse by some Commentators.

Some other Commentators have suggested that Lot offered his daughters in marriage, but this explanation also seems unsatisfactory. It appears from the Bible that Lot had two daughters who were married. But if it be supposed that they were unmarried, they could be married only to two of the townsmen. How could then this offer give satisfaction to a large number of people? And how was it relevant to their demand?

There is, however, one explanation which seems plausible, if it be supposed that the people came with the intention which these Commentators ascribe to them. A Prophet is, as it were, the father of his people, so he can speak of their women as his daughters.
80. They answered, 'Thou surely knowest that we have no claim on thy daughters, and thou surely knowest what we desire.'

81. He said, 'Would that I had power to deal with you, or I should betake myself to a mighty support for shelter.'

So when Lot said to the people, "these are my daughters; they are purer for you," he, as a Prophet and an old man, must have referred to their own wives as his daughters, who, of course, were purer for them. He thus asked them to follow the lawful course rather than satisfy their lust unnaturally.

1460. Commentary:

When Lot told his townsmen that they had his daughters in their custody and that, if he did anything which was injurious to their interests they might avenge themselves on him through his daughters, he was in fact offering his daughters as hostages. Now, the rule with regard to hostages was that only males were accepted as such (Enc. Bri.) so the people told Lot that they could not take his daughters as hostages for that was against their custom and law. The words, we have no claim on thy daughters, clearly show that they had not come with the motives which most Commentators ascribe to them, for a people who had become so depraved and corrupt in their morals as the people of Lot were, could raise no question of claim or no claim, right or no right about the satisfaction of their carnal passions.

The words, thou surely knowest what we desire, mean, "You know that what we at present want is to prevent the coming of strangers, so to say that we should accept hostages and leave the strangers alone is an offer which we cannot accept."

1461. Important Words:

1. ركن (support). They say ركن إليه (rakana) i.e., he inclined to him or it; he trusted or relied upon him or it so as to become easy or quiet in mind; he leaned, rested or relied upon him.

2. ركن في المزل (rukn) means, he kept tenaciously to the abode and did not relinquish it.

Commentary:

Lot says that if he had possessed any power, he would have resisted these mischievous people; but he was powerless against them.

The words, I should betake myself to a mighty support for shelter, mean that now the only course left to him was that he should seek refuge with God and beg Him to send upon them His punishment.
82. The messengers said, '0 Lot, we are the messengers of thy Lord. They shall by no means reach thee. So depart with thy family in a part of the night, and let none of you look back, but thy wife. Surely, what is going to befall them shall also befall her. Verily, their appointed time is the morning. Is not the morning nigh?'

83. So when Our command came, We turned that town upside down and We rained upon it stones of clay, layer upon layer.

Commentary:
When the strangers heard Lot pathetically say to his people that he would pray to God against them, they, who had till then kept the matter secret, revealed to him that God had already decreed their punishment and that it was that decree which they had come to communicate to him. They also announced to him that the threatened punishment would not affect his family or followers who would be saved except his wife who was doomed.

The verse mentions the time of morning as the time of the coming punishment because the morning is generally the time of negligence and is thus best suited to remind wicked people of the real cause of divine chastisement.

Important Words:
- سجل (stones of clay) is derived from سجل (sajjala) which is again derived from سجل (sajala). They say سجل القرآن (sajjal al-Quran) i.e., he read or recited the Quran continuously.
- سجل القاضي (sajjal al-Qāzi) means, the judge decided judicially and recorded the sentence in his record. سجل ب means, he threw it from above.
- سجل (stones like lumps of dry or tough clay; stones of clay. The Quranic words من سجل من mean, stones of clay which had been written or decreed for them that they should be punished therewith (Lane & Aqrab).
- نضود (layer upon layer) is derived from نضد which means, he put goods or commodities one upon another, or he put or set them together in regular order; he put them one upon another or side by side compactly or he set them together in regular order (Lane).

It appears that the people of Lot were destroyed by a terrible earthquake. Violent earthquakes often turn parts of the earth upside down and fragments of earth fly off into the air and then fall down.

The expression, layer upon layer, suggests that the earthquake shocks were repeated over some length of time.
84. "Marked for them in the decree of thy Lord. And such punishment is not far from the wrongdoers of the present age."¹⁴⁶⁴

85. "And to Midian We sent their brother Shu'aib. He said, 'O my people, worship Allah. You have no God other than Him. And give not short measure and short weight. I see you in a state of prosperity and I fear for you the punishment of a destructive day."¹⁴⁶⁵

¹⁴⁶⁴. **Commentary:**

The words, *marked for them*, mean that it had been decreed from eternity that these stones should become the cause of the destruction of Lot's people.

The latter portion of the verse points out that the account of the destruction of the people of Lot has not been given here as a story but is intended to give a warning that a similar destructive punishment would overtake the disbelieving people of the Holy Prophet's time if they persisted in rejecting him.

It may also be noted here that there are some serious differences in the accounts about Lot as given in the Quran and the Bible: (1) The Bible represents Lot as a quarrelsome and jealous person, while the Quran says that he was a righteous servant of God. (2) The Bible says that the three visitors partook of the food presented to them by Abraham, declaring at the same time that one of them was God Himself, the other two being angels. The Quran denies all this. (3) According to the Bible, Lot offered his daughters for fornication, while the Quran declares that they were merely offered as hostages. (4) The Bible says that Lot's wife was turned into a pillar of salt but the Quran rejects all such puerile stories. Any sensible person can see which of the two accounts is more sensible and correct.

¹⁴⁶⁵. **Important Words:**

الد (destructive) is derived from حط. They say حط ، i.e., he guarded, kept, protected or took care of him or it; he defended him or he paid frequent attention to him or it. حط means, he or it surrounded, encompassed or enclosed it or him. They say حط i.e., such a one was destroyed, or his destruction drew near. The Quranic words حط and حط (destructive) mean, verily thy Lord hath men in His grasp or power, or He hath destroyed them or is about to destroy them. حط means, surrounding, encompassing or enclosing. The words حط mean, the punishment of a day which shall beset people on every side so that there will be no way of escape from it; or the punishment of a destructive day (Lane).

Midian (Midian) was a son of Abraham from his third wife, Keturah (Gen. 25:1,2). His descendants were all called Midian, in accordance with ancient usage. Or it may be that originally they were called "Banū Midian" (children of Midian) but these words
later became abbreviated into Midian. The metropolis of these people was also called Midian, which itself may be an abbreviation of some such name as Dūrī Mīdān (the houses of Midian). This town was situated on the Gulf of ‘Akaba, on the Arabian coast, at a distance of some six or seven miles from the sea. This is why in some ancient books of geography it is mentioned as a sea port, while in others it is shown as an inland town. The trade-caravans going from Arabia to Egypt passed through it. There are still several small townships known as Midian, but the original town no longer exists. The descendants of Midian lived in the north of the Hijāz and it is they who built this town. It was hither that Moses fled for refuge when Pharaoh and his nobles sought to kill him and it was in the neighbourhood of Midian that he stayed with the Israelites after crossing the Red Sea. The fact that the word مَدِينَة (Midian) possesses a close resemblance to مَدِينَة (Medina), the town of the Holy Prophet, constitutes one of the many similarities Moses had with the Holy Prophet. See also 7: 86.

Commentary:

Some Commentators think that Shu‘aib was the father-in-law of Moses and that Moses had gone to live with him after he had killed an Israelite. The Bible, however, gives the name of the father-in-law of Moses as Jethro (Exod. 3: 1). Now Jethro and Shu‘aib cannot be the same person, nor was Shu‘aib the father-in-law of Moses. The following facts support this view:

(1) Shu‘aib has been mentioned in the Quran at several places and so has the father-in-law of Moses, but nowhere in the Quran is there the slightest hint that Shu‘aib and the father-in-law of Moses were the same person nor has the father-in-law of Moses anywhere been referred to as a Prophet of God.

(2) The Quran clearly states that Moses was raised as a Prophet after the destruction of the people of Midian (7: 104), which definitely shows that they were not contemporaries.

(3) The Quran also states that Shu‘aib appeared not long after Lot, so he could not be a contemporary of Moses (v. 90 below).

(4) If Shu‘aib had been the contemporary and father-in-law of Moses, he would not have failed to refer to the destruction of Pharaoh and his people, which had taken place only recently, when he had referred to the destruction of the peoples of Noah, Hūd and Šāliḥ (v. 90), but he did not do so.

The following important facts about the people of Shu‘aib also emerge from this and other verses of the Quran: (a) that, like the Holy Prophet, it was chiefly at the hands of the people of his town that Shu‘aib met with opposition (7: 89); (b) that his people not only practised idolatry, but were also fraudulent in their dealings with one another; (c) that they were a well-to-do and prosperous people; (d) that they had adopted the calling of the road and were given to plundering and dacoity (7: 86 & 11: 86 below). As these people lived on the trade-route to Egypt, they used to plunder the caravans which passed by that way. This inference receives further support from the fact that near Midian there was a wood which was peopled by the descendants of Dedan, a nephew of Midian, being the child of another son of Abraham from Keturah (Gen. 25: 3). These people are referred to in the Quran as سُبُلُ الْأَرْضِ i.e. the People of the Wood (15: 79 & 26: 177) and Shu‘aib preached to them as he preached to the people of Midian (26: 178-192). From 15: 80 it appears that this wood or jungle lay on a trade-route, so it served as a good hiding-place for the people of Midian to plunder travellers.

The words, the punishment of a destructive day, signify that the punishment of that day will be thoroughly destructive. The words may
86. "And O my people, give full measure and full weight with equity, and defraud not people of their things and commit not iniquity in the earth, causing disorder."1466

87. 'That which is left with you by Allah is better for you, if you are believers. And I am not a keeper over you.'1467

88. They replied, 'O Shu'aib, does thy Prayer bid thee that we should leave what our fathers worshipped, or that we cease to do with our property what we please? Thou art indeed very intelligent, and right-minded.'1468

also mean that the day will not end until the whole people are annihilated. See the meaning of the word مٌٰٰٓٓ (destructive) above.

1466. Commentary:
The verse hints at the importance of fair and just dealings, especially in business matters.

1467. Commentary:
The word بِعَيْن (that which is left) is used to express goodness and perfection. The term بِعَيْن is applied to a person who is one of the best men of his people or community. See also 2: 249. The word بِعَيْن therefore, here signifies wealth earned by fair and honest means and in accordance with the laws of God. It may also mean God-given powers and capabilities.

By the words, I am not a keeper over you, Shu'aib warns his people that they should not remain under the illusion that he would be able to save them from divine punishment. The words embody the implication that such is the goodness of the Prophets of God that disbelievers, notwithstanding their hostility towards them, look upon them as a source of protection and blessing.

1468. Commentary:
The words, does thy Prayer bid thee, etc. have been spoken ironically. Shu'aib's opponents mean to say that they see nothing good in him except that he is given to the saying of Prayers and has no concern with the affairs of the world, not even knowing how to work and earn a respectable living. Should they too give themselves up to praying, which to him was the chief business of life, and part company with their hardly-won wealth and worldly honour? They were not going to be so foolish as to act upon his advice.
89. He said, "O my people, tell me if I stand on a clear evidence from my Lord, and He has provided me from Himself with a handsome provision, what answer will you give to Him? And I do not desire to do against you the very thing which I ask you not to do. I only desire reform as far as I can. There is no power in me save through Allah. In Him do I trust and to Him do I turn."

90. 'And O my people, let not your hostility towards me lead you to this that there should befall you the like of that which befell the people of Noah or the people of Hûd or the people of Sâlih; and the people of Lot are not far from you.'

1469. Important Words:
- تقوى (power) is the noun-infinitive from وَفَقَ (waffaqa) which is the transitive form of the verb وَفَقَ (waffaqa). They say وَفَقَ أَمْرُهُ (waffaqa-amr) i.e., his affair or case was right or agreeable with what was desired. وَفَقُّ (waffaqa-hu) means, he disposed or adapted him to a thing; or he made him fit for it. وَفَقَتْ اللَّهُ (waffaqa-lahu) means, God disposed or directed him to the right course; or He made him to take or follow the right course; or He directed him by inspiration to that which was good. تقوى means, being disposed or directed to take the right course or being granted fitness or power to do the right thing (Tâj).

Commentary:
This verse contains an answer to the jibes of Shu'âib's opponents. He says to them: "It is not my Prayers but my God Who bids me preach to you. Now let me know if the word of God should come to me with truth and He should, out of His bounty, provide me with lawful sustenance, have I not then a right to exhort you to righteousness and to prohibit you from things which I have shown you to be injurious?"

This verse also sheds light on the position of a heavenly Messenger. Every Messenger of God has to face similar difficulties. In the beginning people show impatience at his preaching. They think that he wants to exercise authority over them and to bring compulsion to bear upon them. The second stage is that of indifference when they leave him alone. But neither the impatience nor the indifference of his opponents can stop a Prophet from preaching his Message. He carries on his work with unabated zeal in all circumstances till God crowns his efforts with success.

1470. Commentary:
This verse shows that Shu'âib came after Noah, Hûd, Sâlih and Lot (and for that matter after Abraham also), but lived before the time of Moses, for he does not here speak of the people of Moses, although Moses lived with his people in the very territory of the people of Shu'âib. See also note on v. 85 above.
91. 'And *seek forgiveness of your Lord; then turn to Him wholeheartedly. Verily, my Lord is Merciful, Most Loving.'

92. They replied, 'O Shu'aib, we do not understand much of that which thou sayest, and *surely we see that thou art weak among us. And were it not for thy tribe, we would surely stone thee. And thou holdest no strong position among us.'

1471. Important Words:

وُدُودُ (Most Loving) is derived from ردود, i.e., he loved him or it. They say ردود لو كان كذا, i.e., I wished that it had been so. ردود, ودود (wud), ود (wid) and ودود (mawaddat) as also ودود (wadad), ودود (wadd) and ودود (wudad) are all infinitive nouns meaning love and affection. ردود, ودود (wud) and ودود (wad) also mean a person loved, an object of love. ردود, ودود (wud) and ودود (wad) also mean a person who loves much; very loving or affectionate. الودود is an attribute of God meaning, the Loving towards His servants; Very Loving or Most Loving; also He Who is beloved in the hearts of His servants (Tāj & Aqrab).

Commentary:

It is often asserted by the opponents of Islam that it encourages sin as it keeps open the door of repentance. This objection is based on a misunderstanding of توبة, i.e., Islamic repentance. توبة does not consist in merely uttering the words "I regret" or "I repent" and then thinking that one's sins will be forgiven. Such is not the Islamic conception of repentance. Islam does not recognize that transition from evil to virtue or ascent from a lower grade of virtue to a higher one can be attained in one jump. These conditions are attained through many stages of spiritual development. When a sinner turns to God, he begins by subjecting himself to a sort of inner stock-taking which makes him feel a sense of shame or contrition as a result of which he endeavours to seek shelter in God. This is the stage of استغفار. Then comes the stage of استغاثة, i.e., seeking divine protection from the evil consequences of one's misdeeds. Finally there is the stage of توبة (repentance) which signifies turning to God and loving Him with heart and soul and establishing a true connection with Him. In short, توبة (repentance) does not mean mere verbal asking for forgiveness but constitutes one of the several stages which a man has to traverse when he eschews evil and turns to virtue or when he ascends from one stage of virtue to a higher one. It is difficult to find fault with this concept of توبة (repentance) and only one ignorant of human psychology can take exception to it.

The grades and stages of spiritual development briefly referred to above are all described in the Quran in detail.

1472. Important Words:

رهط (thy tribe) means, a man's people or tribe consisting of his nearer relations or near kinsfolk; a number of men less than ten
93. He said, 'O my people, is my tribe mightier with you than Allah? And you have cast Him behind your backs as neglected. Surely, my Lord encompasses all that you do.'

94. 'And O my people, act as best you can, I too am acting. You will soon know on whom befalls a punishment that will disgrace him, and who it is that is a liar. And wait; surely, I wait with you.'

among whom there is no woman; or a number from three to ten or from seven to ten. كم في المدينة رهط means, there were in the city nine men (Lane).

1473. Commentary:

The Prophets are very jealous about the honour of God. Any one else in Shu'aib's place would have been glad to see that his clan was so powerful that his enemy refrained from doing him harm out of fear of his tribesmen. But it makes Shu'aib indignant that his security from harm has been ascribed to his clan and not to the protection of God, and he sharply rebukes his opponents by saying: "Is my clan more powerful than God so that you are afraid to harm me because of them but you do not fear God and continue to disobey Him by indulging in plunder and fraud?" Shu'aib does not mind, by thus despising his own clan, running the risk of estranging them or making them angry. Only one thought holds sway over his mind and that thought relates to the honour of his God.

The Holy Prophet also never failed to display his love and jealousy for God in a manner worthy of his great spiritual position. One such opportunity occurred at Uhud when the Muslims suffered a temporary defeat and the infidels, thinking that the Prophet had been killed, shouted slogans glorifying their national idol, Hubal. On that critical occasion, when considerations of safety demanded complete silence, the Holy Prophet rebuked the Muslims for keeping silent and urged them to glorify God at the top of their voices.

1474. Important Words:

&amp; (as best you can). See 6 : 136.

Commentary:

The words, act as best you can, I too am acting, mean that they should go on working according to their own lights and plans, and he could work as guided by his faith. The results would show who was working in accordance with God's will and who was seeking to defy and frustrate His purpose.

In fact, Prophets of God always ask their people to leave the matter to God and wait for His decision, but their opponents always seek to take the matter into their own hands. The result invariably is that their efforts to destroy the Prophet and his followers prove futile and they themselves are destroyed.
95. And when Our command came we saved Shu'aib, and those who had believed with him by Our special mercy; and *chastisement* seized those who had done wrong, so that they lay prostrate in their houses.  

96. *As though they had never dwelt there.* Behold! how Midian were cut off, even as Thamūd had been cut off.  

97. And, surely, *We sent Moses with Our Signs and manifest authority,*  

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**1475. Commentary:**  
Shu'aib lived in a territory where earthquakes were frequent. So it is quite possible that, as the words apparently show, his people should have been visited with an earthquake: but the word سُبْحَانَ (for which see v.68 above) may also mean any other punishment and the words, *they lay prostrate in their houses,* may have been used in a figurative sense, meaning that their power was broken by some dreadful visitation and they met with disgrace and humiliation, as if thrown into the dust.  

**1476. Commentary:**  
See 11:61, 69 above.  

**1477. Commentary:**  
As already stated, the present Sūra discusses the history of only those Prophets whose peoples were ultimately destroyed. The present and the following few verses deal with Moses' mission to Pharaoh and his people who rejected him and therefore met with destruction. The Sūra makes no reference to the Israelites, for the obvious reason that they believed in Moses and became heirs to divine blessings.  

Incidentally, it may be noted here that the Biblical account of Moses as given in Exod. chapters 2, 3 & 4, differs from the Quranic description in several points:—  

1. According to the Bible, Moses was not cast into the river, but was concealed under a basket in the bushes by the side of the river (Exod. 2:3). According to the Quran, however, he was cast into the river (20:40). The name Moses, as explained in Exod. 2:10 supports the Quranic version, for Moses was so called because he “was saved from water.” See also note under 2:54.  

2. According to the Bible, the Egyptian who died at the hands of Moses was killed by him intentionally (Exod. 2:11,12), while according to the Quran, Moses did not strike the man with the intention of killing him. The man died only accidentally (28:16). Thus the Bible represents Moses as a wilful murderer, while the Quran acquits him of this heinous act.  

3. According to the Bible, Moses saw two Hebrews quarrelling with each other (Exod. 2:13,14); while the Quran says that one was a Hebrew and the other an Egyptian (28:19).
4. The Quran differs from the Bible in the details of the incident at the well. The Bible says that there were as many as seven daughters of the priest of Midian at the well. (Exod 2: 16), while according to the Quran there were only two (28: 24). Again, according to the Bible, the girls filled their troughs to water their father's flock, but the shepherds came and drove them away (Exod. 2: 16), while according to the Quran the girls kept themselves and their flock away owing to modesty (28: 24). Again, the Bible represents Moses as standing up against the shepherds and helping the girls (Exod. 2: 17), while according to the Quran, there was no standing up against the shepherds on the part of Moses; he only watered the flock of the girls (28: 25).

5. According to the Bible, Moses was bidden to take his people out of Egypt without apprising Pharaoh of their flight. He is, in fact, represented as playing a trick on Pharaoh and deceiving him (Exod. 3: 18). But the Quran represents him as being bidden by God to go to Pharaoh and ask him to let the children of Israel go with him (20: 48).

6. According to the Bible, Moses bade the Israelite women to borrow from their Egyptian neighbours their ornaments, their gold, their silver and their raiment with a view to robbing them of their valuables (Exod. 2: 22). According to the Quran, they were not bidden by God to take the ornaments from the Egyptians; they did so deceitfully and were themselves responsible for the deceit (20: 88).

7. The hand of Moses, says the Bible, was white and its whiteness was due to leprosy (Exod. 4: 6). According to the Quran, his hand was indeed brightly white, but its whiteness was not due to any disease. It constituted a divine Sign (20: 23).

8. The Bible represents Aaron not as a real brother of Moses or his brother from the side of his mother, but a brother in the sense that he was a member of the Levite family (Exod. 4: 14). The Quran, however, represents him as a real brother of Moses, or at least his brother from the side of his mother (20: 95).

9. According to the Bible, Aaron took part with the Israelites in taking the calf for an idol; nay, it even represents him as the very author of the calf-worship (Exod. 32: 35). But the Quran exonerates him of this charge (20: 91).

It is unnecessary to remark here that both reason and recent research in history agree that of the two versions the Quranic one is correct.

In fact, Christian writers themselves have admitted the inaccuracy of the Biblical account (Enc. Bri. under "Moses"). The writer of this article declares that a great part of the Ḥāmūrābī teaching has been incorporated in the Pentateuch. He also considers the Biblical account showing Aaron as having taken part in calf-worship as spurious and a later addition, and infers that there have been other similar interpolations in the Bible.

The word Harūn (Aaron) has no significance in Hebrew. According to modern scholars, the name is to be found in the languages of North Arabia (Enc. Bri.). This shows that the Hebrews had, till then, some connection with Arabic, their original tongue.
98. "To Pharaoh and his chiefs; but they followed the command of Pharaoh, and the command of Pharaoh was not at all rightful."

99. He will go before his people on the Day of Resurrection and will bring them down into the Fire, even as cattle are brought to a watering-place. And evil is the watering-place arrived at.

1478. Commentary:

Pharaoh, as already stated, was not the name of any particular monarch (2: 50). It was the title of the rulers of Egypt. The ruler of the Nile valley and Alexandria was called Pharaoh. This title was in vogue before the conquest of Egypt by the Romans. As, after the advent of the Romans, the government of the country passed into foreign hands, the title of Pharaoh fell into disuse, for the foreign conquerors adopted their own titles.

It also appears that Pharaoh was not the title of the rulers of one dynasty only. Kings of many dynasties which ruled over the valley of the Nile and Alexandria in succession for about four thousand years bore this title. The Pharaoh during whose reign Moses was born was also, like the Israelites, a foreigner in the country, and therefore always feared lest they should multiply and help the original inhabitants of Egypt in expelling him and his people from the land or should rebel against him (Exod. 1: 9-10).

1479. Important Words:

`اور` (bring them down). The word `اور` as well as `اور` (watering-place) and `اور` (arrived at) are all derived from `اور`. They say `اور` i.e. he (a man or a camel, etc.) came to it, or arrived at it, namely water, whether he entered it or not. `اور` means, he came to or arrived at it (water, town, etc.).

Commentary:

The verse means to say that all that Pharaoh did for his people was to bring them to the verge of Hell and cause them to fall into it. As shown under Important Words, the word `اور` (will bring down) is generally used with reference to water but here it has been used in connection with fire in order to point out that instead of obtaining water, which is the source of physical and spiritual life (21: 31), these people
100. And a curse was made to follow them in this life and on the Day of Resurrection. Evil is the gift which shall be given them.\textsuperscript{1480}

101. \textasciitilde{}That is of the tidings of the ruined cities, We relate it to thee. Of them some are standing and some have been mown down like the harvest.\textsuperscript{1481}

**Commentary:**

The word \\textit{\textsuperscript{a}}\textsuperscript{28 : 43} (curse) is not used here as a term of abuse, but in its original sense of “driving away” or “casting away by way of punishment” (Mufradât). The verse would therefore mean that, as these people remained away from God in the present life, so, as a punishment, they will be kept away from Him in the life to come. The moral of the verse is that by following in the footsteps of a wicked man, one is disgraced both in this and in the next life.

The word \\textit{\textsuperscript{b}}\textsuperscript{20 : 100} (lit. gift or support or aid) may also refer to Pharaoh. In this case the verse would mean that Pharaoh whom his people took as their means of support against God proved an evil support for them; for he not only landed them into Hell, but himself went into the Fire with them.

**1480. Important Words:**

\textit{\textsuperscript{a}}\textsuperscript{28 : 43} (gift) and \textit{\textsuperscript{b}}\textsuperscript{20 : 100} (which will be given them) are both derived from \textit{\textsuperscript{a}}\textsuperscript{28 : 43} (rafada). They say \textit{\textsuperscript{b}}\textsuperscript{20 : 100} i.e. he gave him, or he gave him a gift; he aided, helped or assisted him; he aided or assisted him by a gift or by a good saying or by some other thing. \textit{\textsuperscript{a}}\textsuperscript{28 : 43} (zard al-hatt) means, he propped up or supported the wall. \textit{\textsuperscript{b}}\textsuperscript{20 : 100} (which is the passive participle from this root, means, he who is given a gift, etc.; or that which is given as a gift, etc. (Lane & Aqrab).

**1481. Important Words:**

\textit{\textsuperscript{a}}\textsuperscript{28 : 43} (cities) is the plural of \textit{\textsuperscript{b}}\textsuperscript{20 : 100} and means, (1) the people of the towns; or (2) the towns themselves (Aqrab).

\textit{\textsuperscript{b}}\textsuperscript{20 : 100} (mown down like the harvest) is derived from \textit{\textsuperscript{a}}\textsuperscript{28 : 43} (zard al-\textsuperscript{b}\textsuperscript{20 : 100}). They say \textit{\textsuperscript{a}}\textsuperscript{28 : 43} i.e. he reaped or cut the harvest with a scythe. \textit{\textsuperscript{b}}\textsuperscript{20 : 100} means, he mowed down the people with the sword. The proverb \textit{\textsuperscript{a}}\textsuperscript{28 : 43} \textsuperscript{b}\textsuperscript{20 : 100} means, he who sows evil reaps repentance. \textit{\textsuperscript{a}}\textsuperscript{28 : 43} means, reaped seed-produce; mown down with the sword like reaped seed-produce; an harvest that is cut or mown down; also the lower part of the harvest which remains after the latter is cut down (Lane & Aqrab). See also 6 : 142.
102. And *We did not wrong them, but they wronged themselves; and their gods on whom they called beside Allah were of no avail to them at all when the command of thy Lord came; and they added to them naught but perdition.1482

Commentary:

In the first mentioned sense of the word قَرِى (standing) would mean that the progeny of these peoples lived after them and thus, as it were, continued to stand; and in the latter sense it would mean that the remains of some of these towns are still to be found while others have become totally extinct. Similarly, in this sense the word حَمَد (mown down like the harvest) would mean “a people who have become totally or nearly extinct.” If, however, the word قَرِى is taken in the sense of “towns,” the word حَمَد would signify, “towns whose traces have become wholly or nearly extinct.”

The verse means that the remains of some of the towns mentioned are still extant, while others have become wholly or nearly obliterated. Consequently, if the ruins of some of the towns mentioned in this Sūra cannot be found, the truth of the Quranic narratives cannot be called into question, because the Quran itself uses the word حَمَد (mown down) with regard to them. If, however, in some future time, archaeologists succeed in discovering the ruins of some towns now extinct, the Quranic account would still be beyond doubt, for the word حَمَد (mown down) is also used with regard to a harvest that has been cut down with a scythe, the lower part of which still remains visible. See also 10:25.

1482. Commentary:

The Quran repeatedly emphasizes the fact that God never punishes a people unjustly and that it is their own misdeeds that bring down punishment upon them. It denies the theory of predestination or of man’s being the victim of a blind fate. It also contradicts the view that God makes nations rise and fall arbitrarily, without just or real cause. This is why, wherever the Quran speaks of punishment, it does not fail to add that punishments or rewards are the results of men’s own doing. This is what is hinted at in the words, And We did not wrong them but they wronged themselves.

The verse also points out that of all things it is their idols that are of absolutely no use to idolaters. All other things in nature such as fire, snakes, poisons, etc. have their uses. The swords of disbelievers were also of some service to them, because with them they killed some Muslims, but what proved of entirely no use to the idolaters were their gods, upon whom they had staked their whole future.

The words, and they added to them naught but perdition, do not contradict the well-known Quranic dictum that idols can do disbelievers neither good nor evil, for where the Quran denies that idols can do harm, it is intentional harm that is meant; but where it says that idols do serious harm to their votaries, as in the present verse, it means involuntary or unintentional harm, for what greater sin there can be than committing Shirk, (idol-worship) of which idols are the unconscious cause.

The words “but perdition” also point to the moral that Shirk generally renders idolaters lax
103. "Such is the grasp of thy Lord when He seizes the cities while they are doing wrong. Surely, His grasp is grievous and severe.\textsuperscript{1483}

104. "In that surely is a Sign for him who fears the punishment of the Hereafter. That is a day for which all mankind shall be gathered together and that is a day the proceedings of which shall be witnessed by all.\textsuperscript{1484}

\textsuperscript{1483} Commentary:
This verse gives the reason why all the foregoing events—the destruction of the people of Noah down to Moses—have been related. The reason is that when the punishment of God overtakes a people, they are simply annihilated. The enemies of the Holy Prophet are told by implication that they should take warning from the fate of the opponents of former Prophets.

The word 
\textsuperscript{1484} Commentary:
The word "Sign" is not used here in the sense of "proof" of the Day of Judgement but in the sense of "a lesson." The verse thus means that those who believe in the punishment of the future life can alone learn a lesson from the events related above. When such people witness heavenly visitations in this life, they are naturally reminded of the punishment of the life to come and, being actuated by divine fear, they begin to strive more earnestly for the future life.

The words, for which all mankind shall be gathered together, signify that a day fixed for holding judgement is necessary for the moral and spiritual development and perfection of man. It is not therefore a means to an end but an end in itself. The assembling of men on that day is not accidental. It is deliberate and serves a definite and useful purpose.

In fact, as it appears from the Quran, human actions are not quite independent, but are influenced by environment and heredity; and, in order to judge a particular action rightly, it is necessary to take into consideration all
105. And We delay it not save for a computed term.\textsuperscript{1485}

106. \textsuperscript{a}The day it comes, no soul shall speak except by His permission; then some of them will prove unfortunate and others fortunate.\textsuperscript{1486}

the conditions and circumstances which lead to and influence it. So, for the full realization of the true nature of a man's actions and to show that the seemingly unfair and inexplicable discrimination in dealing out different punishments and rewards to different persons is not capricious and arbitrary but perfectly just and fair, being based on the extent to which the individual is independent and free in his actions, it is necessary that there should be fixed a certain day when all men should assemble with all the conditions and circumstances under which they worked and the various causes and reasons that led to their actions, so that these circumstances and causes may be jointly considered while determining the nature of their rewards and punishments. Thus it may become apparent to all that no injustice or unfairness was observed in meting out those punishments and rewards.

1485. Commentary:

\textsuperscript{a}78:39.

1486. Important Words:

\textbf{\textit{\textsuperscript{a}}} (unfortunate) means, unprosperous, unfortunate, unhappy or miserable; or in a state of straitness, distress, adversity or difficulty. According to Al-Râghib \\
\textsuperscript{a}shârâ' (unprosperousness, etc.) is of two kinds: (a) \textsuperscript{a}hârâmât \textsuperscript{a}i.e. that relating to the world to come, and (b) \textsuperscript{a}dînî \textsuperscript{a}i.e. that relating to the present world; and the latter is of three kinds: (1) \textsuperscript{a}tâmi \textsuperscript{a}i.e. relating to the soul; (2) \textsuperscript{a}bûnî \textsuperscript{a}i.e. relating to the body and (3) \textsuperscript{a}zhâri' \textsuperscript{a}i.e. relating to external circumstances (Lane).

\textbf{\textit{\textsuperscript{b}}} (fortunate) means, prosperous, fortunate, happy or in a state of felicity. Al-Râghib also divides \textsuperscript{b}sûrât (prosperity, etc.) as he describes \textsuperscript{b}sâ'\textsuperscript{b}d\textsuperscript{b}a\textsuperscript{b} for which see note on \textsuperscript{a}shâr\textsuperscript{a} above (Lane).

Commentary:

The verse signifies that the day referred to in v. 104 above is the Day of Retribution when judgement will be set up and none will dare speak in his defence except by the command of God, because on that awful day everyone will have fully realized that any pleading or protesting before the Omniscient God is useless. But God, out of His great mercy, will Himself ask the guilty to adduce excuses calculated to mitigate their own offences or the offences of their companions and to bring their virtuous deeds into greater relief. This will result in clearer classification of the wicked and the virtuous.
107. As for those who will prove unfortunate, they shall be in the Fire, wherein there will be for them sighing and sobbing.\footnote{1487}

108. Abiding therein, so long as the heavens and the earth endure, excepting what thy Lord may will. Surely, thy Lord does bring about what He pleases.\footnote{1488}

\footnote{1487}{Important Words:}

\indent زئير (sighing) is the noun-infinitive from which means, he drew in his breath vehemently, so that his ribs became pushed out; or he drew in his breath to the utmost by reason of distress; or he sent forth his breath with a prolonged sound; he sighed or uttered a long sigh or sighed vehemently; or he groaned; or he breathed, raising his voice like one moaning or in grief. They say \textit{i.e.} the fire made a sound by its burning or its fierce burning. \indent زئير means, the ass brayed. \indent زئير means, the sound of drawing in of breath by reason of distress; sighing; beginning of the cry of an ass; the sound of burning fire (Lane & Aqrab).

\indent شهق (sobbing) is derived from which means, it rose high or became high or elevated or lofty; or he (an ass) uttered the ending of his braying or the final sounds thereof. They say \textit{i.e.} the sound of weeping became reiterated in his chest. \indent شهق means, the ass uttered the ending of his braying or the final sound thereof; the ass brayed. \indent شهق signifies, the ending or final part of the crying or braying of an ass, whereas \indent زئير signifies the beginning thereof. \indent شهق also signifies a high-sounding moaning; a cry of distress (Lane & Aqrab).

\footnote{1488}{Commentary:}

By using about disbelievers the words زئير and which are particularly used for the braying of an ass, the verse compares them to this timid and stupid animal. A big load of books carried on the back of an ass, says the Quran (62: 6), does not make him learned. So do those who are indifferent to truth remain destitute of true knowledge and spirituality even if they are crammed with book-lore. Similarly, like an ass which, according to the Quran, is a timid animal (74: 51,52), disbelievers have not the courage of their conviction. They fail to accept the truth either because they refuse to derive any benefit from God-given knowledge or because they have not the courage to accept what they believe to be the truth. The words زئير and شهق also signify sighing and moaning by reason of distress.

\footnote{1488}{Commentary:}

See next verse.
109. "But as for those who will prove fortunate, they shall be in Heaven; abiding therein so long as the heavens endure and the earth, excepting what thy Lord may will—a gift that shall not be cut off."  

1489. Important Words:

- ضَرْبُ جَذَّدُ (that shall not be cut off) is derived from جَذَّدَ. They say جَذَّدَ i.e. he cut it off; or he cut it off utterly; or he cut it off utterly and quickly; or he cut it repeatedly or in many pieces; he broke it. ضَرْبُ جَذَّدُ means, (a gift, etc.) not cut short or not interrupted i.e. continuous and everlasting (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

The present verse and that which precedes it throw light on an important question in which Islam differs from other religions, viz. the question of salvation.

According to the Hindu religion, both Heaven and Hell (i.e. reward and punishment) possess a limited duration; and man, after undergoing the punishment, or reaping the reward, of his deeds, is sent back to this world. Although some Hindu sects disagree among themselves regarding certain details, they are all agreed on the fundamental principle that both the punishments and rewards of the next world are temporary. Of the Semitic religions, Judaism denies Paradise to all non-Jews while Jews are regarded as almost free from the torture of Hell, for, according to Judaism, no Jew will remain in Hell for more than 11 months, whereas non-Jews will abide in it for ever. According to Christians, both Heaven and Hell are eternal, although some of their sects hold the belief that Heaven will at last come to an end (Tafsir Kabir). Islam, however, fundamentally differs from all these religions. The great leaders of Muslim religious thought in the past have generally believed and Hazrat Ahmad, the Promised Messiah, in our own age has particularly insisted that Heaven is eternal and everlasting, while Hell is temporary and of limited duration. The sayings of the Holy Prophet support this view. For instance, Ahmad bin Hanbal quotes a saying of the Holy Prophet, as reported by 'Abdullah bin 'Abbâs, as saying: "There will come on Hell a day when its shutters will strike against each other and there will be none in it. That will happen after the inmates of Hell will have lived in it for centuries" (Musnad). Thus, according to this tradition, the word دَارُ السَّلْطَانَاتِ (abiding) used with regard to Hell only means "remaining for long centuries". The same view was held by Ibn Mas'ûd and Abû Huraira. According to Ibn Taimiya, 'Umar, Ibn 'Abbâs, Anas and many Commentators are of the same opinion.

With reference to the word دَارُ السَّلْطَانَاتِ (abiding) used in the Quran in connection with Hell some eminent religious authorities think that it does mean "abiding for ever". They however, hold that though wicked disbelievers will deserve to be kept in Hell for ever, Hell itself will one day cease to exist through God's mercy, and when there is no Hell, there will naturally be no dwellers in it. Among the supporters of this view are Ibn Taimiya and Ibn al-Qayyim (Fath).
The saying of the Holy Prophet quoted above on the authority of 'Abdullah bin 'Amr, is also reported by Abī Huraira, which fact adds to its weight and authenticity. In another tradition Ibn Mas'ūd says: 

يأب عيَّن علَّم يعَتِّق أبَي أباه

i.e. “There will certainly come upon Hell a time when its shutters will strike against each other,” meaning that it will be untenanted. Jābir, Abī Saʿīd Khudrī and 'Abdullah bin 'Umar are also reported to have made a similar statement (Fatl).

Abī Saʿīd Khudrī quotes a long ḥadīth of the Holy Prophet which clearly shows that Hell is not eternal. According to this tradition the Holy Prophet is reported to have said that on the Day of Judgement God would give permission to different high-placed persons to intercede for sinners. At last common believers also will be given permission to intercede on their behalf. At first, they will intercede for those whom they know. Then, with God’s permission, they will also intercede for other sinners who have some faith left in their hearts, until at last they will intercede even for those who have only a grain of faith in their hearts. Then only those will be left behind in Hell who had never done anything good. Then will God say: “The angels have interceded, and the Prophets and the Faithful have interceded and now it is My turn, the Most Merciful of the merciful ones.” Then will God take a handful from the Fire and take out of it even those who never had done any good deed (Bukhārī & Muslim).

This ḥadīth hints that finally a time will come when all men will be taken out of Hell, for when even those who never did any good deed are removed from the Fire, who else will remain behind? Moreover, God’s handful is not a physical thing. The word implies indefinite comprehensiveness and nothing can be considered to have been left out of it. It also appears from this saying that sinners will be punished first for their sins and, when they have been washed of their sins, they will be rewarded for their good deeds which, till then, will have been kept in reserve. The verse, whoso does good an atom’s weight will see it (99:8), also points to the same conclusion.

The different traditions quoted above show that many Companions of the Holy Prophet and their immediate successors held the view that Hell is not eternal and the Quran also supports this view. The following are some of the Quranic proofs in support of it:

(1) Though the words, excepting what thy Lord may will, have been used with regard to both Heaven and Hell (vv. 108 & 109), in the case of Heaven the words, a gift that shall not be cut off, have been specifically added in v.109 in order to show that there is no limitation upon the eternity of Heaven. In the case of Hell, on the other hand, they are followed by the clause, Surely thy Lord does bring about what He pleases (v. 108). These words are very emphatic and imply that the inmates of Hell must necessarily be taken out of Hell one day. If they were not to be taken out of Hell at all it was unnecessary to make the declaration so emphatic by using three words of emphasis, viz. ان (surely) رَبُك (thy Lord) and فَعَلْت (does bring about), the last word being the intensive form of فعل and meaning the Great Doer of things that others cannot do.

Again, if Hell, like Heaven, was to be eternal, then its mention should also have been followed by some such words as “a punishment that shall not be cut off”. It is true that as about Hell, so with regard to Heaven, it has been said that its inmates will abide in it as long as God wills, but in the case of the dwellers of Heaven it has been clearly added that God’s eternal will is that they should never be deprived of this favour and that their stay in Heaven should know no end. But no such declaration has been made with regard to Hell. This differentiation is so clear that even Ibn
Hajr, whose view is opposed to Ibn Taimiya's with regard to Hell being not eternal, has been compelled to admit that whereas with regard to the inmates of Heaven God has made known His will which is that they shall abide therein for ever, with respect to the dwellers of Hell He has remained silent. But even the statement that God has remained silent with regard to the inmates of Hell is not correct, for by saying, *Surely thy Lord does bring about what He wills*, the Quran declares that in the case of the inmates of Hell God will carry out His wish which is implied in the words, *excepting what thy Lord may will*.

(2) The second evidence of the limited duration of Hell is furnished by the words *إِلاَّ مَنْ رَحَمْ رَبَّكَ وَلَدَ النَّاسَ خَلَقْتَ* i.e. *except those to whom thy Lord shall show mercy and for this has He created them* (11: 120). It has been admitted by eminent authorities such as Ibn 'Abbas, Tā'ús, Mujahid, Daḥḥāk, Qatāda, and 'Ikrima that the pronoun *ذَالِكَ* (this) in the above words refers to *رَحْمَة* (mercy) meaning that God has created men in order to show mercy to them (Kathir, Manthūr and Taḥāvi). Now, if it be supposed that some men will remain in Hell for ever and will never be taken out of it, then these wretched people cannot be said to have been shown any mercy.

(3) Whereas elsewhere in the Quran one meets with such expressions about Heaven as, *they will surely have a reward that will never end* (41 : 9; 84 : 26; 95 : 7), no such expression has been used with regard to Hell, which points to a clear distinction between the duration of the rewards of Heaven and the punishment of Hell.

(4) The Quranic expression *رحمتي رستت كل شيء* i.e. *My mercy encompasses all things* (7 : 157), also shows that the punishment of Hell is only an intermediate condition and a transitory state and that even those whom God punishes will in the end become covered by His mercy and will be forgiven. The above expression represents God's mercy as comprehending not only all human beings, but also all other things. The same idea is expressed in 40 : 8, where it is said that God comprehends all things in His mercy and knowledge. If it be supposed that certain persons can remain out of the mercy of God by being subjected to everlasting punishment, it will have to be admitted that certain things can also escape the knowledge of God, for knowledge and mercy have been mentioned in the verse side by side. But it is absurd to suppose that anything can escape the knowledge of God; therefore it is equally absurd to believe that any thing will remain permanently deprived of God's mercy.

It should, however, be remembered that temporary punishment is not inconsistent with divine mercy. The very fact that punishment is to last for a limited period shows that it will be reformatory; and it is clear that punishment which is meant to be reformatory is only a manifestation of divine mercy, from which no human being can remain deprived even for a single moment. This is contradictory to the belief in the eternity of Hell.

(5) The following verses of the Quran also support this view: *I have created the Jinn and men only that they may serve Me* (51 : 57), and *Enter then among My servants and enter then My garden* (89 : 30, 31). Now if all men in the end are to become God's servants, for man cannot permanently be kept away from the object for which he has been created, and if all God's servants will eventually enter Heaven the falsity of the view that Hell is eternal becomes quite clear.

(6) The sixth evidence of the limited character of Hell is to be found in the verse, *Whoever does an atom's weight of good will see it* (99 : 8). Now a mere alleviation of punishment cannot be truly called the “seeing” of one's good works. Hence, in order that men should see their works in completion i.e. should meet with the reward of their good actions, it is necessary
110. So be not in doubt concerning that which these people worship. They only worship as their fathers worshipped before, and We shall surely pay them in full their portion undiminished.\textsuperscript{1490} that they should first be punished for their evil deeds by way of reformation and should afterwards receive the reward of their good actions.

(7) The verse, \textit{As for him whose scales are light, Hell will be his mother} (101:9,10), constitutes further strong evidence in support of the view that Hell is not eternal. In this verse Hell is compared to a mother and it is well known that the child does not remain in the mother's womb for ever. It only remains there until the formation of its body and organs becomes complete. Similarly, those unfortunate persons who are cast into Hell will remain there until the time when the faculties which fit them for seeing the beautiful face of the Lord have become fully developed. This verse thus makes it clear that Hell is not eternal and that the word \textit{abiding} (abiding) in the verse under comment does not denote an unending time but only a long time, as is also clear from the verse, \textit{who will tarry therein for ages} (78:24).

The words, \textit{So long as the heavens and the earth endure}, only mean "so long as the heaven and the earth of Paradise and Hell last"; so when Hell came to an end, heaven and earth will also naturally cease to exist.

\textbf{1490. Commentary:}

The words, \textit{So be not in doubt concerning that which these people worship}, have two meanings:

(1) Do not wonder at their worshipping gods other than Allah, \textit{i.e.} do not think that it is impossible for these people to worship any other being beside God, for a man is apt to commit such folly in respect of beliefs which he inherits from his forefathers and to which he does not give his personal consideration. Taking the words in this sense, they will be understood to have been addressed to the people of the age and will be taken as speaking of the time when \textit{Shirk} (idol-worship) will have disappeared from the world and belief in the unity of God will have prevailed everywhere. Thus the words contain a prophecy that a time will come when belief in the unity of God will become so paramount that it will become difficult to believe that people were ever given to idolatry.

(2) Or the verse may be taken to be addressed to every reader of the Quran, who is told here not to think that those people who are associating gods with Allah will escape punishment, for they are following in the footsteps of their predecessors and when the latter were punished for their guilt, there is no reason why their successors should escape punishment. In this case the clause would read somewhat like this: "Be not in doubt concerning (the punishment of) that which these people worship."
111. And We certainly gave Moses the Book, but differences were created therein; and had it not been for a word already gone forth from thy Lord, surely the matter would have been decided between them long before; and now these people are in a disquieting doubt concerning it.1491

112. And surely the works of all these have not yet been requited but thy Lord will certainly repay them in full, according to their works. He is surely well aware of all that they do.1492

1491. Commentary:
Towards the end of the Sūra the Quran reverts to the theme with which it began and declares that God continued to send down His word in the ages so that people might benefit by it but they always failed to do so. God gave a book to Moses and that book spoke of another book (i.e. the Quran) which was to be revealed later, but people raised doubts about it and did not pause to think that their attitude would produce grave results.

The words, Surely the matter would have been decided between them long before, mean that so serious was their guilt that if there had not been a decree pre-ordained, that mankind had been created for spiritual progress by becoming the object of divine mercy (7:157; 11:120; 51:57), they would have long been destroyed.

1492. Commentary:
There is no difference of opinion as to the meaning of the verse, but grammarians have differed as to the significance of the particle ٌ (not yet). Different authorities have expressed different opinions as to the use of this particle here, but the correct opinion seems to be the one expressed by Ibn Ḥajib and supported by such eminent authorities as Ibn Hishām, and Abū Ḥayyān. According to these authorities ٌ as used here is the particle known as Jāzīmah in Arabic grammar, meaning “not yet” with a verb understood after it. This verb may be deduced from the context. According to Ibn Hishām, the verb understood is ٌ (i.e. their works have not yet been requited), and this appears to be the most suitable interpretation. With this interpretation of the particle ٌ the verse would mean that although the evil works of disbelievers have not yet been requited and God is granting them respite, the day will surely come when He will repay them in full.
113. "So stand thou upright, as thou hast been commanded, and also those who have turned to God with thee; and exceed ye not the bounds O Believers; for surely He sees what you do." 

1493. Commentary:

This verse shows that mere outward observance of the commandments of God is not productive of good results; it must be in full accord with divine will. The offering of the prescribed Prayers and the observance of Fasts, for instance, are not the object of religion. The real object of religion is that man should live in accordance with God's will. Unless this is done and all actions of man are actuated by a desire to please God, he cannot hope to win His favour.

The verse also shows that it was not the Holy Prophet only who was required to mould his own life in harmony with divine will. It was also his duty to see that all those who believed in him followed his example. This dual responsibility equally lay on his Successors, even on all the Faithful who are not only themselves required to act upon divine commandments but are expected to make others attain a high standard of spiritual progress.

The magnitude and heaviness of this responsibility is self-evident. It is tremendous both as regards its depth and vastness. It is no easy task to observe faithfully all the commandments of God and at the same time to make one's companions do the same. But the importance of this injunction becomes all the more augmented when the fact is taken into consideration that the commandments are to be acted upon in the way in which God requires, as hinted at in the words, as thou hast been commanded.

Another inference which can be drawn from this verse is that the Faithful are to take the Holy Prophet as their model and to follow his example. The words, So stand thou upright as thou hast been commanded, and also those who have turned to God with thee, mean that the Faithful are to act uprightly in the same way as the Holy Prophet is commanded to do. The high moral standard to which believers are required to rise is thus the one set up for the Holy Prophet himself. It is clear that the verse does not say that believers are to be upright in the way in which they themselves are commanded but that they have to act uprightly in the way in which the Prophet is commanded. This definitely shows that believers are to take the Holy Prophet as their exemplar and have to try to come up to his standard.

The far-reaching effect which this verse had on the Holy Prophet himself is clear from his own words. He is reported to have said: "The Sūra Hūd and its sister- Sūrās have rendered me aged before my time" (Manthur). Abū ‘Ali Sirrī is reported to have said that he once saw the Prophet in a dream and asked him whether he had really said that the Sūra Hūd had made him old? The Holy Prophet replied in the affirmative, upon which Abū ‘Ali further asked whether it was the stories of the Prophets and the destruction of their peoples that had aged him. The Holy Prophet said: "No, but the words, 'So stand thou upright as thou hast been commanded,' have done it" (Baihaqi).

The reason why this verse weighed so heavily on the Holy Prophet’s mind was that it was not only his immediate followers but
114. And incline not toward those who do wrong, lest the Fire touch you. And you will have no friends beside Allah, nor shall you be helped. 1494

115. And observe Prayer at the two ends of the day, and in the hours of the night that are nearer the day. Surely, good works drive away the evil ones. This is a reminder for those who would remember. 1495

the generations that were to come long afterwards whose spiritual progress he was made responsible for. It was the full realization of this grave responsibility that weighed heavily on him and rendered him old prematurely. But it appears that this high sense of responsibility so pleased God that He took upon Himself the fulfilment of this responsibility and promised the Prophet that He would continue to raise from among his followers men who, by following in his footsteps, would attain nearness to Him and would reform his people in his name.

The verse also points out how necessary it is that Muslims should become organized into a homogeneous and evenly advanced community. A Muslim can easily exhort his neighbours to virtue, but he cannot convey his exhortation to Muslims scattered all over the world. It is only through a perfect organization that this supreme and stupendous task can be accomplished. By helping to maintain such an organization, a Muslim becomes part of it and a sharer in the work carried on by it in any part of the world. The Ahmadiyya Movement is, by the grace of God, the living example of such an organization in the world today.

The injunction to see that our fellow-men should, like us, follow the right way also implies the need of the proper upbringing of our children as well as the care of future generations.

1494. Commentary:

In the previous verse we were told that we should not only reform ourselves but also our fellow-men because man is influenced by his environment, and if our surroundings are corrupt, the corruption thereof is sure to affect us sooner or later. So in the present verse we are enjoined to sever all connexion with the wicked and the unjust even though they may be our own kith and kin.

The present verse is also connected with the words, exceed ye not the bounds, occurring in the previous verse. In the light of the verse under comment these words do not mean that we exceed the bonds only when we have actually committed an act of injustice, but we are equally guilty of injustice if we are accessory to another man's unjust act in any way or if we defend him when he happens to commit an offence.

1495. Important Words:

1495. Important Words:

1495. Important Words:
or tract; a part, portion, piece or bit of a thing.

means, generous or noble in respect of both male and female ancestors.

(plural of طرق الارض) means a man's father and mother and brothers and paternal uncles and any near relations whom it is unlawful for him to marry; noble or exalted men.

means, the noble or exalted men or the learned men of the earth or land.

means, two ends of the day i.e. morning and afternoon or the morning as well as afternoon and late afternoon (Lane & Aqrab).

زاف من الليل (hours of the night that are nearer the day). زاف is derived from زاف which i.e. he did the thing previously or beforehand. ازاف means, he made or brought or drew him or it near. They say ازاف الاشام i.e. he collected the things together. زافا which is the plural of زاف means, nearness with respect to rank, degree or station; or simply rank or grade; a portion of the first part of the night, whether small or large. It also means, hours or periods of the night commencing from the daytime, and the hours or periods of the daytime commencing from the night; or hour or period joining day and night at both ends (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

The preceding verse spoke of the responsibilities of the Holy Prophet and those of his followers. As full acquittal of such heavy and onerous responsibilities is beyond human power, the verse under comment suggests some methods which can help a Muslim successfully to discharge them. The first method suggested is Prayer and worship of God, because one urgently needs God's help for discharging such heavy tasks. By Prayer favourable divine decrees come into operation.

The words, Surely good works drive away the evil ones, suggest effective ways by which evils can be overcome and eradicated. The setting of a good example is one of them. It wins the hearts of men and makes them copy it. In this way the emulation of good makes evil gradually disappear. It is actions and not words that can overcome evil and efface it. Very few persons follow an independent line of action. A vast majority of them only follow and imitate others. Therefore a good example is an excellent way of establishing virtue in the world.

Another method implied in these words is that we should exhort people to virtue. The proper preaching of good greatly helps men to shun evil ways.

The doing of good to people and treating them with kindness is yet another method which goes a long way to inclining the hearts of men to good works. A kindly and beneficent deed done to a person in need makes him give ear to advice. This is the third way suggested in this verse.

In addition to these methods for the preaching and propagation of good, the words, Surely good works drive away the evil ones, also contain a sure guidance for the spiritual progress of the workers themselves. If a person desires to get rid of an evil habit, he should begin to practise a corresponding virtue. In this way he will soon get rid of his evil habit. The words also tell us that to avoid the evil consequences of our misdeeds we should practise more and more virtue. The more virtue we practise, the more secure will we become from the consequences of our evil deeds.

Incidentally, the verse also hints at the different times of Prayer prescribed for the Faithful. They are deducible from the words طرق البار (two ends of the day) and زاف من الليل (hours of the night that are nearer the day).
116. And be thou steadfast; for surely Allah suffers not the reward of the righteous to perish.1496

117. Why, then, were there not among the generations before you persons possessed of understanding who should have forbidden corruption in the earth—except a few of those whom We saved from among them? But the wrongdoers followed that by which they were afforded ease and comfort, and they became guilty.1497

1496. Commentary:
This verse tells us another great secret of individual and national success. This consists in constancy and steadfastness, which are essential conditions for success.

1497. Important Words:

اولوٰا بیع (persons possessed of understanding).

ِبیع is derived from بیع which means, he or it remained, lasted, endured and was or became permanent or perpetual. They say بیع i.e. a remnant, relic or residue of the thing remained. The Arabs say بیع i.e. such a one is of the best of people, for it is the best that lasts.

اولوٰا بیع means, persons possessed of excellence, or persons possessing a relic of judgement and intelligence, or persons of understanding and discrimination, or persons possessing a quality of watching or observing and, hence, of guarding and preserving (Lane & Aqrab). See also 11: 87.

اترسوا (they were afforded ease and comfort) is derived from ترسف which means, he enjoyed or led a plentiful and a pleasant or an easy and delicate life; or a life of ease and plenty. They say ترسف i.e. wealth—made him behave exorbitantly; or to be excessively disobedient or rebellious; or to exalt himself; be inordinate in infidelity; or to be extravagant in acts of disobedience and in wrongdoing. ترسف means, the man persisted in, resolved upon, transgression, wrongdoing and deviation from the right way (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:
This verse makes a feeling reference to a serious but general mistake. It purports to say that, when experience had shown that man has a tendency to become corrupt, why did not the wise men among past generations recognize this responsibility about their own people and at the outset warn them of the evil consequences of their bad deeds and thus nip the evil in the bud. But instead of doing this they allowed the evil to grow, with the result that their people became totally corrupt and depraved. These people, instead of learning a lesson from the fate of their predecessors, lost themselves in pursuit of the paltry things of the world and the result was that they ranged themselves with wrongdoers and became estranged from God.
118. And thy Lord is not the One Who would destroy the cities unjustly while the people thereof were righteous.\(^{1498}\)

119. And if thy Lord had enforced His will, He would have surely made mankind one people; but they would not cease to differ;\(^{1499}\)

120. Save those on whom thy Lord has had mercy, and for this has He created them. But the word of thy Lord shall be fulfilled: 'Verily, I will fill Hell with the disobedient Jinn and men all together.'\(^{1500}\)


1498. Commentary:

The verse clearly shows that it is unjust to punish any people unless they make themselves deserving of it by their misdeeds. It is a pity that inspite of the fact that various kinds of afflictions and miseries have fallen upon present-day Muslims, they persist in thinking that they are following the right path. This, in other words, means that they look upon God as unjust and themselves as righteous. The important lesson that we learn from this verse is that as punishment comes only when people become corrupt, therefore when people see signs of an impending punishment they should take a warning from it and should at once set about eschewing evil practices and reforming themselves.

As the word مصلحوين (righteous) also means "making peace among themselves", the verse also shows that the way to avert divine punishment is that people should make peace among themselves and there should be unity and concord among them. In fact, decline and degradation overtake a people only when they are rent by dissensions and discord and fall victim to various kinds of moral and spiritual maladies.

1499. Commentary:


1500. Commentary:

The words, for this has He created them, mean that it is for mercy that God has created men. This interpretation is supported by 7 : 157.

The words, the word of thy Lord shall be fulfilled, show that it is only the followers of Satan and evil-doers that will be cast into Hell. The verse does not at all mean that all men will be thrown into Hell. In the words, the word of thy Lord shall be fulfilled, God mentions a promise, so the verse must be interpreted in harmony with that promise. But no promise is to be found in the Quran to the effect that all men will be cast into Hell. On the contrary, there is a definite promise in which it is said that Hell will be filled with those who follow Satan (7 : 19). It is to this promise that the verse under comment refers, for the Quran makes mention of no other promise except this.
121. And \textit{all of the tidings of the Messengers,} whereby We make thy heart firm, We relate unto thee. And herein has come to thee the truth and an exhortation and a reminder for believers.\footnote{1501}

122. And \textit{say to those who believe not: 'Act as best you can, we too are acting.}'\footnote{1502}

123. 'And \textit{wait ye, we too are waiting.}'\footnote{1503}

So the verse means only that those who follow Satan will be thrown into Hell.

It was stated in the previous clause that God had created man for mercy. Now the question naturally arose, if man had been created for mercy, why were men to be cast into Hell? The present verse answers this question by saying that it is true that man has been created for mercy, but it was also declared that this promise of mercy would not be fulfilled immediately with regard to people who followed Satan. These companions of Satan will first be thrown into Hell on account of their affinity with him, and after they have been purged of their sins, they will go to Heaven. Moreover, the preceding verse speaks of disbelievers \textit{"who would not cease to differ"}. So the Jinn and men spoken of here are none but the wicked among them. For a discussion of the Jinn see 15 : 28.

1501. \textbf{Commentary}:

This verse clearly proves that the accounts of the previous Prophets have not been narrated in the Quran merely as simple facts of history, but contain prophetic allusions to similar incidents that were to occur in the life of the Holy Prophet. If it had not been so, how could these accounts be said to bring satisfaction to his mind and \textit{"make his heart firm."} It was only when these accounts were to be taken as future incidents of his own life, that they could bring satisfaction to the Holy Prophet. In these accounts he saw how his enemies were to behave towards him, how they were to be discomfited and how his cause was to triumph in the end. As he was the representative of all previous Prophets, therefore, more or less, he was to pass through all the experiences through which his predecessors in the prophetic office had passed.

1502. \textbf{Commentary}:

The Holy Prophet is here commanded to say to disbelievers that bootless quarrelling and fighting serves no useful purpose. Time will show who is in the right and who is in the wrong by the results that the actions of Muslims and their opponents produce.

1503. \textbf{Commentary}:

The verse hints that it is believers who, being the aggrieved party, have reason to show impatience and demand the speedy arrival of divine punishment and not disbelievers; but actually it is the latter who are getting impatient.
124. And to Allah belongs the hidden things of the heavens and the earth, and to Him shall the whole affair be referred. So worship Him and put thy trust in Him alone. And thy Lord is not unmindful of what you do.\footnote{1504}

\textit{Commentary:}

This verse with which the present \textit{Sūra} concludes means to say that though the great prophecies made in this \textit{Sūra} about the ultimate triumph of Islam and the discomfiture of disbelievers appear to be incredible and impossible of fulfilment at the present time, yet nothing is impossible with God and these prophecies will surely soon come to pass. In the words, “worship Him”, believers are reminded that although the word of God has foretold the final triumph of Islam, yet they should remember that God is a jealous God and their failings and shortcomings may defer and postpone the fulfilment of these promises. Therefore they should engage themselves in the worship of God and in prayer and at the same time have full trust in His promises.
CHAPTER 12

YūSUF
(Revealed Before Hijra)

Date Of Revelation And Context

According to most Companions of the Holy Prophet, the whole of this Sūra was revealed at Mecca; but, according to Ibn 'Abbas and Qatāda, verses 2 to 4 were revealed after Hijra.

As already pointed out, Chapter 10 (Sūra Yūnus) deals with both aspects of God's dealings with man—His punishment and mercy. But while Chapter 11 (Sūra Hūd) deals with the subject of divine punishment, the present Chapter deals with that of divine mercy. The Sūra dealing with God's punishment has been placed before that dealing with His mercy because the enemies of the Holy Prophet were shown mercy after they had been punished for their misdeeds.

Subject-Matter

The present Sūra, however, possesses one peculiarity. The whole of it deals with the life-story of only one Prophet—Joseph. In this it differs from any other Sūra. The reason for this peculiarity is that the life of the Prophet Joseph bears a close resemblance to that of the Holy Prophet even in minor details. The entire Sūra has been devoted to a somewhat detailed account of the Prophet Joseph's life that it might serve as a fore-warning of the incidents that were to occur during the life-time of the Holy Prophet.

In Chapter 10 the story of the Prophet Jonah was chosen as an illustration of divine mercy, while in the detailed account given in the present Chapter the example of Joseph has been cited as an illustration. Two reasons may be given for this: (1) The lives of Jonah and the Holy Prophet resemble one another only in their closing stages, there being little resemblance between them in the intervening stages. But Joseph's life, as already stated, resembles that of the Holy Prophet even in small details. (2) Although the case of Jonah resembles that of the Holy Prophet inasmuch as the peoples of both Jonah and the Prophet were ultimately saved through God's mercy, the resemblance between the two is only partial whereas the resemblance between Joseph and the Holy Prophet even in the way in which God treated the former's brethren and the latter's tribe is very close and is almost complete. The mercy shown to Jonah's people was directly the result of God's grace, Jonah having no hand in it, while the declaration of pardon for Joseph's brethren was made by Joseph himself, and so it happened with the Quraish of Mecca that the announcement of their unqualified forgiveness came directly from the Prophet's own mouth.
1. "In the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful."

2. "Alif Lam Rā. These are verses of the clear Book."

3. "We have revealed it—the Quran in Arabic—that you may understand."

1505. Commentary:
See 1:1.

1506. Commentary:
In the words Alif Lam Rā i.e. I am Allah, the All-Seeing, disbelievers have been called upon to make use of their power of observation, hence the reference to the divine attribute of "Seeing." The Sūra tells disbelievers that the Holy Prophet bears a close resemblance to Joseph, and that it is not right for them to call him an impostor before seeing his end.

The word مبين (i.e. clear, for the full meaning of which see 2:169) signifies that the Quran not only states facts and makes predictions and lays down laws and ordinances but also supports and substantiates what it says by solid arguments and sound reasons. The word also means that the Quran is not only clear in itself but also lifts the veil of obscurity from some previous Scriptures. It also implies an answer to the objection that Quranic accounts differ from those of previous Scriptures. Being مبين which means not only “clear” but also “that which makes clear or manifest,” it is one of the functions of the Quran to point out errors that have found their way into former Scriptures. It is, therefore, inevitable that it should differ from them.

The word مبين also points to the Quran being complete in itself. It needs no external evidence to demonstrate the truth of its claims but contains adequate internal proofs to substantiate them. It not only puts forth claims but also supplies proofs and arguments in support of them.

The word مبين also contains a beautiful hint that all that is essential for the attainment of nearness to God and all that relates to the laws of Shari'at, to ethics, and to matters of belief has been made clear and manifest in the Quran.

1507. Important Words:
عربي (in Arabic) is derived from عرب ('ariba) or عربة (aruba). They say, عربة إيلي (aribat) (i.e. the water of the well became abundant; or the well contained much water. عربة (aruba) means, his stomach became in a corrupt or disordered state from being burdened (owing to fulness). عربة ليلج (aruba) means, the man spoke clearly, plainly or distinctly after being barbarous in speech; he was or became brisk, lively or
sprightly. "عرَب means, he spoke clearly, plainly or distinctly without incorrectness. "عرَباءله means, his tongue or speech was or became chaste Arabian. "أَعُوْذُ اللَّهِ from "أَعُوْذُ اللَّهِ means, he spoke clearly, plainly, distinctly or intelligibly in Arabic; or he made the speech clear, plain, distinct or perspicuous; or he made his speech free from error or incorrectness. "عَمَّل means, pertaining to Arabic; clear, eloquent and chaste in speech; of established Arabic lineage. So the expression "فرَتَ الحَدَّاء would mean, a book which is (1) most extensively and regularly read and (2) which can express its meanings in a clear, eloquent and comprehensive language (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:
The word "عَمَّل conveys the sense of fulness, abundance and clearness, and the Arabic language is so called because its roots are innumerable and are full of meaning and because it is most expressive, eloquent and comprehensive. It possesses suitable words and phrases for the full expression of all sorts of ideas and shades of meaning. Any topic can be discussed in this language with a precision and thoroughness unmatched in any other. European scholars have had to testify to the fact that the Arabic language is complete in respect of its roots. It consists of hundreds of thousands of roots which are pregnant with a vast variety of meanings. Ibn Jinnī, an eminent linguist, has advanced the claim in the name of his teacher, Abū 'Ali, that even the letters of the Arabic language possess clear and definite meanings. For instance, he declared that the letters مَمَم، لَم and كَف، in whatever combination they may occur, express the idea of “power,” which is more or less common to all the words that are formed with these letters or are derived from this root.

In the previous verse the Quran was called “the Book” which implied a prophecy that it would ever continue to be preserved in the form of a book. In the present verse it has been called “the Quran,” meaning, “a book that is read,” which constitutes a prophecy that it will be very widely read and studied. It is a fact which no opponent of Islam can deny that no other book is so widely and frequently read as the Quran. Professor Noldeke says, “Since the use of the Koran in public worship, in schools and otherwise, is much more extensive than, for example, the reading of the Bible in most Christian countries it has been truly described as the most widely read book in existence” (Enc. Bri. 9th edition, vol. 16, p. 597).

Thus, the giving of these two names to the Word of God revealed to the Holy Prophet, viz. the “Book” and the “Quran” signifies that this final Law of God would be preserved both by means of the pen and the tongue.

The verse also hints that if the Quran had not been revealed in a tongue which possessed the quality of expressing all ideas with perfect ease and clearness, as the Arabic language does, or if it had not been widely and constantly read (as the Quran is, in accordance with the prophecy implied in its name), people would not have benefited by it as much as they have done and still do.

It may also be incidentally noted here that Arabic, as its very name implies, is the mother of all languages ("ةَلَلَّاَةَمَلاَمَة"). This great revelation was made and emphasized by Ahmad, the Promised Messiah, who wrote a treatise on this subject entitled, “Minan al-Rahmān.” See also 14: 5.
4. We narrate unto thee the most beautiful narration by revealing to thee this Quran though thou wast, before this, of those not possessed of requisite knowledge.  

1508. Important Words: 

(We narrate) They say i.e. he followed his tracks or footsteps in pursuit. يَنْصِرَ الْحَدِيثَ means, he related to him the story in its proper manner i.e. rightly, as though he followed its traces in pursuit and related it accordingly (Lane). See also 7:177.

Commentary:

As the expression يَنْصِرَ (which literally means, we narrate rightly or properly) indicates, the verse shows that some differences existed about the life-story of Joseph. The Quran here claims to act as judge between the upholders of different views and to lift the veil of obscurity from the face of the true story. This is why it says, We relate to thee the narration rightly or properly as though following its very traces (see Important Words). It is strange that some European critics of the Quran have not taken into consideration the existence of differences about the life of Joseph, but have only thought fit to take exception to the narrative of the Quran, merely because it differs from that of the Bible in certain details. In fact, the very objection has established the truth of the Quran, inasmuch as the claim that it relates the incidents rightly shows that the Revealer of the Quran knew that at some future time people would object to the Quranic version. Brinckman is one of these critics. In his "Notes on Islam" he says, "In the Koran a beautiful and touching tale is mangled and spoiled." The following pages will show whether it is in the Quran or the Bible, that a "beautiful and touching tale" has been "mangled and spoiled."

One of the reasons why the story of Joseph was revealed to the Holy Prophet in such detail is that it contains many prophetic allusions to his own life. The whole story was to be, as it were, re-enacted in the person of the Holy Prophet himself and his brethren, the Quraish, and was thus to serve as evidence of his truth. Another reason is that, as the Holy Prophet was the like of Joseph it was necessary that he himself should know the latter's life-history.

The Holy Prophet has been referred to here as of those not possessed of requisite knowledge. His lack of requisite knowledge about Joseph was intended to hint that, firstly, the whole truth about Joseph was to be found neither in the Bible nor in the Talmud; and, secondly, that the Holy Prophet was not aware that events similar to those which happened to Joseph were to occur in his own life. The account of the Quran differs from that of the Bible in many respects but, as will appear from the following pages, wherever the two accounts differ, it is the Bible that has erred.
5. Remember the time when Joseph said to his father, 'O my father, I saw in a dream eleven stars and the sun and the moon, I saw them making obeisance to me.'

1509. Important Words:

Joseph was the eleventh son of the Prophet Jacob, otherwise known as Israel, and the elder of the two sons of Rachel. The meaning given to the name is "shall add" i.e. "The Lord shall add to me another son" (Gen. 30: 24). A somewhat detailed account of his life is given in the present Sûra. It should, however, be added that Joseph possesses the unique characteristic among all Prophets of God that not only was he himself a Prophet of God but his father, Jacob, his grandfather, Isaac, and his great-grandfather, Abraham, were all God's chosen Messengers. The Holy Prophet referred to this characteristic of Joseph in one of his well-known sayings when, on being asked by some of his Companions as to who was the noblest of men, he is reported to have replied, "Truly the noblest of men is the Prophet Joseph who was the son, grandson and great-grandson of a Prophet of God" (Bukhári, Bad' al-Khalq). It may also be noted here that, though Joseph was buried in Egypt, his remains were later removed by Moses to Palestine when the Israelites were commanded by God to leave Egypt (Enc. Bib.).

The word (making obeisance) in the verse does not mean that the brothers and parents of Joseph actually fell prostrate before him. The root-meaning of this word being "obedience" and "submission" (for which see

Commentary:

With this verse begins the story of Joseph, and in this very verse two important differences in the accounts of the Bible and the Quran and in the manner of their narration have been brought to light. Firstly, the Biblical account begins with a description of the pedigree of Joseph, while the Quran leaves this unimportant detail to be filled up by historians and begins the actual narration with the dream of Joseph, which constitutes its pivot. The whole life of Joseph revolves round this dream. Thus the Quran has opened the narrative with a much better and more appropriate beginning than the Bible. Secondly, while describing the dream of Joseph, the Bible mentions the sun and the moon first and the eleven stars afterwards, as making obeisance to Joseph (Gen. 37: 9), but the Quran reverses the order; and actual facts of history support the order followed by the Quran, for it was the brethren of Joseph (the eleven stars) who met him first and made obeisance to him and his parents came afterwards. The vision as given in the Quran was literally fulfilled in actual life.
6. He said, 'O my darling son, relate not thy dream to thy brothers, lest they contrive a plot against thee; for Satan is to man an open enemy.\(^{1510}\)

The incident of the vision related by Joseph to his father furnishes two points of resemblance between him and the Holy Prophet. Just as Joseph’s vision, which was his first revelation, foretold his future greatness; so the first revelation of the Holy Prophet in the Cave of Hira predicted that he was to become the most honoured man of the human race. In 96: 2-5, containing the first revelation which the Holy Prophet received, he was told that God would make him the most honoured among mankind and through him would teach men things which they did not know before, and that he would be the most honoured man not only among his contemporaries but also among those who had gone before him as well as those who would come after him. In this way, he would not only be the chief among his own brethren or followers, but also among his spiritual forefathers, the Prophets of yore. This is why the Holy Prophet is reported to have said to me (Kathir, vol. 2, p. 246). He also said

1510. **Important Words:**

- رَؤَى (dream) is derived from رأى which means, (1) he saw with the eye; (2) he saw mentally; (3) he saw in a dream or vision; (4) he held the opinion; (5) he thought or considered, etc. The Arabs say رأيه دَرَأَهُ اِلْعَلَمَ, i.e., I saw him where the eye or sight fell upon him, i.e., I saw him actually with the eye. رؤى means, a dream or vision seen in sleep. According to most lexicologists رؤى is synonymous with حَلَمْ (bilm) but according to others the former is such as is good and the latter is the contrary (Lane).

**Commentary:**

Here again the Quran differs from the Bible and again the Quranic version is decidedly more reasonable and correct. According to the Quran, Joseph told his dream to his father first, while according to the Bible he first related it to his brothers (Gen. 37: 9). But the Bible itself says that Joseph had seen another dream, even before this dream which the Quran relates, and, on listening to this first dream, his brethren had said to him: “Shalt thou indeed reign over us or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us?” And they hated him...
7. ‘And thus shall it be as thou hast seen, thy Lord shall choose thee and teach thee the interpretation of things and perfect His favour upon thee and upon the family of Jacob as He perfected it upon two of thy forefathers—Abraham and Isaac. Verily thy Lord is All-Knowing, Wise.’

yet the more for his dreams, and for his words (Gen. 37:5-8). Now, after the rebuke he had received from his brothers on telling them his first dream, it is highly unreasonable and improbable that Joseph should have related his second and similar dream to them before acquainting his father with it. So the Quranic account is clearly nearer truth and reason than the Biblical account.

The Quran represents Jacob, the father of Joseph, as having forbidden him to mention his dream to his brethren. It also gives the reason why he forbade him to do so. The reason was that the dream would excite their envy and they would be tempted to plot against him. That this fear of Jacob was only too well-founded is borne out by the Bible itself, for it says that Joseph’s brethren hated him yet the more for his dreams. This also goes to support the Quranic version.

The verse under comment mentions another important resemblance between Joseph and the Holy Prophet. Just as Jacob, on hearing the dream of Joseph, told him that when his brothers heard of it, they would plot against him and seek to do him harm, similarly, when Waraqa bin Naufal heard of his first revelation from the Holy Prophet, he told him that a time would come when his people would plot against him and turn him out of their town.

1511. Important Words:

Yet the more for his dreams, and for his words (Gen. 37:5-8). They say يعفو i.e. he struck his heel; he came after him as though at his heel. The Bible says, “And after that came his brother out, and his hand took hold on Esau’s heel; and his name was called Jacob,” (Gen. 25:26) as if “one who takes hold by the heel.” The name is also explained in the Bible as “the supplanter” (Gen. 27:36). It is the prevalent critical opinion that Ya’qub (Jacob) is really a shortened form of Ya’akob-el, admitting several explanations such as “God follows” or “God rewards.” Jacob was the son of Isaac and Rebekah and the grandson of Abraham and the traditional ancestor of the people of Israel (another name of Jacob) and known as the third Patriarch (Enc. Bib. & Jew. Enc.). See also 2:41.

Commentary:

The words, thy Lord shall choose thee, mean that God will deal with you (Joseph) according to your dream, and you will attain to the greatness which has been promised to you in the vision.

The expression, shall teach you the interpretation of things, is capable of two meanings: (a) what you have seen in the dream will come to pass (b) God will teach you how to interpret dreams.

By the word “favour” occurring in this verse is meant the boon of prophethood, which means
R. 2. 8. Surely, in Joseph and his brethren there are Signs for the inquirers. 1512

9. When they said, 'Verily, Joseph and his brother are dearer to our father than we are, although we are a strong party. 'Surely, our father is in manifest error. 1513

that Joseph received the promise that God would bestow prophethood on him, and through him He would bestow distinction on Jacob's family also. God would make them believe in Joseph and thus they would share with him the favours and blessings of God.

This verse also embodies a divergence from the Bible. According to the Quran, Jacob was pleased to hear of the dream of Joseph and held it as true. But the Bible says: "His father rebuked him, and said unto him, What is this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth?" (Gen. 37: 10). Evidently there was no reason or occasion for Jacob to become angry with his son for having seen a dream in which he had no hand. No reasonable person, much less a Prophet of God, would act so unreasonably. Neither can it be said that Jacob thought Joseph was telling a lie and that really he had dreamt no dream, for the words which Jacob uttered when he heard of the dream i.e. "What is this dream that thou hast dreamed?" show that Jacob did believe that Joseph had really seen a dream. It is curious that the Bible contradicts itself in this very passage, for it says, "His brethren envied him; but his father observed the saying" (Gen. 37: 11). The fact that Jacob "observed the saying" i.e. remembered it and bore it in mind, shows that he believed it to be a true dream and a genuine heavenly vision.

This incident furnishes a fourth point of similarity between Joseph and the Holy Prophet. Just as Jacob believed in the truth of Joseph's dream, similarly, when Waraqa heard of the first revelation of the Holy Prophet, he accepted it as the true word of God and even likened it to the revelation of Moses.

1512. Commentary:

By "inquirers" is here meant those who inquire about the truth of the Holy Prophet.

This verse also shows that the life-history of Joseph as given in this Sura was not meant as a mere narrative, but provided solid proof of the truth of the Holy Prophet. In fact, the incidents in the life of Joseph were so many Signs or prophecies which were later to be fulfilled in the life of the Holy Prophet.

1513. Important Words:

"Estab (a strong party) is derived from " which means, he twisted a thing or wound it round or he folded it tightly; he bound or tied a thing. "Estab means, party or company of men who league together to defend one another, generally from ten to forty in number; a company of men absolutely. "Estab ("asabiyat) means, zeal in the cause of one's party; a strong attachment which holds several persons closely united by the same interests or the same opinion and which causes them to defend one another; partisanship or party spirit (Lane)."
10. 'Kill Joseph or cast him out to some distant land, so that your father's favour may become exclusively yours, and you can thereafter become a righteous people.'

Commentary:

The verse under comment contains the fifth resemblance of the Holy Prophet with Joseph. Joseph's brothers were annoyed that instead of them, who, as they thought, were superior to him in every respect, he had won the affection of their father and had become the centre of his attention. In the same way it is on record that when some Arab chiefs were asked what they thought of the Prophet's claims, they answered that if God had intended to raise a Prophet it was they who deserved this honour."

The Meccans also seemed to hold the view that the Quran ought to have been revealed to one of the great men of Mecca or Ṭā'īf (43:32). They looked upon the Holy Prophet as too small a person to be selected for the exalted office of a Prophet.

1514. Commentary:

Like the brothers of Joseph, who plotted to kill him, the Quraish of Mecca also conspired to put the Holy Prophet to death (8:31). This is the sixth point of resemblance between the two Prophets. But here again the Quran differs from the Bible. According to the Quran, Joseph's brothers first held a secret conference and matured a plan to put Joseph out of their way, and then went in a body to their father asking him to send him with them, while according to the Bible, they came to a sudden decision to slay him as soon as they saw him approaching them in the fields, without previous consultation (Gen. 37:18-20). Of the two accounts the Quranic one is obviously nearer truth. Only an insane person or an hardened or habitual murderer or dacoit can take the life of an innocent person suddenly and without premeditation. The brothers of Joseph were members of a respectable family. They could not be expected to come to so atrocious a decision on the spur of the moment. Their decision to murder Joseph was the result of a mature and well-thought-out plan. Moreover, if the decision to kill Joseph was the outcome of a sudden impulse, the man who made the suggestion should have thought twice before doing so lest the others refused to accept his suggestion and he should be branded a potential murderer. Their words, and you can thereafter become a righteous people, also show that they were not habitual criminals and that in their heart of hearts they disliked the foul deed, though they were temporarily blinded by hatred and jealousy.
11. One of them said, 'Kill not Joseph, but if you must do something, cast him into the bottom of a deep well; some of the travellers will pick him up.'

12. They said, 'O our father, why dost thou not trust us with respect to Joseph, when we are certainly his sincere well-wishers?'

1515. Important Words:

- غابة (bottom) is derived from غاب which means, he was or became absent; or distant and remote; or hidden and concealed. غابة means, that part of anything which veils or conceals one; the bottom of a well; covert or place of concealment of birds; a low or depressed piece of land or ground; also a grave (Lane & Aqrab).

- جب (deep well) is derived from جب (jabba). They say جب i.e. he cut it; or cut it off. جب means, a well; or a well not cased with stone or the like; or a well containing much water; or a deep well; or a well that people have found, not one that they have dug; or a well that is wide or ample (Lane & Aqrab).

- سارة (travellers) is derived from سار which means, he went or passed along; or he marched, journeyed or departed by night or by day. سارة means, one who travels or journeys much; a caravan; a company of persons journeying. الباب is the name of the five planets viz. Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

This verse embodies yet one more point of resemblance between Joseph and the Holy Prophet. Just as one of the brothers of Joseph opposed the proposal to slay him and suggested instead that he should be disposed of in some other manner, so when the plot to kill the Holy Prophet was mooted and hatched at Mecca, some of the plotters objected. Similarly, when the Meccans made a compact to boycott and starve the Holy Prophet and his followers to death, some of the citizens opposed this compact and finally broke it.

1516. Commentary:

This verse points to another difference with the Biblical version; for, whereas in this verse we are told that the brothers of Joseph asked their father to send him with them, the Bible tells us that Jacob himself sent Joseph to his brothers (Gen. 37: 13, 14). But the Bible seems to contradict itself in this respect for in Gen. 37: 4 we are told that Joseph was hated by his brothers because Jacob loved him more than he loved them and that Jacob was aware of this hatred. How could Jacob, knowing that his brothers hated him, send Joseph to them?

Moreover, Joseph appears to be only eleven or twelve years old at the time when this incident took place, because it is only for a boy of this tender age that the language used by Joseph's brothers about him can be used. The Bible, however, places Joseph's age at that time at seventeen or eighteen, which is evidently wrong.
13. 'Send him with us tomorrow that he may enjoy himself and play, and we shall surely keep guard over him.'  \(^{1517}\)

14. He said, 'It grieves me that you should take him away, and I fear lest the wolf should devour him while you are heedless of him.'  \(^{1518}\)

15. They said, 'Surely, if the wolf devour him while we are a strong party, then we shall indeed be great losers.'

16. So, when they took him away, and agreed to put him into the bottom of a deep well, they had their malicious design carried out; and We sent a revelation to him, saying, 'Thou shalt surely one day tell them of this affair of theirs and they shan not know.'  \(^{1519}\)

1517. **Important Words:**

- **Enjoy** (he may enjoy himself) is derived from which means, he (a beast) pastured at pleasure, eating and drinking plentifully and pleasantly; he (a man) enjoyed himself, going about cheerfully (Lane).

**Commentary:**

The words, *we shall surely keep guard over him*, also show that Joseph at that time was a mere lad of eleven or twelve years of age who required to be looked after and not a grown-up young man of seventeen who could easily take care of himself. See also the preceding verse.

1518. **Commentary:**

This verse lends further support to the view that Joseph was not seventeen or eighteen but much younger (v. 12); otherwise there was no occasion for Jacob to fear his being devoured by a wolf. It also appears from this verse that Jacob had already been informed by God in a general way of the plot of Joseph's brothers to kill him. So, as if pre-arraigning them, Jacob used the same words which they were to use later in extenuation of their heinous crime.

1519. **Commentary:**

The words, *they shall not know*, hint that so helpless was Joseph's condition at that time that his brothers could not even imagine that he would ever rise to any greatness afterwards.

This verse points to two more resemblances between Joseph and the Holy Prophet. Joseph was cast into a deep well by his brothers and the Holy Prophet had to take shelter in a cave (which is like a well) from the persecution of his brethren, the Quraish. The confinement of the Holy Prophet along with the Muslims in the low-lying depressed valley which belonged to the tribe of Abū Ṭalib, in consequence of the boycott compact agreed upon by the people
17. And they came to their father in the evening, weeping.\textsuperscript{1520}

18. They said, 'O our father, we went forth racing with one another, and left Joseph with our things, and the wolf devoured him: but thou wilt not believe us even if we speak the truth.' \textsuperscript{1521}

19. And they came with false blood on his shirt. 'He said, 'Nay, but your souls have made a great thing appear light in your eyes. So now comely patience is good for me. And it is Allah alone Whose help is to be sought against what you assert.' \textsuperscript{1522}

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of Mecca, also provides a point of resemblance with Joseph's having been cast into a well. \textit{Secondly}, just as this verse tells us that Joseph was informed through revelation that there would come a time when God would bestow upon him power and glory and he would then inform his brothers of the bad treatment they had meted out to him, similarly the Holy Prophet was informed by revelation that though his enemies would compel him to fly from Mecca, yet he would return home victorious (28:86).

\textbf{1520. Important Words:}

\textit{ishā} (in the evening). \textit{ishā} (\textit{ishā}) means, the time of nightfall or the first or beginning of the darkness of night; also the time from the declining of the sun (from the meridian) to the rising of the dawn (Lane).

\textbf{1521. Commentary:}

This verse also indicates that when Joseph was cast into a well he was a mere lad of eleven or twelve, otherwise his brothers would not have said that they made him take care of their things while they were playing. A young man of seventeen or eighteen is not entrusted with work of this kind. He himself can take part in all kinds of sports. Nor is he, when armed, likely to be attacked by a wolf, unless there be a pack of wolves, and Palestine is not a land where wolves roam in packs.

The words, \textit{thou wilt not believe us even if we speak the truth}, show that Joseph's brethren were not habitual criminals, otherwise they would not have uttered words which bespoke nervousness and betrayed their offence.

\textbf{1522. Important Words:}

\textit{kāfūb} (false) really means either a lie or a falsehood or the act of telling a lie, but here it is used in the sense of \textit{kāfūb \textit{i.e.} false or that about which a lie is uttered (Lane).

\textit{sawīla} (made a great thing appear light) is derived from \textit{sawalā}. The verb \textit{sawalā} (\textit{sawīla}) of which the aorist is \textit{sawāl}, means, he or it was or became lax, flaccid or uncompact; or it hung...
20. And there came a caravan of travellers and they sent their water-drawer. And he let down his bucket into the well. 'Oh, good news!' said he, 'Here is a youth!' And they concealed him as a piece of merchandise, and Allah well knew what they did.\[1523\]
down loosely; or it was or became pendent or pendulous. They say i.e. Satan led him into error; or he facilitated to him the commission of great sins; or he incited him to indulgence in lusts; or he made the commission of great sins appear small in his eyes. The Arabic expression means, his soul embellished or commended to him a thing or an affair; or his soul made it appear easy to him; or made it appear as a light matter in his eyes; or pictured to him what is foul as goodly (Lane & Aqrab).

**Commentary:**

This verse alludes to another point of difference between the Quranic account and the Biblical version. According to the Bible, Jacob believed the report of his sons to be true and declared that Joseph had really been "rent in pieces" by a wolf (Gen. 37:33); while the Quran says that he regarded their report as a concocted story. Other parts of the Bible, however, support the Quranic version. In Gen. 44:28 we have: And the one (child) went out from me, and I said, Surely he is torn in pieces; and I saw him not since. If Jacob was really convinced that Joseph had been torn in pieces, the sentence, "I saw him not since" becomes quite meaningless. These words clearly show that in his heart of hearts Jacob thought Joseph to be alive, though for the time being he yielded to the inevitable. The Talmud also agrees with the Quranic account and says that Jacob did not believe the statement of his sons to be true and that he was told in a vision that Joseph was alive (Jew. Enc.)

The verse provides another point of resemblance between Joseph and the Holy Prophet. Just as Joseph’s brothers falsely declared that he had been slain, similarly, the Quraish falsely announced first at Uhud and then at Mecca that the Prophet had been killed, with the difference that whereas Joseph’s brethren spoke of Joseph as having been killed by a wolf, the Quraish asserted that they had themselves killed the Holy Prophet. This is the tenth point of resemblance between the Holy Prophet and Joseph.

1523. **Commentary:**

It is noteworthy how God takes care of His faithful servants. Joseph’s brothers cast him into a deep well in the wilderness but God so arranged that immediately afterwards a caravan arrived there. A man sent to fetch water from a well happened to go to the very well into which Joseph had been cast and this led to his being taken out alive.

The words, *And they concealed him as a piece of merchandise*, show that the members of the caravan looked upon Joseph as treasure and saw in him a youth of promise.
21. And they sold him for a paltry price, a few dirhems, and they were not desirous of it.  

R. 3

22. And the man from Egypt who bought him said to his wife, ‘Make his stay among us honourable. Maybe he will be of benefit to us; or we shall adopt him as a son.’ And thus did We establish Joseph in the land, and We did so that We might also teach him the interpretation of things. And Allah has full power over His decree, but most men know it not.  

1524. Commentary:

It appears that when a member of the caravan took Joseph out of the well, his brethren became apprised of it and, declaring Joseph to be their slave, sold him to that very caravan for a paltry price. Thus the pronoun “they” in the clause, they sold him for a paltry price, stands for Joseph’s brethren and not for the caravan. The pronoun in the expression نَبْ (of it) may mean either “him” or “it,” standing either for Joseph or the price.

The Bible tells us that Joseph’s brothers sold him for twenty pieces of silver (Gen. 37:28). Their object in selling Joseph was obviously not to get money; they only did so fearing that if they did not declare Joseph to be their slave, the caravan might take him to be a free man and might send him home. So they represented him as their slave, and sold him for a small sum.

The context of the Quran also shows that those who are spoken of in this verse as selling Joseph were not the members of the caravan, but, as the Bible tells us, Joseph’s own brethren.

The verse refers to another difference between the Bible and the Quran. According to the Bible, it was not a member of the caravan who drew Joseph from the well but Joseph’s own brothers (Gen. 37:28). The unreliability of the Biblical version is apparent from the fact that the passage dealing with this incident is full of contradictions. The Talmud also contradicts the Biblical account, and its description of this incident agrees with that of the Quran (Jew. Enc. under Joseph).

1525. Important Words:

stay (stay) is derived from مَثْرِي. They say
23. "And when he attained his age of full strength, We granted him judgement and knowledge. And thus do We reward the doers of good." 1526

24. And she, in whose house he was, sought to seduce him against his will. And she bolted the doors, and said, 'Now come.' He said, 'I seek refuge with Allah. He is my Lord. He has made my stay with you honourable. Verily, the wrongdoers never prosper.' 1527

1526. Commentary:
The verse does not mean that Joseph attained to prophethood as soon as he became of age. The Quran generally omits intervening details and mentions only the end.

1527. Important Words:
راوته (she sought to seduce him) is derived from which means, he or it came and went; he went to and fro; he was restless; it also means, he sought or desired a thing. راوته means, he endeavoured or sought to turn him to or from a thing. راوته means, he endeavoured to turn him by blandishment or by deceitful arts from the thing. راوته means, he endeavoured to turn him by blandishment, etc., to the thing. The Quranic expression means, we will endeavour to turn his father from him by blandishment or artifice and to make him yield him to us; or we will strive to obtain him of his father. So the words would mean, she desired or sought of him a sinful act using blandishment or artifice for that purpose; she tempted him to do the sinful act; she endeavoured to entice him and to make him yield himself to her; more literally, she endeavoured to turn him by blandishment, etc., from his disdainful non-compliance or from his purpose and will. المراوته really signifies going about in search of a thing. المراوته means, seeking to make a person do a thing against his will (Lane & Mufradât).
25. And she made up her mind with regard to him, and he made up his mind with regard to her. If he had not seen manifest Sign of his Lord, he could not have shown such determination. Thus was it, that We might turn away from him evil and indecency. Surely, he was one of Our chosen servants.\footnote{1528}

(Name of word) is a word of exclamation denoting wonder. The Arabs say \( \text{الله} \), i.e. what forbearing mildness or clemency! The word is used in the sense of \( \text{أين} \) or \( \text{أين} \) or \( \text{أين} \) meaning, “come or come forward.” It is also used to signify “hasten” and “set forth journeying.” The words therefore mean, “come thou” or “now come.” The words also signify, “come, I am ready for thee, or I am ready to receive thee” (Lane & Mufradāt).

(I seek refuge with God). \( \text{ماذا} \) is the noun-infinitive from \( \text{ماذا} \). They say \( \text{ماذا} \), i.e. he sought protection by him from that or sought refuge in him from that; or he put his trust in him, or relied upon him, for protection from such a thing. \( \text{ماذا} \) means, a refuge; a place to which one has recourse for protection or preservation; also the time at which one does so. The expressions \( \text{ماذا} \) and \( \text{ماذا} \) are all synonymous with \( \text{ماذا} \), i.e. I seek protection or preservation by God (Lane & Aqrab).

**Commentary:**

The verse clearly shows that the woman who sought to seduce Joseph failed in her efforts and that Joseph successfully resisted her temptation. The words, “He is my Lord,” refer to God, and not to Joseph’s Egyptian master, as some Commentators have wrongly supposed. It is difficult to imagine that a highly spiritual man like Joseph should have abstained from sin merely out of regard for the paltry favours of a human benefactor and not for manifold divine boons.

Whatever honour Joseph had received from his Egyptian master was really in fulfilment of God’s promises. So it was for the sake of his real Lord and Master that he followed the path of rectitude and refused to be seduced into sin, which would have amounted to an act of ingratitude far more towards God than to any human benefactor.

Joseph not only himself abstained from the heinous sin, but also warned his master’s wife against its evil consequences by saying that the wrong-doers never prosper. The expression translated as “she sought to seduce him against his will,” literally means, as shown under Important Words, “she endeavoured to turn him from his purpose or will by blandishment and artifice and make him yield to her against his disdainful non-compliance.” This meaning shows that Joseph abhorred the evil deed to which she invited him and was determined not to yield.

**Commentary:**

This verse tells us that the wife of Joseph’s master intended a thing about Joseph (i.e., copulation) in which she did not succeed. Similarly, Joseph intended a thing about her (i.e. turning her to pure thoughts), but he too did not succeed in his endeavour. That Joseph did not intend anything evil is clear from the previous verse. His only purpose was to dissuade her from her evil course.
26. And they both raced to the door, and she tore his shirt from behind, and they found her lord at the door. She said, ‘What shall be the punishment of one who intended evil to thy wife, save imprisonment or a grievous chastisement?’

By “manifest Sign” is meant the heavenly Signs which Joseph had already witnessed, e.g. the wonderful dream which foretold his future greatness (v. 5) and the revelation he had received when cast into the well, which also pointed to his later eminence and glory (v. 16). Surely, the person who was being prepared for the exalted office of a Prophet could not debase himself before an idolatrous woman.

The words, that We might turn away from him evil and indecency, signify that a person who had witnessed such Signs could not stoop to evil. They may also mean that God brought about these circumstances so that Joseph should no longer live in the evil company of his master’s wicked wife and her evil companions which might have exercised a pernicious influence on him.

Here there is another point of resemblance between Joseph and the Holy Prophet. Just as an attempt was made to tempt Joseph away from the path of piety and rectitude, similarly, the idolaters of Mecca made an unsuccessful attempt to make the Holy Prophet give up preaching the Unity of God by offering to make him their king or amass great wealth for him or give him in marriage the most beautiful girl in Arabia. The offer was of course disdainfully rejected by the Prophet with the historic words, “If you place the sun on my right hand and the moon on my left hand, I will not give up preaching the Oneness of God.” (Zurqānī & Hishām). This constitutes the eleventh resemblance between these two great Prophets.

1529. Commentary:

When Joseph saw that all his exhortations and admonitions to his master’s wife to desist from her evil course were of no avail, he thought he should no longer stay in the room, lest it might give rise to unfounded suspicions. So he hastened to leave her presence. Thereupon the woman, in order to prevent him from leaving the room, ran to the door to reach it before Joseph succeeded in getting out. There was thus a sort of race for the door. It was most probably at the door that the woman pulled Joseph’s shirt in order to pull him back and in so doing she tore his shirt at the back.

Here, again, the Bible differs from the Quran. The Bible says that when the woman caught hold of Joseph’s garment, he left it in her hand (Gen. 39:12). But as the Hebrews used to wear one garment only, which was generally long enough to cover the whole body, it is inconceivable that Joseph should have run away naked, leaving the only garment he was wearing in the woman’s hand. So the Quranic account that Joseph’s shirt was torn in the scuffle seems to be more reasonable.
27. He said, 'She it was who sought to seduce me against my will.' And a witness of her household bore witness saying, 'If his shirt is torn from the front, then she has spoken the truth and he is of the liars.'

28. 'But if his shirt is torn from behind, then she has lied and he is of the truthful.'

29. So when he saw his shirt torn from behind, he said, 'Surely, this is a device of you women. Your device is indeed mighty.'

30. 'O Joseph, turn away from this and thou, O woman, ask forgiveness for thy sin. Certainly thou art of the guilty.'

1530. Commentary:
Nothing can approach the nobility of mind of God's Elect. In spite of the fact that Joseph was grievously sinned against, he bore himself with great dignity and refrained from exposing the evil deed of his temptress. But when she herself had the hardihood to bring an utterly false accusation against him, he was compelled to state the true facts. A person who appeared to have noticed that Joseph's shirt had been torn at the back at once came to the conclusion that the woman was to blame. Without having the courage to incriminate her, but wishing to exculpate Joseph, he gave his evidence in a general manner as if he were blaming no one, but was merely laying down a principle by which the culprit could be discovered.

1531. Commentary:
See note on the preceding verse.

1532. Commentary:
The pronoun "he" in the clause, when he saw his shirt, stands for the master of the house and not for the man who bore witness.

The words, Your device is indeed mighty, will thus be taken to have been spoken by Joseph's master, and the pronoun "your" refers to "women" generally. In his endeavour to screen his wife so far as possible, he appears to accuse the whole fair sex of cunning and guile. But cunning is no characteristic of women; only those women who are oppressed and tyrannized over and whose rights are trampled upon generally develop a tendency to conspiring and adopting wily and cunning ways to avenge themselves on their oppressors. Moreover, the words of a man spoken casually cannot be regarded as an established truth and must be treated with reserve.

1533. Commentary:
Here again there is a difference between the Bible and the Quran. According to the Bible, Joseph's master believed the allegation of his
wife to be true and held Joseph to be guilty and was angry with him (Gen. 39:19). But other verses of the Bible itself contradict this statement and support the Quran. In Genesis it is stated that when Joseph was sent to prison, its keeper committed all the prisoners to his care. The prison was under the charge of Potiphar, captain of the guard (Joseph’s master), nay, it was in Potiphar’s own house, as the following Biblical verses show: And Pharaoh was wroth against two of his officers, against the chief of the butlers, and against the chief of the bakers. And he put them in ward in the house of the captain of the guard, into the prison, the place where Joseph was bound (Gen. 40:2,3). Now it does not stand to reason that the keeper of the prison who was subordinate to Potiphar, Joseph’s master, should have given the latter a position of honour in the prison when his superior looked upon him as one who sought to commit an outrage upon his wife. Not only that but we find that Potiphar himself put two of Pharaoh’s officers, the chief of the butlers and the chief of the bakers in charge of Joseph while the former were sent to the same prison (Gen. 40:4). These facts clearly show that Joseph’s master believed him to be innocent of the heinous charge brought against him by his wife.

1534. Important Words:

العزيز (The ‘Aziz) is derived from عز, which means, he was or became mighty, potent, powerful or strong; or he was or became high or elevated in rank or condition or state; عزيز means, mighty, potent, powerful or strong; high or elevated in rank or condition or state; noble, honourable, glorious or illustrious; proud, disdainful; invincible; a mighty king or a glorious king. The word عزيز is one of the names of God signifying the Mighty, Who overcomes everything; or He Who resists or withstands so that nothing overcomes Him; or the Incomparable or Unparalleled. It also signifies “king,” because he has the mastery over the people of his dominions and the word was especially used about the ruler of Egypt i.e., the valley of the Nile together with Alexandria. It is a surname like نجس (Nagus) applied to the King of the Abyssinians and قيس (Kaiser) applied to the Emperor of the Romans (Lane & Aqrab).

شغف her (he has infatuated her with love). شغف means, he or it struck or smote the pericardium of his heart. شغف الريش means, he was or became vehemently desirous of the thing. شغف الامان means, the property became embellished to him so that he loved it. The expression قذفها شغفها حجاب (pericardium) or the خفاش (midriff) of her heart (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

Al-‘Aziz stands here for Potiphar. According to modern technicality the rulers of Egypt are known by this title. But Potiphar was only the captain of the King’s guard. It seems that at the time of the Holy Prophet the chiefs and dignitaries of Egypt were also known by this title. It is also possible that those women might have used this high title for Potiphar merely by way of flattery.
And when she heard of their crafty design, she sent for them and prepared for them a repast, and gave every one of them a knife and then said to Joseph, ‘Come forth to them.’ And when they saw him they thought much of him and cut their hands, and said, ‘Allah be glorified! This is not a human being: this is but a noble angel.’

It appears that the incident of the wife of ‘Azīz having made evil approaches to Joseph became public and the women-folk of the locality began gossiping about it as is their wont.

1535. Important Words:

- `mārū`, `mārū` (reast) is derived from `mār` i.e. he leaned upon his hands or arms. `mārū` means, he set up for him a thing upon which to recline. `mārū` means, he sat leaning upon one of his sides; he leaned or rested his back or his side against a thing; he leaned or reclined upon a thing; he reclined upon a cushion. They say, `mārū` i.e. we ate a repast with such a one. `mārū` means, a place in which one reclines: a chamber or sitting room; that upon which one leans or reclines in eating, drinking or talking; food or repast, so called because high people used to recline when they sat to eat (Lane & Aqrab).

- `bāyā` (Allah be glorified). `bāyā` is derived from `bāy`, which means, he breathed short or he panted for breath or was out of breath. `bāyā` means, he set him aside as excluded from the description of the company or party; he excluded him from them, i.e. made an exception in regard to him. `bāyā` means, far art thou from being included among those of whom I speak. `bāyā` means, I ascribe unto God remoteness from every imperfection or freedom therefrom; generally implying wonder or admiration. The expression may be rendered as “How far or how free is God from every imperfection!” It is also used in the sense of `bāyā` i.e. I seek protection by God (Lane).

Commentary:

The verse purports to say that when Potiphar’s wife heard of what the women in the city were saying about her infatuation for Joseph, she thought they really believed her to be guilty though outwardly they talked in such a manner as to show that they sought to exculpate her. So in order to remove their suspicions, she invited them to a feast. Tables were laid and a knife was provided for each of them. When all the guests were assembled, she asked Joseph to come out and serve them, but hardly had they cast a glance over his face when his innocent look and angelic appearance made them convinced of the purity of his conduct and all their suspicions so far as Joseph was concerned were dissipated.

The expression, cut their hands, may mean that when the women looked at Joseph, they were so struck with his saintly appearance that in a state of forgetfulness some of them happened to cut their hands with the knives they had. Or the sentence may be taken as figuratively expressing their wonder and amazement. The Arabic expression " yanlış الإسلام" implies wonder or admiration. The expression may be rendered as “How far or how free is God from every imperfection!” It is also used in the sense of "bāyā" i.e. I seek protection by God (Lane).
33. She said, 'And this is he about whom you blamed me. I did seek to seduce him against his will, but he preserved himself from sin. And now if he do not what I bid him, he shall certainly be imprisoned and become one of the humbled.'

34. He said, 'O my Lord, I would prefer prison to what they invite me to; and unless Thou turn away their guile from me I shall incline towards them and be of the ignorant.'

35. So his Lord heard his prayer, and turned away their guile from him. Verily, He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing.

(biting the finger ends) is also used to express surprise, and, as sometimes the whole is used for a part, therefore the word “hands” may be said to have been here used for “finger-ends.” According to the Talmud, oranges were served to the guests and the women inadvertently cut their hands owing to their being engrossed in looking at Joseph (Jew. Enc. & Talmud).

Incidentally, the verse shows that the word “angel” can also be used for a righteous and holy man. The verse also throws interesting light on the social customs of those days—the laying of cushioned seats and the use of knives, etc.

1536. Commentary:

Having made the women admit that their suspicions were baseless and that the sinful act had not yet been committed, Potiphar’s wife made an open confession before her guests who were her friends that she had failed in her efforts to tempt Joseph into sin. This unqualified confession of Potiphar’s wife gives the direct lie to the absurd allegation of some Commentators that Joseph had become almost inclined towards committing the foul deed.

Strange are the ways of God. The very way by which this woman sought to bring disgrace upon Joseph proved to be the means of his future greatness.

1537. Commentary:

It is extremely regrettable that although Potiphar’s wife, who wanted to entice Joseph into sin, herself openly confessed to his innocence and her women-guests also bore witness to Joseph’s piety, and though in the present verse Joseph himself says that through God’s special grace he was saved from inclining to the commission of the evil deed, yet some Commentators, writing long centuries after the event, do not hesitate to accuse Joseph of feeling inclined towards that evilly-disposed woman.

1538. Commentary:

God on the one hand made the women despair of Joseph and on the other strengthened his heart. This is how Joseph’s prayer was accepted.
36. Then it occurred to them (the men) after they had seen the signs of his innocence that to preserve their good name they should imprison him for a time.

37. And with him there entered the prison two young men. One of them said, 'I see myself in a dream pressing wine.' And the other said, 'I see myself in a dream carrying upon my head bread of which the birds are eating. Inform us of the interpretation thereof; for we see thee to be of the righteous.'

1539. Commentary:
The imprisonment of Joseph, as is generally understood, was not the result of the acceptance of his prayer mentioned in the preceding verse. The acceptance of the prayer resulted in the guiles of the women being defeated. The idea of imprisoning Joseph was an afterthought. It had nothing to do with his prayer. It appears that as the ill fame of Potiphar's wife spread in wider circles, her people thought that the best way to put a stop to this scandal-mongering was to imprison Joseph so that public opinion might come to regard him as the offender and the blame might be shifted from that guilty woman to this innocent man. The seeing of "signs" seems to refer to the incident of the garment and to the fact that the name of Potiphar's wife began increasingly to come into greater disgrace.

1540. Commentary:
The expression (with him) does not necessarily mean that the two youths were sent to prison with Joseph at the same time. They mean only that they were kept in the same prison with him.

The dreams of the butler and the baker are given in detail in Genesis (chap. 40), but their substance is the same as given in the Quran. The fact that they asked Joseph the interpretation of their dreams shows that he was held in very high esteem in the prison for his piety; for it is only from highly spiritual and pious persons that men ask the interpretation of their dreams. His two fellow-prisoners pay a further tribute to Joseph's piety in the words, we see thee to be of the righteous.
38. He replied, 'The food which you are given shall not come to you but I shall inform you of the interpretation thereof before it comes to you. This is on account of what my Lord has taught me. I have renounced the religion of the people who do not believe in Allah and who are disbelievers in the Hereafter.\\n
39. "And I have followed the religion of my fathers, Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. We cannot indeed associate anything as partner with Allah. This is of Allah's grace upon us and upon mankind, but most men are ungrateful.\\n
40. 'O my two companions of the prison, are diverse lords better or Allah, the One, the Most Supreme?\\n
1541. Commentary: This verse provides a very useful lesson for preachers, for it shows that a preacher should preach his message in a manner as not to tire or bore his hearers. Joseph assured the young men that he would not detain them long and would finish his discourse before their meal-time. The verse also shows how solicitous Joseph was in preaching the truth. Like Joseph, the Holy Prophet was also ever on the look-out for an opportunity to preach to the people and sometimes he had recourse to strange devices such as inviting them to a feast.

1542. Commentary: The expression, This is of Allah's grace upon us and upon mankind, shows that prophethood is a boon not only for the person on whom it is conferred, but also for the entire people to whom he is sent, for all men profit by it according to their respective capacities.

1543. Commentary: The verse means to say that whereas in this world of matter numerical strength counts for much, it is not so with God. Though He is One and Alone, He overpowers all and dominates over all.
41. a'You worship nothing beside Allah, but mere names that you have named, you and your fathers; Allah has sent down no authority for that. b'The decision rests with Allah alone. c'He has commanded that you shall not worship anything save Him. d'That is the right religion, but most men know it not.1544

42. 'O my two companions of the prison, as for one of you he will pour out wine for his lord to drink; and as for the other, he will be crucified so that the birds will eat from off his head. The matter about which you inquired has been decreed.' 1545

1544. Commentary:
The verse draws attention to the great principle that the things which claim to be from God must be accompanied by some evidence of divine authority and power. It is by this criterion that the claim of different religions to be of divine origin must be tested. The religion which claims to be from God must show on what divine authority it bases its claim. It does not stand to reason that a divine religion should depend on human and purely rational arguments for the demonstration of its truth. That religion which claims to come from Heaven must have heavenly evidence to support its claim. This is what is hinted at in the words, Allah has sent down no authority for that.

In the expression 'الدين الرا٦ط', meaning "the right religion", i.e. a religion which puts into a right state the affairs of this world and of the next, the principle has been laid down that only that religion can be said to be a true religion which satisfies both the physical and the spiritual needs of man. It also points out that only that religion can be called "the right religion" which saves men from Shirk or setting up equals to God. There is no doubt that Shirk has proved a great hindrance in the way of human progress. How can a people who look upon elements which God has created for their service as objects of worship, examine and analyse them and put them to their service?

1545. Commentary:
It may be asked why did Joseph, of whom the interpretation of the dreams was sought, say to the two prisoners that the affair about which they had inquired had already been decreed or settled. This was because the interpretation of dreams has much to do with their fulfilment. So long as a dream is not told to others, it may remain in abeyance. In the expression "ال أمر الديى" meaning "the right religion", i.e. a religion which puts into a right state the affairs of this world and of the next, the principle has been laid down that only that religion can be said to be a true religion which satisfies both the physical and the spiritual needs of man. It also points out that only that religion can be called "the right religion" which saves men from Shirk or setting up equals to God. There is no doubt that Shirk has proved a great hindrance in the way of human progress. How can a people who look upon elements which God has created for their service as objects of worship, examine and analyse them and put them to their service?
43. And of the two, he said to him whom he thought to be the one who would escape: ‘Mention me to thy lord.’ But Satan caused him to forget mentioning it to his lord, so he remained in prison for some years.\textsuperscript{1546}

44. And the King said, ‘I see in a dream seven fat kine which seven lean ones eat up, and seven green ears of corn and seven others withered. O ye chiefs, explain to me the meaning of my dream if you can interpret a dream.’\textsuperscript{1547}

1546. \textbf{Important Words:}

\textit{بضع} (some) is derived from \textit{بضع} (\textit{bad\textsuperscript{a}}). They say \textit{بضع} \textit{i.e.} he cut it; or he cut it into pieces. \textit{بضع} means, a part or portion of the night; a time thereof. The word denotes a variety of numbers but is generally understood to mean from three to nine. \textit{رجال} means, from three to nine men. The expression \textit{في السجن بضع سنتين} means, and he remained in the prison from three to nine years (Lane & Aqrab).

\textbf{Commentary:}

When this prisoner busied himself with the satanic occupation of preparing wine for and offering it to his master, the purifying influence of Joseph’s holy company was gone and he forgot to speak of him to the King.

1547. \textbf{Important Words:}

\textit{عمج} (withered) of which the singular is \textit{عجف} \textit{i.e.} it (a beast) became lean, meagre and emaciated. \textit{عجف} means, lean, meagre or emaciated, having lost fatness or plumpness. \textit{وجه عجف} means, a face that has little flesh (Lane).

\textbf{Commentary:}

It appears from this verse that the King was so fully convinced that his vision was real and true that he not only asked the learned men of his court to interpret it but also wished them to tell him what he should do to escape its evil effects, if any. The vision seemed to be so vivid that the King was deeply affected by it and his fright became the means of Joseph’s deliverance from the prison.
45. They replied, 'They are confused dreams and we do not know the interpretation of such dreams.'

46. And he of the two who had escaped, and who now remembered after a time, said, 'I will let you know its interpretation, therefore send ye me.'

47. 'Joseph! O thou man of truth, explain to us the meaning of seven fat kine which seven lean ones devour, and of seven green ears of corn and seven others withered; that I may return to the people so that they may know.'

1548. Important Words:

- **ءام (time)**: See 11:9.

Commentary:
The verse shows that the man who escaped was an ordinary person and not a court dignitary. This is why he asked the permission of the court to go to Joseph. The words, *I will let you know its interpretation*, show that, because of his past experience, this man was sure that Joseph would be able to interpret the vision correctly. In ancient times priests and religious divines exercised great influence in the royal courts.

1549. Important Words:

- **ذكر (remembered)**: which is derived from **ذكر** and gives the same meaning as **ذكر** i.e. he remembered or he became reminded of (Lane).

Commentary:
The words, *that I may return to the people so that they may know*, show that the butler addressed them to Joseph with a view to inspiring hope in him that when he returned to the court with the interpretation, the people would realize that Joseph was a holy man and was innocent of the wicked charge imputed to him. The butler also meant by these words to offer an excuse for his failure so far to fulfil his promise to Joseph, which was that no favourable opportunity had yet offered itself to bring his case to the notice of the King and that it was only now that a suitable opportunity had presented itself.
48. He replied, 'You shall sow for seven years, working hard and continuously, and leave what you reap in its ear, except a little which you shall eat.'

49. 'Then there shall come after that seven hard years which shall consume all that you shall have laid by in advance for them except a little which you may preserve.'

50. 'Then there shall come after that a year in which people shall be relieved and in which they shall give presents to others.'

1551. Important Words:

(working hard and continuously). See 3:12.

Commentary:

Joseph, while interpreting the dream, not only advised the people to lay up corn for the years of famine but also suggested to them the way in which they could safely do so, viz., by leaving the corn in the ear, for that was the safest way of preserving it. It is quite possible that Joseph should have deduced this method of preserving corn from the words of the dream itself, for after being shown seven fat and seven lean cows, the King was shown seven green and seven dry ears, and from this repetition Joseph might have deduced the remedy for the impending calamity.

1552. 'Commentary:

Joseph explains that the seven years of famine would be so severe that all that the people had stored up during the first seven years of plenty would be eaten up except very little which they might have saved, for fear lest the famine should become prolonged or for the purpose of seed.

Here we have another point of resemblance between Joseph and the Holy Prophet. Just as in the time of Joseph, Egypt was visited with a severe seven-year famine, so in the Holy Prophet's time Arabia had a terrible famine which lasted for seven long years. It was so severe that some people were forced to eat carrion. At last, the Holy Prophet was requested to pray to God for the removal of the famine. He prayed to God and the famine left the land after the people had been reduced to a most pitiable plight. (Bukhari and Muslim.) This is the twelfth point of resemblance between these two noble Prophets.

1553. Important Words:

(give presents) is derived from which means: (1) he pressed or squeezed the thing so as to force out its juice, etc.; (2) he took or collected the produce of the earth.
And the King said, 'Bring him to me.' But when the messenger came to him, he said, 'Go back to thy lord and ask him how fare the women who cut their hands: for, my Lord well knows their crafty design.'

Commentary:

Thinking in their ignorance that the verb is used only in the sense "they shall be rained upon," some Christian critics of the Quran have objected that as it very seldom rains in Egypt and the fertility of its soil depends entirely on the flooding of the Nile, therefore the statement that "the people shall be rained upon" betrays the ignorance of the Revealer of the Quran of even the elementary facts of geography. But these critics, instead of exposing the ignorance of the Quran, have betrayed their own ignorance of the Arabic language. The verb as shown under Important Words is used in three different senses, i.e. (1) sending down rain; (2) helping and aiding; and (3) relieving and removing trouble. Of these the latter two quite agree with the text of the Quran. But even if the word be taken in the first-mentioned sense there is no ground for objection, for though it is true that the fertility of the soil in Egypt depends on the flooding of the Nile, the flooding of the Nile itself depends on the rain on the mountains where lies its source. So if Joseph is represented here as saying that after seven years of famine, rains would fall, he obviously meant to say that rains would fall in such parts of the land as would cause the swelling of the Nile, which would bring relief to the famine-stricken people of Egypt.

The objection that the Quran has used an ambiguous and equivocal word is also devoid of all substance. The ambiguity lies in the critics' own minds. The Quran has every right to use any word in the sense in which it is used in the Arabic language. If the critics of the Quran are not conversant with the particular use of a certain word, they should blame their own ignorance and not the Quran. In fact, the beauty of the Quranic style lies in the fact that it has used a word which applies with equal appropriateness to the times both of Joseph and the Holy Prophet, whose respective peoples were visited with a severe seven-year famine. Of the three meanings of the word given under Important Words, the first applied to the time of the Holy Prophet and the latter two to that of Joseph. Thus instead of exposing any weakness in the diction of the Quran, the use of this word emphasizes its excellence.

Commentary:

When the King saw that the wise men of his court had failed to interpret his dream and that Joseph had not only interpreted it rightly but had also suggested a remedy for the impending affliction, and when he learnt from his butler that Joseph's previous interpretation of two dreams had also turned out to be true, he realized that Joseph was no ordinary man and desired to release him from the prison forthwith. But Joseph refused to be released until a full inquiry was made into his case and he was proved to be innocent of the charge.
52. He (the King) said to the women, 'What was the matter with you when you sought to seduce Joseph against his will? They said, 'He kept away from sin for fear of Allah—we have known no evil against him.' The wife of the 'Azīz said, 'Now has the truth come to light. It was I who sought to seduce him against his will, and surely, he is of the truthful.'

The women, while absorbed in conversation, had inadvertently cut their hands, or they might have declared that, by bringing a false accusation against Joseph, they had cut their own hands i.e. had landed themselves in a false position. If these words had only expressed the women’s state of mind and nothing actual had happened, Joseph could not have referred to “the cutting of the hands.”

1555. Important Words:

"What was the matter with you" (Ma'ālikun) is the noun-infinitive from "khaṭab" (khaṭaba). They say "khaṭab" i.e. he addressed the people and delivered to them an exhortation or admonition. "khaṭab" means, he asked or demanded the woman in marriage. "khaṭab" means, a thing, an affair, or a business, small or great, that one seeks or desires to do or that may be a subject of discourse; a great thing or affair; or the cause or occasion of a thing or an event; or an affliction or calamity. They say "khaṭab" i.e. what is the thing or affair or business that thou seekest or desirest to do; or, what is the cause of thy coming? (Lane).

Commentary:

This verse shows that the King had become so convinced of the righteousness of Joseph that, on hearing of the accusation against him, he at once believed it to be false. This is why the women, judging from the way in which the
53. *Joseph said, 'I asked for that enquiry to be made so that he (the 'Aziz) might know that I was not unfaithful to him in his absence and that Allah suffers not the device of the unfaithful to succeed.'*

54. *'And I do not hold my own self to be free from weakness; for, the soul is surely prone to enjoin evil, save that whereon my Lord has mercy. Surely, my Lord is Most Forgiving, Merciful.'*

King questioned them, realized that he looked upon Joseph as a righteous man, and so they confessed the truth. But by so doing they only bore witness to the innocence of Joseph, without in any way accusing Potiphar's wife. The latter, however, fearing lest after exonerating Joseph of all blame the women might proceed to testify to her guilt, although she had not yet been questioned by the King. She did this to escape the greater shame of being condemned out of the mouth of others and perhaps also to win some credit for speaking the truth without being questioned.

1556. **Commentary:**

The words of this and the following verses were uttered by Joseph and not by the seducing woman as supposed by some Commentators. The pronoun “him” in the clause *(I was not unfaithful to him)* refers to Potiphar. The verse shows Joseph as stating the object for which he had caused this enquiry to be held, which was to clear himself of the possible charge that he had behaved faithlessly towards his master, Potiphar.

The words “the unfaithful” here refer to those who had plotted against Joseph. As Joseph was a Prophet of God, the plotters against him could not succeed, and hence God caused their plot to be exposed and defeated.

1557. **Commentary:**

As stated in the preceding verse, the words *I do not hold my own self etc.*, were uttered by Joseph. The verse thus constitutes a striking commentary on the purity and nobility of mind of God’s Prophets and His Elect. Joseph, as stated above, had demanded an enquiry to be held about the imputation made against him. In this verse he disclaims any intention to establish his own purity or attribute any good to himself by that enquiry. His object, he says, is to show by this means that God does not allow the machinations of dishonest people to succeed against His Prophets and also that no one can tempt into sin those to whom God gives His protection. Joseph declares that he had caused this inquiry to be made, not to make a show of his own purity but to indicate that nobody can lead astray the man whom God Himself protects from evil. As for himself, he admits in the verse that human nature alone, unaided by divine mercy, which manifests itself through revelation, religious Law and divine grace, cannot protect itself from evil. Man, by nature, is apt to fall into evil and it is God's connection alone which can lead him to the right path.

The clause *(save that whereon my Lord has mercy)* is capable of three different interpretations: *(a)* save the *نَفْس* (soul or spirit) whereupon my Lord has mercy;