CHAPTER 17.

BANI ISRA'IL

(Revealed Before Hijra)

Title And Date Of Revelation.

This Chapter is known as Bani Isra'il because it deals with important incidents in the history of the Israelites and with the religious experiences through which they had to pass. It bears the title of Isra' also because it begins with the Holy Prophet's great Vision about his Night Journey to Jerusalem which forms one of the most outstanding topics of this Chapter.

According to some Commentators the consensus of Muslim scholarly opinion regards this Sūra as wholly Meccan (Muḥīṭ), but some other scholars think that vv. 2-8 are Medinite. Ibn Merdawaih reports Ibn 'Abbas and Ibn Zubair as saying that this Chapter is of Meccan origin and was revealed very early in the Prophet's ministry, in the third or fourth year of the Call. 'Abdullah bin Mas'ūd is of the view that Sūrās Bani Isra'il, Kahf and Maryam are among the Chapters that were revealed very early (Bukhari, Kūtub Tafsīr al-Qur'ān). According to this ḥadīth, the whole or a part of this Sūra was revealed in the early years of the Call but it is not clear what 'Abdullah bin Mas'ūd meant by the words “early years”.

We are, however, inclined to the view that this Chapter does not belong to the very early years of the Call. If 'Abdullah bin Mas'ūd's memory has not failed him the revelation of this Sūra was completed between the 4th and 11th year of the Call; otherwise it was possibly revealed in the 10th or 11th year or even in the 12th year. Christian Commentators of the Quran also assign the period between the 6th and 12th years of the Call as the time of its revelation (Wherry). This view is of special significance inasmuch as for their purpose of criticizing the Quran a date after the Hijra should have suited these Christian Commentators better.

Connection With The Preceding Sūra.

In the preceding Chapter Muslims were promised power and dominion. They were told that vast empires will come under their sway but that in the time of their glory and prosperity they should not behave like the Jews upon whom similar blessings were bestowed but who turned those blessings to wicked purposes and consigned God to oblivion, with the result that His wrath descended on them and they were destroyed (16 : 125). There subsists another beautiful connection between the closing verses of the preceding Sūra and the opening verses of the present Sūra. Towards the end of the previous Sūra Muslims were warned that very soon they would meet with as severe opposition from “the People of the Book” as they had already experienced at the hands of Meccan idolaters but that they should bear it
with patience and fortitude till God should give them complete victory over their opponents. In the present Sūra their attention has been drawn to the fact that this opposition will start at Medina and will result in the total defeat and discomfiture of “the People of the Book” and in their sacred places ultimately falling into the hands of Muslims.

This Sūra was revealed before its predecessor—Al-Naḥl, but as in point of order and arrangement its subject-matter should have followed that Sūra, so when the time came for the Quran to be compiled in the form of a book, the Holy Prophet, in pursuance of divine command, placed this Sūra after Al-Naḥl. The subject has already been dealt with at some length (see General Introduction) that the order in which the Quran was originally revealed was different from the order in which we find it today. As the temporary needs of its first addressees were not the same as the permanent needs and requirements of mankind at large and as it was a guide for the whole of humanity for all time, therefore, the order in which it was revealed could not be the same as the order in which it was compiled in the form of a book for permanent use. It is indeed an outstanding miracle of the Quran that it was revealed in an order which was best suited for the needs of the period in which it was revealed and was arranged for permanent use in another order which best suited the needs of mankind in subsequent times. Whereas every Chapter of the Quran is quite complete in itself and is independent of other Chapters as regards the subject with which it deals, there runs a deep and far-reaching connection among all the different Chapters. This is because, when the Quran was first revealed, its Sūrās were revealed in separate parts and the subject-matter of each Sūra was complete in itself. But when it was compiled in the form of a book, in its present order, in addition to the independent and separate subject-matter that every Sūra possessed, another chain of interrelated and interdependent subject-matter linking all the various Sūrās came into being and thus the Quranic subjects acquired a new breadth and a new depth.

Subject-Matter.

This Sūra, as its title shows, deals with the history of the Jewish people, with pointed reference to two outstanding occasions when they openly disobeyed and defied the two great Prophets of God—David and Jesus. As a result of this defiance they suffered destruction of their national life, first at the hands of the Babylonian Nebuchadnezzar and then at those of the Roman Emperor Titus. This special reference to the twofold destruction of Jews implied a warning for Muslims that their subsequent wrongdoing and transgression would also result in the double eclipse of their national life. The warning, however, was accompanied with a word of hope and good cheer for them. It was to the effect that since the Holy Prophet was the last Law-giving Prophet his Dispensation would not, like the Jewish Dispensation, suffer total extinction but after initial reverses would emerge triumphant with increased lustre and effulgence.

Moreover, some subjects to which only implied reference was made in the preceding Sūra have been dealt with at some length in the present one. For instance in Sūra Al-Naḥl, honey was described as a cure for many physical diseases. This description implied a
beautiful hint that the Quran, being spiritual honey, contains the panacea for humanity’s moral and spiritual ailments and disorders. This subject which was treated only casually in the preceding Chapter has been dealt with exhaustively in the present one, as is clear from the words, *And We are gradually revealing of the Quran that which is a healing and a mercy to the believers* (17:83).

The Sūra opens with the subject of *Isrā’* (Spiritual Night Journey of the Holy Prophet) in order to show that, the Holy Prophet being the successor and counterpart of Moses, his followers will conquer the lands which were promised to Moses, and that like Moses he will also have to leave his native place. But his Emigration will lead to the very rapid progress and advancement of his noble cause. After this we are briefly told that the people of Moses acquired great power and prestige through him though subsequently they came to grief by defying and ignoring divine warning. But the Quran, being a more complete code of Laws, is capable of bringing about a greater and more complete change in the lives of its followers than was the Book of Moses. This brief reference to the rise and decline of Jews is attended with a warning for Muslims that God would bestow upon them His favours and like the Jews they would also rise to great heights of material greatness and glory, but when they had acquired wealth, power and influence they should not forget God. After this we are told that there is nothing bad in seeking the good things of this life but their enjoyment should not lead us to a life of ease and forgetfulness. Then some rules of conduct are mentioned by acting upon which one can rise to a very high spiritual stature. But instead of thinking over and benefiting by these rules disbelievers arrogantly turn away from them and give no thought to the dreadful end to which their conceit and pride are likely to lead them. They are warned that rejection of truth is never productive of wholesome results and that they will be visited with severe divine punishment, particularly in the Latter Days, when the world shall witness a fight to the finish between the angels of heaven and the sons of darkness and finally the forces of Satan shall suffer complete rout.

The Sūra proceeds to administer a severe rebuke to disbelievers that they seek to annihilate the Holy Prophet, but God has decreed a great purpose for him and a mighty destiny awaits him. His name shall be known to the remotest corners of the earth and shall be honoured to the end of time. The world shall recognize him as humanity’s greatest Guide and Leader and the Quran as a storehouse of limitless spiritual knowledge. The Sūra closes with a brief description of the signs of the Latter Days and of the evils that will then prevail in the world and declares that it is prayer and connection with God alone that can save man from sin.
1. In the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful.\(^{1930}\)

2. Glory be to Him Who carried His servant by night from the Sacred Mosque to the Distant Mosque, the environs of which We have blessed, that We might show him some of Our Signs. Surely, He alone is the Hearing, the Seeing.\(^{1931}\)

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1930. Commentary:
See 1:1.

1931. Important Words:

- "(carried)" is derived from استراح. They say استراح بالليل، i.e., he journeyed or travelled by night or in the night. استراح امرأء أسرى means, he made him journey or travel, or he transported him by night or in the night; he journeyed or travelled with him, by night or in the night, or simply, he carried him.

- The Quranic expression مسجد النذير يبعد ألا means, Glory be to Him Who transported His servant by night. According to some lexicologists استراح is used for journey in the first part of the night and استراح for the last part of it. According to others, the verb استراح is from مسجد which means, a wide tract of land.

- According to this meaning the expression استراح بعده ألا means, Who transported His servant over a wide tract of land (Lane, Aqrab & Mufradat).

- The Distant Mosque. They say السجد الاقف which means, distant or very distant (Aqrab).

- May signify the Prophet Solomon's Temple at Jerusalem, the Holy Prophet's Mosque at Medina or the Promised Messiah's Mosque at Qadian.

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Commentary:
The verse is supposed by almost all Commentators of the Quran to refer to the (Spiritual Ascension of the Holy Prophet). The subject of aîrâj has become much complicated and confused on account of the many divergent traditions that deal with it. Contrary to popular view we are, however, inclined towards the opinion that the present verse deals with the (Night Journey) of the Holy Prophet while his aîrâj (Spiritual Ascension) has been dealt with in Sûra Al-Najm. That Sûra removes all the obscurities and ambiguities that have confused the popular mind in regard to this important subject. In Sûra Al-Najm we have:--

*It is nothing but a revelation that is revealed. The One of mighty powers has taught him (this knowledge): the One Possessor of strength. So He manifested His ascendance (over everything) and He revealed His word when he was on the uppermost horizon. Then he drew nearer (to God); then he came down to (His creatures), so that he became, as it were, the one chord of two bays...*
or closer still. And He revealed to His servant that which He revealed. The heart (of the Prophet) was not untrue to that which he saw. Will you then dispute with him concerning that which he saw? And certainly he saw Him a second time, near the Lote-tree beyond which none may pass, near which is the Garden of Abode. This was when a wonderful and glorious Divine manifestation covered the Lote-tree. The eye deviated not nor did it wander. Surely, he saw the greatest of the Signs of his Lord. (53: 5—19).

These verses give a graphic description of the Mi'raj, for the facts mentioned in them all relate to it, e.g., the Holy Prophet went up to the Lote-tree; (2) the Lote-tree was covered with “something”; (3) the Prophet saw the Paradise (the Garden of Abode) near the Lote-tree; (4) he became, as it were, the one chord of two bows; (5) he saw God (and the heart of the Prophet was not untrue to that which he saw); and (6) the word of God descended on the Lote-tree.

All these details have also been mentioned in the traditions which deal with Mi'raj. As for the Lote-tree, Abu Huraira (as reported by Ibn Jarir, Ibn Abü Hâtim, Ibn Merdawaih, Abû Ya'la and Baihaqi) says, “In the night of Mi'raj, after having seen other Prophets in the heavens I was taken up to Paradise. This is followed by the words i.e., after I had seen the Prophets in the heavens I was taken up to Paradise. This is followed by the words i.e., after the Paradise I was led up to the Lote-tree (Ibn Jarir, vol. 15, p. 11).

The fourth important detail mentioned in Chapter 53 is that when the Holy Prophet had a vision of those celestial scenes he was transported into a highly spiritual state which has been described in the words, So that he became, as it were, the one chord of two bows or closer still.

This fact has also been mentioned in the traditions about Mi'raj. In the tradition reported by Abu Sa'id al-Khudri and referred to above we find the words i.e., between God and the Prophet there was the one chord of two bows or closer still.

The fifth important and relevant incident mentioned in Chapter 53 is that during the Mi'raj the Prophet had a vision of God Himself
This fact has also been mentioned in the traditions quoted by Ibn Merdawaih on the authority of Asmā', daughter of Abū Bakr (Al-Khaṣṣāṣ al-Kubra, vol. 1, p. 177), and by Muslim on the authority of Ibn ‘Abbās (Muslim, Ḳūṭab al-Imān). In the latter tradition we read راَهِمْنُ، فَهَدأْنَى مَرَّةً i.e., twice the Prophet saw God with the eyes of his heart.

The sixth notable detail mentioned in Chapter 53 is that God spoke to the Holy Prophet near the Lote-tree (53:11). This fact has also found a mention in the traditions. For instance, in the tradition reported by Abū Huraira we have بُعِيَتْ نَفْسِي إِلَى مَعَالَةٍ مُّرَّةٌ i.e., so God spoke to him near it—the Lote-tree (Al-Khaṣṣāṣ al-Kubra, vol. 1, p. 174). Similarly, Ibn Abī Ḥātim has reported on the authority of Anas bin Mālik that when the Prophet arrived near the Lote-tree, God addressed him by name saying وَاللَّهُ مَعَكَ i.e., O Muhammad, and then Anas continues to finish the hadith. These very striking similarities and resemblances between the subject-matter of Sūra Al-Najm and the traditions about Miʿrāj leave no doubt that it is the Miʿrāj of the Holy Prophet which has been described in that Sūra.

After having established the fact that Sūra Al-Najm contains a description of the Miʿrāj it is important to point out that this Sūra has been admitted by the consensus of scholarly opinion to have been revealed in the fifth year of the Call or even earlier. The following very well-known historical event proves it. A party of early Muslims had sought refuge in Abyssinia. They left Mecca in the seventh month of the fifth year of the Call (Muir, Life of Muhammad, 1923, p. 69). Now the traditions agree that three months had hardly elapsed since this little band of the Faithful had left for Abyssinia when they returned to Mecca (Muir, Life of Muhammad, 1923, p. 80). The reason which, according to traditions, led to their early return was this. The Holy Prophet was one day reciting Chapter 53. When he came to the words, Rather prostrate yourselves before Allah, and worship Him (53:63), the Prophet and the Muslims with him fell prostrate on the ground. The disbelievers present on the occasion, being overwhelmed with the grand theme of the Sūra and the solemnity of the occasion, also joined the Prophet in prostration. This gave rise to the rumour that the Quraish had become converted to Islam. When this rumour reached Abyssinia, Muslim refugees hastened back to Mecca. This shows that the recitation of the Sūra which led to this incident having taken place, must have been revealed in the fifth year of the Call or some time prior to it.

After a brief description of the Miʿrāj or the Spiritual Ascension of the Holy Prophet and of the time when it took place, it may be noted here that the Isrāʾ or the Night Journey of the Holy Prophet from Mecca to Jerusalem, with which the present verse deals took place in the eleventh year of the Call (Zurqānī, vol. 1, p. 306). Christian writers, however, put it in the twelfth year of the Call (Muir, Life of Muhammad, 1923, p. 121). Traditions relating to this incident also corroborate the date referred to above. According to the traditions quoted by Ibn Merdawaih and Ibn Saʿd, the Isrāʾ took place on the seventeenth of Rabīʾ al-Awwal, a year before the Hijra (Al-Khaṣṣāṣ al-Kubra, vol. 1, p. 162). Similarly, a tradition quoted by Baihaqī on the authority of Ibn Shihāb, relates that the Isrāʾ took place a year before the Hijra. Another tradition also quoted by Baihaqī places the Night Journey to Jerusalem six months before the Hijra (Al-Khaṣṣāṣ al-Kubra, vol. 1, p. 162).

All these traditions go to prove that the Isrāʾ took place six months or a year prior to the Hijra and it has been shown above that...
the Mi'raj took place about the fifth year of the Call. Thus the two incidents are separated from each other by an interval of six or seven years and therefore cannot be identical; the Mi'raj must be regarded as quite distinct and separate from the Isra'.

Irrefutable evidence which shows that the Mi'raj and the Isra' were two separate incidents is the fact that it was during the fifth year of the Call that the five daily prayers were enjoined upon Muslims. If the Mi'raj be considered as identical with the Isra', then it will also have to be admitted that the five daily Prayers were enjoined upon Muslims in the eleventh or twelfth year of the Call which is evidently wrong because all traditionists agree that the five Prayers were prescribed in the very early years of the Call.

It may incidentally be stated here that the Mi'raj itself seems to have occurred twice. As it appears from the Hadith, the first Mi'raj occurred in the beginning of the Holy Prophet's ministry when the foundation of the Sharia'at may be said to have been laid and Prayers were made obligatory, which seem to have taken place in the first year of the Call (Bukhari, *Chapter on Tauhid*; Jarir, vol. 15, p. 4). The second or the better known Mi'raj took place about the fifth year of the Call when the five prescribed Prayers were made obligatory and Chapter 53, containing a description of it, was revealed (or it may have taken place even earlier and may have been subsequently referred to in Ch. 53). The Isra', however, is quite a separate event which undoubtedly occurred in the eleventh or twelfth year of the Call when the Prophet was living in the house of his cousin, Ummi Hani', after the death of his wife, Khadija, which took place in the tenth year of the Call after the Prophet had come out of the Valley (Waabil) of Abü Tâlib.

In addition to this strong historical evidence, other relevant circumstances also lend support to the view that the two incidents are quite distinct and separate from each other:

1. The first evidence in this connection is furnished by the Quran itself. It gives an account of the Prophet's Mi'raj (Spiritual Ascension) in Chapter 53 but makes no reference to his Isra' (Night Journey to Jerusalem), while in the present Sura it speaks of his Isra' but omits all allusion to his Mi'raj. This shows that the two incidents took place separately and, therefore, could not be mentioned together. It is inconceivable that the Quran should have mentioned the concluding portion of this incident in one Sura and the first portion of the self-same incident in another Sura five years later.

2. The second evidence which supports this inference is the fact that there was only one person, namely Ummi Hani', who was present with the Prophet during the night when the Isra' (Spiritual Night Journey to Jerusalem) took place and she speaks only of his visit to Jerusalem and makes no mention of his journey to the heavens. She was the first person whom the Prophet informed of his Night Journey to Jerusalem and at least seven collectors of traditions have given her account of the incident on the authority of four different reporters who have reported the incident from her. All these four reporters concur in saying that the Prophet went to Jerusalem and returned to Mecca the same night. If the Prophet had spoken of his Ascension to the heavens also, Ummi Hani' could not have failed to refer to it in one or other of her reports. But she does not do so in any of her reports, which conclusively shows that during the night in question the Holy Prophet made the Isra' or the Spiritual Night Journey to Jerusalem only and that the Mi'raj did not take place on that occasion. So the Isra' or the Prophet's Spiritual Night Journey to Jerusalem should not be confused
with the Mi'raj or his Spiritual Ascension to heaven.

(3) All the different reporters of this incident may be placed in three categories: (a) those who speak of the Prophet's Ascension direct to heaven and make no mention of his Journey to Jerusalem; (b) those who speak first of his Journey to Jerusalem and then of his Ascension to heaven; and (c) those who only speak of His Journey to Jerusalem and make no mention at all of his Ascension to heaven. Of the reporters of this last group, there is a goodly number who say expressly that the Prophet returned to Mecca after his Journey to Jerusalem.

It is evident that the reports of the first group point to the Mi'raj as being distinct from the Isra' inasmuch as, according to them, the Holy Prophet was taken from his house direct to heaven, so Jerusalem could not lie in his way. The reporters of this group are Anas, Malik bin Sa'āda and Abū Dharr, who was one of the earliest converts to Islam.

Similarly, the reports of those who speak only of the Prophet's Journey to Jerusalem and make no mention of his Ascension to heaven also show that when He made his Night Journey to Jerusalem, he did not ascend to heaven, for if he had ascended to heaven after his visit to Jerusalem, it is inconceivable that the reporters, after mentioning the less important part of the Vision, should have omitted to mention its more important part which related to his Ascension to heaven, and to his having seen God and having had communion with Him. The reporters of this group of traditions are Anas and 'Abdullah bin Mas'ūd, the latter being one of the earliest and best-loved of the Prophet's Companions.

Reports of the third group clearly state that the Prophet returned to Mecca after his visit to Jerusalem and did not ascend to heaven. These also demonstrate the two events to be distinct and separate from each other. The reporters of this group are 'Abdullah bin Mas'ūd, 'Abdullah bin 'Abbās, 'A'isha and Ummi Salma and Ummi Hāni. All of them with the exception of 'Abdullah bin Mas'ūd, who, as stated above, was among the earliest converts to Islam, were the Prophet's very near relatives and enjoyed his intimate and constant company. It is impossible to impugn their evidence.

Another argument in favour of Isra' being distinct from Mi'raj are the traditions which speak of the Prophet's transportation to the heavens after his visit to Jerusalem and then of his return from the heavens to Jerusalem and from Jerusalem back to Mecca (Al-Khāṣṣaṣ al-Kubra, vol. 1, p. 154). Now, going to Jerusalem before ascending to heaven may be considered as reasonable, for it served for the Prophet the purpose of offering Prayers at the place where a large party of heavenly Messengers had delivered their divine Message, but it is difficult to understand why the same route should have been followed during the return journey, when on his return from heaven the Prophet is not reported to have performed any specific act at Jerusalem. The only reasonable assumption is that the account of the Isra' became mixed up with that of the Mi'raj. Anas seems to have related the account of both the Isra' and the Mi'raj to some reporters who mixed up the two accounts and mistakenly thought that they formed the two parts of the same event and thus these reporters were led to believe that while coming back from his Mi'raj the Prophet went to Jerusalem from where he returned to Mecca. In fact, the confusion seems to have arisen from the same word ًاسراء (which means a night journey) having been used for both the Holy Prophet's ًاسراء (Spiritual Night Journey to Jerusalem) and his ًمرج (Spiritual Ascension to heaven); and the resemblance that existed in some of the
details in the description of the Isra' (Isra) and the Mi'raj (Mi'raj) heightened and confirmed it.

Internal evidence of the traditions also points to the fact that the Isra' and the Mi'raj were two distinct and separate events. The traditions which first give an account of the Prophet's visit to Jerusalem and then of his transportation from Jerusalem to heaven also state that at Jerusalem he met the former Prophets, including Adam, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus, and that in the heavens he met the same Prophets again but could not recognize them. Now how did these Prophets whom he had met at Jerusalem reach the heavens before him and why could he not recognize them while he had seen them only a short while ago in the course of the same journey? If the two meetings had taken place separately and at a distance of long intervals, it was possible that he could not have recognized some of them at the time of the second meeting in a changed atmosphere. But it is inconceivable that he should have failed to recognize them when he had met them only a short while ago in the course of the same journey.

It having been established that the Isra' and the Mi'raj were two separate and distinct events, it is necessary to give a somewhat detailed account of Isra' as given in the traditions as it forms the subject-matter of the verse under comment. The most reliable account of it is to be found in the tradition quoted by Ibn Jarir on the authority of Anas bin Malik. It is briefly as follows:

“When the Archangel Gabriel brought the Burāq to the Holy Prophet, he mounted it, and had gone only a short distance, when he saw an old woman. The Prophet asked Gabriel who she was, but Gabriel gave no answer to his question; on the contrary he told him not to ask questions, just as Moses in his Mi’raj (Spiritual Ascension) was told not to put unnecessary questions (18: 71).

After the Prophet had gone a little further he saw a man calling him by name from across the road in order to invite his attention to himself. But Gabriel asked him again not to heed his call. When the Prophet had proceeded a little further, he met a party of men who greeted him with the greeting of peace. Gabriel told him to return their greeting. After this the Prophet reached the Holy House in Jerusalem. There Gabriel presented him with three cups containing water, milk and wine. The Prophet took the cup containing milk and drank it and refused to accept the other two. Upon this Gabriel said to him, “Thou hast, indeed, chosen the right course which is in perfect harmony with a pure, unsullied nature. If thou hadst accepted water or wine, thou and thine followers would have been lost.” Then Adam and the other Prophets were presented to him, and the Holy Prophet led them in Prayers. After this Gabriel explained to him that the old woman he saw on the way was an embodied representation of the life of this world and only as much was left of the life of the world as was left of the life of that old woman. As for the person who called him from across the road, he was Iblīs, the enemy of God. The party of men who greeted him were the Prophets Abraham, Moses and Jesus (Ibn Jarir).

This tradition serves as a key to resolve this whole allegory. It gives the most reliable and correct account of the Isra'. It shows that the Journey to Jerusalem was no physical act but only a vision. This is clear from the following facts:

(a) It is stated in this tradition that during the Night Journey to Jerusalem, the Prophet saw an old woman, a person standing on one side of the road, and three cups full of water, wine and milk (of which the Prophet chose the last), and Gabriel told him what all these things signified. The explanation and interpretation by Gabriel of the things the Prophet
saw shows that the Journey was only a vision, for it is only things seen in visions that need interpretation and explanation.

(b) The Night Journey has been spoken of as a vision in the present Sūra (v. 61). Accordingly, we find that several Companions of the Prophet and some of the later scholars of Islam have, on the basis of this verse, declared the Isrā' to be a vision. For instance, Ibn Ishāq and Ibn Jarir report that when Mu‘āwiya was asked concerning the Isrā', he said that it was a vision which came out to be true (Manthūr, vol. 4, p. 197). ‘Ā'isha is also reported to have held the same view. (Hishām and Ma‘ād, vol. 1).

(c) We learn from the Ḥadīth that when the Holy Prophet spoke of his Night Journey to Jerusalem he was asked to give a description of the Temple at Jerusalem. The Prophet is reported to have said that at that time God presented before his eyes an embodied representation of the Temple and he was thus able to describe it as demanded of him (Ibn Kathīr, vol. 6, p. 18).

The Vision of the Prophet referred to in the present verse implied a great prophecy. His journey to the Distant Mosque (المسجد الأقصى) that the Prophet saw in the Vision represented his own Mosque at Medina, Jerusalem stood for Medina and his going to Jerusalem signified his Emigration to Medina. The Vision begins with the words سبحان اللّه (Glory be to Him) which indicated that the Emigration of the Prophet would redound to the Glory of God. The word سبحان itself shows that the Vision embodied a prophecy; for a physical journey to the Temple at Jerusalem could not be regarded as evidence of the Glory of God. But as establishment of the Islamic State at Medina was to fulfil a prophecy, that event did serve as evidence of divine Glory. Thus the words, Glory be to Him Who carried His servant by night from the Sacred Mosque to the Distant Mosque, signified that God would take the Holy Prophet to a Mosque resembling المسجد الأقصى (the Distant Mosque) at Jerusalem so that His word might be fulfilled.

The words, We might show him some of Our Signs, pointed to the great possibilities of the Prophet’s journey to Medina. The Prophet’s Emigration to Medina served as a prelude to the glorious future of Islam which was then hidden from the eyes of the world and thus God’s great Signs were manifested. The reason why the Holy Prophet’s Mosque was called المسجد الأقصى (the Distant Mosque), and why Medina was shown to him in the Vision in the form of Jerusalem was that the blessings which God had conferred on the Mosque at Jerusalem were also in store in a greater measure for the Prophet’s Mosque at Medina.

The Prophecy implied in the words, Who carried His servant by night, was fulfilled when the Prophet left Mecca at dead of night. He did not undertake this journey of his own accord but in pursuance of God’s express command. And as in his Night Journey to Jerusalem in the Vision he was accompanied
3. And We gave Moses the Book, and We made it a guidance for the children of Israel, saying, 22"Take no guardian beside Me, 1932

4. 'O ye the progeny of those whom We carried in the Ark with Noah'. He was indeed a grateful servant.1933

by the Archangel Gabriel, so in his Flight to Medina he was accompanied by his most faithful companion, Abū Bakr. The word "Gabriel," which means "man of God," fitly applies to Abū Bakr and portrays his spiritual eminence.

The Vision may also be taken as referring to a spiritual journey of the Holy Prophet to a distant land in some future time. It meant that when spiritual darkness enveloped the entire world, the Prophet would appear in spirit a second time in the person of one of his followers, in a land far away from the scene of his first advent—in the Punjab. A pointed reference to this second advent of the Holy Prophet is to be found in 62:3-5.

1932. Commentary:

With this verse begins an account of Moses and his people. The preceding verse alluded to the divine promise that the Holy Prophet and his followers would conquer "the Distant Mosque" and the land around it. Muslims are told here that Jerusalem and the country around it was first given to Moses and his people in accordance with divine promise. The people of Moses lost it because they disobeyed the commandments of God. Muslims should beware lest they also break God's covenant and incur His displeasure.

Towards the close of the previous Chapter, reference was made to Jews, and Muslims were directed to argue with them in a way that is best (16:126). This direction implied that in their discussion with Jews Muslims should base their arguments on principles accepted by Jews and should advance reasons in support of the truth of Islam from their own (Jewish) Scriptures. The present Chapter provides an illustration of the way in which Muslims should discuss religious matters with "the People of the Book." It refers to prophecies contained in the Jewish Scriptures which point to the corruption and degeneration of Jews and their breach of the divine covenant which made them the object of divine punishment and tells them that now they could only save themselves by accepting the New Covenant—Islam.

1933. Commentary:

The verse is taken by some Commentators to refer to the followers of the Holy Prophet, but primarily it refers to the followers of Moses, as the context shows. It reminds the Israelites that they should have profited by the noble example of Noah who with his followers was saved from the Deluge and was grateful to God for that great favour. They, too, were saved from drowning in the sea and should have been grateful to God for that favour but they were not. The verse may also be taken as constituting a forewarning to Muslims who are told that when, by the grace of God, they emerge safe from the storm of opposition and persecution that was raging over their heads, they should be grateful to Him.
5. And We revealed to the children of Israel in the Book, saying, 'You will surely do mischief in the land twice, and you will surely become excessively overbearing.'

6. So when the time for the first of the two warnings came, We sent against you some servants of Ours possessed of great might in war, and they penetrated the innermost parts of your houses and it was a warning that was bound to be carried out.

1934. Commentary:
This verse shows that it was foretold in the Book of Moses that the Israelites would disobey and defy divine commandments twice and twice would they be visited with punishment. The word الكتاب (the Book) here means, the Book of Moses—the Bible.

The dreadfal fate that befell the Israelites on account of their repeated defiance of the commandments of God was mentioned in the Quran to serve as a timely warning for Muslims, but they did not profit by it and followed in the footsteps of the Jews and were punished as the Israelites were punished before them. This slavish imitation of Jews by Muslims was foretold by the Holy Prophet in the well-known tradition viz., Surely, you will follow the ways of those before you (Bukhārī, Kitāb al-Iʿtīām biʿl-Kitāb waʿl Sunnat). The Quran refers to the two transgressions of the Israelites in the words: Those amongst the children of Israel who disbelieved were cursed by the tongue of David and of Jesus, son of Mary (5:79).

1935. Important Words:
نحاسا (and they penetrated). نحاس means, he sought for or after a thing or news or tidings eagerly and with the utmost of his endeavour.

They say جاسم الإيام. i.e., the lion trod upon them, or came into the midst of them and did mischief among them. The Arabs say جسا خلاد درا بار. i.e., We went to and fro or went about amidst the houses of the people. The Quranic expression فجاسوا خلا الديار means, they went through the midst of the houses and sought for what was in them or they went to and fro among the houses in a sudden attack or they slew you amid your houses (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:
The first disaster befell the Israelites after David, and the second after Jesus. It appears from the Bible that the Jews had become a very powerful nation after Moses and in the time of David they laid the foundation of a mighty kingdom which continued to flourish for sometime after his death in its old might and glory. Then it fell prey to gradual decay and about 733 B.C. Samaria was conquered by the Assyrians, who annexed the whole of Israel north of Jezreel. In 608 B.C. Palestine was ravaged by an Egyptian force under Pharaoh Necho and the Israelites came under Egyptian sway (Jew. Enc., vol. 6, p. 665). The loss of their temporal power and their destruction and desolation, however, did not make them
mend their ways. They continued in their old wicked practices. The Prophet Jeremiah warned them to give up their iniquities as the wrath of God was about to overtake them. These are Jeremiah's warnings:

O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved. How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee? For I have heard a voice as of a woman in travail, and the anguish as of her that bringeth forth her first child, the voice of the daughter of Zion, that bewaileth herself, that spreadeth her hands, saying, Woe is me now! for my soul is wearied because of murderers (Jeremiah 4:14 & 31).

The Israelites paid no heed to Jeremiah's warnings. So “the Lord was very angry with them and removed them out of His sight; there was none left but the tribe of Judah only” (2 Kings 17:18). In the reign of Jehoiakim, Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon made his first invasion of Palestine and carried off some of the Temple vessels, but the city was spared the rigours of a siege. In 597 B.C., also the city was invested and fell victim to a severe famine. The rebellion of Zedekiah, however, caused a second invasion in 587 B.C., and after a siege of a year and a half, the city was taken by storm. King Zedekiah fled from the city but was taken prisoner. His sons were slain and his eyes were put out and he was bound in fetters and carried off to Babylon. The Temple, the King’s palace and all the great buildings in the city were burnt down, the chief priests and other leaders were put to death and many people were carried off in captivity (Jew. Enc., vol. 6, p. 665 & vol. 7, p. 122 under Jerusalem).

Thus was fulfilled the promise about the first of the two warnings held out to the Israelites by Moses to which the present verse refers. The following passages of the Bible contain Moses’s warnings to the Jews:

“But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe to do all His commandments and His statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee......

The Lord shall bring a nation against thee from far, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flieth; a nation whose tongue thou shalt not understand; a nation of fierce countenance, which shall not regard the person of the old, nor show favour to the young: and he shall eat the fruit of thy cattle, and the fruit of thy land, until thou be destroyed: which also shall not leave thee either corn, wine, or oil, or the increase of thy kine, or flocks of thy sheep, until he hath destroyed thee. And he shall besiege thee in all thy gates, until thy high and fenced walls come down, wherein thou trustedst, throughout all thy lands: and he shall besiege thee in all thy gates throughout all thy land, which the Lord thy God hath given thee. And thou shalt eat the fruit of thy own body, the flesh of thy sons and of thy daughters, which the Lord thy God hath given thee, in the siege, and in the straitness, wherein thine enemies shall distress thee. And it shall come to pass, that as the Lord rejoiced over you to do you good, and to multiply you; so the Lord will rejoice over you to destroy you, and to bring you to naught; and yet ye shall be plucked from off the land whither thou goest to possess it. And the Lord shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other; and there thou shalt serve other gods, which neither thou nor thy fathers have known, even wood and stone. (Deut. 28:15; 49-53; 63-64).
7. 'Then We gave you back the power against them, and aided you with wealth and children, and made you larger in numbers. 1936

1936. Commentary:

The Jews fared well in exile. Most of them were employed on public works in central Babylonia and many among them eventually gained their freedom and rose to influential positions. Their faith and religious devotion were renewed; the literature of the kingdom was studied, re-edited, and adapted to the needs of the reviving community, and the hope of restoration to Palestine was preached and cherished. About 545 B.C., this aspiration took a more definite form. Cyrus, King of Media and Persia, had by this time attained to dominion over the whole uplands of Asia as far as the shores of the Aegean Sea. The Jews made a secret agreement with him and helped him to conquer Babylon. The city surrendered to his army without resistance in July, 539 B.C. As a reward for their services Cyrus permitted the Jews to return to their country, and also helped them in the rebuilding of the Temple. In 538 B.C. Cyrus proclaimed the rebuilding of the Temple as his divine mission but the work was not started till the following year (Historians' History of the World, vol. II, p. 126; Jew. Enc., vol. 7, under Jerusalem, Enc. Bib., under Cyrus and 2 Chronicles 36 : 22, 23). The Judean, Sheshbazzar (a Governor under Cyrus) brought back to the Temple vessels which Nebuchadnezzar had carried away and prepared to undertake the work at the expense of the royal purse. A large body of exiles returned to Jerusalem (Ezra 1: 3-5). The work of rebuilding the Temple steadily progressed and it was completed in 516 B.C. (Jew. Enc., vol. 7, under Jerusalem).

It is to these events and the subsequent prosperity of the Jews that the verse under comment refers. All this, however, was foretold by Moses long before it came to pass. Says he:

And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call them to mind among all the nations, whither the Lord thy God hath driven thee, and shalt return unto the Lord thy God, and shalt obey his voice according to all that I command thee this day, thou and thy children, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul; That then the Lord thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations, whither the Lord thy God hath scattered thee. If any of thee be driven out unto the utmost parts of heaven, from thence will the Lord thy God gather thee, and from thence will he fetch thee: And the Lord thy God will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it; and he will do thee good, and multiply thee above thy fathers (Deut. 30: 1-5). See also 2: 103.
8. 'Now, if you do well, you will do well for your own souls; and if you do evil, it will only go against them. So when the time for the latter warning came, We raised a people against you to cover your faces with grief, and to enter the Mosque as they entered it the first time, and to destroy all that they conquered with utter destruction. 1937

1937. Commentary:

This verse speaks of the Jews' second relapse into iniquitous and evil ways and of the punishment which befell them in consequence. They persecuted Jesus and sought to kill him on the Cross and stamp out his Movement. So God afflicted them with a terrible punishment when in 70 A.D. the Roman forces under Titus swept the country and amid circumstances of unparalleled horror Jerusalem was destroyed and the Temple of Solomon was burnt down (Enc. Bib., under Jerusalem). This disaster took place when Jesus was yet living in Kashmir. It was also foretold by Moses. The Bible says:

Of the rock that begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee. And when the Lord saw it, he abhorred them, because of the provoking of his sons, and of his daughters. And he said, I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end shall be: for they are a very froward generation, children in whom is no faith. They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God; they have provoked me to anger with their vanities: and I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation. For a fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn unto the lowest hell, and shall consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains. I will heap mischiefs upon them; I will spend mine arrows upon them. They shall be burnt with hunger, and devoured with burning heat, and with bitter destruction: I will also send the teeth of beasts upon them, with the poison of serpents of the dust. The sword without, and terror within, shall destroy both the young man and the virgin, the suckling also with the man of gray hairs. I said, I would scatter them into corners, I would make the remembrance of them to cease from among them (Deut. 32: 18-26).

It may be noted here that this prophecy about the second punishment is mentioned in the Bible after the prophecy which spoke of the first punishment (Deut. 28). More than that, it is mentioned even after the prophecy which speaks of the return of the Jews to Jerusalem (Deut. 30: 1-5). This shows that this prophecy (Deut. 32: 18-26) refers to the second punishment, to which reference has been made in the words of the Quran, in v. 5, viz. You will surely do mischief in the land twice.
9. 'It may be that your Lord will now have mercy on you; but if you return to your previous state, We too will return, and We have made Hell a prison for the disbelievers.'

10. Surely, this Quran guides to what is most right; and gives to the believers who do good deeds the glad tidings that they shall have a great reward.

1938. Commentary:
After speaking of the utter destruction of the Israelites, the Quran in the present verse gives them a message of hope and informs them that, although so far as the Bible and the Jewish Faith are concerned their fate is sealed for ever and they can never hope to regain their departed glory, yet, outside the Mosaic Dispensation, God has opened to them a new way by following which they can be readmitted to His Mercy and Grace. That way is Islam and through it they can again rise to their former power and greatness (Deut. 33:1-3). They should avail themselves of this new opportunity and inherit divine blessings. If, however, they refuse to benefit by this last opportunity, God's wrath shall descend on them and they shall be consigned to everlasting perdition. While in these verses the Jews were told that according to the prophecies of their own Scriptures there was no future for them outside Islam, the Muslims have also been warned that, like the Jews, they too will be punished twice if they did not give up their evil ways. But they also threw this timely warning to the winds and the result was their disgrace and punishment. They, too, were twice punished. The first punishment overtook them at the fall of Baghdad when the barbarous hordes of Halakü laid waste that great seat of learning and power. In the heyday of their glory Muslims married the beautiful women of Farghana. These women brought with them their idolatrous beliefs with the result that later generations of Muslims became infected with these beliefs and lost the respect they once had for their own religion and became lax in morals and discipline. This led to the invasion of Baghdad by the savage Tartar hordes who exceeded the Babylonian despilers of Palestine in savagery and barbarity. Baghdad fell in 1258 A.D. and 1,800,000 Muslims are said to have been put to the sword. All members of the royal family were mercilessly butchered and for days the city was given over to pillage and arson and with the destruction of the Abbaside Empire Muslim power in the East came to a most inglorious end. Islam, however, emerged triumphant from this dreadful ordeal. The victors became the vanquished and the humble servants of Islam. The second punishment was destined to overtake Muslims in the Latter Days. Its signs have already begun to appear. See also 17:105.

1939. Commentary:
The verse purports to say that the goal which
11. And that for those who do not believe in what is to come later We have prepared a grievous punishment. 1940

12. And man asks for evil as he should ask for good; and man is hasty. 1941

the Quran sets before its followers is much nobler and more sublime than that of the former peoples and promises its true followers both spiritual and temporal blessings. They should, therefore, make great efforts to attain them and be on their guard against a lax and undisciplined life and in every way prove themselves deserving of the promised boons.

1940. **Commentary:**

This verse continues and develops the theme of the previous verse and leaves no doubt about the fact that negligent people come to grief. The word اذى (lit. meaning ‘that which comes after’) has erroneously been taken to mean يوم الآخرة (the Last Day) only. The word should be interpreted in harmony with its context. In the present verse ‘the end of nations’ seems to be the most appropriate meaning of the word الآخرة. The verse means to say that those who ignore the patent fact that the end of every rise is fall, tend to neglect their duties and responsibilities with the result that they draw upon themselves divine punishment.

The fact that this verse is connected with the preceding verse by the conjunction و (and) also supports the above interpretation, for it shows that it is Muslims who have been addressed here, and Muslims cannot be said to deny يوم الآخرة (the Day of Judgement). So the word الآخرة cannot be taken to mean here the Day of Judgement or the Last Day but that which is yet to come—the end of a doomed nation.

1941. **Commentary:**

This verse corroborates and explains the interpretation put upon the previous verse. It makes no mention of the Day of Judgement. The verses that follow also continue the same theme.

The expression ويدع الإنسان بالشر يدع (And man asks for evil as he should ask for good) does not mean that there lives a man so foolish as to pray to God to send him evil. It only means that such is the condition of man that while by his words of mouth he prays to God to grant him good, by his actual bad deeds he invites the displeasure and punishment of God. Thus his actions belie his words.

The expression may also be interpreted as, "And man calls for evil as he should call for good." According to both renderings the verse signifies that when nations or individuals attain material wealth and rise to power and influence, they tend to neglect their duties and responsibilities and thus in the very hour of their power and glory they lay the foundations of their decay and death. At a time when they should have established peace and justice on earth by the help of the great resources placed at their disposal, they give themselves up to enjoyment and self-aggrandizement. The time of their power and glory
13. And We have made the night and the day two Signs and the Sign of night We have made dark, and the Sign of day We have made sight-giving, that you may seek bounty from your Lord, and bthat you may know the computation of years and the science of reckoning. And everything We have explained with a detailed explanation. 1942

14. And every man’s works have We fastened to his neck; and on the Day of Resurrection We shall bring out for him a book which he will find wide open. 1943

is their testing time when they should particularly be on their guard. But such is the tragedy of human affairs that power and prosperity make man arrogant, defiant and heedless. The verse may also mean that man invites evil to himself with the same zeal and vehemence as God invites him to good. That is to say while God wishes man to inherit His blessings by doing good, he earns His displeasure by doing evil and thus invites his own ruin and destruction. In this case the action of b (inviting to good) will be taken as referring to God.

The words, and man is hasty, signify that if man were to pause and consider before embarking upon any venture he would be spared many a fall. In fact, haste is at the root of most of man’s failures.

1942. Commentary:

The verse should not be understood to mean that God first made both night and day and then the one was displaced by the other. It only means that God has made night and day such that both have their benefits for man; but whereas the benefits of the night are subtle and hidden, those of the day are clear and manifest.

Similarly, the natural phenomenon of the alternation of night and day helps man in determining the dates of the year and in preparing calendars. It has also led to the development and progress of the science of mathematics. See also 10: 6.

‘Day’ being the symbol of happiness and prosperity and ‘night’ that of grief and sorrow, the verse points to two kinds of Signs: (a) those that lead to a people’s prosperity and advance; and (b) those that lead to their misery and destruction. We are exhorted here to pray that we may only be shown the first kind of Signs. By inference we are also exhorted to make both the time of our distress and misery and the period of our progress and prosperity means of our spiritual advancement, just as God has made both night and day as a source of great material benefits for us.

1943. Important Words:

ب (his works). ج (means, it (a bird) moved in the air by means of its wings; it flew). ج (means, his courage fled away. The Arabs used to say to a man from whom they augured evil, جـ ل (i.e. what God doth and decreeth, not what thou
dost and causest, is to be feared. Or they would say لَا يَرْتَبُّ عَلَى أَنْفُسِهِمْ i.e. there is no evil fortune but that which is of God. لَاء means, an omen, a bodement of good or evil; good or evil fortune, especially evil fortune; ill-luck; the means of subsistence; the actions or works of a man which are, as it were, attached as a necklace to his neck (Lane & Aqrab). See also 7:132.

**Commentary:**

The words, *every man's works have We fastened to his neck*, mean that no work of man goes in vain; every action of his must bear some fruit, good or bad. The fastening of the work to the neck of a man denotes that his actions will stick to him permanently and their effects will cling to him as long as he lives.

The word جُبَل (lit. bird) has been very appropriately used here for the actions of man in order to denote that just as a bird flies away and becomes hidden from the eye, so does a man very often seem to forget his actions, but they remain fastened to his neck with a cord like a bird which is secured from flying away by a string tied round its neck; and therefore, even if they seem to fly away and become hidden from his view, man's connection with them never ceases and one day he has to reap the fruits thereof.

The word جُبَل has also been used to draw attention to the fact that if a long string were tied to the leg of a bird and it were let off to fly away, it can fly to the extreme length of the string. The same is the case with the actions of man. Sometimes they appear to be of little significance, yet their effects are far-reaching and permanent.

The verse warns man to be very careful about his actions. He is reminded that since a deed once done cannot be undone and has far-reaching effects and, even if hidden from the human eye, still remains attached to the doer's neck, it is clear that it is impossible to obliterate it. We should therefore be on our guard against hasty and careless actions, because sooner or later we are bound to reap their consequences. The Quran says, *Whoso does good an atom's weight will see it, and whoso does evil an atom's weight will also see it* (99:8, 9). These verses, however, should not be understood to mean that repentance is denied to man. The door of repentance is always open but man's moral and spiritual lapses, even though they may be forgiven, leave a more or less lasting imprint on his spiritual progress. He lags behind those who are not guilty of such lapses unless he makes a special effort to make up the deficiency. The effects of sins must linger on. The discovery of ethereal waves has confirmed the great truth enunciated about 1,400 years ago by Islam that even the smallest motion causes a stir in the air which goes on enlarging and widening. So we should be very careful about our actions because every deed like a seed grows into a big tree without our knowing it.

The verse may also be taken to mean that man augurs good or evil from outside things while his good or bad augury is inseparably linked to his own neck. The words, *fastened to his neck*, have been used deliberately and with a purpose. When a man does a good deed, he raises his head with pride while with the commission of an evil one he hangs his head in shame. So the word 'neck' has been used here to bring home to him the fact that he himself is his own judge. If he feels that he can raise his head with pride before his associates and friends, he should conclude that he is on the right path but if his head hangs in shame, he must know that he is going to rack and ruin.

The words, *which he will find wide open*, mean that the effect of man's deeds will begin to manifest itself. It will not remain only like a seed but will grow and develop into a big tree and later bear fruit.
15. "Read thy book. Sufficient is thy own soul this day as reckoner against thee." ¹⁹⁴⁴

16. He who follows the right way follows it only for the good of his own soul: and he who goes astray, goes astray only to his own loss. And no bearer of burden shall bear the burden of another. And We never punish until We have sent a Messenger. ¹⁹⁴⁵

¹⁹⁴⁴. Commentary:

The expression, Read thy book, used figuratively means, "take thy punishment." The words, Sufficient is thy own soul this day as reckoner against thee, clearly show that punishment is not something that comes from outside but it takes its birth within man himself. In fact, the punishments and rewards of Heaven and Hell will only be so many embodiments and representations of the deeds, good or bad, of man. Thus in this life man is the architect of his own destiny and in the next he will be his own rewarder or punisher.

¹⁹⁴⁵. Commentary:

This verse further explains the purport of the previous verse. It shows that man himself benefits by his good deeds or suffers the evil consequences of his bad deeds. So whatever he does, he does for or against his own self. A murderer, in fact, murders his own self, and a thief steals his own property. Similarly, when a man does good to another person, in reality he does good to himself.

Christian theological writers sometimes quote this verse in support of the doctrine that Jesus took upon himself, and suffered for, the sins of man. They argue that according to this verse a sinner cannot bear the sins of another person, but Jesus, being sinless, could and did bear other people's sins. Without entering here into the sinlessness or otherwise of Jesus, it may be pointed out that what the verse means is only this, that man himself and no one else in his place can suffer the consequences of his actions. He has to bear his own cross; none else shall answer for him. Punishment or reward is no external thing but is another name for the consequences of man's actions, and it is evident that where the seed is sown only there does it bear fruit. So when punishment or reward proceeds from within the doer himself, how can any other person share it with him or be responsible for it?

The verse under comment thus lends no support to the Christian doctrine of atonement; on the contrary, it refutes and contradicts it. The Christian doctrine is based on the assumption that punishment is something external and therefore one person can atone for the sins of another person. The present verse clearly refutes this unnatural idea.

In order to meet this objection Christians hold Hell to be a material thing. It is clearly unreasonable to believe that Hell is a material thing and Heaven spiritual. Either both are material or both spiritual. If Hell is spiritual then there is no sense in one
17. And when We intend to destroy a township, We address our commandment to its rebellious people but they transgress therein; so the sentence of punishment becomes due against it, and We destroy it with utter destruction.\textsuperscript{1946}

person bearing the punishment of another. No person can share the regret, grief, anger, etc., of another, because all these things take their birth within man himself and are the result of his own deeds. He can become relieved of the punishment of his deeds only when he brings about death over his baser self and a complete and genuine change takes place in him through repentance and remorse.

The verse also explains another divine law viz., God does not send down destructive punishment upon a people unless He has first raised a Warner among them. This law has also been expressly laid down in vv. 67:9, 10; 39:72; 35:38 & 28:60.

The truth of these verses has been remarkably demonstrated in our own generation. The world has seen pestilences, famines, wars, earthquakes and other calamities of unprecedented severity and unparalleled magnitude in such rapid succession as to embitter human life. But before these calamities and catastrophes visited the earth God raised in the person of Ahmad, the Promised Messiah, a Warner who warned mankind of the impending tribulation.

God's purpose in raising His Messengers and sending down punishment when people reject and oppose them is that they should listen to their admonitions and reform themselves. See also 4:166; 24:48; 39:72 & 67:9–10.

1946. Important Words:
\begin{itemize}
  \item مَرْف (its rebellious people). مُرَف (its rebellious people) is derived from مَرَف which means, he led a plentiful and pleasant or an easy life; or a life of ease and plenty; it (a plant or herbage) was or became luxuriant, flourishing and fresh by reason of plentiful irrigation. مَرَف means, he persevered or persisted in, or resolved upon transgression, wrongdoing, or deviation from the right way. They say مَرَف i.e., wealth, or what God bestowed upon him, made him excessively disobedient or rebellious; or extravagant in acts of disobedience and in wrongdoing; or made him lead a life of ease and plenty. مَرَف therefore means, one left to do what he wills; one enjoying a life of ease and plenty; luxurious or indulging himself largely in the pleasures or delights of the present life; one who is not prevented from enjoying himself; one whose means of subsistence are made ample or plentiful; one whom a life of ease and plenty or wealth causes to exult, or to exult excessively, and to behave insolently and ungratefully; one who magnifies himself; or behaves proudly, haughtily or insolently. The Quranic expression مَرَف means, the worst of its chiefs; and the leaders in evil (Lane & Aqrabi). See also 11:117.
\end{itemize}

Commentary:
Some critics of Islam have first translated this verse as "We command its rebellious inhabitants and they transgress therein" and then have made it a target for objection, saying that
18. \textit{a}How many generations have We destroyed after Noah! And thy Lord suffices as the Knower and Seer of the sins of His servants.\textsuperscript{1947}

19. \textit{b}Whoso desires the present life, We hasten for him therein what We will—for such of them as We please; then have We appointed Hell for him; he shall burn therein condemned and rejected.\textsuperscript{1948}

God Himself first commands the people to transgress and then punishes them for their transgression. The words of the verse do not justify this objection. The verse clearly states that disbelievers defied the commandments of God and as a result of their defiance and transgression they were destroyed. Elsewhere the Quran expressly says that it is only good deeds that God commands men to do. See 7:29 & 16:91.

The expression, \textit{We address our commandment to its rebellious people}, should not be understood to mean that the command to obey was given only to one section of the people. It was given to all the people as the word مرف (lit. one who does what he pleases and is rebellious) comprises all sorts of disobedient and rebellious people, whether rich or poor. Even if the expression may appear to refer to only one class of people, according to Quranic style and diction, it applies to all peoples. Analogous expressions have been used in the Quran where a command intended for all people seems to have been addressed to one person only. In 38:76 the command to obey Adam was given to all the angels but it seems to have been addressed to Iblis only. See also 2:35.

By جمی (a township) is here meant the mother-town, a town which serves as a metropolis or centre of culture and politics for other towns.

\textbf{1947. Commentary:}

The verse means to say that the appearance of a divine Messenger is no new phenomenon. Prophets have been appearing in the world since the days of Noah and the enemies of these Prophets have always come to grief. God cannot allow men to go astray without first sending His Messengers to lead them to the right path.

\textbf{1948. Important Words:}

\textit{الملجة} (the present life) is the feminine of \textit{المجول} which is derived from \textit{المجول} which means, he hastened, made haste or speed; he was or became hasty, quick or expeditious. \textit{المجول} means, present; ready, not delayed; and is the contrary of \textit{المجول} which means, delayed, postponed, not present, future, etc. \textit{المجول} signifies the present hour or time; the present abode, world, life or state of existence (Lane & Aqrab).

\textbf{Commentary:}

The verse admonishes us not to confine our efforts to the achievement of the paltry material benefits of this life, which are easy to get, and not to regard these gains as a mark of God's grace and pleasure because people who are devoid of all divine love and are even under the
20. **And whoso desires the Hereafter and strives for it as it should be striven for, and is a believer—these are the ones whose striving shall find favour with God.**

21. To all We render aid—both to these and those—a gift from thy Lord. And the gift of thy Lord is not restricted.

**Commentary:**

The pronoun *i* (it) in the expression **(as it should be striven for)** refers to the Hereafter, the meaning being that only such efforts as are calculated to secure the good of the Hereafter will be productive of really good results.

The words, **and is a believer**, have been added to point out that the securing of the good of the Hereafter depends upon right belief and purity of heart. Efforts made for material prosperity may bear fruit even in the absence of right belief but efforts made for the attainment of the good of the next life are effective only when they are accompanied by true faith. The verse should not be understood to mean that the good deeds of the Faithful only are acceptable to God. What it means is that good deeds accompanied by true belief in the next life will be fully rewarded in the Hereafter, while the reward of those good deeds which are done without any such belief in the Hereafter is confined to only the material benefits of this world.

**Important Words:**

- جنر **(We render aid)** is derived from جنر. They say جنر i.e., he pulled, strained or stretched the rope. جنر means, he granted him delay or respite.

- جنر جنر جنر جنر جنر جنر جنر means, the commander aided or succoured his army with horses and men (Lane & Aqrab).

**Commentary:**

This verse removes the misapprehension which might have arisen from the previous verse that good deeds only of the Faithful are rewarded. We are here told that divine aid is of two kinds: (1) general aid, as a result of which all good works and efforts of all sorts of people, Muslims, Christians, Jews, Hindus etc., bear fruit according to their scope and magnitude and (2) special grace and succour of God which is confined to spiritual matters and which is given to God’s true servants only and is denied to disbelievers.
22. Behold, how We have exalted some of them over others in the present life; and surely the Hereafter shall be greater in degrees of rank and greater in excellence. 1951

23. Set not up with Allah another god lest thou sit down disgraced and forsaken. 1952

R. 3 24. Thy Lord has commanded, 'Worship none but Him,' and show kindness to parents. If one of them attain old age with thee or both of them, never say unto them any word expressive of disgust nor reproach them, but always address them with excellent speech. 1953

1951. Commentary:
In this world we find that some persons occupy higher positions than others. But in the life to come differences in rank will be much more clearly marked. The Holy Prophet is reported to have said that a section of the inmates of Paradise enjoying very high spiritual positions will find those of still higher ranks to be so far exalted above them that the latter's dwelling-places will appear to them like distant stars raised high in the firmament (Muslim, Kitaab al-Jannat).

1952. Commentary:
This verse gives the reason why the rewards of the Hereafter will be given only to those who have faith in it. The reason given here is that men will be made to live with those to whom they are attached. Thus those who love God will scale spiritual heights and will become at one with Him. On the other hand those who are devoted to their false gods will be dragged down to the depths of spiritual degradation. In fact Shirk (idolatry) causes man to sink morally and spiritually. Never has a people steeped in Shirk been known to have made any real progress. No moral or material progress is possible unless Shirk is eradicated.

1953. Important Words:
ان (a word expressive of disgust) is derived from ان (affa) which means, he said ان (aff) by reason of anxiety or disquietude of mind, or by reason of vexation, distress of mind or disgust. ان is a word expressive of vexation, distress of mind or disgust, dislike, displeasure or hatred; dirt of the ear or paring of the nail; alas, woe or fie. They say ان i.e. fie upon thee! The Quranic expression ان نقل لبآ ان i.e. do not thou deem anything of their
affairs burdensome nor be contracted in bosom thereby, nor be rough or harsh or coarse to them; or do not thou say to them anything expressive of the least disgust (Lane & Aqrab).

(I. means, he chid him; he checked him, restrained him or forbade him, with rough speech. (Lane & Aqrab).

(Excellent) is derived from i which means, it was or became highly esteemed or valued; excellent, precious or rare. They say i.e. his land was or became productive or fertile. (means, he treated him with honour or courtesy. therefore means, generous; noble; high-born; highly esteemed or valued; excellent, precious or rare. It is the contrary of which means, ignoble; low-born, etc. (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

With this verse begin those principles and rules of conduct by observing which a people can preserve the integrity of their organization and make it safe against disintegration and decline.

In this connection pride of place is given to the maintenance of belief in the Unity and Oneness of God and refutation of Shirk (setting up equals with God), because it is in the heyday of their glory and splendour that it people fall a prey to superstitious ideas and idolatrous practices. In fact Shirk is at the root of all sins. Man sins because he lacks true faith in God and His attributes. Belief in the Unity of God is like a seed out of which grow all virtues. It is the pivot round which the teachings of all religions and codes of morality revolve. This belief constitutes the basis and the foundation for both the law of nature and the Law of Shar'at. That the Law of Shar'at is based on belief in the Unity of God is too patent a fact to need any explanation; but even the law of nature and all scientific progress are also based on it. For if it be supposed that there are more gods than one, it necessarily follows that there is more than one law of nature. But in the absence of one fixed and uniform natural law all progress of science will have come to an end, because all the discoveries and inventions made by science are due to the belief that an ordered, fixed and unchangeable system pervades the whole universe. Without such a belief man could never have devoted his attention and labour to fathom the secrets of the unknown.

The second most important precept laid down in the verse under comment concerns man's moral conduct. His obligations towards his parents form the most important part of it, because it is the parents who first of all direct our attention to God. It is in the parental mirror that the divine attributes of Mercy, Compassion, Love and Providence are reflected and on a minor human scale are given practical expression. They point to the Being from Whom all things take their origin. The long chain of man's parentage shows that his existence is not the result of mere accident or chance. It turns our thoughts to the Great Originator and Creator. It also shows that a great and noble purpose underlies the creation of man.

The commandment given in relation to God is negative. Man is told that as it is not possible for him to make a return of God's favours, he should at least refrain from Shirk (setting up equals with Him). In the case of parents, however, he is given a positive commandment, because he is in a position to return their love and kindness, though only very inadequately. So he is commanded to be generous to them.

The words, with thee, are significant. They show that when the parents of a person are dependent on him and live with him, he must be specially on his guard against using any harsh words about them. The words have been added because when a man's parents are living with him, there is always the
25. And lower to them the wing of humility out of tenderness. And say, “My Lord, have mercy on them even as they nourished me in my childhood.”

The Quranic expression 

The Quranic expression 

which means, he or it was or became low, abject, despicable, humble and weak; he or it (an animal) was or became easy, tractable, submissive or manageable; it (a road) was or became beaten or trodden so as to be rendered easy to walk or ride upon; it (a tank) was or became broken. 

is synonymous with 

and means, lowness; paltriness, abasement, and weakness; easiness, tractableness; submissiveness; also gentleness; and mercy.

According to Imam Raghib 

is a consequence of subjection and 

is what is after refractoriness (Lane, Aqrab & Mufradat).

Commentary:
The verse uses a beautiful simile to teach the Faithful to be always kind to their parents. It purports to say that as ordinarily a person can never fully repay the love and affection his parents gave him when he was yet a child he should make up the deficiency by praying for them. The words of the prayer imply that in old age parents need to be tended as carefully and affectionately as little children are looked after in their childhood.
26. Your Lord knows best what is in your minds: if you are righteous, then surely He is Most Forgiving to those who turn to Him again and again.\textsuperscript{1955}

27. And give thou to the kinsman his due, and to the poor and the wayfarer, and squander not thy wealth extravagantly.\textsuperscript{1956}

1955. Commentary:
This verse shows that if a person serves his parents sincerely and whole-heartedly, then God, out of His Mercy, makes up for his remissness and lapse, if any. It is to this commandment about being kind to one’s parents in their old age that the Holy Prophet referred when he said, “Unfortunate is that person who got an opportunity to serve one of his parents and failed to earn God’s forgiveness” (Kathir, vol. 6, p. 61).

1956. Important Words:
- \textit{baddhāhara} (squander) is derived from \textit{badhāhara} which is the intensified form of \textit{badhara} which means, he sowed seed; he scattered seed upon the ground; he scattered or dispersed or he scattered or dispersed much; he divulged what was secret; he talked much. They say بذر الخلق \textit{baddhāhara} (.guilded) means, the land put forth its herbage in a scattered state. \textit{بذر الأرض} means, he disseminated and diffused knowledge. \textit{بذر الخال} (badhdhara) means, he dissipated or squandered wealth by extravagant expenditure and destroyed and wasted it; he expended his wealth so largely as not to leave of it whereby he might subsist, or he expended it in acts of disobedience; or he squandered it in a way that was not right (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:
The verse declares that the relatives of a rich person are entitled to a share in his property, and so are wayfarers and poor people. A person’s relatives help him in various ways to earn his wealth. For instance, A succeeds in getting a highly lucrative post as the result of the good education his parents have given him, depriving their other children of a similar education. The latter, therefore, possess a right in the wealth of A because he rose to his high position at their expense. It is clearly stated in 51:20 that the poor and the needy have a right to share the property of the rich.

As for the wayfarer, the Holy Prophet is reported to have said that a wayfarer could claim, as of right, three days’ free entertainment from the residents of a place which he might visit, and if it were denied to him, he could demand it even by reasonable force (Dāwūd, \textit{Kitāb al-At’ima}).

This injunction can only be carried out in a country where the Law of Islam is in force, for according to it the residents of a place, as a whole, are bound to act as the host to a wayfarer. If this injunction were carried into practice many of the social evils which are to be found in hotels and restaurants would disappear.

This general commandment about entertainment of guests and visitors is also eminently
28. **Verily, the extravagant are brothers of satans and Satan is ungrateful to his Lord.**

29. And if thou hast to turn away from them while seeking thy Lord's Mercy for which thou hopest, **even then** speak to them a gentle word.

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**Commentary:**

The verse purports to say that God has bestowed His favours upon men that they may make a right use of them. A person who does not make a right use of God's gifts is guilty of ingratitude to Him. He who squanders away his wealth, in fact, seeks to shirk the responsibilities which lie upon him in connection with its proper use.

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**Important Words:**

ميسورة (gentle) is derived from لسان or لسان الس مرور. He was or became gentle, docile and submissive or easy; it was or became little in quantity; paltry or of no weight or worth; he divided anything into parts or portions. They say لسان المراة, i.e., the woman had an easy birth.

The Arabs say لسان مسورة دمع مسورة, take thou what is easy and leave thou what is difficult. مسورة means, easy, kind, successful, etc. When applied to a saying or speech it means gentle. Thus the words نزل مسورة mean, gentle speech (Lane & Aqrab). See also 2: 220.

**Commentary:**

The verse may have two meanings:

(a) If at all we have to turn away from our kinsmen, the poor and the destitute, it should be with the intention of rendering them help on a future occasion when God, out of His Mercy, may give us the means to do so. Even in such a case we should speak to them a word of good cheer which should comfort them.

(b) Help may sometimes be denied to a seemingly needy person when it is feared that the giving of it would have an adverse effect upon him; for instance, he may be a professional beggar or may be addicted to some bad habit.
30. And keep not thy hand chained to thy neck, nor stretch it out an entire stretching, lest thou sit down blamed or exhausted. 1959

31. Surely, thy Lord enlarges His provision for whom He pleases, and straitens it for whom He pleases. Verily, He knows and sees His servants full well. 1960

1959. Important Words:

- حسر (exhausted) is derived from حسر which means, he was or became weary and tired.
- حسردابا (fatigued) means, the beast was fatigued so that it was left to remain where it was.
- حسراب (fatigued) means, the eye became weak and fatigued by looking for long.
- حسرور (swept) means, he swept the house.
- حسرور (a man who has given all that he had, so that nothing remains in his possession. Being synonymous with حسر) means, tired, fatigued or jaded by much travel; grieving or regretting most intensely (Lane & Aql'ab).

Commentary:
The verse teaches the right way of spending one's money. One should not be so miserly as not to spend it even when there is a real and genuine need as if his hands are tied to his neck, nor should one stretch forth one's hands so openly as to squander away his wealth purposelessly. One should strike the golden mean.

The expression, lest thou sit down blamed or exhausted, means to say that a person who squanders away his money thoughtlessly and without purpose does not have anything left with him, so that when money is required for a real national need, he finds to his regret that he cannot contribute to it. Not only can he then not help the national cause but he loses his self-respect also; and by thus falling in the estimation of his compatriots he becomes permanently deprived of the opportunity to serve his country or community in the hour of its need.

1960. Commentary:
The verse means to say that God grants plenty to some and straitens the means of livelihood for others. He does so that He may see whether those upon whom He has bestowed wealth help those who are poor and needy. The verse teaches the supreme lesson that money spent in helping and serving the poor is money well spent. The enlarging of provision by God and the straitening of it by Him do not imply an arbitrary action but refer to a wise system of divine laws.

It is worthy of note that these commandments regarding the right use of money were given to Muslims in Mecca at a time when they could not earn even as much as to make both ends meet and when many of them were actually starving. Could such commandments be given to a persecuted and starving people by anyone except the All-Powerful God Who knew that the time was soon coming when those very starving Muslims would become wealthy and powerful?
32. "Kill not your children for fear of poverty. It is We Who provide for them and for you. Surely, the killing of them is a great sin."

1961. Important Words:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>مال (poverty)</td>
<td>is the noun-infinitive from مال. They say مال الشيء i.e., he effaced or blotted out the thing. مال الرجل means, the man spent his money so much that he became poor. مال الرقب means, he washed the cloth. They say مال الدمى i.e., time took away his money from his hands. مال means, to be or grow poor; poverty (Aqrab).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Commentary:

V. 29 enjoins the giving of wealth in charity but not in a way as to do moral injury to the recipient or to involve the giver himself in pecuniary trouble. The verse under comment condemns the begrudging of adequate funds or means for the proper education and up-bringing of children and calls it a form of killing. It does not, however, refer to the Arab custom of killing girls, which is dealt with elsewhere and which is nowhere said to be due to the fear of spending money upon them. Girls were slain because their birth was looked upon as a source of disgrace and humiliation for their parents (15:59, 60 & 43:18).

Evidently there hardly lives a person so foolish as actually to kill his children in order to save his money. But there is no dearth of persons even among the so-called educated and cultured classes who “kill” their children by not giving them proper food or clothing. Children of miserly parents fall victim to various kinds of diseases because they are not given the food which is essential for the proper building up of strong and healthy bodies. These children die prematurely from malnutrition. This refusal to provide proper nourishment for them is as good as killing them and has been so called.

Taking the word قتل (killing) in a figurative sense those miserly parents who do not give proper education to their children contribute to the latter’s moral and intellectual death. The verse under comment very strongly condemns such “killing” of innocent children who, if given right kind of education and also afforded proper opportunities to rise to their full stature are capable of becoming very useful members of society. It exhorts Muslims not to spare money to equip their children physically and morally for a successful and respectable life.

The word قتل (killing) has been used in the verse in order forcibly to draw attention to the various indirect ways in which some parents cause the death of their children. One such form of killing is to neglect to provide proper nourishment for pregnant women or exact heavy tasks from them during their pregnancy or in the period of suckling, which has a very adverse effect on the health of the child. By using this word the Quran emphatically has drawn attention to all those direct or indirect causes that lead to the ruining of the physical or moral health of children.

The killing of children may also take the form of birth-control which, however, is permissible if, for instance, by conception the life of a pregnant woman is considered, by competent medical authority, to be in danger in the event of her giving birth to a child.

The words قتلان (khit‘an) and قتلان (khat‘an) differ in their significance, the former being intentional, while the latter may both be
33. aAnd come not near unto adultery; surely, it is a foul thing and an evil way.  

34. bAnd kill not the soul which Allah has forbidden save for just cause. And whoso is killed wrongfully, We have surely given his heir authority to demand retaliation, but let him not exceed the prescribed bounds in slaying; for therein he is helped by law.  

intentional or unitentional (Aqrab). The Quran has used the former word to bring home the fact that the killing of children is a crime at which human nature recoils and only a person devoid of all human feelings is capable of committing it. The expression also indicates that it is not killing by a lethal weapon or by poisoning or other similar means that is meant here. This latter kind of killing has been clearly mentioned in v. 34.

1962. Commentary:
The commandment forbidding “the killing of children” is followed by another equally weighty injunction about adultery, because adultery also causes the death of innumerable children, for to prevent pregnancy contraceptives are used and if despite precaution pregnancy does take place, abortion is resorted to. All these are different forms of infanticide. Moreover, the proper bringing up of children born of such immoral unions is neglected, thus causing their moral death.

Unlike the Biblical commandment, “Thou shalt not commit adultery”, the Quran says, “Come not near unto adultery”, which is clearly a more comprehensive and more effective commandment. The Quran not only prohibits and condemns the actual act of adultery but seeks to close and shut all those avenues that lead to it, such as free and promiscuous intermingling of the sexes. Purdah, which forbids women to display the beauty of their person or dress to men not their near relatives, and sundry other preventive measures prescribed by Islam effectively check this fell moral disease from spreading. Compared with the Quranic injunctions the teaching of the Bible is altogether ineffective and cannot, and has actually failed to, check the spread of this most heinous of all social crimes in the West. The Quranic injunction that even the occasions and places which are calculated ultimately to lead to the commission of sin must be avoided applies as much to persons of very strong as to those of weak moral calibre. Whereas the latter class of people are bidden to avoid going near the places of sin lest they actually fall into it, those who can withstand temptations are commanded to avoid them in order that many others morally not so strong may be saved, by their example, from falling into sin.

1963. Commentary:
In the preceding two verses reference was made to the two indirect ways of killing. The verse under comment, however, speaks of direct murder. It declares it unlawful to kill a soul, the killing of which has been forbidden by God.
35. aAnd come not near the property of the orphan, except in the best way, until he attains his maturity, and bfulfil the covenant; for the covenant shall be questioned about.  

The word (soul) means anything which breathes and therefore includes all living things. So the words, which Allah has forbidden, have been added in order to restrict their application to man, it being lawful to kill other animals except under certain conditions when their killing also is forbidden.

The word (heir) is applied to any person who is entitled to inherit another man's property after the latter's death. But one may nominate a person other than his legal heir as his . If a person is murdered, his (heir) has the right to demand satisfaction. But after the murderer is convicted by a properly constituted court, the heir of the murdered person has the right either to have the murderer legally executed or accept blood-money in lieu of the death of the murdered person. If, however, it is considered against the interests of public peace or morality to allow blood money to the heir or if the demand of the heir be found to be not , the court may refuse to accept the option of the heir and order the murderer's execution. In fact, both the heir and the State equally share the right to pardon or punish the guilty person. This right of the State in regard to the punishment of the guilty person covers all matters to which the injunction of (retaliation) applies. The Caliph 'Ali is reported to have punished a guilty person whom the aggrieved party had pardoned on the plea that the dictates of public peace demanded his punishment. 'Ali was convinced that the fear of being harmed by the offender had made the aggrieved person pardon him. See also 2:179.

Whereas in the earlier part of the verse the rights of the party offended against have been safeguarded, the words, let him not exceed the prescribed bounds in slaying, safeguard the interests of the offender. They mean to say that the aggrieved party should not exceed legitimate bounds by adopting a cruel method of killing. In fact, these words imply a recommendation in favour of the murderer. They also show that although “life for life” is the general rule, the heirs of the murdered person may not always act upon this rule. The murderer is to suffer the extreme penalty of the law only when the dictates of equity, retaliation, public peace and morality absolutely demand it. His life should be spared if this act of grace is calculated to lead to his moral reformation. In the words, for therein he is helped by law, the aggrieved person is reminded of his responsibilities. He is told that he, too, is responsible for the maintenance of peace. As God has safeguarded his rights, he should have regard for the rights of others—he should not always insist upon his “pound of flesh.”

1965. Commentary:

Besides the every-day incidence of death, sudden and accidental happenings, among which may be included epidemics, murders, etc. leave children orphans. Hence, after having laid down the law about the punishment of murder,
36. "And give full measure when you measure, and weigh with a right balance; that is best and most commendable in the end."

37. "And follow not that of which thou hast no knowledge. Verily, the ear and the eye and the heart—all these shall be called to account."

which leaves orphans in two families—in the family of the murderer and that of the murdered person—the Quran proceeds to give directions about the rights of orphans. One of the most important of these is with regard to their property.

The present verse clearly lays down that the property of orphans is to be handled in such a way that it may increase and produce the best results for them. In this as in many other respects the teaching of Islam is clearly superior to that of other religions. In no other religious system have such detailed instructions been given to safeguard the property of orphans as are given by Islam. The present verse institutes, as it were, a general Court of Wards, a department designed for the protection of the property of orphaned minors. It is generally considered to be a Western institution, but it was conceived and brought into being by Islam no less than 1350 years ago.

The words, until he attains his maturity, signify that the guardianship of orphans' property is not to be given up before they are physically and mentally mature enough to take proper care of it; nor is it to be retained a minute longer after that.

The word ʿemād (covenant) also means an obligation and it has been used here in this sense to emphasize the fact that taking proper care of orphans’ property constitutes no favour to them but is a responsibility and a duty to be discharged fully and honestly. Orphans are powerless to call their guardians to account if the latter are found to be guilty of fraudulence with regard to their property. So God has given their charge the status of a divine covenant the breach of which will be severely punished.

This word ʿemād, however, may possess a wider significance. It may refer to the responsibility that devolves upon a powerful nation which takes under its protection a weaker sister nation. Such a powerful nation is reminded that it can keep under its tutelage the weaker nation only till that time when the latter “comes of age” and is fit to take charge of its affairs. The weaker nation is here likened to an orphan whose period of tutelage is a sacred trust which the stronger nation is directed to discharge honestly “until it attains its maturity.” The verse thus possesses an object-lesson for the Western Mandatory Powers.

1965. Commentary:

The verse points to the fact that the secret of the commercial progress and prosperity of a people lies in honest and fair dealing in commercial transactions.

1966. Commentary:

This verse cuts at the root of all sources
38. *And walk not in the earth haughtily, for thou canst not rend the earth, nor canst thou reach the mountains in height.*

of suspicion. These sources in their natural order are "the ear", "the eye" and "the heart". "The ear" is the first avenue through which most suspicions enter man's mind. As a rule suspicions are caused by ill-founded reports which one hears about another person. Next to hearing comes the source of sight. A person sees another doing a certain act and interprets it wrongly and is led to suspect the latter's motives and intentions. The last and most degraded kind of suspicion is that which a person entertains about another not as the result of a bad report which he might have heard about him nor in consequence of a bad act or deed which he might have seen him doing but which is purely the figment of his own diseased mind. Muslims are enjoined to steer clear of all these forms of suspicion. They are the enemy of all cordial social relations.

The verse draws attention to the fact that it is not only human life and property (to which a reference has already been made in the preceding verse) which are sacred and inviolable; human honour also is sacrosanct and an attack upon it also will have to be accounted for.

A person will be called to account for having listened to anything about another person which he had no right to do. Similarly, he will be brought to book for having seen something which he should not have seen. And so will he be punished for harbouring in his mind evil thoughts about other people. We are told that our impressions and opinions should not be based on mere hearsay and surmise but on sure knowledge. Mere evidence of the ear, the eye or the heart is not sufficient to condemn a person or form an adverse opinion about him but sure knowledge based on thorough enquiry. Mark the high moral tone of these teachings!

1967. Commentary:

The teaching given in the previous verses pertained to our relations with other individuals or with God. The moral precepts which this verse proceeds to lay down concern our own selves. First of all we are bidden not to be proud of and exult over our achievements, for such an attitude makes us content with what we have already achieved and is thus calculated to impede and arrest our moral progress. The words, *thou canst not rend the earth nor canst thou reach the mountains in height,* remind us that after all our successes and achievements are limited, and there is no sense in our losing our heads over what is so limited. In spite of all our achievements, real or imaginary, we have to live on this earth and among its people. We should not therefore behave in such a manner as to make ourselves intolerable to others. A proud man's life is generally very bitter. In every-day life he cannot do without the help and assistance of those among whom he lives and yet he disdains their co-operation. This contrariness and irreconcilability of attitude and feelings renders his life bitter and makes him unacceptable to others.

Taking the word *جِبَالَ* (mountains) in the sense of "leaders" or "learned men", which is also one of its so many meanings, the verse
39. The evil of all these is hateful in the sight of thy Lord.\footnote{1968}

40. This is part of that wisdom which thy Lord has revealed to thee. \textit{And set not up with Allah any other god, lest thou be cast into Hell, condemned and rejected.}\footnote{1969}

\textit{a17:23; 26:214; 28:89.}

seems to administer a subtle rebuke to the haughty and the arrogant that they cannot attain that height of greatness and honour among their people which these two classes of men reach by their knowledge and service, and yet these pillars of learning are the models of humility and humaneness.

1968. Commentary:

In this verse, which speaks of the dark or evil side of things, a vast store of knowledge has been compressed in a very brief sentence. It purports to say that nothing in this world may be described as absolutely good or bad. Every action has its good or evil aspect. It is the circumstances under which it is done that make it good or bad. Belief in the Unity of God, for instance, is a virtue, but if one makes it a cause of mischief and begins to abuse other people's gods, it will become an evil. Similarly, it is a virtue to be obedient to one's parents, but if one begins to commit acts of injustice or worship deities other than Allah at their bidding, obedience to them becomes an evil act. Again, it is an act of virtue to abstain from killing but if one should, on that ground, abstain from fighting in defence of one's country or oppose the killing of a person who has been sentenced to death by a properly constituted court of law, his conduct will be considered reprehensible; and so on and so forth. A Muslim is, therefore, expected to understand and realize the reality and true significance of God's commandments and to use his God-given gifts, powers and faculties on proper occasions in accordance with the exigencies of time and circumstance and the dictates of reason. Every natural faculty has a good or bad use and it is only the improper use of those faculties that is called evil and is forbidden by God. How true and comprehensive is this definition of good and bad actions but how few people really understand it!

1969. Commentary:

In 16:126 we were told that a number of commandments full of wisdom would be given soon. The present verse purports to say that a few of these wise divine commandments have already been mentioned in the previous verses. In v. 23, great stress was laid on \textit{توحيد} (Oneness of God). In the following verses the practical implications of the Islamic conception of \textit{توحيد} and the great moral and spiritual benefits that mankind has derived from this concept were explained. In the verse under comment, however, \textit{توحيد} is considered from another standpoint, the injury that its anathesis—idolatry—does to human intellect. A polytheist naturally feels self-condemned and realizes the untenability of his position before a believer in the Oneness of God because he knows that he possesses no solid argument to support his belief. Thus he can never enjoy real peace of mind.
41. "Has, then, your Lord honoured you with sons, and taken for Himself females from among the angels? Surely, you say a grievous saying."  

42. "We have explained the truth in the Quran in various ways that they may be admonished, but it only increases them in aversion."

43. Say, had there been other gods with Him, as they say, then they (idolaters) would have surely sought out a way to the Owner of the Throne.

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1970. Commentary:
This verse gives an illustration of the mental confusion and lack of intellectual poise of polytheists. For instance, some of them say that angels are God's daughters and they worship them although they themselves regard daughters to be a source of shame and humiliation.

1971. Important Words:
- سو (We have explained the truth in various ways) 
- سرفا (Sarafa) is the intensified form of سرفا (Sarafa) 
- كف (Kaf) means, he turned, sent or put him away or back from his way or course. 
- صرف (Sarafa) means, he employed the thing in more than one way. 
- كلام (Kalam) means, he derived one part of the speech from another. 
- تصرف (Tirafa) is the turning from one state or condition to another or from one direction or course or way to another. 
- تصرف الأيات signifies the varying of the Quranic verses by repeating them in different forms (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:
The objection is generally raised against the Quran that it unnecessarily repeats its subjects. This objection has been answered in this verse. According to the two meanings of the word سرفا given under Important Words, the verse would mean, (a) that the Quran refutes all possible objections raised against its principles and teachings and (b) that it discusses all important subjects from all conceivable points of view. For a book which has to deal exhaustively with all questions of importance it is quite natural and even necessary that it should revert, time and again, to the relevant points which bear on the main theme. No reasonable person can call this repetition. Repetition is objectionable only when it serves no useful purpose, but when it is intended to throw light upon a question from a new angle of vision or to refute a new objection no sane and intelligent person can object to it.

1972. Commentary:
This verse furnishes an illustration of the fact that when the Quran reverts to a subject it does so to deal with it in a new light. The verse has reverted to the subject of
44. aHoly is He, and Exalted far above that which they say. 1973

45. bThe seven heavens and the earth and those that are therein extol His glory; and there is not a thing but glorifies Him with praise; but you understand not their glorification. Verily, He is Forbearing, Most Forgiving. 1974


setting up equals with God. But here it gives quite a new argument in its refutation. It demolishes the claim of idolaters that they worship their idols to seek nearness to God through their mediation (39:4) by saying that if by this worship they had really sought nearness to God, they should have achieved this object but there are no signs of any one of them ever having attained nearness to God.

Incidentally some light may be thrown on some of the signs and marks which a person who has established real connection with God must possess: (a) his prayers are accepted; (b) he becomes very much immune from sin or indulgence in vain discourse; (c) he enjoys a sort of divine protection and (d) he treats God's creatures with kindness and benevolence and lives peacefully and amicably with them, i.e., he is at peace with God and man. Idolaters are completely devoid of all these characteristics of God's beloved and His Elect.

The expression, they (idolaters) would have surely sought out a way to the Owner of the Throne, may also be understood to mean that if the false gods of idolaters had possessed any truth or power, then with their help idolaters would have learnt from the Supreme Lord of the Throne some way or means to counteract and nullify the Holy Prophet's efforts. The fact, therefore, that the Prophet marched from success to success and all their schemes and machinations failed to impede his progress furnishes proof positive of the fact that these so-called gods possess no truth or power.

1973. Commentary:

It is inconsistent with the dignity and greatness of God to grant nearness to His creatures through the medium of others and thus make difficult the path of those who seek His nearness. The Prophets of God come to make that path easy. They do not stand between God and His creatures.

1974. Commentary:

The expression, the seven heavens and the earth and those that are therein extol His glory, refers to the collective evidence that the whole universe bears to the Unity of God, while the words, and there is not a thing but glorifies Him with His praise, refer to the evidence which everything bears to that Unity individually and separately. The former expression means that the beautiful arrangement and order existing in the universe shows unmistakably that its Creator is One and the latter means that everything in this universe, within its own limited sphere and in its own inimitable way, demonstrates God's various attributes.
46. And when thou recitest the Quran, We put between thee and those who believe not in the Hereafter a hidden veil; 

47. aAnd We put coverings over their hearts lest they should understand it, and in their ears a deafness. bAnd when thou makest mention in the Quran of thy Lord alone, they turn their backs in aversion.

48. We know best what they listen for, when they listen to thee, and when they confer in private, when the wrongdoers say, c'You follow none but a man who is a victim of deception.'

1975. Commentary:

The 'veil' mentioned in this verse is the veil sometime of malice and envy, at another time of a false sense of dignity and racial pride, at yet another time of the fear of loss of social position and income, or again it is the veil of a long-standing custom and belief fondly and firmly held that stands in the way of the acceptance of truth by disbelievers, etc. It is a hidden veil which disbelievers themselves do not clearly see and appreciate.

1976. Commentary:

It has been made abundantly clear elsewhere in the Quran that the "coverings" over the hearts of disbelievers and the "deafness" in their ears are of their own creation. It is the result of their own perversity and wrong-doing (2: 27, 28 & 47: 25). Disbelievers, in fact, are the architects of their own evil destiny.

The words, when thou makest mention in the Quran of thy Lord alone, mean that disbelievers cannot discard the coverings over their hearts because the mention of the Unity and Oneness of God is so repugnant to them that they turn their backs in aversion and refuse to listen when it is being mentioned.

1977. Commentary:

The expression means that God knows full well the object of disbelievers in listening to the Holy Prophet. They listen to him in order to reject him and find fault with him. The expression may also mean that God is fully aware of the mental attitude of disbelievers to the Holy Prophet. They listen to him in a spirit of mockery and hostility.

The verse refers to some of the 'coverings' over the hearts of disbelievers, e.g., (a) they hold idolatrous beliefs; (b) they listen to the Quran in order to mock at it; (c) they look upon the Prophet as too weak to lead a successful movement; (d) they regard him as a victim of deception and (e) they consider
49. "See, how they coin similitudes for thee, and have thus gone astray so that they cannot find a way."

50. And they say, "When we shall have become bones and broken particles, shall we be really raised up as a new creation?"

The passage provides an illustration of the fact that when the Quran uses a certain word denoting a number of different senses it means that the word should be understood in all such senses as may be relevant to the context.

Commentary:
In the preceding verses it was mentioned how believers would attain prosperity both in this life and in the next and disbelievers would suffer punishment. This verse gives expression to the very natural wonder and amazement of disbelievers that they would ever be raised to a new life after they had been dead.
51. Say, ‘Be ye stones or iron,’

52. ‘Or created matter of any kind which appears hardest in your minds, even then shall you be raised up.’ Then will they ask, ‘Who shall restore us to life?’ Say, ‘He Who created you the first time.’ They will then shake their heads at thee and say, ‘When will it be?’ Say, ‘Maybe it is nigh.’

53. ‘It will be on the day when He will call you; then will you respond praising Him and you will think that you have tarried but a little while.’

1980. Commentary:
The verse may either be taken as saying to disbelievers that even if their hearts should become hard like iron or stone or any other similar substance, God would bring about among them that wholesome change which He had decreed to bring about through the Holy Prophet. Or it may be taken as answering their doubts about resurrection mentioned in the previous verse and says to them that they could not escape divine punishment even if they became converted into iron or stone or any other hard substance.

It may be inferred from this verse that after the lapse of a long time one substance may become transformed into quite a new one. Coal becomes transformed into diamond and forests of petrified trees have been discovered in some parts of the globe. Similarly, it is not impossible that the human body, after having remained buried in the earth for a long time, may possibly become transformed into stone or iron or some other substance, though geological research has so far made no such discovery.

1981. Commentary:
The expression, Who shall restore us to life, does not mean that disbelievers really enquire as to who will bring them to life again. It only signifies that they ridicule the very idea of their being restored to a new life.

The words, maybe it is nigh, signify that the resurrection promised to disbelievers in this verse is not the one which will take place after death, but the one which was to take place shortly in their lives. This prophecy was fulfilled after the fall of Mecca when the whole of Arabia embraced Islam. Those who were spiritually dead were restored to a new life.

1982. Commentary:
This verse confirms the interpretation of the previous verse viz. that the resurrection referred to is the one which took place in Arabia after the fall of Mecca when the whole country
54. *And say to My servants that they should speak that which is best.*

Surely, Satan stirs up discord among them. Surely, Satan is an open enemy to man. 1963

responded to the call of God and His Prophet with a feeling of thanksgiving and divine glorification.

The words, *and you will think that you have tarried but a little while,* mean that disbelievers would realize that the victory of Islam was not a distant consummation, as wrongly imagined by them, but an event close at hand. Another sense implied in the words is that on that day they would feel that the period of their lives spent in ignorance and opposition to Islam was wasted and that their real lives had begun only with their acceptance of Islam. Similarly, the Faithful would also look back with satisfaction upon the days they had spent in adversity and privation and would regard their bitter experiences of the past as a dream.

The words ‘a little while’ do not, in fact, refer to the length of any period of time, but to the nature of the emotion which the memory of those days will awaken in the minds of believers as well as disbelievers.

1983. Commentary:

In v. 16:126 which was actually revealed after the Sūra under comment in order of revelation, we have, *call unto the way of thy Lord with wisdom and goodly exhortation,* and *reason with them in a way that is best.* The order in which the three precepts to be followed in preaching have been mentioned in these words has been closely observed in the teaching given in the present Sūra. This constitutes a strong argument in favour of the contention that the Chapters and verses of the Quran have been arranged in an intelligent order and not placed haphazard. Verses 24-40 of the present Sūra embody some of the excellent teachings of the Quran and end with the words, *this is part of that wisdom which thy Lord has revealed to thee* (v. 40). These words correspond to the first injunction contained in 16:126, viz., *call unto the way of thy Lord with wisdom.* Verses 40-53 begin with the theme “set not up with Allah any other god” and proceed to give teachings concerning the Unity of God. This corresponds to the second precept contained in 16:126 and is expressed by the words “goodly exhortation.” A discourse on the Unity of God makes a natural appeal to the sentiments of man. The third principle mentioned in 16:126 was, *reason with them in a way that is best.* This corresponds to the third injunction, beginning with the verse under comment, *viz., say to My servants that they should speak that which is best.*

The verse also contains the hint that if Muslims desire to hasten the day of the spiritual resurrection referred to in the previous verse when the whole of Arabia would become Muslim they should adopt a manner of discourse best calculated to help disbelievers accept Islam.
55. Your Lord knows you best. AIf He please, He will have mercy on you: or if He please, He will punish you. BAnd We have not sent thee to be a keeper over them. 1984

56. And thy Lord knows best those that are in the heavens and the earth. And we exalted some of the Prophets over the others and to David We gave a Book. 1985

57. SASay, 'Call on those whom you think to be gods beside Him; then you will know that they have no power to remove affliction from you or to avert it. 1986

1984. Commentary:
God alone knows the innermost secrets of man's heart and therefore He has reserved for Himself the right to punish or reward man. This work has not been entrusted even to the Holy Prophet. God Himself will deal with men according to the state of their minds.

1985. Commentary:
The verse means to say that not only does God know all those peoples to whom Messengers were sent at different times and how they received the divine Message but He knows also all the Prophets whether dead (in the heavens) or living (in the earth). He is aware of their stations and grades as well. He knows also what kind of a Prophet is needed at a particular time. In this connection special mention has been made of the Prophet David in order to warn Muslims that, like the Israelites who were punished after him for their iniquities and transgressions, they will be punished if they behave like them.

1986. Commentary:
In this verse idolaters are told that they can judge the truth or falsity of their faith from the prophecies that foretell their destruction and the eventual triumph of Islam. Let them pray to their gods to save them if they can from the threatened divine punishment. Far from saving their votaries from divine punishment, these gods do not possess the power even to postpone or defer it for a single day. While idolaters are admonished that idolatry is at the root of all their misfortunes Muslims are warned that idolatry will bring about their downfall also. It is worthy of note that one of the major causes of the
58. *Those whom they call on themselves seek nearness to their Lord—even those of them who are nearest—and hope for His mercy, and fear His punishment. Surely, the punishment of thy Lord is a thing to be feared.*

Decline, downfall and destruction of the Abbaside Empire of Baghdad was that Muslim nobles freely married Turkish and Iranian idolatrous women. This led to the growth and spread of idolatrous beliefs among Muslims. Ibn Muqanna' and Ḥasan bin Ṣabbāḥ were the product of the idolatrous ideas and practices that were rampant in those days among Muslims.

1987. **Important Words:**

- **اِئم** (those of them who). This word is a noun used in five different senses. (1) It means, who? which? and what? They say اِئم اخوك i.e., who or which of them is thy brother? In the Quran we have ابن حديث بعد مولون i.e., And in what announcement after it will they believe? (2) It denotes a condition. They say اِئم زيدان i.e., whichever of them treats me with honour, I will treat him with honour. (3) It is a conjunct noun; and is sometimes used in the manner of اَلما and therefore requires a complement; as in the Quranic verse اِئم نذور من كل شيعة اِئم اعد على الانحرص صي i.e., Then We will assuredly draw forth from every sect those of them who are most exorbitantly rebellious against the Compassionate God. (4) It denotes perfection or consummateness: and in this case it is an epithet applying to an indeterminate noun. They say زيدَ رجل اِئم i.e. Zaid is a man; what a man! (5) It is also a connective of the vocative اَي with the noun signifying the person or persons called, when this noun has the article ل prefixed to it; and with a noun of indication, اَي; and with a conjunct noun having ل prefixed to it, اَي: it is a noun formed for serving as such a connective; and has اَي affixed to it. They say اَي اِي اِئم i.e. O thou man or O thou, the man, or O thou who art the man (Lane).

**Commentary:**

This verse may be interpreted in two ways:

(1) The pronoun اولك (those) may be taken as referring to the Prophets mentioned in v. 56. In this case the verse would mean that those Prophets always invited people to the worship of the One God, sought His nearness and feared His punishment. (2) The pronoun اولك may refer to the gods of the idolaters, the latter (idolaters) being taken as subject of the verb يدعون (they call on). In this case the verse would mean, those whom the idolaters call upon beside God themselves seek His nearness and pleasure and fear His punishment.
59. aThere is not a township but We shall destroy it before the Day of Resurrection, or punish it with a severe punishment. That is written down in the Book.

60. bAnd nothing could hinder Us from sending Signs, except that the former people rejected them, but this is no hindrance. And We gave Thamûd the she-camel as a clear Sign, but they unjustly rejected it. And We send not Signs but to warn.

1988. Commentary:
In the previous verse it was stated that false deities could not save their devotees from divine punishment. The present verse gives a specific illustration of this. It purports to say that the time was coming when idolatry would spread all over the world and in consequence thereof the whole of mankind would suffer for its sins and iniquities. At that time no human device and no seeking of help from false deities would save their devotees from divine wrath. This subject has been dealt with at greater length in the next Sûra.

The verse contains a warning for Muslims to beware of "the second great punishment" to which an allusion has already been made in v. 57. The words "before the Day of Resurrection" allude to a prophecy which was to be fulfilled in the Latter Days. From the Hadîth it appears that this prophecy about "the second Punishment" was to be fulfilled after the advent of the Promised Messiah, and we find that it is already being fulfilled.

1989. Important Words:
ظلمها (unjustly rejected it). The word ظلم means, (1) he did wrong; or acted wrongfully, unjustly or tyrannically, (2) he put a thing in a wrong place or in a place not its own. They say from إِبْلَاءِ ظَلَمٍ (Lane & Aqrab). See also 2:36, 52.

Commentary:
The verse beautifully states that heavenly Signs will never cease to appear. It warns Muslims not to entertain such a foolish belief and proceeds to refute and demolish the only possible objection against the appearance of heavenly Signs. The objection is:
When the people to whom the Signs were first shown did not profit by them, where was the
61. And remember the time when We said to thee: 'Surely, thy Lord has encompassed the people.' And We made not the vision which We showed thee but as a trial for men, as also the tree cursed in the Quran. And We warn them, but it only increases them in great transgression.

warrant that their successors would do so? The arguments given in refutation of this objection are: (a) If the rejection of heavenly Signs had been a reasonable ground, no Prophet after the very first Prophet—Adam—would have appeared. But this did not happen and fresh Prophets continued to appear in all ages and fresh Signs continued to be shown at their hands, which showed that the rejection of Signs never proved a barrier in the way of the appearance of new Signs. (b) Prophets are sent in the world in order to warn wrongdoers of their transgressions and iniquities and of the impending divine punishment in consequence of those iniquities. Any such punishment without a previous warning and without showing Signs would be contrary to divine mercy.

As an illustration of the claim that wrongdoers never go unpunished if they do not repent, special mention has been made of the tribe of Thamūd because the Thamūd were an Arab tribe and their history was a matter of common knowledge with pagan Arabs as well as with the Jews of Arabia.

1990. Important Words:

- **إِنَّ رَبِّي يَحْلِلُ الْأَرْضَ لَنَا وَيَكْسَبْنَا** (has encompassed the people). إِنَّ رَبِّي يَحْلِلُ الْأَرْضَ لَنَا (Lane & Aqrab). إِنَّ رَبِّي يَحْلِلُ الْأَرْضَ لَنَا (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

The reference in the words, When We said to thee, is to the Vision mentioned under v. 2 of this Sūra. In that Vision the Holy Prophet saw himself leading all other Prophets in Prayers. The Vision implied that at some future time, the followers of those Prophets would join the fold of Islam. This is what is meant by the words, Thy Lord has encompassed the people. This general spread of Islam would follow in the wake of the world-wide disasters of which mention has been made in v. 59. The object of these disasters was to open the way for the propagation of Islam, to induce all men to rally round its banner and to demonstrate the futility of the present materialistic Western civilization to stand in its way. Some of these disasters have already taken place and others are waiting to shake the present order of things to its foundation.
The signs of these impending disasters are already in evidence everywhere in the world. They will be followed by conditions favourable to the general and widespread acceptance and expansion of Islam.

Commentators of the Quran have greatly differed as to what the expression "الليرة الملوية" (the accursed tree) means. According to some of them it means "شجرة خيبة" (evil tree) mentioned in 14:27. The word خيبة (evil) meaning a thing devoid of all good is synonymous with لمون (accursed) which means, far removed from good. But the word شجرة as shown under Important Words, also means, a family. According to this meaning of the word the expression "الليرة الملوية" appears to apply more appropriately to a people—the Jewish people—who have been repeatedly mentioned in the Quran as having been cursed by God (5:14, 61, 65, 79). The curse of God has dogged the footsteps of these unfortunate people from the time of the Prophet David right down to the present time. This interpretation of the expression finds additional support from the fact that the present سورة particularly deals with the Israelites as its very name, بني إسرائيل, suggests. The fact that the verse begins with a mention of the Vision in which the Holy Prophet saw himself leading the Israelite Prophets in Prayers in Jerusalem, the Centre of the Jewish Faith, lends further support to the assumption that by "الليرة الملوية" (cursed tree) is meant the Jewish people.

The verse speaks both of "the vision" and the Jewish people (the accursed tree) to whom that Vision specially refers as "a trial for men". The Jews have, throughout the ages, proved a source of much misery and distress for mankind, particularly for Muslims, under whose benign rule they have enjoyed more freedom and security than under any other people. The two World Wars have been the result directly or indirectly of the plots and machinations of the Jews. They led an organized opposition to the German people in the First Great War and the Second Great War was also the result of their widespread and highly organized propaganda against Hitler. In the Russian Revolution which, too, forms a part of the divine punishment (v.59) the Jews took a prominent part and some of its foremost leaders are Jews by blood. The Jewish machinations have now extended to Palestine and have turned this "land of the Prophets" into a veritable hot-bed of intrigue, murder and arson. But all their intrigues and efforts to go back to, and take possession of, Palestine, will meet with only temporary success because this country has been divinely decreed to remain in Muslim hands.

1991. Important Words:
حرف جار (to Adam). لام (Preposition) is used in about twenty-two senses, the most important of which are the following: (1) It is used in the sense of i.e., who is or will be for me as my defender or surety? (2) in the sense of i.e., they fall down prostrate upon their faces; (3) in the sense of i.e.,
63. And he said, 'What thinkest Thou? Can this whom Thou hast honoured above me be my superior? If Thou wilt grant me respite till the Day of Resurrection, I will most surely bring his descendants under my sway except a few.'

Commentary:
The particle 'possesses, as shown under Important Words, a vast variety of meanings one of which is 'with'. In the expression 'to Adam' the particle 'means, "with"; thus the whole sentence 'may mean, "submit to God along with Adam".

In the previous verses reference was made to the transgressions of the Jews. In order to throw further light on the subject, the verse under comment cites the case of Adam by way of example. The Prophets of God have always met with strong opposition from disbelievers. Adam who was the first Prophet was also opposed by Iblis, who said that he was superior to him (Adam) and therefore could not render obedience to him. The same obstacle lay in the way of the Jews. They looked upon themselves as superior to the Holy Prophet and his people. They were obsessed with the idea that, being the progeny of Isaac, all the blessings promised to Abraham were to be inherited by them alone to the exclusion of their cousins, the children of Ishmael. This false and foolish notion proved a stumbling block in the way of their accepting the Holy Prophet.

1992. Important Words:
appearance (what thinkest thou?) is derived from "i.e., he saw with the eyes and means, hast thou considered? tell thou me, tell me; thinkest thou? or what thinkest thou? (Lane). See also 10:51.

I will most surely bring under my sway) is derived from "i.e., he put a rope in the mouth of the horse. means, the locusts ate what was upon the land and consumed its herbage. means, (1) he put a rope in his mouth and led him; (2) he took the whole of his property; and (3) he gained the mastery over him. The Quranic expression 'means, I will assuredly extirpate his progeny; or I will assuredly incline his progeny to obey me, or I will assuredly gain the mastery over his progeny (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:
By "resurrection" is here meant not the great Resurrection that is to take place after death but the time when believers will have achieved success and disbelievers met with discomfiture.
64. "He said, ‘Begone! and whoso shall follow thee from among them, Hell shall surely be the recompense of you all—an ample recompense."

65. "And entice whomsoever of them thou canst, with thy voice, and urges against them thy horsemen and thy footmen and be their partner in wealth, and children, and make promises to them." And Satan promises them naught but deceit.

It may also mean the spiritual resurrection which is experienced by every believer when his faith becomes perfect and Satan ceases to exercise control over him.

Whether or not Satan has succeeded in carrying out his threat in leading astray a vast majority of mankind is an important question which calls for an answer. A hurried and thoughtless glance over the state of good and evil in the world may lead one to the wrong conclusion that evil predominates in the world. But the truth is quite the reverse. If all the utterances of the greatest of men were to be critically examined, the number of his truthful utterances will be found to be far exceeding his lies. So is the case with other evils. A great majority of people in the world are disposed to be good and virtuous. They commit moral excesses only in the heat of passion. Similarly, the number of the wicked people in the world is much smaller than that of the good and the virtuous. The fact that wickedness attracts such wide notice in itself constitutes proof positive of the fact that human nature is innately good and recoils at even a slight touch of evil. It is therefore wrong to suppose that Satan has succeeded in carrying his threat into actual fact.

The dialogue described here and in other verses of the Quran as having taken place between God and Satan never actually took place. It is only a representation of the state of things existing in the world. See also 2:35; 7:13-19 & 15:28-29.

1993. Commentary:
The verse shows that the punishment of Hell will be mental and not physical. Punishment can suit every individual case only if it is mental. No two men's mental condition is exactly alike, and if punishment be external, the same punishment cannot suit every case. It can do so only if it be mental and everybody should receive punishment according to the condition of his mind. Just as all kinds of trees receive their sustenance from the earth according to their particular needs and natures, similarly all sinners will suffer the torment of Hell according to their mental condition.

1994. Important Words:
نر (entice thou) is derived from نر which means, he was or became frightened. استفز means, it (fear) excited him to lightness, unsteadiness; or it unsettled him; he incited or excited him to be promptly obedient and submissive to him; he deceived or beguiled him so as to cast him into
66. As to My servants, thou shalt certainly have no power over them, and sufficient is thy Lord as a Guardian.

67. Your Lord is He Who drives for you the ships in the sea, that you may seek of His bounty. Surely, He is Merciful toward you.

 Destruction; he expelled him from his land; he slew him. The Quranic expression واستنزاف من استنملت من بصرته means, and excite thou to lightness and unsteadiness or unsettle thou whom thou canst with thy voice. And the expression وان كا دوا ليستتروك من الأرض means, and verily they were near to unsettling thee from the land or, some say, they were near to frightening thee so as to excite thee to promptness of flight from the land (Lane & Aqrab).

**Commentary:**

This verse shows that man is by nature good. It is only when he falls a victim to satanic influences that he gives up the path of virtue for the ways of sin and iniquity. This Islamic conception of human nature is in striking contrast with that of Christianity according to which man is evil by nature and Jesus alone can redeem him from his original sin.

The verse describes the three kinds of devices that are adopted by the sons of darkness to entice men away from the right way: (1) They try to intimidate the poor and the weak by holding out threats of violence to them. This is the significance of the words, And entice... with thy voice. (2) They use more drastic measures against those who are not frightened away by verbal threats of violence by forming alliances against them and making a concerted attack upon them and persecuting and oppressing them in every way.

All these measures and stratagems have been adopted by the enemies of truth against the Prophets of God and their followers throughout the ages. But they have never succeeded in arresting or retarding the progress of truth.

**1995. Commentary:**

The verse purports to say that man is amenable to the enticement of Satan so long as he is not “resurrected” i.e. as long as his faith does not attain its full stature. The verse also teaches man the secret of becoming safe from the attacks of Satan. It is that he should give himself up wholly to the care and protection of God and, instead of depending upon his own resources and efforts, should rely upon Him alone, for Satan can cause no harm to one who is under the guardianship of God.

**1996. Commentary:**

The verse points out that all amenities of life are God’s gifts bestowed upon man, although they are not always recognized or appreciated by man as such. For example, the use of ships has made communication possible between
68. And when harm touches you on the sea, all those whom you call upon, except Him, become lost to you. But when He brings you safe to land, you turn aside; and man is very ungrateful.  

69. Do you then feel secure that He will not cause you to sink in the side of the land or send against you a violent sand-storm and then you will find no guardian for yourselves?  

the dwellers of the main lands and the islands, who would have remained permanently isolated from each other without them.

There is also in the verse an implied reference to the fact that Islam will spread throughout the world on land and sea and for this purpose sea-going vessels, which are a great divine blessing, will play a most important part. It is worthy of note that Muslims in the heyday of their glory were great sailors and navigators. The discovery of the sea-route to India was due to the good offices of an Arab sailor who guided some wandering Portuguese ships from the coast of Africa to the shores of India.

1997. Commentary:

Such is the nature of man that when he is in distress he becomes humble and prays to God and promises and vows to lead a virtuous life if he were to regain his lost peace of mind. But when the danger is over, he is as arrogant and boastful as ever. The verse, in fact, embodies a warning for Muslims that they should not forget God in their days of prosperity so that He may not forget them in their time of adversity.

1998. Important Words:

(violent sand-storm) is derived from حَمْطَمَانُ (violent sand-storm) means, he pelted him or pelted him with pebbles. They say حَمْطَمَانُ means, a stone that is thrown; حَمْطَمَانُ means, a thrower or pelter of stones; a punishment from God; dust containing pebbles; pebbles cast about by the wind; small particles of snow and hail scattered about; a large number of men on foot. رِيْجٍ حَمْطَمَانُ means, a violent wind that raises, drives along or casts down pebbles from the sky; clouds or clouds casting down snow and hail (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

The verse implies a prophetic allusion to the Battle of Badr which was yet to be fought. The Arabs, being an inland people, were very much afraid of the sea. It purports to warn the Meccan disbelievers that they were afraid of the sea but God could destroy them on land also. This happened on the battlefield of Badr where their power got a severe shaking.

The verse also seems to suggest to Muslims the benefits of sea-going, hinting that, since dangers at sea are no greater than those on land why should they remain contented with life on land and not improve their commercial relations with other nations which is possible mainly through constant sea-voyaging?
70. Or, do you feel secure that He will not send you back therein a second time, and then send against you a storm-blast, and drown you because of your disbelief; you will then find therein no helper for yourselves against Us. 1999

71. Indeed, We have honoured the children of Adam, and carried them by land and sea, and given them of good things and exalted them far above many of those whom We have created. 2000

1999. Important Words:
- مُاءٌ (storm-blast) is active participle from مَاءٌ. They say مَاءٌ, i.e., he broke the thing. مَاءٌ means, the camel roared violently. مَاءٌ means, it thundered violently. مَاءٌ means, strong wind and مَاءٌ means, violent thunder (Aqrab).

Commentary:
It is strange that in fulfilment of the warning contained in this verse, some of the disbelievers were actually drowned in the Red Sea when they fled from Mecca after its conquest by the Holy Prophet.

2000. Commentary:
The verse means to say that God has equally honoured all the children of Adam and has not favoured any particular nation or tribe. It seeks to demolish all foolish notions of superiority based on colour, creed, race or nationality. It further says that all avenues of progress and prosperity have been kept open equally for all men and these avenues lie as much in travel by land as by sea. The laying of stress on travel by sea in the Quran seems strange. The fact that an Arab, and of all Arabs the Holy Prophet, who throughout his whole life never experienced a sea-voyage, should have so much emphasized the importance of sea-voyaging does indeed show that the Quran could not be his composition. He did not and could not know the great benefits of sea-voyaging.

The words, and exalted them far above many, may seem to suggest that man is superior only to certain species of creation and not all creation. But a little deeper reflection over the expression makes such an inference appear quite unwarranted. The verse speaks of all mankind and it is true that all men are not superior to all other creatures. There are men morally so degraded as to be worse than animals and beasts. There are others who are superior even to the angels. There are others still who are so righteous as to occupy a higher spiritual position than even the most exalted angels. In short, all men are not superior to all other creatures, but some men do top the whole creation and man as such is superior to most of the creation, for the sun, the moon, the stars, and animals have been created for him and are engaged in his service. Hence, mankind as a class is
R. 8

72. Remember the day when We shall summon every people with their Leader. Then whoso shall be given his book in his right hand—such will read their book and they will not be wronged a whit.

superior to most of God's creatures, while man in his perfect spiritual state is certainly superior to the whole creation.

2001. Commentary:

The word رأي (Leader) here means a spiritual Leader or a Prophet. On the Day of Judgement every people will be summoned along with their Prophet, for he will have to render an account of how he discharged his divine Mission and how his people received and treated his Message (4: 42; 16: 85, 90; & Bukhārī, Kūb al-Tafsīr).

According to Islam the right hand is a symbol of blessing while the left is a symbol of punishment. In the human body the right side enjoys a certain superiority over the left since the tissues of the right side generally are stronger than those of the left. The giving of the record of one's deeds in one's right hand as mentioned in this verse signifies that it will be a good and favourable record.

A certain preference for the right hand is a trait common among all races. Medical science has established the fact that the right hand of man is comparatively stronger than the left. Various explanations for this phenomenon have been offered by scientists, some of which are based on psycho-physics and others on social habits. At any rate among normal men the percentage of left-handed persons has been found to vary from 4 to 8, while among the mentally defective the percentage is much higher (Enc. Brit., 14th Edition, under Handedness).

It may well be concluded from these facts that the right hand is better suited for the performance of work than the left. So it is quite reasonable to regard the right arm as the symbol of strength. The receiving by believers of the records of works in their right hands may therefore be understood to point to the fact that they were industrious, diligent and self-sacrificing, while the receiving by disbelievers of their records in their left hands would signify that they were slow, lazy and selfish, the left hand being symbolic of weakness.

Moreover, the right hand is reserved for doing works which are generally regarded as clean while the left hand is reserved for unclean works. Thus the holding by believers of their records in their right hands would signify that their works were good and pure and the works of disbelievers were unclean and dirty as they would hold their records in their left hands.

According to some Commentators of the Quran the word ذين (right hand) also signifies strength and power (69: 46). According to this sense of the word the holding by believers of their records in their right hands would signify that they had taken hold of virtue with strength and resolution while the holding by disbelievers of their records in their left hands would signify that they did not strive after virtue with requisite strength and zeal.

The word ذين (right hand) also means a blessed thing as in the hadith ذين ذين i.e. both the hands of my Lord are full of blessings. (Biḥār, vol. 2, p. 503). In this sense the words,
73. aBut whoso is blind in this world will be blind in the Hereafter, and even more astray from the way.  2002

74. bAnd they had well-nigh caused thee severest affliction on account of what We have revealed to thee that thou mightest invent against Us something other than that; and then they would have certainly taken thee for a special friend.  2003

"whoso shall be given his book in his right hand" would symbolize that the believers' record would be a blessed one. The words, such will read their book, only point to a common habit of man. The possessor of a good record naturally reads it again and again while he whose record is bad conceals it and avoids reading it. See also v. 15 above. For the word نكي (a whit) see 4: 50.

2002. Commentary:
The verse means to say that those who do not make proper use of their spiritual eyes in this world would remain deprived of spiritual sight in the life to come. The Quran speaks of those who do not ponder over the Signs of God and do not benefit by them as "blind." Such men will remain blind in the next life also, i.e. they would not be able to see God with their spiritual eyes. The verse does not refer to any physical blindness because the human soul will shed its physical tabernacle here and men will rise on the Judgement Day free from all physical maladies and ailments. See also 6:106.

2003. Important Words:
من (on account of). As a preposition it denotes transition, a compensation, superiority and a cause. It is synonymous with بعد and and and denotes the meaning of ف, etc. (Lane).
75. "And if We had not strengthened thee with the Quran, thou mightest have inclined to them a little."

76. In that case We would have made thee taste similar afflictions of life and similar afflictions of death, and then thou wouldst not have found for thyself any helper against Us.

77. And indeed they are near to unsettling thee from the land that they might expel thee therefrom; but in that case they themselves would not have stayed after thee save a little.

Abū Talib, and proposed to him that if his nephew would only refrain from criticizing their idols, they would make him their leader and chief. See also 8:31.

2004. Commentary:
Verses 14:29 and 25:33 help to explain the meaning of the present verse. In these verses we have, Allah strengthens the believers with the word that is firmly established both in the present life and in the Hereafter; and, it is thus revealed that We may strengthen thy heart therewith. These verses show that in the verse under comment the words, if We had not strengthened thee, refer to the revelation of the Quran. The verse means to say that the Prophet’s nature was so pure that even if the Quran had not been revealed to him and he had no knowledge of God’s great intentions about him, he would never have stooped to practising Shirk. In the event, however, of the Quran not having been revealed to him and his not having been blessed with heavenly light he might have perhaps compromised with disbelievers on some very minor details of doctrine or practice. But after the Quran had been revealed to him, there remained absolutely no possibility of any compromise with them on his part. The verse thus sheds a flood of light on the purity of the Prophet’s heart and the greatness of his spiritual stature and does not refer to any possible weakening in his Mission on his part on account of persecution or temptations held out to him by his enemies.

2005. Commentary:
The verse purports to say that if in the absence of the revelation of the Quran, the Prophet should have inclined to disbelievers, his inclination towards them would have done them no good and would not have saved them from divine punishment. The verse drives home the supreme truth that all the Prophet’s greatness was due to his being the recipient of divine revelation; without such revelation he was no more than an ordinary mortal.

2006. Important Words:
خليفة (after thee). خلاف is derived from خلف which means, he succeeded or
78. **This has been Our way with Our Messengers whom We sent before thee; and thou wilt not find any change in Our way.**

79. **Observe Prayer at the declining and paling of the sun on to the darkness of the night, and the recitation of the Quran in prayer at dawn. Verily, the recitation of the Quran at dawn is specially acceptable with God.**

Commentary:

As the Arabic expression **استفز من الأرض** means, he expelled him from the land (17:65), the words **ليرى حول** (that they might expel thee) occurring immediately after evidently do not imply simple expulsion because in that case there would have been useless repetition of the same meaning. They signify legal banishment which entails loss of rights of citizenship. Disbelievers wanted to brand the Prophet with the stigma of legal banishment so that he might lose all dignity with his people, but God Himself commanded him to leave Mecca and thus saved him from this stigma which involved loss of citizenship of that town.

**2007. Commentary:**

The verse means to say that it is invariably God’s way with His Messengers that whenever anyone of them is expelled from his native land by his people with indignity and dishonour, that people is visited with divine punishment. A striking illustration of this divine law is to be found in the case of the tribe of Thamūd and the Jews. The former sought to put obstacles in the way of the Prophet’s missionary expedition by killing his she-camel and the latter put Jesus on the Cross. The Thamūd met with the destruction of their bodies and souls while the Jews suffered only moral and political death. But the Meccans were spared this punishment because the Holy Prophet left Mecca in pursuance of God’s own command and was not expelled from it by his people.

**2008. Important Words:**

ل (at) means, at, on or upon; nigh, near or about; (Lane & Aqrab). For other meanings of لام see 17:62.

دايرك (declining and paling) is derived from **دايرك** i.e. the time proved him and made him expert. **دايرك** means, (1) the sun declined from the meridian; (2) or it became yellow; (3) or it set (Lane & Aqrab).

**غسق** (darkness) is the noun-infinitive from **غسق** (ghasaqa). They say **غسق اليل** i.e. the night became dark. **غسق عين** means, his eyes became dark or shed tears. **غسق** (ghasayn)
80. And wake up for it (the Quran) in the latter part of the night as a supererogatory service for thee. It may be that thy Lord will raise thee to an exalted station.

(a)50:41; 52:50; 73:3-5; 76:27.

means, the beginning of the darkness of night or the darkness of the beginning of the night or the redness in the horizon after sunset disappears (Lane).

Commentary:
The words of this verse denote the hours of the five daily Prayers of Islam. The three meanings of the word طل (gold) as given under Important Words indicate the times of غروب (afternoon Prayer) and عصر (late afternoon Prayer) and غروب (sun-set Prayer). The words غروب غروب الليل include the times of غروب (sun-set Prayer) but particularly refer to عصر (night Prayer). The words غروب الغروب (the recitation of the Quran at dawn) indicate the hour of فجر (morning Prayer).

In this and the following verses Muslims are warned to be prepared to meet great hardships and privations at the hands of the Jews of Medina. These people were very punctilious about outward acts of worship. The slightest slackness in Prayers on the part of Muslims would make them criticize Islam and the Holy Prophet. Moreover, Islam was destined to make great headway in Medina in the near future and as success and prosperity generally make men prone to a life of ease and they become indifferent towards Prayers, so Muslims are particularly warned to be on their guard against any slackness in Prayers.

2009. Important Words:

(tahajjada) mean the same thing i.e. (1) he slept or slept in the night or in the latter part of the night; (2) he remained awake or was sleepless or wakeful in the night; (3) he awoke from sleep to pray or for some other purpose; (4) he prayed in the night. Hence praying in the latter part of the night is called جهن (tahajjud). Some say that جهن which is the noun infinitive from جهن (hasj) means, to sleep in the day and جهن (hasj) means, to sleep in the night or simply to sleep (Lane & Aqrab).

(نافل) (as a supererogatory service) is derived from نافل. They say نافل جهل i.e. he presented to the man a thing for which he desired no return or reward. نافل الإمراء (nafa) means, the commander gave to the soldiers the booty. نافل (nafal) is to do more than one is bound to do by duty or of which the doing is not obligatory. نافل means, what accedes to or exceeds the original; a voluntary gift by way of alms or as a good work; a gift; a deed beyond what is incumbent or obligatory; grandson or grandchild; supererogatory Prayer (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:
The words جهن للك (as supererogatory service for thee) refer to the Tahajjud Prayer offered in the latter part of the night. The word جهن, as its meanings show, implies that the Tahajjud Prayer is not obligatory for Muslims. The verse may also be taken to indicate that this Prayer was obligatory only for the Holy Prophet, and not for any other Prophet. The word جهن further means a special favour and signifies that Prayers are not a burden to weary the flesh but a privilege and a favour from God.
81. And say, 'O my Lord, make my entry a good entry and then make me come forth with a good forthcoming. And grant me from Thyself a helping power.

The expression, *It may be that thy Lord will raise thee to an exalted station*, embodies a great prophecy. Perhaps no other person has been so much malignod and abused as the Holy Prophet of Islam and certainly no other person has been the recipient of so much divine praise and the object of the invocation of so many divine blessings and favours upon him as he. The implied prophecy was that whereas the sons of darkness would abuse and condemn the Prophet, the good, the noble and the righteous would invoke God's blessings upon him and God Himself would proclaim his praises from His Exalted Throne. Thus the Prophet's praise by God and His Elect would far outweigh the undeserved abuse heaped upon him by the sons of darkness.

The expression *مَقَامُ مُحمَّد* (exalted station) may also be understood to imply the special prerogative of *صُرْحَاء* (intercession) which God bestowed upon the Holy Prophet. There is a well-known hadith that the followers of all other Prophets, having despaired of the intercession of their own Prophets on the Day of Judgement, will seek the Holy Prophet's intercession and he will intercede for them, and thus they will acknowledge his greatness. The advent of the Promised Messiah and Mahdi is another manifestation of this *مَقَامُ مُحمَّد* (exalted station) of the Holy Prophet. When denunciation of him reached its climax, and he was also deserted by his own so-called followers and friends, God raised the Promised Messiah and Mahdi from among his followers and through him vindicated his honour. The Promised Messiah refuted and rebutted the charges of his enemies, and by imparting to his followers true knowledge of the manifold excellences and beauties of his teaching and character inspired them with a new love and veneration for him. The mention of the grant of the *مَقَامُ مُحمَّد* after the command for obligatory and supererogatory Prayers implies the hint that the real remedy for him who receives mockery and abuse from the people of the world is not to retaliate with mockery and abuse but to turn to God and seek His help. This is sure to turn enemies into friends, as happened in the Prophet's case. His bitterest enemies became his most devoted followers. Of the many exalted stations the Holy Prophet was destined to obtain the first was his possession of Medina from where spread his praise and holiness to the ends of the earth. This is why the next verse refers to his emigration to Medina.

2010. **Important Words:**

- **منْ صُرْحَاء** (entry) is derived from صَرْحَاء which means, he entered. منْ صُرْحَاء of which the infinitive noun is صُرْحَاء or صُرْحَاء means, he caused him to enter. منْ therefore means, to enter, entering or entry. The Quranic expression رَبَ ادْخِلْيَ مَنْ صُرْحَاء means, O my Lord cause me to enter in a good or agreeable manner (or make my entry a good entry) (Lane).

**Commentary:**

In acceptance of his prayers and supplications, the Prophet in this verse has been vouchsafed the glad tidings that in fulfilment of the prophecy made in the words, *Glory be to Him Who carried His servant by night from the Sacred Mosque to the Distant Mosque*, he would be taken to Medina which would constitute
82. And say, “Truth has come and falsehood has vanished away. Falsehood does indeed vanish away fast.”

the first of the various “exalted positions” (مقام محمد) which are to be bestowed upon him. In anticipation of the fulfilment of this prophecy the Prophet is commanded to pray that his entry in Medina may be doubly blessed and so may be his departure from the town in which he is now living (Mecca). This prayer of the Prophet was amply fulfilled. His enemies desired to expel him from Mecca in ignominy and disgrace but he was foretold by God of their evil designs and in accordance with divine plan he left Mecca of his own accord and arrived in perfect safety in Medina, where he succeeded in gathering round him a band of most faithful and devoted followers.

The question may be asked why the entry of the Prophet into Medina has been mentioned before his “coming forth” from Mecca, which is contrary to events as they took place. The answer to this seeming historical anomaly is that the order in the statement of events as they took place has been reversed in order to console the Holy Prophet. The news of his departure from Mecca would naturally have caused him great pain. In order to relieve him of this mental anguish God preceded the news of his departure from Mecca by the news of his entry into Medina where power and honour awaited him.

The word مدخل (entry) might also be taken to refer to the Holy Prophet’s subsequent victorious entry into Mecca. Read in this sense, the said “entry” may be understood to constitute another stage in the Holy Prophet’s march to his promised مقام محمد (exalted station) because with his triumphant re-entry into Mecca ended all opposition to Islam and the Prophet’s erstwhile opponents became his devoted followers.

The prayer contained in the words, And grant me from Thyself a helping power, was necessary because power is a great corrupter of men. The Prophet is taught to pray that instead of corrupting him the acquisition of power may prove a source of real help to him.

The prayer contained in this verse supports the interpretation of اسماء، i.e., the Vision about the Prophet’s Night Journey mentioned in v. 2, namely that the flight of the Holy Prophet from Mecca to Medina was sure to take place.

2011. Important Words:

i.e., falsehood gradually weakened. It means, the thing perished, passed away or came to nought; became null, void or of no effect. It means, his soul departed; he died (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

This verse implies a beautiful hint that with the entry of the Holy Prophet into Medina his power would continue to grow and that of his enemy decline till it would be finally broken. So it came to pass when by the conquest of Mecca idolatry disappeared from Arabia for ever.

The word زمَح which has been translated as “has vanished away” actually conveys, as shown under Important Words, the sense of gradual weakening and ultimate disappearance. It is among the marvels of Quranic diction that to convey a certain sense it selects that particular word which points to a long
83. And *We are gradually revealing of the Quran that which is a healing and a mercy to the believers; but it only adds to the loss of the wrong-doers.*

sequence of events. In this particular instance the sense of the vanishing of falsehood might as well have been expressed by the word بَيْضُ (perished) or بَلْلَ (became useless, vain or ineffective) but neither of these words would have conveyed the sense of gradual weakening and ultimate disappearance which is expressed by the word زِيْمَةٌ. This word, in fact, implies a prophecy of the gradual weakening and ultimate disappearance of idolatry from Mecca, which was literally fulfilled as foretold.

It is another marvel of the style of the Quran that, without being poetry, its verses possess that poetic rhythm and cadence without which it is not possible to give full expression to feelings of extreme delight. The verse under comment furnishes one such example. After the conquest of Mecca when the Holy Prophet was busy clearing the Ka'ba of the idols which had desecrated it, he repeated as he struck each of the idols the following verse of the Quran:

> وَتَقَلِّبَ النَّاسُ وَالْبَائِلَ إِنَّ الْبَائِلَ كَانَ زَهْوًا

*Met. App.:* And say, Truth has come and falsehood has vanished away. Falsehood does indeed vanish away fast. One can imagine the deep emotion the Prophet's Companions must have felt when they watched him strike down the idols one after the other and repeat this Quranic verse in a measured tone. It is only natural that they spontaneously joined him in reciting this verse on that august occasion.

2012. **Commentary:**

The verse purports to say that as to a jaundiced eye all objects appear yellow, similarly to a mind which is swayed by jealousy and prejudice, even most pure and noble teachings appear impure and ignoble. Such was the case with disbelievers in regard to the teachings of the Quran.

The word "Quran" in this verse may also be taken to refer to the portion of the Quran already revealed, the portion containing prophecies about the prosperity and success of the Faithful and the ruin and destruction of disbelievers. The verse means to say that the time has come for the fulfilment of those prophecies and that the flight of the Prophet from Mecca would usher in an era of triumph for Islam and would bring discomfiture and humiliation to disbelievers.
84. And when We bestow favour on man, he turns away and goes aside; and when evil touches him, he gives himself up to despair. 2013

85. Say, 'Every one acts according to his own way, and your Lord knows well who is best guided.' 2014

86. And they ask thee concerning the soul. Say, 'The soul is by the command of my Lord; and of the knowledge thereof you have been given but a little.' 2015

2013. Commentary:
The verse means to say that Muslims were subjected to tortures and suffered all sorts of hardships for thirteen long years, but they bore them with fortitude and patience. The case of disbelievers, however, is different. When their turn came to be visited with divine punishment they would give way to despair, because they had no faith in God.

2014. Important Words:
- (his own way). is the feminine of which is synonymous with which is the infinitive noun from . It means, a likeness or resemblance; shape, form or form of a thing. They say i.e. this is according to the likeness of his father. also and more commonly means, a particular way, cause, mode or manner of acting or conduct; direction, side; motive, intention or purpose; creed; etc. The Quranic expression means, everyone acts according to his particular way (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:
Every man acts according to his own motives, way of thinking, aims and purposes. The aim and object of disbelievers is to attain worldly gains. Therefore when they suffer a worldly loss they give themselves up to despair. But a believer's whole aim in life is to win God's pleasure, so the loss of worldly wealth leaves him unperturbed. He faces all trials and hardships with a brave heart. The verse means to say that God treats men according to their motives and intentions. He takes into consideration not only the actions of man but also his intentions and motives. As all the efforts of disbelievers are for this world, they do not deserve to be the recipients of God's help and favour. This and the preceding verse apply as much to the Jews as to the idolaters of Mecca.

2015. Commentary:
Various meanings have been assigned to the word by scholars of different schools of Muslim religious thought. According to some of the Commentators it applies to all angels; according to others it means only the angel to whom is entrusted the task of the creation of the world; yet others think that it
particularly applies to the Archangel Gabriel. Some scholars, however, are of the view that *روح* means the word of God, while some others take it as applying to the Quran. But the most appropriate meaning of this word is “the human soul.”

The question regarding the nature of the human soul was first put to the Holy Prophet at Mecca by some of the Meccan idolators, probably at the instance of the Jews of Medina, when the news reached the latter that he had claimed to be a divine Prophet. In reply the Prophet recited to them the present verse. When, however, he came to Medina the question appears again to have been put to him by the Jews and he must naturally have recited to them the same verse, thus giving rise to the wrong notion held by some traditionists that this verse was revealed in Medina or that, after having been first revealed at Mecca, it was again revealed at Medina. The fact is that it was only revealed once and that was at Mecca.

As stated above, the most appropriate meaning of the word *روح* is the human soul. The soul has been described here as something created by the direct command of God. As a matter of fact according to the Quran all creation falls under two categories: (1) Original creation which is brought about without the aid or help of any substance or matter previously created. (2) Subsequent creation which is brought about with the aid and help of means and matter previously created. The former kind of creation falls under the category of * أمر* (lit. command) for which see 2:118, and the latter is known as *خلق* (lit. creating). In this verse we are told that the human soul belongs to the first category.

In the period of their spiritual decadence the Jews seem to have come to dabble in spiritualism and occult practices like many modern Spiritualists, Theosophists and Hindu Yogis. They had come to believe in magic and so-called spiritual practices. These occult practices appeared to have exercised great influence on them. It appears that the Jews started taking interest in magic and occult practices in the time of the Prophet David. These practices became very popular with them in the time of Jesus. According to Philo and the well-known Jewish writer, Josephus, the Essenes in the time of Jesus greatly indulged in these practices and by a life of renunciation they had greatly developed this art. The Quran also refers to the Jewish counterparts of the modern Spiritualists in 72:8-10. References to black and white magic may also be found in the books of the Old and New Testaments. Some of the Jews of Medina also seem to have resorted to these practices in the time of the Holy Prophet. This is why when the Meccan idolaters sought their help in confuting the Prophet they suggested that they (the Meccan idolaters) should enquire of him regarding the powers and attributes of the human soul. The Quran answers this inquiry in the verse under comment by saying that the perfect soul derives its powers from the command of God and anything else that is claimed to be acquired by so-called spiritual exercises and magical arts is all meaningless. It may be added that by *روح* is particularly meant the perfect soul. That the knowledge acquired by so-called spiritual exercises and by their professed communication with the dead carries little weight has often been demonstrated by the fact that the information claimed to be furnished by departed souls to different mediums regarding the next world always varies.

The question of the powers and attributes of the human soul is of more than local importance, inasmuch as it had not only agitated the minds of the Medinite Jews of the Prophet’s
87. And if We pleased, We could certainly take away that which We have revealed to thee and then thou wouldst find in the matter no guardian for thee against Us; 2016

88. *Except mercy from thy Lord. Surely, His grace towards thee is great.* 2017

89. *Say, 'If mankind and the Jinn gathered together to produce the like of this Quran, they could not produce the like thereof, even though they should help one another.'* 2018

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*Commentary:*

The present verse furnishes further evidence in support of what has been said in the previous verse. The words of the present verse appear to be addressed to the Holy Prophet but as a matter of fact they are not. As the question referred to in the previous verse was not asked by him, so the answer is evidently meant for those who had asked it. The verse means to say that the human soul is so weak that, far from revealing new spiritual truths, it is incapable even of reproducing those already revealed if they happen to disappear from the world.

The verse also implies a prophecy that a time would come when Quranic knowledge would depart from the earth. A similar prophecy of the Holy Prophet has been reported by Ibn Merdawaih and by Baihaqi and Ibn Maja that there would come a time when the kernel and spirit of the Quran would disappear from the earth and not all the so-called mystics and sufis of the time claiming, like their Jewish prototypes, to possess supernatural powers would be able to restore it with their concerted effort.

*Commentary:*

The meaning of the expression, *Surely, His grace towards thee is great,* among other things, is that when the spirit of the Quran disappeared from the world and its letter only remained, God alone could and would bring it back.

*Commentary:*

This verse confirms the interpretation of the two preceding verses, for it develops the argument embodied in them. It holds out the challenge to those who indulge in occult practices and by means of these practices claim to receive spiritual knowledge from the departed spirits that, if they seriously think their claim to possess any substance, then let all of them assemble together and summon to their aid the hidden spirits which they think can communicate to them the knowledge of spiritual matters, and with their concerted and combined effort produce a book like the Quran. If they failed to produce such
90. And surely We have set forth for mankind in various ways all kinds of similitudes in this Quran, but most men would reject everything but disbelief. 2019

91. And they say, 'We will never believe thee until thou cause a spring to gush forth for us from the earth.' 2020

92. Or thou have a garden of date-palms and vines, and cause streams to gush forth in the midst thereof in abundance;

a book, and most certainly they would fail if they ever made such an attempt, then the falsity of their claim to receive spiritual knowledge from departed spirits would become established beyond doubt as also would their assertion that the Holy Prophet had acquired the knowledge contained in the Quran by means of certain spiritual exercises. 2019. Important Words:

(We have set forth in various ways).
See 17: 42.

Commentary:
The verse brings home to disbelievers their complete inability to produce a book like the Quran. It purports to say that their mental faculties are limited. They can deal with only such matters of which they have made a special study. The Quran, on the other hand, has comprehensively dealt with all sorts of subjects—Politics, Physical Science, Ethics, Economics, etc., and has provided right guidance in matters of belief and conduct about which the various existing religions disagree. These people have not the capacity even to understand and appreciate these matters, much less to produce a book like the Quran—humanity's infallible guide. In spite of their patent inability to accept the above challenge they persist in their denial of the divine origin of the Quran out of sheer obstinacy. One day they will reap the fruit of their wayward denial.

2020. Commentary:

When the Meccans were confounded by the answers of the Quran to their questions and objections they turned round and demanded of the Prophet that if the Quran comprehended every kind of knowledge then he should be able to work miracles—cause springs to gush forth from the earth, grow gardens and build houses of gold for himself. The demand was either intended as mockery or had its basis in the belief that they shared with the Jews that most wonderful works could be performed by special spiritual exercises and by the help of disembodied spirits.
93. 'Or, thou cause the heaven to fall upon us in pieces, as thou hast claimed, or, thou bring Allah and the angels before us face to face.'

94. 'Or thou have a house of gold or thou ascend up into heaven; and we will not believe in thy ascension until thou send down to us a book that we can read'. Say, 'Holy is my Lord! I am not but a man sent as a Messenger.'

2021. Commentary:
Disbelievers mockingly told the Holy Prophet, that, if he could not bring to them any of the good things which they demanded he might as well cause the sky to fall upon them or let God and His angels destroy them.

2022. Commentary:
The contemptuous tone of the disbelievers' discourse is continued in this verse. They are represented as saying to the Prophet that if he could not accomplish any of the things they demanded of him he might as well have some good things for himself. Pharaoh had challenged Moses that he could not be a true Prophet because he possessed no bracelets of gold (43: 54); but the Meccan disbelievers went a step further and declared that the Prophet's claims could only be regarded true if he possessed a house made of gold.

The words, Or thou ascend up into heaven..., that we can read, contain a derisive reference to the Mi'raj or the Ascension of the Prophet. The disbelievers meant to say that they would not believe in his Ascension unless he stayed in the heavens and let fall to them a book that they might read. To these foolish demands of the disbelievers the words Say, Holy is my Lord! I am not but a man sent as a Messenger, embody a crushing reply. They are told that their demands fall under two heads: (a) those that pertain to God (b) those that pertain to the Prophet. The demands of the first category are frivolous in character and God is above such frivolities. These demands have nothing to do with the spiritual development of man for which divine Messengers are raised. As for their demands pertaining to the Prophet, they are incompatible with his humanity and his mission as a Prophet of God. A human being, even one invested with prophethood, could not and would not indulge in such acrobatic feats.
95. "And nothing has prevented men from believing when the guidance came to them save that they said, 'Has Allah sent a man as a Messenger?" 2023

96. Say, 'Had there been in the earth angels walking about in peace and quiet, We should have certainly sent down to them from heaven an angel as a Messenger.' 2224

2023. Commentary

In the previous verse the Holy Prophet, in reply to the foolish and frivolous demands of disbelievers, was commanded to say to them that he was nothing beyond a Messenger of God. The present verse contains their strongest objection that he is only a mortal. In fact, the words, Has Allah sent a man as a Messenger, contain not one but several objections. The first is that, God being so great, it is incompatible with His dignity to appoint a mere mortal as His Messenger. This objection in reality implies rejection and denial of revelation itself. Some people reject a Prophet out of vanity and a false sense of self-importance. They do not deny the possibility of divine revelation, but in their pride and egotism they cannot bring themselves to think that God could possibly choose a man of no consequence, as they think, to be the bearer of His Message. Another class of people hold that man being endowed with great natural gifts and talents is quite fit to find the right path by the help of these natural faculties alone and needs no divine revelation to guide him. Yet a third class would object to any mortal being a divine Prophet on the ground that a Prophet requires higher and better faculties for the effective discharge of his onerous duties than those possessed by a mere mortal. These people are ever ready to believe in the claims of any mountebank if only he professes to possess superhuman powers, but find it hard to believe in similar claims of another person possessed of the highest moral and spiritual stature who might be sincere enough to disclaim all such superhuman powers. This class of men fall an easy prey to supernaturalism. Persons who suffer from such mental distempers might well profess to believe in the past Prophets, but their failure to recognize the truth of a new claimant to Prophethood amply proves that the faith which they profess in the old Prophets is but an empty and customary faith inherited from their forefathers and is devoid of all reality.

2024. Commentary:

It is clear from this verse that what is here meant by "angels" are not real angels but angel-like men, because real angels certainly would not need other angels to come as Warners to them.

The verse constitutes an effective answer to those people who in their arrogance say that, being superior to their Prophet, they should have received revelation direct from God. They are told that angels descend upon angel-like men, and not upon their opposites and that if they bring about an angelic change in their lives, angels would begin to descend upon them.
97. Say, "Sufficient is Allah for a witness between me and you; surely, He knows and sees His servants full well."

98. "And he whom Allah guides, is the only one rightly guided; but as for those whom He causes to perish, thou wilt find for them no helpers beside Him. And on the Day of Resurrection We shall gather them together on their faces, blind, dumb and deaf. Their abode will be Hell; every time it abates, We shall increase for them the flame."

But as they have allied themselves with Satan they could not expect visits from angels. The verse also provides an answer to another class of men who believe that man is too puny and inconsequential a being to be the recipient of divine revelation and that higher beings are required for this purpose. The answer given is that only beings of the same species can help their prototypes achieve their salvation, because only they can serve as exemplars or models for them. Thus none but a man could be the bearer of a divine Message for mankind, because only a man could serve as a model for other men. The word رسول (Messenger) here does not mean simply the bearer of divine revelation, but the possessor of all the attributes and qualifications of a divine Messenger.

2025. Commentary:

This verse provides a telling answer to the other two objections mentioned in v. 95 viz., (a) that man is too unimportant a being to be the recipient of God's revelation; and (b) that he is endowed with such extraordinary natural gifts and faculties as not to need divine revelation at all for his guidance. The answer here given is that God being the Creator of mankind knows full well how limited or self-sufficient are their natural gifts and so when He sends a Messenger, it is not for them to judge whether a Prophet should or should not have been sent to them but whether or not the claimant is a true Messenger. If, tested by God's own tangible evidence, his claim is proved true, then both these objections fall to the ground and it has to be accepted that man is neither too unimportant to be the recipient of God's word nor too self-sufficient not to need revelation.

2026. Commentary:

In this verse believers are assured that they should not feel discouraged at the obstinacy and waywardness of disbelievers because those who are the inveterate enemies of the truth today may become its devoted votaries tomorrow. The decision as to who deserves to be guided in the end and who will for ever remain wedded to disbelief rests entirely in God's own hands. One thing, however, is certain: truth shall ultimately prevail. So there is no cause for believers to be disheartened at the opposition shown by disbelievers.

The words "on their faces" have also been used in 54:49 where we have, On the day when
99. "That is their recompense, because they rejected Our Signs and said, 'What! when we are reduced to bones and broken particles, shall we really be raised up as a new creation?'

they will be dragged into the Fire on their faces. So the words in the verse under comment may also mean that disbelievers "shall be dragged on their faces" into the fire i.e. they shall be humbled, disgraced and severely punished. Some sayings of the Holy Prophet also throw light on the meaning of the words, "on their faces." He is reported to have said, \( \text{\textit{ان الذين اظلمهم على يوم القيامة أدادرهم على وجههم}} \) i.e. He Who has made men walk on their feet can also make them move along on their faces (Bukhārī, Kitāb al-Riqaq). Another hadith says that on the Day of Resurrection men will be raised in three different forms. Some will be raised as riding, others on foot, and yet others on their faces. Another hadith speaks of the people of the last category as being dragged on their faces (Maʿānī vol. 15). It appears that people of the first category will be the Prophets, those of the second the Faithful, while those belonging to the third category will be the disbelievers. In fact, an action done in this world will assume a corresponding form in the next. As the aim and object of disbelievers in this world is the attainment of paltry material gains and they, as it were, instead of looking up to God, look down to earth, so in this verse they are represented as moving along with their faces turned downward in the next life.

The words "it abates" do not mean that the fire of Hell will become extinguished or its intensity would lessen. They only mean that when on account of burning in the Fire for a sufficiently long time, the disbelievers' sense of feeling became dull, God would again sharpen it and they would once more begin to feel the burning of Hell-fire as keenly as before. See also 4:57.

2027. Commentary:

All disbelief is born of lack of belief in the life after death. Disbelievers rejected the word of God and thus rendered themselves deserving of punishment but this rejection of divine revelation was due to a lack of belief in the life after death when they would have to render an account of their deeds. All rejection of religion and truth is, in fact, the result of denial of the next life. This is why the Quran has laid so much stress on the life after death and reverts to this all-important subject time and again.
100. Have they not seen that Allah Who created the heavens and the earth has the power to create the like of them? And He has appointed for them a term; there is no doubt about it. But the wrongdoers would reject everything but disbelief. 2028

101. Say, 'Even if you possessed the treasures of the mercy of my Lord, you would surely hold them back for fear of spending, for man is niggardly.' 2029

a36:82; 46:34; 86:9.

2028. **Commentary:**
The verse embodies an invincible argument to prove the existence of life after death. It does not straightaway say to disbelievers that they would be born again because God has the power to give them a new birth. Such a statement would have been an empty assertion. It says to them that if it is difficult for them to believe in a life after death, they would as well disbelieve if they were told that they would lose their power and prestige to those very weak and poor Muslims whom they now look down upon as of no worth and consequence. If this seemingly impossible prophecy about their complete destruction and the rise to power of the poor Muslims turned out to be true, the claim that there is a life after death and that they will be punished for their misdeeds and rejection of truth will also have to be accepted as true. Now history bears eloquent testimony to the fact that within a few years after the above prophecy was made, the powerful Empires of Persia and Rome fell into dust before the irresistible onrush of Islam and the half-starved camel-drivers of Arabia became the leaders and teachers of mankind.

2029. **Commentary:**
This verse reverts to the subject of the human soul dealt with in v. 86 and purports to say that the treasures of divine knowledge which lie hidden in the word of God know no end or limit while the knowledge that is acquired by so-called spiritualists by their occult practices is very limited. This is why the Elect of God diffuse divine knowledge freely while so-called spiritualists are very parsimonious in acquainting even their closest disciples with the knowledge they claim to acquire by their unnatural practices. The truth is that the powers of God are limitless and so are the great treasure of divine knowledge which He vouchsafes to His Elect. They diffuse and expend it freely without fear of its becoming exhausted so that God's creatures may become acquainted with all the innumerable stages of His nearness and that they may realize Him and become at one with Him.
102. And of a truth "We gave Moses nine manifest Signs. So ask then the children of Israel. When he came to them, Pharaoh said to him, 'I do think thee, O Moses, to be a victim of deception.'

103. He said, 'Thou knowest well that none has sent down these Signs but the Lord of the heavens and the earth as so many evidences; and I certainly think thee, O Pharaoh, to be a ruined man.'

104. So he resolved to remove them from the land; but We drowned him and those who were with him, all together.

2030. Commentary:
The nine Signs alluded to in this verse have been mentioned elsewhere in the Quran. They are as follows:

(a) the rod (7:108)
(b) the white hand (7:109)
(c), (d) drought and scarcity of fruits which means the death of the first born children (7:131)
(e) the storm
(f) the locusts
(g) the lice
(h) the frogs
(i) the punishment of the blood (7:134)

The Bible gives a strange description of these Signs. Some of them were miracles pure and simple, such as the miracle of the rod and the radiant hand, while others served both as Signs and as punishment. In 7:134 these Signs have been described as مصلات; the word مصلات indicating that they were shown at intervals.

Reference to these Signs in this verse implies that similar Signs will be shown to the Jews by the Holy Prophet and that like Pharaoh they would not benefit by them and like him they too would incur God's displeasure and be visited with heavenly punishment.

2031. Commentary:
Pharaoh spoke of Moses as a victim of deception (v. 102), in order to lower him in the estimation of his people and to weaken his cause. But Moses warned Pharaoh that he would not succeed in his object because his people would certainly believe in him (Moses) and Pharaoh himself would come to a miserable end. The verse, in fact, implies a warning to the Meccans that, like Pharaoh who tried to defame and decry Moses, they would call the Holy Prophet a cheat and a victim of deception but like Pharaoh they would also fail in their designs and the Prophet would succeed.

2032. Commentary:
The verse contains a prophetic reference to some incidents in the Prophet's life that were to happen later in Medina. The Jews and some of the leaders of the Quraish had hatched a plot to bring the Prophet into collision with the power of Imperial Rome as a result of which he had to undertake a long and hazardous journey to Tabuk. But God
105. And after him We said to the children of Israel, "Dwell ye in the land; and when the time of the promise of the latter days comes, We shall bring you together out of various peoples."
106. \( a \)And in truth have We sent it down and with truth has it descended. And We have sent thee only as a bearer of good tidings and a Warner.\(^{2034}\)

107. And \( b \)the Quran We have revealed in pieces that thou mayest read it to mankind at intervals and We have sent it down piecemeal.\(^{2035}\)

with divine punishment for the second time in the time of the Promised Messiah just as the Jews were punished in that of the first Messiah—Jesus. In the present verse we are told that when Muslims are punished for the second time which means the fulfilment of “the promise of the latter days” the Jews would be brought back to their Holy Land from all parts of the world. This is what is happening now in Palestine.

According to Fath al-Bayan some very prominent Muslim religious scholars hold the view that the promise of the latter days (the promise of the latter days) applies to the time of the Promised Messiah. This interpretation supports our view.

2034. Commentary:
This verse signifies that the prophecies made in the previous verse would certainly be fulfilled. These prophecies related to the two disasters that befell the followers of Moses and by implication related also to the two great national disasters that were to overtake the followers of the Holy Prophet. The words, We have sent thee only as a bearer of good tidings and a Warner, imply a prophecy about the ultimate destruction of the enemies of Islam and the triumph of its followers.

The verse also embodies a refutation of the foolish notion that Satan can sometime interfere with the revelation of the Quran. It unmistakably declares that Quranic revelation has ever remained absolutely immune from any such interference.

2035. Commentary:
This verse explains why the present order of the Chapters and verses of the Quran is different from the order in which they were originally revealed. As a matter of fact the Quran had to meet the needs of two classes of people: (a) It had to answer the temporary objections of its immediate addressees and satisfy the immediate needs of the first converts to Islam; and (b) it had to lay down guidance for the multitudinous and multifarious problems of mankind for all time. The verses dealing with the objections of Meccan idolaters and the spiritual up-bringing of early Muslims naturally had to be revealed first and those which dealt with the lasting spiritual human needs were revealed afterwards. Thus the Quranic verses were revealed piecemeal and at intervals. Whenever a particular objection was raised by disbelievers, verses containing the answer to such an objection were revealed. Similarly, when early Muslims were required to be provided with guidance at a particular occasion, necessary and relevant verses were revealed to meet the needs of that occasion. That was the order in which the Quran was originally revealed. But since the temporary needs of the immediate addressees of the Quran were different from the permanent require-
108. Say, 'Whether you believe therein or believe not, those to whom knowledge has been given before it, do fall down prostrate on their faces when it is recited to them.'

109. And say, 'Holy is our Lord. Surely, the promise of our Lord is bound to be fulfilled.'

110. They fall down on their faces weeping, and it increases humility in them.

Commentary:

The words, those to whom knowledge has been given before it, refer to Muslims who had believed in the Quran before this verse was revealed. They may also refer to the “People of the Book”, who have been principally addressed in this Chapter.

The words, fall down prostrate on their faces, symbolize the humblest form of devotion and prayer to God and incidentally represent a Muslim showing his uttermost humility and devotion in Prayer.

Commentary:

The words, سِيَاهُ رَبَّنَا (Holy is our Lord) show that it was inevitable that the cause of Islam should prosper and its opponents should be completely discomfited and overthrown. For if it had not been so, it would have constituted a reflection on the glory and holiness of God Who had promised success and victory to Muslims and defeat and discomfiture to disbelievers.

Commentary:

The verse expresses a Muslim’s state of mind when in the posture of prostration the realization of the greatness of God and his own weakness renders him extremely humble.
111. "Say, 'Call upon Allah or call upon Raḥmān, by whichever name you call on Him, His are the most beautiful names. And utter not thy prayer aloud, nor utter it too low, but seek a way between." 2039

112. "And say, 'All praise belongs to Allah Who has taken unto Himself no son, and Who has no partner in His Kingdom, nor has He anyone to help Him on account of weakness.' And extol His glory with all glorification." 2040

2039. Commentary: In the previous verse reference was made to prostrations and prayers. In the present verse a Muslim is taught how to pray while prostrating for the fulfilment of God's promises and the betterment of his own self.

The expression, *His are the most beautiful names*, signifies that God has many names which express His various attributes and a Muslim should invoke in his prayer that particular attribute of God which has a special bearing on the matter for which he wants to pray. If, for instance, the object of prayer falls under the category of God's attribute of رحایت (the Gracious), similarly, if the object for which he prays has particular reference to the attribute of الرحم (the Merciful), or الزرااق (the Great Sustainer), or اوپ (the Bestower), these attributes should be invoked and so on, i.e., prayer should be offered to God by invoking the relevant divine attributes.

The word ملاذ - ملاذ applies to both the five daily Prayers, and prayer in general. The context, however, shows that it is prayer in general that is meant here.

The expression, *but seek a way between*, implies an injunction that we should pray to God neither too loudly, for He is not deaf, nor in too low a voice as that would interfere with our concentration of mind in prayer.

2040. Commentary: This verse which is the last of the present Sūra, contains an implied reference to the subject of اسراء (the Night Journey) mentioned in v. 2 of this Chapter. It means to say that God would bring about the fulfilment of the promises implied in the Prophet's Vision. The cause of Islam would triumph and idolatry would disappear from Arabia. This glorious triumph of Islam and the inglorious discomfiture of disbelief and idolatry would completely demolish the false doctrines of the trinity and plurality of Godhead. The ultimate and complete defeat of these false doctrines, prophesied by an unknown and poor man of Mecca without means and power, at a time when there were no ostensible prospects of such a prophecy being fulfilled, would show that God Who had made this prophecy through His Prophet was the One True God Who had no son or partner.
CHAPTER 18.
SŪRA AL-KAHF
(Revealed Before Hiṣra)

Date Of Revelation.

According to Ibn 'Abbās and Ibn Zubair, the whole of this Sūra was revealed at Mecca (Manthūr). Almost all the Commentators of the Quran appear to be agreed upon this point. 'Abdulrah bin Mas'ūd's report shows that it was revealed in the early days of the Meccan period. He says that Bani Isrā'il, Kahf and Maryam are among those Sūrās which were revealed very early in the Prophet's ministry (Bukhāri). According to some authorities, however, the present is one of those Sūrās which were revealed not piecemeal but in one whole. Anas reports that this Sūra was revealed in one whole and was guarded by 70,000 angels (Manthūr, vol. 4, p. 210). This hadith should not be understood to mean that some Chapters of the Quran enjoyed a greater protection than others at the time of their revelation. The traditions which say that so many angels descended for the protection of such and such Chapters do not speak of their protection at the time when they were being revealed but after they had been revealed. In fact, every Chapter deals with a particular subject. Sometimes a Chapter contains prophecies on the fulfilment of which depends the very truth of the Quran. Sometimes these prophecies pertain to physical changes, at others to the actions of men. The prophecies which pertain to the actions of men are of particular importance by reason of the fact that those whose punishment they predict exert themselves to the utmost of their power to escape it. As such prophecies generally are made in unusually adverse circumstances, their fulfilment appears to be highly improbable and is brought about only by a combination of extraordinary circumstances. So if a Sūra contains a certain prophecy which powerful nations have to exert themselves to render nugatory, the angels who control and superintend the direction of the affairs of the world are instructed to create conditions which may lead to its fulfilment. It is evident that the schemes and machinations of the opponents of a Prophet who makes the prophecy are proportionate in scope and intensity to the greatness of the prophecy and proportionately comprehensive are the means employed by God to frustrate those plans and plots. Since the direction of the affairs of the world is entrusted to angels and since they carry it out under divine laws, a correspondingly large number of them are appointed to guard the subject-matter of a Sūra which contains prophecies of the highest import. The angels are directed to take such steps as are necessary for the fulfilment of those prophecies.

In short, the guarding of the Sūrās by angels does not mean their protection when they are being revealed to a Prophet of God. The real work of guardianship begins after they have
been revealed and continues till the time when the prophecies mentioned therein are fulfilled. As regards immunity of Quranic revelation from Satanic or human interference every Chapter, every verse, every word, even every letter and vowel-point of the Quran is equally safe and under divine protection and no particular part of it enjoys this protection in greater measure than others.

As the present Sūra contains prophecies about the destruction of such powerful nations as Gog and Magog and about the nullification of Christian false propaganda against Islam, thousands of angels have been on duty to bring about the fulfilment of these mighty prophecies from the very day when the Sūra was revealed.

Western scholars assign this Sūra to the sixth year of the Holy Prophet's ministry at Mecca, but most probably it was revealed in the 4th or 5th year of the Call.

**Connection With The Preceding Sūra.**

According to Muslim Commentators of the Quran the connection of this Chapter with the previous one consists in the three questions that the Jews had asked the Holy Prophet about the human soul, the Dwellers of the Cave and Dhu'l Qarnain. The answer to the first question, they say, was revealed in Sūra Bani Isrā'il, whilst answers to the second and third questions were revealed in the present Chapter (Muḥīṭ). But this view does not accord with actual facts. The present Sūra deals with some other important subjects besides the account of the Dwellers of the Cave and of Dhu'l Qarnain e.g., the parable of two men (vv. 33-44) and the İsrā' or Spiritual Journey of Moses (vv. 61-83). As to why this Sūra contains these accounts along with the account of the Dwellers of the Cave and of Dhu'l Qarnain, these Commentators have no answer to give. Wherry, however, remarks in his "Commentary on the Quran", that 'this Chapter might be called the Chapter of wonderful stories.' But this very novel explanation of the reverend gentleman is as far from truth as that given by some Muslim Commentators. These far-fetched explanations, in fact, are born of a lack of proper realization by these gentlemen of the real significance and purpose of the Sūra. As a matter of fact, on the basis of some traditions of doubtful authenticity the idea had got into their heads that the Jews had put three questions to the Holy Prophet which this Sūra seeks to answer. So they came to entertain this baseless notion and made no attempt to ponder over and understand the contents of the Chapter.

It is incredible that an event should have been mentioned in the Quran at length merely because the Jews had asked the Holy Prophet certain questions about it. The Quran, being a perfect code of laws, was bound to discuss all important questions bearing on human morals, divine worship, spirituality, social relations, political economy, etc., whether or not the Prophet was asked a question regarding any one of them. If the incidents referred to above had any bearing on any of these subjects, they were bound to be mentioned and discussed in any case; if not, the Quran would not have referred to them, no matter how many questions the Jews might have asked. It is also not reasonable to suggest that these incidents have been mentioned together in the Quran because the Jews happened to inquire about them at the same time. Questions about widely different subjects may be
asked at the same time in one meeting and they may be answered in the order in which they are asked in the same meeting; but it is unwise to think that questions must necessarily be answered together in a religious Scripture whose address is not confined to one country or age, irrespective of the fact whether these questions have any bearing on one another. The Commentators of the Quran seem to have grievously erred in this regard.

It should also be remembered that the Quran anticipated and replied to all legitimate objections. It did not wait for any question to be asked before answering it. While dealing with a particular subject, the Quran invariably seeks to remove all possible doubts and misgivings to which a discussion of that subject is likely to give rise and which are incidental to it. It leaves alone all matters of passing interest because its Message is not for one particular people but for all peoples and all times. Hence there could be no place in it for the discussion of subjects which concern only one people or one particular period. While dealing with a particular subject it answers only those objections which spontaneously flow from a discussion of it and not the objections which may have been raised by a certain people at the time when it was being revealed. The fact is that this Chapter specifically deals with Christianity and the Christian people. There are on record certain sayings of the Holy Prophet which show that he, too, believed that the present Sūra particularly related to Christians. He is reported to have said, "Whosoever learns by heart the first and the last ten verses of Sūra al-Kahf will become immune from the evil influence of the Dājīl or Antichrist" (Musnad, vol. 6, pp. 446, 449).

As a matter of fact the reports upon which the Commentators have based their conclusions possess no reasonable basis. Most of these have been attributed to Ibn ‘Abbās who was only about four years old at the time when the Meccans are supposed to have sent their deputation to the Jews at Medina and the latter had suggested to them that they should ask the Prophet the aforesaid three questions. These reports are also contradictory of each other and even a hurried and casual perusal of them leaves no doubt about their being manifestly baseless and absurd. Either the Jews themselves knew the answer to the question which they are reported to have asked the Holy Prophet about the human soul or they did not. If they knew it, how could the truth of the Prophet be proved on the basis of an answer which they themselves knew? If they did not know it, then how could they know that the one given by the Prophet was correct?

All these facts taken together unmistakably show that the above-mentioned reports about the Holy Prophet having been asked the three questions were the product of some inventive genius and were later passed on as true and genuine traditions.

After having demonstrated the falsity of the above-mentioned reports about the Holy Prophet having been asked the three questions, it is necessary to add a few words to show the connection of this Chapter with the preceding Sūra.

In Chapter Al-Naḥl the prophecy had been dealt with at some length that the Holy Prophet would meet with severe opposition from Jews and Christians. This subject was further elaborated in Sūra Bani Isrāʾil in which it was stated that he would be taken to regions where he would live among Jews and would establish new contacts with them and later meet with opposition from both Jews and Christians and in the end would conquer them. Sūra Bani Isrāʾil also mentioned a vision of the Prophet which embodied a prophecy that he would conquer
the Promised Holy Land of the Jews and alluded to two revolts of the Jews foretold in the book of Deuteronomy. The first revolt took place after the time of David, as a consequence of which the Jews were expelled from their native land. They repented of their sins and their homeland was restored to them. But they relapsed into iniquity and defied God’s commandments and revolted for the second time in the time of Jesus. This second defiance of a Prophet of God brought upon them severer punishment. Their holy places were destroyed and they were exiled from their beloved land of promise. These prophecies had also mentioned the conditions and circumstances through which the first part of the Israelites—the Jews—had to pass. A description of their condition, however, gave rise to an obvious question, viz., when Christians who form the second part of the Mosaic Dispensation have been spared the punishment with which the Jews who were its first part were afflicted, does it not follow that Christians are the inheritors of the divine blessings and favours promised to the Jews? This question having been dispensed with, there remained one more question to be answered, viz., why are Muslims warned to be on their guard lest they incur divine displeasure by following in the footsteps of the Jews, and what does this warning portend and what has the future in store for them? These two very natural and pertinent questions have been answered in the present Chapter and some light has also been shed on the vicissitudes through which the Christian Faith was to pass. Mention has also been made of how Muslims would behave and make themselves the object of divine wrath by imitating the iniquitous ways of the Jews. An answer has also been supplied to yet another question viz. what connection is there between these matters and the story of the Dwellers of the Cave, and of Dhu’l Qarnain and Gog and Magog, the parable of two gardens and the Isrā’ (Spiritual Ascension) of Moses? The answer which the Sūra under comment gives to this question is that these parables describe in metaphorical language the rise and fall of Christian nations and also the hardships and tribulations that Muslims had to suffer from them on account of their own iniquities.

The Dwellers of the Cave are those early Christians who suffered untold persecution for the sake of their religion and upon whom God bestowed great material and spiritual blessings and favours as a reward for their sacrifices. The incidents mentioned in this Chapter had happened long before the time of the Holy Prophet because the successors of those early Christians had forsaken the path of truth by the time he made his appearance. A brief account of the Dwellers of the Cave or early Christians is given to point to the fact that when Jews incurred divine displeasure by their persistent rejection of truth, God chose these early Christians for the bestowal of His favours. But when later Christians departed from the path of virtue and took to iniquitous ways and practices, they too forfeited divine favours. This subject has been described in the parable of “two gardens.” The “two gardens” symbolized the two periods of the progress and prosperity of the Mosaic Dispensation, viz., (a) the period of prosperity of the Jewish people and (b) the period of the progress and advancement of Christian nations. Or they symbolized the two periods of the Christian people, the one before the time of the Holy Prophet and the other in our own time. Sūra Bānī Isrā’īl contains an account of the favours which God bestowed upon the Jews and the present Sūra deals with the great material progress and advancement made by Christian nations.
After this the Sūra proceeds to say that when the Israelites abused the possession of these “two gardens” and consigned to oblivion God’s great blessings and began to look down upon their cousins, the Ishmaelites, and became spiritually so depraved as to think that God’s blessings were not so many divine favours but rewards which they had themselves earned and therefore richly deserved as of right, then God heard the supplications of the despised and oppressed Ishmaelites and destroyed the gardens belonging to the Mosaic Dispensation, i.e. God broke the power of both Jews and Christians and chose the Ishmaelites, who were looked down upon, for His favours and gave them gardens better than those He had given to Jews and Christians.

In order to expand the subject and give it more clarity, the Isrā’ (Spiritual Journey) of Moses has been mentioned after the parable of the “two gardens”. This Spiritual Journey of Moses describes in metaphorical language the great material and moral progress that his followers were to make just as the phenomenal progress of the followers of the Holy Prophet has been described in his own Isrā’, mentioned in Sūra Bānī Isrā’īl. This Isrā’ of Moses describes in detail when and how this great advancement would commence and where it would stop and when the Israelites would become deprived of divine favours which would be transferred to the House of Ishmael. After this we are told that the Ishmaelites, after having become heirs to God’s favours, would in their turn incur His displeasure by defying His commandments and would receive severe punishment at the hands of Christian peoples—the second misguided part of the Mosaic Dispensation. The depraved followers of the Holy Prophet would be punished by Gog and Magog who would, at one time, spread over and dominate the entire world. In order to show that these nations lived also even in the time of the Holy Prophet but that God in His own infallible wisdom had kept them in a state of dormancy and had stopped them from spreading over the world, the Sūra has mentioned the causes that hindered their progress. Towards the end of the Sūra, mention is made of one, Dhu’l Qarnain, who stood in the way of the domination of the whole world by Gog and Magog. Thus light is thrown on the material and spiritual condition of Christians both in the early stages of their Faith and in the Latter Days when power, wealth and material prosperity would make them depart from the path of truth and righteousness. The Dwellers of the Cave symbolize early Christians in the period of their weakness, and Gog and Magog represent them in the heyday of their glory in our own time. Gog and Magog are Christians only in name, being quite strangers to the real spirit of their religion. The Sūra closes with an assurance to the followers of Islam that God would break and shatter the forces of irreligiosity unleashed by Gog and Magog and would bring about the deliverance of Muslims by means of a second Dhu’l Qarnain. This second Dhu’l Qarnain is the Holy Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement.

In short, the Sūra deals with two epochs of Christianity. In the first epoch the Christians led a life of virtue and righteousness and in the second they have given themselves up entirely to the pursuit and acquisition of material wealth and worldly gains. In between these two periods of Christianity’s spiritual glory and its decline and degradation the Islamic Dispensation was established and we are told that when Muslims abandoned the path of virtue and adopted satanic ways, their political power would suffer great eclipse at the hands of Christians. Later, however, Islam would emerge unscathed from this travail. This prophecy is being fulfilled in our own time.
Such is the close connection that subsists between the present Sūra and the preceding one, particularly the connection between the opening verses of this Sūra and the closing verses of the previous Sūra. The preceding Sūra ended with the words, All praise belongs to Allah Who has taken unto Himself no son and Who has no partner in His Kingdom and this Sūra opens with the warning that destruction shall overtake a people who propose a son for God. Similarly, the previous Sūra commended as men of knowledge those who worship and glorify God and have firm faith in His promises and denounced as ignorant and deprived of all true knowledge those who assign a son to God. Moreover, while in the previous Sūra true knowledge was defined and explained, the present Sūra defines and explains what constitutes ignorance and lack of true knowledge. Another connection between the closing verses of the last Sūra and the opening verses of the present Sūra is that whereas the closing verses of the preceding Chapter categorically denied the existence of any partner in God's Kingdom, in the opening verses of this Sūra the Holy Prophet is commanded to warn those who, in the pride of their power, wealth, and means, think that these things are everlasting and that they are immune from divine punishment. The fourth connection between these two Chapters consists in the fact that while the former Chapter closed with the words, And extol His glory with all glorification, the Sūra under comment opens with severe condemnation and castigation of those who assign a son to God. The Prophet is reported to have said that whosoever reads the first and the last ten verses of Sūra Al-Kahf would be protected against the evil influence of the Dajjāl or Antichrist (Musnad). This hadith shows that the Prophet understood that this Sūra was a special antidote against the mischief of the Dajjāl who, however, has not been mentioned in it by name. The first ten verses, the recital of which is recommended as a safeguard against the mischief of the Dajjāl, speak of a people "who assign a son to God", and they are no other than present-day Christians. The last ten verses of the Sūra speak of a people who have devoted their entire time, energy and effort to the acquisition of material wealth and who are so engrossed in their mechanistic inventions and discoveries as to think that they can fathom even the very secret of creation. But the greater their inventions and discoveries the more mortifying is their realization that there is no limit to the secrets of nature and no end to God's great and wonderful works. This description also applies to Christian nations of the West today. The Sūra thus constitutes a sort of commentary on the ideas, beliefs, ambitions and doings of these nations. So when the Chapters immediately preceding and following this Sūra deal primarily with the Christian Faith and the great material progress and prosperity of its followers, it clearly follows that when the Holy Prophet declared the recitation of the first and last ten verses of this Sūra as an infallible safeguard against the mischief of the Dajjāl, by Dajjāl he meant present-day corrupt Christian nations. These verses embody a severe indictment of their belief in Jesus as son of God and of their materialistic tendencies. Thus Christian nations are certainly the Dajjāl or Antichrist of the Holy Prophet's traditions.

Subject-Matter.

The subject-matter of the Sūra may briefly be stated as follows:—God has revealed the Quran in order to remove the errors that had crept into previous heavenly Scriptures. It warns those who ascribe a son to God that by so doing they incur God's displeasure.
These people hate Islam, but their beginning is not like their end. In the beginning they were very weak and were subjected to bitter persecution. God had mercy on them and delivered them from their trials and tribulations and put them on the road to progress and prosperity. But when they grew rich and prosperous, they became involved in idolatrous practices and instead of turning to God they turned to the world and were entirely lost in it. Muslims are warned to take a lesson from these people and to be on their guard particularly against three evils in the day of their power and glory, viz., (a) remissness in divine worship; (b) excessive love of wealth and worldly possessions; and (c) a life of ease and luxury.

The glory and power of Christian nations and degradation and poverty of Muslims are then graphically depicted in “the parable of two men”, one rich and the other poor. The rich man—Christian nations—would be proud of his riches while the poor man would turn to God. Pride and conceit would come to grief in the long run and circumstances beyond human control would bring about the rich man’s decline and fall.

The Sūra proceeds to give some details of those great changes which were revealed to Moses in his Vision. Moses was told in his Vision that the development and progress of his Dispensation would fall far short of the great heights which another and a later Dispensation would attain. This later Dispensation would bring to perfection and completion the teaching which Mosaic Dispensation had left incomplete and Islam would emerge triumphant from the ashes of a declining and decadent Christendom.

After having dealt with the decline and fall of Christian nations and the rise of Islam, the Sūra describes the conditions which would follow the triumph of Islam. We are told that a time would come when Muslims would also turn their backs upon religion and would become entirely engrossed in the pursuit of material wealth and power. To punish them for their sins God would once again grant success and prosperity to Christian nations which for a time had been restrained from advancing into Southern and Eastern regions. Then would come great destruction upon the world and all nations would become divided into two hostile camps and wedded to two opposite ideologies. Sin and iniquity would prevail and injustice and tyranny become rampant. When things came to such a pass God would create circumstances which would finally check the seemingly irresistible onrush of the flood threatening to engulf the entire world. While dealing with this subject the Sūra clearly hints that the same people would play an important part in arresting and stopping this flood as had once before broken the political power of Gog and Magog—true followers of the Holy Prophet.

In fact, the Sūra is complementary to, and has a deep and beautiful connection with, its predecessor—Sūra Bani Isrā’īl. Its subject-matter and the incidents mentioned therein do not lack cohesion as some Commentator have mistakenly inferred but, in fact, possess an exquisite order.
1. In the Name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful.

2. All praise belongs to Allah Who has sent down the Book to His servant, and has not put therein any crookedness.

3. He has made it a guardian, that it may give warning of a grievous chastisement from Him, and that it may give the believers who do good deeds the glad tidings that they shall have a good reward.

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2041. Commentary:
See 1:1.

2042. Important Words:

- عرط (crookedness) is derived from عرط, i.e., it was or became crooked, curved or uneven.
- عرط الإمر means, the affair was or became difficult or troublesome.
- جمع (isajun) means, crookedness, curvity, unevenness or distortion; corruption or deviation from rectitude; deflection; evilness of natural disposition (Lane, Aqrab & Mufradat). See also 14:4.

Commentary:
The Quran has been called (guardian) in this verse. According to the different meanings of the Arabic word فيم, as shown under Important Words above, the Quran performs a double function. It is a guardian of the previous Scriptures inasmuch as it corrects and removes the errors that have found their way into them, and it is also a guardian for future generations of men because it takes upon itself their spiritual up-bringing and guides them to the paths which lead to the realization of the sublime object of their life.

The believers have been promised (good reward) in this verse. The significance of “good reward” being implicit in the word أجر (reward) which in many places in the Quran has been promised to believers, the addition of the qualifying word خير (good) points to the fact that the reward of the believers would be productive of particularly good results. It would not spoil them, but
4. Wherein they shall abide for ever; 2044

5. And that it may warn those who say, 'Allah has taken unto Himself a son.' 2045

Would make them deserving of still greater reward as they would turn God's favours to good account.

2044. Commentary:
If the verse be taken as referring to the reward of believers in Paradise, it would mean that that reward will last for ever and will know no end or diminution. But if it refers to the good reward of this world, then the verse would mean that believers will get a good reward so long as they do good deeds. The continuity of their good reward would depend upon the continuity of their good and righteous deeds.

2045. Commentary:
It is worthy of special note that the Quran is first spoken of as 'giving warning', next as 'giving glad tidings' (v. 3) and then again as 'giving warning' as in the present verse. Disbelievers have been warned twice and in between these two warnings the believers have been given glad tidings. This seems rather queer and the words appear to have been used haphazard. But it is not so. They serve a very useful purpose. The two 'warnings' and the one 'glad tidings' point to three important periods of the history of Islam. The first 'warning' mentioned in v. 3 pertains to the disbelievers of Mecca and all those people in the time of the Holy Prophet who had rejected his Message and were punished for their rejection and opposition. The 'glad tidings' spoken of in the same verse applies to Muslims who after their enemies had been destroyed enjoyed divine favours for a very long time and this fulfilled the divine promise embodied in the words, 'Wherein they shall abide for ever.' For long centuries Muslims ruled over a large part of the globe and enjoyed great power and prestige. The 'second warning' embodied in the present verse refers to Christian nations of 'the latter days' and implies a prophecy that after Muslims had enjoyed power and dominion for a long time, their glory would depart and Christian nations would again come into their own and spread over the entire world and would prove as a bar sinister to the expansion of Islam. These present-day Christian nations of the West have been warned of a severe punishment that is in store for them in the words, that it may warn those who say, Allah has taken unto Himself a son. Thus this giving of warnings twice and interspersing these two warnings with glad tidings for Muslims implied three great prophecies viz., (a) the discomfiture and destruction of the Holy Prophet's opponents in his own time; (b) the phenomenal rise of Muslims to power and glory and, after the departure of Muslim glory, (c) the punishment that is in store for the nations who say that Allah has taken unto Himself a son. The signs of this divine punishment are already becoming too manifest to be overlooked.
6. "No knowledge have they thereof, nor had their fathers. Grievous is the word that comes out from their mouths. They speak naught but a lie.

7. So haply thou wilt grieve thyself to death for sorrow after them if they believe not in this discourse.

2046. Commentary:
The expression "grievous is the word" is really "grievous is the word" which means that the saying of this word is very grievous, or that it is very grievous even to open the lips with this word and it is against reason and common sense to utter it. The verse constitutes a severe indictment of the doctrine that Jesus is the son of God. This doctrine is not only blasphemous but also revolting to human intellect. It is an insult to human understanding to say that a weak and helpless man who could not save himself from being hung on the Cross was God or the son of God. Misguided and erring leaders of the Christian Church fabricated a most heinous and blasphemous doctrine without even a modicum of sense or reason to support it. They were fully aware of the fact that the disciples of Jesus and early Christians were strict monotheists and yet they departed from their pristine Faith. The later Christians, however, had with them the excellent Islamic teaching about the Unity of God, but they did not benefit by it, nor by the monotheistic beliefs of their own forebears. Without rhyme or reason they ascribed Godhead to a weak human being.

The words, "they speak naught but a lie," signify that Jesus never taught such a foolish doctrine but later Christians themselves invented it and they are to blame for it. In fact, even the canonical Gospels lend no support to this blasphemous doctrine. No doubt the Bible has used the epithet "son of God" about Jesus but so has it also done about several other persons. For instance in Exod. 4: 22 we have, "Thus saith the Lord, Israel is my son, even my first born." See also Gen. 6: 2, John 10: 35, etc.

2047. Important Words:
"grieve thyself to death" is active participle from "grieve." They say i.e., he slaughtered the lamb with extraordinary effectiveness so that the knife reached the back of the neck; the verb "grieve" is used to denote the doing of anything to a great extent or with extraordinary effectiveness or energy. "grieve" means, he gave him his advice most sincerely. "grieve" means, he killed himself with wrath or grief. The Quranic expression "kill thyself with grief" means, And maybe thou wilt kill thyself with grief being beyond measure eager for their becoming Muslims (Lane).

Commentary:
It is clear from the context that the people spoken of in these verses are the Western
8. Verily, We have made all that is on the earth as an ornament for it, that We may try them as to which of them is best in conduct.

Christian nations. God had blessed them with material comforts and wealth and had bestowed upon them power, prestige and dominion. But they fell into the grievous error of taking a frail human being as the son of God. The Holy Prophet's solicitude and concern for the spiritual well-being of these people and his deep grief over their opposition to truth had almost killed him. But such is human ingratitude that from the very people for whom he felt and grieved so much he received nothing but abuse, invective and ridicule. Never, indeed, were selfless love and kindness so ill requited!

The words, *if they believe not in this discourse*, allude to the reason of the Prophet's grief. They mean to say that the Quran contains the solution of all those difficult problems that Christian nations had to face in this life, yet these people who have made so much progress in material sciences are so backward in the spiritual science that they are inviting death and destruction by refusing to accept true guidance.

2018. Commentary:

The words, *We have made all that is on the earth as an ornament for it*, point to the great moral lesson that nothing in this world has been created in vain. Of all the innumerable things that God has created there is not one which has not its particular use or is devoid of all good. All of them add to the beauty of human life. Muslims were expected always to keep in view the great truth underlined in these simple words and to devote their time and energy to delving into the great secrets of nature and to exploring the unlimited properties of its elements. But they ignored this supreme lesson while the Christian peoples of the West remembered it well with the result that they became the most advanced and powerful nations in the world.

It is to be regretted, however, that while Western nations greatly benefited by the lesson taught in the words, *We have made all that is on the earth as an ornament for it*, they neglected the one embodied in the words, *that We may try them as to which of them is best in conduct*. No doubt they sought after knowledge and made great advances in science. But the object of the advance and expansion of knowledge is that man's conduct may become pure and human life more peaceful. But these nations, instead of employing their knowledge and resources to the service of man, have ended by making human life miserable and unliveable. They have failed to set an example of good conduct and have put their scientific researches to evil use and have thereby laid the foundations of injustice, tyranny and corruption in the world. It is probably to this fact that the present verse refers.
9. "And We shall make all that is thereon a barren soil."

10. Dost thou think that the People of the Cave and the Inscription were a wonder among Our Signs?

2049. Important Words:
- صمدا (soil) is derived from صم. They say صمدا, i.e., he descended the ladder. صم (the orchard) means, the orchard became a desert, i.e., land without trees or herbage. صم (means, high or elevated land or ground; land or ground without any trees; the surface of earth; wide or an ample place; a road; a grave. (Lane & Aqrab).

- جرزا (barren) is derived from جر. They say جرزا, i.e., he cut it or exterminated it. جرزا (means, time destroyed or extirpated) or it. The Arabs say جرزا على الأمة خسأ, i.e., he ate all that was on the table and did not leave anything; he ate quickly. جرزا إرض (means, land in which there is no herbage or from which the water is cut off so that it is dried up and is without herbage; or land that produces no herbage (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:
The verse means to say that all the things of this world are transitory. Their acquirement is not the end and object of human life. On the contrary, they have been created to serve higher and sublimer purposes—to be used for the service of humanity. But Christian nations of the West, after having acquired wealth, power and dominion and after having made great discoveries and inventions, have not turned their scientific achievements to the service of mankind, but instead have employed them generally to add to human misery. As these scientific discoveries and inventions have not fulfilled the purpose of making human life more peaceful and beautiful, all the works of these peoples would be brought to naught and entirely obliterated. The expression, And We shall make all that is thereon a barren soil, does not mean that the whole world will be destroyed. It only refers to the destruction of the works of Christian nations to whom these verses particularly apply.

Since a similar expression viz., صمدا ذاقا (barren ground) used in v. 41 of this Sūra in connection with the parable of “two gardens” clearly applies to the works of Western nations, as shown by the context, the expression صمدا جرزا (barren soil) must also be taken as applying to them. The words صمدا جرزا (barren ground) are shown under Important Words mean, a land without herbage or a land of which the herbage has been cut or eaten. Now, ‘herbage’ in Quranic terminology stands for the works of men, and according to this sense of the word, the verse would mean that all the progress that the Western nations were to make and all their handiworks, their lofty and stately buildings, the beautiful scenery of their land and all their pomp, glory and grandeur would be destroyed. This means that a terrible visitation is in store for them.

2050. Important Words:
- الكفيف (the Cave). الكفيف (the Cave) means, he entered the cave. الكف (means, a cave excavated out of a mountain in the form of a house; a spacious cave; a place of refuge (Aqrab).
on the writing with the dots or points, and made its letters distinct or plain. رقمة the (raggama-hū) means, he figured, variegated or decorated the garment or piece of cloth and made it striped or marked it with stripes. رقمة أشيي means, I marked the thing so as to distinguish it from other things, as, for instance, by writing and the like. رقمة السير signifies any garment or piece of cloth figured, variegated or decorated with a certain or known figuring or decoration, such as is a mark; a book or writing. رقمة means, the Inscription (Lane & Aqrab). For different accounts of this word see at the end of the commentary of the present verse.

Commentary:

The verse declares the Dwellers of the Cave to be no novel or out of the ordinary thing but as only one of the many Signs of God. There was nothing about them which might be considered a departure from the ordinary laws of nature. It is, however, very regrettable that while according to this verse the Dwellers of the Cave were no object of wonder but were only a Sign of God, many Commentators of the Quran have woven fantastic legends around them.

Who were these Dwellers of the Cave, where did they live and what were the conditions and circumstances under which they had to live, are some of the questions that have agitated the minds of Commentators for hundreds of years. A good clue to the solution of these baffling questions is to be found in some of the stories related by Muslim historians, Ibn Ishāq being most prominent among them. These stories are summarized below:

1. Ibn Ishāq relates that when idolatry first found its way among Christians, those of them who were strict monotheists being sorely distressed over the condition of their coreligionists renounced their company. This happened in the time of the Roman Emperor Decius, who was a great persecutor of Christians. Some Christian young men who refused to worship idols were arrested and brought before him. He asked them to think over and revise their attitude and himself went on a journey. Instead of submitting to the Emperor's command they sought safety in flight and took refuge in a cave. On his return from the journey the Emperor ordered these young men to be brought before him. They feared that they would be found out and killed. So they prayed long and fervently in the cave and had hardly finished their prayer when they fell into a deep sleep. Their belongings lay beside them and their dog kept watch at the entrance of the cave. The search for them brought their pursuers to the mouth of the cave but no one could muster enough courage to enter it. The Emperor was counselled to raise a wall before its mouth. He accepted the advice and the mouth of the cave was sealed up. (Ma'āni, vol. 5, p. 16).

2. There is another story to the effect that a disciple of Jesus arrived in a town of which the ruler had commanded that every newcomer, before entering the town, should prostrate himself before the idol at its entrance. The search for them brought their pursuers to the mouth of the cave but no one could muster enough courage to enter it. The Emperor was counselled to raise a wall before its mouth. He accepted the advice and the mouth of the cave was sealed up. (Ma'āni, vol. 5, p. 16).

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3. Ibn ‘Abbās is reported to have said that he was with Mu‘āwiya in an expedition against the Romans when they saw the cave in which إصحاب كهف (Dwellers of the Cave) were believed to have lived. Mu‘āwiya sent some of his men to enter the cave but a storm suddenly arose and prevented them from entering it. According to another narration Ibn ‘Abbās is reported to have said that he had even seen the remains of إصحاب كهف which seemed to be 300 years old (Manthur, vol. 4, pp. 22, 214).

4. According to Abū Ḥayyān there is a cave in Spain which is supposed to contain the dead bodies of the Dwellers of the Cave and also of their dog. Ibn Abi ‘Attiyya also claims to have seen the cave where according to him the corpses of إصحاب كهف have remained for four or five hundred years. He writes that there are to be found near Granada the ruins of a town which is called the town of Decius. It contains very weird tombs built of stones (Muḥīṭ, vol. 6, p. 102).

5. Identical accounts have been given by Ibn Kathir and by ‘Abd al-Razzāq and Ibn Ḥātim in Durri Manthur (vol. 4, p. 224). Some Commentators of the Quran have gone so far as to give even the names of the Dwellers of the Cave. For instance, Ibn Kathir (vol. 6, p. 131) has, on the authority of Ibn ‘Abbās, given the names of these people and their number.

6. The memorable story of the "Seven Sleepers", as told by Gibbon in his Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, provides an important clue to the solution of the mystery that surrounds the Dwellers of the Cave. "When the Emperor Decius", says Gibbon, "persecuted the Christians, seven noble youths of Ephesus concealed themselves in a spacious cavern in the side of an adjacent mountain, where they were doomed to perish by the tyrant, who gave orders that the entrance should be firmly secured with a pile of huge stones. They immediately fell into a deep slumber, which was miraculously prolonged, without injuring the powers of life, during a period of one hundred and eighty-seven years. At the end of that time, the slaves of Adolius, to whom the inheritance of the mountain had descended, removed the stones, to supply materials for some rustic edifice; the light of the sun darted into the cavern, and the seven sleepers were permitted to awake. After a slumber, as they thought, of a few hours, they were pressed by the calls of hunger and resolved that Jamblichus, one of their members, should secretly return to the city to purchase bread for the use of his companions. The youth could no longer recognize the once familiar aspect of his native country; and his surprise was increased by the appearance of a large cross, triumphantly erected over the principal gate of Ephesus. His singular dress and obsolete language confounded the baker to whom he offered an ancient medal of Decius as the current coin of the empire; and Jamblichus, on the suspicion of a secret treasure, was dragged before the judge. Their mutual inquiries produced the amazing discovery that almost two centuries had elapsed since Jamblichus and his friends had escaped from the rage of a pagan tyrant. The bishop of Ephesus, the clergy, the magistrates, the people, and, it is said, the Emperor Theodosius himself, hastened to visit the cavern of the Seven Sleepers, who bestowed their benediction, related their story, and at the same instant peaceably expired" (chapter 33).

The story of the Dwellers of the Cave may also be taken to apply to Joseph of Arimathaea and his companions. According to William of Malmesbury, Joseph was sent to Britain by St. Philip and having been given a small island in Somersetshire there constructed with twisted twigs the first Christian church in Britain, afterwards to become the Abbey of Glastonbury. According to another account Joseph is said to have wandered into Britain in the year 63 A. D. ... According to the legends
which grew up under the care of the monk, the first Church of Glastonbury was a little wattled building erected by Joseph of Arimathæa as the leader of the twelve apostles sent over to Britain from Gaul by St. Philip (Enc. Brit., 10th edition & 13th edition, under Joseph of Arimathæa & Glastonbury).

All these accounts may appear to be no more than picturesque legends or later interpolations or they may belong to the realm of poetry rather than genuine tradition but they do not seem to be completely devoid of all reality and are not without an undercurrent of truth. Anyhow, they possess a deep and far-reaching significance. Joseph of Arimathæa may or may not have gone to England or that country may or may not be “the cave” under discussion, but the story of the Dwellers of the Cave does symbolize the story of the early persecution and later rise and expansion of Christianity.

Our recent research, however, assigns the catacombs at Rome rather than Glastonbury as the site of “the cave” and a study of early Christianity lends great weight to this research. Accounts of the Dwellers of the Cave given above by Ibn Ishâq and other historians also seem to substantiate and reinforce this recent theory.

From these accounts the following facts unmistakably emerge:

(1) That early Christians were believers in the Unity of God and that they suffered great persecution for their beliefs.

(2) That some of these Christians fearing persecution and death took refuge in a cave in the time of a king variously known as Dacyuse, Dacýanûse or, in Latin, Decius.

(3) That the persecutors of these Christians were idol-worshippers who sought to compel them to worship their own idols and offer sacrifices to them.

(4) That these young men came out of the cave in the time of a king named Nandūsîs or, as Gibbon says, Theodosius.

Now it is a well-known historical fact that early Christians had to suffer untold persecutions at the hands of the idolatrous Roman Emperors for their belief in the Oneness of God. This persecution began as early as in the time of the notorious Emperor Nero who is said to have set fire to Rome and fiddled while that great seat of learning and civilization was burning. It continued intermittently till the reign of the Emperor Constantine who became converted to Christianity and made it the religion of the State. According to Tacitus Nero inflicted most inhuman tortures upon Christians in order to shift the blame for the burning of Rome on to them. He caused them to be hanged, burned alive and thrown to hungry dogs. Even St. Peter is said to have met his death at this cruel Emperor's hands. Tertullian states that Peter was crucified under Nero, and Origen adds that at his own request he was crucified head downwards... Early in the third century the grave of Peter and Paul was shown in the Vatican and their relics were moved to the catacombs in 258 A. D. Among the tombs to be lately discovered in the catacombs are some of those disciples whose names have been mentioned in the Gospels and with whom Peter is said to have stayed (Enc. Brit., Every Man’s Encyclopaedia, & Gibbon’s Roman Empire, under Peter, Catacombs & Nero, and Story of Rome by Norwood Young).

The persecution continued in the reign of Domitian. But it was not only tyrants like Nero and Domitian who persecuted Christians but great and virtuous princes like Trajan and Marcus Aurelius also punished these
unoffending people with death, exile and imprisonment. They had, however, a brief respite of about forty years after which their persecution again began with renewed fury under the Emperor Decius. This time the persecution was so severe that compared with it the former condition was a state of perfect freedom and security. Decius wanted to restore the religion and institutions of ancient Rome and with this object in view he began a systematic extermination of Christianity. The edicts of Diocletian in 303 A.D., however, surpassed all anti-Christian measures. By these edicts Christian churches in all the provinces of the empire were demolished, all their sacred books were publicly burnt and the property of the Church was confiscated and Christians were put out of the protection of the land (Gibbon's Roman Empire).

To save themselves from this most cruel and inhuman persecution the helpless Christians had to seek refuge in concealment and from a study of the catacombs at Rome it appears that they proved havens of safety for them. These catacombs which have been referred to in the Quran as "the cave" were admirably suited to the needs of Christians who had to remain in concealment for long intervals. They had built schools and chapels and also buried the dead bodies of their saints and holy men in them. Though some of the statements as to the employment of the catacombs in times of persecution may have been somewhat exaggerated, we have clear evidence that they were used as places of refuge from the fury of the heathen, in which the believers—especially the bishops and clergy, who would naturally be the first objects of attack—might secrete themselves until the storm had blown over. This was a purpose for which they were admirably adapted both by the intricacy of their labyrinthine passages, in which anyone not possessing the clue would inevitably be lost, and the numerous small chambers and hiding places at different levels which might be passed unperceived in the dark by pursuers. As a rule also the catacombs had more than one entrance, and frequently communicated with a sand-quarry; so that while one entrance was carefully watched, the pursuer might escape in a totally different direction by another. These catacombs have several stories which are connected with each other by a vast labyrinth of narrow galleries, interspersed with small chambers, excavated at successive levels. These dark, narrow and labyrinthic galleries have gone on for hundreds of miles. Padri Marchi has estimated the length of the galleries at from 800 to 900 miles and the number of interments at between 6,000,000 and 7,000,000. Martigny's estimate is 587 miles and Northcote's lower still, at not less than 350 miles (Enc. Brit., 9th edition, under Catacombs).

From the inscriptions on the tombstones in the catacombs it appears that the early Christians were strict monotheists. There is not a single word on the inscriptions which indicated that they believed in Jesus as God or the son of God. He has been represented only as a shepherd or a Prophet of God, which he really was. Nor has Mary, his mother, been mentioned as anything more than a pious woman. The story of the tribe of the Prophet Jonah and that of Noah's flood find repeated and prominent mention in the inscriptions and engravings. This clearly shows that early Christians regarded the Old Testament with greater respect than do present-day Christians. It also appears that Christians who took refuge in the catacombs kept dogs at their entrance which would announce the approach of strangers by their barking.

To be brief, the account of the Dwellers of the Cave constitutes a representation of the history of early Christians and shows how they conducted a vigorous campaign against
11. When the young men betook themselves for refuge to the Cave and said, ‘Our Lord, bestow on us mercy from Thyself, and provide for us right guidance in our affair.’

12. So We sealed up their ears in the Cave for a number of years.

means, he took or followed a right way or course or direction. They say, (rashida) i.e., he took or followed a right course in his affair.

(rushda-hu) means, he attained years of discretion, when he was able to take or follow a right course. Some say that (rushdun) relates to the things of the present life and to those of the life to come; and (rashadun) only to those of the life to come but this distinction does not accord with Arabic idiom. (Lane, Aqrab & Mufradat).

Commentary:

The verse means to say that the Dwellers of the Cave prayed to God for His Mercy and deliverance from the difficult situation in which they found themselves.

Important Words:

(We sealed up their ears). The word has a vast variety of meanings. They say, he prevented him from doing a thing that he had begun. means, he prevented him from hearing. So the Quranic expression means, We prevented them from hearing. It also means, We made them sleep by preventing any sound from penetrating into their ears in consequence of which they would have awoke (Lane & Aqrab). See also 2:274 & 4:35.

Commentary:

Literally the verse means, We prevented any sound from penetrating into their ears, i.e., for a number of years they remained wholly cut off from the affairs of the outside world and did not know what was happening there.
13. Then We raised them up that We might know which of the two parties would better reckon the time that they had tarried. 2053

14. We will relate to thee their story with truth: They were young men who believed in their Lord and We increased them in guidance. 2054

2053. Important Words:

أَمْدَدُ (the time) is from امدة. They say امدة شرب له امدة. i.e., he assigned or appointed for him or it a term or limit. بلغ امدة means, he or it reached or attained his or its utmost or extreme extent, term etc. امدة means, time considered with regard to its end; the utmost or the extreme extent, term, limit, point or reach; the period of life which one has reached; each of the two terms of the life of a man, i.e., the time of his birth and the time of his death; the starting place and the finish (of horses in a race); any space of time; a space of time of unknown limit; a particular time etc. The difference between امدة and زمان is that whereas the former is time considered with regard to its end, the latter is time considered with regard to both its end and its beginning. Similarly, the difference between امدة and امدة is that while the former means time limited in duration, the latter means time everlasting. The Arabs say الامدة و الاخرياة i.e., the present state of existence is limited in duration, but the final state of existence is everlasting (Lane & Mufradat).

Commentary:

There were two parties among the early Christians: (a) Those who did not like to dissemble or dissimulate and knowing no compromise with unbelief and idolatry suffered persecution for their faith with patience and fortitude. These people had to seek refuge in caves: (b) Those who thinking prudence to be the better part of valour concealed their faith and saved themselves from persecution. Of these two parties the one which suffered most were in a better position to remember the duration of the period of their persecution. Or it may be that the words “two parties” refer to the persecutors and the persecuted.

2054. Commentary:

The verse shows that many fantastic stories were current about the Dwellers of the Cave in the Holy Prophet’s time. The truth about them, however, is that they were young men of noble conduct who had staked their all for the sake of their Lord and that their faith had steadily grown under persecution.
15. And We strengthened their hearts, when they stood up and said, 'Our Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth. Never shall we call upon any god beside Him; if we did, we should indeed have uttered an enormity.'

16. 'These, our people, have taken for worship other gods beside Him. Wherefore do they not bring a clear authority for them? And who is more unjust than he who invents a lie concerning Allah?'

17. 'And now when you have withdrawn from them and from that which they worship beside Allah, then seek refuge in the Cave; your Lord will unfold for you His Mercy and will provide for you comfort in this affair of yours.'

2055. Commentary:
Though their people were against them and mercilessly persecuted them, yet they could not be intimidated into giving up their Faith. God had strengthened their hearts and had bestowed upon them firmness of faith.

2056. Commentary:
By using the words "our people" the verse shows that the people to whom the Dwellers of the Cave belonged were idol-worshippers. Such were the Romans who worshipped idols.

2057. Commentary:
The verse brings to light the fact that those monotheistic young men were no scattered individuals but they formed part of an organized and disciplined religious community whose members met frequently in private.

The word كهف (Cave) used here shows that when these young men talked of taking shelter in "the cave" they had some specific cave in mind. This cave seems to have already been used as a place of refuge by Roman slaves who had fled from their cruel masters.

It also appears from this verse that before they took refuge in "the cave" these young men had decided that they would repair to that particular cave for shelter when persecution exceeded all bearable bounds and it became impossible for them to live any longer among their people. The words, And now when you have withdrawn from them, show that they had already been the victims of a severe social boycott and had lived apart from their people in a separate group of their own.
And thou couldst see the sun, as it rose, move away from their Cave on the right, and when it set, turn away from them on the left; and they were in the spacious hollow thereof. This is among the Signs of Allah.  

He whom Allah guides is rightly guided; but he whom He adjudges astray, for him thou wilt find no helper or guide.  

Important Words:

- تزاور (move away) is in reality which is derived from (tazawara) which again is derived from زار.  
- فرضه (turn away) is derived from فرض (tazawara) or فورتهم (tazawara) means, he declined or turned aside from it (Lane & Aqrab).  
- (spacious hollow) is derived from فجورة means, I passed through or across the valley.  
- فجورة means, he turned aside or away from the place. The Quranic expression when it set to leave them behind on the left; to pass by and beyond them leaving them on its left; to turn aside or away from them on the left (Lane & Aqrab).  
- فجورة (spacious hollow) is derived from فجورة means, he opened the door. فجورة means, he parted his legs wide or straddled to make water. فجورة means, an opening or intervening space or an intermediate wide space between two things; a wide tract or a wide or depressed tract of land; the court or yard of a house; the part between the two sides of the solid hoof (Lane & Aqrab).  

Commentary:

The verse describes the position of the Cave. It appears that the people referred to above lived in very high regions in the north, and the Cave was so situated that it faced north-west, for the sun passes a place which has its face to the north from right to left.

The word فجورة (spacious hollow) shows that the Cave covered a vast area. The catacombs at Rome which still exist confirm this view. They enclose a vast area, which has been estimated variously as extending over as many as 870 miles. It also appears that the catacombs admitted very little light. The Cave was made in such a way as to serve as a hiding place. St. Jerome who visited the catacombs in the 4th century says, “It is all so dark that the language of the Prophet (Ps. 55.15) seems to be fulfilled, ‘let them go down quick into Hell’. Only occasionally is light let in to mitigate the horror of the gloom, and then not so much through a window as through a hole” (Enc. Brit., 11th edition, vol. 5, p. 491).

By pointing to the position of the Cave which faced northward, God intended to warn Muslims that they had an enemy in northern regions about whom they should particularly be on their guard. Muslims disregarded this timely warning and fell easy victims to the machinations of their enemy. Instead of presenting a united front they fell out among themselves and facilitated his task. The
19. Thou mightest deem them awake, whilst they are asleep; and We shall cause them to turn over to the right and to the left, their dog stretching out his forelegs on the threshold. If thou hadst had a look at them, thou wouldst surely have turned away from them in fright, and wouldst surely have been filled with awe of them. 2059

intrigues of the Abbasides of Baghdad and their unseemly approaches to the Byzantine Empire of Constantinople for help on the one hand and the intrigues of the Moors in Spain with the Vatican on the other led to their progressive decline and ultimate destruction. The solidarity of Islam suffered a fatal blow from these internal dissensions. 2059. Important Words.

(awake) is the plural of (yaqiṣun) which is derived from (yaqiṣa) which means, he awoke; he did not sleep. (yaqiṣun) means, a man waking; a man vigilant, wary, cautious, or in a state of preparation; having his attention roused and possessing knowledge and much intelligence (Lane & Aqrab).

(asleep) is the plural of (rānūd) which is derived from (rānūd) which means, he slept. They say رَنَذَ عَلَيْهِ الرُّؤَن, i.e. he abstained or held back from the affair; he neglected it. رَنَذَ الْرَّؤَن means, the market became stagnant or dull (Lane & Aqrab).

(threshold) is derived from . They say وَلَمْ يَكُونَ إِلَّا وَقِيَّمَ الدُّرَّ, i.e. he remained in the house. means, he closed the door. means, a court or open space in front of a house; a threshold of a door or entrance; a door or entrance; a fold for sheep or goats; a house of stones made in the mountains for flocks or herds (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

The verse does not refer to the Dwellers of the Cave in the early days of Christianity but to Christian nations in the Holy Prophet's own time. Muslims of that time were warned that Christian nations in northern regions were then lying in a state of dormancy but they would soon rise from their deep sleep of centuries and would spread all over the world and hold it under their sway. Before that time Muslims should make effective preparation to protect themselves against their devastating onslaughts. Muslims threw this timely divine warning to the winds. After Caliph Uthman internecine dissensions rent them. They became heedless of the danger that existed in the shape of the Byzantine Empire by their side. If they then had attacked and conquered it, for which they had quite legitimate reasons as the Romans had first attacked them, the political map of the world would now be quite different from what it is.

The words, their dog stretching out his forelegs on the threshold, refer to the great fondness of Christian peoples for their dogs. The words may also be taken as referring to the Byzantine Empire which then kept guard over Europe on both sides of the Sea of Marmora. This sea looks like a dog keeping watch with his forelegs stretched forth on both sides. The Turks conquered this country in the 15th century but it was too late. By then a great political awakening had taken place among the Christian nations of the northern regions. If in the day of their power and glory the Moors and
20. And so We raised them up that they might question one another. One of them said, "How long have you tarried?" They said, "We have tarried a day or part of a day." Others said, "Your Lord knows best the time you have tarried. Now send one of you with these silver coins of yours to the city; and let him see which of its inhabitants has the purest food, and let him bring you provisions thereof. And let him be courteous and let him not inform any one about you."  

Like its predecessor this verse also speaks not of early Christians who took shelter in "the cave" but of the Christian nations of the West after they had spread all over the world. The words, "We raised them up", refer to the great progress which these nations were destined to make in future. It is a peculiarity of the Quranic style that it uses the past tense for events which are to take place in future in order to emphasize the inevitability and certainty of their occurrence. The words mean to say that the day is sure to come when God will bring about an awakening among these people who are now asleep. The expression, "one of them said; How long have you tarried", signify that Christian nations would begin to feel that it was now time for them to bestir themselves and shake off their lethargy. This awakening took place in the time of the Crusades when the Monarchs of England, France and Germany made common cause and the whole of Europe combined to make a concerted attack upon Muslims to wrest the Holy Land from their hands.

The expression, "a day or part of a day", does not mean that the Dwellers of the Cave were not certain as to how long they remained asleep. According to Arabic idiom the expression denotes an indefinite period of time. Elsewhere the Quran has specified as one thousand years the period for which Christian nations of the West remained in a state of sleep or inactivity. In vv. 20:103,
21. 'For, if they should come to know of you, they will stone you or make you return to their religion and then will you never prosper.'

104 we have, *The day when the trumpet will be blown. And on that day We shall gather the sinful together blue-eyed. They will talk to one another in a low tone: You tarried only ten days.* The words "ten days" here stand for ten centuries and the word زرآ (blue-eyed) clearly refers to the peoples of the West who generally have blue eyes. It is a well-known historical fact that the foundations of British power in the East were laid in the beginning of the seventeenth century, in about 1611 A.D., when a British commercial company was allowed to open its first industrial concern in Surat and began to do business in the Bay of Bengal (March of Man, published by Enc. Brit. Society). This period approximates to one thousand years after the Holy Prophet began to preach his Mission in 611 A.D. The secret of the British power in subsequent centuries lay in their success in obtaining a foothold in the East. Other European nations only followed in the wake of the British people.

The word لمس (provisions) in the verse under comment does not mean 'cooked food' as is generally misunderstood. It possesses a much wider significance and may mean, wheat, barley, millet, dates or other articles of food (Lane). The words, *and let him bring you provisions thereof,* refer to the import of Indian articles of food, especially wheat, by European countries for about 200 years. European business men had a special knack of being gentle and courteous in their commercial dealings. To this characteristic of theirs the expression وَلَكِنْ تَفْلَحْ أَيْدَاءِ (and let him be courteous) refers.

The words, *and let him not inform any one about you,* refer to the quiet and unobtrusive penetration of Western influence in the East, particularly in India—the undivided India of pre-Partition days.

2061. *Commentary:*

The verse means to say that if the people to whom you are sending trade parties became acquainted with your real intentions, or before your feet became firmly established in their country some political quarrel or commercial disagreement arose and you were overpowered, then you would either have to quit their country or embrace their religion. In either case you would fail to gain a permanent foothold and all your dreams of establishing a great empire in their country would come to naught.
22. And thus did We disclose them to the people that they might know that the promise of Allah was true, and that, as to the hour, there was no doubt about it. And remember the time when people disputed among themselves concerning them, and said, 'Build over them a building.' Their Lord knew them best. Those who won their point said, 'We will, surely, build a place of worship over them.'

23. Some say, 'They were three, the fourth was their dog,' and others say, 'They were five, the sixth was their dog,' guessing at random. And yet others say, 'They were seven, the eighth was their dog.' Say, 'My Lord knows best their number. None knows them except a few.' So argue not concerning them except with arguing that is overpowering, nor seek information about them from any one of them.

2062. Commentary:
In this verse we are told that these people who had remained aloof from the world for a long time will become known to the ends of the earth, and thus the truth of the prophecy about the rise to great power and dominion of Christian nations in the Latter Days will become established and then the promised hour of which these people were warned will come to pass.

In the words, We will surely build a place of worship over them, the Quran reverts again to the early history of the Dwellers of the Cave and mentions one of their distinctive marks which is that their successors, the Christian nations, will build churches in memory of their dead saints. Muslims or Jews have never erected mosques or synagogues to the memory of their departed saints. Christians are the only people who erect churches to perpetuate the memory of their dead saints; they even bury their dead in churchyards. It is worthy of note that many such churches have been found in the catacombs.

2063. Important Words:
لا يُبْلِدُوْنَ (So argue not). مَثْلَٰکَ (i.e. he disputed, doubted or questioned his right). اِنْخَرَجَ الْرَّحْمُ (he elicited the thing). مالاً (the wind draws forth the clouds).
24. And say not of anything, 'I am going to do it tomorrow,'  

Commentary:
This verse refers to a popular discussion about the number of the Dwellers of the Cave. The Quran regards all estimates about their number as futile surmises. The words, My Lord knows best their number, dismiss all such discussion as fruitless waste of effort because only God knows what their real number was. The Arabic expression لا يعلمون ما يعلمهم الله means, (a) none knows their number; the Arabic word مألال refers to the English word 'few;' signifies 'none'; or (b) the expression means that a very few people have knowledge of the truth about them or are acquainted with their history. These fortunate few know that the Dwellers of the Cave were early Christians who in times of persecution under different Roman Emperors took refuge in the catacombs and that they were several thousands in number.

Towards the end of the verse Muslims are admonished not to try to know the details about the Dwellers of the Cave as any effort in this direction will lead them nowhere, rather it is likely to make confusion worse confounded.

2064. Commentary:
The verse refers to the time when Christian nations will have attained great power and predominance in the world. Muslims of that time—of the present time—are warned that it would be then suicidal on their part to try to fight Christian nations with material means, because the military might and material means of the latter would be too much for any single people or a combination of peoples to fight them successfully. It is to this all-powerfulness of Christian nations of the West in the Latter Days that the well-known hadith لا يدان لا حد تاليم i.e. no one will have the power to fight them successfully (Muslim, vol. 4, Chap. on Dajjal) refers. Muslims are warned that in the days of their powerlessness before Christian nations they should not indulge in idle boasts of adopting one scheme or the other against them but should respond to the call of one whom God would raise to take them out of the slough of despond into which they would have fallen. The verse may also mean that in the time of their decline and degradation Muslims will lose all initiative for any real and useful work and will indulge only in day-dreaming and holding out impotent threats to their enemies. All their activities will then remain confined to talking about the future and they would do nothing to improve their miserable lot.

Some Commentators of the Quran have given currency to the baseless legend that this verse admonishes the Holy Prophet that he should never fail to utter the formula إذا طاعة الله i.e. "If God so wills it," while beginning to do any work, because on one occasion before doing a certain thing he had forgotten to utter this formula. There is no reference here to any such legend.
25. "Unless Allah should will. And remember thy Lord when thou forgettest, and say, ‘I hope my Lord will guide me to what is even nearer than this to the right path.’" 2065

26. And they stayed in their Cave three hundred years and added nine more. 2066

2065. **Commentary:**

The verse purports to say to Muslims that in their hour of despondency and helplessness before the irresistible might of Christian nations, they should not for a moment entertain the idea that they can ever successfully fight them with material means. On the contrary, they should have firm faith in God's promises that He would never let Islam down and would Himself create circumstances that would bring about the complete downfall and destruction of these nations.

2066. **Commentary:**

This verse sheds some light on the duration of the period in which early Christians were subjected to persecution and had frequently to take refuge in caves and other places of concealment. This period extends over 309 years and historical data have corroborated this calculation. As popularly believed the persecution of Christians began with Jesus' Crucifixion in 28 A.D. and ended with the Emperor Constantine's conversion to Christianity in 337 A.D. (Enc. Brit., 14th edition, vol. 5), a period of about 309 years. These dates, however, are not correct. If we delve a little more deeply into the history of early Christianity the fact is disclosed to us that Emperor Constantine did not become a Christian in 337 A.D. as is the popular belief but in 309 A.D., as history shows. The astonishing fact that the Christian Calendar now in use is not free from chronological anachronisms has been admitted by Christian scholars themselves. Archbishop Ushers and Dr. Kitto in their well-known books, "Chronology" and "Daily Bible Illustrations," after elaborate research into the chronology of early Christianity, have been compelled to admit that chronological data show that Jesus was five and not thirty-three years old at the time when the Crucifixion is supposed to have taken place i.e., the tragedy of the Crucifixion took place 28 years later than is generally believed. Thus subtracting 28 from 337 it becomes established that the year of Constantine's conversion was 309 A.D., when with Christianity becoming the State religion of the Roman Empire persecution of Christians completely ceased. So even Christian historical records support the Quran in stating that early Christians continued to be persecuted, off and on, for 309 years.

The verse incidentally impresses upon Muslims who, like 4 إصابا كتب now are and may, also in future, be the victims of similar persecution, the desirability of bearing with patience and fortitude their trials and tribulations so that they may become entitled to divine favours.
27. Say, 'Allah knows best how long they tarried.' To Him belong the secrets of the heavens and the earth. How Seeing is He! and how Hearing! They have no helper beside Him, and He does not let any one share in His government. 2067

28. And recite what has been revealed to thee of the Book of thy Lord. There is none who can change His words, and thou wilt find no refuge beside Him. 2068

2067. Commentary:
The words, Say, Allah knows best how long they tarried, purport to say that histories written by Christian writers assign 337 years as the period of the persecution of early Christians and therefore seem to contradict the Quranic statement that this period was 309 years. But this calculation as shown in the previous verse is at fault because the Quran is the revealed word of God and God cannot err in His calculations. Later research into old historical records as explained elsewhere has also supported the Quran. The present verse does not contradict the words, And they stayed in their Cave three hundred years and added nine more (v. 26). These words do not refer to the popular view about the period for which early Christians took refuge in caves but are God’s own words. So the expression, Allah knows best how long they tarried, not only does not contradict but actually supports and corroborates these words.

The words, How Seeing is He! and how Hearing, lend further support to the view that Christian chronologists have erred in fixing the present date of Jesus’ birth and his Crucifixion and that the Quranic statement with regard to the period for which the (Dwellers of the Cave) remained hidden in caves is correct.

2068. Commentary:
The verse makes it clear that the above account of the Dwellers of the Cave is not meant merely as an interesting narrative but refers to events of the past of great spiritual significance, at the same time constituting a forewarning to Muslims to be always prepared for hardships like those that the Dwellers of the Cave had to suffer. In fact according to Ibn ‘Abbās the Holy Prophet is reported to have said that the (Dwellers of the Cave) are the companions of the Imām Mahdī (Manthūr). The words, there is none who can change His words, also support the assumption that the account of the Dwellers of the Cave contains mighty prophecies, otherwise there was no sense in using such challenging words as these. See the following verses.
29. "And keep thyself attached to those who call on their Lord, morning and evening, seeking His pleasure; and let not thine eyes pass beyond them, seeking the adornment of the life of the world; and obey not him whose heart We have made heedless of Our remembrance and who follows his evil inclinations and his case exceeds all bounds."

30. And say, "It is the truth from your Lord; wherefore let him who will, believe, and let him who will, disbelieve. Verily, We have prepared for the wrongdoers a fire whose flaming canopy shall enclose them. And if they cry for help, they will be helped with water like molten lead which would burn the faces. How dreadful the drink, and how evil is the Fire as a resting place!"

2069. Commentary:
This verse lends further support to the fact that the preceding verses embody some very important prophecies. In fact we are here told that at the time of the predominance and ascendancy of Christian nations there will be living in the world a people who as true representatives of Islam will be engaged night and day in prayer and divine worship. The so-called Muslims will, at that time—the time of Imām Mahdi—pin all their hopes about the future political glory and greatness of Islam on the employment of material means and will look down upon the poor and politically unimportant followers of the Imām Mahdi for concentrating on prayer and worship. The verse warns Muslims that on prayer and divine worship alone will depend the eventual salvation and success of Islam.

The verse further mentions the following three main causes of the misfortunes and miseries of Muslims at that time: (a) they will be neglectful of prayer and divine worship; (b) love of the world will be their overpowering passion; and (c) they will be wholly lost in the pursuit of material comforts and a life of luxury. But their deliverance will lie in a complete change of their outlook and the programme of their life.

2070. Important Words:
- مسأدا (whose tent). مسأدة is derived from ملبد. They say ملبد الپیت. i.e., he covered the house
31. Verily, those who believe and do good works—surely, "We suffer not the reward of those who do good works to be lost. 2071

with an awning over its interior court. مرادق: means, an awning extended over the interior court of a house; a tent of cotton or hair-cloth; a tent; smoke rising high and surrounding a thing; dust rising or spreading itself. They say مرادق إطعلا مودود i.e., the canopy of glory is extended over thee (Lane & Aqrab).

مرق (resting place) is derived from مرق i.e., he was or became gentle or he acted or behaved gently. امرق means, he sought or demanded aid or help or he profited by him or it (a thing) or he made use of it; he leaned upon his elbow; and, it was or became full: مرقة means, a place or thing upon which one leans, hence a place of rest (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:
The words, It is the truth from your Lord, signify that the prophecy, implied in the foregoing verses, that the great material might and glory of Western Christian nations will be reduced to dust and that Islam will emerge triumphant and full of new life shall most surely come to pass.

The words, let him who will, believe, and let him who will, disbelieve, hint that the time of the Imam Mahdi will not be the time for waging Jihad by the sword, but for the peaceful preaching of Islam.

The last part of the verse answers a natural question that arises from the first part, viz. if there was to be no Jihad by the sword how was Islam to come into its own? To this question the last part of the verse returns the answer that God Himself will see to it that the seemingly irresistible might of Western Christian nations is completely broken. Divine punishment will overtake these nations in the form of wars which will not end until their power is completely shattered and is reduced to ashes and dust. Molten lead and iron will scorch their faces. They will cry for peace and will get bombs and gun-shots instead. Their beautiful residences will become unfit for human habitation and life will become a veritable hell for them. All their efforts to bring about peace in the world, being insincere and dishonest, will come to nothing.

2071. Commentary:
As against the futile efforts of the powerful Western nations to establish peace in the world, the tiny and seemingly insignificant but honest contributions towards this noble purpose of those good and righteous people—the companions of the Mahdi, will be crowned with success because though deprived of all worldly pomp and glory they will have firm faith in God and will live up to their noble ideals.
32. **It is these who will have Gardens of Eternity beneath which streams shall flow. They will be adorned therein with bracelets of gold and will wear green garments of fine silk and heavy brocade, reclining therein upon raised couches. How good the reward and how excellent the place of rest!**

2072. **Important Words:**

- **اور** (bracelets) is the plural of which is derived from *مار* i.e., he climbed or scaled the wall. *نور* also means, he put on or decked himself with bracelets. *وار* means, a man’s or woman’s bracelet of silver or of gold (Lane & Aqrab).

- **دراخ** (fine silk) means, thin or fine (silk brocade) or thin or fine (silk). It is opposed to *حرير* (silk). (Lane).

- **استيرق** (heavy brocade) is derived from *برق* which means, it shone, gleamed or glistened. *استيرق* means, thick *دراخ* (silk brocade) or *دراخ* interwoven with gold; thick silk (Lane & Aqrab).

- **ارك** (raised couches) is the plural of which is derived from *ارك* which means, he persisted or persevered. They say *ارك إمكان* i.e., he remained in the house, not quitting it. The Arabs say *ارك الامر في عته* i.e., he compelled him to do the thing; he made him cleave to it. *ارك* means, a raised couch in a tent or chamber decorated and adorned with cloth and curtains for a bride; a bed spread upon the ground to sit upon; anything upon which one reclines; a raised couch (Lane & Aqrab).

**Commentary:**

The wearing of bracelets of gold may refer either to this life or the next. In the former case, the words, *They will be adorned therein with bracelets of gold*, mean that gold bracelets being symbols of royalty, Muslims will become rulers of vast and mighty empires. But taken as referring to the next life they connote a spiritual sense, meaning that good works of Muslims in this life would assume an embodied form in the next. Or “bracelets of gold” may signify special marks of honour, i.e. the Faithful will enjoy great power, honour and dignity and their womenfolk will wear garments of fine silk and heavy brocade interwoven with gold. This prophecy was fulfilled when the treasures of Persia and Rome were laid at the feet of so-called illiterate and half-civilized Arabs who wore clothes made of coarse skins and the hair of animals.

The words, *how good the reward*, imply that these things will not make Muslims lovers of ease and luxury and will not lead to their moral or spiritual death. On the contrary they will prove “a good reward” for them, that is, these things will give them peace and contentment of mind.

The words, *and how excellent the place of rest*, signify that contacts and friendships formed
33. And set forth to them the parable of two men: one of them We provided with two gardens of grapes, and surrounded them with date-palms, and between the two We placed corn-fields. 

34. Each of the gardens yielded its fruit in abundance, and failed not the least therein. And in between the two We caused a stream to flow.

in accordance with Quranic teaching, being based on sincere and honest motives, will not lead to war and mutual hatred but will bring about real peace and concord in the world.

2073. Commentary:

With this verse begins, in the form of a parable, a description of the conditions respectively of Muslim and Christian nations in the Latter Days. The form and wording of the dialogue unmistakably shows that it is no real conversation between two living persons but is a portraiture, in metaphorical language, of the conditions of these two peoples at a certain time. The dialogue represents the decline and degradation of Muslims at their nadir and the power and prosperity of Western Christian nations at their zenith in the Latter Days.

Now parables, like dreams, require to be interpreted, and the present and following several verses having been couched in allegorical language it is difficult to grasp and fully appreciate their full significance and beauty without putting on them a construction which their apparent form does not seem to bear. In the language of dreams a “garden” signifies wife, children, riches and life full of happiness; sometimes it also denotes cantonments and army headquarters. “Grapes” represent abundant provisions which can be stored up and last for a long time; “palm trees” signify exercise of authority over large number of men; “corn” in the case of a monarch denotes expansion of his dominions and in that of other people their “work”. A “stream” denotes an eminent man and “fruits” mean fresh sources of honour (Ta’īr al-Anām).

The parable describes the conditions of two men. One of them had two gardens which metaphorically interpreted means that God had bestowed upon him an abundance of wealth and offspring in two separate periods of his life. This interpretation is supported by v. 35 below where the same person says, I am richer than thou in wealth and stronger in respect of men.

The words, and We surrounded them with date-palms, signify that this man will protect his riches and offspring and dominions with military force.

The expression, and between the two We placed corn-fields, denotes that in between the two gardens there will be ordinary property which will not be so strongly protected.

2074. Commentary:

Singular number of the verbs َاتَوَّماَمَلْ and َأَلَّامْ shows that the two gardens were,
35. And he had fruit in abundance. And he said to his companion, arguing boastfully with him, 'I am richer than thou in wealth and stronger in respect of men.'

in reality, two parts of one and the same garden.

The words, and failed not the least therein, indicate that these were not gardens in the literal sense of the word but gardens in a metaphorical sense because it is against the laws of nature that trees should continue to yield abundant fruits in many consecutive seasons. But the trees of the gardens mentioned in this verse yielded fruits uniformly in abundance. This shows that they were gardens in the metaphorical sense only.

2075. Important Words:

الحوار (arguing boastfully with him) is derived from حاور. They say حاور الانتهى i.e., he returned to a thing. حاور means, he returned him answer for answer; held dialogue or debate with him; he vied with him for superiority in glorying or boasting or the like (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

Now as to the meaning of the parable as a whole. In the beginning of the Sūra it was said that the Holy Prophet had already conveyed the Message of God to the Meccans, and that he was now going to convey it to Christians also. Again, reference was made to the history of early Christians who endured untold persecutions for their belief in the Unity of God and whose successors became idol-worshippers and were entirely engrossed in the pursuit of material wealth.

The Quranic parable bears very close resemblance to the parable of the vineyard in the Gospels (Mark 12:1-12; Matt. 21:33-46 & Luke 20:9-19). It speaks of two peoples—Muslims and Christians. The master of the garden in the Quranic parable represents Christian peoples, and the "grape-vines" stand for increase in their wealth and offspring. The hedge of date-palms denotes their armed forces which in the days of their power and glory will safeguard their possessions.

The parable speaks of two gardens which denotes that Christian peoples in their chequered history were to rise to great power twice. The first period preceded the advent of Islam while the second began with the dawn of the 17th century A.D., when Christian nations of Europe began to make great progress and acquire unprecedented power and prestige which reached its zenith in the 19th century. During the interval between these two periods of the progress and prosperity of its followers Christianity resembled a field of corn which was exposed to the danger of being trampled upon and destroyed. In this interval God caused the great stream of Islam to flow and fertilize the entire world. A mighty man of truth—the Holy Prophet Muhammad—made his appearance. His advent constituted the greatest landmark in the religious life of mankind. He gave to the world new concepts, new ideals and new values and left behind him the Quran as humanity's infallible and eternal guide.

As shown under Important Words, "fruits" signify fresh sources of honour. The expression, and he had fruit in abundance, therefore means that Christian nations would continue to make new scientific inventions and discoveries which would greatly add to their material wealth, power and prosperity.

The words, I am richer than thou in wealth...
36. And he entered his garden while he was wronging his soul. He said, 'I do not think that this will ever perish.'

37. 'And I do not think the Hour will ever come. And even if I am ever brought back to my Lord, I shall, surely, find a better resort than this.'

38. His companion said to him, while he was arguing with him, "Dost thou disbelieve in Him Who created thee from dust, then from a sperm drop, then fashioned thee into a perfect man?"

2076. Commentary:

The verse purports to say that Christian nations would be very proud of their material progress and would give themselves up to a life of ease and luxury and in their conceit and arrogance misconceive that their power, progress and prosperity would last for ever. The words, while he was wronging his soul, mean that lulled into a false sense of security and complacency these people would be entirely lost in a life of sin and iniquity. The words "his garden" do not contradict vv. 33 and 34 above where mention is made of 'two gardens'. For an explanation of this seeming contradiction see v. 34 above.

2077. Commentary:

This verse continues the theme of the preceding one and purports to say that there will be two schools of religious thought among Christian nations. One school will altogether deny life after death and Resurrection. The exponents of this school will regard present life as the be-all and end-all of man's creation, and Resurrection and Paradise as only other names for national renaissance and prosperity. The other school will literally believe in Resurrection and the next life but they will also hold the belief that because Jesus had atoned for all their sins they will get salvation while non-Christians will be consigned to eternal perdition.

2078. Commentary:

This verse constitutes the reply of the poor and depressed Muslim to his boastful Christian companion. He admonishes the latter not to deny God in his conceit. He seeks to rouse him from his state of self-complacency by drawing his attention to his
39. "But as for me, I believe that Allah alone is my Lord, and I will not associate any one with my Lord.\(^{2079}\)

40. "And why didst thou not say when thou didst enter thy garden; 'Only that which Allah wills comes to pass. There is no power save in Allah. If thou seest me as less than thee in riches and offspring.\(^{2080}\)

41. 'Perhaps my Lord will give me something better than thy garden, and will send on it (thy garden) a thunderbolt from heaven so that it will become a bare slippery ground.\(^{2081}\)

\(^{2079}\)Commentary:
The verse administers an effective rebuke from the mouth of the poor, resourceless Muslim to the conceited, arrogant and rich Christian. The poor Muslim seems to say to his Christian companion that though he was poor and deprived of the good things of this life yet he was grateful to God whereas the other who had been given wealth, power and large following was ungrateful to God and had set up equals with Him. If at all anybody had any cause to be ungrateful to God it was he and not his rich companion who, on the contrary, had every reason to be grateful to Him.

\(^{2080}\)Commentary:
The verse bespeaks the sympathy the Muslim has with his Christian companion. The heart of a true Muslim is full of the milk of human kindness.

\(^{2081}\)Important Words:
- حبة (thunderbolt) is derived from حبأ. They say حبة حساباً- hadda means, he placed a pillar for him; he buried him or buried him in stones. حبأ means, punishment; a calamity; an affliction with which a man is tried; locusts; dust or smoke; fire; small arrows; a thunderbolt (Lane & Aqrab).
- زان (bake slippery) is derived from زان i.e., he slipped. زان رأسه means, he shaved his head. زان means, a slippery place; a place where the foot does not remain firm. The Quranic expression صنع صعيداً زان means, so that it shall become smooth ground, with nothing in it or such that the feet shall not stand firmly upon it (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:
The word used here is جنة (garden) which
42. ‘Or its water will become sunk in the ground so that thou wilt not be able to find it.’

43. ‘And his fruit was actually destroyed, and he began to wring his hands for what he had spent on it and it had all fallen down on its trellises. And he said, ‘Would that I had not associated any one with my Lord!’

is singular and so are the pronouns that follow it (as also in vv. 36 and 40). Thus the present verse and vv. 36 and 40 speak of one garden only because of the two gardens one had practically perished before Islam and was not worth much compared with the other. If Christians had boasted of their two gardens it would have been an empty boast. The garden which is the source of pride for Christians is the one which flourished after Islam—their present material progress and power. Hence the use of the word جَنَّة in the singular.

The words “from heaven” show that no earthly power will be able effectively to combat and resist the military might of Christian nations. God Himself will create circumstances which will lead to their destruction. It is to this irresistible might of Gog and Magog who represent the material glory of Christianity that the Holy Prophet referred when he said, لا يدان لاحذ أتتائم i.e., none will have the power to fight them (Muslim, Chap on Dajjal).

The words مصِيدا زِلاطا (bare slippery ground) which have been used here are analogous to the words مصیدا جزرا (barren soil) which have been used in v. 9 above about Christians who attribute a son to God. This shows that the present verse also speaks of Christians.

2082. Commentary:

The words, Or its water will become sunk in the ground, mean that the springs of their great talents and intellectual attainments on which their material progress mainly depended or which, in the words of the Quran, kept their garden fresh and green, will become dried up, resulting in the complete desolation of their garden.

2083. Important Words:

قَالَ (began to wring his hands). قَالَ is formed from قَالَ (qallaba) which is derived from قَلَب (qalaba). قَلَب means, he turned it over or upside down. قَالَبٌ كَنَّهَ (began to wring his hands) means, And he began to turn his hands upside-down or to do so repeatedly in grief or regret; or he became in a state or condition of repenting or grieving, for قَلَب is the action of a man who is repenting or grieving, and therefore metonymically denotes repentance or grief (Lane). See also 2 : 145 & 9 : 18.

Commentary:

The verse means to say that all the efforts and endeavours of Christian peoples to add to their material wealth and power will fail to produce any wholesome results. These efforts will end in smoke and their power and prestige will speedily decline. In the hour of their misery and desolation the Western Christian
44. "And he had no party to help him against Allah, nor was he able to defend himself." 2084

45. "In such a case protection comes only from Allah, the True. He is the best in respect of reward, and the best in respect of consequence." 2085

46. "And set forth to them the similitude of the life of this world: it is like the water which We send down from the sky, and the vegetation of the earth is mingled with it, and then it becomes dry grass broken into pieces which the winds scatter. And Allah has power over everything." 2086

nations will lament that they had expended so much labour and money on the illusory things of this life.

The words, it had all fallen down on its trellises, show that these people will be given to erecting lofty and imposing buildings and that the calamities which will befall them in quick succession will raze their prosperous and rich cities to the ground and their eleventh-hour repentance will avail them nothing. The verse incidentally shows that the word 'garden' used in these verses is not used literally because gardens do not fall down upon their trellises.

2084. Commentary:

The verse shows that these people will vainly look to Jesus to save them. When divine punishment overtakes them they will find, to their regret, that they had leaned on a broken reed.

2085. Commentary:

The verse constitutes an emphatic reminder of the great eternal truth that all authority and power belong to God and that when His punishment overtakes a people, none can save it. It also shows that the preceding few verses embodied a prophecy about the eventual destruction of Christian nations.

2086. Important Words:

(he ('hashshama-hū) means, he broke it much or crushed it, namely a dry thing or anything hollow. (hayya) means, a plant that is dry and breaks or is broken into pieces (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

The subject of the worldly life has been further elaborated by another parable in this
47. aWealth and children are an ornament of the life of this world. But enduring good works are better in the sight of thy Lord in respect of immediate reward, and better in respect of future hope.

48. And bethink of the day when We shall remove the mountains, and thou wilt see the nations of the earth march forth against one another and We shall gather them together and shall not leave any one of them behind.

**Commentary:**

Riches and children are the ornament of this life and add to its beauty and splendour and generally make men forget God but they can also be employed to serve a very noble cause. Money spent in a righteous cause leaves behind permanent good results. Young men who dedicate their lives to the service of their community, country or humanity at large are not only themselves remembered with honour long after they are dead but also perpetuate the memories of their ancestors. This is the substance and significance of this verse.

The words, are better in the sight of thy Lord in respect of immediate reward and better in respect of future hope, may have two meanings: (a) That good works produce good results in this life and also form the basis of hope for rich reward in the hereafter. (b) That good works not only benefit the doer himself but also his posterity. It is a divine law that the posterity of a righteous man partakes of the divine blessings conferred upon him.

2088. **Commentary:**

Taking the word جال in the sense of "chiefs", the verse purports to say that the prophecy about the complete destruction of the forces of evil—of Gog and Magog—mentioned in the few preceding verses will be fulfilled when great rulers and leaders of nations begin to fight among themselves, or in the words of the Bible when "nation shall rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom and there shall be famines, and pestilences and earthquakes in divers places" (Matt. 24: 7).

Taking the word الأرض in the sense of "poor people" or "people belonging to the lower strata of society," the verse would mean that the world will become divided into two hostile camps, representing two distinct and conflicting
49. "And they will be presented to thy Lord standing in rows: Now have you come to Us as We created you at first. But you thought that We would fix no time for the fulfilment of Our promise." 2089

50. "And the Book will be placed before them, and thou wilt see the guilty ones fearful of that which is therein; and they will say, 'O woe to us! What kind of a Book is this! It leaves out nothing small or great but has recorded it.' And they will find all that they did confronting them, and thy Lord does not wrong any one." 2090

2089. Commentary:

The words, And they will be presented to thy Lord standing in rows, mean that the decree of God about their final destruction will certainly come into force.

The clause, Now have you come to Us as We created you at first, signifies that they will become divested of all power and authority and will be reduced to a state of subjection and disgrace as before.

The expression, But you thought that We would fix no time for the fulfilment of Our promise, means that they had laboured under the misconception that We had lost all control over them and had fixed no time of reckoning for their iniquities and transgressions. The verse constitutes an amplification of v. 36 above where an analogous expression viz., I do not think that this will ever perish, occurs.

2090. Commentary:

When divine decree about the punishment of these iniquitous people comes into force, they will realize the baselessness of the misconception that their rule and dominion will last for ever and they will begin to fear that the civilization and culture of which they were so proud will soon perish.

The words, What kind of a Book is this? It leaves out nothing small or great but has recorded it, signify that disbelievers will be punished for all their past misdeeds. They will then know that God is the Lord and Ruler of heavens and earth and that He does not allow any action of man to go unrequited.

The clause, and thy Lord does not wrong any one, denotes that the punishment will be very severe and their end very bitter but it will all be the natural and inevitable consequence of their own evil doings; the Merciful God does not wrong any one.
51. *And remember the time when We said to the angels, 'Submit to Adam', and they all submitted. But Iblis did not. He was one of the Jinn; and he disobeyed the command of his Lord. Will you then take him and his offspring for friends instead of Me while they are your enemies? Evil is the exchange for the wrong-doers.*

52. *I did not make them witness the creation of the heavens and the earth, nor their own creation; nor could I take as helpers those who lead people astray.*

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**2091. Commentary:**

It is worthy of special note that at several places in the Quran where mention is made of the punishment which overtakes a people when they reject their Prophet, its object is to warn their successors that they should not repeat the errors of their predecessors. The example of Adam, our great progenitor whom Satan sought to seduce and involve in trouble, is set before unbelievers that they may benefit by it and not fall victims to the seductions of Satan and reject their Prophet.

**2092. Commentary:**

The pronoun “them” refers to Satan and his devotees, and the verse purports to say that those who think that by following in the footsteps of Satan and by having recourse to satanic ways they can make progress in the world suffer from a grievous error. How can they, by making common cause with the Evil Spirit and his tribe, hope to make real and enduring progress when the latter had nothing to do with the creation of the heavens and the earth or with man’s own creation, i.e., all the natural faculties and instincts of man have been implanted in him by God for the promotion of good in the world. So the fleeting and ephemeral material advancement and progress of the people who have forsaken the path of God and have chosen to follow Satan should not make true believers think that God has divorced Himself from the direction and control of the universe and has entrusted its management into the hands of Satan and his devotees. God has ever maintained a firm hold over the affairs of His creatures and the management of the world and will never take leave of it. The triumphs and successes of the sons of Satan are but transitory and man eventually is bound to turn to his Lord and Creator.

A somewhat deeper reflection over the verse reveals the very important fact that in the period with which these verses particularly deal there will be general talk about a new world-order and so-called leaders of political and social thought of the time would seek and claim to establish such a world-order. These spurious leaders are told that they will never succeed in establishing a new world-order.
53. And remember the day when He will say, "Call those whom you deemed to be My partners." Then they will call on them, but they will not answer them; and We shall place a barrier between them.

54. And the guilty shall see the fire and realize that they are going to fall therein; and they shall find no way of escape therefrom.

Commentary:
The word موقع, as shown under Important Words means, (a) a barrier between two things; (b) destruction. According to the first meaning of the word, the Arabic expression، وَرَأَى الْمَخَيْرُونَ النَّارَ فَقُلُوْاْ إِنَّهُمُ مَوْقَعُوا وَلَمْ يُجْدِدَا عَنْهَأ مَصِيرًا would mean that these nations will set up high tariff walls or iron curtains and impose economic boycott upon one another, and according to the second it means that they would become involved in deadly wars which would ruin them.

If the expression بينهم (between them) be taken as referring to the false-gods and their votaries, the verse would mean that a barrier would be set up between the two so that the false-gods would not be able to hear the entreaties and supplications of their votaries for intercession when the latter find themselves face to face with divine punishment.

2094. Commentary:
The word رك، signifies war (5:65) and the verse means that the disbelieving nations of the West will see a most destructive war approaching. They will try all possible means to avoid it but all their plans and efforts to this end will prove futile. The West has already passed through the ordeal of two most destructive wars which have almost destroyed its political domination and prestige in the
55. And, surely, We have explained in various ways in this Quran, for the good of mankind, all kinds of similitudes, but of all things man is most contentious.

56. And nothing hinders people from believing when the guidance comes to them, and from asking forgiveness of their Lord, except that they wait that there should happen to them the precedent of the ancients or that punishment should come upon them face to face.

world and have shaken its civilization to its foundations. Now a third world-war is staring it in the face.

2095. Commentary:
The expression (of all things man is most contentious) may have two explanations: (1) Of all God’s creation man has been endowed with reason and great intellectual faculties so that by making proper use of them he may develop and advance morally and spiritually and may know and realize his Creator. But he employs these faculties to reject truth and for other evil purposes and instead of making spiritual progress he descends to a yet lower state of morality. (2) Man is a victim of chronic misgivings and doubts which seldom find satisfaction. He is a confirmed sceptic and seeks to discover loopholes even in most convincing arguments.

The word "الناس" in the verse refers to mankind in general while "الإنسان" refers to such men as have been mentioned in the foregoing verses. The verse means to say that the Quran has explained in different forms fully and completely all those matters which concern man’s moral and spiritual development but the people to whom reference has been made in the preceding verses refuse to benefit by these teachings.

2096. Commentary:
The Quran has explained all matters that concern man’s belief and conduct so completely and comprehensively that no room is left to an honest person but to accept truth and obey the divine Call. But so perverse and wayward are disbelievers that they refuse to see reason and accept truth. Their obstinacy and hardness of heart seems to show that they will not be satisfied with anything but divine punishment.

By the words "الإيدين" is meant the last and final divine punishment which completely destroys disbelievers, while the expression "أو يؤتىهم العذاب قبلا" refers to intermediate punishments which come only to warn disbelievers and rouse them from their state of indifference and lethargy. The verse means to say that people to whom reference has been made in the foregoing verses will have both kinds of punishment.
57. And We send not the Messengers but as bearers of glad tidings and as Warners. And those who disbelieve contend by means of falsehood so that they may rebut the truth thereby. And they take My Signs and what they are warned of only as a jest.\(^{2097}\)

58. And who is more unjust than he who is reminded of the Signs of his Lord, but turns away from them, and forgets what his hands have sent forward? Verily, We have placed veils over their hearts that they understand it not, and in their ears a deafness. And if thou call them to the guidance, they will never accept guidance.\(^{2098}\)

\(^{2097}\) Important Words:

\(لـدحضوا\) (that they may rebut) is derived from لدحض. They say لدحض وجهه i.e. his foot slipped. لدحض حديثه means, his argument, plea, allegation or evidence was or became null or void. لدحض means, he rendered null and void an argument, etc.; he rebutted it. The Quranic words لدحضوا هو الحق mean, that they might rebut thereby the truth (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

The verse means to say that Signs are shown to disbelievers that they may benefit by them and by accepting truth save themselves from divine punishment. But they mock at them and treat them as vagaries of superstitious and ignorant people and reject them with contempt. They accept, however, as holy writ the half-baked theories of their own philosophers and social thinkers. These verses describe the mental attitude of Western nations towards spiritual matters.

\(^{2098}\) Commentary:

These scoffers and mockers treat lightly the word of God and turn away from it and do not pause to consider that their plans, contrivances and designs have created only moral chaos, economic disruption and international rivalries. They have destroyed the peace of the world. But though all their schemes and plans have ended in complete failure and have added to the world's chaos and disruption, they pay no heed to divine guidance and thus belie their own experience that the rejection of divine guidance never produces good results. What do these people who persistently refuse to see reason and do not make use of their God-given faculties expect except that these faculties should become rusted and corroded and that they should be left to their fate floundering in sin and iniquity?
59. **And thy Lord is Most Forgiving, full of Mercy. If He were to seize them for what they have earned, then surely He would have hastened the punishment for them. But they have an appointed time from which they will find no refuge.**

60. **And these towns—We destroyed them when they committed iniquities. And We appointed a fixed time for their destruction.**

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**2099. Important Words:**

- **(refuge) is derived from **. They say **. i.e. he made such a one his refuge. ** means, the man sought refuge from him. ** means, he sought refuge with him or fled to him for refuge or protection. ** means, he returned to God. ** means, a place of refuge or simply refuge (Aqrab).

**Commentary:**

God does not destroy a sinful people forthwith. It is against His law. He first grants them respite and warns them of the impending punishment by raising a Prophet among them who invites them to truth and urges them to give up iniquitous ways. It is only when they persist in transgression that destructive punishment comes upon them and then they can find no refuge from it.

**2100. Commentary:**

The verse means to say that it is not the nations of the West who alone have attained to great power and influence. There have been other nations in the past who also rose to great power. The Prophets of God came to them and invited them to truth and warned them against their wicked ways. But in their conceit and arrogance they refused to see reason and paid no heed to the voice of their Prophets. So divine punishment descended upon them and destroyed them. The nations of the West are the most powerful nations in the world today. In the intoxication of their might and material resources, their wealth and prestige, they have cast the warning of nature to the winds and have given themselves up wholly to the acquisition of material wealth and the pursuit of sexual pleasures and physical comforts. The whole ** constitutes a warning to these people to mend their ways and to desist from their present evil course for the day of their reckoning is fast approaching; and they should remember that when divine punishment descends upon a people they are destroyed.
61. And remember the time when Moses said to his young companion, 'I will not stop until I reach the junction of the two seas, or I will journey on for ages."

2101. Important Words:
حقب (ages) is the plural of حقب (hugbun) which is derived from حقب (hagiba). They say حقب (hugbun) means, i.e. the rain was delayed. حقب الإمر means, the affair became marred or impeded. حقب (hugbun) means, time; indefinite time; long time; an age; a year or years; seventy years; eighty years or more (Lane, Aqrab. & Mufradät).

Commentary:
With this verse begins the very important subject of the اسرا (Spiritual Night Journey) of Moses. As stated above, the followers of Jesus Christ achieved great material power and prosperity and in their chequered career left their imprint twice on world’s history. This double prosperity of Christian nations has been likened to “two gardens” in v. 33 above. The first of these two periods began with the conversion to Christianity of the Roman Emperor Constantine, when it became the religion of the State, and continued to the birth of the Holy Prophet of Islam. The second and more important of these two periods is represented by the present age when Christian nations of the West have acquired so much power and prestige that the nations of Asia and Africa have had to dance attendance upon them like serfs and slaves. Between these “two gardens” flowed a “stream” (v. 34). These “two gardens”, as stated above, represent the two periods of Christian prosperity and progress. The “stream” denotes the birth and rise to power of the Prophet of Islam. He and his followers made their mark in human history during the interval between these two periods.

Now in order to provide an historical setting to the whole account and make it look like a connected whole a somewhat detailed description of the اسرا or Spiritual Journey of Moses has been given in the present and following few verses. Moses had foretold the advent of a Prophet like unto him (Deut. 18:18). This prophecy has been referred to in the Quran in 73:16. By putting the account of Moses’ Spiritual Journey between that of the Dwellers of the Cave and of Dhu’l Qarnain—the two periods representing Christian progress and advance—the Quran has pointed to the fact that the Prophet referred to in Moses’ prophecy, who was also to be his counterpart, was to appear during the interval between these two periods. Thus these incidents have been mentioned in their historical order.

Very fantastic stories have gained currency about the nature and purpose of the اسرا or Spiritual Journey of Moses and the circumstances under which it took place. Commentators of the Quran differ as to the name and status of “the servant of God” whom Moses sought and met and about “the young man” who was with him in his “journey.” Failing to comprehend the spiritual aspect of this seemingly physical journey most of them have indulged only in conjectures and guesses and consequently have grievously erred. The fact is that mention was made of the اسرا or Spiritual Journey or as literally interpreted, the حيجات (Emigration) of the Holy Prophet to Medina in v. 2 of the present سورة. Light was also thrown on the great results that were to ensue from this حيجات and the wonderful success that Muslims were
to achieve after it. They were also warned of the great dangers that lay in their way and of the unrelenting opposition of Jews and Christians, particularly of the grievous blows that Islam as a political force was to receive at the hands of the latter. The Isra’ of Moses has only been mentioned to lend support to the prophecies of ultimate success of Islam that were implied in the Isra’ of the Holy Prophet and also to make it clear beyond doubt that the seemingly dazzling power and prosperity of Christian nations will endure for a limited time and the cause of Islam will eventually triumph.

Similarly, the Isra’ of Moses was, like the Isra’ of the Holy Prophet, no physical journey but a spiritual experience by means of which Moses was transported from this body of flesh and blood to a spiritual tabernacle. The Bible and the Quran both support this contention. Some of the arguments advanced in its support are as follows:

(1) The Bible which is more or less a reliable record of Moses’ life has omitted all mention of this most unusual and wonderful incident and has failed even to make a passing reference to it.

(2) Before Moses was made a Prophet, he is known to have undertaken only one journey and that was to Midian. The Bible and the Quran have both referred to this journey, the latter at several places. The Bible and the Quran also both agree that Moses undertook this journey alone, while in the journey referred to in the present and the following verses of the Quran he is described as having been accompanied by “his companion.”

(3) Even after he was made Prophet, Moses undertook no such journey. The Bible embodies a somewhat detailed record of Moses’ life but it contains no account of any such journey and even makes no reference to it.

(4) It is well known that after Moses had been away on Mount Tur for a few days his people took a calf for worship. When his absence from them for only forty days on Mount Tur caused such great spiritual havoc among them, which has been described in the Bible in detail, the depths of spiritual chaos to which these people of weak faith and fickle minds should have sunk in Moses’ absence on a journey of a much longer duration, as evidently the journey referred to in these verses was, can easily be imagined. The Bible could not have failed to mention it. But the Bible alludes to no such happening. Moreover, it would have cast a serious reflection on Moses’ wisdom and intelligence if, having had such a terrible experience once, he should have undertaken another journey which would have kept him away from his people for a much longer period.

(5) In his absence on Mount Tur for only forty days Moses appointed Aaron his vicegerent for his people. But apart from this solitary instance Moses is not known ever to have appointed anybody his vicegerent or Khalil in his absence on any journey. The Bible contains no reference to any such appointment. It is inconceivable that if Moses had gone on such a long journey as mentioned in these verses he would have failed to appoint a Khalifa in his absence.

(6) It is against the established practice of all the Prophets of God to remain separate from their people for a long time. Some of them are known to have gone on short journeys but those were missionary expeditions and the scope did not extend beyond their own people. Jesus certainly did go to Kashmir after the Crucifixion but he left one section of his people in Palestine to live among another and a large section in Kashmir. But Moses’ journey referred to above was not a journey undertaken with any missionary purpose nor was it confined...
to his own people. He left his people in search of a man who was more learned than himself.

(7) The expression جمعرالسرين (junction of two seas) occurring in the verse under comment also points to the fact that the یسیر of Moses was a spiritual journey because there is no place in the world which is known by this name. The expression can have only one significance i.e. "the junction of two seas." Such junctions nearest to the place where Moses lived after he had left Egypt are Bab al-Mandab which unites the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean, the Straits of Dardanelles which joins the Mediterranean Sea with the Sea of Marmora and Al-Bahrain where the waters of the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean meet. Of all these places the Straits of Dardanelles alone can possibly be the point where such a meeting could have taken place because on its way lies Canaan which was the destination of Moses but which he could not reach in his lifetime. All these three points were about one thousand miles distant from Moses' place of living and considering the absence of good means of communication and transport in those days it would have taken him about a year's time to cover such a long distance and Moses could not afford to remain absent from his people for such a long time without seriously jeopardising their spiritual well-being.

From this historical evidence it can be safely inferred without fear of contradiction that Moses' journey referred to in these verses was a spiritual journey undertaken with a spiritual body for a spiritual purpose.

Besides this external evidence there is also internal evidence in the Quran which clearly shows that this journey was no physical event but a spiritual experience of Moses:

(a) The "learned man" made a big hole in the boat to save it from being forcibly seized by the King. Now a quite natural question arises here, viz., was the boat navigable after it was damaged or was it not? If it was, why did not the King seize it; if it was not, why did it not sink? In this physical world no boat is ever known to have remained floating after a big hole had been made in its bottom. In the world of visions, however, such things are possible.

(b) The "slaying of the young boy" also shows that this incident happened in a vision because in this world of flesh and bones no sensible person, much less a Prophet of God, would take the life of another person without legitimate cause.

(c) The incident of the "repairing of the wall" also lends support to the above conclusion. How could a great Prophet of God and a most noble and broad-minded person like Moses have found fault with his learned companion for not demanding payment from two poor orphan boys for repairing their wall because the people of their town had refused to entertain him and his companion? What had the two orphan boys done to deserve Moses' displeasure? It was the people of the town and not they who had refused to entertain them as their guests. What earthly connection was there between these two things? In this material world no sensible person could indulge in such talk, much less a great Prophet of God. Such things can happen only in visions and dreams.

(d) Ibn 'Abbas is reported to have said that the word كنز (treasure) occurring in v. 83 below means "a treasure of knowledge". This shows that this word has been used in this verse in its metaphorical sense and needs to be interpreted and explained. Similarly, the repairing of the wall and the demanding of hospitality were not physical acts. Thus the whole journey was only a spiritual experience.

In short, even a casual and cursory glance over the relevant verses leaves no doubt about
the fact that the whole affair was nothing more than a vision. It is simply inconceivable that a great Prophet of God like Moses should have undertaken a long and arduous journey in search of a “man of God” to learn from him how to break a hole in a boat or kill a young man or to repair a wall and demand no remuneration for it. Even an illiterate rustic would consider it below his dignity to do such a foolish thing, much less a Prophet of God.

Moreover, the Holy Prophet is reported to have said, 

وَدَرَوْاْ أَنَّ مُوسَىٰ كَانَ صَيْحَةً بِأَنَّهُ عَلَىٰ مِنْ بَعْرِهَا i.e. would that Moses had kept silent, so that God would have revealed to us many more secrets of the future (Bukhari, Kīthab al-Tafsir). This saying of the Holy Prophet shows that the unusual acts which this “man of God” is stated to have performed were great secrets of the future which were communicated to Moses in his Vision in metaphorical language. If these acts are understood to have literally taken place, then they could not have excited the Holy Prophet’s curiosity and he could not possibly have wished Moses to have kept silent in order to learn more about similar acts. According to Mawardi, the person whom Moses had gone to see was no human being but an angel (Kathir).

All these facts taken together constitute very solid and weighty evidence, incapable of being doubted or contradicted, that the story of the journey of Moses is but a vision which needs to be interpreted and explained to understand its reality and significance.

The words “his young companion” may refer to Joshua, the son of Nun, but they apply more fittingly to Jesus. Jesus was the young companion of Moses i.e. he was the last great Prophet of the Mosaic Dispensation who came not to destroy but to fulfil the Law and the Prophets (Matt. 5:17).

The words, I will not stop until I reach the junction of the two seas, show that Moses’ young companion joined him towards the end of his journey. Moses did not seem to have taken the young man with him from the very outset of his journey. The words do not represent him as having started on his journey but only as pursuing it with a young companion. Strictly speaking these words can only be spoken by one who is about to reach his destination.

The expression مَجْمَعُ الْبَحْرِينَ i.e. junction of two seas, denotes the time when the Mosaic Dispensation was to have come to an end and the Islamic Dispensation to have commenced. According to Taṭīr al-Anām بحر (sea), when seen in a vision, signifies a powerful, just and kind king. It also signifies praise and glorification of God. In the first sense of the word بحر (sea) the expression مَجْمَعُ الْبَحْرِينَ would mean the meeting place of two powerful, just and kind kings i.e. Moses and the Holy Prophet Muhammad, and according to the second signification, the expression denotes the junction of the two seas of God’s glorification which means two religious Dispensations—Mosaic and Islamic.

The words, Or I will journey on for ages, signify that the Mosaic Dispensation would remain in force for many centuries. The period from the time of Moses to the advent of the Holy Prophet when the Mosaic Dispensation came to an end extends over 2000 years.
62. But when they reached the place where the two seas met, they forgot their fish, and it made its way into the sea going away swiftly. 2102

63. And when they had gone further, he said to his young companion: 'Bring us our morning meal. Surely, we have suffered much fatigue on account of this journey of ours.' 2103

2102. Important Words:

- سرب (going away swiftly) is derived from مرد، i.e. the water flowed. They say مرد الامام، which means, the man went at random.
- حرف (sarabum) means, going away swiftly, a subterranean excavation; a habitation beneath the earth having a passage through it; the burrow or hole of a wild animal; the den of a lion. The Quranic expression "going away swiftly" is derived from سررباً في البحر، which means, it (the fish) took its way into the sea swiftly, etc. (Lane & Aqrab).

Commentary:

- حور، (fish) when seen in a vision denotes the houses of worship of righteous people (Ta’tir al-Anam). In this sense of the word the expression, when they reached the place where the two seas met, they forgot their fish, means that at the time when the Mosaic and the Islamic Dispensations met, i.e. when Mosaic Dispensation ceased to function and the Islamic Dispensation came into force, true righteousness would depart from among the followers of Moses and Jesus and would henceforward become the special mark of the followers of the new Dispensation (48:30). The verse under comment also shows that the Islamic Dispensation was, in fact, a continuation of the Mosaic Dispensation. Being two consecutive parts of God's eternal guidance no such thing as the "junction of two seas" existed in the time of Moses.

2103. Commentary:

"Asking for breakfast" in a vision denotes "weariness" (Ta’tir al-Anam) and the verse purports to say that at the "junction of the two seas" i.e. when the Holy Prophet comes, the followers of Moses and Jesus would not accept him. They would continue their journey alone and would refuse to admit that the span of life granted to their Dispensation had come to an end. Then after going on their separate way for a long time and being tired of vainly waiting for the Promised Prophet (Deut. 18:18) they would begin to wonder whether he had already come and they had failed to recognize him. In this verse Moses and his young companion (Jesus) stand for Jews and Christians respectively.
64. He replied, 'Didst thou see, when we betook ourselves to the rock for rest, and I forgot the fish—and none but Satan caused me to forget to mention it to thee—it took its way into the sea in a marvellous manner?'

65. He said, 'That is what we have been seeking.' So they both returned, retracing their footsteps.

66. Then found they one of Our servants, upon whom We had bestowed Our Mercy, and whom We had taught knowledge from Ourselves.

2104. Commentary:
The pronouns in the expressions, "their fish" (v. 62), "they had gone further" (v. 63) and "we betook ourselves" obviously do not refer to Moses and Jesus because they did not live in the time of the Holy Prophet but to their respective peoples.

(rock) in the language of dreams and visions denotes "a life of vice and sin." So the expression, when we betook ourselves to the rock, means that when the two seas met i.e. when the Mosaic Dispensation came to an end and a new Prophet and a new Dispensation appeared, then Jews and Christians would be sunk in a life of sin and iniquity.

The words, it took its way into the sea in a marvellous manner, signify that true piety and worship of God would take leave of these people and would become the special mark of another people (the followers of Islam) who would become heirs to divine favours.

The incident of the fish unimpossibly points to the whole affair being a vision because when Moses and his young companion were pursuing their journey with the fish as their guide it was not possible for them to forget it.

2105. Commentary:
Who is this (servant of God) in search of whom Moses, in pursuance of divine command, had undertaken such a long and difficult journey and who is the central figure and hero of the whole story? He is none other than the Holy Prophet Muhammad—his soul having taken an embodied form in Moses' Vision. The following arguments conclusively show that he was indeed the (god's servant) mentioned in this story:

(a) The Holy Prophet has been called in the Quran at several places (2:24; 8:42; 17:2; 18:2; 25:2; 39:37; 53:11 & 72:20). In fact he is (God's servant) par excellence, because truly speaking the stage of (servant of God) is the highest stage in the spiritual development of man and the Holy Prophet had attained that stage.

(b) The words, upon whom We had bestowed Our Mercy, also clearly refer to the Holy Prophet. He has been particularly spoken of as "a
67. Moses said to him, 'May I follow thee on the condition that thou teach me of the guidance which thou hast been taught?'

68. He replied, 'Thou canst not keep company with me in patience.'

mercy to the whole world' (21 : 108), an epithet applied in the Quran to none other than the Holy Prophet.

(c) The words, whom We had taught knowledge from Ourselves, also refer to the Holy Prophet. At several places in the Quran it is stated that he was vouchsafed divine knowledge in a very large measure (4: 114; 6: 92; 20: 115 & 27: 7).

(d) The "servant of God" had told Moses that he (Moses) would not keep silent (v. 68 below), and the Holy Prophet is reported to have said, "Would that Moses had kept silent! If he had done so, we would have been vouchsafed more knowledge about the unseen" (Bukhari, Kitab al-Tafsir). This shows that the "servant of God" of Moses' Vision and the Holy Prophet were one and the same person.

As a matter of fact, Moses had seen a manifestation of God "in the fire" when travelling from Midian to Egypt (28: 30). Later on, however, he was told that a Prophet would appear from among the brethren of the Israelites in whose mouth God would put His own word (Deut. 18: 18-22). The words of the prophecy signified that the Promised Prophet would be the object of a greater manifestation of God than Moses. Moses therefore naturally wished to see who "that Prophet" could be. To satisfy his curiosity God made him see in his Vision "that Prophet" of much higher spiritual powers. This learned "servant of God" of Moses' Vision who has been popularly known by the name of Khizr was the spirit of our Noble Master, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, which had assumed a physical tabernacle. See also 7: 144.

2106. Commentary:
By instituting a comparison between the spiritual status of Moses and that of the Holy Prophet, the verse under comment shows that the former was distinctly inferior to the latter. Moses was denied the heights which the spiritual knowledge of the Prophet had attained. The difference between these two great Prophets has been depicted in these verses in the form of a dialogue between two companions on a journey.

2107. Commentary:
This verse refers to the subject dealt with in 7: 144, viz. that Moses and his people could not attain that spiritual eminence which the Holy Prophet and his followers were destined to attain. It states that the patience and steadfastness under severe trials and difficulties of the followers of Moses were not of the same high order and pattern as those of the Holy Prophet's followers (5: 22-25 & Bukhari, Kitab al-Maghazi). The Christians did, indeed, show a better example than the Jews in facing physical hardships but they too gave in before spiritual trials. Jesus himself bitterly complained of the intellectual dullness of his disciples. He was not sure whether they had fully realized his spiritual status (Matt. 17: 17).

The verse also compares the natural dispositions of Moses and the Holy Prophet. Moses impatiently inquired of his companion
69. 'And how canst thou be patient about things the knowledge of which thou comprehendest not?'

70. He said, 'Thou wilt find me, if God please, patient and I shall not disobey any command of thine.'

71. He said, 'Well, if thou wouldst follow me, then ask me no questions about anything till I myself speak to thee concerning it.'

about things which he did not understand but the Holy Prophet waited patiently till God Himself revealed to him all details of the Shari'at and their explanation. This difference in the temperaments of these two Prophets was also reflected in the behaviour of their respective followers. While the Israelites continued to pester Moses with all sorts of unnecessary questions, the demeanour of the Holy Prophet’s Companions was characterized by great dignity and restraint. They scrupulously avoided putting him questions on religious matters. Both the Holy Prophet and his Companions most faithfully observed the admonition contained in 20: 115.

2108. Commentary:
The verse purports to say that it was not quite easy for Jews to accept the Holy Prophet. Islam had introduced new ideals and new teachings and the Jews had their own prejudices and preconceived ideas. They regarded themselves as God’s own chosen people and the sole repositories of divine knowledge. So it was difficult for them to shed their prejudices all at once. This is why the Arabs who had no past experience of divine revelation and possessed no settled beliefs and principles readily accepted the Holy Prophet while the Jews waited and hesitated. Their rejection of Jesus was also due to the same cause.

2109. Commentary:
This verse also shows that the Journey of Moses was a vision because being an independent Prophet he could not pledge himself to obey a person, however spiritually eminent, in matters of Shari'at. He was the divinely appointed Leader and Guide of his people and therefore could not afford to seek guidance from any other source except the divine.

The verse also implies the hint that it would be binding on Moses’ followers of the Holy Prophet’s time to accept him. It is to this fact, perhaps, that the saying of the Prophet, "If Moses and Jesus had been alive, they could not help being among my followers" (Kathir, vol. 11, p. 246), refers.

2110. Commentary:
By implication the verse establishes the Holy Prophet’s spiritual superiority over Moses. Whereas Moses, in spite of his repeated pledge that he would ask no more questions, persisted in doing so, the Holy Prophet, though he had made no such promise to Gabriel, on being only once told by the Archangel in his Vision to ask no question, at once submitted to him and maintained complete silence.
72. So they both set out till, when they embarked in a boat, he staved it in. Moses said, 'Hast thou staved it in to drown those who are in it? Surely, thou hast done an evil thing.'

211. Important Words:

(a) (evil) is derived from (amara). (amra) means, he commanded him. They say (amira) i.e. the people became many. (amila) means, the affair or case became severe, distressful, grievous or wonderful. (imrun) means, a severe, distressful or grievous thing; or a terrible and foul or very foul, evil or abominable thing; or a wonderful thing. The Quranic words (amra) mean, verily thou hast done a severe, distressful or grievous thing; or a terrible and foul or evil or abominable thing (Lane, Aqrab & Mufradat).

Commentary:
The preceding several verses served only as an introduction to the subject of the Isrā' of Moses. With the present verse, however, begins an account of the incidents which Moses actually saw in his Vision. Moses is here represented as having objected to the very first act of his learned companion, in spite of the fact that he had promised not to do so. The Holy Prophet, however, was shown in his own Vision as having kept silent all the way. This contrast in the behaviour of these two great Prophets represented the attitude of their followers towards their respective religions. Whereas the Companions of the Holy Prophet remained loyal to their Faith under the severest persecution and difficulties, the followers of Moses ignored and defied theirs when it suited them. On the other hand the three incidents of both Visions are identical in their interpretation and significance though the metaphors used to describe them are different.

(boat) in the language of dreams denotes "worldly riches". This interpretation is supported by the Quran also (17: 67). In this sense of the word, the embarkation of both Moses and his learned companion who, as is explained above, was the embodied form of the Holy Prophet, signifies that the followers of both these Prophets will have worldly riches in plenty in their respective periods.

The words, he staved it in, when interpreted, signify that the Holy Prophet would lay down commandments which would, as it were, make a hole in the boat of the material prosperity and riches of his followers, i.e. he would see to it that wealth does not accumulate in the hands of a few but that it continues to change hands and is fairly distributed among all sections of Muslims. To effect this Islam has made the giving of Zakat obligatory, has totally prohibited all transactions based on interest and by its law of inheritance has sought to distribute the wealth of a dying person among all his children, parents, wives and other near relatives. It has also prohibited gambling and has laid down laws to better and improve the condition and status of labourers. The materialistic and wealthy Jews and Christians could not view such a division of wealth with favour and regarded it as reckless waste. All their economic laws tend to increase the wealth of the rich and to help it accumulate in a few hands. Whereas in his Vision Moses objected to the hole being made in the boat by his learned companion which, interpreted in accordance with the language of dreams, meant that his people would be too much enamoured of material wealth to accept laws.
73. He replied, 'Did I not tell thee that thou wouldst not be able to keep company with me in patience?' 2112

74. Moses said, 'Take me not to task at my forgetting and be not hard on me for this lapse of mine.' 2113

75. So they journeyed on till when they met a young boy he slew him. Moses said, 'Hast thou slain an innocent person without his having slain any one? Surely, thou hast done a hideous thing!' 2114

 aiming at its equitable distribution, the Holy Prophet in his own Vision refused to accept the cup of water offered to him which signified that his followers would prefer religion to the world.

Just as Moses in his Vision found fault with his learned companion when the latter made a hole in the boat, similarly his people found fault with the Holy Prophet when he called upon his followers to spend their money in the cause of God. They even taunted him for making such demands (5:65 & 36:48).

2112. Commentary:

The righteous man of God in Moses' Vision (the Holy Prophet) is here represented as saying to him that as there existed great difference between the teachings of the two, he (Moses) could not accompany him, i.e. Moses' people would not accept him (the Holy Prophet) unless they replaced their love of money by love of God.

2113. Commentary:

Moses repents of his mistake, begs to be excused and promises to ask no more questions. This may be interpreted as signifying that at first Jews and Christians would offer to make common cause with the Holy Prophet but later on they would back out of their solemn agreements. It so happened that when the Prophet went to Medina, the Jews of the town entered into an alliance with him. But later on, finding that such an alliance would entail great sacrifices, they broke it and ended by openly siding with his enemies. So was the case with Christians also. In the beginning they were on friendly terms with Muslims but their friendship soon became changed into open enmity. The Christian Emperor Heraclius treated the Prophet's epistle with great respect and it appeared that he would become Muslim. But afterwards when Christians found that the political interests of Islam clashed with their own they declared war on Muslims which continued to have repercussions for a very long time.

2114. Important Words:

 قتل (he killed). قتل عليه means, he killed; قتل العرطاب means, he quenched his