

severe punishment or I will slay him, unless he bring me a clear reason *for his absence*.’

23. And he did not tarry long *before Hudhud came* and said, ‘I have encompassed that which thou hast not encompassed; and I have come to thee from Saba’ with sure tidings.

24. ‘I found a woman ruling over them, and she has been given everything, and she has a mighty throne.

25. ‘I found her and her people worshipping the sun instead of Allāh; and Satan has made their works *look* beautiful to them, and has thus hindered them from the *right* way, so that they follow not guidance;

26. ‘*And Satan has bidden them* not to worship Allāh, Who brings to light that which is hidden in the heavens and the earth, and Who knows what you conceal and what you make known.

27. ‘Allāh! there is no God but He, the Lord of the Mighty Throne.’

28. *Solomon* said, ‘We shall see whether thou hast spoken the truth or whether thou art one of those who lie.

29. ‘Go thou, with this letter of mine, and lay it before them; then withdraw from them and see what *answer* they return.’

30. *The Queen* said, “Ye chiefs, there has been delivered to me a noble letter.

لَا أَذْبَحُهَا أَوْ لِيَأْتِيَنِي بِسُلْطٰنٍ  
مُّبِينٍ ٢٢

فَمَكَثَ غَيْرَ بَعِيدٍ فَقَالَ أَحَطْتُ  
بِمَا لَمْ تُحِطْ بِهِ وَجِئْتُكَ مِنْ سَبَإٍ  
بِنَبَأٍ يَقِينٍ ٢٣

إِنِّي وَجَدْتُ امْرَأَةً تَمْلِكُهُمْ وَأُوتِيَتْ  
مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَلَهَا عَرْشٌ عَظِيمٌ ٢٤

وَجَدْتُهَا وَقَوْمَهَا يَسْجُدُونَ لِلشَّمْسِ  
مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَزَيَّنَّ لَهُمُ الشَّيْطٰنُ  
أَعْمَالَهُمْ فَصَدَّهُمْ عَنِ السَّبِيلِ فَهُمْ  
لَا يَهْتَدُونَ ٢٥

أَلَّا يَسْجُدُوا لِلَّهِ الَّذِي يُخْرِجُ الْخَبْءَ  
فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا  
تُخْفُونَ وَمَا تُعْلِنُونَ ٢٦

اللَّهُ لَا إِلٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ رَبُّ الْعَرْشِ  
الْعَظِيمِ ٢٧

قَالَ سَنَنْظُرُ أَصَدَقْتَ أَمْ كُنْتَ مِنَ  
الْكٰذِبِينَ ٢٨

إِذْ هَبَّ بِكُنْيَتِي هَذَا قَالَتْ لَهُمْ ثُمَّ  
تَوَلَّ عَنْهُمْ فَانْظُرْ مَاذَا يَرْجِعُونَ ٢٩

قَالَتْ يَا أَيُّهَا الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ إِنِّي أُتِيتُ بِالْأَمْرِ  
كَرِيمٍ ٣٠

31. "It is from Solomon, and it is: 'In the name of Allāh, the Gracious, the Merciful; إِنَّهُ مِنْ سُلَيْمَانَ وَإِنَّهُ بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ ﴿٣١﴾"
32. 'Behave not proudly towards me, but come to me in submission.' أَلَا تَعْلَمُونَ عَلَىٰ وَأَتُونِي مُسْلِمِينَ ﴿٣٢﴾
- R. 3.
33. She said, 'Ye chiefs, advise me in the matter that is before me. I never decide any matter until you are present with me and give me your advice.' قَالَتْ يَا أَيُّهَا الْمَلَأُوْا أَفْتُونِي فِي أَمْرِي ۚ مَا كُنْتُ قَاطِعَةً أَمْرًا حَتَّىٰ تَشْهَدُونِ ﴿٣٣﴾
- \*34. They replied, 'We possess power and we possess great prowess in war, but it is for thee to command; therefore consider thou what thou wilt command.' قَالُوا نَحْنُ أَوْلُوا قُوَّةً وَ أَوْلُوا بِأَسْ شَرِيذِهِ وَالْأَمْرَ إِلَيْكِ فَانْظُرِي مَاذَا تَأْمُرِينَ ﴿٣٤﴾
35. She said, 'Surely, kings, when they enter a country, despoil it, and turn the highest of its people into the lowest. And thus will they do. قَالَتْ إِنَّ الْمُلُوكَ إِذَا دَخَلُوا قَرْيَةً أَفْسَدُوهَا وَجَعَلُوا أَعِزَّةَ أَهْلِهَا أَذِلَّةً ۚ وَكَذَلِكَ يَفْعَلُونَ ﴿٣٥﴾
36. 'But I am going to send them a present and wait to see what answer the envoys bring back.' وَ إِنِّي مُرْسِلَةٌ إِلَيْهِمْ بِهَدِيَّةٍ فَنْظُرُهُ بِمَ يَرْجِعُ الْمُرْسَلُونَ ﴿٣٦﴾
37. So when the Queen's ambassador came to Solomon, he said, 'Do you mean to help me with your wealth? But that which Allāh has given me is better than that which He has given you. Nay, but you rejoice in your gift. فَلَمَّا جَاءَ سُلَيْمَانَ قَالَ أَتُمِدُّونَ بِمَالٍ فَمَا آتَيْنِيَ اللَّهُ خَيْرٌ مِّمَّا آتَاكُمْ ۚ بَلْ أَنْتُمْ بِهَدِيَّتِكُمْ تَفْرَحُونَ ﴿٣٧﴾
38. 'Go back to them, for we shall surely come to them with hosts against which they will have no إِرْجِعْ إِلَيْهِمْ فَلَنَأْتِيَنَّهُمْ بِجُنُودٍ لَا قِبَلَ لَهُمْ بِهَا وَ لَنُخْرِجَنَّهُمْ مِنْهَا

\*34. They replied, 'We possess power and we are fierce fighters, but it is for you to command; therefore consider you what you will command.'

power, and we shall drive them out from there disgraced, and they will be humbled.'

- \*39. He said, 'O nobles, which of you will bring me a throne for her before they come to me, submitting?'

40. Said a stalwart from among the Jinn: 'I will bring it to thee before thou rise from thy camp; and indeed I possess power therefore *and I am* trustworthy.'

- \*41. Said one who had knowledge of the Book, 'I will bring it to thee before thy noble *messengers* return to thee.' And when he saw it set before him, he said, 'This is by the grace of my Lord, that He may try me whether I am grateful or ungrateful. And whosoever is grateful is grateful for the good of his *own* soul; but whosoever is ungrateful, truly my Lord is Self-Sufficient, Generous.'

- \*39. He said, 'O nobles, which of you will bring me **her throne** before they come to me **offering submission**?'

**Note:** From the following verses, it becomes clear that Solomon does not refer to her throne itself. He either means a throne very similar to hers should be manufactured or that a very faithful replica of her throne should be brought to him. Before her intended visit to the court of Solomon, she is given the surprise of finding a throne very similar to her own but in the possession of Solomon. From the verses which follow, the scenario that emerges clearly indicates that each of the nobles of his court wanted the task to be assigned to him, each boasting to perform the task quicker and better than his rivals. Ultimately, when the replica was first presented to him, he praised God for it and issued instructions to modify it further so that it might resemble the Queen of Saba's throne ever more closely and so deflate her pride in possessing a unique throne. The expression *nakkirū lahā 'arshahā* (نَكَّرُوا لَهَا عَرْشَهَا) clearly supports this meaning and implies that if she saw a throne very similar to her own, she would naturally infer that her own throne was not as unique and special as she thought it was. So the meaning of *nakkirū* (نَكَّرُوا) in this context would make her throne seem common-looking. When she actually saw the throne built by Solomon's craftsmen, her response was not that of a Queen who only recently had her own throne stolen, nor that of a Queen who could not recognise her own throne because the craftsmen had worked on it to render it unrecognisable. Her response is simply that of a person who finds an article similar to her own. This clearly proves that the scenario we have visualised is more realistic.

- \*41. Said one who had knowledge of the Book, 'I will bring it to **you quicker than the blinking of your eye**.

أَذِلَّةٌ لَهُمْ صَاغِرُونَ ﴿٣٩﴾

قَالَ يَا أَيُّهَا الْمَلَأُ أَيُّكُمْ يَأْتِينِي

بِعَرْشِهَا قَبْلَ أَنْ يَأْتُونِي مُسْلِمِينَ ﴿٤٠﴾

قَالَ عَفَرْتُ مِنْ الْحِجَى أَنَا أَتَيْتُكَ بِهِ

قَبْلَ أَنْ تَقُومَ مِنْ مَقَامِكَ ۚ وَإِنِّي

عَلَيْهِ لَقَوِيٌّ أُمِينٌ ﴿٤١﴾

قَالَ الَّذِي عِنْدَهُ عِلْمٌ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ أَنَا

أَتَيْتُكَ بِهِ قَبْلَ أَنْ يَأْتِيَنَّكَ إِلَيْكَ طَرَفُكَ ۚ

فَلَمَّا رَأَاهُ مُسْتَقَرًّا عِنْدَهُ قَالَ هَذَا مِنْ

فَضْلِ رَبِّي ۚ لِيَبْلُوَنِي ۚ أَشْكُرَ أَمْ أَكْفُرُ ۚ

وَمَنْ شَكَرَ فَإِنَّمَا يَشْكُرُ لِنَفْسِهِ ۚ

وَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَإِنَّ رَبِّي غَنِيٌّ كَرِيمٌ ﴿٤٢﴾