

INTRODUCTION TO SŪRAT *Al-Qaṣaṣ*, 28.

This Sūra continues the subject of Revelation and its reception by those to whom it is sent. But it emphasises new points: how the recipient of inspiration is prepared for his high destiny, even in the growth of his ordinary life, and how the rejection of Allah's Message by groups of men or by individuals is caused by overweening arrogance or avarice. The plight of those who reject the Truth is contrasted with the reward of the righteous.

With the possible exception of a few verses, it belongs to the late Makkan period, just preceding the Hijrat.

Summary.—Pharaoh was arrogant and unjust, but Allah's Plan was to strengthen the weak: in infancy Moses was prepared for his mission; in youth he trusted in the Lord and was guided; in his exile he found help and love; and when he was called, he was supported by Allah (xxviii. 1-42).

So was the holy Prophet Muḥammad fed spiritually by Allah's Grace, and his Revelation was recognised by those who knew the earlier Revelations: it came to an old and sacred Centre, to warn those seduced by this world's life (xxviii. 43-60).

The Future is with those who repent, have faith, and do good: for all Mercy and Truth are with Allah (xxviii. 61-75).

But men puffed up with wealth, like Qārūn, will come to an evil end, while the lowly and the righteous will attain Allah's Mercy (xxviii. 76-88).

Al-Qaṣaṣ, or the Narration.

*In the name of Allah, Most Gracious,
Most Merciful.*

1. Tā. Sin. Mīm.³³²⁶
2. These are Verses of the Book
That makes (things) clear.³³²⁷
3. We rehearse to thee some
Of the story of Moses
And Pharaoh in Truth,
For people who believe.³³²⁸
4. Truly Pharaoh elated himself
In the land and divided
Its people into sections,³³²⁹
Depressing a group
Among them: their sons he slew,
But he kept alive their females:
For he was indeed
An evil-doer.

سُورَةُ الْقَصَصِ

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

طسّم

تِلْكَ آيَاتُ الْكِتَابِ الْمُبِينِ

نَتْلُو عَلَيْكَ مِنْ نَبَأِ مُوسَى وَفِرْعَوْنَ

بِالْحَقِّ لِقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ

إِنَّ فِرْعَوْنَ عَلَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَجَعَلَ أَهْلَهَا شِيَعًا

يَسْتَضِعُّ طَائِفَةً مِنْهُمْ يَتَّبِعُ أَبْنَاءَ هُمْ

وَيَسْتَحْيِي نِسَاءَهُمْ إِنَّهُ كَانَ مِنَ الْمُفْسِدِينَ

3326. See n. 3137 to xxvi. 1.

3327. See n. 3138 to xxvi. 2.

3328. The part of the story of Moses told here is how Moses and his mother were guided in the child's infancy, that even as he grew up, he might be prepared for his high destiny; how in youth he trusted Allah in the most awkward situations and sought His help; how he fled into exile, and yet found love and support because of his well-doing; and how, when he was called to his mission, he received Allah's favour, which defeated all the plots of his enemies. Thus Allah's Plan works continuously in the web of events. Those who have faith will thus see the hand of Allah in everything and welcome the light that comes to them by Revelation. With such a Faith there is no room for Chance or blind Fate.

3329. For a king or ruler to make invidious distinctions between his subjects, and specially to depress or oppress any particular class of his subjects, is a dereliction of his kingly duties, for which he is responsible to Allah. Pharaoh and his clique were intoxicated with pride of race and pride of material civilization, and grievously oppressed the Israelites. Pharaoh decreed that all male sons born to his Israelite subjects should be killed, and the females kept alive for the pleasure of the Egyptians. Moses was saved in a wonderful way, as related further.

5. And We wished to be
Gracious to those who were
Being depressed in the land,³³³⁰
To make them leaders (in faith)
And make them heirs,
6. To establish a firm place
For them in the land,
And to show Pharaoh, Hāmān,³³³¹
And their hosts, what they were
Dreading from them.³³³²
7. So We sent this inspiration
To the mother of Moses:
"Suckle (thy child), but when
Thou hast fears about him,
Cast him into the river,³³³³
But fear not nor grieve:
For We shall restore him
To thee, and We shall make
Him one of Our messengers."

وَنُرِيدُ أَنْ نَمُنَّ عَلَى الَّذِينَ اسْتُضْعِفُوا
فِي الْأَرْضِ وَنَجْعَلَهُمْ أَئِمَّةً
وَنَجْعَلَهُمُ الْوَارِثِينَ ﴿٥﴾
وَنُفِخَ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَنُرَىٰ فِرْعَوْنُ وَهَامَنْ
وَأَصْحَابُ مَاكَانُوا يُحْذَرُونَ ﴿٦﴾
وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ أُمِّ مُوسَىٰ أَنْ أَرْضِعِيهِ ۖ فَإِذَا خِفَتْ
عَلَيْهِ فَكَأْفِيهِ فِي الْيَمِّ وَلَا تَحْزَنِي ۚ
إِنَّا رَأَدُّوهُ إِلَىٰكَ وَجَاعِلُوهُ مِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿٧﴾

3330. What Pharaoh wished was to crush them. But Allah's Plan was to protect them as they were weak, and indeed to make them custodians and leaders in His Faith, and to give them in inheritance a land "flowing with milk and honey". Here they were established in authority for such time as they followed Allah's Law. As regards Pharaoh and his ministers and hosts, they were to be shown that they would suffer, at the hands of the Israelites, the very calamities against which they were so confidently taking precautions for themselves.

3331. Hāmān was evidently Pharaoh's minister, not to be confounded with a Hāmān who is mentioned in the Old Testament (Esther iii.1), as a minister of Ahasuerus (Xerxes) King of Persia, the same who invaded Greece, and ruled from B.C. 485 to 464.

3332. Pharaoh was trying to kill the Israelites. Instead, the Plagues of Egypt, invoked by Moses, killed thousands of Egyptians (vii. 133, and notes 1091-92), because "they were steeped in arrogance,—a people given to sin." In pursuing the Israelites in their flight, Pharaoh and his army were themselves overwhelmed in the sea.

3333. The Egyptian midwives had orders to kill Israelite babies. Moses was saved from them, and his mother nursed the infant at her breast herself. But when the danger of discovery was imminent, she put him into a chest or basket, and floated him on the river Nile. It flowed by the King's palace, and the chest with the baby was picked up, as related further on. The mother had no cause to fear or grieve afterwards, as the child grew up under her tender care and became afterwards one of the Prophets of Allah.

8. Then the people of Pharaoh
Picked him up (from the river):
(It was intended) that (Moses)
Should be to them an adversary
And a cause of sorrow:³³³⁴
For Pharaoh and Hāmān
And (all) their hosts were
Men of sin.

فَالْقَاطِفَةُ ۖ أَلْ فِرْعَوْنَ لِيَكُونَ لَهُمْ عَدُوًّا
وَحَزَنًا إِنَّ فِرْعَوْنَ وَهَمَانَ وَجُنُودَهُمَا
كَانُوا خَاطِئِينَ ﴿٨﴾

9. The wife of Pharaoh said:
“(Here is) a joy of the eye,³³³⁵
For me and for thee:
Slay him not. It may be
That he will be of use
To us, or we may adopt
Him as a son.” And they
Perceived not (what they
Were doing)!³³³⁶

وَقَالَتِ امْرَأَتُ فِرْعَوْنَ قُرْتُ عَيْنِي لَكَ
لَا تَقْتُلُوهُ عَسَى أَنْ يَنْفَعَنَا أَوْ نَتَّخِذَهُ وَلَدًا
وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿٩﴾

10. And the heart
Of the mother of Moses
Became void:
She was going almost to
Disclose his (case), had We
Not strengthened her heart
(With faith), so that she
Might remain a (firm) believer.³³³⁷

وَأَصْبَحَ قُودًا أُمِّ مُوسَىٰ فَذِرَاءً إِنْ كَادَتْ
لَتُبْدِيَ بِهِ ۖ لَوْلَا أَنْ رَّبَّنَا عَلَيَّ قَلْبُهَا
لَتَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٠﴾

3334. This was the Plan of Providence: that the wicked might cast a net round themselves by fostering the man who was to bring them to naught and be the instrument of their punishment,—or (looking at it from the other side) that Moses might learn all the wisdom of the Egyptians in order to expose all that was hollow and wicked in it.

3335. He was a darling to look at, and Pharaoh had apparently no son, but only a daughter, who afterwards shared his throne. This is on the supposition that the Pharaoh was Thothmes.

3336. In all life Providence so orders things that Evil is defeated by its own weapons. Not only is it defeated, but it actually, though unwittingly, advances the cause of Good!

3337. The mother's heart felt the gaping void at parting from her son; but her Faith in Allah's Providence kept her from betraying herself.

11. And she said to the sister
Of (Moses), "Trace him".
So she (the sister) watched him
From a distance
And they perceived not.

وَقَالَتْ لِأُخْتِهِ قُصِّيهٖ فَبَصَّرَتْ بِهِ عَنْ جُنُبٍ
وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿١١﴾

12. And We ordained that he
Refused suck at first, until
(His sister came up
And) said: "Shall I
Point out to you the people
Of a house that will nourish
And bring him up for you³³³⁸
And take care of him."

وَحَرَّمْنَا عَلَيْهِ الْمَرَاضِعَ مِنْ قَبْلُ فَقَالَتْ
هَلْ أَتَاكُمْ عَلَىٰ أَهْلِ بَيْتٍ يَكْفُلُونَهُ لَكُمْ
وَهُمْ لَهُ نَاصِحُونَ ﴿١٢﴾

13. Thus did We restore him
To his mother, that her eye
Might be comforted, that she
Might not grieve, and that
She might know that the promise
Of Allah is true: but
Most of them do not know.³³³⁹

فَرَدَدْنَاهُ إِلَىٰ أُمِّهِ كَىٰ تَقَرَّ عَيْنُهَا وَلَا تَحْزَنَ
وَلِنَعْلَمَ أَتَىٰ وَعَدَ اللَّهِ حَقُّ
وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٣﴾

SECTION 2.

14. When he reached full age,
And was firmly established³³⁴⁰
(In life), We bestowed on him
Wisdom and knowledge: for thus
Do We reward those
Who do good.

وَلَمَّا بَلَغَ أَشُدَّهُ وَاسْتَوَىٰ ءَاتَيْنَاهُ حُكْمًا وَعِلْمًا
وَكَذَٰلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿١٤﴾

3338. *For you:* i.e., on your behalf. Thus Moses got the benefit of his mother's milk as well as the prestige and the opportunities of being brought up in the royal family, with the best of teachers to teach him Egyptian wisdom. In addition, there was the comfort to his mother.

3339. Allah's promise is always true, but short-sighted people, if they are a little thwarted in their plan, do not understand that Allah's wisdom, power, and goodness are far more comprehensive than any little plans which they may form.

3340. *Full age* may be taken to be mature youth, say between 18 and 30 years of age. By that time a person is fully established in life: his physical build is completed, and his mental and moral habits are formed. In this case, as Moses was good at heart, =

15. And he entered the City
At a time when its people³³⁴¹
Were not watching; and he
Found there two men fighting,—
One of his own people,^(a)
And the other, of his foes.
Now the man of his own
People appealed to him
Against his foe, and Moses
Struck him with his fist³³⁴²
And killed him.
He said: "This is a work
Of Satan: for he is
An enemy that manifestly
Misleads!"*

وَدَخَلَ الْمَدِينَةَ عَلَى حِينٍ غَفَلَةٍ مِّنْ أَهْلِهَا فَوَجَدَ فِيهَا
رَجُلَيْنِ يَقْتَتِلَانِ هَذَا مِنْ شِيعَتِهِ وَهَذَا مِنْ عَدُوِّهِ
فَاسْتَعَاذَ الَّذِي مِنْ شِيعَتِهِ عَلَى الَّذِي مِنْ عَدُوِّهِ
فَوَكَرَهُ مُوسَى فَقَضَى عَلَيْهِ قَالَ هَذَا
مِنْ عَمَلِ الشَّيْطَانِ إِنَّهُ عَدُوٌّ مُّضِلٌّ مُّبِينٌ ﴿١٥﴾

16. He prayed: "O my Lord!
I have indeed wronged my soul!
Do Thou then forgive me!"
So (Allah) forgave him: for He
Is the Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّي ظَلَمْتُ نَفْسِي فَاغْفِرْ لِي فَغَفَرَهُ
إِنَّكَ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿١٦﴾

= true and loyal to his people, and obedient and just to those among whom he lived, he was granted wisdom and knowledge from on high, to be used for the times of conflict which were coming for him. His internal development being complete, he now goes out into the outer world, where he is again tried and proved, until he gets his divine commission.

3341. That may have been either the time of the noontime siesta, when all business is suspended even now in Egypt, or the time of night, when people are usually asleep. The latter is more probable, in view of verse 18 below. But there is also another suggestion. A guest in a Palace is not free to wander about at will in the plebeian quarters of the City at all sorts of hours, and this applies even more to an inmate of the Palace brought up as a son. Moses was therefore visiting the City privately and eluding the guards. His object may have been to see for himself how things were going on; perhaps he had heard that his people were being oppressed, as we may suppose that he had retained contact with his mother.

3342. His object was apparently to strike him so as to release the Israelite, not to kill the Egyptian. In fact he killed the Egyptian. This was unfortunate in more ways than one. His visit to the City was clandestine; he had taken the side of the weaker and despised party; and he had taken the life of an Egyptian. He was full of regrets and repentance, and he prayed to Allah, and obtained Allah's forgiveness.

17. He said: "O my Lord!

For that Thou hast bestowed

Thy Grace on me, never

Shall I be a help

To those who sin!"³³⁴³

قَالَ رَبِّ بِمَا أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيَّ فَلَنْ أَكُونَ

ظَهيرًا لِّلْمُجْرِمِينَ ﴿١٧﴾

18. In the morning, he was

In the city, fearful

And vigilant when

Behold, the man who had,

The day before, sought his help

Called aloud for his help
(Again). Moses said to him:

"Thou art truly, one

Erring manifestly."³³⁴⁴

فَاصْبَحَ فِي الْمَدِينَةِ خَائِفًا يَتَرَقَّبُ فَإِذَا الَّذِي

أَسْتَنْصَرَهُ بِالْأَمْسِ يَسْتَصْرِخُهُ قَالَ

لَهُ مُوسَى إِنَّكَ لَغَوِيٌّ مُّبِينٌ ﴿١٨﴾

19. Then, when he was about to lay

His hands on their enemy³³⁴⁵

The man said: "O Moses!

Is it thy intention to slay me

As thou slewest a man

فَلَمَّا أَنْ أَرَادَ أَنْ يَبْطِشَ بِالَّذِي هُوَ عَدُوٌّ لَّهُمَا قَالَ

يَمُوسَى أَتَرِيدُ أَنْ تَقْتُلَنِي كَمَا قَتَلْتَ نَفْسًا بِالْأَمْسِ ۚ

3343. He takes a conscious and solemn vow to dedicate himself to Allah, and to do nothing that may in any way assist those who were doing wrong. This was his general idea, but no plan had yet shaped itself in his mind, until a second catastrophe brought matters to a head, and he was plunged in adventure.

3344. The man was an Israelite. But Moses was himself in a distracted mood, for the reasons given in n. 3342 above, and he was exasperated at this public appeal to him again.

3345. When Moses considered further that the Egyptian was unjust, he was going to intervene again, when he received a double warning, one from the Egyptian who was fighting, and the other from some man (Israelite or Egyptian) who was friendly to him, as explained below. We may suppose that after the first day's fight, there had been a great deal of talk in the bazars, both among Israelites and Egyptians. Probably the Israelites were elated at finding a champion—perhaps more elated than they should have been, and in a provocative mood, which deserved Moses's rebuke. Probably the Egyptians had discussed who this new champion was, and had already apprised the Palace, to which Moses had not dared to return.

Yesterday? Thou only desire
To become a tyrant
In the land, and not to be
One who sets things right!"³³⁴⁶

20. And there came a man,
Running, from the furthest end³³⁴⁷
Of the City. He said:
"O Moses! the Chiefs
Are taking counsel together
About thee, to slay thee:
So get thee away, for I
Do give thee sincere advice."

21. He therefore got away therefrom,³³⁴⁸
Looking about, in a state
Of fear. He prayed:
"O my Lord! save me
From people given to wrong-doing."

SECTION 3.

22. Then, when he turned his face
Towards (the land of) Madyan,³³⁴⁹
He said: "I do hope
That my Lord will show me
The smooth and straight Path."

إِنْ تُرِيدُ إِلَّا أَنْ تَكُونَ جَبَّارًا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا تُرِيدُ
أَنْ تَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُصْلِحِينَ ﴿١٩﴾

وَجَاءَ رَجُلٌ مِنْ أَقْصَا الْمَدِينَةِ يَسْعَى قَالَ يَمْوَسَىٰ
إِنَّكَ الْمَلَأَ يَأْتَمِرُونَ بِكَ لِيَقْتُلُوكَ فَاخْرُجْ
إِنِّي لَكَ مِنَ النَّاصِحِينَ ﴿٢٠﴾

فَخَرَجَ مِنْهَا خَائِفًا يَتَرَقَّبُ قَالَ رَبِّ نَجِّنِي
مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٢١﴾

وَلَمَّا تَوَجَّهَ تَلَقَّاهُ مَذْيَبٌ قَالَ عَسَىٰ رَبِّي
أَنْ يَهْدِيَني سَوَاءَ السَّبِيلِ ﴿٢٢﴾

3346. The Egyptian saw the situation. He said to Moses: 'Are you going to do the same with me? You are nothing but a bully! And you talk of setting things right! That is what you should do if you were true to yourself!'

3347. Apparently rumours had reached the Palace, a Council had been held, and the death of Moses had been suggested.

3348. Moses saw that his position was now untenable, both in the Palace and in the City, and indeed anywhere in Pharaoh's territory. So he suffered voluntary exile. But he did not know where to go to. His mind was in a state of agitation. But he turned to Allah and prayed. He got consolation, and felt that after all it was no hardship to leave Egypt, where there was so much injustice and oppression.

3349. East of Lower Egypt, for about 300 miles, runs the Sinai Peninsula, bounded on the south by the Gulf of Suez, and on the north by what was the Isthmus of Suez, now cut by the Suez Canal. Over the Isthmus ran the highroad to Palestine and Syria, but a fugitive could not well take that road, as the Egyptians were after him. If he could, =

23. And when he arrived at
The watering (place) in Madyan,³³⁵⁰
He found there a group
Of men watering (their flocks),
And besides them he found
Two women who were keeping
Back (their flocks). He said:
"What is the matter with you?"
They said: "We cannot water
(Our flocks) until the shepherds
Take back (their flocks):
And our father is
A very old man."³³⁵¹

وَلَمَّا وَرَدَ مَاءَ مَدْيَنَ وَجَدَ عَلَيْهِ أُمَّةٌ
مِّنَ النَّاسِ يَسْقُونَ وَوَجَدَ مِنْ دُونِهِمُ
أَمْرَاتَيْنِ تَذُودَانِ قَالَ مَا خَطْبُكُمَا قَالَتَا لَا نَسْقِي
حَتَّى يُصْدِرَ الرِّعَاءُ وَأَبُونَا شَيْخٌ كَبِيرٌ ﴿٢٣﴾

24. So he watered (their flocks)
For them; then he turned back
To the shade, and said:
"O my lord!
Truly am I

فَسَقَى لَهُمَا ثُمَّ تَوَلَّى إِلَى الظِّلِّ فَقَالَ
رَبِّ إِنِّي لِمَا أَنزَلْتَ إِلَيَّ مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَقِيرٌ ﴿٢٤﴾

= after crossing the Isthmus, plunge into the Sinai desert, east or south-east, he would be in the Midianite territory, where the people would be Arabs and not Egyptians. He turned thither, and again prayed to Allah for guidance.

3350. The first thing that a wanderer in a desert would make for would be an oasis where he could get water from a spring or well, the shade of trees against the scorching sun, and some human company. The Midianite watering place was probably a deep well, as surface springs are rare in sandy deserts, where the water level is low, unless there was a hill from which issued a spring.

3351. Here is a pretty little idyll, told in the fewest and most beautiful words possible. Moses arrives at an oasis in the desert, weary and travel worn, with his mind full of anxiety and uncertainty owing to his recent experiences in Egypt. He was thirsty and would naturally seek water. At the well or spring he found shepherds (or perhaps goat-herds) watering their flocks. As a stranger it was not for him to thrust himself among them. He waited under the shade of a tree until they should finish. He noticed two damsels, also waiting with their flocks, which they had come to water. His chivalry was roused. He went at once among the goat-herds, made a place for the flocks of the damsels, gave them water, and then resumed his place in the shade. They were modest maidens, and had given him in three Arabic words the key of the whole situation. '*Abū-nā shaiḥūn Kabīrun* our father is a very old man, and therefore cannot come to water the flocks; we therefore do the work; we could not very well thrust ourselves among these men.'

In (desperate) need
Of any good
That Thou dost send me!"...³³⁵²

25. Afterwards one of the (damsels)
Came (back) to him, walking
Bashfully. She said: "My father
Invites thee that he may
Reward thee for having watered³³⁵³
(Our flocks) for us." So when
He came to him and narrated
The story, he said:
"Fear thou not: (well) hast thou
Escaped from unjust people."³³⁵⁴

فَإِذَا تَدَارَكَهُمَا تَمَشَّى عَلَى أَسْتَحْيَاءٍ قَالَتْ
إِنَّ أَبِي يَدْعُوكَ لِيَجْزِيَكَ أَجْرَ مَا سَقَيْتَ
لَنَا قَلَمًا جَاءَهُ، وَفَضَّ عَلَيْهِ الْقَصَصَ قَالَ
لَا تَخَفْ نَجَوْتَ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٣٥﴾

3352. The maidens are gone, with smiles on their lips and gratitude in their hearts. What were the reflections of Moses as he returned to the shade of the tree? He returned thanks to Allah for the bright little vision which he had just seen. Had he done a good deed? Precious was the opportunity he had had. He had slaked his thirst. But he was a homeless wanderer and had a longing in his soul, which he dared not put into words. Those shepherds were no company for him. He was truly like a beggar in desperate need. For any little good that came his way, he was grateful. But what was this?—this vision of a comfortable household, presided over by an old man rich in flocks and herds, and richer still in two daughters, as modest as they were beautiful? Perhaps he would never see them again! But Allah was preparing another surprise for him.

3353. Scarcely had he rested, when one of the damsels came back, walking with bashful grace! Modestly she gave her message. 'My father is grateful for what you did for us. He invites you, that he may thank you personally, and at least give some return for your kindness.'

3354. Nothing could have been more welcome than such a message, and through such a messenger. Moses went of course, and saw the old man. He found such a well-ordered patriarchal household. The old man was happy in his daughters and they in him. There was mutual confidence. They had evidently described the stranger to him in terms which made his welcome a foregone conclusion. On the other hand Moses had allowed his imagination to paint the father in something of the glorious colours in which his daughters had appeared to him like an angelic vision. The two men got to be friends at once. Moses told the old man his story,—who he was, how he was brought up, and what misfortunes had made him quit Egypt. Perhaps the whole household, including the daughters, listened breathlessly to his tale. Perhaps their wonder and admiration were mingled with a certain amount of pity—perhaps with some more tender feeling in the case of the girl who had been to fetch him. In any case the stranger had won his place in their hearts. The old man, the head of the household, assured him of hospitality and safety under his roof. As one with a long experience of life he congratulated him on his escape. 'Who would live among unjust people? It is as well you are free of them!'

26. Said one of the (damsels):

"O my (dear) father! engage³³⁵⁵

Him on wages: truly the best

Of men for thee to employ is

The (man) who is strong and

trusty"...³³⁵⁶

27. He said: "I intend to wed

One of these my daughters

To thee, on condition that

Thou serve me for eight years,³³⁵⁷

But if thou complete ten years,

It will be (grace) from thee.

But I intend not to place

Thee under a difficulty:

Thou wilt find me,

Indeed, if Allah wills,

One of the righteous."

قَالَتْ إِحْدَاهُمَا يَأَبَتِ اسْتَغْرِهْ إِنَّكَ خَيْرٌ
مَنْ اسْتَغْرَتِ الْقَوِيُّ الْأَمِينُ ﴿٦٦﴾

قَالَ إِنِّي أُرِيدُ أَنْ نِكَحَكَ إِحْدَى ابْنَتَي هَاتَيْنِ
عَلَى أَنْ تَأْجُرَنِي ثَمَنِي حَتَّىٰ حَجَّحَ فَإِنْ أَتَمَمْتَ
عَشْرًا فَمِنْ عِنْدِكَ وَمَا أُرِيدُ أَنْ أَشُقَّ
عَلَيْكَ سَتَجِدُنِي إِن شَاءَ اللَّهُ
مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ ﴿٦٧﴾

3355. A little time passes. A guest after all cannot stay for ever. They all feel that it would be good to have him with them permanently. The girl who had given her heart to him had spoken their unspoken thoughts. Why not employ him to tend the flocks? The father was old, and a young man was wanted to look after the flocks. And-there may be other possibilities.

3356. *Strong and trusty*: Moses had proved himself to be both, and these were the very qualities which a woman most admires in the man she loves.

3357. A little time passed, and at length the father broached the subject of marriage. It was not for the fugitive to suggest a permanent tie, especially when, in the wealth of this world, the girl's family was superior, and they had an established position, while he was a mere wanderer. The father asked if he would marry one of the daughters and stay with them for at least eight years, or if he liked, ten years, but the longer term was at his option. If he brought no dower, his service for that period was more than sufficient in lieu of dower. The particular girl intended was no doubt tacitly settled long before, by the mutual attraction of the young hearts themselves. Moses was glad of the proposal, and accepted it. They ratified it in the most solemn manner, by appealing to Allah. The old man, knowing the worth of his son-in-law, solemnly assured him that in any event he would not take advantage of his position to be a hard task-master or to insist on anything inconsistent with Moses's interests, should a new future open out to him. And a new and glorious future was awaiting him after his apprenticeship.

28. He said: "Be that (the agreement)
Between me and thee:
Whichever of the two terms
I fulfil, let there be
No injustice to me.
Be Allah a witness
To what we say."³³⁵⁸

قَالَ ذَلِكَ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَكَ أَيَّمَا الْأَجَلَيْنِ
قَضَيْتُ فَلَا عُدْوَةَ عَلَيَّ وَاللَّهُ عَلَى مَا نَقُولُ
وَكِيلٌ ﴿٢٨﴾

SECTION 4.

29. Now when Moses had fulfilled
The term, and was travelling³³⁵⁹
With his family, he perceived
A fire in the direction
Of Mount Tūr. He said
To his family: "Tarry ye;
I perceive a fire; I hope
To bring you from there
Some information, or a burning
Firebrand, that ye may
Warm yourselves."³³⁶⁰

﴿٢٩﴾ فَلَمَّا قَضَىٰ مُوسَى الْأَجَلَ وَسَارَ بِأَهْلِهِ آنَسَ
مِنْ جَانِبِ الطُّورِ نَارًا قَالَ لِأَهْلِهِ امْكُثُوا
إِنِّي آنَسْتُ نَارًا لَّعَلِّي آتِيكُمْ مِنْهَا بِخَبَرٍ
أَوْ خَذُوقٍ مِنْ النَّارِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَصْطَلُونَ ﴿٣٠﴾

3358. In patriarchal society it was not uncommon to have a marriage bargain of this kind conditional on a certain term of service. In this case the episode conveys two lessons. (1) A man destined to be a messenger of Allah is yet a man, and must pass through the ups and downs of life like any other man: only he will do it with more grace and distinction than other men. (2) The beautiful relations in love and marriage may themselves be a preparation for the highest spiritual destiny that may await a Messenger of Allah. A woman need not necessarily be a snare and a temptation: she may be the understanding help-mate that the Lady *Khadija* was to the holy Prophet.

3359. The episode in the desert, full of human interest, now closes, and we come to the threshold of the sacred Call to the divine ministry of Moses. Here we may compare this passage with that in xxvii. 7-14 and previous passages. In this passage we are told, after reference to Moses's preparation for his high destiny, of the particular sin of Arrogance and Sacrilege of which Pharaoh was guilty (xxviii 38-39), how it was punished, and with what instruments in the hands of Moses and Pharaoh. The notes on the earlier passage should be read, as explanations already given need not now be repeated.

3360. Note how the transition is effected from the happy life of Moses to the new prophetic mission.

30. But when he came
To the (Fire), he was called
From the right bank
Of the valley, from a tree³³⁶¹
In hallowed ground:
"O Moses! Verily
I am Allah, the Lord
Of the Worlds...

فَلَمَّا أَتَاهَا نُودِيَ مِنْ شَاطِئِ الْوَادِ الْأَيْمَنِ
فِي الْبُقْعَةِ الْمُبَارَكَةِ مِنَ الشَّجَرَةِ أَنْ يَمْوِسَ
إِنِّي أَنَا اللَّهُ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٣٠﴾

31. "Now do thou throw thy rod!"
But when he saw it
Moving (of its own accord)
As if it had been a snake,
He turned back in retreat,
And retraced not his steps:
"O Moses!" (it was said),
"Draw near, and fear not:
For thou art of those
Who are secure."³³⁶²

وَأَنْ أَلْقِ عَصَاكَ فَلَمَّا رَآهَا هَآئِهِ تَركَانَهَا
جَانًّا وَلَيْ مُدْبِرًا وَلَمْ يُعَقِّبْ يَمْوِسْ أَقْبَلَ
وَلَا تَخَفْ إِنَّكَ مِنَ الْآمِنِينَ ﴿٣١﴾

32. "Thrust thy hand into
Thy bosom, and it will
Come forth white without stain
(Or harm), and draw thy hand
Close to thy side

أَسْلَكَ يَدَكَ فِي جَيْبِكَ تَخْرُجُ بَيْضَاءَ مِنْ غَيْرِ سُوءٍ
وَاضْمُمْ إِلَيْكَ جَنَاحَكَ مِنَ الرَّهْبِ فَذَلَّكَ

3361. We are to suppose the appearance of a bush burning but not consumed (Exod. iii. 2), a device adopted by the Scottish Church in its armorial bearings. Scotland apparently took that emblem and motto (*Nec tamen consumebatur*, 'nevertheless it was not consumed') from the Synod of the Reformed Church of France, which had adopted it in 1583. (I am indebted for this information to the Rev. D.Y. Robertson, Chaplain of the Church of Scotland in Simla). The real explanation of the Burning Bush will be found in xxvii. 8, n. 3245.

3362. The verbal meaning is: 'you have nothing to fear from what appears to be a snake: it is a snake, not for you, but for Pharaoh.' But there is a deeper meaning besides. Moses had now been called to a higher prophetic mission. He had to meet the hatred of the Egyptians and circumvent their trickery and magic. He had now the security of Faith: in all dangers and difficulties Allah would guide and protect him, for he was actually in Allah's service, one of the Elect.

(To guard) against fear.³³⁶³
Those are the two credentials
From thy Lord to Pharaoh
And his Chiefs: for truly
They are a people
Rebellious and wicked.”

33. He said: “O my Lord!
I have slain a man
Among them, and I fear³³⁶⁴
Lest they slay me.

34. “And my brother Aaron—
He is more eloquent in speech
Than I: so send him
With me as a helper,
To confirm (and strengthen) me:
For I fear that they may
Accuse me of falsehood.”

35. He said: “We will certainly
Strengthen thy arm through
Thy brother, and invest you both
With authority, so they
Shall not be able to³³⁶⁵

بَرَهَانَيْنِ مِنْ رَبِّكَ إِلَىٰ فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَلَئِهِ
إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا قَوْمًا فَسِيقِينَ ﴿٣٢﴾

قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّي قُلْتُ مِنْهُمْ نَفْسًا فَأَخَافُ
أَنْ يَقْتُلُونِ ﴿٣٣﴾

وَإِخِي هَارُونَ هُوَ أَفْصَحُ مِنِّي لِسَانًا فَأَرْسَلَهُ
مَعِيَ رِدْءًا يُصَدِّقُنِي إِنِّي أَخَافُ أَنْ يُكَذِّبُونِ ﴿٣٤﴾

قَالَ سَنَشُدُّ عَضُدَكَ بِإِخِيكَ وَنَجْعَلُ لَكُمَا
سُلْطَانًا فَلَا يَصِلُونَ إِلَيْكُمَا بِأَيِّدِنَا
أَن تَمَآوَا مِنْ أَتْبَعِكُمَا أَفَلَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٣٥﴾

3363. Literally, “draw thy wing close to thy side, (away) from fear”. When a bird is frightened, it ruffles its wings and prepares to fly away, but when it is calm and composed, it sits with its wings drawn close to its sides, showing a mind secure from danger. Cf. also n. 2550 to xx. 22.

3364. It is not that Moses is not reassured from all fear on account of the apparent snake which his rod had become, or from the sacred and unfamiliar surroundings in which he found himself. On this point his heart has been completely assured. But he is still new to his mission, and the future is obscure to his mind. Pharaoh was after him, to take his life, and apparently with good cause, because one of Pharaoh's men had been slain at his hands. And now he is commanded to go to Pharaoh and rebuke him and his Chiefs. The inner doubts and difficulties of his human mind he frankly lays before his Lord, and asks for a little human and visible support, which is granted him at once, viz.; the help of his brother Aaron.

3365. *To touch you:* to approach you anywhere near, in the wonders and Signs that you will show them under the divine authority with which you are invested.

Touch you: with Our Signs
Shall ye triumph,—you two
As well as those
Who follow you.”³³⁶⁶

36. When Moses came to them
With Our Clear Signs, they said:
“This is nothing but sorcery”³³⁶⁷
Faked up: never did we
Hear the like among our fathers
Of old!”³³⁶⁸

37. Moses said: “My Lord
Knows best who it is
That comes with guidance
From Him and whose End
Will be best in the Hereafter:
Certain it is that
The wrong-doers will not
prosper.”³³⁶⁹

فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ مُوسَىٰ بِآيَاتِنَا بَيِّنَاتٍ قَالُوا
مَا هَذَا إِلَّا أَسْحَرٌ مُّفْتَرًى وَمَا سَمِعْنَا بِهَذَا
فِي آبَائِنَا الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿٣٦﴾

وَقَالَ مُوسَىٰ رَبِّي أَعْلَمُ بِمَنِ جَاءَ بِالْهُدَىٰ
مِنْ عِنْدِهِ وَمَنْ تَكُونُ لَهُ عَاقِبَةُ الدَّارِ
إِنَّهُ لَا يَفْلَحُ الظَّالِمُونَ ﴿٣٧﴾

3366. The potency of Allah's Light is such that its divine rays reach the humblest of those who seek after Him. The Prophets can certainly work wonders, but their sincere followers in Faith can do so also in their own spheres. Wonders may appeal to people, but they are not the highest signs of Allah's workings, and they are around us every day in our lives.

3367. This is what Moses was thinking of when he had said: “They may accuse me of falsehood”. To accuse the purest Truth of lying is a favourite trick of those whose chief stock-in-trade is deception and sorcery and catching the attention of the vulgar by arts adapted to their ignorant minds!

3368. 'As to this higher talk of the worship of the One true God, why, our ancestors have worshipped power and patronage, as concentrated in Pharaoh, from the most ancient times!'

3369. Cf. vi. 135. The only argument in such a case is an appeal to Allah, and to the ultimate Future. Both of these appeals require Faith. But even if you do not rely on anything so high, you can see that Falsehood or evils crystallised in ancestral customs are not going to do any one any good.

38. Pharaoh said: "O Chiefs!
No god do I know for you³³⁷⁰
But myself: therefore,
O Hāmān! light me a (kiln
To bake bricks) out of clay,
And build me a lofty³³⁷¹
Palace, that I may mount up
To the god of Moses:
But as far as I am concerned,
I think (Moses) is a liar!"
39. And he was arrogant and insolent
In the land, beyond reason,-
He and his hosts: they thought
That they would not have
To return to Us!³³⁷²
40. So We seized him
And his hosts, and We
Flung them into the sea:³³⁷³
Now behold what was the End
Of those who did wrong!
41. And We made them (but)
Leaders inviting to the Fire;
And on the Day of Judgment
No help shall they find.

وَقَالَ فِرْعَوْنُ يَتْلُوا آيَاتِ الْمَلَأِ مَا عَلِمْتُ لَكُمْ
مِنْ إِلَهِ غَيْرِي فَأَوْقِدْ لِي يَهْمَنُ عَلَى الطِّينِ
فَأَجْعَلْ لِي صَرْحًا لَعَلِّي أَطَّلِعُ إِلَى إِلَهِ
مُوسَى وَإِنِّي لَأَظُنُّهُ مِنَ الْكَاذِبِينَ ﴿٣٨﴾

وَأَسْتَكْبَرُ هُوَ وَخُضُوذُهُ فِي الْأَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ
وَطَنُوا أَنَّهُمْ إِلَيْنَا لَا يُرْجَعُونَ ﴿٣٩﴾

فَأَخَذْنَاهُ وَخُضُوذَهُ فَنَبَذْنَاهُمْ فِي الْيَمِّ
فَانْظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ
عَاقِبَةُ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٤٠﴾

وَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ أَيْمَةً يَدْعُونَ إِلَى النَّارِ
وَيَوْمَ الْفَيْصَمَةِ لَا يُنْصَرُونَ ﴿٤١﴾

3370. Pharaoh claimed, himself, to be God,—not only one god among many, but the only god: "I am your Lord Most High": lxxix. 24. At any rate he did not see why his people should worship any one but him.

3371. I understand his speech to his minister Hāmān to be sarcastic. But some Commentators have taken it very seriously and imagined that he actually thought of reaching the heavens by building lofty towers.

3372. They did not believe in the Hereafter. They did not understand that every deed must have its inevitable consequence, good, or evil, unless the Grace of Allah intervenes to save us from ourselves!

3373. Pharaoh and his hosts were drowned in the sea in their pursuit of the Israelites: see vii. 130-136. They are the type of men who lead—only to Destruction. They invite, not to Peace and Happiness, but to the Fire of Wrath, mutual Envy, and Hatred.

42. In this world We made
A Curse to follow them:³³⁷⁴
And on the Day of Judgment
They will be among
The loathed (and despised).

SECTION 5.

43. We did reveal to Moses
The Book after We had
Destroyed the earlier generations,
(To give) Insight to men,
And Guidance and Mercy,
That they might receive
admonition.³³⁷⁵
44. Thou wast not on the Western³³⁷⁶
Side when We decreed
The Commission to Moses,

وَاتَّبَعْنَاهُمْ فِي هَذِهِ الدُّنْيَا لَعْنَةً
وَيَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ هُمْ مِنَ الْمَقْبُوحِينَ ﴿٤٢﴾

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ مِنْ بَعْدِ
مَا أَهْلَكْنَا الْقُرُونَ الْأُولَىٰ بَصَائِرَ لِلنَّاسِ
وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةً لَّعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٤٣﴾

وَمَا كُنْتَ بِجَانِبِ الْغَرْبِيِّ إِذْ قَضَيْنَا إِلَىٰ مُوسَى
الْأَمْرَ وَمَا كُنْتَ مِنَ الشَّاهِدِينَ ﴿٤٤﴾

3374. Power and patronage may be lauded by sycophants and selfish place-hunters; but when they are misused, and when their exposure causes their fall, they suffer ignominy even in this life. If they manage to escape exposure while alive, it often happens that they are found out after their death, and the curses of many generations follow those whose oppressions and wrong-doing spoiled the fair face of Allah's earth. But even this is nothing to the true Punishment that will come in the Hereafter. There, true values will be restored, and some of the highest and mightiest will be in the lowest depths of degradation.

3375. After the destruction of the Pharaonic Tyranny and other similar Tyrannies before them, Allah began a new age of Revelation, the age of Moses and his Book. Humanity began as it were with a clean slate again. It was a full Revelation (or *Shari'at*) which may be looked at from three points of view: (1) as Light or Insight for men, so that they should not grope in darkness; (2) as a Guide to show them the Way, so that they should not be misled into wrong Paths; and (3) as a Mercy from Allah, so that by following the Way they may receive Allah's Forgiveness and Grace. In vi. 91, we have a reference to Light and Guidance in connection with the Revelation of Moses, and in vi. 154 we have a reference to Guidance and Mercy in the same connection. Here all three are combined, with the substitution of *Basair* for *Nur*. *Basair* is the plural of *Basirat*, and may also be translated Proofs, as I have done in vi. 104 Cf. also vii. 203, n. 1175, where the word is translated "Lights".

3376. The Sinai Peninsula is in the north-west corner of Arabia. But the reference here is, I think, to the western side of the valley of *Tuwā*. Mount *Tūr*, where Moses received his prophetic commission, is on the western side of the valley.

Nor wast thou a witness
(Of those events).

45. But We raised up (new)
Generations, and long were the
ages³³⁷⁷

That passed over them;
But thou wast not a dweller
Among the people of Madyan,
Rehearsing Our Signs to them;
But it is We Who send
Messengers (with inspiration).³³⁷⁸

46. Nor wast thou at the side
Of (the Mountain of) Tūr
When We called (to Moses).
Yet (art thou sent)
As a Mercy from thy Lord,
To give warning to a people³³⁷⁹
To whom no warner had come
Before thee: in order that
They may receive admonition.

47. If (We had) not (sent thee
To the Quraish),-in case
A calamity should seize them
For (the deeds) that their hands
Have sent forth, they might say:

وَلَكِنَّا أَنشَأْنَا قُرُونًا فَتَطَاوَلَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْعُمُرُ
وَمَا كُنْتَ ثَاوِيًا فِي أَهْلِ مَدْيَنَ تَتْلُو
عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِنَا وَلَكِنَّا كُنَّا مُرْسِلِينَ ﴿٤٥﴾

وَمَا كُنْتَ بِجَانِبِ الطُّورِ إِذْ نَادَيْنَا وَلَكِنْ رَحْمَةً
مِّن رَّبِّكَ لِتُنذِرَ قَوْمًا مَّا أَتَتْهُمْ مِّنْ نَّذِيرٍ
مِّن قَبْلِكَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٤٦﴾

وَلَوْلَا أَن تُصِيبَهُمْ مُّصِيبَةٌ بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ
فَيَقُولُوا رَبَّنَا لَوْلَا أَرْسَلْتَ إِلَيْنَا رَسُولًا فَنَتَّبِعَ

3377. That is, there were many generations that passed between Moses and the holy Prophet. Yet he knew by inspiration of the events of those times. Even if he had lived then, he could not have known the events that took place among the Midianites, except by inspiration, as he did not dwell among them.

3378. 'Though thou wast not among the Midianites, Our inspiration has told thee of the momentous events that took place among them when Moses was with them. This is itself a Sign that should make thy people understand.'

3379. This people was the Quraish. 'Though thou didst not see how Moses was invested with the prophetic office at Mount Tūr, thou hast had similar experience thyself, and We have sent thee to the Quraish to warn them of all their sins, and to repent and come into the Faith'.

"Our Lord! why didst Thou not³³⁸⁰
Send us a messenger? We
Should then have followed
The Signs and been amongst
Those who believe!"

48. But (now), when the Truth
Has come to them from Ourselves,
They say, "Why are not
(Signs) sent to him, like
Those which were sent to
Moses?"³³⁸¹

Do they not then reject
(The Signs) which were formerly
Sent to Moses? They say:
"Two kinds of sorcery,
Each assisting the other!"³³⁸²
And they say: "For us,
We reject all (such things)!"

عَايَنِكَ وَتَكُونُ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٤٧﴾

فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ الْحَقُّ مِنْ عِنْدِنَا قَالُوا لَوْلَا أُوْتِيَ
مِثْلَ مَا أُوتِيَ مُوسَىٰ أَوْ لَمْ يَكْفُرُوا بِمَا أُوتِيَ
مُوسَىٰ مِنْ قَبْلُ قَالُوا سِحْرَانِ تَظَاهَرَا
وَقَالُوا إِنَّا بِكُلِّ كَافِرُونَ ﴿٤٨﴾

3380. Now that a warner has come among them with all the authority that previous Messengers possessed and with all the knowledge which can only come by divine inspiration, they have no excuse left whatever. They cannot say, "No warner came to us." If any evil comes to them, as the inevitable result of their ill-deeds, they cannot blame Allah and say that they were not warned. Cf. xx. 134.

3381. When a Revelation is sent to them, in the Qur-ān, adapted to all their needs and the needs of the time they live in, they hark back to antiquity. The holy Prophet was in many respects like Moses, but the times in which he lived were different from the times of Moses, and his age did not suffer from the deceptions of sorcery, like that of Moses. The remedies which his age and future ages required (for his Message was universal) were different. His miracle of the Qur-ān was different and most permanent than the Rod and the Radiant-White Hand of Moses. But supposing that the Quraish had been humoured in their insincere demands, would they have believed? Did they believe in Moses? They were only put up by the Jews to make objections which they themselves did not believe in.

3382. Moses was called a sorcerer by the Egyptians, and the wonderful words of the Qur-ān were called sorcery by the Quraish. As the Qur-ān confirmed the Message of Moses, the Quraish objectors said that they were in collusion. The Quraish did not believe in Allah's Revelation at all.

49. Say: "Then bring ye
A Book from Allah,
Which is a better Guide
Than either of them,
That I may follow it!
(Do), if ye are truthful!"
50. But if they hearken not³³⁸³
To thee, know that they
Only follow their own lusts:
And who is more astray
Than one who follows his own
Lusts, devoid of guidance
From Allah? For Allah guides not
People given to wrong-doing.

SECTION 6.

51. Now have We brought them
The Word in order that
They may receive admonition.³³⁸⁴
52. Those to whom We sent
The Book before this,—they
Do believe in this (Revelation);
53. And when it is recited
To them, they say: "We
Believe therein, for it is
The Truth from our Lord:

قُلْ فَأْتُوا بِكِتَابٍ مِّنْ عِندِ اللَّهِ هُوَ أَهْدَىٰ مِنْهُمَا
أَتَّبِعُهُ إِن كُنتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿١١﴾

فَإِن لَّمْ يَسْتَجِيبُوا لَكَ فَاعْلَمْ أَنَّمَا يَتَّبِعُونَ
أَهْوَاءَهُمْ وَمَنْ أَضَلُّ مِمَّنْ اتَّبَعَ هَوَاهُ بَغْيَرٍ
هُدًى مِّنَ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي
الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٥٠﴾

وَلَقَدْ وَصَّلْنَا لَهُمُ الْقَوْلَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَذْكُرُونَ ﴿٥١﴾

الَّذِينَ ءَاتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ مِن قَبْلِهِ
هُم بِهِ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٥٢﴾

وَإِذَا نُنزلُ عَلَيْهِمْ قَالُوا ءَأَمَّا إِلَهُنَا إِلَهُ الْحَقِّ مِن رَّبِّنَا
إِنَّا كُنَّا مِن قَبْلِهِ مُسْلِمِينَ ﴿٥٣﴾

3383. They were challenged to produce something better, to be a guide in life. But as they could not, it was evident that their objections were fractious. They were only following their own selfish lusts of power, monopoly, and exploitation of the poor and ignorant. How can such people receive guidance?

3384. Before this the Quraish might have said that the Word of Allah had come to the Hebrews in their tongue or in Greek, which was used by the Hebrews in the time of Jesus. Now that Word is brought to their own doors, in their own Arabic tongue, by a man of their own race and family. Surely they have no excuse now for remaining strangers to the higher moral and spiritual law.

Indeed we have been Muslims
(Bowing to Allah's Will)
From before this.³³⁸⁵

54. Twice will they be given³³⁸⁶
Their reward, for that they
Have persevered, that they avert
Evil with Good, and that
They spend (in charity) out of
What We have given them.

أُولَٰئِكَ يُؤْتَوْنَ أَجْرَهُم مَّرَّتَيْنِ بِمَا صَبَرُوا وَيَدْرَءُونَ
بِالْحَسَنَةِ السَّيِّئَةَ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنفِقُونَ ﴿٥٤﴾

55. And when they hear vain talk,
They turn away therefrom
And say: "To us our deeds,
And to you yours,"³³⁸⁷
Peace be to you: we
Seek not the ignorant."

وَإِذَا سَمِعُوا اللَّغْوَ أَعْرَضُوا عَنْهُ وَقَالُوا لَنَا
أَعْمَالُنَا وَلَكُمْ أَعْمَالُكُمْ سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ
لَا نَبْنِئُ الْجَاهِلِينَ ﴿٥٥﴾

56. It is true thou wilt not
Be able to guide every one³³⁸⁸
Whom thou lovest; but Allah
Guides those whom He will
And He knows best those
Who receive guidance.

إِنَّكَ لَا تَهْدِي مَنْ أَحْبَبْتَ وَلَٰكِنَّ اللَّهَ يَهْدِي
مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ ﴿٥٦﴾

3385. There were Christians and Jews who recognised that Islam was a logical and natural development of Allah's revelations as given in earlier ages, and they not only welcomed and accepted Islam, but claimed, and rightly, that they had always been Muslims. In that sense Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus had all been Muslims.

3386. Their credit is twofold, in that before they knew Islam, they followed the earlier Law in truth and sincerity, and when they were offered Islam, they readily recognised and accepted it, suffered in patient perseverance for its sake, and brought forth the fruits of righteousness.

3387. The righteous do not encourage idle talk or foolish arguments about things sacred. If they find themselves in some company in which such things are fashionable, they leave politely. Their only rejoinder is: "We are responsible for our deeds, and you for yours; we have no ill-will against you; we wish you well, and that is why we wish you to know of the knowledge we have received; after that knowledge you cannot expect us to go back to the Ignorance which we have left."

3388. The immediate occasion for this was the death of Abū Talib, an uncle whom the holy Prophet loved dearly and who had befriended and protected him. The Prophet was naturally anxious that he should die in the profession of the true Faith, but the pagan =

57. They say: "If we were
To follow the guidance with thee,
We should be snatched away³³⁸⁹
From our land." Have We not
Established for them a secure
Sanctuary, to which are brought
As tribute fruits of all kinds,-
A provision from Ourselves?
But most of them understand not.

وَقَالُوا إِن نَّبِيعَ الْهُدَىٰ مَعَكَ نُنْخَطَفُ مِنْ أَرْضِنَا
أَوَلَمْ نُمْكِنْ لَهُمْ حَرَمًا آمِنًا يُجْبَىٰ إِلَيْهِ
ثَمَرَاتُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ رَزَقْنَا مِنْ لَدُنَّا وَلَكِنْ
أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٥٧﴾

58. And how many towns
We destroyed, which exulted
In their life (of ease and plenty)!
Now those habitations of theirs,
After them, are deserted,-
All but a (miserable) few!
And We are their heirs!³³⁹⁰

وَكَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا مِنْ قَرْيَةٍ بَطَرَتْ مَعِيشَتَهَا
فَإِنَّكَ مَسْكَنُهُمْ لَا تَسْكُنُ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ
إِلَّا قَلِيلًا وَكُنَّا نَحْنُ الْوَارِثِينَ ﴿٥٨﴾

= Quraish leaders persuaded him to remain true to the faith of his fathers. This was an occasion of disappointment and grief to the Prophet. We are told that in such circumstances we should not grieve. All whom we love do not necessarily share our views or beliefs. We must not judge. Allah will guide whom He pleases and as He pleases. He alone knows the true inwardness of things.

3389. Some Quraish said: "We see the truth of Islam, but if we abandon our people, we shall lose our hold on the land, and other people will dispossess us." The answer is twofold, one literal and the other of deeper import. (1) 'Your land? Why, the sanctuary of Makkah is sacred and secure because Allah has made it so. If you obey Allah's Word, you will be strengthened, not weakened.' (2) 'Makkah is the symbol of the Fortress of Spiritual Well-being. The Fruit of every Deed comes or should come as a tribute to Spiritual Well-being. What are you afraid of? It is Allah's Fortress. The more you seek Allah, the stronger you are in the Fortress.'

3390. A life of ease and plenty is nothing to boast of. Yet peoples or cities or civilisations grow insolently proud of such things. There were many such in the past, which are now mere names! Their very sites are deserted in most cases, or buried in the debris of ages. India is full of such sites nearly everywhere. The sites of Harappa and Mohenjo Daro are the most ancient hitherto unearthed in India, and they are themselves in layers covering centuries of time! And how many more there may be, of which we do not know even names! Fatehpur-Sikri was a magnificent ruin within a single generation. And there are thousands of Qasbas once flourishing and now reduced to small villages or altogether deserted. But God is merciful and just. He does not destroy or degrade a people until they have had full opportunities of turning in repentance to Him and they have deliberately rejected His Law and continued in the practice of iniquity.

59. Nor was thy Lord the one
To destroy a town until
He had sent to its Centre
A messenger, rehearsing to them
Our Signs; nor are We
Going to destroy a population
Except when its members
Practise iniquity.

وَمَا كَانَ رَبُّكَ مُهْلِكَ الْقُرَى حَتَّى يَبْعَثَ فِي أُمِّهَا
رَسُولًا يُتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِنَا وَنُفَصِّلُ لَكَ
الْقُرَى إِلَّا وَأَهْلُهَا ظَالِمُونَ ﴿٥٩﴾

60. The (material) things which
Ye are given are but
The conveniences of this life
And the glitter thereof;³³⁹¹
But that which is with Allah
Is better and more enduring:
Will ye not then be wise?

وَمَا أُوتِيتُمْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ فَمَتَّعُ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا وَزِينَتَهَا
وَمَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ خَيْرٌ وَأَبْقَى أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٦٠﴾

SECTION 7.

61. Are (these two) alike?—
One to whom We have made
A goodly promise, and who
Is going to reach its (fulfilment),³³⁹²
And one to whom We have
Given the good things of this
Life, but who, on the Day
Of judgment, is to be among
Those brought up (for
punishment)?

أَفَمَنْ وَعَدْنَاهُ وَعْدًا حَسَنًا فَهُوَ لَاقِيهِ
كَمَنْ مَنَعْنَاهُ مَتَاعَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا ثُمَّ هُوَ يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ
مِنَ الْمُخْضَرِينَ ﴿٦١﴾

3391. The good things of this life have their uses and serve their convenience. But they are fleeting and their value is infinitely lower than that of Truth and Justice and Spiritual Well-being, the gifts which come as it were from Allah. No wise soul will be absorbed in the one and neglect the other, or will hesitate for a moment if it comes to be a choice between them.

3392. The two classes of people are: (1) those who have faith in the goodly promise of Allah to the righteous, and who are doing everything in life to reach the fulfilment of that promise, i.e., those who believe and work righteousness, and (2) those who are ungrateful for such good things in this life as Allah has bestowed on them, by worshipping wealth or power or other symbols or idols of their fancy, i.e., those who reject Faith and lead evil lives, for which they will have to answer in the Hereafter. The two classes are poles asunder, and their future is described below.

62. That Day (Allah) will
Call to them, and say:
"Where are My 'partners'?-
Whom ye imagined (to be such)?"

63. Those against whom the charge³³⁹³
Will be proved, will say:
"Our Lord! These are the ones
Whom we led astray:
We led them astray, as we
Were astray ourselves: we free
Ourselves (from them) to you.
It was not us they worshipped."³³⁹⁴

64. It will be said (to them):
"Call upon your 'partners'
(For help)": they will call
Upon them, but they will not
Listen to them; and they
Will see the Chastisement (before
them);
(How they will wish)
'If only they had been
Open to guidance!'

65. That Day (Allah) will³³⁹⁵
Call to them, and say:

وَيَوْمَ يُنَادِيهِمْ فَيَقُولُ أَيْنَ شُرَكَائِيَ الَّذِينَ
كُنْتُمْ تَزْعُمُونَ ﴿٦٢﴾

قَالَ الَّذِينَ حَقَّ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقَوْلُ رَبَّنَا هَؤُلَاءِ
الَّذِينَ آغْوَيْنَا آغْوَيْنَاهُمْ كَمَا غَوَيْنَا تَبَرَّأْنَا إِلَيْكَ
مَا كَانُوا إِلَّا نَايِبُونَ ﴿٦٣﴾

وَقِيلَ ادْعُوا شُرَكَاءَكُمْ فَدَعَوْهُمُ فَلَمْ يَسْتَجِيبُوا
لَهُمْ وَرَأُوا الْعَذَابَ لَوْ أَنََّّهُمْ كَانُوا يَهْتَدُونَ ﴿٦٤﴾

وَيَوْمَ يُنَادِيهِمْ فَيَقُولُ مَاذَا أَجَبْتُمُ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿٦٥﴾

3393. This and the next verse are concerned with the examination of those who neglected truth and righteousness and went after the worship of false gods. These were the "partners" they associated with Allah. In so far as they were embodied in false or wicked leaders, the leaders will disown responsibility for them. 'We ourselves went wrong, and they followed our example, because it suited them: they worshipped, not us, but their own lusts.'

3394. Cf. x. 28 False worship often names others, but really it is the worship of Self. The others whom they name will have nothing to do with them when the awful Penalty stands in the sight of both. Then each wrong-doer will have to look to his own case. The wicked will then realise the gravity of the situation and wish that they had accepted the true guidance of Allah's Messengers.

3395. Now we come to the examination of those who rejected or persecuted Allah's Messengers on the earth. It may be the same men as those mentioned in xxviii. 62-64, but this is a different count in the charge.

"What was the answer
Ye gave to the messengers?"

66. Then the arguments that day
Will be obscure to them³³⁹⁶
And they will not be able
(Even) to question each other.
67. But any that (in this life)
Had repented, believed, and worked
Righteousness, haply
He shall be one of the
Successful.
68. Thy Lord does create and choose
As He pleases:³³⁹⁷ no choice
Have they (in the matter):
Glory to Allah! and far
Is He above the partners
They ascribe (to Him)!
69. And thy Lord knows all
That their hearts conceal
And all that they reveal.³³⁹⁸
70. And He is Allah: there is
No god but He. To Him
Be praise, at the first
And at the last:

فَعِمَّتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الْأَنْبَاءُ يَوْمَئِذٍ
فَهُمْ لَا يَتَسَاءَلُونَ ﴿٦٦﴾

فَأَمَّا مَنْ تَابَ وَآمَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَعَسَى
أَنْ يَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُفْلِحِينَ ﴿٦٧﴾

وَرَبُّكَ يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَاءُ وَيَخْتَارُ مَا كَانَ
لَهُمُ الْخِيَرَةُ سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ وَتَعَالَى
عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٦٨﴾

وَرَبُّكَ يَعْلَمُ مَا تُكِنُّ صُدُورُهُمْ
وَمَا يُعْلِنُونَ ﴿٦٩﴾

وَهُوَ اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ لَهُ الْحَمْدُ فِي الْأُولَى
وَالْآخِرَةِ وَهُوَ الْحَكِيمُ وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ ﴿٧٠﴾

3396. In their utter confusion and despair their minds will be blank. The past will seem to them unreal, and the present unintelligible, and they will not even be able to consult each other, as every one's state will be the same.

3397. *As He pleases:* according to His own Will and Plan. Allah is not dependent on other people for advice or help. He has no partners. All creation is an act of His Will, and no one can direct Him how or why certain things should be, because He is supreme in wisdom and knowledge. He chooses His messengers also by His own unfettered choice. Inspiration or spiritual knowledge and dignity cannot be judged of by our relative or temporary standards. Worldly greatness or even wisdom do not necessarily go with spiritual insight.

3398. Men may form all sorts of vain wishes or conceal their designs. But Allah's Will is supreme, and nothing can withstand its fulfilment.

For Him is the Command,
And to Him shall ye
(All) be brought back.

71. Say: See ye? If Allah
Were to make the Night³³⁹⁹
Perpetual over you to the Day
Of Judgment, what god
Is there other than Allah,
Who can give you light?
Will ye not then hearken?

72. Say: See ye? If Allah
Were to make the Day
Perpetual over you to the Day
Of Judgment, what god
Is there other than Allah,
Who can give you a Night
In which ye can rest?
Will ye not then see?³⁴⁰⁰

قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ جَعَلَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكُمُ اللَّيْلَ سَرْمَدًا
إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَمَةِ مَنْ إِلَهٌ غَيْرُ اللَّهِ يَأْتِيكُمْ بِضِيَاءٍ
أَفَلَا تَسْمَعُونَ ﴿٧١﴾

قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ جَعَلَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكُمُ النَّهَارَ
سَرْمَدًا إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَمَةِ مَنْ إِلَهٌ غَيْرُ اللَّهِ
يَأْتِيكُمْ بِاللَّيْلِ تَسْكُنُونَ
فِيهِ أَفَلَا تُبْصِرُونَ ﴿٧٢﴾

3399. In the physical world the Night and the Day are both blessings, the one for rest and the other for work, and the alternation itself is one of the mercies of Allah, and none but He can give us these blessings. If we were perpetually resting, or screened from the light, our faculties would be blunted and we should be worse than dead. If we were perpetually working, we should be tired, and we should also be dead in another way. This daily miracle keeps us alive and prepares us, in this our probationary life, for our final destiny in the Hereafter. In the same way our spiritual strivings require periodical alternations of rest in the form of attention to our temporal concerns: hence the justification of a good and pure life on the plane of this earth also. Also, in the world's history, there are periods when a living messenger stimulates intense spiritual activity, and periods when it is comparatively quiescent (the so-called Dark Ages); but both are examples of the working of Allah's Plan of wisdom and mercy. But this applies only up to the Day of Judgment. After that we shall be on another plane altogether.

3400. In verse 71 was mentioned a "perpetual Night," for which the faculty of "hearkening" was appropriate, as all light was shut out. In this verse a perpetual Day is mentioned, for which the faculty of "seeing" is appropriate. Through many doors can the higher knowledge enter our souls. Shall we not use each of them as the occasion demands?

73. It is out of His Mercy
That He has made for you
Night and Day,—that ye
May rest therein, and that
Ye may seek of His Grace;—
And in order that ye
May be grateful.

وَمِنْ رَحْمَتِهِ جَعَلَ لَكُمُ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ لِتَسْكُنُوا
فِيهِ وَلِتَبْتَغُوا مِنْ فَضْلِهِ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٧٣﴾

74. The Day that He will³⁴⁰¹
Call on them, He will say:
“Where are My ‘partners’?
Whom ye imagined (to be such)?”

وَيَوْمَ يُنَادِيهِمْ فَيَقُولُ أَيْنَ شُرَكَاءِي
الَّذِينَ كُنتُمْ تَزْعُمُونَ ﴿٧٤﴾

75. And from each people
Shall We draw a witness,³⁴⁰²
And We shall say: “Produce
Your Proof”: then shall they
Know that the Truth is with
Allah (alone), and the (lies)
Which they invented will
Leave them in the lurch.³⁴⁰³

وَنَزَعْنَا مِنْ كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ شَهِيدًا فَقُلْنَا
هَاتُوا بُرْهَانَكُمْ فَعَلِمُوا أَنَّ الْحَقَّ لِلَّهِ
وَضَلَّ عَنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يَفْتَرُونَ ﴿٧٥﴾

SECTION 8.

76. Qārūn was doubtless,³⁴⁰⁴
Of the people of Moses; but
He acted insolently towards them:

﴿٧٦﴾ إِنَّ قَارُونَ كَانَ مِنْ قَوْمِ مُوسَى فَبَغَى
عَلَيْهِمْ وَءَاتَيْنَاهُ مِنَ الْكُنُوزِ مَا إِنَّ مَفَاتِحَهُ لَتَنُورُ

3401. Cf. xxviii. 62 above. The reminiscence of the words closes and rounds off the argument of this Section.

3402. Cf. iv. 41. The Prophet from each People or Nation will bear testimony that he preached the true gospel of Unity, and the People who rejected him will be asked to show the Proof or authority on which they rejected him: Cf. ii. 111.

3403. In that new world, all the fancies or lies, which had been invented in this world of reflected or relative truths mixed with illusions, will have vanished, and left those in the lurch who relied on them. Cf. vi. 24.

3404. Qārūn is identified with the Korah of the English Bible. His story is told in Num. xvi. 1-35. He and his followers, numbering 250 men, rose in rebellion against Moses and Aaron, on the ground that their position and fame in the congregation entitled them to quality in spiritual matters with the Priests,—that they were as holy as any, and they claimed to burn incense at the sacred Altar reserved for the Priests. They had an =

Such were the treasures We³⁴⁰⁵
 Had bestowed on him, that
 Their very keys would
 Have been a burden to
 A body of strong men.³⁴⁰⁶
 Behold, his people said to him:
 "Exult not, for Allah loveth not
 Those who exult (in riches).

77. "But seek, with the (wealth)
 Which Allah has bestowed on thee,
 The Home of the Hereafter,³⁴⁰⁷
 Nor forget thy portion in this
 World: but do thou good,
 As Allah has been good
 To thee, and seek not
 (Occasions for) mischief in the land:
 For Allah loves not those
 Who do mischief."

يَا لِعَصْبَةٍ أُولَى الْقُوَّةِ إِذْ قَالَ لَهُ قَوْمُهُ لَا تَفْرَحْ
 إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْفَرِحِينَ ﴿٧٦﴾

وَابْتَغِ فِيمَا آتَاكَ اللَّهُ الدَّارَ الْآخِرَةَ
 وَلَا تَنْسَ نَصِيبَكَ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا وَأَحْسِنَ
 كَمَا أَحْسَنَ اللَّهُ إِلَيْكَ وَلَا تَبْغِ الْفُسَادَ
 فِي الْأَرْضِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُفْسِدِينَ ﴿٧٧﴾

= exemplary punishment: "the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods: they, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them: and they perished from among the congregation."

3405. Qārūn's boundless wealth is described in the Midrashim, or the Jewish compilations based on the oral teachings of the Synagogues, which however exaggerate the weight of the keys to be the equivalent of the load of 300 mules!

3406. *Uṣbat*: a body of men, here used indefinitely. It usually implies a body of 10 to 40 men. The old-fashioned keys were big and heavy, and if there were hundreds of treasure-chests, the keys must have been a great weight. As they were travelling in the desert, the treasures were presumably left behind in Egypt, and only the keys were carried. The disloyal Qārūn had left his heart in Egypt, with his treasures.

3407. That is, 'spend your wealth in charity and good works. It is Allah Who has given it to you, and you should spend it in Allah's cause. Nor should you forget the legitimate needs of this life, as misers do, and most people become misers who think too exclusively of their wealth'. If wealth is not used properly, there are three evils that follow: (1) its possessor may be a miser and forget all claims due to himself and those about him; (2) he may forget the higher needs of the poor and needy, or the good causes which require support; and (3) he may even misspend on occasions and cause a great deal of harm and mischief. Apparently Qārūn had all three vices.

78. He said: "This has been given
To me because of a certain
Knowledge which I have."³⁴⁰⁸
Did he not know that Allah
Had destroyed, before him,
(Whole) generations,—which were
Superior to him in strength
And greater in the amount
(Of riches) they had collected?
But the wicked are not
Called (immediately) to account³⁴⁰⁹
For their sins.

قَالَ إِنَّمَا أُوتِيتُهُ عَلَىٰ عِلْمٍ عِنْدِي ۚ أَوَلَمْ يَعْلَم أَنَّ اللَّهَ
قَدْ أَهْلَكَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ مِنَ الْقُرُونِ مَنْ هُوَ أَشَدُّ مِنْهُ
قُوَّةً وَآكُفَرُ جَعَلًا وَلَا يَسْتَلْ عَنْ دُنُوهُمْ
الْمُجْرِمُونَ

79. So he went forth among
His people in the (pride
Of his worldly) glitter.
Said those whose aim is
The Life of this World:
"Oh! that we had the like
Of what Qārūn has got!
For he is truly a lord
Of mighty good fortune!"³⁴¹⁰

فَخَرَجَ عَلَى قَوْمِهِ فِي زِينَتِهِ ۖ قَالَ الَّذِينَ يُرِيدُونَ
الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا نَبِئْتُكُم مَّا أَوتِىَ قُنُودُ
إِنَّهُ لَذُو حَظٍّ عَظِيمٍ

80. But those who had been granted (True) knowledge said: "Alas For you! The reward of Allah (In the Hereafter) is best

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ وَيَلَكُمْ ثَوَابُ اللَّهِ
خَيْرٌ لِمَنْ ءَامَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا

3408. He was so blind and arrogant that he thought that his own merit, knowledge, and skill or cleverness had earned him his wealth, and that now, on account of it, he was superior to everybody else and was entitled to ride rough-shod over them. Fool!—he was soon pulled up by Allah.

3409. Even Qārūn was given a long run of enjoyment with his fabulous wealth before he had to be removed for the mischief he was doing.

3410. When he was in the hey-day of his glory, worldly people envied him and thought how happy they would be if they were in his place. Not so the people of wisdom and discernment. They knew a more precious and lasting wealth, which is described in the next verse.

For those who believe
And work righteousness: but this
None shall attain, save those
Who steadfastly persevere
(in good)."

81. Then We caused the earth³⁴¹¹
To swallow up him and
His house; and he had not
(The least little) party
To help him against Allah,
Nor could he defend himself.

82. And those who had envied
His position the day before
Began to say on the morrow:
"Ah! It is indeed Allah
Who enlarges the provision³⁴¹²
Or restricts it, to any
Of His servants He pleases!

وَلَا يُلْقِيهَا إِلَّا الصَّابِرُونَ ﴿٨١﴾

فَنَسْفَنَّا بِهِ وِيدَارِهِ الْأَرْضَ فَمَا كَانَ
لَهُ مِنْ فِئَةٍ يَنْصُرُونَهُ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ
وَمَا كَانَتْ مِنَ الْمُتَصَرِّينَ ﴿٨٢﴾

وَأَصْبَحَ الَّذِينَ تَمَنَّوْا مَكَانَهُ بِالْأَمْسِ يَقُولُونَ
وَيَكَابُ اللَّهُ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ
مِنْ عِبَادِهِ وَيَقْدِرُ لَوْلَا أَنْ مَنَّ اللَّهُ عَلَيْنَا

3411. See n. 3404 above. Cf. also xvi. 45 and n. 2071. Besides the obvious moral in the literal interpretation of the story, that material wealth is fleeting and may be a temptation and a cause of fall, there are some metaphorical implications that occur to me. (1) Material wealth has no value in itself, but only a relative and local value. (2) In body he was with Israel in the wilderness, but his heart was in Egypt with its fertility and its slavery. Such is the case of many hypocrites, who like to be seen in righteous company but whose thoughts, longings, and doing are inconsistent with such company. (3) There is no good in this life but comes from Allah. To think otherwise is to set up a false god besides Allah. Our own merits are so small that they should never be the object of our idolatry. (4) If Qārūn on account of his wealth was setting himself up in rivalry with Moses and Aaron, he was blind to the fact that spiritual knowledge is far above any little cleverness in worldly affairs. Mob-leaders have no position before spiritual guides.

3412. *Provision* or *Sustenance*, both literally and figuratively: wealth and material things in life as well as the things that sustain our higher and spiritual faculties. The rabble, that admired Qārūn's wealth when he was in worldly prosperity, now sees the other side of the question and understands that there are other gifts more precious and desirable, and that these may actually be withheld from men who enjoy wealth and worldly prosperity. In fact it is false prosperity, or no prosperity in the real sense of the word, which is without spiritual well-being.

Had it not been that Allah
Was gracious to us, He
Could have caused the earth
To swallow us up! Ah!
Those who reject Allah
Will assuredly never prosper."

SECTION 9.

83. That Home of the Hereafter
We shall give to those
Who intend not high-handedness
Or mischief on earth.³⁴¹³
And the End is (best)
For the righteous.

84. If any does good, the reward
To him is better than
His deed; but if any
Does evil, the doers of evil
Are only punished (to the extent)
Of their deeds.³⁴¹⁴

85. Verily He Who ordained³⁴¹⁵
The Qur-ān for thee, will bring

لَحَسَفَ بِنَّا وَيَكَاذِبُونَ لَا يَفْلِحُ الْكَافِرُونَ ﴿٨٢﴾

تِلْكَ الدَّارُ الْآخِرَةُ نَجْعُلُهَا لِلَّذِينَ لَا يُرِيدُونَ عُلُوًّا
فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فَسَادًا وَالْعَاقِبَةُ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿٨٣﴾

مَنْ جَاءَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ فَلَهُ خَيْرٌ مِنْهَا وَمَنْ جَاءَ
بِالسَّيِّئَةِ فَلَا يُجْزَى الَّذِينَ عَمِلُوا السَّيِّئَاتِ
إِلَّا مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٨٤﴾

إِنَّ الَّذِي فَرَضَ عَلَيْكَ الْقُرْآنَ لَرَأْدُكَ

3413. *High-handedness* or arrogance, as opposed to submission to the Will of Allah, Islam. *Mischief*, as opposed to doing good, bringing forth fruits of righteousness. It is the righteous who will win in the end.

3414. A good deed has its sure reward, and that reward will be better than the merits of the doer. An evil deed may be forgiven by repentance, but in any case will not be punished with a severer penalty than justice demands.

3415. That is: order in His wisdom and mercy that the Qur-ān should be revealed, containing guidance for conduct in this life and the next, and further ordered that it should be read out and taught and its principles observed in practice. It is because of this teaching and preaching that the holy Prophet was persecuted, but as Allah sent the Qur-ān, He will see that those who follow it will not eventually suffer, but be restored to happiness in the Place of Return, for which see next note.

Thee back to the Place³⁴¹⁶
Of Return. Say: "My Lord
Knows best who it is
That brings true guidance,
And who is in manifest error."³⁴¹⁷

86. And thou hadst not expected
That the Book would be
Sent to thee except as
A Mercy from thy Lord:³⁴¹⁸
Therefore lend not thou support
In any way to those
Who reject (Allah's Message).³⁴¹⁹

87. Let no one turn you away
From Allah's revelations
After they have been revealed
To thee: and invite (men)

إِلَىٰ مَعَادٍ قُلْ رَبِّي أَعْلَمُ مَنْ جَاءَ بِالْهُدَىٰ

وَمَنْ هُوَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ ﴿٨٥﴾

وَمَا كُنْتَ تَرْجُو أَن يُلْقَىٰ إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابُ

إِلَّا رَحْمَةً مِن رَّبِّكَ فَلَا تَكُونَنَّ

ظَهِيرًا لِلْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٨٦﴾

وَلَا يَصُدُّكَ عَنْ ءَايَاتِ اللَّهِ بَعْدَ إِذْ أَنْزَلَتْ إِلَيْكَ

وَأَدْعُ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ وَلَا تَكُونَنَّ

3416. *Place of Return*: (1) a title of Makkah; (2) the occasion when we shall be restored to the Presence of our Lord. It is said that this verse was revealed at *Juhfa*, on the road from Makkah to Madinah, a short distance from Makkah on the Hijrat journey. The Prophet was sad at heart, and this was given as consolation to him. If this was the particular occasion, the general meaning would refer the Place of Return to the occasion of the Resurrection, when all true values will be restored, however they may be disturbed by the temporary interference of evil in this life.

3417. Allah knows the true from the false, and if we are persecuted for our Faith and attacked or spoken ill of because we dare to do right, our surest refuge is an appeal to Allah rather than to men.

3418. Revelation and the preaching of Truth may in the beginning bring persecution, conflict, and sorrow in its train; but in reality it is the truest mercy from Allah, which comes even without our expecting it, as it came to the Prophets without their consciously asking for it. This is proved in the history of Moses related in this Sūra, and the history of the holy Prophet which it is meant to illustrate.

3419. If Allah's Message is unpalatable to evil and is rejected by it, those who accept it may (in their natural human feelings) sometimes wonder that such should be the case, and whether it is really Allah's Will that the conflict which ensues should be pursued. Any such hesitation would lend unconscious support to the aggressions of evil and should be discarded. The servant of Allah stands forth boldly as His *Mujāhid* (fighter of the good fight), daring all, and knowing that Allah is behind him.

To thy Lord and be not
Of the company of those
Who join gods with Allah.³⁴²⁰

88. And call not, besides Allah,
On another god. There is
No god but He. Everything
(That exists) will perish
Except His Face.³⁴²¹
To Him belongs the Command,
And to Him will ye
(All) be brought back.

مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴿٨٧﴾

وَلَا تَدْعُ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهًا آخَرَ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ كُلُّ شَيْءٍ
هَالِكٌ إِلَّا وَجْهَهُ لَهُ الْحُكْمُ وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ ﴿٨٨﴾

3420. The soldier of Allah, having taken up the fight against evil, and knowing that he is in touch with the true Light, never yields an inch of ground. He is always to the fore in inviting others to his own ranks, but he himself refuses to be with those who worship anything else but Allah.

3421. This sums up the lesson of the whole Sūra. The only Eternal Reality is Allah. The whole phenomenal world is subject to flux and change and will pass away, but He will endure for ever.