

INTRODUCTION TO SŪRAT *An-Naml*, 27.

This Sūra is cognate in subject to the one preceding it and the two following it. Its chronological place is also in the same group of four, in the middle Makkan period.

The Fire, the White Hand, and the Rod, in the story of Moses; the speech of birds, the crowds of Jinns and men pitted against a humble ant, and the Hoopoe and the Queen of Sheba, in Solomon's story; the defeat of the plot of the nine wicked men in the story of Ṣāliḥ; and the crime of sin with open eyes in the story of Lot;—lead up to the lessons of true and false worship and the miracles of Allah's grace and revelation.

Summary.—Wonderful is Revelation, like the Fire which Moses saw, which was a glimpse of Allah's Glory, and His Miracles, which searched out those who refused Faith in spite of the light they had received (xxvii. 1-14).

Solomon knew the speech of Birds and had hosts of Jinns and men; yet the wise ant had ample defence against them: the Hoopoe who was absent at his muster, was yet serving him: the Queen of Sheba had a kingdom, but it submitted with conviction to the Wisdom of Solomon and the Kingdom of Allah (xxvii. 15-44).

Fools ascribe ill-luck to godliness as in Ṣāliḥ's story, or fall into their lusts with their eyes open, as in Lūt's story; but their plots and their rage will be foiled by Allah (xxvii. 45-58).

Allah's glory and goodness are supreme over all Creation: Unfaith will yield to Faith in the final adjustment of values: so follow Revelation, serve Allah, and trust in Him (xxvii. 59-93).

An-Naml, or the Ants..

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

1. *Tā. Sīn.*³²⁴⁰
These are verses
Of the Qur-ān,—A Book
That makes (things) clear;
2. A Guide; and Glad Tidings
For the Believers,—³²⁴¹
3. Those who establish regular prayers
And give zakat,
And also have sure faith
In the Hereafter.
4. As to those who believe not
In the Hereafter, We have
Made their deeds pleasing³²⁴²
In their eyes; and so they
Wander blindly.
5. Such are they for whom
A grievous Chastisement is (waiting):
And in the Hereafter theirs
Will be the greatest loss.³²⁴³

سُورَةُ النَّامِلِ

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

طَسَّ تِلْكَ آيَاتُ الْقُرْآنِ وَكِتَابٍ مُبِينٍ ﴿١﴾

هُدًى وَبُشْرَى لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٢﴾

الَّذِينَ يُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَهُمْ
بِالْآخِرَةِ هُمْ يُوقِنُونَ ﴿٣﴾إِنَّ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ رَبَّائِهِمْ
أَعْمَلُهُمْ فَهُمْ يَعْمَهُونَ ﴿٤﴾أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ لَهُمْ سُوءُ الْعَذَابِ
وَهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ هُمُ الْآخَسِرُونَ ﴿٥﴾

3240. See n. 3137 to xxvi. 1.

3241. Revelation is here presented in three aspects: (1) it explains things, the attributes of Allah, our own position, and the world around; (2) it directs us to right conduct and keeps us from evil; and (3) to those who have Faith and accept its guidance, it gives the good news of forgiveness, purification, and the achievement of salvation.

3242. Those who reject Allah and follow Evil have a good conceit of themselves. Their deeds are pleasing to no one else. As they have rejected Allah's guidance, they are allowed to hug their own self-conceit, and given further respite for repentance. But they follow their own whims and wander about in distraction, as they have no standards such as guide the godly.

3243. The account will then be made up, and they will be found to be terribly in loss. They will be the worst in loss, for all their self-complacency.

6. As for thee, thou receivest
The Qur-ān from One
All-Wise, All-Knowing.
7. Behold! Moses said³²⁴⁴
To his family: "I perceive
A fire; soon will I bring you
From there some information,
Or I will bring you
A burning brand (to light
Our fuel,) that ye may
Warm yourselves.
8. But when he came
To the (Fire), a voice
Was heard: "Blessed are those³²⁴⁵
In the Fire and those around:
And Glory to Allah,
The Lord of the Worlds.
9. "O Moses! Verily,
I am Allah, the Exalted
In Might, the Wise!...
10. "Now do thou throw thy rod!"³²⁴⁶
But when he saw it
Moving (of its own accord)
As if it had been a snake,

وَأَنَّكَ لَتَلْقَى الْقُرْآنَ مِنْ لَدُنْ حَكِيمٍ عَلِيمٍ ﴿٦﴾

إِذْ قَالَ مُوسَى لِأَهْلِهِ إِنِّي آنَسْتُ نَارًا سَآتِيكُمْ مِنْهَا خَبَرٍ
أَوْ آتِيكُمْ بِشِهَابٍ قَبَسٍ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَصْطَلُونَ ﴿٧﴾

فَلَمَّا جَاءَهَا نُودِيَ أَنْ بُورِكَ مَنْ فِي النَّارِ وَمَنْ حَوْلَهَا
وَسَبَّحَنَ اللَّهُ رَبَّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٨﴾

يَمُوسَى إِنَّهُ أَنَا اللَّهُ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿٩﴾

وَأَلْقِ عَصَاكَ فَلَمَّا رَآهَا تَهْتَزُّ كَأَنَّهَا جَانٌّ وَلَّى مُدْمِرًا
وَلَمْ يُعَقِّبْ يَمُوسَى لَّا تَخَفْ إِنِّي لَا يَخَافُ

3244. Cf. xx. 9-24. Both there and here there is a reference to the dawn of Revelation in the heart of Moses. The points there emphasised will be found in the notes to that passage. Here the emphasis is on the wonderful nature of the Fire and the wonderful way in which Moses was transformed at the touch of the Light. He was travelling in the Sinai desert with his family. Seeking ordinary light, he came upon a Light which took him to the highest signs of Allah. No doubt all his inner history had prepared him for his great destiny. It is the inner history that matters, and not the place or position of a man in the eyes of his ordinary fellows.

3245. *Those*: in the original the pronoun is in the singular, "man", which is often used with a plural meaning.

3246. Moses was now transported into an entirely new world. What he had taken to be an ordinary fire was a gleam of the heavenly light. His own rod or staff was no longer the dead piece of wood that had hitherto supported him. It became instinct with life, a life that moved, and had the power of offence and defence in it, as all living Good must have in its fight with Evil. His own transformation is described in the next note.

He turned back in retreat,
And retraced not his steps:
"O Moses!" (it was said),
"Fear not: truly, in My presence,
Those called as messengers
Have no fear,"³²⁴⁷

لَدَى الْمُرْسَلُونَ ﴿١٠﴾

11. "But if any have done wrong
And have thereafter substituted
Good to take the place of evil,³²⁴⁸
Truly, I am Oft-Forgiving,
Most Merciful.

إِلَّا مَنْ ظَلَمَ ثُمَّ بَدَّلَ حَسْتًا بَعْدَ سُوءٍ

فَإِنِّي غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿١١﴾

12. "Now put thy hand into
Thy bosom, and it will
Come forth white without stain³²⁴⁹
(Or harm): (these are) among
The nine Signs (thou wilt take)³²⁵⁰
To Pharaoh and his people:
For they are a people
Rebellious in transgression."

وَأَدْخِلْ يَدَكَ فِي جَيْبِكَ تَخْرُجَ بَيْضَاءَ
مِنْ غَيْرِ سُوءٍ فِي ثِيَابٍ إِلَىٰ فِرْعَوْنَ وَقَوْمِهِ

إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا قَوْمًا فَاسِقِينَ ﴿١٢﴾

3247. In this great, new, wonderful world, that was opening out to Moses, he had to get his vision adjusted to his new surroundings, as an ordinary man has to adjust his sight before he can see in any very strong light that is new to him. The staff which had become alive as a snake frightened him: yet it was to be his own instrument of work in his new mission. All fear was to be cast out of his mind, as befitted a man chosen by Allah.

3248. His slaying the Egyptian (n. 3146 to xxvi. 14), however defensible from certain aspects, was yet something from his past that had to be washed off, and Allah, Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful, did it out of His abounding Grace. Nay, more; he was given a pure, Radiant Hand, as a Sign from Allah, as stated in the next verse.

3249. Cf. xx. 22. There the expression is: "Draw thy hand close to thy side." As far as the physical act is concerned, the expressions there and here mean the same thing. Moses had a loose-fitting robe. If he put his hand within the folds of the robe, it would go to his bosom on the side of his body opposite to that from which his hand came; i.e., if it was his right hand it would go to the left side of his bosom. The hand comes out white and radiant, without a stain. Ordinarily if the skin becomes white it is a sign of disease or leprosy. Here it was the opposite. It was a sign of radiance and glory from the higher Light.

3250. The *nine Signs*: see n. 1091 to vii. 133.

13. But when Our Signs came
To them, visibly³²⁵¹

They said:

"This is sorcery manifest!"

14. And they denied them, though
Their souls acknowledged them
Wrongfully and out of pride:
So see what was
The end of those
Who acted corruptly!

SECTION 2.

15. We gave knowledge to
David and Solomon:³²⁵²
And they both said:
"Praise be to Allah, Who
Has favoured us above many
Of His servants who believe!"³²⁵³
16. And Solomon was David's heir.³²⁵⁴
He said: "O ye people!

فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ ءَايَاتُنَا مُبْصِرَةً

قَالُوا هَذَا سِحْرٌ مُّزْمِنٌ ﴿١٣﴾

وَحَدَّوْا بِهَا وَاسْتَيْقَنَتْهَا أَنْفُسُهُمْ ظُلْمًا وَعُلُوًّا

فَانْظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُفْسِدِينَ ﴿١٤﴾

وَلَقَدْ ءَاتَيْنَا دَاوُدَ وَسُلَيْمَانَ عِلْمًا وَقَالَا الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ

الَّذِي فَضَّلَنَا عَلَى كَثِيرٍ مِّنْ عِبَادِهِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٥﴾

وَوَرِثَ سُلَيْمَانُ دَاوُدَ وَقَالَ يَأَيُّهَا النَّاسُ عَلِمْنَا

3251. The Signs should have clearly opened the eyes of any persons who honestly examined them and thought about them. Those who rejected them were perverse and were going against their own light and inner conviction. That was the aggravating feature of their sin.

3252. Cf. xxi. 78-82. "Knowledge" means such knowledge as leads up to the higher things in life, the Wisdom that was shown in their decisions and judgments, and the understanding that enabled them to fulfil their mission in life. They were both just men and prophets of Allah. The Bible, as we have it, is inconsistent: on the one hand it calls David "a man after God's own heart" (I Samuel, xiii. 14, and Acts xiii. 22); and the Christians acclaim Christ as a son of David; but on the other hand, horrible crimes are ascribed to him, which, if he had committed them, would make him a monster of cruelty and injustice. About Solomon, too, while he is described as a glorious king, there are stories of his lapses into sin and idolatry. The Muslim teaching considers them both to be men of piety and wisdom, and high in spiritual knowledge.

3253. They ascribed, as was proper, their knowledge, wisdom, and power to the only true Source of all good, Allah.

3254. The point is that Solomon not only inherited his father's kingdom but his spiritual insight and the prophetic office, which do not necessarily go from father to son.

We have been taught the speech³²⁵⁵
Of Birds, and we have been
Given of everything
This is indeed
Grace manifest (from Allah.)³²⁵⁶

مَنْطِقَ الطَّيْرِ وَأَوْتَيْنَا مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ
إِنَّ هَذَا لَهُوَ الْفَضْلُ الْمُبِينُ ﴿١٦﴾

17. And before Solomon were
marshalled
His hosts,—of Jinns and men
And birds, and they were all
Kept in order and ranks.³²⁵⁷

وَحِشْرَ لِسُلَيْمَانَ جُنُودَهُ مِنَ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسِ
وَالطَّيْرِ فَهُمْ يُوزَعُونَ ﴿١٧﴾

18. At length, when they came
To a valley of ants,
One of the ants said:
"O ye ants, get into
Your habitations, lest Solomon
And his hosts crush you
(Under foot) without knowing it."³²⁵⁸

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا اتَوْا عَلَىٰ وَادِ النَّمْلِ قَالَتْ نَمْلَةٌ يَأْكُلُهَا النَّعْلُ
أَدْخُلُوا مَسَكِنَكُمْ لَا يَحْطِمَنَّكُمْ
سُلَيْمَانُ وَجُنُودُهُ وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿١٨﴾

3255. *Speech of Birds*. The spoken word in human speech is different from the means of communication which birds and animals have between each other. But no man can doubt that they have means of communication with each other, if he only observes the orderly flight of migratory birds or the regulated behaviour of ants, bees, and other creatures who live in communities. The wisdom of Solomon consisted in understanding these things—in the animal world and in the lower fringes of human intelligence.

3256. "*Everything*": Solomon was a king of power and authority; outside his kingdom he had influence among many neighbouring peoples; he had knowledge of birds, and beasts and plants; he was just and wise, and understood men; and above all, he had spiritual insight, which brought him near to Allah. Thus he had something of all kinds of desirable gifts. And with true gratitude he referred them to Allah, the Giver of all gifts.

3257. Besides the literal meaning, there are two symbolical meanings. (1) All his subjects of varying grades of intelligence, taste, and civilization, were kept in due order and co-operation, by his discipline, justice, and good government. (2) The gifts of various kinds, which he possessed (see last note), he used in proper order and co-ordination, as if they were a well disciplined army, thus getting the best possible results from them.

3258. This verse and the next, read together, suggest the symbolical meaning as predominant. The ant, to outward appearance, is a very small and humble creature. In the great pomp and circumstances of the world, she (generic feminine in Arabic) may be neglected or even trampled on by a people who mean her no harm. Yet, by her =

19. So he smiled, amused
At her speech; and he said:
"O my Lord! so order me
That I may be grateful
For Thy favours, which Thou
Has bestowed on me and³²⁵⁹
On my parents, and that
I may work the righteousness
That will please Thee:³²⁶⁰
And admit me, by Thy Grace,
To the ranks of Thy
Righteous Servants."³²⁶¹

20. And he took a muster
Of the Birds; and he said:
"Why is it I see not
The Hoopoe? Or is he
Among the absentees?"³²⁶²

فَنَبَسَ ضَاحِكًا مِّن قَوْلِهَا وَقَالَ رَبِّ أَوْزِعْنِي
أَنْ أَشْكُرَ نِعْمَتَكَ الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيَّ وَعَلَىٰ وَالِدَيَّ
وَأَنْ أَعْمَلَ صَالِحًا تَرْضَاهُ وَأَدْخِلْنِي بِرَحْمَتِكَ
فِي عِبَادِكَ الصَّالِحِينَ ﴿١٩﴾

وَنَقَّذَ الطَّيْرَ فَقَالَ مَا لِيَ لَا أَرَى الْهُدْهُدَ
أَمْ كَانَ مِنَ الْغَائِبِينَ ﴿٢٠﴾

= wisdom, she carries on her own life within her own sphere ("habitations") unmolested, and makes a useful contribution to the economy of the world. So there is room for the humblest people in the spiritual world.

3259. The counterpart to the position of the humble ant is the position of a great king like Solomon. He prays that his power and wisdom and all other gifts may be used for righteousness and for the benefit of all around him. The ant being in his thoughts, we may suppose that he means particularly in his prayer that he may not even unwittingly tread on humble beings in his preoccupations with the great things of the world.

3260. The righteousness which pleases the world is often very different from the righteousness which pleases Allah. Solomon prays that he may always take Allah's Will as his standard, rather than the standards of men.

3261. In the Kingdom of Allah, righteousness is the badge of citizenship. And although there are great and noble grades (see n. 586 to iv. 69), the base of that citizenship is the universal brotherhood of righteousness. The greatest in that Kingdom are glad and proud to pray for that essential badge.

3262. Solomon was no idle or easy-going king. He kept all his organisation strictly up to the mark, both his armies literally and his forces (metaphorically). His most mobile arm was the Birds, who were light on the wing and flew and saw everything like efficient scouts. One day he missed the Hoopoe in his muster. The Hoopoe is a light, graceful creature, with elegant plumage of many colours, and a beautiful yellow crest on his head, which entitles him to be called a royal bird.

21. "I will certainly punish him
With a severe punishment,
Or execute him, unless he
Bring me a clear reason
(For absence)."
22. But the Hoopoe tarried not
Far: he (came up and) said:
"I have compassed
Which thou hast not compassed,
And I have come to thee
From Sabā³²⁶³ with tidings true.
23. "I found (there) a woman³²⁶⁴
Ruling over them and provided³²⁶⁵
With every requisite; and she
Has a magnificent throne.

لَأُعَذِّبَنَّهُ عَذَابًا شَدِيدًا أَوْ لَأَذْبَحَنَّهُ
أَوْ لِيَأْتِنِي سُلْطَانٌ مُّبِينٌ ﴿٢١﴾

فَمَكَثَ غَيْرَ بَعِيدٍ فَقَالَ أَحَطْتُ بِمَا لَمْ تُحِطْ بِهِ
وَجِئْتُكَ مِنْ سَبَإٍ بِنَاءٍ يُقِينِ ﴿٢٢﴾

إِنِّي وَجَدْتُ امْرَأَةً تَمْلِكُهُمْ وَأُوتِيَتْ
مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَلَهَا عَرْشٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿٢٣﴾

3263. Sabā may reasonably be identified with the Biblical Sheba (1 Kings x. 1-10). It is further referred to in the Sūra called after its name: xxxiv. 15-20. It was a city in Yemen, said to have been three days' journey (say 50 miles) from the city of San'ā. A recent German explorer, Dr. Hans Helfritz, claims to have located it in what is now Hadhramaut territory. The famous dam of Ma'rib made the country very prosperous, and enabled it to attain a high degree of civilization ("provided with every requisite" in the next verse). The Queen of Sheba therefore rightly held up her head high until she beheld the glories of Solomon.

3264. The Queen of Sheba (by name Bilqīs in Arabian tradition) came apparently from Yemen, but she had affinities with Abyssinia and possibly ruled over Abyssinia also. The Habasha tribe (after whom Abyssinia was named) came from Yemen. Between the southern coast of Yemen and the north-eastern coast of Abyssinia there are only the Straits of Bāb-al-Mandab, barely twenty miles across. In the 10th or 11th century B.C. there were frequent invasions of Abyssinia from Arabia, and Solomon's reign of 40 years is usually synchronised with B.C. 992 to 952. The Sabaeen and Himyarite alphabets in which we find the south Arabian pre-Islamic inscriptions, passed into Ethiopic, the language of Abyssinia. The Abyssinians possess a traditional history called "The Book of the Glory of Kings" (*Kebra Nagast*), which has been translated from Ethiopic into English by Sir E.A. Wallis Budge (Oxford, 1932). It gives an account of the Queen of Sheba and her only son Menyelek I, as founders of the Abyssinian dynasty.

3265. *Provided with every requisite*: I take this to refer not only to the abundance of spices and gems and gold in her country, but to sciences and arts, as well.

24. "I found her and her people
Worshipping the sun besides
Allah:³²⁶⁶
Satan has made their deeds
Seem pleasing in their eyes,
And has kept them away
From the Path,—so
They receive no guidance,—
25. "So that they worship not
Allah who brings forth³²⁶⁷
What is hidden in the heavens
And the earth, and knows
What ye hide and what
Ye reveal.
26. "Allah!—there is no god
But He!—Lord of the Throne³²⁶⁸
Supreme!"

وَجَدْتُهُمْ وَاقِفَةً يُسْجِدُونَ لِلشَّمْسِ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ
وَرَبِّ لَهُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ أَعْمَلَهُمْ فُصَّدَهُمْ عَنِ السَّبِيلِ
فَهُمْ لَا يَهْتَدُونَ ﴿٢٤﴾

أَلَا يَسْجُدُوا لِلَّهِ الَّذِي يُخْرِجُ الْخَبْءَ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ
وَالْأَرْضِ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا تُخْفُونَ وَمَا تُعْلِنُونَ ﴿٢٥﴾

اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ رَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ ﴿٢٦﴾

3266. The ancient religion of the people of Sabā (the Himyar or Sabæans) consisted in the worship of the heavenly bodies, the sun, the planets, and the stars. Possibly the cult was connected with that of Chaldaea, the home-land of Abraham: see vi. 75-79 and notes thereon. Yemen had easy access to Mesopotamia and the Persian Gulf by way of the sea, as well as with Abyssinia. That accounts for the Christians of Najrān and the Jewish dynasty of kings (e.g. Zū-Nuwās, d. 525 A.D.) who persecuted them in the century before Islam,—also for the Christian Abyssinian Governor Abraha and his discomfiture in the year of the Prophet's birth (S.cv.), say 570 A.D. Jewish-Christian influences were powerful in Arabia in the sixth century of the Christian era.

The religion of these Sabaeans (written in Arabic with a *Sīn*) should not be confounded with that of the Sabians (with a *Ṣād*), as to whom see n. 76 to ii. 62.

3267. The false worship of the Sabaeans is here exposed in three ways: (1) that they were self-satisfied with their own human achievements, instead of looking up to Allah; and (2) that the light of the heavenly bodies which they worshipped was only dependent on the true Light of Allah, which extends over heaven and earth; the Creator should be worshipped rather than His Creation; and (3) Allah knows the hidden secrets of men's minds as well as the objects which they openly profess: are false worshippers really only worshipping their own selves, or the "sins they have a mind to" and are therefore afraid to go to Allah, Who knows all?

3268. The messenger (Hoopoe) is a pious bird, as befits a messenger of Solomon. After mentioning the false worship of the Sabaeans, he pronounces the Creed of Unity, and emphasises Allah's attribute as Lord of the Great Throne, in order to make it clear =

27. (Solomon) said: "Soon shall we
See whether thou hast told
The truth or lied! ³²⁶⁹

28. "Go thou, with this letter
Of mine, and deliver it
To them: then draw back
From them, and (wait to) see
What answer they return"...

29. (The Queen) said: "Ye chiefs!
Here is—delivered to me—
A letter worthy of respect.

30. "It is from Solomon, and is
(As follows): 'In the name' ³²⁷⁰
Of Allah, Most Gracious,
Most Merciful:

31. " 'Be ye not arrogant
Against me, but come
To me in submission
(To the true Religion).' "

SECTION 3.

32. She said: "Ye chiefs!
Advise me in (this)
My affair: no affair
Have I decided
Except in your presence."

﴿٢٧﴾ قَالَ سَنَنْظُرُ أَصَدَقْتَ أَمْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الْكَاذِبِينَ

أَذْهَبَ بِكِتَابِي هَذَا فَأَلْقَاهُ إِلَيْهِمْ ثُمَّ تَوَلَّى عَنْهُمْ
فَانْظُرْ مَاذَا يَرْجِعُونَ ﴿٢٨﴾

قَالَتْ يَا أَيُّهَا الْمَلَأُ إِنَّ إِلَيْنَا لِكِتَابٍ كَرِيمٍ ﴿٢٩﴾

إِنَّهُ مِنْ سُلَيْمَانَ وَإِنَّهُ بِسْمِ اللَّهِ
الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ ﴿٣٠﴾

أَلَّا تَعْلَمُوا عَلَى وَاتُوبِي مُسْلِمِينَ ﴿٣١﴾

قَالَتْ يَا أَيُّهَا الْمَلَأُ أَفْتُونِي فِي أَمْرِي
مَا كُنْتُ قَاطِعَةً أَمْرًا حَتَّى تَشْهَدُونِ ﴿٣٢﴾

= that whatever may be the magnificence of a human throne such as he has described (in verse 23), he is not in any way misled from his loyalty to Solomon, the exponent of the true Religion of Unity.

3269. Solomon does not doubt his messenger's plea that he has scouted a new country, but wants to test whether he has loosened the rein of his imagination in describing its splendours or its worship.

3270. Solomon expressly begins his letter with the formula of the true and universal Religion of Unity, and he invites to the true Faith the new people with whom he establishes honourable relations, not for worldly conquest but for the spreading of the Light of Allah.

33. They said: "We are endued
With strength, and given
To vehement war:
But the command is
With thee; so consider
What thou wilt command."

قَالُوا نَحْنُ أَوْلُو الْقُوَّةِ وَأَوَّلُوا بِأَسْوَءِ شِدَائِهِمْ وَالْأَمْرُ لِلَّهِ
فَأَنْظِرِي مَاذَا تَأْمُرِينَ ﴿٣٣﴾

34. She said: "Kings, when they³²⁷¹
Enter a country, despoil it,
And make the noblest
Of its people its meanest
Thus do they behave.

قَالَتْ إِنَّ الْمُلُوكَ إِذَا دَخَلُوا قَرْيَةً أَفْسَدُوهَا
وَجَعَلُوا أَعِزَّةَ أَهْلِهَا أَذِلَّةً وَكَذَلِكَ يَفْعَلُونَ ﴿٣٤﴾

35. "But I am going to send
Him a present, and (wait)
To see with what (answer)
Return (my) ambassadors."

وَلِيَّ مَرْسَلَةٍ إِلَيْهِمْ بِهِدْيَةٍ
فَتَأْتِرُهُمْ ثُمَّ يَرْجِعُ الْمُرْسَلُونَ ﴿٣٥﴾

36. Now when (the embassy) came
To Solomon, he said:
"Will ye give me abundance
In wealth? But that which
Allah has given me is better
Than that which He has
Given you! Nay it is ye
Who rejoice in your gift!"³²⁷²

فَلَمَّا جَاءَ سُلَيْمَانَ قَالَ أَتُمِدُّوْنَ بِمَالٍ فَمَاءَ آتِنَا إِلَهَ اللَّهِ
خَيْرٌ مِمَّا آتَيْنَاكُمْ بَلْ أَنْتُمْ مَهْدِيَّتِكُمْ تَفْرَحُونَ ﴿٣٦﴾

3271. The character of Queen Bilqīs, as disclosed here, is that of a ruler enjoying great wealth and dignity, and the full confidence of her subjects. She does nothing without consulting her Council, and her Council are ready to carry out her commands in all things. Her people are manly, loyal, and contented, and ready to take the field against any enemy of their country. But their queen is prudent in policy, and is not willing to embroil her country in war. She has the discrimination to see that Solomon is not like ordinary kings who conquer by violence. Perhaps in her heart she has a ray of the divine light already, though her people are yet Pagans. She wishes to carry her people with her in whatever she does, because she is as loyal to them as they are to her. An exchange of presents would probably establish better relations between the two kingdoms. And perhaps she anticipates some spiritual understanding also, a hope which was afterwards realised. In Bilqīs we have a picture of womanhood, gentle, prudent, and able to tame the wider passions of her subjects.

3272. Poor Bilqīs! she thought she had arranged with womanly tact to conciliate Solomon, and at the same time pacify her warlike subjects! But the effect of the embassy with presents was the very opposite. Solomon took it as an insult that she should send =

37. "Go back to them, and be sure
We shall come to them
With such hosts as they
Will never be able to meet:
We shall expel them
From there in disgrace,
And they will feel
Humbled (indeed)."

أَرْجِعْ إِلَيْهِمْ فَلَنَأَيِسَهُمْ بِمُجُودٍ لَا قِبَلَ لَهُمْ بِهَا
وَلَنُخْرِجَنَّهُمْ مِنْهَا أَذِلَّةً وَهُمْ صَاغِرُونَ ﴿٣٧﴾

38. He said (to his own men):
"Ye Chiefs! which of you
Can bring me her throne³²⁷³
Before they come to me
In submission?"

قَالَ يَبْنَائِيهَا أَلَمْ أَلْهَمْ أَتِيكُمْ بِأَيِّسٍ بَعْرِشَهَا
قَبْلَ أَنْ يَأْتُونِي مُسْلِمِينَ ﴿٣٨﴾

39. A stalwart of the Jinn said:³²⁷⁴
"I will bring it to thee
Before thou rise from thy
Council: indeed I have
Full strength for the purpose,
And may be trusted."

قَالَ عِفْرِيتٌ مِّنَ الْجِنِّ أَنَا ءَانِيكَ بِهِ قَبْلَ أَنْ تَقُومَ
مِنْ مَّقَامِكَ وَإِنِّي عَلَيْهِ لَقَوِيٌّ أَمِينٌ ﴿٣٩﴾

40. Said one who had knowledge³²⁷⁵
Of the Book: "I will
Bring it to thee before ever
Thy glance returns to thee.
Then when (Solomon) saw it
Placed firmly before him,
He said: "This is

قَالَ الَّذِي عِنْدَهُ عِلْمٌ مِّنَ الْكِتَابِ أَنَا ءَانِيكَ بِهِ قَبْلَ
أَنْ يَرْتَدَّ إِلَيْكَ طَرْفُكَ فَلَمَّا رَآهُ مُسْتَقَرًّا عِنْدَهُ قَالَ
هَذَا مِن فَضْلِ رَبِّي لِيَبْلُوَنِي ءَأَشْكُرُ أَمْ أَكْفُرُ
وَمَن شَكَرَ فَإِنَّمَا يَشْكُرُ لِنَفْسِهِ ۖ

= her presents instead of her submission to the true Religion! He flung back the presents at her, as much as to say, "Let these baubles delight your own hearts! Allah has blessed me with plenty of worldly goods, and something infinitely better, viz.; His Light and Guidance! Why do you say nothing about that?"

3273. The throne is symbolical of power and dignity. So far her throne was based on material wealth: Solomon is going to alter it to a basis of Faith and the Religion of Unity.

3274. *Ifrit*: a large, powerful jinn.

3275. Solomon was thankful to Allah that he had men endowed with such power, and he had the throne of Bilqis transported to his Court and transformed as he desired, without Bilqis even knowing it.

By the grace of my Lord!—³²⁷⁶
 To test me whether I am
 Grateful or ungrateful!
 And if any is grateful,
 Truly his gratitude is (a gain)
 For his own soul; but if
 Any is ungrateful, truly
 My Lord is Free of all Needs,
 Supreme in Honour!”³²⁷⁷

41. He said: “Disguise her throne.
 Let us see whether she
 Is guided (to the truth)³²⁷⁸
 Or is one of those who
 Are not rightly guided.”

42. So when she arrived,
 She was asked, “Is this
 Thy throne?” She said,
 “It seems the same.”³²⁷⁹
 And knowledge was bestowed
 On us in advance of this,
 And we have submitted
 To Allah (in Islām).”

وَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَإِنَّ رَّبِّي عَنِّي كَرِيمٌ ﴿٤١﴾

قَالَ نَكِّرُوا لَهَا عَرْشَهَا نَنْظُرْ أَتَنْهَدِي
 أَمْ تَكُونُ مِنَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَهْتَدُونَ ﴿٤٢﴾

فَلَمَّا جَاءَتْ قِيلَ أَهَكَذَا عَرْشُكِ قَالَتْ كَأَنَّهُ هُوَ وَأُوتِينَا
 الْعِلْمَ مِنْ قَبْلِهَا وَكُنَّا مُسْلِمِينَ ﴿٤٣﴾

3276. If Solomon had been ungrateful to Allah, i.e., if he had worked for his own selfish or worldly ends, he could have used the brute strength of 'Ifrit to add to his worldly strength and glory. Instead of it he uses the higher magic of the Book,—of the Spirit—to transform the throne of Bilqis for her highest good, which means also the highest good of her subjects, by the divine Light. He had the two alternatives, and he chooses the better, and he thus shows his gratitude to Allah for the Grace He had given him.

3277. Man's gratitude to Allah is not a thing that benefits Allah, for Allah is high above all needs: it benefits a man's own soul and gives him higher rank in the life to come. *Per contra*, man's ingratitude will not detract from Allah's Glory and Honour or the value of Allah's generous gifts to man: for Allah is supreme in honour, glory, and generosity. *Karim* in Arabic involves all three significations.

3278. The throne having been disguised, it will be a test to see whether Bilqis recognises it as her own or not.

3279. Bilqis stands the test. She knows it was her throne, yet not exactly the same, for it was now much better. And she is proud of her good fortune, and acknowledges, for herself and her people, with gratitude, the light which was given to them by Allah, by which they recognised Allah's prophet in Solomon, and received the true Religion with all their will and heart and soul.

43. And he diverted her³²⁸⁰
From the worship of others
Besides Allah: for she was
(Sprung) of a people
That had no faith.

وَصَدَّهَا مَا كَانَتْ تَعْبُدُ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنَّهَا كَانَتْ
مِنْ قَوْمٍ كَافِرِينَ ﴿٤٣﴾

44. She was asked to enter³²⁸¹
The lofty Palace: but
When she saw it, she
Thought it was a lake
Of water, and she (tucked up
Her skirts), uncovering her legs.
He said: "This is
But a palace paved
Smooth with slabs of glass."
She said: "O my Lord!
I have indeed wronged³²⁸²
My soul: I do (now)
Submit (in Islām), with Solomon,
To the Lord of the Worlds."

قِيلَ لَهَا ادْخُلِي الصَّرْحَ فَلَمَّا رَأَتْهُ حَسِبَتْهُ لُجَّةً
وَكَشَفَتْ عَنْ سَاقَيْهَا قَالَ إِنَّهُ صَرْحٌ مُمَرَّدٌ
مِنْ قَوَارِيرَ قَالَتْ رَبِّ إِنِّي ظَلَمْتُ نَفْسِي
وَأَسْلَمْتُ مَعَ سُلَيْمَانَ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٤٤﴾

3280. Some Commentators and Translators adopt an alternative construction for the last clause of the last verse and the first clause of this verse. They understand the former to be spoken by Solomon and to mean, 'we had knowledge of Allah's Message and accepted it before her.' They understand the latter to mean, 'the worship of others besides Allah diverted her (from the true Religion).' If we accept the construction adopted in this Translation, the visit to Solomon confirmed the true Faith of Bilqis and prevented her from lapsing into her ancestral false worship.

3281. Bilqis, having been received with honour on her arrival, and having accepted the transformation of her throne, placed presumably in an outer building of the Palace, is asked to enter the great Palace itself. Its floor was made of slabs of smooth polished glass, that glistened like water. She thought it was water, and tucked up her clothes to pass through it, showing her bare feet and ankles. This was a very undignified position for a woman, especially one of the position of a Queen. Solomon immediately told her the real facts, when she felt grateful, and joined herself with Solomon in praising Allah.

3282. A gentle leader points out the truth. Instead of resenting it, the new entrant is grateful; acknowledges his own mistake freely and frankly; and heartily joins with the Teacher in the worship of Allah, the Source of all truth and knowledge.

SECTION 4.

45. We sent (aforetime),
To the Thamūd, their brother³²⁸³
Sālih, saying, "Serve Allah":
But behold, they became
Two factions quarrelling
With each other.
46. He said: "O my people!
Why ask ye to hasten on
The evil before the good?"³²⁸⁴
If only ye ask Allah for forgiveness,
Ye may hope to receive mercy."
47. They said: "Ill omen
Do we augur from thee
And those that are with thee".
He said: "Your ill omen
Is with Allah; yea, ye are
A people under trial."³²⁸⁵
48. There were in the City
Nine men,
Who made mischief in the land,
And would not reform.³²⁸⁶

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا إِلَىٰ ثَمُودَ أَخَاهُمْ صَالِحًا أَنْ اعْبُدُوا
اللَّهَ فَإِذَا هُمْ فَرِيقَانِ يَخْتَصِمُونَ ﴿٤٥﴾

قَالَ يَاقَوْمِ لِمَ تَسْتَعْجِلُونَ بِالسَّيِّئَةِ قَبْلَ الْحَسَنَةِ
لَوْ لَا تَسْتَغْفِرُونَ اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ ﴿٤٦﴾

قَالُوا أَطِيعُوا نَارَكُمْ وَيَمْنُ مَعَكُمْ قَالِ طَيْرُكُمْ
عِنْدَ اللَّهِ بَلْ أَنْتُمْ قَوْمٌ تُفْسِدُونَ ﴿٤٧﴾

وَكَانَ فِي الْمَدِينَةِ تِسْعَةُ رَهْطٍ يُفْسِدُونَ
فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا يُصْلِحُونَ ﴿٤٨﴾

3283. The main story of the Thamūd, who were broken up into two factions, the rich oppressing the poor and keeping them out of the good things of life and the test case of the She-camel, will be found in xxvi. 141-159 and the notes thereon. The point here is the secret plot of the nine men against the Prophet of Allah, whose teaching, they thought, brought them ill-luck; but what they called ill-luck was the just punishment from Allah for their own ill-deeds. Their plot was foiled, and the whole community, which was involved in evil, was destroyed.

3284. Cf. xiii. 6. The evil-doers were really hastening on their own punishment by their feuds against the poor. The advocates of justice were not bringing ill-luck to them. They were showing the way to ward it off. Their own injustice was bringing on their disaster.

3285. All evil unpunished is not evil condoned, but evil given a chance for reform. They are on trial, by the mercy of Allah. What they call "ill omen" is really the just punishment for their ill-deeds, and that punishment rests with Allah.

3286. They had made up their minds to wage a relentless war against justice. They did not destroy justice, but justice destroyed them.

49. They said: "Swear
A mutual oath by Allah
That we shall make
A secret night attack
On him and his people,³²⁸⁷
And that we shall then
Say to his heir (when he
Seeks vengeance): 'We were not
Present at the slaughter
Of his people, and we are
Positively telling the truth'."

50. They plotted and planned,³²⁸⁸
But We too planned,
Even while they perceived it not.

51. Then see what was the end
Of their plot!—this,
That We destroyed them
And their people, all (of them).

52. Now such were their houses,—
In utter ruin,—because
They practised wrong-doing.
Verily in this is a Sign
For people of knowledge.

53. And We saved those
Who believed and practised
Righteousness.

قَالُوا تَقَاسَمُوا بِاللَّهِ لَنُبَيِّتَنَّهُ وَأَهْلَهُ ثُمَّ لَنَقُولَنَّ
لَوْلِيَّهِ مَا شَهِدْنَا مَهْلَاكَ أَهْلِهِ
وَلِنَا لَصَدِّقُونَ ﴿٤٩﴾

وَمَكْرُؤٌ مَكْرُؤٌ وَمَكْرُؤٌ مَكْرُؤٌ
وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿٥٠﴾

فَانْظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ مَكْرِهِمْ
أَنَّا دَمَرْنَاهُمْ وَقَوْمَهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ ﴿٥١﴾

فَتِلْكَ بُيُوتُهُمْ خَاوِيَةٌ بِمَا ظَلَمُوا
إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٥٢﴾

وَأَنجَيْنَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا
وَكَاوَأَيْنُقُوتُ ﴿٥٣﴾

3287. A most dastardly plot, because (1) it was to be secret, (2) by night, (3) taking their victims unawares, and (4) because careful provision was made that they should all tell lies together, saying that they knew nothing about it, in order to evade the vengeance which Sālih's heirs (if any were left) or his tribe might want to exact! And yet such were exactly the plots laid against the holy Prophet himself.

3288. Cf. iii. 54. Their secret plotting is all known to Allah, but of Allah's just and beneficent plans they know nothing. And the wicked must come to an evil end.

54. (We also sent) Lūt³²⁸⁹

(As a messenger): behold,
He said to his people,
"Do ye do what is indecent
Though ye see (its iniquity)?"

55. Would ye really approach men
In your lusts rather than
Women? Nay, ye are
A people (grossly) ignorant!³²⁹⁰

56. But his people gave
No other answer but this:
They said, "Drive out
The followers of Lūt from
Your city: these are
Indeed men who want
To be clean and pure!"³²⁹¹

57. But We saved him
And his family, except
His wife: her We destined
To be of those
Who lagged behind.

وَلُوطًا إِذْ قَالَ لِقَوْمِهِ
أَتَأْتُونَ الْفَاحِشَةَ وَأَنْتُمْ تُبْصِرُونَ ﴿٥٤﴾

أَيُنْكِحُ الْمَتَانُ الرِّجَالَ شَهْوَةً مِنْ دُونِ النِّسَاءِ
بَلْ أَنْتُمْ قَوْمٌ بِجَهْلُولٍ ﴿٥٥﴾

﴿٥٦﴾ فَمَا كَانَتْ جَوَابَ قَوْمِهِ إِلَّا أَنْ قَالُوا
أَخْرِجُوا آلَ لُوطٍ مِنْ قَرْيَتِكُمْ إِنَّهُمْ
أَنْاسٌ يَبْغُونَ ﴿٥٦﴾

فَأَنْجَيْنَاهُ وَأَهْلَهُ إِلَّا امْرَأَتَهُ قَدَرْنَاهَا
مِنْ الْغَابِرِينَ ﴿٥٧﴾

3289. The story of Lūt is referred to elsewhere. The passages to which reference may be made here are: xxvi. 160-175, and vii. 80-84. But the point emphasised here is that the crime of the Cities of the Plain was against their own nature, and they saw its enormity, and yet they indulged in it. Can degradation go further? His wife was not apparently a Believer. Her previous sympathy with the sinful people "destined her" (verse 57 below) to a miserable end, as she lagged behind and shared in the destruction of her kinsfolk.

3290. The ignorance referred to here is the spiritual Ignorance, the Ignorance of how grossness and sins that bring shame on their own physical and moral nature are doomed to destroy them: it is their own loss. That they knew the iniquity of their sins has already been stated in the last verse. That knowledge makes their spiritual Ignorance all the more culpable, just as a man consciously deceiving people by half-truths is a greater liar than a man who tells lies inadvertently.

3291. Cf. vii. 82-84. Instead of being ashamed on account of the consciousness of their own guilt, they attack the pure ones with their sarcasms, as if not they but the pure ones were in the wrong in trying to set them on the right way.

58. And We rained down on them
A shower (of brimstone):
And evil was the shower
On those who were admonished
(But heeded not)!

SECTION 5.

59. Say: Praise be to Allah,
And Peace on His servants³²⁹²
Whom He has chosen
(For His Message). (Who)
Is better?—Allah or
The false gods they associate
(With Him)?

60. On who has created³²⁹³
The heavens and the earth,
And who sends you down
Rain from the sky?
Yea, with it We cause
To grow well-planted orchards
Full of beauty and delight:
It is not in your power
To cause the growth³²⁹⁴

وَأَمْطَرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ مَطَرًا فَسَاءَ مَطَرُ الْمُنْذَرِينَ ﴿٥٨﴾

قُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ وَسَلَامٌ عَلَى عِبَادِهِ الَّذِينَ اصْطَفَى
إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَيْرٌ أَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٥٩﴾

أَمَّنْ خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَأَنْزَلَ لَكُمْ
مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَنْبَتْنَا بِهِ حَدَائِقَ ذَاتَ
بَهْجَةٍ مَا كَانَ لَكُمْ أَنْ تُنْبِتُوا شَجَرَهَا
إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ هُمْ يَدْعُونَ ﴿٦٠﴾

3292. Allah's revelation having been described as Light, Guidance, and Mercy, we ought all to be grateful to Allah for vouchsafing His revelation. We ought also to appreciate the services of Allah's Messengers, who are chosen to deliver His Message: we ought to send salutations of Peace on them, instead of plotting, as the wicked do, for their removal or persecution, or banishment or death. For these Prophets of Allah undergo every kind of hardship and forego every kind of advantage or pleasure in life for serving mankind. And Allah is truth and goodness, and all our fancies of false worship are falsehoods and evils. Shall we prefer falsehood and evil to truth and goodness?

3293. The order, beauty, and grandeur of the Universe are appealed to. They show unity of design and purpose. How can unjust, ignorant, foolish, heedless, false men think of a multiplicity of gods, or of any god, besides the One True God?

3294. To make a single seed germinate and grow into a tree is beyond man's power. When it comes to a great well-laid-out garden of beauty and delight, no one would think it grew up of itself without a Gardener's consummate art. And the orchard is more than the trees in it: there is design and beauty in their arrangement: proper spaces have to =

Of the trees in them. (Can there be
Another) god besides Allah?
Nay, they are a people
Who swerve from justice.

61. Or, who has made the earth
Firm to live in; made
Rivers in its midst; set
Thereon mountains immovable;³²⁹⁵
And made a separating bar
Between the two seas³²⁹⁶
(Can there be another) god
Besides Allah? Nay, most
Of them know not.

62. Or, who listens to the
Distressed when he calls
On Him, and Who relieves³²⁹⁷
His suffering, and makes you
(Mankind) inheritors of the
earth?³²⁹⁸
(Can there be another) god
Besides Allah? Little it is
That ye heed!

أَمْ نَجْعَلُ الْأَرْضَ قَرَارًا وَنَجْعَلُ خِلَالَهَا أَنْهَدًا
وَنَجْعَلُ لَهَا رُوسًا وَنَجْعَلُ بَيْنَ الْبَحْرَيْنِ
حَاجِزًا أَلَيْسَ اللَّهُ بِأَكْثَرُهُمْ
لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١١﴾

أَمْ نَجْعَلُ الْمُضْطَرَّ إِذَا دَعَاهُ وَيَكْشِفُ السُّوءَ
وَيَجْعَلُكُمْ خُلَفَاءَ الْأَرْضِ أَلَيْسَ
مَعَ اللَّهِ قَلِيلًا مَّا تَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿١٢﴾

= be left between them for the growth of their roots, for the aeration of the soil beneath them, and for the penetration of air and sunlight between their branches. How can any one then think of the wonderful Universe as a whole, without thinking of the far higher Unity of Design, the evidence of the One True Allah?

3295. Cf. xvi. 15 and notes 2038 and 2039. The *terra firma*, the flowing water, and the cycle of water circulation—sea, vapour, clouds, rain, rivers, and sea again,—all one and yet all distinct, with a sort of wonderful barrier between salt water and fresh water: can man see all this and yet be ignorant of Allah?

3296. Cf. xxv. 53 and notes 3111 and 3112.

3297. Besides the evidence of external nature, there is the still more intimate evidence in man's inner conscience and heart. Allah listens to man's cry of agony and relieves his suffering, and He has given him superiority over other creation on this earth, through his mind and soul. Is man then going to run after inferior beings and forget Allah?

3298. Cf. vi. 165, n. 988.

63. Or, who guides you
Through the depths of darkness
On land and sea, and who
Sends the winds as heralds³²⁹⁹
Of glad tidings, going before
His Mercy? (Can there be
Another) god besides Allah?—
High is Allah above what
They associate with Him!

أَمْ يَهْدِيكُمْ فِي ظُلُمَاتٍ لَّيْلٍ وَنَهَارٍ
وَمَنْ يُرْسِلُ الرِّيحَ بُشْرًا بَيْنَ يَدَيْ رَحْمَتِهِ
أَإِلَٰهٌ مَّعَ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى اللَّهُ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ ﴿١٣﴾

64. Or, who originates Creation,
Then repeats it,³³⁰⁰
And who gives you sustenance
From heaven and earth?³³⁰¹
(Can there be another) god
Besides Allah? Say, "Bring forth
Your argument, if ye
Are telling the truth!"³³⁰²

أَمْ يَبْدَأُ الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيدُهُمْ وَبَرَزُهُمْ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ
وَالْأَرْضِ ۚ أَوَلَمْ يَكُنْ لِلَّهِ قُلُوبٌ هَا تَأْتُرْ هُنَّكُمْ
إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿١٤﴾

65. Say: None in the heavens
Or on earth, except Allah,
Knows what is hidden:³³⁰³
Nor can they perceive
When they shall be raised
Up (for Judgment).

قُلْ لَا يَعْلَمُ مَنْ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ الْغَيْبَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ
وَمَا يَشْعُرُونَ أَيَّانَ يُبْعَثُونَ ﴿١٥﴾

3299. Cf. xxv. 48, n. 3104. After external nature, our attention was drawn to our inner consciousness; after that, it is drawn here to our social and collective life, in which we use the forces of nature for international intercourse, trade, agriculture, production, and economic well-being generally. In the next verse, we are asked to contemplate creation from its primeval stages, through its intermediate processes, to the final Destiny in a new Creation—a new heaven and a new earth.

3300. Cf. x. 34, and n. 1428.

3301. *Sustenance*: of course in the spiritual as well as the material sense.

3302. All the arguments point to the Unity of Allah: there is none whatever against it.

3303. The existence of Allah is certain. But nothing else can be known with certainty to our knowledge. He has told us of the Hereafter, and therefore we know it is true. But those who do not believe in Allah,—what knowledge or certainty can they have? Even when it is actually coming, they will not have the sense to perceive it.

66. Nay, but their knowledge
Fails as to the Hereafter,
They are in doubt and uncertainty
Thereanent; nay, they are blind
Thereunto!³³⁰⁴

SECTION 6.

67. The Unbelievers say: "What!
When we become dust,-
We and our fathers,-shall we
Really be raised (from the dead)?
68. "It is true we were promised
This,-we and our fathers
Before (us): these are nothing
But tales of the ancients."
69. Say: "Go ye through the earth
And see what has been
The end of those guilty
(Of sin)."³³⁰⁵
70. But grieve not over them,
Nor distress thyself
Because of their plots.³³⁰⁶
71. They also say: "When will
This promise (come to pass)?
If ye are truthful."

بَلْ أَذْرَكَ عَلِمُهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ بَلْ هُمْ
فِي شَكٍّ مِنْهَا بَلْ هُمْ مِنْهَا عَمُونَ ﴿٦٦﴾

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَإِذَا كُنَّا تُرَابًا وَءَابَاؤُنَا
أَيْنَا لَمُخْرَجُونَ ﴿٦٧﴾

لَقَدْ وَعَدْنَا هَذَا نَحْنُ وَءَابَاؤُنَا مِنْ قَبْلُ إِنْ هَذَا
إِلَّا أَسْطِيرُ الْأُولِينَ ﴿٦٨﴾

قُلْ سِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَانظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ
عَقِبَةُ الْمُجْرِمِينَ ﴿٦٩﴾

وَلَا تَحْزَنْ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا تَكُنْ
فِي ضَلَالٍ مِمَّا يَمْكُرُونَ ﴿٧٠﴾

وَيَقُولُونَ مَتَى هَذَا الْوَعْدُ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿٧١﴾

3304. The Unbelievers are generally materialists, who cannot go beyond the evidence of their physical senses. As to a spiritual vision of the future, their physical senses would only leave them in doubt and uncertainty, while their rejection of the spiritual Light makes them blind altogether to the next world.

3305. Even if the Unbelievers are unwilling to take any doctrine, they have only to observe what has actually happened on the earth, and they will see that evil always came to an evil end, and that Truth and righteousness ultimately won.

3306. Cf. xvi. 127, and n. 2164. The righteous need not worry over the unjust. The plots of the unjust can never defeat or deflect the purpose of Allah.

72. Say: "It may be that
Some of the events which
Ye wish to hasten on
May be (close) in your pursuit!"³³⁰⁷

73. But verily thy Lord is
Full of grace to mankind:
Yet most of them are ungrateful.

74. And verily thy Lord knoweth
All that their hearts do hide,
As well as all that
They reveal.

75. And there is nothing
Hidden in heaven
Or earth, but is (recorded)³³⁰⁸
In a clear record.

76. Verily this Qur-ān doth explain
To the Children of Israel
Most of the matters
In which they disagree.³³⁰⁹

قُلْ عَسَى أَنْ يَكُونَ رَدِفَ لَكُمْ بَعْضُ الَّذِي
تَسْتَعْجِلُونَ ﴿٧٢﴾

وَلِنْ رَبِّكَ لَذُو فَضْلٍ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَلَئِنْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ
لَا يَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٧٣﴾

وَلِنْ رَبِّكَ لَيَعْلَمُ مَا تُكِنُّ صُدُورُهُمْ
وَمَا يُعْلِنُونَ ﴿٧٤﴾

وَمَا مِنْ غَائِبَةٍ فِي السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ
إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ مُبِينٍ ﴿٧٥﴾

إِنَّ هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ يَفُصِّلُ عَلَى بَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ
أَكْثَرَ الَّذِي هُمْ فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ ﴿٧٦﴾

3307. The Unbelievers—or even men of half-hearted faith—may say, "Why worry over distant future events? Take the day as it comes!" But that is a fallacy. Judgment is certain, and it may be that this very hour may be the hour of doom for any given individual. This is the hour of repentance and amendment. For Allah wishes well to all mankind in spite of their ingratitude.

3308. Cf. xxii. 70, xxxvi. 12, lvii. 22.

3309. The Jews had numerous sects. Some were altogether out of the pale, e.g., the Samaritans, who had a separate *Taurāt* of their own: they hated the other Jews and were hated by them. But even in the orthodox body, there were several sects, of which the following may be mentioned: (1) the Pharisees, who were literalists, formalists, and fatalists, and had a large body of traditional literature, with which they overlaid the Law of Moses; (2) the Sadducees, who were rationalists, and seemed to have doubted the doctrine of the Resurrection or of a Hereafter; (3) the Essenes, who practised a sort of Communism and Asceticism and prohibited marriage. About many of their doctrines they had bitter disputes, which were settled by the Qur-ān, which supplemented and perfected the Law of Moses. It also explained clearly the attributes of Allah and the nature of Revelation, and the doctrine of the Hereafter.

77. And it certainly is
A Guide and a Mercy
To those who believe.
78. Verily thy Lord will decide
Between them by His Decree:³³¹⁰
And He is Exalted in Might,
All-Knowing.
79. So put thy trust in Allah:
For thou art on (the Path
Of) manifest Truth.
80. Truly thou canst not cause
The Dead to listen, nor
Canst thou cause the Deaf
To hear the call,
(Especially) when they
Turn back in retreat.³³¹¹
81. Nor canst thou be a guide
To the Blind, (to prevent them)
From straying: only those
Wilt thou get to listen
Who believe in Our Signs,
So they submit.
82. And when the Word is³³¹²
Fulfilled against them (the unjust),
We shall bring forth from the earth

وَأَنَّهُ هُدًى وَرَحْمَةً لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٧٧﴾

إِنَّ رَبَّكَ يَقْضِي بَيْنَهُمْ بِحُكْمِهِ
وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْعَلِيمُ ﴿٧٨﴾

فَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ إِنَّكَ عَلَى الْحَقِّ الْمُبِينِ ﴿٧٩﴾

إِنَّكَ لَا تَسْمَعُ الْمَوْتَى وَلَا تَسْمَعُ الدَّعَاءَ
إِذَا وَلَوْ أَمْذَبِينَ ﴿٨٠﴾

وَمَا أَنْتَ بِهَادِيَ الْعُمْيِ عَنْ ضَلَالَتِهِمْ إِنْ تَسْمَعُ
إِلَّا مَن يُؤْمِنُ بِآيَاتِنَا فَهُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ ﴿٨١﴾

وَإِذَا وَقَعَ الْقَوْلُ عَلَيْهِمْ أَخْرَجْنَا لَهُمْ دَابَّةً
مِّنَ الْأَرْضِ تُكَلِّمُهُمْ أَنَّ النَّاسَ كَانُوا بِآيَاتِنَا

3310. *Decree: hukm*: the disputes between rival sects can only be settled by the Decree of Allah, (1) in the form of a Revelation, as was done by the Qur-ān, or (2) by the logic of events, for hundreds of sects have been extinguished and forgotten in the course of time, and (3) in the Decree of Judgment in the Hereafter, when all jarring sects will at length see their errors.

3311. The Prophet's responsibility was to preach and show the way. Men and women of goodwill had faith and accepted the Message. But he was not responsible for the obstinacy and perversity of men who turned away from Allah's Signs and rejected the Truth.

3312. *The Word*: the Decree or Sentence, the Decision to end the respite and restore the true values of right and wrong in a new world: their cup of iniquity will then have been full.

A Beast to speak unto them³³¹³
Because mankind had no
Faith in our signs.

لَا يُؤْفِكُونَ ﴿٨٢﴾

SECTION 7.

83. The Day We shall gather
Together from every people
A troop of those who reject
Our Signs, and they shall
Be kept in ranks,-

وَيَوْمَ نَحْشُرُ مِنْ كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ فَوْجًا مِمَّنْ يُكَذِّبُ
بَيِّنَاتِنَا فَهُمْ يُوزَعُونَ ﴿٨٣﴾

84. Until, when they come
(Before the Judgment-seat),
(Allah) will say: "Did ye
Reject My Signs, though ye³³¹⁴
Comprehended them not
In knowledge, or what
Was it ye did?"

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءَهُمْ قَالَ أَكَذَّبْتُمْ بِآيَاتِي
وَلَمْ تَحْيطُوا بِهَا عِلْمًا أَمَآذَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٨٤﴾

85. And the Word will be³³¹⁵
Fulfilled against them, because
Of their wrong-doing, and they
Will be unable to speak
(In plea).

وَوَقَعَ الْقَوْلُ عَلَيْهِمْ بِمَا ظَلَمُوا فَهُمْ لَا يَنْطِقُونَ ﴿٨٥﴾

3313. The Beast will be one of the Signs of the Last Days to come, before the present World passes away and the new World is brought into being. If *taklimuhum* is read instead of *tukallimuhum*, it would mean that the Beast would wound them.

3314. The charge against them will be: 'You had no knowledge, and yet you arrogantly rejected My Signs: is that true, or have you any plea in your defence?'

3315. There will be no plea, because the charge will be only too true. The Decree will be passed and executed.

86. See they not that We
Have made the Night
For them to rest in
And the Day to give³³¹⁶
Them light? Verily in this
Are Signs for any people
That believe!

87. And the Day that the Trumpet
Will be sounded—then will be
Smitten with terror those
Who are in the heavens,
And those who are on earth,
Except such as Allah will please
(To exempt): and all shall come
To Him in utter humility.³³¹⁷

88. Thou seest the mountains
And thinkest them firmly fixed:³³¹⁸
But they shall pass away
As the clouds pass away:
(Such is) the artistry of Allah,

أَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّا جَعَلْنَا اللَّيْلَ لَيْسَكُنَا فِيهِ وَالنَّهَارَ
مُبْصِرًا إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٨٦﴾

وَيَوْمَ يُنْفَخُ فِي الصُّورِ فَفَزِعَ مَنْ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ
وَمَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا مَنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ وَكُلُّ أَتَوُهُ
دَٰخِرِينَ ﴿٨٧﴾

وَتَرَى الْجِبَالَ تَحْسَبُهَا جَامِدَةً وَهِيَ تَمُرُّ مَرَّ السَّحَابِ
صُنِعَ اللَّهُ الَّذِي أَنْقَضَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ
إِنَّهُ خَيْرٌ مِّمَّا تَفْعَلُونَ ﴿٨٨﴾

3316. *Night, Day, Rest, and Light*: both in the literal and the symbolic sense. Any one with a scrap of faith or spiritual insight could see that the Night is blessing when used for rest and a curse when used to cover ignorance or sin; and that the Day is for work and enlightenment, and its misuse is gross ingratitude to Allah. Or, understand Truth and practise Righteousness while it is yet Light and the Message of Allah is here to guide you: for there comes the Night when Endeavour will cease and there will be no room for Repentance.

3317. Arrogance will flee with Ignorance, and Self will see itself in its true place—that of humility and lowliness—when the scales of ignorance fall from its eyes.

3318. This is so in the present phase of phenomenal things, both literally and figuratively. There seems nothing more firm or fixed or permanent than the "eternal hills": yet when the new order of things comes and the new World is brought into being, they will be as flimsy and unsubstantial as clouds. So, in the revaluation of things in the Hereafter persons or things or ideas that seem so great and so firmly established now will pass away like mere fancies and give way to the Reality of Allah.

Who disposes of all things³³¹⁹
In perfect order: for He is
Well acquainted with all that ye do.

89. If any do good, he will
Have better than it.
And they will be secure
From terror that Day.

90. And if any do evil,
Their faces will be thrown
Headlong into the Fire:³³²⁰
"Do ye receive a reward
Other than that which ye
Have earned by your deeds?"³³²¹

91. For me, I have been
Commanded to serve the Lord³³²²
Of this City, Him Who has
Sanctified it and to Whom

مَنْ جَاءَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ فَلَهُ خَيْرٌ مِنْهَا وَهُمْ مِنْ فَزَعٍ
يَوْمَئِذٍ آمِنُونَ ﴿٨٩﴾

وَمَنْ جَاءَ بِالسَّيِّئَةِ فَكُبَّتْ وَجُوهُهُمْ فِي النَّارِ
هَلْ تُجْزَوْنَ إِلَّا مَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٩٠﴾

إِنَّمَا أُمِرْتُ أَنْ أَعْبُدَ رَبَّ هَذِهِ الْبَلَدِ الَّذِي
حَرَّمَهَا وَلَهُ كُلُّ شَيْءٍ وَأُمِرْتُ
أَنْ أَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ ﴿٩١﴾

3319. *Atqana*: to arrange or dispose of things with art, or so as to obtain the most perfect results. The present phenomenal world and the Future that is to be, all have a definite object and purpose in the Plan of Allah, Who knows perfectly what we are, what we do, what we think, and what we need. Who can praise His artistry enough?

3320. *Headlong*: it may be that the very things of which we were proudest, which we considered foremost in our present order of the world, will be the first to go into the Fire, as they are but the window-dressing (=faces) of Evil.

3321. There will be no punishment except such as has been deserved by actual conduct in the present life of probation.

3322. *The Lord of this City*. This was spoken in Makkah say about the 5th year before the Hijrat, when the holy Prophet and his adherents were being persecuted as enemies to the cult of Makkah. So far from being against the true spirit of the holy City of Makkah, it was actually in furtherance of that spirit, which had been overlaid by the idolatries and abominations of the Pagan Quraish. They are told that the new Teaching is from the Lord of Makkah itself, the One True God, Who had sanctified it in the time of Abraham. Lest they should think that it was a local or tribal or narrow cult, it is added that He is not only Lord of this City, but Lord of the Worlds, "to Whom belong all things". It is a universal message; but how sad it would be if the Makkans, among whom it came first, were to reject it?

(Belong) all things:
And I am commanded
To be of those who bow
In Islam to Allah's Will,-

92. And to rehearse the Qur-ān:³³²³

And if any accept guidance,
They do it for the good
Of their own souls,
And if any stray, say:
"I am only a Warner".

93. And say: "Praise be to Allah,
Who will soon show you³³²⁴
His Signs, so that ye
Shall know them:" and thy Lord
Is not unmindful
Of all that ye do.³³²⁵

وَأَنْ أَتْلُوا الْقُرْآنَ فَمَنْ أَهْتَدَىٰ فَإِنَّمَا يَهْتَدِ
لِنَفْسِهِ وَمَنْ ضَلَّ فَقُلْ إِنَّمَا أَنَا مِنَ الْمُنذِرِينَ ﴿٩٢﴾

وَقُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ سَيُرِيكُمْ آيَاتِهِ فَتَعْرِفُونَهَا وَمَا رَبُّكَ
بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٩٣﴾

3323. The duty of the Prophet and his adherents was, first, to accept Islam and become themselves shining examples of Allah's grace and mercy, as they in fact were, and secondly to preach that message and spread that Light to all around. It was not for them to force it on unwilling people: for any who rejected it would find their own spiritual loss in such rejection. But they must clearly warn them of the consequences.

3324. In a few years after that, many wonderful things happened that removed the doubts of the doubters and confirmed the faith of the Believers. They showed how the logic of events proved the true mission of the holy Prophet. Other things some minds may not be able to grasp. But the logic of events is for all to see.

3325. Trials and tribulations, persecution and exile, and the patient endurance and constancy with which they were met by the Believers—all are known to Allah and will be credited to their account.