

## INTRODUCTION TO SŪRAT *Banī Isrāil*, 17

In the gradation of religious teaching (see Introduction to Sūra viii), we saw that the first seven Sūras sketched the early religious history of man, and led up to the formation of the new Ummat of Islam. Sūras viii to xvi formed another series dealing with the formation of the new Ummat and its consolidation, and Allah's dealing with man taken as an Ummat and considered in his social relations in organised communities (see Introduction to Sūras viii, x, and xvi). We now come to a fresh series, (Sūras xvii-xxix), which may be considered in three parts. Sūras xvii-xxi begin with an allusion to the *Isrā* (of which more later), and proceed to religious history as touching individuals rather than nations. The old prophets and stories of the past are now referred to from this point of view. Sūras xxii-xxv refer to Hajj (pilgrimage), worship and prayer, chastity, privacy, etc., as related to a man's individual religious growth. Sūras xxvi-xxix go back to the old prophets and stories of the past, as illustrating the growth of the individual soul in its reactions against the lives of the communities and the reactions of the communities to the lives of its great individual souls.

Let us now consider S. xvii. by itself. It opens with the night journey of the Holy Prophet: he was transported from the Sacred Mosque (of Makkah) to the Farthest Mosque (of Jerusalem) in a night and shown some of the Signs of Allah. The majority of Commentators take this Night Journey literally. The Hadith literature gives details of this Journey and its study helps to elucidate its meaning. The holy Prophet was first transported to the seat of the earlier revelations in Jerusalem, and then taken through the seven heavens even to the Sublime Throne. The Spaniard, Miguel Asin, Arabic Professor in the University of Madrid, has shown that this Mi'rāj literature had a great influence on the Mediaeval literature of Europe, and especially on the great Italian poem, the *Divine Comedy* (or Drama) of Dante, which towers like a landmark in mediaeval European literature.

The reference to this great story of the Mi'rāj is a fitting prelude to the journey of the human soul in its religious growth in life. The first steps in such growth must be through moral conduct—the reciprocal rights of parents and children, kindness to our fellow-men, courage and firmness in the hour of danger, a sense of personal responsibility, and a sense of Allah's Presence through prayer and praise.

The Mi'rāj is usually dated to the 27th night of the month of Rajab (though other dates, e.g., 17th of Rabi' I, are also given) in the year before the Hijra.

This fixes the date of the opening verse of the Sūra, though portions of the Sūra may have been a little earlier.

*Summary.*—The spiritual experience of the Prophets of Allah are given in order that Allah's Signs may be made clear to men: man is misled into evil, and must be guided to a sense of personal responsibility (xvii. 1-22).

Our service to Allah is shown also in our human relations, goodness to parents and kinsmen and strangers in want, as well as kindness to children, purity in sex relations, justice and respect for human life, protection of orphans, probity in all dealings, and avoidance of arrogance (xvii, 23-40).

Allah's glory is above all comparison, and the reception of His revelation marks off the man of faith from those who do not believe. But the Believers should speak fair and avoid dissensions, for Allah doth encompass all men (xvii. 41-60).

Pride caused the fall of Iblis; but the children of Adam have been raised in excellence above other Creation. They will be judged by their deeds. Prayer is good at stated times and at night, and the Qur-ān is offered as healing and mercy (xvii. 61-84).

Inspiration (the Qur-ān) is a Sign of Allah's grace, and men should accept it without making carping excuses. Be humble in prayer and praise (xvii. 85-111).

*Bani Isrā'il, or the Children of Israel  
or Al-Isrā'.*

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

1. Glory to (Allah)

Who did take His Servant

For a Journey by night<sup>2166</sup>

From the Sacred Mosque<sup>2167</sup>

To the Farthest Mosque<sup>2168</sup>

Whose precincts We did

Bless,—in order that We

Might show him some

Of Our Signs: for He

Is the One Who heareth

And seeth (all things).<sup>2169</sup>



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

سُبْحَنَ الَّذِي أَسْرَىٰ بِعَبْدِهِ ۚ لَيْلًا مِنَ الْمَسْجِدِ  
الْحَرَامِ إِلَى الْمَسْجِدِ الْأَقْصَا الَّذِي بَنَيْنَا حَوْلَهُ  
لِنُرِيَهُ مِنْ آيَاتِنَا إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ ﴿١﴾

2166. The reference is to the Isra' for which see the Introduction to this Sūra.

2167. *Masjid* is a place of prayer: here it refers to the Ka'ba at Makkah. It had not yet been cleared of its idols and rededicated exclusively to the One True God. It was symbolical of the new Message which was being given to mankind.

2168. *The Farthest Mosque* must refer to the site of the Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem on the hill of Moriah, at or near which stands the Dome of the Rock, called also the Mosque of Hadhrat 'Umar. This and the Mosque known as the Farthest Mosque (*Masjid-ul-Aqṣā*) were completed by the Amīr 'Abd-ul-Malik in A.H. 68. *Farthest*, because it was the place of worship farthest west which was known to the Arabs in the time of the holy Prophet: it was a sacred place to both Jews and Christians, but the Christians then had the upper hand, as it was included in the Byzantine (Roman) Empire, which maintained a Patriarch at Jerusalem. The chief dates in connection with the Temple are: it was finished by Solomon about B.C. 1004; destroyed by the Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar about 586 B.C.; rebuilt under Ezra and Nehemiah about 515 B.C.; turned into a heathen idol-temple by one of Alexander's successors, Antiochus Epiphanes, 167 B.C.; restored by Herod, B.C. 17 to A.D. 29; and completely razed to the ground by the Emperor Titus in A.D. 70. These ups and downs are among the greater Signs in religious history.

2169. Allah's knowledge comprehends all things, without any curtain of Time or any separation of Space. He can therefore see and hear all things, and the *Mi'rāj* was a reflection of this knowledge.

In this and the subsequent verses, the reference to Allah is generally in the first person and plural. But in the first and the last clause of this verse it is in the third person singular: "Glory to Allah, Who did take *His* Servant...."; "He is the One....". In each of these two instances, the clause expresses the point of view of Allah's creatures, who glorify Him, and whose hearing and seeing are ordinarily so limited that they can do nothing but glorify Him when one of His creatures is raised up to hear and see the Signs. It is *they* who glorify Him.

2. We gave Moses the Book,<sup>2170</sup>  
And made it a Guide  
To the Children of Israel,  
(Commanding): "Take not  
Other than Me<sup>2171</sup>  
As Disposer of (your) affairs."
3. O ye that are sprung  
From those whom We carried  
(In the Ark) with Noah!<sup>2172</sup>  
Verily he was a devotee  
Most grateful.
4. And we decreed for  
The Children of Israel<sup>2173</sup>  
In the Book, that twice<sup>2174</sup>  
Would they do mischief  
On the earth and be elated

وَأَتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ وَجَعَلْنَاهُ  
هُدًى لِّبَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ لَّا تَتَّخِذُوا  
مِن دُونِي وَكِيلاً

ذُرِّيَّةَ مَنْ حَمَلْنَا مَعَ نُوحٍ إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا  
عَبْدًا شَاكِرِينَ

وَقَضَيْنَا إِلَى بَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ فِي الْكِتَابِ لُتُفْسِدُنَّ  
فِي الْأَرْضِ مَرَّتَيْنِ وَلِتَعْلَنَ أَعْلُوًا كَبِيرًا

2170. *The Book*: the revelation that was given to Moses. It was there clearly laid down that those who followed Moses must consider Allah as the Only God. "Thou shalt have no other gods before me; thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image...." thou shalt not bow down thyself to them nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God....;" etc.(Exod. xx. 3-5). These are the words of the English Bible. As a matter of fact the spirit of the Mosaic teaching went further. It referred all things to the Providence of Allah: Allah is the Disposer of all affairs, and we are to look to none but Him. This is Islam, and the *Mi'raj* showed that it was the teaching of Allah from the most ancient times, and yet it was violated by the very people who claimed to be its custodians.

2171. Note the transition from "We" in the first clause to "Me" in the second clause. The first clause refers to the majesty of Allah as the Heavenly King; the second clause refers to His personal interest in all our affairs.

2172. After the Deluge of the time of Noah the only descendants of Noah were those who were saved in the Ark with him. They had special reason to celebrate the praises of Allah. But they relapsed into idolatry, sin, and abominations. They are reminded of the true and sincere devotion of Noah himself, as contrasted with the unworthiness of Noah's descendants, especially the Children of Israel.

2173. The Book is the revelation given to the Children of Israel. Here it seems to refer to the burning words of Prophets like Isaiah. For example, see Isaiah, chap. xxiv. or Isaiah v. 20-30, or Isaiah iii. 16-26.

2174. What are the two occasions referred to? It may be that "twice" is a figure of speech for "more than once", "often". Or it may be that the two occasions refer to (1) the destruction of the Temple by the Babylonian Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C., when the Jews were carried off into captivity, and (2) the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus in A.D. 70, after which the Temple was never re-built. See n. 2168 above. On both occasions it was a judgment of Allah for the sins of the Jews, their backslidings, and their arrogance.

With mighty arrogance  
(And twice would they be punished)!

5. When the first of the warnings  
Came to pass, We sent  
Against you Our servants  
Given to terrible warfare:<sup>2175</sup>  
They entered the very inmost  
Parts of your homes;  
And it was a warning  
(Completely) fulfilled.

6. Then did We grant you  
Victory over them:<sup>2176</sup>  
We gave you increase  
In resources and sons,  
And made you  
The more numerous  
In man-power.

7. If ye did well,  
Ye did well for yourselves;  
If ye did evil,

فَإِذَا جَاءَ وَعْدُ أُولَاهُمَا بَعَثْنَا عَلَيْكُمْ عِبَادًا لَنَا أُولَىٰ  
بَأْسٍ شَدِيدٍ فَجَاسُوا خِلَالَ الدِّيَارِ  
وَكَانَ وَعْدًا مَّفْعُولًا ﴿٥﴾

ثُمَّ رَدَدْنَا لَكُمُ الْكَرَّةَ عَلَيْهِمْ وَأَمْدَدْنَاكُمْ  
بِأَمْوَالٍ وَبَنِينَ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ أَكْثَرَ نَفِيرًا ﴿٦﴾

إِنْ أَحْسَنْتُمْ أَحْسَنْتُمْ لِأَنْفُسِكُمْ وَإِنْ أَسَأْتُمْ فَلَهَا  
فَإِذَا جَاءَ وَعْدُ الْآخِرَةِ لِيَسْتَوْزُوا وُجُوهَكُمْ

2175. A good description of the war-like Nebuchadnezzar and his Babylonians. They were servants of Allah in the sense that they were instruments through which the wrath of Allah was poured out on the Jews, for they penetrated through their lands, their Temple, and their homes, and carried away the Jews, men and women, into captivity. As regards "the daughters of Zion" see the scathing condemnation in Isaiah, iii. 16-26.

2176. The return of the Jews from the Captivity was about 520 B.C. They started life afresh. They rebuilt their Temple. They carried out various reforms and built up a new Judaism in connection with Ezra. See appendix II following S. v. For a time they prospered. Meanwhile their old oppressors the Babylonians had been absorbed by Persia. Subsequently Persia was absorbed in Alexander's Empire. The whole of western Asia was Hellenized, and the new school of Jews was Hellenized also, and had a strong centre in Alexandria. But their footing in Palestine continued, and under the Asmonæan Dynasty (B.C. 167-63), they had a national revival, and the names of the Makkah bees are remembered as those of heroes. Another dynasty, that of the Idumæans, (B.C. 63 to B.C. 4), to which Herod belonged, also enjoyed some semi-independent power. The sceptre of Syria (including Palestine) passed to the Romans in B.C. 65, and Jewish feudatory Kings held power under them. But the Jews again showed a stiff-necked resistance to Allah's Messenger in the time of Jesus, and the inevitable doom followed in the complete and final destruction of the Temple under Titus in 70 A.D.

(Ye did it) against yourselves.<sup>2177</sup>

So when the second  
Of the warnings came to pass,  
(We permitted your enemies)  
To disfigure your faces,<sup>2178</sup>  
And to enter your Temple<sup>2179</sup>  
As they had entered it before,  
And to visit with destruction  
All that fell into their power.<sup>2180</sup>

8. It may be that your Lord  
May (yet) show Mercy<sup>2181</sup>  
Unto you; but if ye  
Revert (to your sins),  
We shall revert  
(To Our punishments):  
And We have made Hell  
A prison for those who  
Reject (all Faith).<sup>2182</sup>

9. Verily this Qur-ān  
Doth guide to that

وَلِيَدْخُلُوا الْمَسْجِدَ كَمَا دَخَلُوهُ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ  
وَلِيَسِيرُوا فِيهِ أَمَانَةً تَبِيرًا

عَسَىٰ رَبُّكُمْ أَنْ يَرْحَمَكُمْ وَإِنْ عُدْتُمْ عَدَاوَةً جَعَلْنَا جَهَنَّمَ  
لِلْكَافِرِينَ حَصِيرًا

إِنَّ هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ يَهْدِي لِلَّتِي هِيَ أَقْوَمُ وَيُبَيِّنُ

2177. This is a parenthetical sentence. If anyone follows Allah's Law, the benefit goes to himself: he does not bestow a favour on anyone else. Similarly evil brings its own recompense on the doer of evil.

2178. The second doom was due to the rejection of the Message of Jesus. "To disfigure your faces" means to destroy any credit or power you may have got: the face shows the personality of the man.

2179. Titus's destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. was complete. He was a son of the Roman Emperor Vespasian, and at the date of the destruction of Jerusalem, had the title of Cæsar as heir to throne. He ruled as Roman Emperor from 79 to 81 A.D.

2180. Merivale in his *Romans Under the Empire* gives a graphic account of the siege and final destruction (ed. 1890, vii. 221-255). The population of Jerusalem was then 200,000. According to the Latin historian Tacitus it was as much as 600,000. There was a famine and there were massacres. There was much fanaticism. The judgment of Merivale is: "They" (the Jews) "were judicially abandoned to their own passions and the punishment which naturally awaited them". (vii. 221).

2181. Now we come to the time of our holy Prophet. In spite of all the past, the Jews could still have obtained Allah's forgiveness if they had not obstinately rejected the greatest of the Prophets also. If they were to continue in their sins, Allah's punishment would also continue to visit them.

2182. There is such a thing as disgrace in this life, but the final disgrace is in the Hereafter, and that will be irretrievable.

Which is most right (or stable),<sup>2183</sup>  
 And giveth the glad tidings  
 To the Believers who work  
 Deeds of righteousness,  
 That they shall have  
 A magnificent reward;

الْمُؤْمِنِينَ الَّذِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ الصَّالِحَاتِ  
 أَنْ لَهُمْ أَجْرًا كَبِيرًا ﴿٩﴾

10. And to those who believe not  
 In the Hereafter, (it announceth)  
 That We have prepared  
 For them a Chastisement  
 Grievous (indeed).

وَأَنَّ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ أَعْتَدْنَا لَهُمْ  
 عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا ﴿١٠﴾

## SECTION 2.

11. Man prays for evil  
 As fervently  
 As he prays for good<sup>2184</sup>  
 For man is given to  
 Haste.
12. We have made the Night  
 And the Day as two<sup>2185</sup>  
 (Of Our) Signs: the Sign  
 Of the Night have We made dark  
 While the Sign of the Day  
 We have made bright

وَيَدْعُ الْإِنْسَانُ بِالشَّرِّ دُعَاءَهُ بِالْخَيْرِ وَكَانَ  
 الْإِنْسَانُ عَجُولًا ﴿١١﴾

وَجَعَلْنَا اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ آيَاتَيْنِ فَمَحَوْنَا آيَةَ اللَّيْلِ  
 وَجَعَلْنَا آيَةَ النَّهَارِ مُبْصِرَةً لِّنَبْتَغُوا فَضْلًا

2183. The instability and crookedness of the Jewish soul having been mentioned, the healing balm which should have cured it is now pointed out. The Message of the Qur-ān is for all. Those who have Faith and show that Faith in their conduct must reap their spiritual reward. But those who reject Faith cannot escape punishment. Apart from what is past, apart from questions of national or racial history, there is a Hope,—and a Danger—for every soul.

2184. Man in his ignorance or haste mistakes evil for good, and desires what he should not have. The wise and instructed soul has patience and does not put its own desires above the wisdom of Allah. He receives with contentment the favours of Allah, and prays to be rightly guided in his desires and petitions.

2185. If we were to cry when it is night, we shall look foolish when it is day; for the night is but a preparation for the day: perhaps, as the last verse says, we pray for the day when we want rest for the night. Both are Signs from Allah. Darkness and light stand for ignorance and knowledge. "Where ignorance is bliss, it's folly to be wise." Darkness and light may also stand for shadow and sunshine, sorrow and joy: both may be for our development.

That ye may seek  
Bounty from your Lord<sup>2186</sup>  
And that ye may know  
The number and count  
Of the years: all things  
Have We explained in detail.

13. Every man's fate<sup>2187</sup>  
We have fastened  
On his own neck:  
On the Day of Judgment  
We shall bring out  
For him a scroll,  
Which he will see  
Spread open.<sup>2188</sup>
14. (It will be said to him:)  
"Read thine (own) record:  
Sufficient is thy soul  
This day to make out  
An account against thee."<sup>2189</sup>
15. Who receiveth guidance,  
Receiveth it for his own  
Benefit: who goeth astray

مَنْ رَبِّكُمْ وَلِتَعْلَمُوا عَدَدَ السِّنِّ وَالْحِسَابِ  
وَكُلَّ شَيْءٍ فَصَّلْنَاهُ تَفْصِيلًا ﴿١٢﴾

وَكُلَّ إِنْسَانٍ أَلْزَمْنَاهُ طَلْعَهُ فِي عُنُقِهِ وَنُخْرِجُ لَهُ  
يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ كِتَابًا يَلْقَاهُ مَنْشُورًا ﴿١٣﴾

أَقْرَأْ كِتَابَكَ كَفَىٰ بِنَفْسِكَ الْيَوْمَ عَلَيْكَ حَبِيبًا ﴿١٤﴾

مَنْ اهْتَدَىٰ فَإِنَّمَا يَهْتَدِي لِنَفْسِهِ وَمَنْ ضَلَّ

2186. By the physical light we see physical facts. And this physical gift of Allah is good for us in two ways: (1) we can arrange for our livelihood, or we can attain the knowledge of the physical sciences and gain some control over the physical forces of nature; and (2) the daily rising and setting of the sun gives us the computation of days and years, for the physical natural year is the solar year.

2187. *Fate: Tāir*, literally a bird, hence an omen, an evil omen, fate. Cf. xxxvi. 19. The Arabs, like the ancient Romans, sought to read the mysteries of human fate from the flight of birds. And many of us in our own day seek to read our future fortunes by similar superstitions. We read in the previous verse that there are Signs of Allah, but they are not meant to subserve the vulgar purpose of disclosing our future destiny in a worldly sense. They are meant for quite other purposes, as we have explained. Our real fate does not depend upon birds or omens or stars. It depends on our deeds; good or evil, and they hang round our necks.

2188. These deeds, good or evil, will be embodied in a scroll which will be quite open to us in the light of the Day of Judgment, however much we may affect to be ignorant of it now or waste our energies in prying into mysteries that do not concern us.

2189. Our true accusers are our own deeds. Why not look to them instead of vainly prying into something superstitious which we call a book of fortune or a book of omens?



Doth so to his own loss:<sup>2190</sup>

No bearer of burdens

Can bear the burden<sup>2191</sup>

Of another: nor would We

Punish

Until. We had sent

A messenger (to give warning).

16. When We decide to destroy

A town, We command those

Among them who are given

The good things of this life<sup>2192</sup> (to be obedient)

But they continued to transgress; so that

The word is proved true<sup>2193</sup>

Against them: then

We destroy them utterly.

17. How many generations

Have We destroyed after Noah?<sup>2194</sup>

And enough is thy Lord

فَاتَّمَايَضِلْ عَلَيْهَا وَلَا تَزِرْ وَازِرَةً وَّزَرَ أُخْرَىٰ

وَمَا كُنَّا مُعَذِّبِينَ حَتَّىٰ نَبْعَثَ رَسُولًا ﴿١٥﴾

وَإِذَا أَرَدْنَا أَنْ نُهْلِكَ قَرْيَةً أَمَرْنَا مُتْرَفِيهَا فَفَسَقُوا فِيهَا

فَحَقَّ عَلَيْهَا الْقَوْلُ فَدَمَّرْنَاهَا تَدْمِيرًا ﴿١٦﴾

وَكَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا مِنْ الْقُرُونِ مِنْ بَعْدِ نُوحٍ وَكَفَىٰ بِرَبِّكَ

بَذْنٍ عِبَادِهِ خَيْرًا بَصِيرًا ﴿١٧﴾

2190. The doctrine of personal responsibility is insisted on, and the basis of ethics is shown to be our own good or evil as furthering or obstructing our highest development.

2191. The doctrine of vicarious atonement is condemned. Salvation for the wicked cannot be attained by the punishment of the innocent. One man cannot bear the burden of another: that would be unjust. Every man must bear his own personal responsibility. Cf. vi. 164. But Allah never visits His wrath on anyone until due warning is conveyed to him through an accredited messenger.

2192. Allah's Mercy gives every chance to the wicked to repent. When wickedness gets so rampant that punishment becomes inevitable, even then Allah's Mercy and Justice act together. Those who are highly gifted from Allah—it may be with wealth or position, or it may be with talents and opportunities—are expected to understand and obey. They are given a definite order and warning. If they still transgress there is no further room for argument. They cannot plead that they were ignorant. The command of the Lord is proved against them, and its application is called for beyond doubt. Then it is that their punishment is completed.

2193. *Qaul* here has the sense of word, order, law, charge framed against one under a definite law.

2194. Noah's Flood is taken as a new starting point in history. But even after that hundreds of empires, towns, and generations have perished for their wickedness.

To note and see  
The sins of His servants.<sup>2195</sup>

18. If any do wish  
For the transitory things  
(Of this life), we readily<sup>2196</sup>  
Grant them—such things  
As We will, to such persons  
As We will: in the end  
Have We provided Hell  
For them: they will burn  
Therein, disgraced and rejected.<sup>2197</sup>

19. Those who do wish  
For the (things of) the Hereafter,<sup>2198</sup>  
And strive therefor  
With all due striving,  
And have Faith,<sup>2199</sup>  
They are the ones  
Whose striving will be thanked  
(By Allah).

مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ الْعَاجِلَةَ عَجَّلْنَا لَهُ فِيهَا مَا نَشَاءُ  
لِمَنْ نُرِيدُ ثُمَّ جَعَلْنَا لَهُ جَهَنَّمَ يَصْلَاهَا مَذْمُومًا  
مَذْهُورًا ﴿١٨﴾

وَمَنْ أَرَادَ الْآخِرَةَ وَسَعَىٰ لَهَا سَعْيَهَا وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ  
فَأُولَٰئِكَ كَانَ سَعْيُهُمْ مَشْكُورًا ﴿١٩﴾

2195. Let not the wicked think, because they are given a lease of life and luxury for a time, that their wickedness has escaped notice. Allah notes and sees all things, both open and secret. He knows the hidden motives and thoughts of men, and He has no need of any other evidence. His knowledge and sight are all-sufficient.

2196. An explanation is now given of how it is that prosperity sometimes seems to attend the wicked. The explanation is threefold: (1) the transitory things of this life are worth little in the eternal scheme of things; (2) even they are provided, not just because their recipients wish for them, but according to a definite Plan of Allah; and (3) in the end there is for the wicked the eternal Misery and deprivation of grace,—the Hell which is worse than destruction in the terms of this world.

2197. All the pride and insolence will then be brought low. The disgrace and the exclusion from the "sight of the Face of Allah" will by themselves be punishments of which the magnitude cannot be measured in the terms of our present material life.

2198. This is in contrast to the last verse. Those who wish for mere earthly good sometimes get it and misuse it. Those whose eyes are fixed on the Hereafter, they too share in their Lord's bounty provided they fulfil the conditions explained in the next note; but their wishes and endeavours are more acceptable in the sight of Allah.

2199. A mere wish for moral and spiritual good is not enough. It must be backed up by hard endeavour and supported by a lively Faith. On those conditions the wishes are accepted by Allah.

20. Of the bounties of thy Lord  
We bestow freely on all—  
These as well as those:  
The bounties of thy Lord  
Are not closed (to anyone).<sup>2200</sup>

21. See how We have bestowed  
More on some than on others;  
But verily the Hereafter  
Is more in rank and gradation  
And more in excellence.<sup>2201</sup>

22. Take not with Allah  
Another god;<sup>2202</sup>  
Or thou (O man!) wilt sit  
In disgrace and destitution.<sup>2203</sup>

### SECTION 3.

23. Thy Lord hath decreed  
That ye worship none but Him,  
And that ye be kind  
To parents. Whether one  
Or both of them attain  
Old age in thy life,<sup>2204</sup>

كَلَّا نُمِدُّ هُنُوْلًا وَهُنُوْلًا مِّنْ عَطَاءِ رَبِّكَ  
وَمَا كَانَ عَطَاءُ رَبِّكَ مَحْظُوْرًا ﴿٢٠﴾

أَنظُرْ كَيْفَ فَضَّلْنَا بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ وَلِلْآخِرَةِ  
أَكْبَرُ دَرَجَاتٍ وَأَكْبَرُ تَفْضِيلًا ﴿٢١﴾

لَا تَجْعَلْ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهًا آخَرَ فَتَقْعُدَ مَذْمُوْمًا  
تَخْذُوْلًا ﴿٢٢﴾

﴿٢٣﴾ وَقَضَىٰ رَبُّكَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ  
إِحْسَانًا إِنَّمَا يَتَّبِعَنَّ عِنْدَكَ الْكِبَرُ أَحَدُهُمَا  
أَوْ كِلَاهُمَا فَلَا تَقُلْ لِّمَا آفٍ وَلَا تَنْهَرْهُمَا

2200. Allah's favours are showered on all,—the just and the unjust, the deserving and the undeserving. But there is a difference as explained in the last two verses.

2201. Nor should man suppose that all gifts are of equal value. The spiritual ones rank far higher in dignity and real worth than the transitory ones. Therefore it is altogether wrong to compare the worldly prosperity of a wicked man with the apparent want of it to a man of spiritual worth. There is no comparison between them when measured by right standards.

2202. The seeming inequality of gifts to men might make short-sighted men impugn the impartiality of Allah. But the fault lies with such men's own want of knowledge and want of Faith. There is no excuse for them to seek other objects of worship than Allah. For there is none worthy of worship except Allah.

2203. If foolish men turn to false objects of worship, they will not only be disappointed, but they will lose the respect of their own fellow-men, and spiritually they will be reduced to destitution. All their talents and their works will be of no avail.

2204. The spiritual and moral duties are now brought into juxtaposition. We are to worship none but Allah, because none but Allah is worthy of worship, not because "the Lord thy God is a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto =

Say not to them a word  
Of contempt, nor repel them  
But address them,  
In terms of honour.

24. And, out of kindness,  
Lower to them the wing<sup>2205</sup>  
Of humility, and say:  
"My Lord! bestow on them  
Thy Mercy even as they  
Cherished me in childhood."<sup>2206</sup>

25. Your Lord knoweth best  
What is in your hearts:  
If ye do deeds of righteousness,  
Verily He is Most Forgiving  
To those who turn to Him  
Again and again (in true  
penitence).<sup>2207</sup>

وَقُلْ لَهُمَا قَوْلًا كَرِيمًا ﴿١٧﴾

وَأَخْفِضْ لَهُمَا جَنَاحَ الذَّلِيلِ مِنَ الرَّحْمَةِ  
وَقُلْ رَبِّ ارْحَمْهُمَا كَمَا رَبَّيَانِي صَغِيرًا ﴿١٨﴾

رَبِّكُمْ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا فِي نُفُوسِكُمْ إِن تَكُونُوا صَالِحِينَ  
فَإِنَّهُ كَانَ لِلْأَوَّابِينَ غَفُورًا ﴿١٩﴾

= the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me" (Exod. xx. 5).

Note that the act of worship may be collective as well as individual; hence the plural *ta'budū*. The kindness to parents is an individual act of piety; hence the singular *taqul*, *qul*, etc.

2205. Cf. xv. 88 and n. 2011. The metaphor is that of a high-flying bird which lowers her wing out of tenderness to her offspring. There is a double aptness. (1) When the parent was strong and the child was helpless, parental affection was showered on the child: when the child grows up and is strong, and the parent is helpless, can he do less than bestow similar tender care on the parent? (2) But more: he must approach the matter with gentle humility: for does not parental love, remind him of the great love with which Allah cherishes His creatures? There is something here more than simple human gratitude; it goes up into the highest spiritual region.

2206. Note that we are asked to honour our father and mother, not "that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee" (Exod. xx. 12), but upon much higher and more universal grounds, such as befit a perfected revelation. In the first place, not merely respect, but cherishing kindness, and humility to parents, are commanded. In the second place, this command is bracketed with the command to worship the One True God. Parental love should be to us a type of divine love: nothing that we can do can ever really compensate for that which we have received. In the third place (see next verse) our spiritual advancement is tested by this: we cannot expect Allah's forgiveness if we are rude or unkind to those who unselfishly brought us up.

2207. It is the heart, and its hidden and secret motives, by which we are judged: for Allah knows them all.

26. And render to the kindred  
Their due rights, as (also)  
To those in want,  
And to the wayfarer:<sup>2208</sup>  
But squander not (your wealth)  
In the manner of a spendthrift.<sup>2209</sup>

وَأَاتِ ذَا الْقُرْبَىٰ حَقَّهُ وَالْمِسْكِينَ وَابْنَ السَّبِيلِ  
وَلَا يَبْذِرْ بَذِيرًا ﴿١٧﴾

27. Verily spendthrifts are brothers  
Of the Satans.  
And the Satan  
Is to his Lord (Himself)  
Ungrateful.<sup>2210</sup>

إِنَّ الْمُبَذِّرِينَ كَانُوا إِخْوَانَ الشَّيَاطِينِ  
وَكَانَ الشَّيْطَانُ لِرَبِّهِ كَفُورًا ﴿١٨﴾

28. And even if thou hast  
To turn away from them  
In pursuit of the Mercy  
From thy Lord which thou  
Dost expect, yet speak  
To them a word  
Of easy kindness.<sup>2211</sup>

وَأِمَّا تَعْرِضْ عَنْهُمْ فَبُحْ بِحَنَانِ رَبِّكَ تَرْجُوهُمْ  
فَقُلْ لَهُمْ قَوْلًا مَّيْسُورًا ﴿١٩﴾

2208. In the Jewish Decalogue, which was given to a primitive and hard-hearted people, this refinement of Kindness,—to those in want and to wayfarers (i.e., total strangers whom you come across) finds no place. Nor was there much danger of their wasting their substance out of exuberance. Even the command “to honour thy father and mother” comes after the ceremonial observance of the Sabbath. With us, the worship of Allah is linked up with kindness—to parents, kindred, those in want, those who are far from their homes though they may be total strangers to us. It is not mere verbal kindness. They have certain rights which must be fulfilled.

2209. All charity, kindness, and help are conditioned by our own resources. There is no merit if we merely spend out of bravado or for idle show. How many families are ruined by extravagant expenses at weddings, funerals, etc., or (as they may call it) to “oblige friends or relatives”, or to give to able-bodied beggars? To no one was this command more necessary than it is to Muslims of the present day.

2210. Spendthrifts are not merely fools. They are of the same family as the Satans. And the Satan himself—fell by his ingratitude to Allah. So those who misuse or squander Allah's gifts are also ungrateful to Allah.

2211. You may have to “turn away” from people for two reasons. (1) You may not have the wherewithal with which to entertain them and give them their rights; or (2) you may have to give them a wide berth because their thoughts are not as your thoughts. In either case there is no need to speak harshly to them. Your words should be those of “easy kindness”, i.e., the sort of kindness (not merely frigid politeness) which flows from pity and understanding and smooths over unnecessary difficulties in human intercourse.

29. Make not thy hand tied<sup>2212</sup>  
(Like a niggard's) to thy neck,  
Nor stretch it forth  
To its utmost reach,  
So that thou become  
Blameworthy and destitute.

30. Verily thy Lord doth provide  
Sustenance in abundance  
For whom He pleaseth, and He  
Straiten it<sup>2213</sup>  
For He doth know  
And regard all His servants.

## SECTION 4.

31. Kill not your children<sup>2214</sup>  
For fear of want: We shall  
Provide, sustenance for them  
As well as for you.  
Verily the killing of them  
Is a great sin.
32. Nor come nigh to adultery:  
For it is an indecent (deed)  
And an evil way<sup>2215</sup>

وَلَا تَجْعَلْ يَدَكَ مَغْلُولَةً إِلَىٰ عُنُقِكَ وَلَا تَبْسُطْهَا  
كُلَّ الْبَسِطِ فَتَقْعُدَ مَلُومًا مَّحْسُورًا ﴿٢٩﴾

إِنَّ رَبَّكَ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَن يَشَاءُ وَيَقْدِرُ  
إِنَّهُ كَانَ بِعِبَادِهِ خَبِيرًا بَصِيرًا ﴿٣٠﴾

وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا أَوْلَادَكُمْ خَشْيَةَ إِمْلَاقٍ مِّنْ نَّرْدِهِمْ  
وَاِنَّا كُنَّا إِن فَتَلَهُمْ كَانِ خَطَايَا كَبِيرًا ﴿٣١﴾

وَلَا تَقْرُبُوا الزِّنَىٰ إِنَّهُ كَانَ فَحِشَةً وَسَاءَ  
سَبِيلًا ﴿٣٢﴾

2212. Cf. the phrase for niggardliness in v. 64. We are not to be so lavish as to make ourselves destitute and incur the just censure of wise men, nor is it becoming to keep back our resources from the just needs of those who have a right to our help. Even strangers have such a right, as we saw in xvii. 26 above. But we must keep a just measure between our capacity and other people's needs.

2213. If a foolish spendthrift pretends that his generosity, even if it ruins himself, is good for other people, he is reminded that Allah will take care of all. He knows every one's true needs and cares for them. He gives in abundance to some, but in all cases He gives in just measure. Who are we to pretend to greater generosity?

2214. The Arabs were addicted to female infanticide. In a society perpetually at war a son was a source of strength whereas a daughter was a source of weakness. Even now infanticide is not unknown in other countries for economic reasons. This crime against children's lives is here characterised as one of the greatest of sins.

2215. Adultery is not only shameful in itself and inconsistent with any self-respect or respect for others, but it opens the road to many evils. It destroys the basis of the family: it works against the interests of children born or to be born; it may cause murders =

33. Nor take life—which Allah  
Has made sacred—except  
For just cause. And if  
Anyone is slain wrongfully,  
We have given his heir  
Authority (to demand Qiṣāṣ<sup>2216</sup>  
Or to forgive): but let him  
Not exceed bounds in the matter  
Of taking life; for he  
Is helped (by the Law).

وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا النَّفْسَ الَّتِي حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ  
وَمَنْ قُتِلَ مَظْلُومًا فَقَدْ جَعَلْنَا لَوَلِيِّهِ سُلْطَانًا  
فَلَا يُسْرِفُ فِي الْقَتْلِ إِنَّهُ كَانَ مَنْصُورًا ﴿٣٣﴾

34. Come not nigh  
To the orphan's property  
Except to improve it,<sup>2217</sup>  
Until he attains the age<sup>2218</sup>  
Of full strength; and fulfil  
(Every)<sup>2219</sup> engagement,  
For (every) engagement

وَلَا تَقْرُبُوا مَالَ الْيَتِيمِ إِلَّا بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ حَتَّىٰ يَبْلُغَ  
أَشُدَّهُ وَآوَفُوا بِالْعَهْدِ إِنَّ الْعَهْدَ كَانَ  
مَسْئُولًا ﴿٣٤﴾

= and feuds and loss of reputation and property, and also loosen permanently the bonds of society. Not only should it be avoided as a sin, but any approach or temptation to it should be avoided.

2216. On the subject of Qiṣāṣ see ii. 178 and the notes thereto. Under the strict limitations there laid down, a life may be taken for a life. The heir is given the right to demand the life; but he must not exceed due bounds, because he is helped by the Law. Some Commentators understand "he" in "he is helped (by the Law)" to refer to the heir of the person against whom Qiṣāṣ is sought. He too will be helped by the Law, if the heir of the first slain exceeds the bounds of Law.

2217. Cf. vi. 152, and other passages relating to orphans, e.g., ii. 220. If an orphan's property is touched at all, it should be to improve it, or to give him something better than he had before,—never to take a personal advantage for the benefit of the guardian. A bargain that may be quite fair as between two independent persons would be, under this verse, unfair as between a guardian and his orphan ward until the latter attains the full age of understanding.

2218. *Ashuddahu* means the age when the orphan reaches his full maturity of strength and understanding, say between the ages of 18 and 30. The age of legal maturity may be 18 (as for certain purposes in India) or 21 (as in England). For certain purposes in Muslim law it may be less than 18. In the orphan's interest a much stricter standard is required in his case.

2219. The definite article *al* has here a generic meaning, and is best translated by "every".

Will be enquired into  
(On the Day of Reckoning).<sup>2220</sup>

35. Give full measure when ye  
Measure, and weigh  
With a balance that is straight:  
That is better and fairer  
In the final determination.<sup>2221</sup>

36. And pursue not that  
Of which thou hast<sup>2222</sup>  
No knowledge; for  
Surely the hearing,  
The sight, the heart  
All of those shall be questioned of.

37. Nor walk on the earth<sup>2223</sup>  
With insolence: for thou  
Canst not rend the earth  
Asunder, nor reach  
The mountains in height.

وَأَوْفُوا الْكَيْلَ إِذَا كُنْتُمْ وَزِنُوا بِالْقِسْطِ الْمُسْتَقِيمِ  
ذَلِكَ خَيْرٌ وَأَحْسَنُ تَأْوِيلًا ﴿٣٥﴾

وَلَا تَقْفُ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ إِنَّ السَّمْعَ وَالْبَصَرَ  
وَالْفُؤَادَ كُلُّ أُولَئِكَ كَانَ عَنْهُ مَسْئُولًا ﴿٣٦﴾

وَلَا تَمْشِ فِي الْأَرْضِ مَرَحًا إِنَّكَ لَنْ تَخْرِقَ الْأَرْضَ  
وَلَنْ تَبْلُغَ الْجِبَالَ طُولًا ﴿٣٧﴾

2220. From the context the engagements referred to would relate to beneficial contracts connected with the orphan's property or promises or undertakings given by the guardian or implied in the terms of his appointment. But the words are general and may be interpreted in the general sense. Note that this sentence does not occur in the similar passage in vi. 152, where there was a discussion of social laws: it is appropriate here, where the discussion is about the guardian's personal and individual responsibility.

2221. Giving just measure and weight is not only right in itself but is ultimately to the best advantage of the person who gives it.

2222. Idle curiosity may lead us to nose into evil, through our ignorance that it is evil. We must guard against every such danger. We must only hear the things that are known to us to be of good report, and see things that are good and instructive and entertain in our hearts feelings or in our minds ideas that we have reason to expect will be spiritually profitable to us. We shall be called to account for the exercise of every faculty that has been given to us. This goes a little farther than a famous sculpture on a Japanese temple in which three monkeys are shown as putting their hands to their ears, eyes, and mouths, respectively, to show that they were not prepared to hear any evil, or see any evil, or speak any evil. Here idle curiosity is condemned. Futility is to be avoided even if it does not reach the degree of positive evil.

2223. Insolence, or arrogance, or undue elation at our powers or capacities, is the first step to many evils. Besides, it is unjustified. All our gifts are from Allah.



38. Of all such things  
The evil is hateful  
In the sight of thy Lord.

39. These are among the (precepts  
Of) wisdom, which thy Lord  
Has revealed to thee.<sup>2224</sup>  
Take not, with Allah,  
Another object of worship,  
Lest thou shouldst be thrown  
Into Hell, blameworthy and  
rejected.<sup>2225</sup>

40. Has then your Lord,  
(O Pagans!) preferred for you  
Sons, and taken for Himself  
Daughters among the angels?<sup>2226</sup>  
Truly ye utter  
A most dreadful saying!

#### SECTION 5.

41. We have explained (things)  
In various (ways) in this Qur-ān,

كُلُّ ذَلِكَ كَانَ سَيِّئُهُ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ مَكْرُوهًا ﴿٣٨﴾

ذَلِكَ مِمَّا أَوْحَى إِلَيْكَ رَبُّكَ مِنَ الْحِكْمَةِ وَلَا تَجْعَلْ  
مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهًا آخَرَ فَتُلْقَى فِي جَهَنَّمَ مَلُومًا مَدْحُورًا ﴿٣٩﴾

أَفَأَصْفَاكُمْ رَبُّكُم بِالْبَنِينَ وَاتَّخَذَ مِنَ الْمَلَائِكَةِ  
إِنثَاءً إِنَّكُمْ لَتَقُولُونَ قَوْلًا عَظِيمًا ﴿٤٠﴾

وَلَقَدْ صَرَّفْنَا فِي هَذَا الْقُرْآنِ لِيَذَكَّرُوا وَمَا يَزِيدُهُمْ  
إِلَّا نُفُورًا ﴿٤١﴾

2224. The moral law, as expounded in xvii. 23-39 is far in advance of the bare Decalogue in that it searches out motives, and draws pointed attention to the weak and helpless if we are to reach any real understanding of Allah. It begins with a mention of the worship of Allah, the One True God and ends with a similar mention to close the argument, thus emphasizing the fact that the love of Allah embraces the love of man and practical help of our fellow-creatures.

2225. "Blameworthy" carries us back by reminiscence to xvii. 29, between which and this verse there is mention of crimes committed out of covetousness and a selfish disregard of other people's rights. "Rejected" carries back our reminiscence to xvii. 18, from which to here we have a reference to crimes that lead to deprivation of Allah's grace. The latter is of course wider than the former. Note how subtly the two streams of thought are here conjoined.

2226. Cf. xvi. 57-59. Insistence on true worship means also exclusion of false worship or worship derogatory to Allah. In circles where daughters were despised and even their lives had to be protected by special legislation, what could have been dreadful than ascribing daughters to Allah?

In order that they may receive<sup>2227</sup>  
Admonition, but it only increases  
Their flight (from the Truth)!

42. Say: if there had been  
(Other) gods with Him,—  
As they say,—behold,  
They would certainly have  
Sought out a way in submitting  
To the Lord of the Throne!<sup>2228</sup>

قُلْ لَوْ كَانَ مَعَهُ آلِهَةٌ كَمَا يَقُولُونَ  
إِذَا لَا تَنفَعُوا إِلَىٰ ذِي الْعَرْشِ سَبِيلًا ﴿١٢﴾

43. Glory to Him! He is high  
Above all that they say!—  
Exalted and Great (beyond measure)!

سُبْحَنَهُ وَتَعَالَىٰ عَمَّا يَقُولُونَ عُلُوًّا كَبِيرًا ﴿١٣﴾

44. The seven heavens and the earth,  
And all beings therein,  
Declare His glory:  
There is not a thing  
But celebrates His praise;  
And yet ye understand not  
How they declare His glory!<sup>2229</sup>  
Verily He is Oft-Forbearing,  
Most Forgiving!

تَسْبِيحٌ لَهُ السَّمَوَاتُ السَّبْعُ وَالْأَرْضُ وَمَنْ فِيهِنَّ  
وَإِنْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِلَّا يُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِهِ وَلَكِنْ لَا تَفْقَهُونَ  
تَسْبِيحَهُمْ إِنَّهُ كَانَ حَلِيمًا غَفُورًا ﴿١٤﴾

45. When thou dost recite  
The Qur-ān, We put,

وَإِذَا قَرَأْتَ الْقُرْآنَ فَجَعَلْنَا بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَ الَّذِينَ  
لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بَا لًا خَرَفَةً حِجَابًا مُّسْتَوْرًا ﴿١٥﴾

2227. Things are explained in the Qur-ān from all points of view, individual and national, by means of stories, parables, and figures of speech, and by way of categorical commands. But those who are evil, instead of profiting by such instruction, often go farther and farther away from the Truth.

2228. There is only One True God. But if, as polytheists say, there had been subsidiary gods, they would yet have had to submit to the Throne of the Supreme God, and worship Him.

2229. All Creation, animate and inanimate, sings Allah's praises and celebrates His glory,—animate, with consciousness, and inanimate, in the evidence which it furnishes of the unity and glory of Allah. All Nature bears witness to His power, wisdom, and goodness. It is only "ye", i.e., those who reject the whole trend of your nature and deny Faith simply because ye have been given a limited amount of choice and free-will,—it is only such as "ye" that understand not what every other creature understands and proclaims with joy and pride. What must be your degradation! And yet Allah bears with you and forgives you! Such is His goodness!

Between thee and those who  
Believe not in the Hereafter,  
A veil invisible.<sup>2230</sup>

46. And We put coverings  
Over their hearts (and minds)  
Lest they should understand  
The Qur-ān, and deafness<sup>2231</sup>  
Into their ears: when thou  
Dost mention thy Lord-  
And Him alone-in the Qur-ān,  
They turn on their backs,  
Fleeing (from the Truth).

وَجَعَلْنَا عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ أَكِنَّةً أَنْ يَفْقَهُوهُ وَفِي آذَانِهِمْ  
وَقْرًا وَإِذَا ذُكِّرْتِ رَبِّكَ فِي الْقُرْآنِ وَحْدَهُ وَلَوْ  
عَلَىٰ أَدْبَارِهِمْ نُفُورًا ﴿١٦﴾

47. We know best what it is  
They listen, when they listen<sup>2232</sup>  
To thee; and when they  
Meet in private  
Behold, the wicked say,  
"Ye follow none other than  
A man bewitched!"

نَحْنُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا يَسْتَمِعُونَ بِهِ إِذْ يَسْتَمِعُونَ إِلَيْكَ  
وَإِذْ هُمْ يُخَوِّتُونَ إِذْ يَقُولُ الظَّالِمُونَ إِنَّا تَبِعُونَ  
إِلَّا رَجُلًا مَسْحُورًا ﴿١٧﴾

2230. *Veil invisible*: Some Commentators understand *masṭūr* here as equivalent to *sāṭir*: a veil that makes invisible, a thick or dark veil. But I think that the meaning of *masṭūr* (in the passive voice) as "hidden or invisible" is more consonant with the whole passage. If all nature, external and within ourselves, declares Allah's glory, those unfortunate who cut themselves off from their better nature are isolated from the true servants of Allah and the revelation of Allah, because (1) they are unfit for being in their company, and (2) because the servants of Allah and the revelation of Allah must be protected from the pain which blasphemy or rebellion must cause to their unsullied nature. The veil is none the less real even though it is invisible.

2231. The invisible veil being put against the ungodly on account of their deliberate rejection of Truth, the result is that their minds are fogged so that they cannot understand and their ears are clogged so that they cannot hear. In other words the effects of Evil become cumulative in shutting out Allah's grace.

2232. See last note. That being so, the only motive for the ungodly to listen to Allah's Truth is to scoff at it instead of to be instructed by it. They may make a show of listening, but when they meet together in private, they show themselves in their true colours. Cf. ii. 14. They cannot help seeing that there is singular charm and attractiveness in Allah's Word, and that it consoles, helps, and elevates many people who receive it in the right spirit. So they pretend that they are superior to such people and laugh at them for listening to some one who is only under the influence of something which they call magic!

48. See what similes they strike  
For thee: but they have gone  
Astray, and never can they  
Find a way.<sup>2233</sup>

49. They say: "What!  
When we are reduced  
To bones and dust,  
Should we really be raised up  
(To be) a new creation?"<sup>2234</sup>

50. Say: (Nay!) be ye  
Stones or iron,

51. "Or any created matter  
Which, in your minds,  
Is hardest (to be raised up),—  
(Yet shall ye be raised up)!"  
Then will they say:  
"Who will cause us  
To return?" Say: "He  
Who created you first!"  
Then will they wag  
Their heads towards thee,<sup>2235</sup>  
And say, "When will

أَنْظُرْ كَيْفَ ضَرَبُوا لَكَ الْأَمْثَالَ فَضَلُّوا

فَلَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ سَبِيلًا ﴿١٨﴾

وَقَالُوا أَإِذَا كُنَّا عِظْمًا وَرَفْنًا أَإِنَّا لَمَبْعُوثُونَ خَلْقًا

جَدِيدًا ﴿١٩﴾

﴿٢٠﴾ قُلْ كُونُوا حِجَارَةً أَوْ حَدِيدًا ﴿٥٠﴾

أَوْ خَلْقًا مِمَّا يَكْبُرُ فِي صُدُورِكُمْ فَسَيَقُولُونَ

مَنْ يُعِيدُنَا قُلِ الَّذِي فَطَرَكُمْ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ

فَسَيَنْفِضُونَ إِلَيْكَ رُءُوسَهُمْ وَيَقُولُونَ

مَنْ هُوَ قُلْ عَسَى أَنْ يَكُونَ قَرِيبًا ﴿٥١﴾

2233. Note that the word used is "Sabīlan" "a way", not "the way". In going astray they have lost the way; but never can they find any means of getting back to that way, or of justifying themselves or making good their wicked similes.

2234. They do not realise that Allah Who created them once out of nothing can create them again, with memories of their past, in order to render to Him an account of how they used or misused the talents and opportunities which they were given. If it is to be a new Creation, what then? Bones and dust or ashes may yet retain something of the personality which was enshrined in them. But even if they were reduced to stones or iron or anything which their minds can conceive of as being most unlike them, yet there is nothing impossible to Allah! He has clearly sent a Message that we shall have to render an account of ourselves, and His Message is necessarily true.

2235. The sceptic shifts his ground when he is cornered in argument. It is no longer tenable for him to say that it cannot happen or that there is no one who can bring him back to life and memory. He now gets shaky, and says, "Well, when is that going to happen?" The actual time no man can tell. Indeed that event will be on a plane in which there will be no Time. Our relative ideas of time and place will have been completely overthrown, and it will appear to us then, not that it has been postponed too long, but that it has come too soon! See the next verse and note.

That be?" Say, "May be  
It will be quite soon!

52. "It will be on the Day  
When He will call you,  
And ye will answer  
(His call) with (words  
Of) His praise, and ye<sup>2236</sup>  
Will think that ye tarried  
But a little while!"<sup>2237</sup>

#### SECTION 6.

53. Say to My servants  
That they should (only) say  
Those things that are best:<sup>2238</sup>  
For Satan doth sow  
Dissensions among them:  
For Satan is to man  
An avowed enemy.

54. It is your Lord  
That knoweth you best:

يَوْمَ يَدْعُوكُمْ فَتَسْتَجِيبُونَ بِحَمْدِهِ  
وَتَقُولُونَ إِن لَّيْسَ لَنَا إِلَّا قَلِيلٌ

وَقُلْ لِعِبَادِي يَقُولُوا الَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ  
يَنْزِعُ بَيْنَهُمْ إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ كَانَ لِلْإِنْسَانِ  
عَدُوًّا مُّبِينًا

رَبُّكُمْ أَعْلَمُ بِكُمْ إِنَّ يَشَأْ يَرْحَمْكُمْ أَوْ لَنْ يَشَأْ

2236. It may be that this verse should not be in the inverted commas governed by the verb "say", in the last clause of the last verse. In that case, the answer to the sceptic would be finished in the last verse, and this verse would be a general statement applying also to the righteous, who will rise up celebrating the praises of Allah. But on the whole, I think it is better to take this verse as part of the answer to the sceptic referred to in the last verse.

2237. Whatever may have been your spiritual blindness in this life, the "new creation" will have opened your eyes to the Truth. No one will any longer be in any delusion as regards the Reality of Allah, and will be forced, by their new circumstances, to recognise the Truth and sing Allah's praises. And all will be surprised at the seemingly short flight of time since they had their little ephemeral life on this earth. They will now appraise its true worth.

2238. This command refers to two situations. (1) Even to your enemies and the enemies of Allah you should speak fair: who are you to judge others? Judgment belongs to Allah alone, for He knows you (i.e., all mankind) best, and your personal knowledge is at best imperfect. And Satan is always trying to divide mankind. (2) Amongst yourselves, also you should not entertain suspicions, but speak politely according to the best standards of human speech. A false or unkind word may destroy all your efforts at building up unity, because the forces of disruption are more numerous than the forces of unity.

If He please, He granteth<sup>2239</sup>  
 You mercy, or if He please,  
 Punishment: We have not sent  
 Thee to be a disposer  
 Of their affairs for them.

55. And it is your Lord  
 That knoweth best all beings  
 That are in the heavens<sup>2240</sup>  
 And on earth:  
 And We made some of  
 The Prophets to excel  
 Others and We gave  
 To David  
 The Psalms.<sup>2241</sup>

56. Say: "Call on those—  
 Besides Him—whom ye fancy:  
 They have neither the power  
 To remove your troubles  
 From you nor to change them."<sup>2242</sup>

يَعَذِّبُكُمْ وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ عَلَيْهِمْ وَكِيلًا ﴿٥٤﴾

وَرَبُّكَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَن فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ  
 وَلَقَدْ فَضَّلْنَا بَعْضَ النَّبِيِّينَ عَلَى بَعْضٍ وَآتَيْنَا

دَاوُدَ زَبُورًا ﴿٥٥﴾

قُلِ ادْعُوا الَّذِينَ زَعَمْتُمْ مِنْ دُونِهِ فَلَا يَمْلِكُونَ  
 كَشْفَ الضَّرِّ عَنْكُمْ وَلَا تَحْوِيلًا ﴿٥٦﴾

2239. Man should never for a single moment entertain a thought that would imply that he was wiser than Allah. Allah's knowledge is all-embracing. If He grants mercy to some that you consider wicked or punishment to some that you consider righteous, it is your knowledge or your deductions that are at fault, not Allah's righteous Plan. Even Prophets of Allah are not sent to arrange or dispose of men's affairs, but only to teach Allah's Message. How much less can ordinary men presume to judge other men? The *Mashiyat*—Will and Plan of Allah—is above all human wisdom.

2240. Not only are we not to judge other ordinary men and carp at them. We are not to set up false standards for judging the Prophets of Allah. If one was born of the unlearned Arab race, he yet was a mercy to all the worlds. If one spoke to Allah as *Kalimullah* or another's life began with a miracle; it does not imply superiority. It only means that Allah's wisdom is more profound than we can fathom.

2241. The gifts with which the prophets came may themselves take different forms, according to the needs of the world and the times in which they lived, as judged by the wisdom of Allah. A striking example here given is the gift of David over others. David was given the *Zabur*, the Psalter or Psalms, intended to be for the worship of Allah and the celebration of Allah's praise. For the Book of Psalms, see the last part of n. 669 to iv. 163, where exactly the same words are used about David.

2242. Men's suspicions of each or of the prophets have been condemned in the previous verses. We now have the strongest condemnation of all, that of imagining any other being as being equal or in the same category with One true God. Allah has all power: they have no power. They cannot remove men's troubles. They cannot even mitigate or change them so as to afford the least relief. Why indulge in false worship?

57. Those whom they call upon  
Do seek (for themselves) means  
Of access to their Lord,—  
As to who are nearest.<sup>2243</sup>  
They hope for His Mercy  
And fear His Wrath:  
For the Wrath of thy Lord  
Is something to take heed of.

أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ يَبْتَغُونَ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ  
الْوَسِيلَةَ أَيُّهُمْ أَقْرَبُ وَيَرْجُونَ رَحْمَتَهُ وَيَخَافُونَ  
عَذَابَهُ إِنَّ عَذَابَ رَبِّكَ كَانَ مَحْذُورًا ﴿٥٧﴾

58. There is not a population  
But We shall destroy it  
Before the Day of Judgment  
Or punish it with  
A dreadful Chastisement.<sup>2244</sup>  
That is written  
In the (eternal) Record.

وَلَا يَمْنُنَ الَّذِينَ يَخْتَرُّونَ الْإِسْلَامَ وَلَا يَكُونُوا مِمَّنْ  
أَلْفِكَمَةٌ أَوْ مَعَذِبُوهَا عَذَابًا شَدِيدًا كَانَ ذَلِكَ  
فِي الْكِتَابِ مَسْطُورًا ﴿٥٨﴾

59. And We refrain from sending  
The Signs, only because  
The men of former generations  
Treated them as false:<sup>2245</sup>  
We sent the She-camel<sup>2246</sup>

وَمَا مَنَعَنَا أَنْ نُرْسِلَ بِالْآيَاتِ إِلَّا أَنْ كَذَّبَ  
بِهَا الْأَوَّلُونَ وَءَايَاتُنَا مُّؤَدَّاتٌ مُّبِينَةٌ فَظَلَمُوا

2243. Where men or heroes, or prophets or angels are worshipped, the worship is futile; because (1) even if they are good and holy, and ever so near to Allah, yet the nearest of them have need to seek means of access to Allah, and they do seek such means, viz.,: the hope of Allah's Grace; (2) though by their very nature it is impossible for us to suppose that they will incur the Wrath of Allah, yet they are but creatures and are subject to the law of personal responsibility.

2244. These verses are a commentary on the last clause of the last verse. "The Wrath of thy Lord is something to take heed of." The godless thoughtlessly challenge Allah's Wrath, but do they realise its nature? Even the best of us must be moved with terror when we think of its consequences, were it not for His unbounded Mercy. Those who deny the Hereafter fail to realise its terrible Portents. They ask for Portents and Miracles now, but do they realise that their coming means destruction and misery to those who reject faith? They will come soon enough. The whole world will be convulsed before the Day of Judgment. The part of the wise is to prepare for it.

2245. Past generations treated Signs and Portents with contempt or rebellion, and brought about their own undoing. It is only Allah's Mercy that gives them Grace for a time and prevents the coming of those Portents and Punishments which would overwhelm them if they were put to their trial at once.

2246. An example is cited from the story of Thamūd. A wonderful She-camel was sent among them as a Portent and a Symbol. In their wickedness they hamstrung her. So instead of her reclaiming them she was a cause of their destruction, as their sin and =

To the Thamūd-a visible Sign-  
But they  
Treated her wrongfully:  
We only sent the Signs  
By way of frightening  
(And warning from evil).<sup>2247</sup>

60. Behold! We told thee  
That thy Lord doth encompass  
Mankind round about.<sup>2248</sup>  
We granted the Vision  
Which We showed thee,<sup>2249</sup>  
But as a trial for men,-  
As also the Cursed Tree<sup>2250</sup>  
(Mentioned) in the Qur-ān:  
We put fear (and warning)

يَا وَمَا تُرْسِلُ بِالْآيَاتِ إِلَّا تَخْوِيفًا ﴿٥٩﴾

وَإِذْ قُلْنَا لَكَ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ أَحَاطَ بِالنَّاسِ وَمَا جَعَلْنَا  
الرَّءْيَا الَّذِي أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا فِتْنَةً لِلنَّاسِ وَالشَّجَرَةَ  
الْمَلْعُونَةَ فِي الْقُرْآنِ وَنُخَوِّفُهُمْ فَمَا يَزِيدُهُمْ  
إِلَّا طُغْيَانًا كَبِيرًا ﴿٦٠﴾

= rebellion were laid bare. For the story of the She-camel and the references to the passages in which she is mentioned, see n. 1044 to vii. 73.

2247. Signs, Miracles, and Portents are sent by Allah as a warning, to strike terror into the hearts of evil-doers and reclaim them to the right path. I have discussed Fear as a motive for reclaiming certain kinds of hard hearts, in my note 82 to ii. 74. But some hearts are so hard that even this motive does not work. As they have a limited free-will given by Allah, they are to that extent free to choose. But when they actually choose evil, Allah in His infinite Mercy delays their punishment and removes the occasion for their immediate self-destruction by withholding the Signs which might make them transgress all the more and compass their total destruction.

2248. The reference may be to lxii. 28, probably an earlier Makkan revelation. But the argument is independent of time. This verse falls naturally into three divisions. Warnings and Portents and Signs are sent or not sent according to Allah's All-Wise Plan of Mercy and Justice, this is in no wise inconsistent with the apparent freedom given to the wicked: because (1) in any case Allah is all round all His creatures, and His delay as a Sign of Mercy in no way diminishes His power; (2) the Visions of Truth vouchsafed to Prophets of Allah are themselves Signs by which they can warn the ungodly; and (3) sometimes it is more merciful to give them time by not immediately bringing the matter to judgment.

2249. Some Commentators take this as referring to the Mi'raj (xvii. 1) and others to other visions. Such visions are miracles, and become a stumbling block to unbelievers. They are an encouragement to men of faith. Thus they are "a trial for men".

2250. The tree *Zaqqūm*, a bitter and pungent tree described as growing at the bottom of Hell, a type of all that is disagreeable. See xxxvii. 62-65; xlv. 43-46; and lvi. 52. All these are Sūras chronologically earlier than this Sūra. The application of the name to a tree of the myrobalan kind in the region of Jericho is, I think, of post-Quranic date.



Into them, but it only  
Increases their inordinate  
transgression!

## SECTION 7.

61. Behold! We said to the angels:<sup>2251</sup>

"Prostrate unto Adam":

They prostrated except Iblis:

He said, "Shall I prostrate

To one whom Thou didst create

From clay?"

62. He said, "Seest Thou? This is  
The one whom Thou hast honoured

Above me! If Thou wilt but

Respite me to the Day

Of Judgment, I will surely

Bring his descendants

Under my sway—

All but a few!"<sup>2252</sup>

63. (Allah) said: "Go thy way;<sup>2253</sup>

If any of them follow thee,

Verily Hell will be

The recompense of you (all)—

An ample recompense.

وَإِذْ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ اسْجُدُوا لِآدَمَ فَسَجَدُوا

إِلَّا إِبْلِيسَ قَالَ أَأَسْجُدُ لِمَنْ خَلَقْتُ طِينًا ﴿٦١﴾

قَالَ أَرَأَيْتَ إِنَّكَ هَذَا الَّذِي كَرَّمْتَ عَلَىٰ لَيْسَ

أَخَّرْتَنِي إِلَىٰ يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ لِأَحْتَنِكَ

ذُرِّيَّتَهُ ۚ إِنْ أَقْبَلَا ﴿٦٢﴾

قَالَ أَذْهَبَ فَمَنْ يَبْعَكَ مِنْهُمْ فَإِنَّ جَهَنَّمَ

جَزَاءُكُمْ جَزَاءُ مَوْفُورًا ﴿٦٣﴾

It is a trial for wrong-doers. See xxxvii. 63 and n. 4073.

2251. Cf. vii. 11-18, which deals, as is the case here, with the temptation of the individual human soul, while ii. 30-38 deals with the collective race of man through Adam. Arrogance, jealousy, spite, and hatred are the ingredients in the story of Iblis.

2252. The power of Evil (Satan) over man is due to man's limited free-will. In other words man hands himself to Evil. As to those who loyally worship and serve Allah, Evil has no power over them. This is expressly mentioned in verse 65 below, and in other places.

2253. The power of Evil is summarily dismissed, but not without a clear warning. "Do thy worst; if any of them misuse their limited free-will and deliberately follow thee, they must take the consequences with thee; all of you must answer according to your personal responsibility."

64. And Arouse those  
Whom thou canst among them,<sup>2254</sup>  
With thy (seductive) voice;<sup>2255</sup>  
Make assaults on them<sup>2256</sup>  
With thy cavalry and thy  
Infantry; mutually share  
With them wealth and children;<sup>2257</sup>  
And make promises to them."  
But Satan promises them  
Nothing but deceit.<sup>2258</sup>

65. "As for My servants,<sup>2259</sup>  
No authority shalt thou  
Have over them:"  
Enough is thy Lord  
For a Disposer of affairs.<sup>2260</sup>

66. Your Lord is He  
That maketh the Ship  
Go smoothly for you  
Through the sea, in order that

وَأَسْفِرْزَمِنْ أَسْطَظَعَتْ مِنْهُمْ بِصَوْتِكَ وَأَجْلَبَتْ  
عَلَيْهِمْ بِخَيْلِكَ وَرَجْلِكَ وَشَارِكُهُمْ فِي الْأَمْوَالِ  
وَالْأَوْلَادِ وَعَدَّهُمْ وَمَا يَعِدُهُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ  
إِلَّا غُرُورًا ﴿١٤﴾

إِنَّ عِبَادِي لَيْسَ لَكَ عَلَيْهِمْ سُلْطَانٌ وَكَفَى  
بِرَبِّكَ وَكِيلًا ﴿١٥﴾

رَبِّكُمْ الَّذِي يُزْجِي لَكُمْ الْفُلْكَ فِي الْبَحْرِ  
لِتَبْتَغُوا مِنْ فَضْلِهِ إِنَّهُ كَانَ بِكُمْ رَحِيمًا ﴿١٦﴾

2254. "Do thy worst; but ye are both warned that that path leads to destruction."

2255. Evil has many snares for mankind. The one that is put in the foreground is the voice,—the seductive personal appeal, that "makes the worse appear the better part".

2256. The forcible assault of Evil is next mentioned under the metaphor of cavalry and infantry. It is when cajolery and tempting fair-seeming seem to fail that an attack is made in force with weapons of violence, of all kinds, like the different arms in an organised army.

2257. If the first assaults are resisted. Evil has other weapons in its armoury. Tangible fruits are dangled before the eyes, ill-gotten gains and children of sin, that follow from certain very alluring methods of indulgence in passions. Or it may be children dedicated to sin or worldly gains, etc. And then there are all kinds of promises for the future.

2258. This is a parenthetical clause inserted to show up what the promises of the Satan are worth.

2259. This verse should be read along with the two preceding ones to complete their meaning. Evil has no power except over those who yield to its solicitations.

2260. As Evil has no authority over the sincere servants of Allah, they should put their trust completely in Him. For He is All-Sufficient to carry out their affairs, and by His grace, to save them from all harm and danger.

Ye may seek of His Bounty.<sup>2261</sup>

For He is unto you  
Most Merciful.

67. When distress seizes you

At sea, those that ye  
Call upon—besides Himself—  
Leave you in the lurch!

But when He brings you back  
Safe to land, ye turn  
Away (from Him). Most ungrateful<sup>2262</sup>  
Is man!

68. Do ye then feel secure

That He will not cause you  
To be swallowed up  
Beneath the earth<sup>2263</sup>

When ye are on land,  
Or that He will not send  
Against you a violent tornado  
(With showers of stones)  
So that ye shall find  
No protector

69. Or do ye feel secure

That He will not send you  
Back a second time  
To sea and send against you

وَإِذَا مَسَّكُمُ الضُّرُّ فِي الْبَحْرِ ضَلَّ مَنْ تَدْعُونَ إِلَّا إِلَاهَهُ  
فَلَمَّا بَجَّكُمْ إِلَى الْبَرِّ أَعْرَضْتُمْ وَكَانَ الْإِنْسَانُ كَفُورًا ﴿١٧﴾

أَفَأَمْسَرْتُمْ أَنْ يَخْفِيفَ بِكُمْ جَانِبَ الْبَرِّ أَوْ يُرْسِلَ  
عَلَيْكُمْ حَاصِبًا ثُمَّ لَا تَجِدُوا الْكَوْ  
وَكِيلًا ﴿١٨﴾

أَمْ أَمْسَرْتُمْ أَنْ يُعِيدَكُمْ فِيهِ تَارَةً أُخْرَى فَيُرْسِلَ  
عَلَيْكُمْ فَاصِفًا مِنَ الرِّيحِ فَيُغْرِقَكُمْ بِمَا كَفَرْتُمْ

2261. This illustration of the sea, and the skill with which, by Allah's grace, men pass through it with ease in order to earn material gains by commerce, social gains by human intercourse, and spiritual gains by knowledge, is frequently used to enforce Allah's goodness to man. Cf. ii. 164.

2262. Against Allah's gracious gifts and mercies is contrasted man's ingratitude. In danger he remembers Allah, the One True God, but relapses into his own fancies when the danger is past. Cf. also x. 22-23.

2263. Man is safe neither on land nor at sea except by the grace and mercy of Allah. How forcibly this is brought home to us by the Quetta earthquake of 31st May 1935, when tens of thousands of men, women, and children, perished in a few moments, by night, buried in debris! The stories of violent destructive tornadoes in such areas as the southern United States are equally impressive. The destruction is so sudden that the victims have no time to arrange anything. They are simply wiped out.

A heavy gale to drown you  
Because of your ingratitude,<sup>2264</sup>  
So that ye find no helper  
Therein against Us?

70. We have honoured the sons  
Of Adam; provided them  
With transport on land and sea;  
Given them for sustenance things  
Good and pure; and conferred  
On them special favours,  
Above a great part  
Of Our Creation.<sup>2265</sup>

#### SECTION 8.

71. On the day We shall call  
Together all human beings  
With their (respective) Imāms:<sup>2266</sup>  
Those who are given their record  
In their right hand  
Will read it (with pleasure),  
And they will not be

ثُمَّ لَا يَجِدُ الْكَافِرِينَ عَلَيْهِ يَدْعَا ﴿١١﴾

وَلَقَدْ كَرَّمْنَا بَنِي آدَمَ وَحَمَلْنَاهُمْ فِي الْوَرْدِ وَالْبَحْرِ  
وَرَزَقْنَاهُمْ مِنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَفَضَّلْنَاهُمْ  
عَلَى كَثِيرٍ مِمَّنْ خَلَقْنَا تَفْضِيلًا ﴿٧٠﴾

يَوْمَ نَدْعُوا كُلَّ أُنَاسٍ بِإِمَامِهِمْ فَمَنْ أُوْفِيَ  
كِتَابُهُ، يَسْمِعْهُ، فَأُولَئِكَ يَفْرَحُونَ  
كِتَابَهُمْ وَلَا يَظْلَمُونَ فَتِيلًا ﴿٧١﴾

2264. If a man flees from the Wrath of Allah, there is no place secure for him. He may flee from sea to land, and back again from land to sea. But his life depends on the Disposer of all affairs. He may go again and again to sea, and perhaps finally end by being drowned.

2265. The distinction and honour conferred by Allah on man are recounted in order to enforce the corresponding duties and responsibilities of man. He is raised to a position of honour above the brute creation: he has been granted talents by which he can transport himself from place to place by land, sea, and now by air: all the means for the sustenance and growth of every part of his nature are provided by Allah; and his spiritual faculties (the greatest gift of Allah) raise him above the greater part of Allah's Creation. Should he not then realise his noble destiny and prepare for his real life in the Hereafter?

2266. I have discussed the various meanings of *Imām* in ii. 124, n. 124. What is the meaning here? The Commentators are divided. Some understand the meaning to be that each People or Group will appear with its Leader, who will bear witness to its virtues or sins: Cf. xvi. 84. Another view is that the *Imām* is their revelation, their Book. A third is that the *Imām* is the record of deeds spoken of in the next clause. I prefer the first.

Dealt with unjustly  
In the least.<sup>2267</sup>

72. But those who were blind  
In this world, will be  
Blind in the Hereafter,<sup>2268</sup>  
And most astray  
From the Path.

73. And their purpose was  
To tempt thee away  
From that which We  
Had revealed unto thee,  
To substitute in Our name  
Something quite different.<sup>2269</sup>  
(In that case), behold!  
They would certainly have  
Made thee (their) friend!

74. And had We not  
Given thee strength,  
Thou wouldst nearly  
Have inclined to them<sup>2270</sup>  
A little.

وَمَنْ كَانَتْ فِي هَذِهِ أَعْمَىٰ فَهُوَ فِي الْآخِرَةِ أَعْمَىٰ  
وَأَضَلُّ سَبِيلًا ﴿٧٢﴾

وَإِنْ كَادُوا لَيَفْتِنُونَكَ عَنِ الَّذِي أُوحِيَٰنَا  
إِلَيْكَ لِتَفْتَرِيَ عَلَيْنَا غَيْرَهُ  
وَإِذَا لَا تَأْخُذُوكَ خِلَافًا ﴿٧٣﴾

وَلَوْلَا أَن نَّبَشَنَّاكَ لَقَدْ كُنْتَ  
تَرَكُنَ إِلَيْهِمْ شَيْئًا قَلِيلًا ﴿٧٤﴾

2267. Literally, by the value of a *fatil*, a small skin in the cleft of a date-stone: this has no value.

2268. On the Judgment Day the children of light will receive and peruse their record, and will render joyful thanks to Allah for His Mercies. What of the children of darkness? They had already been blind in this world's life, and they will not receive the light of Allah's Countenance then. On the contrary they will find that the longer the time they have travelled, the farther away they have gone from the Path. Notice the association of ideas—blindness, not seeing the light, going farther and farther away from the true Path.

2269. It happens with men of Allah, and it happened with the holy Prophet, that they are tempted by the world with many things which appeal to the world generally, if they would make some small concession in their favour. The "small concession" may hold the key of the position, and neutralise the whole teaching sent by Allah. If the Prophet had accepted wealth and position among the Quraish and "only respected" their idols! The Quraish would have taken him into their inner circle! A dishonest liar like Musailama would have jumped at the opportunity and been hailed as a friend and associate and made much of. But Prophets of Allah are made of sterner stuff. They are given special strength to resist all plausible deception.

2270. From a purely human point of view it may seem policy to make a small "concession" to men's weakness in order to fulfil a divine mission. But the divine Messenger is given special strength to resist such temptations.

75. In that case We should  
Have made thee taste  
Double portion (of punishment)  
In this life, and an equal portion<sup>2271</sup>  
In death: and moreover  
Thou wouldst have found  
None to help thee against Us!<sup>2272</sup>

إِذَا لَادَقْنَاكَ ضَعْفَ الْحَيَاةِ وَضَعْفَ الْمَمَاتِ  
ثُمَّ لَا يَجِدُكَ عَلَيْنَا نَصِيرًا ﴿٧٥﴾

76. Their purpose was to scare  
Thee off the land,<sup>2273</sup>  
In order to expel thee;  
But in that case they  
Would not have stayed  
(Therein) after thee,  
Except for a little while.

وَأِنْ كَادُوا لَيَسْتَفِزُّوكَ مِنَ الْأَرْضِ  
لَيُخْرِجُوكَ مِنْهَا وَإِذَا لَا يَلْبِثُونَ خَلْفَكَ  
إِلَّا قَلِيلًا ﴿٧٦﴾

77. (This was Our) way  
With the messengers We sent  
Before thee: thou wilt find  
No change in Our ways.<sup>2274</sup>

سُنَّةَ مَنْ قَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا قَبْلَكَ مِنْ رُسُلِنَا  
وَلَا يَجِدُ لِسُنَّتِنَا تَحْوِيلًا ﴿٧٧﴾

2271. If such a thing was possible for a true Messenger of Allah, viz.: a compromise with evil and a dereliction of his mission, he would be no exception to the law of personal responsibility. Indeed, as the power and the responsibility were greater, the punishment would have been greater too. It would have been double,—an exposure in this life and the usual punishment in or after death for a desertion of Truth.

2272. The motive held out by the world for a compromise with Truth is itself fallacious. The motive is that the compromise may bring influence, position, and opportunity, if not wealth and the other good things of life. But these themselves (if attained) would be of no use or help if pitted against the command of Allah.

2273. As happened in the case of the holy Prophet, the enemies try to frighten the Prophet of Allah away from their midst, so that, once away, they could expel him and keep him out. But they are counting without the Plan of Allah. If they persecute the righteous, they dig their own graves!

2274. This was no new thing in history. Allah protects His own, and the ungodly cannot long enjoy the fruits of their unrighteousness even if their punishment be delayed a little while.

## SECTION 9.

78. Establish regular prayers—<sup>2275</sup>

At the sun's decline  
Till the darkness of the night,  
And the recital of the Qur-ān  
In morning prayer  
For the recital of dawn is  
Witnessed.<sup>2276</sup>

أَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِذُلُوكِ الشَّمْسِ إِلَى عَسَى اللَّيْلِ  
وَقُرْءَانَ الْفَجْرِ إِنَّ قُرْءَانَ الْفَجْرِ كَانَ  
مَشْهُودًا ﴿٧٨﴾

79. And as for the night  
Keep awake a part of it as<sup>2277</sup>  
An additional prayer  
For thee: soon will thy Lord  
Raise thee to a Station  
Of Praise and Glory!<sup>2278</sup>

وَمِنَ اللَّيْلِ فَتَهَجَّدْ بِهِ نَافِلَةً لَكَ عَسَى  
أَنْ يَبْعَثَكَ رَبُّكَ مَقَامًا مَحْمُودًا ﴿٧٩﴾

80. Say: "O my Lord!  
Let my entry be<sup>2279</sup>  
By the Gate of Truth  
And Honour, and likewise

وَقُلْ رَبِّ ادْخُلْنِي مِنْ دُخْلٍ صِدْقٍ وَأَخْرِجْنِي مِنْ  
صِدْقٍ وَأَجْعَلْ لِي مِنْ لَدُنْكَ سُلْطَانًا نَصِيرًا ﴿٨٠﴾

2275. The Commentators understand here the command for the five daily canonical prayers, viz.: the four from the declination of the sun from the zenith to the fullest darkness of the night, and the early morning prayer, Fajr, which is usually accompanied by a reading of the holy Qur-ān. The four afternoon prayers are: Zuhri, immediately after the sun begins to decline in the afternoon; 'Asr, in the late afternoon; Magrib, immediately after sunset; and Ishā, after the glow of sunset has disappeared and the full darkness of the night has set in. There is difference of opinion as to the meaning of particular words and phrases, but none as to the general effect of the passage.

2276. The morning prayer is specially singled out for separate mention, because the morning is a "peaceful hour" and special influences act on the soul awaking from the night's rest. Special testimony is borne to the prayers of this hour by the angelic host.

2277. This is held to be addressed specially to the holy Prophet who usually prayed more than the five canonical prayers. The *Tahajjud* was a prayer after midnight, in the small watches of the morning.

2278. To the Prophet was to be assigned in the Hereafter the highest Post of Honour and Glory—the *Maqām Mahmūd*, implying his excellence above all other Prophets. The immediate reference may be to the hope that the Makkan persecution will soon be over and the glorious work in Madinah will begin.

2279. The entry and exit here referred to may be interpreted in four senses: (1) entry into death and exit at the resurrection: for the righteous, who have purified their souls by prayer (last verse) and spiritual teaching from the Qur-ān (next verse), there is on each occasion a fuller and fuller realisation and enjoyment of truth and honour: for those =

My exit by the Gate  
Of Truth and Honour;  
And grant me  
From Thee  
An authority to aid (me)<sup>2280</sup>

81. And say: "Truth has (now)  
Arrived, and Falsehood perished:  
For Falsehood is (by its nature)  
Bound to perish."<sup>2281</sup>

82. We send down (stage by stage)  
Of the Qur-ān that which  
Is a healing and a mercy  
To those who believe:  
To the unjust it causes  
Nothing but loss after loss.<sup>2282</sup>

83. Yet when We bestow  
Our favours on man,  
He turns away and becomes  
Remote on his side (instead  
Of coming to Us), and when

وَقُلْ جَاءَ الْحَقُّ وَزَهَقَ الْبَاطِلُ  
إِنَّ الْبَاطِلَ كَانَ زَهُوقًا ﴿٨١﴾

وَنَزَّلْنَا مِنَ الْقُرْآنِ مَا هُوَ شِفَاءٌ وَرَحْمَةٌ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ  
وَلَا يَرِيدُ الظَّالِمِينَ إِلَّا خَسَارًا ﴿٨٢﴾

وَإِذَا أَنْعَمْنَا عَلَى الْإِنْسَانِ أَعْرَضَ وَنَأَمَّنَ بِنَافِئِهِ إِذَا مَسَّهُ  
الشَّرُّ كَانَ يَئُوسًا ﴿٨٣﴾

= who are estranged from Allah, the effect is the opposite: the truth becomes bitter and there is ignominy and exposure instead of honour: (2) entry for the holy Prophet into the new life at Madinah, which was still in the womb of futurity, and exit from the life of persecution and the milieu of falsehood, which surrounded him in his native city of Makkah still given up to idolatry: (3) referring to the impending Hijrat again, the prayer may mean, "Let it be from pure motives of truth and spiritual honour, and not from motives of anger against the city of Makkah or its persecutors, or of ambition or worldly power from the city of Madinah, which was ready to lay everything at the Prophet's feet": (4) generally, entry and exit at every stage of life.

2280. All prayer must be for Allah's aid and authority. However much we may plan, our success must depend on His aid. However nobler our motives, we have no right to imperil any lives unless there is authority in the Word of Allah. The Prophet only acts on Allah's commission and inspiration.

2281. From its nature falsehood must perish, for it is the opposite of Truth, and Truth must ever prevail.

2282. In Allah's revelation there is healing for our broken spirits, hope for our spiritual future, and joy in the forgiveness of our sins. All who work in faith will share in these privileges. It is only the rebels against Allah's Law who will suffer loss. The more they will oppose Truth, the deeper down will they go into the mire—the state of sin and Wrath, which is worse than destruction.



Evil seizes him he  
Gives himself up to despair!<sup>2283</sup>

84. Say: "Everyone acts  
According to his own disposition:  
But your Lord knows best  
Who it is that is  
Best guided on the Way."<sup>2284</sup>

#### SECTION 10.

85. They ask thee concerning  
The Spirit<sup>2285</sup>  
Say: "The Spirit is of the  
Command of my Lord  
Of knowledge it is only  
A little that is communicated  
To you, (O men!)"

86. If it were Our Will,  
We could take away  
That which We have  
Sent thee by inspiration:<sup>2286</sup>  
Then wouldst thou find  
None to plead thy affair  
In that matter as against Us,-

قُلْ كُلٌّ يَعْمَلُ عَلَى شَاكِلَتِهِ، فَرَبُّكُمْ أَعْلَمُ  
بِمَنْ هُوَ أَهْدَى سَبِيلًا ﴿٨٤﴾

وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الرُّوحِ قُلِ الرُّوحُ مِنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّي  
وَمَا أُوتِيتُمْ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا ﴿٨٥﴾

وَلَوْ شِئْنَا لَنَذْهَبَنَّ بِالَّذِي أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ  
ثُمَّ لَآتِيكَ بِهِ، عَلَيْنَا وَكِيلًا ﴿٨٦﴾

2283. Truth saves us from two extremes: when we are happy, we are saved from being puffed up, for we realise that everything comes from Allah; and when we suffer misfortunes, we are not in despair, for we know that Allah is our sure refuge and help.

2284. If the wicked go their own ways, there is nothing to discourage us. It is their nature. We must seek and hold fast to true guidance.

2285. What is the nature of inspiration? Who brings it? Can it ask its Bringer questions? Can we ask anything which we wish? These are the sort of questions always asked when inspiration is called in question, The answer is given here, Inspiration is one of those high experiences which cannot be explained in the terms of our everyday human experience. It is spiritual. The Spirit (Gabriel) does not come of his own will. He comes by the command of Allah, and reveals what Allah commands him to reveal. Of the sum-total of true divine knowledge what a small part it is that ordinary mortals can understand! They can be only given that which they can understand, however dimly. We are not in a position to ask anything that we wish. If we did so, it would only make us look foolish, for the guidance comes from Allah's Wisdom, not from our worldly knowledge.

2286. Even the spiritual knowledge that comes to us comes because of the favour and mercy of Allah. If He were to withhold it, who can call Him in question?

87. Except for Mercy from thy Lord;<sup>2287</sup>

For His Bounty is  
To thee (indeed) great.

88. Say: "If the whole  
Of mankind and Jinns<sup>2288</sup>

Were to gather together  
To produce the like  
Of this Qur-ān, they  
Could not produce  
The like thereof, even if  
They backed up each other  
With help and support.<sup>2289</sup>

89. And We have explained  
To man, in this Qur-ān,  
Every kind of similitude:<sup>2290</sup>

Yet the greater part of men  
Refuse (to receive it)  
Except with ingratitude!<sup>2291</sup>

90. They say: "We shall not  
Believe in thee, until thou

إِلَّا رَحْمَةً مِنْ رَبِّكَ إِنَّ فَضْلَهُ كَانَ عَلَيْكَ

كَبِيرًا ﴿٨٧﴾

قُلْ لِّئِنْ أَجْتَمَعَتِ الْإِنْسُ وَالْجِنُّ عَلَى أَنْ يَأْتُوا  
بِمِثْلِ هَذَا الْقُرْآنِ لَا يَأْتُونَ بِمِثْلِهِ وَلَوْ كَانَ  
بَعْضُهُمْ لِبَعْضٍ ظَهِيرًا ﴿٨٨﴾

وَلَقَدْ صَرَّفْنَا لِلنَّاسِ فِي هَذَا الْقُرْآنِ مِنْ كُلِّ مَثَلٍ  
فَإِنَّ أَكْثَرُ النَّاسِ إِلَّا كُفُورًا ﴿٨٩﴾

وَقَالُوا لَنْ نُؤْمِنَ بِكَ حَتَّىٰ تَنْفِرَ لَنَا مِنَ الْأَرْضِ  
يُنْبِئُ عَا ﴿٩٠﴾

2287. In that case the only one who can plead for us is the Mercy of Allah. We can interpret the phrase in its widest abstract sense, as well as in the concrete sense of the title which is applied to the holy Prophet Muḥammad, the Mercy of Allah. Thus we come from the abstract question to the concrete question of the Qur-ān, which is referred to by name in the verses that follow.

2288. For the meaning of "Jinns", see n. 929 to vi. 100.

2289. The proof of the Qur-ān is in its own beauty and nature, and the circumstances in which it was promulgated. The world is challenged to produce a Book like it and has not produced one. It is the only revealed Book whose text stands pure and uncorrupted today. Cf., for a similar challenge, ii. 23, x. 38, and xi. 13.

2290. In the Qur-ān everything is explained in detail from various points of view, by commands, similitudes, examples, stories, parables, etc. It does not merely narrate stories or lay down vague abstract propositions. It gives every detailed help in outward and inner life.

2291. One form in which it can be received with ingratitude is to pay verbal tributes to it but not study it as it ought to be studied (ii. 121, *ḥaqqā tilāwatihi*), or to disobey its precepts or standards.

Cause a spring to gush  
Forth for us from the earth,<sup>2292</sup>

91. "Or (until) thou have  
A garden of date trees  
And vines, and cause rivers  
To gush forth in their midst,  
Carrying abundant water,"<sup>2293</sup>

92. "Or thou cause the sky  
To fall in pieces, as thou  
Sayest (will happen), against us;<sup>2294</sup>  
Or thou bring Allah  
And the angels before (us)  
Face to face,"<sup>2295</sup>

93. "Or thou have a house  
Adorned with gold,  
Or thou mount a ladder  
Right into the skies.<sup>2296</sup>  
No, we shall not even believe  
In thy mounting until thou

أَوْ تَكُونَ لَكَ جَنَّةٌ مِّنْ نَّحِيلٍ وَعِنَبٍ  
فَنَفْجِرَ الْآلَافَ مِمَّا خَلْقَناها تَفْجِيرًا ﴿١١﴾

أَوْ تَنْقِطَ السَّمَاءُ كَمَا زَعَمْتَ عَلَيْنَا كِسْفًا  
أَوْ تَأْتِيَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ قَبِيلًا ﴿١٢﴾

أَوْ يَكُونَ لَكَ بَيْتٌ مِّنْ زُخْرُفٍ أَوْ تَرْقَىٰ فِي السَّمَاءِ  
وَلَنْ نُؤْمِنَ لِزُفْرِكَ حَتَّىٰ تَنْزِلَ عَلَيْنَا كِنَانًا نَقْرُؤُهُ

2292. Cf. ii. 60.

2293. This ill-assorted and crude jumble of the sort of miracles which the Unbelievers wanted is in very appropriate contrast to the sober and reasoned argument which has begun in the last sentence of verse 93 and continued in sections 11 and 12, which close this Sûra. It is throughout reminiscent of the materialistic imagination of Jewish sceptics, which was mainly responsible for the fall of the Jewish nation (see verse 104 below). For a thirsty people sojourning in a dry land, the finding of a spring of water as in the story of Moses or of the well of Zamzam is an appropriate miracle. But miracles are not for faithless crowds to gape at. A beautiful well-watered Garden is a symbol of Felicity: but a sceptic cannot order Allah to produce it for his pleasure. The same may be said about a house adorned with gold, except that its symbolism is even more materialistic. The fall of the sky or producing Allah face to face or climbing to the skies by a ladder, or bringing down a book of parchment which men could handle, are all irreverent suggestions that make no distinction between spiritual and material things.

2294. Contrast the sublime passages like the beginning with lxxxii. 1. or that in xxv. 25, where the final breaking up of the firmaments as we know them is referred to in the world's catastrophe, with the ridiculous demand that it should be done for the sport of the sceptics!

2295. Cf. ii 55 and iv. 153 about the desire of the Israelites to see Allah face to face; and vi. 8-9, about angels coming down to convince men.

2296. Cf. vi. 35 about a ladder to the skies.

Send down to us a book  
That we could read."<sup>2297</sup>  
Say: "Glory to my Lord!  
Am I aught but a man,-  
A messenger?"<sup>2298</sup>

قُلْ سُبْحَانَ رَبِّيَ هَلْ كُنْتُ إِلَّا بَشَرًا رَسُولًا ﴿١٧﴾

#### SECTION 11.

94. What kept men back  
From Belief when Guidance  
Came to them, was nothing  
But this: they said,  
"Has Allah sent a man"<sup>2299</sup>  
(Like us) to be (His) Messenger?"
95. Say, "If there were settled,  
On earth, angels walking about"<sup>2300</sup>  
In peace and quiet, We should  
Certainly have sent them  
Down from the heavens  
An angel for a messenger."

وَمَا مَنَعَ النَّاسَ أَنْ يُؤْمِنُوا إِذْ جَاءَهُمْ الْهُدَىٰ  
إِلَّا أَنْ قَالُوا أَبَعَثَ اللَّهُ بَشَرًا رَسُولًا ﴿١٨﴾

قُلْ لَوْ كَانَتْ فِي الْأَرْضِ مَلَائِكَةٌ يُمْشُونَ  
مُطْمَئِنِّينَ لَنَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ  
مَلَكَائِرُوسًا ﴿١٩﴾

2297. Cf. vi. 7 for the foolish idea of materialistic sceptics that a spiritual revelation could come down from the heavens on a piece of parchment that they can touch.

2298. A prophet or messenger of Allah is a man at the command of Allah, and not to satisfy the disingenuous whims and fancies of Unbelievers. Miracles greater than any that their foolish fancies could devise were before them. The Qur-ān was such a miracle, and it is a standing miracle that lasts through the ages. Why did they not believe? The real reason was spite and jealousy like that of Iblis. See next verse.

2299. When a man is raised to honour and dignity, his sincere brothers rejoice, for it is an honour that reflects its glory on them. But those with evil in their hearts are jealous like their prototype Iblis, (xvii. 61, n. 2251). To such men the mere fact that their own brother receives the grace of Allah is enough to turn them against that brother. Any other reasons they may devise are mere make-believe.

2300. The argument is that if angels inhabited this earth, an angel from heaven could be sent down as a messenger to them, as they could mutually understand each other, and the Message of Allah could be explained without difficulty. But the earth is inhabited by men, and the men themselves are divided into races, or groups, or nations. To each Group is sent a prophet from among their brethren: to 'Ād, their brother Hūd (xi. 50); to Thamūd, their brother Šālīḥ (xi. 61); and so on. As a matter of fact, with wicked men, constituted as they are, the appearance of an angel causes disturbance and an unseemly riot, as in the case of the angels that came to Lot (xi. 77-80). In any case they cannot carry out an effective mission among men (vi. 8-9).

96. Say: "Enough is Allah  
For a witness between me<sup>2301</sup>  
And you: for He is  
Well acquainted with His servants,  
And He sees (all things).

97. It is he whom Allah guides,  
That is on true guidance;  
But he whom He leaves  
Astray—for such wilt thou  
Find no protector besides Him.<sup>2302</sup>  
On the Day of Judgment  
We shall gather them together,  
Prone on their faces,  
Blind, dumb, and deaf:  
Their abode will be Hell:  
Every time it shows abatement,  
We shall increase for them  
The fierceness of the Fire.<sup>2303</sup>

98. That is their recompense,  
Because they rejected Our Signs,  
And said, "When we are reduced  
To bones and broken dust,

قُلْ كَفَىٰ بِاللَّهِ شَهِيدًا بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَكُمْ  
إِنَّهُ كَانَ بِعِبَادِهِ خَبِيرًا بَصِيرًا ﴿١٦﴾

وَمَنْ يَهْدِ اللَّهُ فَهُوَ الْمُهْتَدِ وَمَنْ يُضِلِلْ فَلَنْ تَجِدَ  
لَهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءَ مِنْ دُونِهِ يُنصِرُهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ  
عَلَىٰ وُجُوهِهِمْ عُمَاءٌ وَبُكْمٌ وَأَصْمَامٌ وَلَهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ  
كُلَّمَا خَبَتْ زِدْنَاهُمْ سَعِيرًا ﴿١٧﴾

ذَٰلِكَ جَزَاءُهُمْ بِأَنَّهُمْ كَفَرُوا بِآيَاتِنَا وَقَالُوا  
إِذَا كُنَّا عِظْمًا وَرَفَتًا أَءِنَّا لَمَبْعُوثُونَ خَلْقًا  
جَدِيدًا ﴿١٨﴾

2301. 'If you want a real witness, it is not these sorts of fancy miracles, but the witness of the true ever-living God. Purify your hearts, and ask Him in true contrition and repentance, and He will guide you and show you the Way'.

2302. 'All your insincere subtleties are of no use. The only real guidance is the guidance of Allah. If you do not seek His grace, you will be lost. Besides Him, there is no true friend or protector'.

2303. 'If you still persist in your evil ways, what is to be your evil end? You will become more and more identified with the Company of Evil. You will come to shame and ignominy, like men thrown down prone on their faces. You will lose the use of all the faculties of judgment with which Allah has endowed you. Instead of seeing, you will be blind to Allah's Signs. Instead of having the power of seeking Him in prayer and rejoicing in His grace, you will be dumb. Instead of hearing the harmony and music of the spheres, as typified in the pure and harmonious lives of men, you will hear nothing or only hear dull or confused sounds like deaf men. The scorching fire of your punishment will not grow less, but grow more fierce as you go deeper into Hell'.

Should we really be raised up  
(To be) a new Creation?<sup>2304</sup>

99. See they not that Allah,  
Who created the heavens  
And the earth, has power  
To create the like of them<sup>2305</sup>  
(Anew)? Only He has  
Decreed a term appointed,  
Of which there is no doubt.  
But the unjust refuse  
(To receive it) except  
With ingratitude.<sup>2306</sup>

100. Say: "If ye had  
Control of the Treasures  
Of the Mercy of my Lord,  
Behold, ye would keep them  
Back, for fear of spending  
Them: for man  
Is (ever) niggardly!"<sup>2307</sup>

أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّ اللَّهَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ  
وَالْأَرْضَ قَادِرٌ عَلَى أَنْ يَخْلُقَ مِثْلَهُمْ وَجَعَلَ  
لَهُمْ أَجَلًا لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ فَأَبَى الظَّالِمُونَ  
إِلَّا كُفُورًا ﴿١١﴾

قُلْ لَوْ أَنَّكُمْ تَمْلِكُونَ خَزَائِنَ رَحْمَةِ رَبِّي إِذًا  
لَأَمْسَكْتُمْ خَشْيَةَ الْإِنْفَاقِ وَكَانَ الْإِنْسَانُ قَتُورًا ﴿١٠﴾

2304. This phrase is repeated from xvii. 49. The reminiscence rounds off the argument. After certain moral precepts to which Faith was linked, we have had a discussion of Unfaith. Its various motives have been analysed, and its penalties have been allegorically shadowed forth. After this, the example of Pharaoh is held as a type of Unfaith in the next section, and the Sūra closed with an exhortation to faith and a declaration of the glory of Allah.

2305. Allah, Who created all that is in the heavens and on earth, has surely the power to revive the life of individual souls after their bodies have perished,—and revive them with memories of their past life and for a continuation of their spiritual history. Only He has fixed a term for each stage of our existence, which we can neither prolong nor shorten.

2306. This phrase carries us back to xvii. 89, after we began the argument about the real motives for the rejection of the Qur-ān by sceptics. The argument is now closed in a sort of minor circle within the major circle sketched in n. 2304 above.

2307. A fresh argument is now addressed to those who would confine Allah's revelations to a limited circle of men, such as they themselves belonged to. The immediate reference was to the Jews, who could not understand how any Gentiles could receive revelations and guidance even superior to what they considered their own birth-right. But the tendency is widespread in the human race. A particular race, or caste, or a particular kind of culture, claims to be the custodian of Allah's Message, whereas it is universal. Allah's Mercy is universal, and He scatters the priceless Treasures of His Mercy broadcast among His creatures. They are not exhausted by spending. It is only the misers who hoard =

## SECTION 12.

101. To Moses We did give  
Nine Clear Signs:<sup>2308</sup>  
Ask the Children of Israel:  
When he came to them,<sup>2309</sup>  
Pharaoh said to him:  
"O Moses! I consider thee,  
Indeed, to have been  
Worked upon by sorcery!"<sup>2310</sup>

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى تِسْعَ آيَاتٍ بَيِّنَاتٍ فَسْتَلْ  
بَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ إِذْ جَاءَهُمْ فَقَالَ لَهُ فِرْعَوْنُ  
إِنِّي لَأَظُنُّكَ يَمُوسَى مَسْحُورًا ﴿١٠١﴾

102. Moses said, "Thou knowest  
Well that these things  
Have been sent down by none  
But the Lord of the heavens  
And the earth as eye-opening<sup>2311</sup>  
Evidence: and I consider thee  
Indeed, O Pharaoh, to be  
One doomed to destruction!"

قَالَ لَقَدْ عَلِمْتَ مَا أَنْزَلَ هَؤُلَاءِ إِلَّا رَبُّ السَّمَوَاتِ  
وَالْأَرْضِ بِصَآئِرٍ وَإِنِّي لَأَظُنُّكَ  
يَفِرْعَوْنُ مُنْجُورًا ﴿١٠٢﴾

= their wealth for fear it should be used up by spending. 'Are you spiritual misers going to keep back Allah's holy Message from the multitude? Is that the reason why you deny the advent of the new Teacher, who comes as a Mercy to all men-to all Creation?'

2308. *Nine Clear Signs:* see vii. 133, n. 1091. The story of Pharaoh (or a phase of it) is here told with a view to exhibiting the decline of a soul on account of pride in outward power and dignity.

2309. *To them:* i.e., to Pharaoh, as sitting in his Council, with the Chiefs of his People. Cf. vii. 103. The whole scene is described in some detail from the point of view of nations or Ummats in vii. 103-133.

2310. At a different and later stage in the scene, Pharaoh's Chiefs call Moses a "sorcerer well-versed" (vii. 109). Here Moses, who had come with the Nine Signs but had not yet shown them, is reproached with being the object of sorcery: he is practically told that he is mad!

2311. We can well suppose Moses to ask Pharaoh to recall all the past history of Moses, for Moses had been brought up in Pharaoh's palace in all the learning of the Egyptians. He could not therefore be mad, or a simpleton worked on by Egyptian magic. What he was going to show was something far greater; it was not the deceptive magic of Pharaoh's sorcerers, but true Signs that came from Allah, the Lord of all power. They were to open the eyes of his people, and if Pharaoh resisted faith. Moses warns him that Pharaoh in that case was doomed to destruction. This is the course of the soul that sinks down by Pride!

103. So he resolved to remove them<sup>2312</sup>

From the face of the earth:  
But We did drown him  
And all who were with him.

فَأَرَادَ أَنْ يَنْفِرَهُمْ مِنَ الْأَرْضِ



فَاغْرَقْنَاهُ وَمَنْ مَعَهُ جَمِيعًا

104. And We said thereafter

To The Children of Israel,  
"Dwell securely in the land<sup>2313</sup>

(Of promise)": but when  
The second of the warnings came  
To pass, We gathered you  
Together in a mingled crowd<sup>2314</sup>

وَقُلْنَا مِنْ بَعْدِهِ لِبَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ اسْكُنُوا الْأَرْضَ



فَإِذَا جَاءَ وَعْدُ الْآخِرَةِ جَمَعْنَاهُمْ لَفِيضًا

105. We sent down the (Qur-ān)

In Truth, and in Truth<sup>2315</sup>  
Has it descended: and We sent  
Thee but to give Glad  
Tidings and to warn (sinners).<sup>2316</sup>

وَبِالْحَقِّ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ وَبِالْحَقِّ نَزَلَ وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ



إِلَّا مُبَشِّرًا وَنَذِيرًا

106. (It is) a Qur-ān

Which We have divided  
(Into parts from time to time),

وَقُرْءَانًا فَرَقْنَاهُ لِتَقْرَأَهُ عَلَى النَّاسِ عَلَى مُكْتَفٍ



وَنَزَّلْنَاهُ نَزِيرًا

2312. Pharaoh on this tries various subterfuges and plans for removing not only Moses but all his people by doing away with them. The detailed story is not told here but may be read in S. vii. But Allah's Wrath descended on Pharaoh and those who were with him in body and mind. The Egyptians who repented were subject to Pharaoh's wrath but were saved from the Wrath of Allah (vii. 121-126).

2313. The Israelites were taken to the Promised Land in Palestine, and they established their own kingdom there, but they forfeited Allah's favour by their sins and backslidings and will have to answer like all souls by the law of personal responsibility at the Day of Judgment.

2314. The *second of the warnings*: the first was probably that mentioned above, in xvii. 5 and the second that mentioned in xvii. 7 (middle). When this second warning due to the rejection of Jesus came to pass, the Jews were gathered together in a mingled crowd. Some Commentators understand the second warning to be the Day of Judgment, the Promise of the Hereafter.

2315. The Qur-ān was sent down by Allah in Truth: it was not forged by any mortal. It has descended in Truth: it was not and has not been falsified or corrupted in the process of being communicated to mankind.

2316. The part of the Prophet was that of a Messenger: he was not responsible if the ungodly rejected it. He fulfilled his mission in promulgating and explaining it and leaving it as a legacy to the world.



In order that thou mightest  
Recite it to men  
At intervals: We have  
Revealed it by stages.<sup>2317</sup>

107. Say: "Whether ye believe  
In it or not, it is true  
That those who were given<sup>2318</sup>  
Knowledge beforehand, when  
It is recited to them,  
Fall down on their faces  
In humble prostration,

قُلْ ءَامِنُوا بِهِ ؕ أَوْ لَا تُؤْمِنُوا إِنَّ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ  
إِذَا يُتْلَى عَلَيْهِمْ يَخِرُّونَ لِلْأَذْقَانِ سُجَّدًا ﴿١٠٧﴾

108. "And they say: 'Glory  
To our Lord! Truly  
Has the promise of our Lord  
Been fulfilled!'"<sup>2319</sup>

وَيَقُولُونَ سُبْحَنَ رَبِّنَا إِن كَانَ وَعْدُ رَبِّنَا لَمَفْعُولًا ﴿١٠٨﴾

109. They fall down on their faces  
In tears, and it increases  
Their (earnest) humility.<sup>2320</sup>

وَيَخِرُّونَ لِلْأَذْقَانِ يَبْكُونَ وَيَزِيدُهُمْ  
خُشُوعًا ﴿١٠٩﴾

2317. The marvel is that these parts, revealed at different times and in different circumstances, should fit together so closely and consistently as they do. All revelation is progressive. The previous revelations were also progressive. Each of them marked a stage in the world's spiritual history. Man's mind does not take in more than his spiritual state will have prepared him, for Allah's revelation comes as a light to illuminate our difficulties and show us the way in actual situations that arise.

2318. No one's belief or unbelief affects the beauty or grandeur of Allah's revelation. But those endowed with spiritual knowledge or insight know at once when they hear Allah's holy Word, and fall down and adore Allah. Those endowed with knowledge include those who had received previous revelations and had kept themselves free from corrupt ideas.

2319. Those who had received previous revelations find in the Qur-ān and in the Messenger who brought it, the promise of Allah fulfilled. Those who were spiritually prepared for it found in the same way the satisfaction of their spiritual yearnings: to them, also, Allah's promise was sent to be fulfilled.

2320. A feeling of earnest humility comes to the man who realises how, in spite of his own unworthiness, he is brought, by Allah's Mercy, into touch with the most sublime Truths. Such a man is touched with the deepest emotion, which finds its outlet in tears.

110. Say: "Call upon Allah, or  
Call upon Rahmān:<sup>2321</sup>

By whatever name ye call  
Upon Him, (it is well):

For to Him belong

The Most Beautiful Names.<sup>2322</sup>

Neither speak thy Prayer aloud,

Nor speak it in a low tone,<sup>2323</sup>

But seek a middle course  
Between."

قُلْ اَدْعُوا اللَّهَ اَوْ اَدْعُوا الرَّحْمٰنَ اَيًّا مَّا تَدْعُوْا فَلَهُ  
الْاَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنٰى وَلَا تَجْهَرُ بِصَلَاتِكَ  
وَلَا تَخَافُهَا وَابْتَغِ بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ سَبِيْلًا ﴿١١٠﴾

111. Say: "Praise be to Allah,  
Who begets no son,  
And has no partner  
In (His) dominion:

وَقُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ الَّذِى لَمْ يَخْذَ وَلَدًا وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ شَرِيْكٌ

2321. Cf. vii. 180. *Rahmān* describes one of the attributes of Allah,—His grace and Mercy which come to the sinner even before he feels conscious of the need of it,—the preventive Grace which saves Allah's servants from sin. See n. 19 to i. 1. Allah can be invoked, either by His simple name, which includes all attributes, or by one of the names implying the attributes by which we try to explain His nature to our limited understanding. The attribute of Mercy in *Rahmān* was particularly repugnant to the Pagan Arabs (see xxv. 60, and xxi. 36): that is why special stress is laid on it in the Qur-ān.

2322. These Beautiful Names of Allah are many. The hadith related by Tirmizī, accepted by some as authentic, mentions 99 names of Allah. Qādhi Muḥammad Sulaimān has published an Urdu monograph on the subject, published by the Daftar Raḥmatun-lil-ʿĀlamīn Patiala, 1930. Those who wish to see a poetic Commentary on the names in the form of stories in English may consult Sir Edwin Arnold's *Pearls of the Faith*. Sir Edwin's stories are of unequal merit, but a fine example is furnished by No. 4, *al-Malik*. "The King".

2323. Cf. vii. 205. All prayer should be pronounced with earnestness and humility, whether it is congregational prayer or the private outpouring of one's own soul. Such an attitude is not consistent with an over-loud pronunciation of the words, though in public prayers the standard of permissible loudness is naturally higher than in the case of private prayer. In public prayers, of course, the Azān or call to prayer will be in a loud voice to be heard near and far, but the chants from the Sacred Book should be neither so loud as to attract the hostile notice of those who do not believe nor so low in tone as not to be heard by the whole congregation.

Nor (needs) He any  
To protect Him from humiliation:<sup>2324</sup>  
Yea, magnify Him  
For His greatness and glory!"

فِي الْمَلِكِ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ سَوْلِيٌّ مِنَ الذَّلِيلِ وَكِبَرَهُ تَكْبِيرًا

2324. A first step towards the understanding of Allah's attributes is to clear our mind from superstitions, such as that Allah begot a son, or that He has partners, or that He is dependent upon other beings to protect Him from harm and humiliation. We must realise that He is the One and Peerless. His greatness and glory are above anything we can conceive: but using our highest spiritual ideas, we must declare forth His greatness and glory.

The Sūra began with singing the glory and praises of Allah: it ends on the same note, concluding the argument. The next Sūra takes up the same theme from another point of view, and opens with the same note, "Praise be to Allah".