

INTRODUCTION TO SŪRAT *Ash-Shu'arāa*, 26.

This Sūra begins a new series of four Sūras (xxvi-xxix), which illustrate the contrast between the spirit of Prophecy and spiritual Light and the reactions to it in the communities among whom it appeared, by going back to old Prophets and the stories of the Past, as explained in the Introduction to S. xvii.

In this particular Sūra we have the story of Moses in his fight with Pharaoh and of Pharaoh's discomfiture. Other Prophets mentioned are Abraham, Noah, Hūd, Ṣāliḥ, Lūṭ, and Shu'aib. The lesson is drawn that the Qur-ān is a continuation and fulfilment of previous Revelations, and is pure Truth, unlike the poetry of vain poets.

Chronologically the Sūra belongs to the middle Makkan period, when the contact of the Light of Prophecy with the milieu of Pagan Makkah was testing the Makkans in their most arrogant mood.

Summary.—The conflict of Unbelief with Truth is vain: so was the conflict of Pharaoh with Moses: Pharaoh's magicians bowed to the Truth, and Pharaoh and his hosts were drowned (xxvi. 1-69).

Nor did Abraham's people gain anything by their resisting the Truth he preached, and Noah's people perished by their Unbelief (xxvi. 70-122).

Hūd warned his people against reliance on their material strength and Ṣāliḥ against sacrilege, but in both cases the evil ones were brought low (xxvi. 123-159).

Lūṭ had to deal with unspeakable crimes, and Shu'aib against dishonest dealings and mischief; their teaching was rejected, but the rejecters were wiped out (xxvi. 160-191).

So, when the spirit of Prophecy came to Makkah, it was resisted by the votaries of evil: but Truth is not like vain poetry, and must triumph at last (xxvi. 192-277).

Ash-Shu'arāa, or The Poets.

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

1. Tā. Sīn. Mīm.³¹³⁷
2. These are Verses of the Book
That makes (things) clear.³¹³⁸
3. It may be thou will kill
Thy self with grief, that they³¹³⁹
Do not become Believers.
4. If (such) were Our Will,³¹⁴⁰
We could send down to them
From the sky a Sign,
To which they would bend
Their necks in humility.
5. But there comes not
To them a newly-revealed
Message from The Most Gracious,
But they turn away therefrom.
6. They have indeed rejected
(The Message): so they will
Know soon (enough) the truth
Of what they mocked at!³¹⁴¹

سُورَةُ الشُّعَرَاءِ

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

طس

تِلْكَ آيَاتُ الْكِتَابِ الْمُبِينِ

لَعَلَّكَ بِنِعْمَتِ رَبِّكَ لَا تَكُونُ آمُومِينَ

إِنْ شَاءَ نُنْزِلُ عَلَيْهِم مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ آيَةً فَظَلَّتْ

أَعْنَاقُهُمْ لَهَا خَاضِعِينَ

وَمَا يَأْتِيهِمْ مِّنْ ذِكْرٍ مِّنَ الرَّحْمَنِ مُبَدَّلٍ

إِلَّا كَانُوا عَنْهُ مُعْرِضِينَ

فَقَدْ كَذَّبُوا قَسِيئَتِمْ أَنبَتُوا مَا كَانُوا

بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِءُونَ

3137. This is a combination of three Abbreviated Letters, as to which, generally, see Appendix I, printed at the end of S.ii.

3138. Cf. v. 17, and n. 716. The comparison of Allah's revelation with Light is continued.

3139. "They" are the Pagans of Makkah. From a human point of view it was a great disappointment to Allah's Messenger in the middle period of his Makkkan ministry that the Makkkan could not be brought to believe in the Truth.

3140. If it had been Allah's Will and Plan to force people's will, He could quite easily have forced the Makkans. But His Will and Plan work differently. His revelation is meant to train man's own will so that it conforms to Allah's beneficent purpose.

3141. They may laugh at Allah's Message of righteousness, but they will soon see the power of Truth and realise the real significance of the movement which they opposed. Where were the Pagans of Makkah after Badr, and still more, after the bloodless surrender of Makkah? And the meaning may be applied universally in all history.

7. Do they not look
At the earth,—how many
Noble things of all kinds
We have produced therein?³¹⁴²
8. Verily, in this is a Sign:
But most of them
Do not believe.
9. And verily, thy Lord
Is He, the Exalted in Might,³¹⁴³
Most Merciful.

SECTION 2.

10. Behold, thy Lord called³¹⁴⁴
Moses: "Go to the people
Of iniquity,—
11. "The people of Pharaoh:
Will they not fear Allah?"
12. He said: "O my Lord!
I do fear that they
Will charge me with falsehood:
13. "My breast will be straitened.³¹⁴⁵
And my tongue will not speak
(Plainly): so send unto Aaron.

أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا إِلَى الْأَرْضِ كَمَا أَنْشَأْنَا فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ زَوْجٍ كَرِيمٍ ﴿٧﴾

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً وَمَا كَانَ أَكْثَرُهُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٨﴾

وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿٩﴾

وَإِذْ نَادَىٰ رَبُّكَ مُوسَىٰ أَنْ أَتِ الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١٠﴾

قَوْمَ فِرْعَوْنَ ۖ أَلَا يَنْقُوتُ ﴿١١﴾

قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّي أَخَافُ أَنْ يُكَذِّبُونِ ﴿١٢﴾

وَيَضِيقُ صَدْرِي وَلَا يَنْطَلِقُ لِسَانِي فَأَرْسِلْ
إِلَيَّ هَنُوتَ ﴿١٣﴾

3142. If evil has a little run in this life, let them not run away with the notion that the world is for evil. They have only to look round at the physical and moral world around them, and they would be undeceived. But they are blind and without the Faith (the Light) which would open their eyes.

3143. One Who is able to carry out all His Will and Plans. See n. 2818 to xxii. 40.

3144. The part of the story of Moses told here is how Moses felt diffident about undertaking his commission; how Allah reassured him; how he went to Pharaoh with "the Signs"; how Pharaoh and his people rejected him; how their blasphemy recoiled on themselves, but the cause of Allah triumphed; in other words the point here is the reaction of a wicked people to the Light that was held up to them, considered in its relation to the mind of Allah's Messenger.

3145. As we should say in English, "My heart would fail me, and my tongue cleave to my mouth." Moses had an impediment in his speech, and his mission was risky: see =

14. "And (further), they have
A charge of crime against me;³¹⁴⁶
And I fear they may
Slay me."

وَهُمْ عَلَى ذَنْبٍ فَأَخَافُ أَنْ يَقْتُلُونِ ﴿١٤﴾

15. Allah said: "By no means!
Proceed then, both of you,
With Our Signs; We
Are with you, and will
Listen (to your call).

قَالَ كَلَّا فَادْهَابًا يَذِيئُنَا إِنَّا مَعَكُمْ مُسْتَمِعُونَ ﴿١٥﴾

16. "So go forth, both of you,
To Pharaoh, and say:
'We have been sent
By the Lord and Cherisher
Of the Worlds;

فَأْتِيَا فِرْعَوْنَ فَقُولَا إِنَّا رَسُولُ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٦﴾

17. " 'Send thou with us
The Children of Israel.' "

أَنْ أَرْسِلَ مَعَنَا بَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ ﴿١٧﴾

18. (Pharaoh) said: "Did we not³¹⁴⁷
Cherish thee as a child
Among us, and didst thou not
Stay in our midst
Many years of thy life?"

قَالَ أَلَمْ نَرْبِكَ فِينَا وَلِيدًا وَلِئِذَا أُولِئِكَ فِينَا
مِنْ عُمْرِكَ سِنَّينَ ﴿١٨﴾

= next note. But Allah's Plan works in wondrous ways. Aaron was given to assist him in his mission, and Moses's shortcomings were transformed by Allah's grace into power, so that he became the most powerful leader of Israel.

3146. Moses was brought up in the palace of Pharaoh, as narrated in his personal story in xx. 39-40 and n. 2563. When he was grown-up he saw an Egyptian smiting an Israelite, and as the Israelites were being generally oppressed by the Egyptians, Moses's anger was roused, and he slew the Egyptian. He then fled to the Midianite country in the Sinai peninsula, where he received the divine commission. But the charge of slaying the Egyptian was hanging against him. He was also apparently quick-tempered. But Allah's grace cured his temper and he became wise; his impediment in speech, for he stood up boldly to speak to Pharaoh; and his fear, for he dared the Egyptians with Allah's Signs, and they were afraid of him.

3147. There is here a little play of wit on the part of Pharaoh. When Moses speaks of the "Lord and Cherisher of the Worlds", Pharaoh says: "Who cherished you? Did we not bring you up as a child? Did you not grow up among us?" By implication Pharaoh suggest that he is the cherisher of Moses, and in any case Pharaoh laid claim to godhead himself.

19. "And thou didst a deed
Of thine which (thou knowest)³¹⁴⁸
Thou didst, and thou art
An ungrateful!"
20. Moses said: "I did it
Then, when I was
In error."³¹⁴⁹
21. "So I fled from you (all)
When I feared you;³¹⁵⁰
But my Lord has (since)
Invested me with judgment
(And wisdom) and appointed me
As one of the messengers.
22. "And this is the favour³¹⁵¹
With which thou dost
Reproach me,—that you
Hast enslaved the Children
Of Israel!"

وَفَعَلْتَ فَعَلَتَكَ الَّتِي فَعَلْتَ

وَأَنْتَ مِنَ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿١٩﴾

قَالَ فَعَلْتُهَا إِذَا وَأَنَا مِنَ الضَّالِّينَ ﴿٢٠﴾

فَفَرَرْتُ مِنْكُمْ لَمَّا خِفْتُكُمْ فَوَهَبَ لِي رَبِّي حُكْمًا

وَجَعَلَنِي مِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿٢١﴾

وَبَلَكَ نِعْمَةً تَمَنَّا عَلَيْهَا أَنْ عَبَدْتُ بَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ ﴿٢٢﴾

3148. Further, Pharaoh reminds Moses of his having slain the Egyptian, and taunts him: "You are not only a murderer: you are an ungrateful wretch" (using *kāfir* again in a double sense) "to have killed one of the race that brought you up!"

3149. What is Moses's reply? He is no longer afraid. He tells the whole truth, extenuating nothing in his own favour. "Yes I did it: but I did it under an error." There are three implications in this: "(1) I was wrong in doing it in a temper and in being hasty; (2) I was wrong in taking the law into my own hands, but I repented and asked for Allah's pardon (xxviii. 15-16); (3) that was at a time when I was under your influence, but since then I am a changed man, as Allah has called me."

3150. He accounts for all his movements, much more than Pharaoh had asked for. He has nothing to hide. At that time he was under the influence of fear, and he had fled from him. Now he is serving Allah, the Lord of the Worlds. He has no fear: he is a messenger.

3151. Pharaoh had called Moses ungrateful and reproached him with all the favours which Moses had received from the Egyptians. "What favours?" he says; "Do you count it also as a favour to me that you have enslaved my brethren the Children of Israel?" Moses was now speaking as a Prophet of Allah, not as an individual. Any individual favours he may have received were blotted out by the oppression of his people.

23. Pharaoh said: "And what
Is the Lord and Cherisher
Of the Worlds?"³¹⁵²

قَالَ فِرْعَوْنُ وَمَا رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٢٣﴾

24. (Moses) said: "The Lord
And Cherisher of the heavens
And the earth, and all between,—
If ye had but
Sure belief."

قَالَ رَبُّ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا
إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُوقِنِينَ ﴿٢٤﴾

25. (Pharaoh) said to those
Around: "Do ye not listen
(To what he says)?"³¹⁵³

قَالَ لِمَنْ حَوْلَهُ أَلَا تَسْمَعُونَ ﴿٢٥﴾

26. (Moses) said: "Your Lord
And the Lord of your fathers
From the beginning!"

قَالَ رَبُّكُمْ وَرَبُّ آبَائِكُمُ الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿٢٦﴾

27. (Pharaoh) said: "Truly
Your messenger who has been
Sent to you is
A veritable madman!"³¹⁵⁴

قَالَ إِنَّ رَسُولَكُمْ الَّذِي أُرْسِلَ إِلَيْكُمْ لَمَجْنُونٌ ﴿٢٧﴾

3152. Moses having eliminated all personalities, the argument now comes up to the highest plane of all,—the attributes of Allah and His mercies. Moses had put forward this before, as implied in verse 16 above, but Pharaoh had twisted it into personalities. Now we come back to the real issue. It may have been in the same sitting, or it may have been in a later sitting.

3153. Moses had stirred up the wrath of Pharaoh both by putting forward the name of the One True God as against Pharaoh's pretended godhead, and by suggesting that any man of judgment would understand Allah's majesty. While Pharaoh turns to his people in indignation, Moses drives the nail in further: "He is the God of the heavens and the earth and all between: therefore He is also *your* God, and the God of your fathers from the beginning. Any other pretensions are false!"

3154. Pharaoh is further perturbed. In reply to Moses's statement that Allah, the One True God is also the God of the Egyptians and Pharaoh also, Pharaoh says sarcastically to his Court: "Look at this 'Messenger' of yours; he seems to be mad!" But Moses is not abashed. He boldly says what is the truth: "It is you who are mad! The God Whom I preach is the universal Lord,—of the East and of the West. He reigns wherever you go!"

28. (Moses) said: "Lord of the East
And the West, and all between!
If ye only had sense!"

29. (Pharaoh) said: "If thou
Takest any god
Other than me, I will
Certainly put thee in prison!"³¹⁵⁵

30. (Moses) said: "Even if I
Showed you something
Clear (and) convincing?"³¹⁵⁶

31. (Pharaoh) said: "Show it then,
If thou tellest the truth!"

32. So (Moses) threw his rod,
And behold, it was
A serpent, plain (for all to see)!

33. And he drew out his hand,
And behold, it was white
To all beholders!³¹⁵⁷

SECTION 3.

34. (Pharaoh) said to the Chiefs³¹⁵⁸
Around him: "This is indeed
A sorcerer well-versed:

قَالَ رَبُّ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا
إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٢٨﴾

قَالَ لَنْ أَخَذْتَ إِلَهًا غَيْرِي لِأَجْعَلَكَ
مِنَ الْمَسْجُونِينَ ﴿٢٩﴾

قَالَ أَوْ لَوْ جِئْتُكَ بِشَيْءٍ مُّبينٍ ﴿٣٠﴾

قَالَ فَأْتِ بِهِ إِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الصّٰدِقِينَ ﴿٣١﴾

فَأَلْقَى عَصَاهُ فَإِذَا هِيَ ثُعْبَانٌ مُّبينٌ ﴿٣٢﴾

وَنَزَعَ يَدَهُ فَإِذَا هِيَ بَيْضَاءُ لِلنّٰظِرِينَ ﴿٣٣﴾

قَالَ لِلْمَلَآئِكَةِ حَوْلَهُ إِنَّ هَٰذَا لَسَاحِرٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٣٤﴾

3155. Now we come to the crisis. Pharaoh threatens Moses with prison for treason. Moses remains calm and still argues: "What if I show you a miracle? Will it convince you that I am not mad, and that I have behind me the Lord of all the Worlds?"

3156. The Egyptians were addicted to magic and sorcery. If a true miracle were shown to them, would they believe? Perhaps they would see the hollowness of their own magic. In fact this actually happened with the Egyptian sorcerers themselves and perhaps with the commonalty. But Pharaoh and his Court were too arrogant to accept Moses's religion.

3157. Cf. vii. 107-8. See the whole passage there, and the notes thereon.

3158. In vii. 109 it is the Chiefs who say this. The fact is that it was a general consultation, and this was the general feeling, expressed in words by each to the others.

35. "His plan is to get you out
Of your land by his sorcery;
Then what is it ye counsel?"
36. They said: "Keep him
And his brother in suspense
(For a while), and dispatch
To the Cities heralds to collect—
37. "And bring up to thee
All (our) sorcerers well-versed."
38. So the sorcerers were got
Together for the appointment
Of a day well-known,³¹⁵⁹
39. And the people were told:
"Are ye (now) assembled?"—
40. "That we may follow"³¹⁶⁰
The sorcerers
If they win?"
41. So when the sorcerers arrived,
They said to Pharaoh:
"Of course—shall we have
A (suitable) reward"³¹⁶¹
If we win?"
42. He said: "Yea, (and more),—
For ye shall in that case
Be (raised to posts)
Nearest (to my person)."

يُرِيدُ أَنْ يُخْرِجَكُمْ مِنْ أَرْضِكُمْ بِسِحْرِهِ فَمَاذَا
تَأْمُرُونَ ﴿٣٥﴾

قَالُوا أَرْجِهْ وَأَخَاهُ وَأَبْعَثْ فِي الْمَدَائِنِ حَاشِرِينَ ﴿٣٦﴾

يَأْتُواكَ بِكُلِّ سِحَارٍ عَلِيمٍ ﴿٣٧﴾

فَجُمِعَ السَّحَرَةُ لِمِيقَاتِ يَوْمٍ مَعْلُومٍ ﴿٣٨﴾

وَقِيلَ لِلنَّاسِ هَلْ أَنْتُمْ مُجْتَمِعُونَ ﴿٣٩﴾

لَعَلَّنَا نَتَّبِعَ السَّحَرَةَ إِنْ كَانُوا هُمْ الْغَالِبِينَ ﴿٤٠﴾

فَلَمَّا جَاءَ السَّحَرَةُ قَالُوا لِفِرْعَوْنَ أَإِنَّا لَلْأَجْرَ إِنْ كُنَّا
نَحْنُ الْغَالِبِينَ ﴿٤١﴾

قَالَ نَعَمْ وَإِنَّكُمْ إِذَا لَمِنَ الْمُقَرَّبِينَ ﴿٤٢﴾

3159. *A day well-known*: a solemn day of festival: see xx. 59. The object was to get together as large a concourse of people as possible. It was confidently expected that the Egyptian sorcerers with all their organisation would win with their tricks against these amateur Israelites, and so the State cult of the worship of Pharaoh would be fastened on the necks of the people more firmly than ever.

3160. See the last note. The people are to come and witness the triumph of the State religion, so that they may become the more obedient to Pharaoh and more compliant with the demands of the priests. The State religion included magic and the worship of Pharaoh.

3161. There was no such thing as pure loyalty to an exploiting ruler like this Pharaoh. The sorcerers, who were probably also priests, were venal, and they hoped to establish their own hold on both king and people by the further enrichment of themselves and their order.

43. Moses said to them:
"Throw ye—that which
Ye are about to throw!"³¹⁶²
44. So they threw their ropes
And their rods, and said:
"By the might of Pharaoh,
It is we who will
Certainly win!"³¹⁶³
45. Then Moses threw his rod,
When, behold, it straightway
Swallows up all
The falsehoods which they fake!³¹⁶⁴
46. Then did the sorcerers
Fall down, prostrate in adoration,
47. Saying: "We believe
In the Lord of the Worlds.
48. "The Lord of Moses and Aaron."
49. Said (Pharaoh): "Believe ye
In Him before I give
You permission? Surely he
Is your leader, who has
Taught you sorcery!
But soon shall ye know!"³¹⁶⁵

قَالَ لَهُمْ مُوسَىٰ أَلْقُوا مَا أَنْتُمْ مُلْقُونَ ﴿٤٣﴾

فَالْقُوا إِلَهُكُمُوعَصِيَّتَهُمْ وَقَالُوا لِعِزَّةِ فِرْعَوْنَ
إِنَّا لَنَحْنُ الْعَالِيُونَ ﴿٤٤﴾

فَأَلْقَىٰ مُوسَىٰ عَصَاهُ فَإِذَا هِيَ تَلْقَفُ مَا يَأْفِكُونَ ﴿٤٥﴾

فَأَلْقَى السَّحَرَةُ سِحْرَهُمْ سَجِدِينَ ﴿٤٦﴾

قَالُوا آمَنَّا بِرَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٤٧﴾

رَبِّ مُوسَىٰ وَهَارُونَ ﴿٤٨﴾

قَالَ آمَنْتُمْ لَهُ قَبْلَ أَنْ آذَنَ لَكُمْ إِنَّهُ لَكَبِيرٌ كُ
الَّذِي عَلَّمَكُمُ السِّحْرَ فَلَسَوْفَ تَعْمَلُونَ لَأُقَطِّعَنَّ أَيْدِيَكُمْ
وَأَرْجُلَكُمْ مِنْ خَلْفٍ وَلَا صَلْبَتُكُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ ﴿٤٩﴾

3162. The euphemism implies a taunt, as if Moses had said: "I know about your tricks! You pretend to throw ropes and rods, and make people believe they are snakes. But now come on!"

3163. Though Pharaoh claimed to be a god. And so they appeal to his "divine" power.

3164. The sorcerers' ropes and rods seemed to have become serpents, but the rod of Moses was mightier than all of them and quickly swallowed them up. So truth is more powerful than tricks and will expose and destroy them.

3165. The sorcerers knew that they had met something very different from their tricks. Allah's power worked on them and they professed the True God. As they represented the intelligence of the community, it may be presumed that they carried the intelligence of Egypt with them and perhaps some of the commonalty, who were impressed by the dramatic scene! Hence Pharaoh's anger, but it is the beginning of his decline!

"Be sure I will cut off
Your hands and your feet
On opposite sides, and I
Will crucify you all"

50. They said: "No matter!
For us, we shall but
Return to our Lord!

قَالُوا لَا ضَرَّ لَنَا إِلَىٰ رَبِّنَا مُنْقَلِبُونَ ﴿٥٠﴾

51. "Only, our desire is
That our Lord will
Forgive us our faults,
Since we are
The first to believe."³¹⁶⁶

إِنَّا نَطْمَعُ أَنْ يَغْفِرَ لَنَا رَبُّنَا خَطِيئَاتِنَا أَنْ كُنَّا
أَوَّلَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٥١﴾

SECTION 4.

52. By inspiration We told Moses:
"Travel by night with
My servants; for surely
Ye shall be pursued."³¹⁶⁷

﴿٥٢﴾ وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ مُوسَىٰ أَنْ أَسْرِ بِعِبَادِي إِلَيْنَا
مُتَّبِعُونَ ﴿٥٢﴾

53. Then Pharaoh sent heralds
To (all) the Cities,

فَأَرْسَلَ فِرْعَوْنُ فِي الْمَدَائِنِ حَاشِرِينَ ﴿٥٣﴾

54. (Saying): "These (Israelites)
Are but a small band,

إِنْ هَؤُلَاءِ إِلَّا شِرْذِمَةٌ قَلِيلُونَ ﴿٥٤﴾

55. "And they have
Surely enraged us;*

وَلَيْسَ لَنَا لَهَا يُظْطُونَ ﴿٥٥﴾

3166. This is the core of the lesson enforced in this passage. What was the reaction of the environment to the Light or Message of Allah? (1) It transformed Moses so that he became a fearless leader, one of the foremost in faith. (2) From men like Pharaoh and his corrupt court, it called forth obstinacy, spite, and all the tricks and snares of evil, but Evil was defeated on its own ground. (3) The magicians were touched by the glorious Light of Allah, and they were ready to suffer tortures and death, their sole ambition (in their transformed state) being to be foremost in Faith!

3167. The rest of the story-of the plagues of Egypt-is passed over as not germane to the present argument. We come now to the story of Israel leaving Egypt, pursued by Pharaoh. Here again there are three contrasts: (1) the blind arrogance of the Egyptians, against the development of Allah's Plan; (2) the Faith of Moses, against the fears of his people; and (3) the final deliverance of the Israelites against the destruction of the host of brute force.

56. "And we are a multitude
Amplly fore-warned."*

57. So We expelled them³¹⁶⁸
From gardens, springs,

58. Treasures, and every kind
Of honourable position;

59. Thus it was, but
We made the Children
Of Israel inheritors³¹⁶⁹
Of such things.

60. So they pursued them³¹⁷⁰
At sunrise.

61. And when the two bodies
Saw each other, the people
Of Moses said: "We are
Sure to be overtaken."

62. (Moses) said: "By no means!
My Lord is with me!
Soon will He guide me!"³¹⁷¹

63. Then We told Moses
By inspiration: "Strike
The sea with thy rod."
So it divided, and each
Separate part became
Like the huge, firm mass
Of a mountain.

وَأَنَّا لَجَمِيعٌ حَذِرُونَ ﴿٥٦﴾

فَأَخْرَجْنَاهُمْ مِنْ جَنَّاتٍ وَعُيُونٍ ﴿٥٧﴾

وَكُنُوزٍ وَمَقَامٍ كَرِيمٍ ﴿٥٨﴾

كَذَلِكَ وَأَوْرَثْنَاهَا بَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ ﴿٥٩﴾

فَاتَّبَعُوهُمْ مُتْرِفِينَ ﴿٦٠﴾

فَلَمَّا تَرَى الْجَمْعَانِ قَالَ أَصْحَابُ مُوسَى

إِنَّا لَمَذْكُورُونَ ﴿٦١﴾

قَالَ كَلَّا إِنَّ مَعِيَ رَبِّي سَيَهْدِينِ ﴿٦٢﴾

فَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَى مُوسَى أَنْ أَضْرِبْ بِعَصَاكَ الْبَحْرَ

فَانْفَلَقَ فَكَانَ كُلُّ فِرْقٍ كَالطَّوْدِ الْعَظِيمِ ﴿٦٣﴾

3168. In deference to almost unanimous authority I have translated this passage (verses 58-60) as if it were a parenthetical statement of Allah's purpose.

3169. The Children of Israel certainly inherited the gardens, springs, treasures, and honourable positions in Palestine after many years' wanderings in the wilderness. But when they were false to Allah, they lost them again, and another people (the Muslims) inherited them when they were true in Faith. "Of such things": literally, "of them".

3170. The story is here resumed after the parenthesis of verses 58-60.

3171. *Guide me: i.e., show me some way of escape from danger.* This actually happened for Pharaoh's host was drowned. The faith of Moses stands in strong contrast to the fears of his people.

64. And We made the other
Party approach thither.³¹⁷²

65. We delivered Moses and all
Who were with him;

66. But We drowned the others.

67. Verily in this is a Sign:
But most of them
Do not believe.³¹⁷³

68. And verily thy Lord
Is He, the Exalted in Might,
Most Merciful.³¹⁷⁴

SECTION 5.

69. And rehearse to them
(Something of) Abraham's story.³¹⁷⁵

70. Behold, he said
To his father and his people:
"What worship ye?"

وَأَرْسَلْنَاهُمْ إِلَى الْآخِرِينَ ﴿٦٤﴾

وَأَنْجَيْنَا مُوسَى وَمَنْ مَعَهُ أَجْمَعِينَ ﴿٦٥﴾

ثُمَّ أَعْرَفْنَا الْآخِرِينَ ﴿٦٦﴾

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً وَمَا كَانَ أَكْثَرُهُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٦٧﴾

وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَمَوْلَى الْعَزِيزِ الرَّحِيمِ ﴿٦٨﴾

وَأَتْلُ عَلَيْهِمْ نَبَأَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ ﴿٦٩﴾

إِذْ قَالَ لِأَبِيهِ وَقَوْمِهِ مَا تَعْبُدُونَ ﴿٧٠﴾

3172. The miracle was twofold: (1) Moses with his people passed safely through the sea; and (2) Pharaoh and his great host were drowned in the sea.

3173. As it was then, so it is now. In spite of the obvious Signs of Allah, people who are blind in their obstinate resistance to Truth accomplish their own destruction, while humble, persecuted men of Faith are transformed by the Light of Allah, and obtain salvation.

3174. Nothing that the powers of evil can do, will ever defeat the merciful Purpose of Allah. Evil, in resisting good, will effect its own destruction.

3175. For the argument of this Sūra the incidents in Abraham's life are not relevant and are not mentioned. What is mentioned is: (1) the steps by which he taught about the sin of false worship, in the form of a Dialogue; (2) the aims of a righteous man not only in his individual life, but for his ancestors and posterity, in the form of a Prayer; and (3) a picture of the Future Judgment, in the form of a vision. (1) is covered by verses 70-82; (2) by 83-87; and (3) by 88-102.

71. They said: "We worship
Idols, and we remain constantly³¹⁷⁶
In attendance on them."
72. He said: "Do they listen
To you when ye call (on them),
73. Or do you good or harm?"
74. They said: "Nay, but we
Found our fathers doing
Thus (what we do)."
75. He said: "Do ye then
See whom ye have been
Worshipping,-
76. "Ye and your fathers before you?-
77. "For they are enemies to me;³¹⁷⁷
Not so the Lord and Cherisher
Of the Worlds;
78. "Who created me, and
It is He who guides me;
79. "Who gives me food and drink,
80. "And when I am ill,
It is He who cures me;
81. "Who will cause me to die,
And then to live (again);

قَالُوا نَعْبُدُ أَصْنَامًا فَنَظُنُّهَا عَافِيَيْنَ ﴿٧١﴾

قَالَ هَلْ يَسْمَعُونَكُم إِذْ تَدْعُونَ ﴿٧٢﴾

أَوْ يَنْفَعُونَكُم أَوْ يَضُرُّونَ ﴿٧٣﴾

قَالُوا بَلْ وَجَدْنَا آبَاءَنَا كَذَلِكَ يَفْعَلُونَ ﴿٧٤﴾

قَالَ أَفَرَأَيْتُمْ مَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْبُدُونَ ﴿٧٥﴾

أَنْتُمْ وَآبَاؤُكُمْ الْأَقْدَمُونَ ﴿٧٦﴾

فَأَنْتُمْ عَدُوِّي إِلَّا رَبَّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٧٧﴾

الَّذِي خَلَقَنِي فَهُوَ يَهْدِينِ ﴿٧٨﴾

وَالَّذِي هُوَ يُطْعِمُنِي وَيَسْقِينِ ﴿٧٩﴾

وَإِذَا مَرِضْتُ فَهُوَ يَشْفِينِ ﴿٨٠﴾

وَالَّذِي يُمِيتُنِي ثُمَّ يُحْيِينِ ﴿٨١﴾

3176. They want to show their true and assiduous devotion. But Abraham goes at once to the heart of the matter by asking: "To whom is your devotion paid? Is the object worthy of it?"

3177. The things that you worship are enemies to mankind: let me testify from my own personal experience: they are enemies to me: they can do me no good, but would lead me astray. Contrast with their impotence or their power of mischief the One True God Whom I worship: He created me and all the Worlds: He cherishes me and guides me; He takes care of me; and when I die, He will give me new life; He will forgive me and grant me final Salvation. Will you then come to this true worship? How can you doubt, after seeing the contrast of the one with the other? Is it not as the contrast between Light and Darkness?"

82. "And who, I hope,
Will forgive me my faults
On the Day of Judgment.
83. "O my Lord! bestow wisdom³¹⁷⁸
On me, and join me
With the righteous;
84. "Grant me honourable mention
On the tongue of truth³¹⁷⁹
Among the latest (generations);
85. "Make me one of the inheritors
Of the Garden of Bliss;
86. "Forgive my father, for that
He is among those astray;
87. "And let me not be
In disgrace on the Day
When (men) will be raised up;-
88. "The Day whereon neither³¹⁸⁰
Wealth nor sons will avail,
89. "But only he (will prosper)
That brings to Allah
A sound heart;

وَالَّذِي أطمعُ أَنْ يَغْفِرَ لِي خَطِيئَتِي يَوْمَ الدِّينِ ﴿٨٢﴾

رَبِّ هَبْ لِي حُكْمًا

وَالْحَقِّي بِالصَّبْرِ ﴿٨٣﴾

وَأَجْعَلْ لِي لِسَانَ صِدْقٍ فِي الْآخِرِينَ ﴿٨٤﴾

وَجْعَلْنِي مِنْ وَرَثَةِ جَنَّةِ النَّعِيمِ ﴿٨٥﴾

وَاغْفِرْ لِأَبِي إِنَّهُ كَانَ مِنَ الضَّالِّينَ ﴿٨٦﴾

وَلَا تُخْزِنِي يَوْمَ يُبْعَثُونَ ﴿٨٧﴾

يَوْمَ لَا يَنْفَعُ مَالٌ وَلَا بَنُونَ ﴿٨٨﴾

إِلَّا مَنْ أَتَى اللَّهَ بِقَلْبٍ سَلِيمٍ ﴿٨٩﴾

3178. Having shown clearly the distinction between the False and the True, Abraham now shows in the form of a Prayer what his inmost wishes are. (1) He wants his own soul enlightened with divine wisdom, and (2) his heart and life filled with righteousness; (3) he will not be content with working for himself or his own generation: his view extends to all future generations; (4) and of course he wishes to attain the goal of the righteous, the Garden of the Bliss of the Divine Countenance; but he is not content with this; for (5) he wants his father and relatives to share in his spiritual joy, so that he can proudly see all whom he can reach, in an honourable station (contrasted with disgrace) on the Day of Judgment.

3179. Cf. xix. 50. The whole of the passage about Abraham there may be compared with this passage.

3180. Now we have a vision of the Day of Judgment. Nothing will then avail except a pure heart; all sorts of the so-called "good deeds" of this world, without the motive of purity, will be useless. The contrast of the Garden of Bliss with the Fire of Misery will be plainly visible. Evil will be shown in its true colours,—isolated, helpless, cursing and despairing; and all chances will then have been lost.

90. "To the righteous, the Garden
Will be brought near,³¹⁸¹
91. "And to those straying in evil,
The Fire will be placed
In full view;
92. "And it shall be said
To them: 'Where are
The (gods) ye worshipped-
93. " 'Besides Allah? Can they
Help you or help themselves?' "
94. "Then they will be thrown
Headlong into the (Fire),-
They and those straying³¹⁸²
In evil,
95. "And the whole hosts
Of Iblīs together.
96. "They will say there
In their mutual bickerings:
97. " 'By Allah, we were truly
In an error manifest,³¹⁸³
98. " 'When we held you as equals
With the Lord of the Worlds;

وَأُزْلِفَتِ الْجَنَّةُ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿٩٠﴾

وَبُرِزَتِ الْجَحِيمُ لِلْغَاوِينَ ﴿٩١﴾

وَقِيلَ لَهُمْ إِنَّمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْبُدُونَ ﴿٩٢﴾

مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ هَلْ يَنْصُرُونَكُمْ أَوْ يَنْصُرُونَ ﴿٩٣﴾

فَكُبِّكُوا فِيهَا هُمْ وَالْغَاوُونَ ﴿٩٤﴾

وَجُنُودُ إِبْلِيسَ أَجْمَعُونَ ﴿٩٥﴾

قَالُوا وَهُمْ فِيهَا يَخْتَصِمُونَ ﴿٩٦﴾

تَاللَّهِ إِن كُنَّا لَفِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ ﴿٩٧﴾

إِذْ سَوَّيْنَاكُمْ لِرَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٩٨﴾

3181. The Good will only see good (the Garden of Bliss), and the Evil will only see evil (the Fire of Hell). The type of this contrast is shown to us in the world of our spiritual sense even in this life.

3182. The false gods, being devils or personified false fancies, will be all involved in the punishment of Hell, together with their worshippers, and the ultimate sources of evil, the hosts of Iblīs or Satan.

3183. *Error-manifest*: 'our error is now plainly manifest, but it should have been manifest to us before it was too late, because the Signs of Allah were always around us'. This will be said by the ungodly, whose eyes will then be fully opened.

99. " 'And our seducers were
Only those who were
Steeped in guilt.³¹⁸⁴

وَمَا أَضَلَّنَا إِلَّا الْمُجْرِمُونَ ﴿٩٩﴾

100. " 'Now, then, we have none
To intercede (for us),

فَمَا لَنَا مِنْ شَافِعِينَ ﴿١٠٠﴾

101. " 'Nor a single intimate friend

وَلَا صَدِيقٍ حَمِيمٍ ﴿١٠١﴾

102. " 'Now if we only had
A chance of return,
We shall truly be
Of those who believe!' "³¹⁸⁵

فَلَوْ أَنَّ لَنَا كَرَّةٌ فَنَتُخَرِّقُ فِيهَا أَلْسِنًا كَمَا كُنَّا كَاذِبِينَ ﴿١٠٢﴾

103. Verily in this is a Sign
But most of them
Do not believe.

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً وَمَا كَانَ أَكْثَرُهُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٠٣﴾

104. And verily thy Lord
Is He, the Exalted in Might,
Most Merciful.

وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿١٠٤﴾

SECTION 6.

105. The people of Noah rejected
The messengers.

كَذَّبَتْ قَوْمُ نُوحٍ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿١٠٥﴾

106. Behold, their brother Noah³¹⁸⁶
Said to them: "Will ye not
Fear (Allah)?"

إِذْ قَالَ لَهُمْ أَخُوهُمْ نُوحٌ أَلَا تَتَّقُونَ ﴿١٠٦﴾

3184. They now see that the people who seduced them were themselves evil and subject to the penalties of evil, and their seductions were frauds. They feel that they ought to have seen it before. For who would deliberately follow the paths of those condemned to misery and punishment? How simple they were not to see the true character of their seducers, though they had been warned again and again against them! It was their own folly that made them accept such obviously false guidance!

3185. This apparent longing for a chance of return is dishonest. If they were sent back, they would certainly return to their evil ways: vi. 27-28. Besides, they have had numerous chances already in this life, and they have used them for mischief or evil.

3186. Noah's generation had lost all faith and abandoned themselves to evil. They had rejected the Message of messengers previously sent to the world. Noah was sent to them as one of themselves ("their brother"). His life was open before them: he had proved himself pure in heart and conduct (like the holy Prophet of Islam long after him), and worthy of every trust. Would they fear Allah and follow his advice? They could see that he had no ends of his own to serve. Would they not listen to him?

107. "I am to you a trustworthy
messenger"³¹⁸⁷

إِنِّي لَكُمْ رَسُولٌ أَمِينٌ ﴿١٠٧﴾

108. "So fear Allah, and obey me.

فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا أَمْرًا

109. "No reward do I ask
Of you for it: my reward
Is only from the Lord
Of the Worlds:

وَمَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ إِنْ أَجْرِيَ إِلَّا عَلَى رَبِّ
الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٠٩﴾

110. "So fear Allah, and obey me."³¹⁸⁸

فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا أَمْرًا

111. They said: "Shall we
Believe in thee when it is
The meanest that follow thee?"³¹⁸⁹

﴿١١١﴾ قَالُوا أَنْزِلْ لَنَا آيَةً وَأَتَّبِعْكَ الْآزِدُونَ

112. He said: "And what
Do I know as to
What they do?

﴿١١٢﴾ قَالَ وَمَا عَلِمِي بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

113. "Their account is only
With my Lord, if ye
Could (but) understand.

﴿١١٣﴾ إِنْ حِسَابُهُمْ إِلَّا عَلَى رَبِّي لَوْ تَشْعُرُونَ

114. "I am not one to drive away
Those who believe."³¹⁹⁰

﴿١١٤﴾ وَمَا أَنَا بِطَارِدِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

3187. *Amīn*=one to whom a trust has been given, with several shades of meaning implied: e.g., (1) worthy of trust, (2) bound to deliver his trust, as a prophet is bound to deliver his Message, (3) bound to act entirely as directed by the trust, as a prophet is bound to give only the Message of Allah, and not add anything of his own, and (4) not seeking any interest of his own.

3188. Note how the repetition rounds off the argument. See n. 3186 above.

3189. The leaders of the people are speaking, as the Quraish leaders spoke in the time of the holy Prophet. "We know that thou hast been trustworthy in thy life. But look at the 'tag rag and bob tail' that follow thee! Dost thou expect us to be like them or to be classed with them?" His answer was: "I know nothing against them; if they have done any wrong, or are only hypocrites, they are answerable to Allah; how can I drive them away from me, seeing that I am expressly sent to admonish all people?"

3190. Cf. xi. 29. All people who have faith have the right to come and listen to Allah's Word and receive Allah's Mercy, whether they are publicans and sinners, "Harijans" and low-caste men, men of "superior" or "inferior" races. The Prophet of Allah welcomes them all, as His Message has to shine before the whole world.

115. "I am sent only
As a plain warner".
116. They said: "If thou
Desist not, O Noah!
Thou shalt be stoned (to death).³¹⁹¹
117. He said: "O my Lord!
Truly my people have
Rejected me.
118. "Judge thou, then, between me
And them openly, and deliver
Me and those of the Believers
Who are with me."
119. So We delivered him
And those with him.
In the Ark filled
(With all creatures).³¹⁹²
120. Thereafter We drowned those
Who remained behind.
121. Verily in this is a Sign:
But most of them
Do not believe.³¹⁹³
122. And verily thy Lord
Is He, the Exalted in Might,
Most Merciful.

إِن أَنَا إِلَّا نَذِيرٌ مُّبِينٌ ﴿١١٥﴾
قَالُوا لَئِنْ لَمْ تَنْتَهِ يَنُوحُ لَتَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْمَرْجُومِينَ ﴿١١٦﴾

قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّي قَوْمِي كَذَّبُونِ ﴿١١٧﴾

فَأَفْضَحَ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَهُمْ فَتَحَاوَجَجْنِي
وَمَنْ مَعِيَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١١٨﴾

فَأَنجَيْنَاهُ وَمَنْ مَعَهُ فِي الْفُلِّ الْمَشْحُونِ ﴿١١٩﴾

ثُمَّ أَغْرَقْنَا بَعْدُ الْبَاقِينَ ﴿١٢٠﴾

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً وَمَا كَانَ أَكْثَرُهُمْ مُّؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٢١﴾

وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿١٢٢﴾

3191. Two other cases occur to me where prophets of Allah were threatened with death by stoning: one was Abraham (xix. 46), and the other was Shu'aib (xi. 91). In neither case did the threats deter them from carrying out their mission. On the contrary the threats recoiled on those who threatened. So also did it happen in the case of Noah and the holy Prophet.

3192. The story of Noah's Flood is told in xi. 36-48. Here the point emphasised is Noah's patience and constancy against threats, and the triumph and preservation of Allah's Truth even though the world was ranged against it.

3193. This and the following verse run like a refrain throughout this Sūra, and give the key-note to the subject-matter: how the Message of Allah is preached, how it is rejected in all ages, and how it triumphs at last, through the Mercy of Allah. See xxvi. 8-9, 68-69, 103-104, here (121-122), 139-140, 158-159, 174-175, and 190-191.

SECTION 7.

123. The 'Ād (people) rejected³¹⁹⁴
The messengers.

كَذَّبَ عَادُ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿١٢٣﴾

124. Behold, their brother Hūd
Said to them: "Will ye not
Fear (Allah)?

إِذْ قَالَ لَهُمْ أَخُوهُمْ هُودٌ أَلَا تَتَّقُونَ ﴿١٢٤﴾

125. "I am to you a messenger
Worthy of all trust:"³¹⁹⁵

إِنِّي لَكُمْ رَسُولٌ أَمِينٌ ﴿١٢٥﴾

126. "So fear Allah and obey me.

فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا ﴿١٢٦﴾

127. "No reward do I ask
Of you for it: my reward
Is only from the Lord
Of the Worlds."

وَمَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ إِنْ أَجْرِيَ إِلَّا عَلَى رَبِّ
الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٢٧﴾

128. "Do ye build a landmark
On every high place
To amuse yourselves?"³¹⁹⁶

أَتَبْنُونَ بِكُلِّ رِيعٍ آيَةً تَعْبَثُونَ ﴿١٢٨﴾

129. "And do ye get for yourselves
Fine buildings in the hope
Of living therein (for ever)?

وَتَتَّخِذُونَ مَصَانِعَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَخْلُدُونَ ﴿١٢٩﴾

130. "And when ye strike
You strike
Like tyrants."³¹⁹⁷

وَإِذَا بَطِشْتُمْ بَطِشْتُمْ جَبَّارِينَ ﴿١٣٠﴾

3194. See n. 1040 to vii. 65 for the 'Ād people and their location. Here the emphasis is on the fact that they were materialists believing in brute force, and felt secure in their fortresses and resources, but were found quite helpless when Allah's Message came and they rejected it.

3195. See n. 3187 to xxvi. 107 above.

3196. Any merely material civilisation prides itself on show and parade. Its votaries scatter monuments for all sorts of things in conspicuous places—monuments which commemorate deeds and events which are forgotten in a few generations! Cf. Shelley's poem on Ozymandias: "I am Ozymandias, King of Kings! Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair!....Boundless and bare the lonely and level sands stretch far away!"

3197. "Without any responsibility or consideration for those who come within your power?"

131. "Now fear Allah, and obey me."³¹⁹⁸

132. "Yea, fear Him Who
Has bestowed on you
Freely all that ye know."³¹⁹⁹

133. "Freely has He bestowed
On you cattle and sons,-

134. "And Gardens and Springs.

135. "Truly I fear for you
The Chastisement of a Great
Day."³²⁰⁰

136. They said: "It is the same
To us whether thou
Admonish us or be not
Among (our) admonishers!"³²⁰¹

137. "This is no other than
A customary device
Of the ancients,"³²⁰²

138. "And we are not the ones
To receive Pains and
Chastisement!"

فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا
وَاتَّقُوا الَّذِي أَمَدَّكُمْ بِمَا تَعْلَمُونَ

أَمَدَّكُمْ بِأَنْعَامٍ وَبَنِينَ

وَجَنَّاتٍ وَعُيُونٍ

إِنِّي أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ

قَالُوا سَوَاءٌ عَلَيْنَا أَوَعَضْتَ أَمْ لَمْ تَكُنْ
مِنَ الْوَاعِظِينَ

إِنْ هَذَا إِلَّا خُلُقُ الْأَوَّلِينَ

وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمُعَذِّبِينَ

3198. See n. 3188 above.

3199. The gifts are described generally, immaterial and material. "All that ye know" includes not only material things, but knowledge and the faculties by which knowledge may be used for human well-being, all that makes life beautiful and refined. "Cattle" means wealth generally, and "sons" means population and man-power. "Gardens and Springs" are things that contribute to the delight and pleasure of man.

3200. "But you have misused all those gifts, and you will suffer the inevitable penalties for your misuse and or your ingratitude."

3201. "We are not going to attend to you whether you preach to us or not." The construction of the second clause, "or be not among our admonishers" is a rapier cut at Hüd, as if they had said: "Oh yes! we have heard plenty of admonishers like you!" See the next verse.

3202. They said, as many of our modern enemies of religion say, "you are only reviving an ancient superstition, a dope of the crowd; there is no such thing as a Hereafter, or the sort of punishments you denounce!"

139. So they rejected him,
And We destroyed them.
Verily in this is a Sign:
But most of them
Do not believe.

فَكَذَّبُوهُ فَأَهْلَكْنَاهُمْ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً وَمَا كَانَ
أَكْثَرُهُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٣٩﴾

140. And verily thy Lord
Is He, the Exalted in Might,
Most Merciful.

وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿١٤٠﴾

SECTION 8.

141. The Thamūd (people) rejected³²⁰³
The messengers.

كَذَّبَتْ ثَمُودُ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿١٤١﴾

142. Behold, their brother Sālih
Said to them: "Will you not
Fear (Allah)?"

إِذْ قَالَ لَهُمْ أَخُوهُمْ صَالِحٌ أَلَا تَتَّقُونَ ﴿١٤٢﴾

143. "I am to you a messenger
Worthy of all trust.

إِنِّي لَكُمْ رَسُولٌ أَمِينٌ ﴿١٤٣﴾

144. "So fear Allah, and obey me.

فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا عَمَلَكُمْ ﴿١٤٤﴾

145. "No reward do I ask
Of you for it: my reward
Is only from the Lord
Of the Worlds.

وَمَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ إِنْ أَجْرِيَ
إِلَّا عَلَى رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٤٥﴾

146. "Will ye be left secure,
In (the enjoyment of) all
That ye have here?—

أَتَذَرُونَ فِي مَا هَاهُنَا آمِنِينَ ﴿١٤٦﴾

147. "Gardens and Springs,

فِي جَنَّاتٍ وَعُيُونٍ ﴿١٤٧﴾

3203. For the Thamūd people see n. 1043 to vii. 73. They were great builders in stone and a people with agricultural wealth, but they were an exclusive people and oppressed the poor. The point emphasised here is: "How long will your wealth last, especially if you depress your own people and dishonour Allah's Signs by sacrilege?" The inscriptions on the Thamūd remains of rock-cut buildings in Al-Hijr are described in the Appendix at the end of this Sūra.

148. "And corn-fields and date palms
With spathes near breaking"³²⁰⁴
(With the weight of fruit)?

وَزُرُوعٍ وَتَحْلٍ طَلْعُهَا هَضِيمٌ ﴿١٤٨﴾

149. "And ye carve houses
Out of (rocky) mountains
With great skill.

وَتَنْحِتُونَ مِنَ الْجِبَالِ بُيُوتًا فَرِهِينَ ﴿١٤٩﴾

150. "But fear Allah and obey me;

فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا ﴿١٥٠﴾

151. "And follow not the bidding
Of those who are extravagant,"³²⁰⁵

وَلَا تَطِيعُوا أَمْرَ الْمُسْرِفِينَ ﴿١٥١﴾

152. "Who make mischief in the land,
And mend not (their ways)."

الَّذِينَ يُفْسِدُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا يُصْلِحُونَ ﴿١٥٢﴾

153. They said: "Thou art only
One of those bewitched!"³²⁰⁶

قَالُوا إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ مِنَ الْمُسَحَّرِينَ ﴿١٥٣﴾

154. "Thou art no more than
A mortal like us:
Then bring us a Sign,
If thou tellest the truth!"

مَا أَنْتَ إِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِثْلُنَا فَأْتِ بَآيَةً إِنْ كُنْتَ
مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ ﴿١٥٤﴾

155. He said: "Here is
A she-camel: she has"³²⁰⁷
A right of watering,
And ye have a right
Of watering, (severally)
On a day appointed.

قَالَ هَذِهِ نَاقَةٌ لَهَا شِرْبٌ وَلَكُمْ شِرْبٌ
يَوْمَ مَعْلُومٍ ﴿١٥٥﴾

3204. The date palm flowers on a long spathe: when the flowers develop into fruit, the heavy ones hang with the load of fruit. The Thamūd evidently were proud of their skill in producing corn and fruit and in hewing fine dwellings out of rocks, like the later dwellings of Roman times in the town of Petra.

3205. They are told: "All your skill is very well; but cultivate virtue and do not follow the ways of those who put forward extravagant claims for men's powers and material resources, or who lead lives of extravagance in luxury and self-indulgence; that makes mischief: but the door of repentance is open: will you repent?"

3206. They think he is talking like a madman, and they say so.

3207. For this she-camel, see n. 1044 to vii. 73. The she-camel was to be a Sign and a test-case. Would they respect her rights of watering (and pasturage)?

156. "Touch her not with harm,
Lest the Chastisement
Of a Great Day
Seize you."

وَلَا تَمْسُوهَا بِسُوءٍ فَيَأْخُذَكُمْ عَذَابُ يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ ﴿١٥٦﴾

157. But they ham-strung her:
Then did they become
Full of regrets.³²⁰⁸

فَعَقَرُوهَا فَاصْبَحُوا نَدِيمِينَ ﴿١٥٧﴾

158. But the Chastisement seized them.
Verily in this is a Sign:
But most of them
Do not believe.

فَأَخَذَهُمُ الْعَذَابُ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً وَمَا كَانَ

أَكْثَرُهُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٥٨﴾

159. And verily thy Lord
Is He, the Exalted in Might,
Most Merciful.

وَلَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿١٥٩﴾

SECTION 9.

160. The people of Lūt rejected³²⁰⁹
The messengers.

كَذَّبَتْ قَوْمُ لُوطٍ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿١٦٠﴾

161. Behold, their brother Lūt
Said to them: "Will ye not
Fear (Allah)?"

إِذْ قَالَ لَهُمْ أَخُوهُمْ لُوطُ أَلَا تَتَّقُونَ ﴿١٦١﴾

162. "I am to you a messenger
Worthy of all trust.

إِنِّي لَكُمْ رَسُولٌ أَمِينٌ ﴿١٦٢﴾

163. "So fear Allah and obey me.

فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا ﴿١٦٣﴾

3208. Their regrets were too late. They had themselves asked for a Sign. The Sign had been given to them in the she-camel, which their prophet Ṣāliḥ had put forward as a test-case. Would they, through that symbol, respect the law of equity by which all people had rights in water and in the gifts of nature? They refused to respect that law, and committed sacrilege by deliberately killing the she-camel. They themselves came to an evil end.

3209. The story of Lūt (Lot) will be found in vii. 80-84: see n. 1049. Here the point is that the people of the Cities of the Plain were shamelessly addicted to vice against nature, and Lūt's warning only exasperated them, until they were destroyed by a shower of brimstone.

164. "No reward do I ask
Of you for it: my reward
Is only from the Lord
Of the Worlds.

وَمَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ إِنْ أَجْرِيَ إِلَّا عَلَى رَبِّ
الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٦٤﴾

165. "Of all the creatures
In the world, will ye
Approach males,

أَتَأْتُونَ الذَّكَرَانَ مِنَ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٦٥﴾

166. "And leave those whom Allah
Has created for you
To be your mates?
Nay, ye are a people
Transgressing (all limits)!"

وَتَذَرُونَ مَا خَلَقَ لَكُمْ رَبُّكُمْ مِنْ أَزْوَاجِكُمْ بَلْ أَنْتُمْ
قَوْمٌ عَادُونَ ﴿١٦٦﴾

167. They said: "If thou desist not,
O Lūt! thou wilt assuredly
Be cast out!"³²¹⁰

قَالُوا لَئِنْ لَمْ تَنْتَهِ يَلُوطُ لَتَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُخْرَجِينَ ﴿١٦٧﴾

168. He said: "I do detest³²¹¹
Your doings."

قَالَ إِنِّي لِعَمَلِكُمْ مِنَ الْقَالِينَ ﴿١٦٨﴾

169. "O my Lord! deliver me
And my family from
Such things as they do!"

رَبِّ بَنِي وَاهِلِي مِمَّا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٦٩﴾

170. So We delivered him
And his family,—all

فَنَجَّيْنَاهُ وَأَهْلَهُ أَجْمَعِينَ ﴿١٧٠﴾

171. Except an old woman³²¹²
Who lingered behind.

إِلَّا عَجُوزًا فِي الْغَابِرِينَ ﴿١٧١﴾

172. Then the rest We destroyed
Utterly.

ثُمَّ دَمَرْنَا الْأَخْرِينَ ﴿١٧٢﴾

3210. Their threat to cast him out has a grim significance in what actually happened. They were destroyed where they were, and he was glad to escape the dreadful Punishment according to the warning he had received.

3211. He was only among them from a stern sense of duty. The whole atmosphere there was detestable to him, and he was glad to escape when duty no longer demanded his presence there. He prayed for deliverance from such surroundings.

3212. This was Lūt's wife, who lingered behind and was among those who perished. See n. 1051 to vii. 83.

173. We rained down on them
A shower (of brimstone):³²¹³
And evil was the shower
On those who were admonished
(But heeded not)!

وَأَمْطَرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ مَطَرًا فَسَاءَ مَطَرُ الْمُنْذَرِينَ ﴿١٧٣﴾

174. Verily in this is a Sign:
But most of them
Do not believe.

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً وَمَا كَانَ أَكْثَرُهُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٧٤﴾

175. And verily thy Lord
Is He, the Exalted in Might
Most Merciful.

وَلِئِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿١٧٥﴾

SECTION 10.

176. The Companions of the Wood³²¹⁴
Rejected the messengers.

كَذَّبَ أَصْحَابُ الْغَيْكَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿١٧٦﴾

177. Behold, Shu'aib³²¹⁵ said to them:
"Will ye not fear (Allah)?"

إِذْ قَالَ لَهُمْ شُعَيْبٌ أَلَا تَتَّقُونَ ﴿١٧٧﴾

178. "I am to you a messenger
Worthy of all trust.

إِنِّي لَكُمْ رَسُولٌ أَمِينٌ ﴿١٧٨﴾

179. "So fear Allah and obey me.

فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا ﴿١٧٩﴾

180. "No reward do I ask
Of you for it: my reward
Is only from the Lord
Of the Worlds.

وَمَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ إِنْ أَجْرِيَ إِلَّا عَلَى رَبِّ
الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٨٠﴾

181. "Give just measure,³²¹⁶
And cause no loss
(To others by fraud).

أَوْفُوا الْكَيْلَ وَلَا تَكُونُوا مِنَ الْمُخْسِرِينَ ﴿١٨١﴾

3213. See n. 1052 to vii. 84.

3214. See n. 2000 to xv. 78.

3215. For Shu'aib see n. 1054 to vii. 85.

3216. They were a commercial people, but they were given to fraud, injustice, and wrongful mischief (by intermeddling with others). They are asked to fear Allah and follow His ways: it is He Who also created their predecessors among mankind, who never prospered by fraud and violent wrong-doing, but only justice and fair dealing.

182. "And weigh with scales
True and upright.
183. "And withhold not things
Justly due to men,
Nor do evil in the land,
Working mischief.
184. "And fear Him Who created
You and (Who created)
The generations before (you)."
185. They said: "Thou art only
One of those bewitched!
186. "Thou art no more than
A mortal like us,
And indeed we think
Thou art a liar!"³²¹⁷
187. "Now cause a piece
Of the sky to fall on us,
If thou art truthful!"³²¹⁸
188. He said: "My Lord
Knows best what ye do."³²¹⁹
189. But they rejected him.
Then the punishment
Of a day of overshadowing
gloom³²²⁰

وَزِنُوا بِالْقِسْطِ أَيْ الْمُسْقِيمِ ﴿١٨٢﴾
وَلَا تَبْخُسُوا النَّاسَ أَمْشِيَاءَ هُمْ وَلَا تَعْتَوْا فِي الْأَرْضِ
مُفْسِدِينَ ﴿١٨٣﴾
وَاتَّقُوا الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ وَالْجِيلَ الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿١٨٤﴾
قَالُوا إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ مِنَ الْمُسَحَّرِينَ ﴿١٨٥﴾
وَمَا أَنْتَ إِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِثْلُنَا وَإِنْ نَظُنُّكَ
لَمِنَ الْكَذِبِينَ ﴿١٨٦﴾
فَأَسْقِطْ عَلَيْنَا كِسَفًا مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ إِنْ كُنْتَ
مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ ﴿١٨٧﴾
قَالَ رَبِّي أَعْلَمُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٨٨﴾
فَكَذَّبُوهُ فَأَخَذَهُمْ عَذَابٌ يَوْمَ الظَّلَمَةِ إِنَّهُ كَانَ
عَذَابٌ يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ ﴿١٨٩﴾

3217. They deny that he is a prophet or that they are doing wrong, or that any former generations behaved differently. They think they are the true exponents of human nature, and that such as he-idealists—are mere madmen.

3218. 'If you really claim any real contact with Allah, let us see if you can bring down a piece of the sky to fall on us!'

3219. The challenge to bring down a piece of the sky was merely empty bravado, on the part of those who had called him a liar. But Shu'aib does not insult them. He merely says: "Allah is the best judge of your conduct: what more can I say?" And Allah did punish them.

3220. Perhaps a shower of ashes and cinders accompanying a volcanic eruption. If these people were the same as the Midianites, there was also an earthquake. See vii. 91 and n. 1063.

Seized them, and that was
The Chastisement of a Great
Day.³²²¹

190. Verily in that is a Sign:
But most of them
Do not believe.

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً وَمَا كَانَ أَكْثَرُهُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٩٠﴾

191. And verily thy Lord
Is He, the Exalted in Might
Most Merciful.³²²²

وَلَئِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿١٩١﴾

SECTION 11.

192. Verily this is a Revelation³²²³
From the Lord of the Worlds:

وَلَقَدْ نَزَّلْنَاهُ بِرَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٩٢﴾

193. With it came down
The Truthful spirit³²²⁴

نَزَّلَ بِهِ الرُّوحُ الْأَمِينُ ﴿١٩٣﴾

194. To thy heart³²²⁵
That thou mayest admonish

عَلَى قَلْبِكَ لِتَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُنذِرِينَ ﴿١٩٤﴾

3221. It must have been a terrible day of wholesale destruction—earthquake, volcanic eruption, lava, cinders and ashes and rumbling noises to frighten those whose death was not instantaneous.

3222. See above, n. 3193 to xxvi. 121.

3223. The hostile reception of some of the previous Messengers having been mentioned, the special characteristics of the Qur-ān are now referred to, to show (1) that it is true, and (2) that its rejection by the Makkan Pagans was of a piece with previous experience in the history of man: vested interests resist Truth, but it conquers.

3224. *Rūh-ul-amīn*, the epithet of Gabriel, who came with the inspired Messages to the holy Prophet, is difficult to render in a single epithet in translation. In n. 3187 to xxvi. 107 I have described some of the various shades of meaning attached to the adjective *Amīn* as applied to a Prophet. A further signification as attached to the Spirit of Inspiration is that it is the very quintessence of Faith and Truth, unlike the lying spirits which delude men with falsehood. On the whole, I think "the Spirit of Faith and Truth" will represent the original best here.

3225. *Qalb* (Heart) signifies not only the seat of the affections, but also the seat of the memory and understanding. The process of inspiration is indicated by the impression of the divine Message on the inspired one's heart, memory, and understanding, from which it was promulgated in human speech to the world. In this case the human speech was the perspicuous Arabic tongue, which would be plainly intelligible to the audience who would immediately hear it and be through them transmitted to all the world.

195. In the perspicuous
Arabic tongue.
196. Without doubt it is (announced)
In the revealed Books³²²⁶
Of former peoples.*
197. Is it not a Sign
To them that the Learned
Of the Children of Israel
Knew it (as true)?³²²⁷
198. Had We revealed it
To any of the non-Arabs,
199. And had he recited it
To them, they would not
Have believed in it.³²²⁸
200. Thus have We caused it
To enter the hearts
Of the Sinners.³²²⁹
201. They will not believe
In it until they see
The grievous Chastisement

بِلِسَانٍ عَرَبِيٍّ مُبِينٍ ﴿١٩٥﴾

وَإِنَّهُ لَفِي زُبُرِ الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿١٩٦﴾

أَوَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُمْ آيَةٌ أَنْ يَعْلَمَهُ عُلَمَاءُ بَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ ﴿١٩٧﴾

وَلَوْ نَزَّلْنَاهُ عَلَىٰ بَعْضِ الْأَعْجَمِينَ ﴿١٩٨﴾

فَفَرَّاهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مَا كَانُوا بِهِ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٩٩﴾

كَذَٰلِكَ سَلَكْنَاهُ فِي قُلُوبِ الْمُجْرِمِينَ ﴿٢٠٠﴾

لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ حَتَّىٰ يَرَوُا الْعَذَابَ الْأَلِيمَ ﴿٢٠١﴾

3226. The word *Zubur*, used here, is plural of *Zabūr*, which is mentioned in the Qur-ān as the Book revealed to the prophet Dā'ūd. It has also been used in the Qur-ān in generic sense of "Book" (LIV: 52). Here the word refers to the earlier Revelations.

3227. Many of the Jewish Doctors recognised the holy Prophet's Message as a Message from Allah, e.g., 'Abdullāh ibn Salām and Mukhairiq. The latter was a man of property, which he left for Islam. (There were also Christian monks and learned men who recognised the Prophet's mission.)

3228. The turn of Arabia having come for receiving Allah's Revelation, as was foretold in previous Revelations, it was inevitable that it should be in the Arab tongue through the mouth of an Arab. Otherwise it would have been unintelligible, and the Arabs could not have received the Faith and become the vehicles for its promulgation as actually happened in history.

3229. "Thus" I think means through the medium of the Arabic language and the Arab people. The Qur-ān penetrated through their language and their hearts. If the hard-hearted among them did not believe, they will see when the Penalty comes, how grievous a mistake they made. For the Penalty must come; even when they least expected it. They will be caught saying or thinking, "There is plenty of time; we can get another respite," when already it will have become too late for them to turn over a new leaf.

202. But it will come
To them of a sudden,
While they perceive it not;

فَيَأْتِيهِمْ بَغْتَةً وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿٢٠٢﴾

203. Then they will say:
"Shall we be respited?"

فَيَقُولُوا هَلْ نَحْنُ مُنْظَرُونَ ﴿٢٠٣﴾

204. Do they then ask
For Our Chastisement to be
Hastened on?³²³⁰

أَفِعْدَابًا يَسْتَعْجِلُونَ ﴿٢٠٤﴾

205. Seest thou? If We do
Let them enjoy (this life)
For a few years,

أَفَرَأَيْتَ إِن مَتَّعْنَاهُمْ سِنِينَ ﴿٢٠٥﴾

206. Yet there comes to them
At length the (Punishment)
Which they were promised!

ثُمَّ جَاءَهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يُوعَدُونَ ﴿٢٠٦﴾

207. It will profit them not
The enjoyment they were given.

مَا أَغْنَى عَنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يَمْتَعُونَ ﴿٢٠٧﴾

208. Never did We destroy
A town but had
Its warners—

وَمَا أَهْلَكْنَا مِنْ قَرْيَةٍ إِلَّا لَهَا مُنْذِرُونَ ﴿٢٠٨﴾

209. By way of reminder;
And We never are unjust.³²³¹

ذِكْرًا وَمَا كُنَّا ظَالِمِينَ ﴿٢٠٩﴾

210. The Satans did not bring
It down:³²³²

وَمَا نَزَّلَتْ بِهِ الشَّيَاطِينُ ﴿٢١٠﴾

3230. While some sinners out of negligence postpone the day of repentance till it is too late, others more bold actually ask out of bravado that Allah's Punishment should be brought down on them at once, as they do not believe in Allah or His Punishment! The answer to them is: It will come soon enough—too soon, they will think, when it comes! Cf. xxii. 47 and notes.

3231. Allah will grant much respite to sinners, for He is Most Gracious and Merciful. But all this respite will profit them nothing if they are merely immersed in the vanities of this world. Again and again, in spite of their rebellion and their rejection, does Allah send warnings and warners before the final Punishment of Justice. For Allah knows human weakness, and He will never be unjust in the least.

3232. When anything extraordinary happens, there are always people desirous of putting the worst construction on it, and saying that it is the work of Satans. So when the Qur-ān came with its Message in wondrous Arabic, its enemies could only account for its power by attributing it to evil spirits! Such a beneficent message can never suit =

211. It is not meet for them,
Nor is it in their power
212. Indeed they are banished from
Hearing it.
213. So call not on any
Other god with Allah,
Or thou wilt be among
Those who will be punished.
214. And admonish thy nearest
Kinsmen,
215. And lower thy wing³²³³
To the Believers who
Follow thee.
216. Then if they disobey thee,
Say: "I am free (of responsibility)
From what ye do!"³²³⁴
217. And put thy trust
On the Exalted in Might,
The Merciful,-
218. Who seeth thee standing
Forth (in prayer),

وَمَا يُلْبِغِي لَهُمْ وَمَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ ﴿٢١١﴾

إِنَّهُمْ عَنِ السَّمْعِ لَمَعَزُونَ ﴿٢١٢﴾

فَلَا تَدْعُ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهًا آخَرَ فَتَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُعَذَّبِينَ ﴿٢١٣﴾

وَأَنْذِرْ عَشِيرَتَكَ الْأَقْرَبِينَ ﴿٢١٤﴾

وَأَخْفِضْ جَنَاحَكَ لِمَنِ اتَّبَعَكَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٢١٥﴾

فَإِنْ عَصَوْكَ فَقُلْ إِنِّي بَرِيءٌ مِمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٢١٦﴾

وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى الْعَزِيزِ الرَّحِيمِ ﴿٢١٧﴾

الَّذِي يَرْنَاكَ حِينَ تَقُومُ ﴿٢١٨﴾

= the purposes of Satans, nor would it be in their power to produce it. In fact Good and Evil are poles asunder, and Evil cannot even hear words of Good, of tender Pity for sinners and Forgiveness for the penitent!

3233. That is, be kind, gentle, and considerate with them, as a high flying bird is when she lowers her wing to her offspring. C.f. xvii. 24 and n. 2205, and xv. 88 and n. 2011.

3234. "Disobey thee" implied that they did something wrong, for the holy Prophet commanded what was right and forbade what was wrong. If, then, any of his flock did wrong the responsibility was not his, for he, like a good shepherd, tried to keep them right. What was he then to do? He would continue his teaching. But if any of them went so far wrong as to try to injure their own Teacher, Leader, and Guide, there was nothing for him to fear. His trust was only in Allah, and Allah sees and appraises all men's actions at their true worth.

219. And thy movements among
Those who prostrate themselves.³²³⁵

وَقَلِّبُكَ فِي السَّاجِدِينَ ﴿٣١٩﴾

220. For it is He
Who heareth and knoweth
All things.

إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ ﴿٣٢٠﴾

221. Shall I inform you,
(O people), on whom it is
That the Satans descend?³²³⁶

هَلْ أَتَيْتُكُمْ عَلَىٰ مَنْ تَنَزَّلُ الشَّيَاطِينُ ﴿٣٢١﴾

222. They descend on every
Lying, wicked person,

تَنَزَّلُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ أَفَّاكٍ أَثِيمٍ ﴿٣٢٢﴾

223. They listen eagerly
And most
Of them are liars.

يُلْقُونَ السَّمْعَ وَأَكْثُهُمْ كَذِبُونَ ﴿٣٢٣﴾

224. And the Poets,³²³⁷
It is those straying in Evil,
Who follow them:

وَالشُّعْرَاءُ يَتَّبِعُهُمُ الْغَاوُونَ ﴿٣٢٤﴾

225. Seest thou not that they
Wander distracted in every
Valley?—

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّهُمْ فِي كُلِّ وَادٍ يَهِيمُونَ ﴿٣٢٥﴾

226. And that they say
What they practise not?—

وَأَنَّهُمْ يَقُولُونَ مَا لَا يَفْعَلُونَ ﴿٣٢٦﴾

3235. Literally, the standing and prostration are postures in Muslim prayer: the holy Prophet was equally earnest, sincere, and zealous in prayer for himself and for all his people. The Prophet's behaviour was exemplary in all the turns of fortune, and however foolish men may cavil, his purity and uprightness are fully known to Allah.

3236. To people who maliciously suggested that the holy Prophet was possessed or inspired by evil spirits (xxvi. 210 above) the reply had already been made, but it is now declared that that suggestion is itself the work of Evil. Behind such suggestions are lying and wickedness, or at best some half-truths caught up in hearsay and twisted so as to show Allah in an evil light.

3237. *The Poets*: to be read along with the exceptions mentioned in verse 227 below. Poetry and other arts are not in themselves evil, but may on the contrary be used in the service of religion and righteousness. But there is a danger that they may be prostituted for base purposes. If they are insincere ("they say what they do not") or are divorced from actual life or its goodness or its serious purpose, they may become instruments of evil or futility. They then wander about without any set purpose, and seek the depths (valleys) of human folly rather than the heights of divine light.

227. Except those who believe,³²³⁸
 Work righteousness, engaged much
 In the remembrance of Allah,
 And defend themselves after
 They are unjustly attacked.
 And soon will the unjust³²³⁹
 Know what vicissitudes
 Their affairs will take!

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَذَكَرُوا اللَّهَ
 كَثِيرًا وَانْتَصَرُوا مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا ظَلَمُوا وَسَيَعْلَمُ الَّذِينَ
 ظَلَمُوا أَيَّ مُنْقَلَبٍ يَنْقَلِبُونَ



3238. Poetry and the fine arts which are to be commended are those which emanate from minds steeped in Faith, which try to carry out in life the fine sentiments they express in their artistic work, aim at the glory of Allah rather than at self-glorification or the fulsome praise of men with feet of clay, and do not (as in Jihād) attack anything except aggressive evil. In this sense a perfect artist should be a perfect man. Perfection may not be attainable in this life, but it should be the aim of every man, and especially of one who wishes to become a supreme artist, not only in technique but in spirit and essentials. Among the commendable poets contemporary with the holy Prophet may be mentioned Hassān and Labīd: the latter had the honour of being one of the seven whose poems were selected for "hanging" (the *Mu'allaqāt*) in the Days of Ignorance.

3239. These were the scurrilous rhymesters, who were doomed to come to an evil end.

APPENDIX - 4

Thamūd Inscriptions at al-Hijr. (xxvi. 141-159; xv. 80-84; and vii. 73-79.)

Mr. C.M. Doughty travelled in North-Western Arabia and Najd in the 1880's, and his book *Arabia Deserta* forms one of the most notable of Arabian Travel-books. It was first published in two volumes by the Cambridge University Press in 1888, and has recently gone through several editions. The edition I have used is the unabridged one-volume edition printed in London in 1926. The references in this Appendix should be understood to refer to that edition.

Doughty travelled on the old Pilgrim Caravan from Damascus as far as Madāin Ṣāliḥ, and then parted company with the Pilgrims and turned into Najd. Madāin Ṣāliḥ (the Cities of Ṣāliḥ), is one of the station on the Syrian Pilgrim route, about 180 miles north of Madinah Tabūk, to which the holy Prophet led an expedition in A.H. 9 (see Introduction to S. ix), is about 170 miles farther to the north-west, and Ma'an Junction about 150 miles still farther. Madāin Ṣāliḥ was also an important station on the prehistoric gold and frankincense (*bakhūr*) route between Yemen and Egypt or Syria. In sacred history it marks the ruined site of the Thamūd people to whom the prophet Ṣāliḥ was sent, whose she-camel was a Sign and is connected with Ṣāliḥ's history. See n. 3208 to xxvi. 155-157. To the west and north-west of Madāin Ṣāliḥ are three *Ḥarrats* or tracts of volcanic land covered with lava, stretching as far as Tabūk.

This is how Doughty describes his first view of Madāin Ṣāliḥ, approaching from the north-west. "At length in the dim morning twilight, as we journeyed, we were come to a sandy brow and a straight descending-place betwixt cliffs of sandstones. There was some shouting in the forward, and Aswad bid me look up, 'this was a famous place, "*Mabrak-an-Nāqa*"' (the kneeling place of the she-camel of Ṣāliḥ). "It is short, at first steep, and issues upon the plain of *Al-Hijr*, which is Madāin Ṣāliḥ; where the sun coming up showed the singular landscape of this valley-plain, encompassed with mighty sand-rock precipices (which here resemble ranges of city walls, fantastic towers, and castle buildings), and upon them lie high shouldering sand drifts. The bottom is sand, with much growth of desert bushes; and I perceived some thin sprinkled volcanic drift. Westward is seen the immense mountain blackness, terrible and lowering, of the *Ḥarrat*." (*Arabia Deserta*, p. 83, vol. I.)

Doughty took rubbings of some of the Inscriptions which were accessible to him and they were studied by the great Semitic scholar M. Ernest Renan and published by the Academie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres. Renan's Report in French is printed as an Appendix to Chapters IV, V and VI of

Arabia Deserta (pp.180-187, vol. I) and M. le Marquis de Vogüé's Note (also in French) on the Nabatæan sculptured Architecture at Madāin Ṣāliḥ at pp. 620-623, vol. I.

The general result of these studies may be summarised. The sculpture and architecture are found to be of the same kind as in the Nabatæan monuments at Petra (for which see n. 1043 to vii. 73). At Petra there are no dated Inscriptions preserved, but at Madāin Ṣāliḥ we have several. There are at Madāin Ṣāliḥ perhaps 100 sepulchral rock-hewn chambers, in some of which are found human bones and remains, showing that the Nabatæans knew the art of embalming, and used linen of the same kind as was used in ancient Egypt. The tombs are dedicated in perpetuity to named families, and the named Nabatæan kings have, each, the epithet "loving his people". There are flat side-pilasters, and the figures of four-footed beasts, eagles, and other birds are discernible. Besides the sepulchral chambers, there is a great Hall or Council Chamber (*Dīwān*), 25ft. x 27ft. x 13ft. This may have been a Temple. The gods worshipped were those whose names we know of from other Nabatæan sources,—Dusares, Martaba, Allāt, Manā, Kaīs, and Hubal. Allāt, Manāt, and Hubal are also known to us in connection with the idols of the Pagan Quraish of the Times of Ignorance. It is interesting to find the word *Mesjeda* (Arabic *Masjid*) already used here for a "place of worship". Triads of stones were worshipped as gods.

The Inscriptions have dates from 3 B.C. to 79 A.D. Within this short period of 82 years we can see something of the development of Semitic palæography. The writing becomes more and more cursive with the years. We have here a central point between Old Armenian, Square Hebrew, Palmyran, Sinaitic, Kūfī and Naskḥ.

We may treat the Nabatæans as historical, as we have established dates. The *Thamūd* were prehistoric, and occupied sites which were afterwards occupied by the Nabatæans and others. The kneeling place of Ṣāliḥ's she-camel (*Mabrak-un-Nāqa*) and the well of the she-camel (*Bīr-un-Nāqa*), and a number of local names keep alive the race-memory of an ancient Arabian people and their prophet Ṣāliḥ.