

INTRODUCTION TO SŪRAT *As-Ṣaffāt*, 37.

As explained in the Introduction to S. xxxiv, this is the fourth of a series of Sūras in which the defeat of evil is throughout connected with Revelation, and here the ranged fight is illustrated by a reference to the angels in heaven and to the earlier Prophets in our earthly history, from Noah to Jonah. In chronology this Sūra belongs to the early middle Makkan period.

Summary.—Through the heavens and the earth, there is a sorting out of the evil against the good: their final destinations contrasted (xxxvii. 1-74).

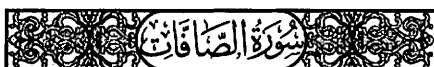
Peace and victory came to Noah, Abraham, Moses and Aaron, Ilyās and Lūt, in their conflict with Evil (xxxvii. 75-138).

So was it with Jonah when he glorified Allah. But men will ascribe to Allah what is unworthy of Him: Allah's Prophets strive for His glory, and shall be victorious (xxxvii. 139-182).

As-Şaffāt, or Those Ranged in Ranks.

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

1. By⁴⁰³⁰ those who range
Themselves in ranks,⁴⁰³¹
2. Those who so are strong
In repelling (evil),⁴⁰³²
3. Those who thus proclaim
The Message (of Allah)!
4. Verily, verily, your God
Is One!—⁴⁰³³



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

وَالصَّفَّاتِ صَفًّا ١

فَالزَّجَرَاتِ زَجْرًا ٢

فَالنَّاتِثَاتِ ذِكْرًا ٣

إِنَّ إِلَهَكُمْ لَوَاحِدٌ ٤

4030. At a later stage, we shall study the general meaning of the adjurations in the Qur-ān indicated by the particle *wa*. See app. xi. Here we may note that the last Sūra (Yā-Sīn) practically began with the adjuration "by the Qur-ān, full of wisdom", emphasising the fact that Revelation was the evidence by which we could learn the highest wisdom of the spiritual world. Here our attention is called in three verses or clauses, to three definite attitudes which illustrate the triumph of Good and the frustration of Evil. See the notes following.

4031. Two questions arise: (1) are the doers of the three things noted in verses 1-3 the same persons, whose actions or qualities are differently described, or are they three distinct sets of persons? (2) in either case, who are they? As to (1) the most authoritative view is that the three clauses describe the same set of persons in different aspects. As to (2) some take them to refer to angels, and others understand by them the good men, the men of God, who strive and range themselves in Allah's service. The words are perfectly general, and I interpret them to refer to both classes. The feminine form is grammatically used in Arabic idiom for the indefinite plural. In xxxvii. 165 below, the word *şaffūn* is used in the definite plural, and seems to be spoken by these beings, angels or men of God or both, according to how we interpret this verse.

4032. The three acts in verses 1-3 are consecutive, as shown by the particle *fa*. I understand them to mean that angels and good men (1) are ever ready to range themselves in ranks in the service of Allah and work in perfect discipline and accord at all times; (2) that they check and frustrate evil wherever they find it and they are strengthened in doing so by their discipline and their ranging themselves in ranks; and (3) that this service furthers the Kingdom of Allah and proclaims His Message and His glory to all creation.

4033. That divine Message is summed up in the gospel of Divine Unity, on which the greatest emphasis is laid: "verily, verily your God is One". It is a fact intimately connected with our own life and destiny. 'Your Lord is one Who cares for you and =

5. Lord of the heavens
And of the earth,
And all between them,
And Lord of every point
At the rising of the sun!⁴⁰³⁴

رَبُّ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا وَرَبُّ
الْمَشْرِقِ

6. We have indeed decked
The lower heaven⁴⁰³⁵ with beauty
(In) the stars,⁴⁰³⁶

إِنَّا زَيَّنَّا السَّمَاءَ الدُّنْيَا بِزِينَةِ الْكَوَاكِبِ

= cherishes you; you are dear to Him. And He is *One*: it is only He that you have to look to, the source of all goodness, love, and power. You are not the sport of many contending forces or blind chances. There is complete harmony and unity in heaven and you have to put yourselves into unison with it—by discipline in ranks, by unity of plan and purpose in repelling evil, and by concerted action in promoting the Kingdom of Allah. Here is the mystery of the manifold variety of creation pointing to the absolute Unity of the Creator.

4034. Allah is the Lord of everything that exists—‘the heavens and the earth, and all between them’. He is the Lord of the *Mashâriq*,—of every point at the rising of the sun. As the Commentators tell us, there are in the solar year only two equinoctial days, when the sun rises due east: on every other the sun rises at a shifting point either north or south of due east. In vii. 137 we have *Mashâriq al ardhi wa magâribahâ*, where the plural of the words for East and West is negligible, as the conjunction of the two embraces all points. The same may be said of lxx. 40, where Allah is called “Lord of all points in the East and the West”. If we are speaking of longitudes, they may embrace all latitudes. In lv. 17 Allah is called “Lord of the *two* Easts and the *two* Wests”, referring to the extreme points in either case. A cursory reader may ask, why is only the East referred to here? The reply is that it is not so much the East as the rising of the sun, on which stress is laid. The Arabic *mashriq* or *mashâriq* is close enough to the root-word *sharaqa*, to suggest, not so much the East as the rising of the sun, especially when the plural form is used. The glorious sun rises from different points, as seen by us, but it illuminates the whole heaven and earth. It is an emblem of Unity.

4035. Cf. lxxvii. 5, lxxii. 8-9.

4036. ‘Stars’ may be taken here in the popular sense, as referring to fixed stars, planets, comets, shooting stars, etc. On a clear night the beauty of the starry heavens is proverbial. Here they are meant to illustrate two points: (1) their marvellous beauty and their groupings and motions (apparent or real) manifest and typify the Design and Harmony of the One true Creator: and (2) the power and glory behind them typify that there is a guard against the assaults of Evil (see verse 7 below).

7. (For beauty) and for guard⁴⁰³⁷
Against all obstinate
Rebellious Satans.
8. (So) they should not listen
Their ears in the direction
Of the Exalted Assembly⁴⁰³⁸
And they are cast away
From every side,
9. Repulsed. And for them
Is a perpetual chastisement,
10. Except such as snatch away
Something by stealth, and they
Are pursued by a flaming⁴⁰³⁹
Fire, of piercing brightness.
11. Just ask their⁴⁰⁴⁰ opinion:
Are they the more difficult
To create, or the (other) beings
We have created?
Them have We created
Out of a sticky clay!⁴⁰⁴¹

وَحِفْظًا مِّنْ كُلِّ شَيْطَانٍ مَّارِدٍ ﴿٧﴾

لَّا يَسْمَعُونَ إِلَى الْمَلَأِ الْأَعْلَى وَيُقَذَّفُونَ
مِّنْ كُلِّ جَانِبٍ ﴿٨﴾

دُحُورًا وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ وَاصِبٌ ﴿٩﴾

إِلَّا مَنِ خَفِيَ لَخِطَفَةٍ فَآتَبَعَهُ شَهَابٌ نَّاقِبٌ ﴿١٠﴾

فَأَسْتَفْهِمُ أَهْمُ أَشَدُّ خَلْقًا أَمْ مِّنْ خَلْقِنَا
إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاهُمْ مِنْ طِينٍ لَّازِبٍ ﴿١١﴾

4037. Verses 7-11 seem to refer to shooting stars. Cf. xv. 17-18, and notes 1951-53. The heavens typify not only beauty but power. The Good in Allah's world is guarded and protected against every assault of Evil. The Evil is not part of the heavenly system: it is a thing in outlawry, merely a self-willed rebellion,—"cast away on every side, repulsed under a perpetual penalty" (verses 8-9).

4038. We can form a mental picture of the Court of the Most High, in the highest heaven, conforming to the highest idea we can form of goodness, beauty, purity, and grandeur. The Exalted Assembly of angels is given some knowledge of the Plan and Will of Allah. Evil is altogether foreign to such an atmosphere, but is actuated by feelings of jealousy and curiosity. It tries to approach by stealth and overhear something from the august Assembly. It is repulsed and pursued by a flaming fire, of which we can form some idea in our physical world by the piercing trail of a shooting star.

4039. See last note and Cf. xv. 18 and notes 1953-54.

4040. "Their": "they" are the doubters, the evil ones, the deniers of Allah's grace and mercy, who laugh at Revelation and disbelieve in a Hereafter. Are they more important or more difficult to create than the wonderful variety of beings in Allah's spacious Creation? Do they forget their own lowly state, as having been created from muddy clay?

4041. Cf. vi. 2; vii. 12; xxxii. 7; etc.

12. Truly dost thou marvel,⁴⁰⁴²
While they ridicule,

بَلْ عَجِبْتَ وَيَسْخَرُونَ ﴿١٢﴾

13. And, when they are
Admonished, pay no heed,—

وَإِذَا ذُكِّرُوا لَا يَذْكُرُونَ ﴿١٣﴾

14. And, when they see
A Sign, turn it
To mockery,

وَإِذَا رَأَوْا آيَةً يَسْتَسْخَرُونَ ﴿١٤﴾

15. And say, "This is nothing
But evident sorcery!"

وَقَالُوا إِن هَذَا إِلَّا سِحْرٌ مُّبِينٌ ﴿١٥﴾

16. "What! when we die,
And become dust and bones,
Shall we (then) be
Raised up (again)?"

إِن دَامِمْنَا وَكُنَّا تُرَابًا وَعِظَامًا إِنَّا نَلْتَبِعُوهُمْ ﴿١٦﴾

17. "And also our fathers⁴⁰⁴³
Of old?"

أَوَءَابَاؤُنَا الْأَوَّلُونَ ﴿١٧﴾

18. Say thou: "Yea, and ye shall
Then be humiliated
(On account of your evil)."⁴⁰⁴⁴

قُلْ نَعَمْ وَأَنْتُمْ دَاخِرُونَ ﴿١٨﴾

4042. It is indeed strange that unregenerate man should forget, on the one hand, his lowly-origin, and on the other hand, his high Destiny, as conferred upon him by the grace and mercy of Allah. The indictment of him here comprises four counts: (1) they ridicule the teaching of Truth; (2) instead of profiting by admonition, they pay no heed; (3) when Allah's Signs are brought home to them, they ridicule them as much as they ridiculed the teaching of Truth: and (4) when they have to acknowledge incontestable facts, they give them false names like "sorcery", which imply fraud or something which has no relation to their life, although the facts touch the inner springs of their life intimately.

4043. Although the Hereafter, is the most solid facts in our intelligent existence, materialists deny them. They cannot believe that they could have any existence beyond the grave—still less their ancestors who died ages and ages ago: how could they ever come to life again?

4044. They are assured that the future life is a solid fact, but that it will be in very different conditions from those they know now. All their present arrogance will have been humbled in the dust. There will be another plane, in which souls will have experiences quite different from those in their probationary life here. In that life the virtues they lacked will count, and the arrogance they hugged will be brought low.

19. Then it will be a single
(Compelling) cry;⁴⁰⁴⁵
And behold, they will
Begin to see!⁴⁰⁴⁶

فَأَنمَاهِي رَجْرَةً وَاحِدَةً فَإِذَا هُمْ يَنظُرُونَ ﴿١٩﴾

20. They will say, "Ah!
Woe to us! this is
The Day of Judgment!"

وَقَالُوا لَوْلَا إِنَّا هَذَا يَوْمَ الدِّينِ ﴿٢٠﴾

21. (A voice will say,
"This is the Day"⁴⁰⁴⁷
Of sorting Out, whose
Truth ye (once) denied!"

هَذَا يَوْمُ الْفَصْلِ الَّذِي كُتِبَ بِهِ تَكَذِّبُوتَ ﴿٢١﴾

SECTION 2.

22. "Bring ye up",
It shall be said,
"The wrong-doers
And their wives,"⁴⁰⁴⁸
And the things they worshipped—

أَحْشَرُوا الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا وَأَزْوَاجَهُمْ وَمَا كَانُوا يَعْبُدُونَ ﴿٢٢﴾

23. "Besides Allah,
And lead them to the Way
To the (Fierce) Fire!

مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ فَأَهْدُوهُمْ إِلَى صِرَاطِ الْجَحِيمِ ﴿٢٣﴾

24. "But stop them,"⁴⁰⁴⁹
For they must be asked:

وَقِفُّهُمْ إِنَّهُمْ مَسْئُولُونَ ﴿٢٤﴾

4045. Cf. xxxvi. 29, 49, and 53.

4046. Their spiritual blindness will then leave them. But they will be surprised at the suddenness of their disillusion.

4047. The Day of Judgment is the day of sorting out. Cf. xxxvi. 59. Good and evil will finally be separated, unlike the apparently inexplicable conditions in the present probationary life, when they seem to be mixed together.

4048. That is, if their wives were also wrong-doers. They are separately mentioned, because the Arabic phrase for "wrong-doers" is of the masculine gender. All the associates in wrong-doing will be marshalled together. There will be personal responsibility: neither husband nor wife can lay the blame on the other.

4049. The scene here is after judgment. As, in an earthly tribunal, the prisoner or his advocate is asked why sentence should not be pronounced upon him, so here those who are proved to have been guilty of wrong are allowed to consider if anything or any one can help them. Then comes the exposure of the misleaders.

25. " 'What is the matter
With you that ye
Help not each other?' "4050

مَا لَكُمْ لَا تَنَاصَرُونَ ﴿٢٥﴾

26. Nay, but that day they
Shall submit (to Judgment);4051

بَلْ هُمْ الْيَوْمَ مُسْتَسْلِمُونَ ﴿٢٦﴾

27. And they will turn to
One another, and question
One another.

وَأَقْبَلَ بَعْضُهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ يَتَسَاءَلُونَ ﴿٢٧﴾

28. They will say: "It was ye
Who used to come to us
From the right hand."4052

قَالُوا إِنَّمَا كُنْتُمْ تَأْتُونَنَا عَنِ الْيَمِينِ ﴿٢٨﴾

29. They will reply: "Nay, ye
Yourselves had no Faith!"4053

قَالُوا بَلْ لَمْ تَكُونُوا مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٢٩﴾

30. "Nor had we any authority
Over you. Nay, it was
Ye who were a people
In obstinate rebellion!"

وَمَا كَانَ لَنَا عَلَيْكُمْ مِنْ سُلْطَانٍ

بَلْ كُنْتُمْ قَوْمًا طَٰغِينَ ﴿٣٠﴾

4050. Obviously no one can stand and intercede, for it is a question of personal responsibility for each soul. No one can help another.

4051. All the previous arrogance of this life will be gone, but they will face each other, and those who were given a false lead, as in the story of Pharaoh (Cf. xx. 79), will question their misleaders as in the following verses.

4052. This is the mutual recrimination of the sinners—those who sinned, against those whose instigation or evil example led them into sin. The misleaders in the life here below often used their power and influence to spread evil. The "right hand" is the hand of power and authority. Instead of using it for righteous purposes, they used it for evil,—selfishly for their own advantage, and mischievously for the degradation of others.

4053. But the fact that others mislead, or that their evil example is before us, does not justify us in falling from right conduct. Faith should save us from the fall. But if we have ourselves no Faith—in righteousness, or a future life, or the reality of Allah's Law, how can we blame others? The misleaders can well say, "You will be judged according to your misdeeds!" The responsibility is personal, and cannot be shifted on to others. The others may get a double punishment,—for their own evil, and for misleading their weaker brethren. But the weaker brethren cannot go free from responsibility for their own deeds; for evil means a personal rebellion against Allah, if we believe in a personal God. Evil has no authority over us, except in so far as we deliberately choose it.

31. "So now has been proved true,"⁴⁰⁵⁴

Against us, the Word
Of our Lord that we
Shall indeed (have to) taste
(The punishment of our sins):

فَحَقَّ عَلَيْنَا قَوْلُ رَبِّنَا إِنَّا لَذَائِقُونَ ﴿٣١﴾

32. "We led you astray: for truly⁴⁰⁵⁵

We were ourselves astray."

فَأَعْوَيْنَاكُمْ إِنَّا كُنَّا غَاوِينَ ﴿٣٢﴾

33. Truly, that Day, they will

(All) share in the Chastisement.

فَإِنَّهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ فِي الْعَذَابِ مُشْتَرِكُونَ ﴿٣٣﴾

34. Verily that is how We

Shall deal with Sinners.

إِنَّا كَذَلِكَ نَفْعَلُ بِالْمُجْرِمِينَ ﴿٣٤﴾

35. For they, when they were

Told that there is

No god except Allah, would

Puff themselves up with Pride,"⁴⁰⁵⁶

إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا إِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ ﴿٣٥﴾

36. And say: "What! Shall we

Give up our gods

For the sake of

A Poet possessed?"⁴⁰⁵⁷

وَيَقُولُونَ أَبَا لَنَا تَارِكُوا آلِهَتَنَا لِيَشَاعِرَ يَجْنُونَ ﴿٣٦﴾

4054. Allah's decree of justice requires that every soul should taste the consequences of its own sins, and that decree must be fulfilled. No excuses can serve. It is only Allah's mercy that can save.

4055. Further, the misleaders can well urge against those who reproach them for misleading them: "How could you expect anything better from us? You were already warned by Allah's Message that we were astray."

4056. Selfish arrogance was the seed of sin and rebellion: ii. 34 (of Satan): xxviii. 39 (of Pharaoh); etc. It is that kind of arrogance which prevents man from mending his life and conduct. When he speaks of ancestral ways, or public opinion, or national honour, he is usually thinking of himself or of a small clique which thrives on injustice. The recognition of Allah, the one true God, as the only standard of life and conduct, the Eternal Reality, cuts out Self, and is therefore disagreeable to Sin. If false gods are imagined, who themselves would have weaknesses that fit in with sin, they give countenance to evils, and it becomes difficult to give them up, unless Allah's grace comes to our assistance.

4057. Possessed of an evil spirit, or mad. Such was the charge which the Unbelievers sometimes levelled at the holy Prophet in the early stages of his preaching.

37. Nay! he has come
With the (very) Truth,
And he confirms (the Message
Of) the messengers (before him).⁴⁰⁵⁸
38. Ye shall indeed taste
Of the Grievous Chastisement;-
39. And you are requited naught
Save what ye did.⁴⁰⁵⁹
40. But the chosen
Servants of Allah,-
41. For them is a Sustenance⁴⁰⁶⁰
Determined,⁴⁰⁶¹
42. Fruits;⁴⁰⁶² and they
(Shall enjoy) honour and dignity,
43. In Gardens of delight.
44. Facing each other
On raised couches.

بَلْ جَاءَ بِالْحَقِّ وَصَدَّقَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿٣٧﴾

إِنَّكُمْ لَذَائِقُوا الْعَذَابِ الْأَلِيمِ ﴿٣٨﴾

وَمَا تُجْزَوْنَ إِلَّا مَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٣٩﴾

إِلَّا عِبَادَ اللَّهِ الْمُخْلَصِينَ ﴿٤٠﴾

أُولَئِكَ لَهُمْ رِزْقٌ مَّعْلُومٌ ﴿٤١﴾

فَوَكَهَهُمْ كُرْهُهُمْ فِي جَنَّاتِ النَّعِيمِ ﴿٤٢﴾

فِي جَنَّاتِ النَّعِيمِ ﴿٤٣﴾

عَلَى سُرُرٍ مُتَقَابِلِينَ ﴿٤٤﴾

4058. The message of Islam, so far from being "mad" or in any way peculiar, is eminently conformable to reason and the true facts of nature as created by Allah. It is the Truth in the purest sense of the term, and confirms the Message of all true Messengers that ever lived.

4059. Justice demands that those who sow evil should reap the fruit, but the punishment is due to their own conduct and not to anything external to themselves.

4060. "Sustenance": correlated with the Fruits mentioned below: see next verse.

4061. "Determined": *Ma'lûm*: the reward of the Blessed will not be a chance or a fleeting thing. It will follow a firm Decree of Allah, on principles that can be known and understood.

4062. "Fruits": Cf. xxxvi. 57, and n. 4003. The Garden's Delights are figured forth from parallel experiences in our present life, and follow an ascending order: Food and Fruits; Gardens of Bliss, (with all their charm, design, greenery, birds' songs, fountains, etc.); the Home of Happiness and Dignity, with congenial company seated on Thrones; Delicious Drinks from crystal Springs, for social pleasure; and the society of Companions of the opposite sex, with beauty and charm but none of the grossness too often incidental to such companionship in this life.

45. Round will be passed
To them a Cup
From a clear-flowing fountain,

يُطَافُ عَلَيْهِمْ بِكَأْسٍ مِنْ مَعِينٍ ﴿٤٥﴾

46. Crystal-white, of a taste
Delicious to those
Who drink (thereof),

بَيْضَاءَ لَذَّةٍ لِلشَّارِبِينَ ﴿٤٦﴾

47. Free from headiness;⁴⁰⁶³
Nor will they suffer
Intoxication therefrom.

لَا فِيهَا غَوْلٌ وَلَا هُمْ عَنْهَا يُنْزَفُونَ ﴿٤٧﴾

48. And besides them will be
Chaste women; restraining
Their glances, with big eyes⁴⁰⁶⁴
(Of wonder and beauty).

وَعِنْدَهُمْ قَصِيرَاتُ الْطَّرْفِ عِينٌ ﴿٤٨﴾

49. As if they were⁴⁰⁶⁵
(Delicate) eggs closely guarded.

كَأَنَّهُنَّ بَيْضٌ مَكْنُونٌ ﴿٤٩﴾

50. Then they will turn to
One another and question
One another.⁴⁰⁶⁶

فَأَقْبَلَ بَعْضُهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ يَتَسَاءَلُونَ ﴿٥٠﴾

4063. The passing round of the social cup, as in the case of other pleasures, is without any of the drawbacks and evil accompaniments of the pleasures of this world, which are taken as types. In drink there is no intoxication: in fruit there is no satiety. Cf. Dante: "the bread of Angels upon which One liveth here and grows not sated by it." (*Paradiso*, Canto II., Longfellow's translation.)

4064. In the emblem used here, again, the pure type of chaste womanhood is figured. They are chaste, not bold with their glances: but their eyes are big with wonder and beauty, prefiguring grace, innocence, and a refined capacity of appreciation and admiration.

4065. This is usually understood to refer to the delicate complexion of a beautiful woman, which is compared to the transparent shell of eggs in the nest, closely guarded by the mother-bird; the shell is warm and free from stain. In lv. 58 the phrase used is "like rubies and coral", referring to the red or pink of a beautiful complexion.

4066. Cf. above, xxxvii. 27, where the same phrase is used in the reverse conditions. In each case there is a going back to the earlier memories or experiences of this life.

51. One of them will say:
"I had an intimate
Companion (on the earth),⁴⁰⁶⁷
52. "Who used to say,
Do you really
Believe?
53. " 'When we die and become
Dust and bones, shall we
Indeed receive rewards
And punishments?' "
54. He said: "Would ye
Like to look down?"
55. He looked down
And saw him
In the midst of the Fire.⁴⁰⁶⁸
56. He said: "By Allah!
Thou wast little short
Of bringing me to perdition!
57. "Had it not been for
The Grace of my Lord,⁴⁰⁶⁹
I should certainly have been
Among those brought (there)!
58. "Is it (the case) that
We shall not die,

قَالَ قَائِلٌ مِّنْهُمْ إِنِّي كَانَ لِي قَرِينٌ ﴿٥١﴾

يَقُولُ أَهْلَ نَكَ لِمَنِ الْمُصَدِّقِينَ ﴿٥٢﴾

أَهْ ذَا مِنَّا وَكُنَّا تُرَابًا وَعِظْمًا أَهْ نَالُمَدِينُونَ ﴿٥٣﴾

قَالَ هَلْ أُنْتُمْ مُّظْلِمُونَ ﴿٥٤﴾

فَأُطْلِعَ قَرَأَاهُ فِي سَوَاءِ الْجَحِيمِ ﴿٥٥﴾

قَالَ تَاللَّهِ إِن كُدتَ لَتُرْدِينَ ﴿٥٦﴾

وَلَوْلَا نِعْمَةُ رَبِّي لَكُنْتُ مِنَ الْمُخْضَرِّينَ ﴿٥٧﴾

أَفَمَا نَحْنُ بِمَيِّتِينَ ﴿٥٨﴾

4067. This companion was a sceptic, who laughed at Religion and a Hereafter. How the tables are now turned! The devout man backed up his Faith with a good life and is now in Bliss: the other was a cynic and made a mess of his life, and is now burning in the Fire.

4068. He is allowed a peep into the state which he so narrowly escaped by the grace of Allah.

4069. And he gratefully acknowledges his short-comings: "I should have been a sinner just like this, but for the grace of Allah!" He sees that if he had erred it would have been no excuse to plead the other man's example. He had Faith and was saved, to walk in the path of righteousness.

59. "Except our first death,
And that we⁴⁰⁷⁰
Shall not be punished?"

إِلَّا مَوْتَنَا الْأَوَّلَى وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمُعَذَّبِينَ ﴿٥٩﴾

60. Verily this is
The supreme triumph.⁴⁰⁷¹

إِنَّ هَذَا هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ ﴿٦٠﴾

61. For the like of this
Let all strive,
Who wish to strive.

لِمِثْلِ هَذَا فَلْيَعْمَلِ الْعَامِلُونَ ﴿٦١﴾

62. Is that the better entertainment
Or the Tree of Zaqqum?⁴⁰⁷²

أَذَلِكَ خَيْرٌ تُزَلُّ أَمْ شَجَرَةُ الزَّقُّومِ ﴿٦٢﴾

63. For We have truly
Made it (as) a trial⁴⁰⁷³
For the wrong-doers.

إِنَّا جَعَلْنَاهَا فِتْنَةً لِلظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٦٣﴾

64. For it is a tree
That springs out
Of the bottom of Hell-fire:

إِنَّهَا شَجَرَةٌ تَخْرُجُ فِي أَصْلِ الْجَحِيمِ ﴿٦٤﴾

4070. After he realises the great danger from which he narrowly escaped, his joy is so great that he can hardly believe it! Is the danger altogether past now? Are the portals of death closed for ever? Is he safe now from the temptations which will bring him to ruin and punishment?

4071. The answer is: Yes. "Beyond the flight of Time. Beyond the realm of Death. There surely is some blessed clime, Where Life is not a breath!" In the words of Longfellow this was an aspiration on this earth. In the Hereafter it is a realisation!

Some interpret verses 60-62 as a continuation of the speech of the man in heaven. The meaning would in that case be the same.

4072. Cf. xvii. 60, n. 2250. This bitter tree of Hell is in contrast with the beautiful Garden of heaven with its delicious fruits.

4073. This dreadful bitter Tree of Hell is truly a trial to the wrong-doers. (1) It grows at the bottom of Hell; (2) even its fruit-stalks, which should have been tender, are like the heads of devils: (3) its produce is eaten voraciously; (4) on top of it is a boiling mixture to cut up their entrails (see next note); and (5) every time they complete this round of orgies they return to the same game. A truly lurid picture, but more lurid in reality are the stages of Evil. (1) It takes its rise in the lowest depths of corrupted human nature; (2) its tenderest affections are degraded to envy and hate; (3) the appetite for Evil grows with what it feeds on; (4) its "cures" serve but to aggravate the disease; and (5) the chain of evil is unending; one round is followed by another in interminable succession.

65. The shoots of its fruit-stalks
Are like the heads
Of devils:

66. Truly they will eat thereof⁴⁰⁷⁴
And fill their bellies therewith.

67. Then on top of that
They will be given
A mixture made of
Boiling water.

68. Then shall their return⁴⁰⁷⁵
Be to the (Blazing) Fire.

69. Truly they found their fathers
On the wrong Path;

70. So they (too) were rushed⁴⁰⁷⁶
Down on their footsteps!

71. And truly before them,
Many of the ancients
Went astray;-

72. But We sent aforetime,⁴⁰⁷⁷
Among them, warners.

طَلَعَهَا كَأَنَّهُ رُءُوسُ الشَّيَاطِينِ ﴿٦٥﴾

فَاتَّخَذُوا مِنْهَا فَمَا لَوْنَ مِنْهَا الْبُطُونَ ﴿٦٦﴾

ثُمَّ إِنَّ لَهُمْ عَلَيْهَا لَشَوْبًا مِنْ حَمِيمٍ ﴿٦٧﴾

ثُمَّ إِنَّ مَرْجِعَهُمْ لَإِلَى الْجَحِيمِ ﴿٦٨﴾

إِنَّهُمْ أَفْقَاءَ آبَاءِ هُمْرَ صَالِينَ ﴿٦٩﴾

فَهُمْ عَلَى آثَارِهِمْ يُهْرَعُونَ ﴿٧٠﴾

وَلَقَدْ ضَلَّ قَبْلَهُمْ أَكْثَرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿٧١﴾

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا فِيهِمْ مُنْذِرِينَ ﴿٧٢﴾

4074. The parable of fruits and drinks in the contrasted fortunes of the Good and the Evil is further elaborated in xlvii. 15, where the boiling water given to the evil ones cuts up their entrails.

4075. When they eat of the *zaqqūm* in the lowest depths of hell, they are apparently brought up to drink of the mixture as a further punishment, after which they go back to repeat the round.

4076. A grim reproach. 'You found your fathers doing wrong; and you must rush headlong in their footsteps to perdition!'

4077. It is human to err. The error is forgiven if there is repentance and amendment. The point is that Allah in His mercy at all times in history sent messengers and teachers to give His Message, and men deliberately rejected that Message.

73. Then see what was
The End of those who⁴⁰⁷⁸
Were warned

فَأَنْظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُنْذَرِينَ ﴿٧٣﴾

74. Except the chosen⁴⁰⁷⁹
Servants of Allah.

إِلَّا عِبَادَ اللَّهِ الْمُخْلَصِينَ ﴿٧٤﴾

SECTION 3.

75. (In the days of old),
Noah cried to Us,⁴⁰⁸⁰
And We are the Best
To hear prayer.

وَلَقَدْ نَادَيْنَا نُوْحًا فَلَنِعْمَ الْمُجِيبُونَ ﴿٧٥﴾

76. And We delivered him
And his people from
The Great Calamity,⁴⁰⁸¹

وَنَجَّيْنَاهُ وَأَهْلَهُ مِنَ الْكَرْبِ الْعَظِيمِ ﴿٧٦﴾

77. And made his progeny
To endure (on this earth);⁴⁰⁸²

وَجَعَلْنَا ذُرِّيَّتَهُ هُرُ الْبَاقِينَ ﴿٧٧﴾

78. And We left (this blessing)
For him among generations⁴⁰⁸³
To come in later times:

وَتَرَكْنَا عَلَيْهِ فِي الْآخِرِينَ ﴿٧٨﴾

4078. It is on the reception or rejection of Allah's teachings and guidance that judgment will come. In this world itself, see what is the teaching of history. Unrighteousness and wrong-doing never prosper in the long run.

4079. But there is always a band of sincere and devoted men who serve Allah, and the highest form of life is open to them.

Note that this verse occurs at xxxvii. 40 above, where the argument of the difference between the fates of the righteous and the unrighteous was begun. Here it is rounded off with the same phrase, and now we proceed to take illustrations from the early Prophets.

4080. Cf. xxi. 76-77. The story of Noah occurs in many places: here the point is that when men gird themselves against evil, Allah protects them, and Evil cannot triumph against Allah's Plan.

4081. The Deluge, the Flood of Noah. The main story will be found in xi. 25-48.

4082. Noah's posterity survived the Flood in the Ark, while the rest perished.

4083. His name is remembered for ever, commencing a new era in religious history. Note that the words in verses 78-81, with slight modifications, form a sort of refrain to the following paragraphs about Abraham, Moses, and Elias, but not about Lot and Jonah. =

79. "Peace and salutation to Noah
Among the nations!"⁴⁰⁸⁴

سَلَامٌ عَلَى نُوحٍ فِي الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٧٩﴾

80. Thus indeed do We reward
Those who do right.

إِنَّا كَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٨٠﴾

81. For he was one
Of Our believing Servants.

إِنَّهُ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٨١﴾

82. Then the rest We overwhelmed
In the Flood.

ثُمَّ أَغْرَقْنَا الْآخَرِينَ ﴿٨٢﴾

83. Verily from his party
Was Abraham.⁴⁰⁸⁵

وَإِنْ مِنْ شَيْعِهِ لَأَبْرَهِيمَ ﴿٨٣﴾

84. Behold, he approached his Lord
With a sound heart.⁴⁰⁸⁶

إِذْ جَاءَ رَبَّهُ بِقَلْبٍ سَلِيمٍ ﴿٨٤﴾

85. Behold, he said to his father
And to his people, "What
Is that which ye worship?"

إِذْ قَالَ لِأَبِيهِ وَقَوْمِهِ مَاذَا تُعْبُدُونَ ﴿٨٥﴾

= Lot was a nephew of Abraham, and may be supposed to belong to the story of Abraham. Jonah's career nearly ended in a tragedy for himself, and his people got a further lease of power "for a time" (xxxvii. 148). And both Lot and Jonah belong to a limited local tradition.

4084. The story of the Flood is found in some form or other among all nations, and not only among those who follow the Mosaic tradition. In Greek tradition, the hero of the Flood is Deukalion, with his wife Pyrrha: in Indian tradition (*Shatapatha Brāhmana* and *Mahābhārata*) it is the sage Manū and the Fish. The Chinese tradition of a great Flood is recorded in *Shū-King*. Among American Indians the tradition was common to many tribes.

4085. The main story will be found in xxi. 51-73; but the episode about his readiness and that of his son to submit to the most extreme form of self-sacrifice under trial (in verses 102-107 below) is told here for the first time, as this Sūra deals with the theme, "Not my will, but Thine be done!" In "followed his way", the pronoun "his" refers to Noah, "he", of verse 81 above.

4086. *A sound heart: qalb salīm*: a heart that is pure, and unaffected by the diseases that afflict others. As the heart in Arabic is taken to be not only the seat of feelings and affections, but also of intelligence and resulting action, it implies the whole character. Cf. Abraham's title of *Hanif* (the True): ii. 135 and n. 134. Cf. also xxvi. 89: "only he will prosper who brings to Allah a sound heart."

86. "Is it a Falsehood—
Gods other than Allah
That ye desire?"⁴⁰⁸⁷
87. "Then what is your idea
About the Lord of the Worlds?"⁴⁰⁸⁸
88. Then did he cast
A glance at the Stars,
89. And he said, "I am
Indeed sick (at heart)!"⁴⁰⁸⁹
90. So they turned away
From him, and departed.
91. Then did he turn
To their gods and said,
"Will ye not eat
(Of the offerings before you)?"
92. "What is the matter
With you that ye
Speak not?"*
93. Then did he turn
Upon them, striking (them)⁴⁰⁹⁰
With the right hand.⁴⁰⁹¹

أَفِكَاءَ إِلَهَةٍ دُونَ اللَّهِ تُرِيدُونَ ﴿٨٦﴾

فَمَا ظَنُّكُمْ بِرَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٨٧﴾

فَنَظَرَ نَظْرَةً فِي النُّجُومِ ﴿٨٨﴾

فَقَالَ إِنِّي سَقِيمٌ ﴿٨٩﴾

فَتَوَلَّوْا عَنْهُ مُدْبِرِينَ ﴿٩٠﴾

فَرَاغَ إِلَى آلِهِمُ فَقَالَ أَلَا تَأْكُلُونَ ﴿٩١﴾

مَا لَكُمْ لَا تَنْطِقُونَ ﴿٩٢﴾

فَرَاغَ عَلَيْهِمْ ضَرْبًا بِالْيَمِينِ ﴿٩٣﴾

4087. False worship—worship of idols or stars or symbols, or Mammon or Self—is due either to false and degrading conceptions of Allah, or to a sort of make-believe, where practice is inconsistent with knowledge or ignores the inner promptings of Conscience. Abraham's challenge to his people is: 'Are you fools or hypocrites?'

4088. 'Do you not realise that the real Creator is One—above all the forms and superstitions that you associate with Him?'

4089. The grief was really preying on his mind and soul, that he should be associated with such falsehoods. His father himself was among the chief supporters of such falsehoods, and his people were given up wholly to them. He could not possibly share in their mummeries, and they left him in disgust. Then he made his practical protest in the manner narrated in xxi. 56-64.

4090. See the reference in the last note.

4091. *With the right hand:* as the right hand is the hand of power, the phrase means that he struck them with might and main and broke them.

94. Then came (the worshippers)
With hurried steps,
To him.

فَأَقْبَلُوا إِلَيْهِ يَرْفُوقْنَ ﴿٩٤﴾

95. He said: "Worship ye
That which ye have
(Yourselves) carved?"⁴⁰⁹²

قَالَ أَتَعْبُدُونَ مَا تَنْحِتُونَ ﴿٩٥﴾

96. "But Allah has created you
And your handiwork!"

وَاللَّهُ خَلَقَكُمْ وَمَا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٩٦﴾

97. They said, "Build him
A furnace, and throw him"⁴⁰⁹³
Into the blazing fire!"

قَالُوا ابْنُوا لَهُ بُنْيَانًا فَأَلْقُوهُ فِي الْجَحِيمِ ﴿٩٧﴾

98. (This failing), they then
Plotted against him,⁴⁰⁹⁴
But We made them the ones
Most humiliated!

فَأَرَادُوا بِهِ كَيْدًا فَجَعَلْنَاهُمُ الْأَسْفَلِينَ ﴿٩٨﴾

99. He said: "I will go
To my Lord! He
Will surely guide me!"⁴⁰⁹⁵

وَقَالَ إِنِّي ذَاهِبٌ إِلَىٰ رَبِّي سَيَهْدِينِ ﴿٩٩﴾

100. "O my Lord! grant me
A righteous (son)!"

رَبِّ هَبْ لِي مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ ﴿١٠٠﴾

4092. His action was a challenge, and he drives home the challenge now with argument. 'Do you worship your own handiwork? Surely worship is due to Him Who made you and made possible your handiwork!'

4093. The argument of Abraham was so sound that it could not be met by argument. In such cases Evil resorts to violence, or secret plotting. Here there was both violence and secret plotting. The violence consisted in throwing him into a blazing Furnace. But by the mercy of Allah the fire did not harm him (xxi. 69), and so they resorted to plotting. But the plotting, as the next verse (xxxvii. 98) shows, was a boomerang that recoiled on their own heads.

4094. Cf. xxi. 71. Their plot against the righteous Abraham failed. Abraham migrated from the country (Chaldea, Babylon, and Assyria) and prospered in Syria and Palestine. It was his persecutors that suffered humiliation.

4095. This was the Hijrat of Abraham. He left his people and his land, because the Truth was dearer to him than the ancestral falsehoods of his people. He trusted himself to Allah, and under Allah's guidance he laid the foundations of great peoples. See n. 2725 to xxi. 69.

101. So We gave him
The good news⁴⁰⁹⁶
Of a forbearing son.⁴⁰⁹⁷
102. Then, when (the son)
Reached (the age of)
(Serious) work with him,
He said: "O my son!
I have seen in a dream⁴⁰⁹⁸
That I offer thee in sacrifice:⁴⁰⁹⁹
Now see what is
Thy view!" (The son) said:
"O my father! Do
As thou art commanded:
Thou will find me,
If Allah so wills one
Of the steadfast."

فَبَشِّرْنَاهُ بِعَلِيمٍ حَلِيمٍ ﴿١٠١﴾

فَلَمَّا بَلَغَ مَعَهُ السَّعْيَ قَالَ يَبْنَئِي إِنِّي آرَى فِي الْمَنَامِ
أَنِّي أَذْبَحُكَ فَانْظُرْ مَاذَا تَرَى ۚ قَالَ يَتَابَعْتُ أَفْعَلُ
مَا تُؤْمُرُ سَتَجِدُنِي إِن شَاءَ اللَّهُ مِنَ الصَّابِرِينَ ﴿١٠٢﴾

4096. This was in the fertile land of Syria and Palestine. The boy thus born was, according to Muslim tradition, the first-born son of Abraham, viz., Ismā'il. The name itself is from the root *Sami'a*, to hear, because Allah had heard Abraham's prayer (verse 100). Abraham's age when Ismā'il was born was 86 (Gen xvi. 16).

4097. The boy's character was to be *Halim*, "forbearing". This title is also applied to Abraham (in ix. 114 and xi. 75). It refers to the patient way in which both father and son cheerfully offered to suffer any self-sacrifice in order to obey the Command of Allah. See next verse.

4098. Where did this vision occur? The Muslim view is that it was in or near Makkah. Some would identify it with the valley of Minā, six miles north of Makkah, where a commemoration sacrifice is annually celebrated as a rite of the Hajj on the tenth of Zul-Hijjah, the 'Id of Sacrifice, in Memory of this Sacrifice of Abraham and Ismā'il (see n.217 to ii. 197). Others say that the original place of sacrifice was near the hill of Marwa (the companion hill to Safā, ii. 158), which is associated with the infancy of Ismā'il.

4099. At what stage in Abraham's history did this occur? See n. 2725 to xxi. 69. It was obviously after his arrival in the land of Cannan and after Ismā'il had grown up to years of discretion. Was it before or after the building of the Ka'ba (ii. 127)? There are no data on which this question can be answered. But we may suppose it was before that event, and that event may itself have been commemorative.

103. So when they had both⁴¹⁰⁰
Submitted (to Allah),
And he had laid him
Prostrate on his forehead
(For sacrifice),⁴¹⁰¹

فَلَمَّا أَسْلَمَا وَتَلَّهُ لِلْجَبِينِ ﴿١٠٣﴾

104. We called out to him,⁴¹⁰²
"O Abraham!

وَنَادَيْنَاهُ أَنْ يَا إِبْرَاهِيمُ ﴿١٠٤﴾

105. "Thou hast already fulfilled
The dream!"—thus indeed
Do We reward
Those who do right.

قَدْ صَدَّقْتَ الرُّؤْيَا إِنَّا كَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي
الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿١٠٥﴾

4100. Note that the sacrifice was demanded of *both* Abraham and Ismā'il. It was a trial of the will of the father and the son. By way of trial the father had the command conveyed to him in a vision. He consulted the son. The son readily consented, and offered to stand true to his promise if his self-sacrifice was really required. The whole thing is symbolical. Allah does not require the flesh and blood of animals (xxii. 37), much less of human beings. But he does require the giving of our whole being to Allah, the symbol of which is that we should give up something very dear to us, if Duty requires that sacrifice.

4101. Our version may be compared with the Jewish-Christian version of the present Old Testament. The Jewish tradition, in order to glorify the younger branch of the family, descended from Isaac, ancestor of the Jews, as against the elder branch, descended from Ismā'il, ancestor of the Arabs, refers this sacrifice to Isaac (Gen. xxii. 1-18). Now Isaac was born when Abraham was 100 years old (Gen. xxi. 5), while Ismā'il was born to Abraham when Abraham was 86 years old (Gen. xvi. 16). Ismā'il was therefore 14 years older than Isaac. During his first 14 years Ismā'il was the *only* son of Abraham; at no time was Isaac the *only* son of Abraham. Yet, in speaking of the sacrifice, the Old Testament says (Gen. xxii. 2): "And He said, Take now thy son, thine *only* son Issac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah: and offer him there for a burnt offering..." This slip shows at any rate which was the older version, and how it was overlaid, like the present Jewish records, in the interests of a tribal religion. The "land of Moriah" is not clear: it was three days' journey from Abraham's place (Gen. xxii. 4). There is less warrant for identifying it with the hill of Moriah on which Jerusalem was afterwards built than with the hill of Marwa which is identified with the Arab tradition about Ismā'il.

4102. In the Biblical version Isaac's consent is not taken; in fact Isaac asks, 'where is the lamb for sacrifice?' and is told that 'God would provide it'. It is a complete human sacrifice like those to Moloch. In our version it is as much a sacrifice by the will of Ismā'il as by that of Abraham.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>106. For this was
A clear trial-</p> <p>107. And We ransomed him
With a momentous sacrifice:⁴¹⁰³</p> <p>108. And We left
For him among generations⁴¹⁰⁴
(To come) in later times:</p> <p>109. "Peace and salutation
To Abraham!"</p> <p>110. Thus indeed do We reward
Those who do right</p> <p>111. For he was one
Of Our believing Servants.</p> <p>112. And We gave him⁴¹⁰⁵
The good news
Of Isaac-a prophet,-
One of the Righteous.</p> <p>113. We blessed him and Isaac:
But of their progeny
Are (some) that do right,
And (some) that obviously⁴¹⁰⁶
Do wrong, to themselves.</p> | <p>إِنَّ هَذَا لَهُوَّ الْبَلَاءِ الْمُبِينُ ﴿١٠٦﴾</p> <p>وَقَدَرْتَهُ بِذَبِيحٍ عَظِيمٍ ﴿١٠٧﴾</p> <p>وَتَرَكْنَاهُ فِي الْآخِرِينَ ﴿١٠٨﴾</p> <p>سَلَامٌ عَلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ ﴿١٠٩﴾</p> <p>كَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿١١٠﴾</p> <p>إِنَّهُ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١١١﴾</p> <p>وَبَشَّرْنَاهُ بِإِسْحَاقَ نَبِيًّا مِّنَ الصَّالِحِينَ ﴿١١٢﴾</p> <p>وَتَرَكْنَاهُ عَلَيْهِ وَعَلَى إِسْحَاقَ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِهِمَا
مُحْسِنٌ وَظَالِمٌ لِّنَفْسِهِ مُبِينٌ ﴿١١٣﴾</p> |
|---|---|

4103. The adjective qualifying "sacrifice" here, '*azim*, (great, momentous) may be understood both in a literal and a figurative sense. In a literal sense it implies that a fine sheep or ram was substituted. The figurative sense is even more important. It was indeed a great and momentous occasion, when two men, with concerted will, "ranged themselves in the ranks" of those to whom self-sacrifice in the service of Allah was the supreme thing in life.

4104. Cf. above, xxxvii. 78-81 and n. 4083.

4105. Isaac was Abraham's second son, born of Sarah, when Abraham was 100 years of age. See n. 4101. He was also blessed and became the ancestor of the Jewish people. See next note.

4106. So long as the Children of Israel upheld the righteous banner of Allah, they enjoyed Allah's blessing, and their history is a portion of sacred history. When they fell from grace, they did not stop Allah's Plan: they injured their own souls.

SECTION 4.

114. Again, (of old.)

We bestowed Our favour
On Moses and Aaron,⁴¹⁰⁷

وَلَقَدْ مَنَّا عَلَىٰ مُوسَىٰ وَهَارُونَ ﴿١١٤﴾

115. And We delivered them
And their people from
(Their) Great distress.⁴¹⁰⁸

وَجَنَيْنَاهُمَا وَقَوْمَهُمَا مِنَ الْكَرْبِ الْعَظِيمِ ﴿١١٥﴾

116. And We helped them,
So they were victorious;⁴¹⁰⁹

وَنَصَرْنَاهُمْ فَكَانُوا هُمُ الْغَالِبِينَ ﴿١١٦﴾

117. And We gave them
The Book which helps⁴¹¹⁰
To make things clear;

وَأَنزَلْنَاهُمَا الْكِتَابَ الْمُسْتَبِينَ ﴿١١٧﴾

118. And We guided them
To the Straight Way.

وَهَدَيْنَاهُمَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ ﴿١١٨﴾

119. And We left
For them among generations⁴¹¹¹
(To come) in later times:

وَتَرَكْنَاهُمَا فِي الْأَخْيَرِ ﴿١١٩﴾

120. "Peace and salutation
To Moses and Aaron!"

سَلَامٌ عَلَىٰ مُوسَىٰ وَهَارُونَ ﴿١٢٠﴾

4107. The story of Moses is told in numerous passages of the Qur-ān. The passages most illustrative of the present passage will be found in xxviii. 4 (oppression of the Israelites in Egypt) and xx. 77-79 (the Israelites triumphant over their enemies when the latter were drowned in the Red Sea).

4108. What could have been a greater calamity to them than that they should have been held in slavery by the Egyptians, that their male children should have been killed and their female children should have been saved alive for the Egyptians?

4109. The Israelites were delivered by three steps mentioned in verses 114, 115, and 116 respectively; but the consummation of Allah's favour on them was (verses 117-118) the Revelation given to them, which guided them on the Straight Way, so long as they preserved the Revelation intact and followed its precepts. The three steps were: (1) the divine commission to Moses and Aaron; (2) the deliverance from bondage; and (3) the triumphant crossing of the Red Sea and the destruction of Pharaoh's army.

4110. *Mustabīn* has a slightly different force from *Mūbīn*. I have translated the former by "which helps to make things clear", and the latter by "which makes things clear",—apt descriptions as applied to the Taurāt and the Qur-ān.

4111. See above, xxxvii. 78-81 and n. 4083.

121. Thus indeed do We reward
Those who do right.
122. For they were two
Of Our believing Servants.
123. So also was Elias⁴¹¹²
Among those sent (by Us).
124. Behold, he said
To his people,
"Will ye not fear (Allah)?
125. "Will ye call upon Baal⁴¹¹³
And forsake the Best
Of Creators,-
126. "Allah, your Lord and Cherisher
And the Lord and Cherisher
Of your fathers of old?"
127. But they rejected him,⁴¹¹⁴
And they will certainly
Be called up (for punishment),
128. Except the chosen
Servants of Allah (among them).

إِنَّا كَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿١٢١﴾

إِنَّهُمْ أَمِينٌ عِبَادُنَا الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٢٢﴾

وَإِنَّ إِلْيَاسَ لَمِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿١٢٣﴾

إِذْ قَالَ لِقَوْمِهِ أَلَأَتُنْفِقُونَ ﴿١٢٤﴾

أَتَدْعُونَ بَعْلًا وَتَذَرُونَ أَحْسَنَ الْخَالِقِينَ ﴿١٢٥﴾

اللَّهُ رَبُّكُمْ وَرَبُّ آبَائِكُمُ الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿١٢٦﴾

فَكَذَّبُوهُ فَأْتَهُم مُّحَضَّرُونَ ﴿١٢٧﴾

إِلَّا عِبَادَ اللَّهِ الْمُخْلَصِينَ ﴿١٢٨﴾

4112. See n. 905 to vi. 85. Elias is the same as Elijah, whose story will be found in the Old Testament in I Kings xvii-xix. and 2 Kings i-ii. Elijah lived in the reign of Ahab (B.C. 896-874) and Ahaziah (B.C. 874-872), kings of the (northern) kingdom of Israel or Samaria. He was a prophet of the desert, like John the Baptist, -unlike our holy Prophet, who took part in, controlled, and guided all the affairs of his people. Both Ahab and Azariah were prone to lapse into the worship of Baal, the sun-god worshipped in Syria. That worship also included the worship of nature-powers and procreative powers, as in the Hindu worship of the Lingam, and led to many abuses. King Ahab had married a princess of Sidon, Jezebel, a wicked woman who led her husband to forsake Allah and adopt Baal-worship. Elijah denounced all Ahab's sins as well as the sins of Ahaziah and had to flee for his life. Eventually, according to the Old Testament (2 Kings, ii-11) he was taken up in a whirlwind to heaven in a chariot of fire after he had left his mantle with Elisha the prophet.

4113. For Baal-worship see last note.

4114. They persecuted him and he had to flee for his life. Eventually he disappeared mysteriously; see n. 4112.

129. And We left
For him among generations⁴¹¹⁵
(To come) in later times:
130. "Peace and salutation
To such as Elias!"^{4115.A}
131. Thus indeed do We reward
Those who do right.
132. For he was one
Of Our believing Servants.
133. So also was Lūt⁴¹¹⁶
Among those sent (by Us).
134. Behold, We delivered him
And his adherents, all
135. Except an old woman
Who was among those
Who lagged behind:⁴¹¹⁷
136. Then We destroyed
The rest.
137. Verily, ye pass⁴¹¹⁸
By their (sites),
By day—

وَرَكْنَا عَلَيْهِ فِي الْآخِرِينَ ﴿١٢٩﴾
سَلَامٌ عَلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ ﴿١٣٠﴾
إِنَّا كَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿١٣١﴾
إِنَّهُ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٣٢﴾
وَإِنَّ لُوطًا لِّمِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿١٣٣﴾
إِذْ بَجَّيْنَاهُ وَأَهْلَهُ أَجْمَعِينَ ﴿١٣٤﴾
إِلَّا عَجُوزًا فِي الْغَابِرِينَ ﴿١٣٥﴾
ثُمَّ دَمَرْنَا الْآخَرِينَ ﴿١٣٦﴾
وَالْيَاكُوفُ لَهُمْ مَصْبِحِينَ ﴿١٣٧﴾

4115. See above, xxxvii. 78-81, and n. 4083.

4115-A. *Ilyāsīn* may be an alternative form of *Ilyās*: Cf. *Saināa* (xxiii. 20) and *Sīnīn* (xcv. 2). Or it may be the plural of *Ilyās*, meaning "such people as *Ilyās*".

4116. The best illustration of this passage about Lūt will be found in vii. 80-84. He was a prophet sent to Sodom and Gomorrah, Cities of the Plain, by the Dead Sea. The inhabitants were given over to abominable crimes, against which he preached. They insulted him and threatened to expel him. But Allah in His mercy saved him and his family (with one exception, see the following note), and then destroyed the Cities.

4117. Cf. vii. 83, and n. 1051. Lot's wife had no faith: she lagged behind, and perished in the general ruin.

4118. Cf. xv. 76, and n. 1998. The tract where they lay is situated on the highway to Syria where the Arab caravans travelled regularly, "by day and by night". Could not future generations learn wisdom from the destruction of those who did wrong?

138. And by night:
Will ye not understand?

وَبِالْأَيْلِ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿١٣٨﴾

SECTION 5.

139. So also was Jonah⁴¹¹⁹
Among those sent (by Us).

وَأَنَّ يُوسُفَ لَمِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿١٣٩﴾

140. When he ran away
(Like a slave from captivity)⁴¹²⁰
To the ship (fully) laden,

إِذْ أَتَى إِلَى الْفُلِّ الْمَشْحُونِ ﴿١٤٠﴾

141. He (agreed to) cast lots,⁴¹²¹
And he was of the rebutted:

فَسَاهَمَ فَكَانَ مِنَ الْمُدْحَضِينَ ﴿١٤١﴾

142. Then the big Fish⁴¹²²
Did swallow him,
And he had done⁴¹²³
Acts worthy of blame.

فَالْقَمَّةَ الْخَوْثُ وَهُوَ مُلِيمٌ ﴿١٤٢﴾

4119. For illustrative passages, see xxi. 87-88, n. 2744, and lxviii. 48-50. Jonah's mission was to the city of Nineveh, then steeped in wickedness. He was rejected and he denounced Allah's wrath on them, but they repented and obtained Allah's forgiveness. But Jonah "departed in wrath" (xxi. 87), forgetting that Allah has Mercy as well as forgiveness. See the notes following. Cf. x. 98, n. 1478.

4120. Jonah ran away from Nineveh like a slave from captivity. He should have stuck to his post. He was hasty, and went off to take a ship. As if he could escape from Allah's Plan!

4121. The ship was fully laden and met foul weather. The sailors, according to their superstition, wanted to find out who was responsible for the ill-luck: a fugitive slave would cause such ill-luck. The lot fell on Jonah, and he was cast off.

4122. The rivers of Mesopotamia have some huge fishes. The word used here is *Hūt*, which may be a fish or perhaps a crocodile. If it were in an open northern sea, it might be a whale. The locality is not mentioned: in the Old Testament he is said to have taken ship in the port of Joppa (now Jaffa) in the Mediterranean (Jonah, i. 3), which would be not less than 600 miles from Nineveh. The Tigris river, mentioned by some of our Commentators, is more likely, and it contains some fishes of extraordinary size.

4123. See n. 4120.

143. Had it not been
That he (repented and)
Glorified Allah,⁴¹²⁴
144. He would certainly have
Remained inside the Fish⁴¹²⁵
Till the Day of Resurrection.
145. But We cast him forth
On the naked shore
In a state of sickness,⁴¹²⁶
146. And We caused to grow,
Over him, a spreading plant
Of the Gourd kind.
147. And We sent him
(On a mission)
To a hundred thousand⁴¹²⁷
(Men) or more.
148. And they believed;
So We permitted them
To enjoy (their life)⁴¹²⁸
For a while.

﴿١٤٣﴾ فَلَوْلَا أَنَّهُ كَانَ مِنَ الْمُسَبِّحِينَ

﴿١٤٤﴾ لَلْبَثِّ فِي بَطْنِهِ إِلَى يَوْمِ يُبْعَثُونَ

﴿١٤٥﴾ ﴿فَبَذَلْنَاهُ بِالْعَرَاءِ وَهُوَ سَقِيمٌ﴾

﴿١٤٦﴾ وَأَبْلَسْنَا عَلَيْهِ شَجَرَةً مِّنْ يَقْطِينٍ

﴿١٤٧﴾ وَأَرْسَلْنَاهُ إِلَى مِائَةِ أَلْفٍ أَوْ يَزِيدُونَ

﴿١٤٨﴾ فَآمَنُوا فَمَتَّعْنَاهُمْ إِلَىٰ حِينٍ

4124. "But he cried through the depths of darkness, 'There is no god but Thee: glory to Thee! I was indeed wrong!'" (xxi. 87).

4125. This is just the idiom. This was to be the burial and the grave of Jonah. If he had not repented, he could not have got out of the body of the creature that had swallowed him, until the Day of Resurrection, when all the dead would be raised up.

4126. Cf. xxxvii. 89 above. His strange situation might well have caused him to be ill. He wanted fresh air and solitude. He got both in the open plain, and the abundantly shady Gourd Plant or some fruitful tree like it gave him both shade and sustenance. The Gourd is a creeper that can spread over any roof or ruined structure.

4127. The city of Nineveh was a very large city. The Old Testament says: "Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three days' journey" (Jonah, iii. 3); "wherein are more than six score thousand persons" (Jonah, iv. 11). In other words its circuit was about 45 miles, and its population was over a hundred and twenty thousand inhabitants.

4128. They repented and believed, and Nineveh got a new lease of life. For the dates to which Jonah may be referred, and the vicissitudes of the City's history as the seat of the Assyrian Empire, see notes 1478-79 to x. 98.

149. Now ask them their opinion:⁴¹²⁹

Is it that thy Lord
Has (only) daughters, and they
Have sons?—

فَأَسْأَلْتَهُمُ الرِّبَّكَ الْبَنَاتُ وَلَهُمْ

الْبَنُونَ ﴿١٤٩﴾

150. Or that We created
The angels female, and they
Are witnesses (thereto)?

أَمْ خَلَقْنَا الْمَلَائِكَةَ إِنَاثًا وَهُمْ

شَاهِدُونَ ﴿١٥٠﴾

151. Behold they
Say, out of their own invention,

أَلَا إِنَّهُمْ مِنْ إِفْكِهِمْ لَيَقُولُونَ ﴿١٥١﴾

152. "Allah has begotten children"?⁴¹³⁰
But they are liars!

وَلَدَ اللَّهُ وَلَيْتَهُمْ لَكَذِبُونَ ﴿١٥٢﴾

153. Did He (then) choose⁴¹³¹
Daughters rather than sons?

أَصْطَفَى الْبَنَاتِ عَلَى الْبَنِينَ ﴿١٥٣﴾

154. What is the matter
With you? How judge ye?

مَا لَكُمْ كَيْفَ تَحْكُمُونَ ﴿١٥٤﴾

155. Will ye not then
Receive admonition?

أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿١٥٥﴾

156. Or have ye
An authority manifest?

أَمْ لَكُمْ سُلْطَانٌ مُبِينٌ ﴿١٥٦﴾

157. Then bring ye your Book
(Of authority) if ye be
Truthful!

فَأْتُوا بِكِتَابِكُمْ إِن كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿١٥٧﴾

= The lessons from Jonah's story are: (1) that no man should take upon himself to judge of Allah's wrath or Allah's mercy; (2) that nevertheless Allah forgives true repentance, whether in a righteous man, or in a wicked city; and (3) that Allah's Plan will always prevail, and can never be defeated.

4129. We begin a new argument here. The Pagan Arabs called angels daughters of Allah. They themselves were ashamed of having daughters, and preferred to have sons, to add to their power and dignity. See xvi. 57-59, and n. 2082. Yet they invented daughters for Allah!

4130. Any attribution to Allah of ideas derogatory to His Oneness and His supreme height above all creatures is likely to degrade our own conception of Allah's Universal plan, and is condemned in the strongest terms.

4131. There is the strongest irony in this passage.

158. And they have invented
A kinship⁴¹³²
Between Him and the Jinns:
But the Jinns know
(Quite well) that they
Will be brought
Before Him.

وَجَعَلُوا بَيْنَهُ وَبَيْنَ الْجَنَّةِ نَسَبًا وَلَقَدْ عَلِمَتِ الْجِنَّةُ
إِنَّهُمْ لَمُحْضُرُونَ ﴿١٥٨﴾

159. Glory to Allah! (He is free)
From the things they ascribe
(To Him)!

سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ عَمَّا يُصِفُونَ ﴿١٥٩﴾

160. Not (so do) the Servants
Of Allah, the chosen ones.⁴¹³³

إِلَّا عِبَادَ اللَّهِ الْمُخْلَصِينَ ﴿١٦٠﴾

161. For, verily, neither ye
Nor those ye worship

فَأَن تَكُومُوا تَعْبُدُونَ ﴿١٦١﴾

162. Can lead (any)⁴¹³⁴
Into temptation
Concerning Allah,

مَا أَنتُمْ عَلَيْهِ بِفَتَنِينَ ﴿١٦٢﴾

163. Except such as are
(Themselves) going to
The blazing Fire!

إِلَّا مَن هُوَ صَالٍ الْجَحِيمِ ﴿١٦٣﴾

164. (The angels)⁴¹³⁵
"Not one of us but has
A place appointed;

وَمَا مِنَّا إِلَّا لَهُ مَقَامٌ مَّعْلُومٌ ﴿١٦٤﴾

4132. The angels are at least pure beings engaged in the service of Allah. But the Pagan superstitions not only connect them with Allah as daughters but even connect Allah by relationship with all kinds of spirits, good or evil! In some mythologies the most evil powers are gods or goddesses as if they belonged to the family of Allah the Creator and had some semblance of equality with Him! This, too, is repudiated in the strongest terms.

For Jinns see n. 929 to vi. 100.

4133. Those sincere in devotion to Allah never ascribe such degrading ideas to Allah.

4134. Evil has no power over faith, truth, and sincerity. Such power as it has is over those who deliberately put themselves in the way of Destruction. It is their own will that leads them astray. If they were fortified against Evil by Faith, Patience, and Constancy, Evil would have no power to hurt them. Allah would protect them.

4135. To round off the argument of the Sūra we go back to the idea with which it began. Those who range themselves in ranks for the united service of Allah (see above, xxxvii. 1 and n. 4031)—whether angels or men of God—are content to keep their ranks =

165. "And we are verily
Ranged in ranks (for service);

وَاِنَّا لَنَحْنُ الصّٰفُّوْنَ ﴿١٦٥﴾

166. "And we are verily those
Who declare (Allah's) glory!"

وَاِنَّا لَنَحْنُ الْمُسَبِّحُوْنَ ﴿١٦٦﴾

167. And there were those⁴¹³⁶
Who said,

وَإِنْ كَانُوا لَيَقُولُنَّ ﴿١٦٧﴾

168. "If only we had had
Before us a Message
From those of old,

لَوْ اَنْ عِنْدَنَا ذِكْرٌ مِّنْ الْاَوَّلِيْنَ ﴿١٦٨﴾

169. "We should certainly have
Been Servants of Allah,⁴¹³⁷
Sincere (and devoted)!"

لَكُنَّا عِبَادَ اللّٰهِ الْمُخْلِصِيْنَ ﴿١٦٩﴾

170. But (now that the Qur-ān
Has come), they reject it:
But soon will they know!⁴¹³⁸

فَكُفِّرُوا بِهٖٓ فَسَوْفَ يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿١٧٠﴾

171. Already has Our Word
Been passed before (this)
To Our Servants sent (by Us),

وَلَقَدْ سَبَقَتْ لَكُمْ نَا اِلٰهِنَا الرِّسَالُ ﴿١٧١﴾

172. That they would certainly
Be assisted,

اِنَّهُمْ لَمِنَ الْمَنْصُورُوْنَ ﴿١٧٢﴾

= and do whatever service is assigned to them. It is not for them to question Allah's Plan, because they know that it is good and that it will ultimately triumph. Any seeming delays or defeats do not worry them. Nor do they ever break their ranks.

4136. There were the sceptics or Unbelievers,—primarily the Pagan Arabs, but in a more extended sense, all who doubt Allah's providence or revelation.

4137. Such men take refuge in ancestral tradition. 'If our forefathers had had an inkling of Revelation or miracles, or had worshipped as we are now taught to worship, we should gladly have accepted. Or if they had had anything of the miracles which other nations of old are said to have received, we could then have accepted.' But now stronger and more convincing proofs have come to them in the Qur-ān in their own tongue, and they doubt and reject it.

4138. Allah's Truth will manifest itself against all odds, and the whole world will see.

173. And that Our forces,⁴¹³⁹
They surely must conquer.

وَلَنْ جُنْدَنَا لَهُمُ الْغَالِبُونَ ﴿١٧٣﴾

174. So turn thou away⁴¹⁴⁰
From them for a little while,

فَوَلَّ عَنْهُمْ حَتَّىٰ حِينٍ ﴿١٧٤﴾

175. And watch them (how⁴¹⁴¹
They fare), and they soon
Shall see (how thou farest)!

وَأَبْصِرْهُمْ فَسَوْفَ يُبْصِرُونَ ﴿١٧٥﴾

176. Do they wish (indeed)⁴¹⁴²
To hurry on our Punishment?

أَفِعْدَا إِنَّا يَسْتَعْجِلُونَ ﴿١٧٦﴾

177. But when it descends
Upon their courtyards⁴¹⁴³
Before them, Evil will be
The morning for those who
Were warned (and heeded not)!

فَإِذَا نَزَلَ بِسَاحَتِهِمْ فَسَاءَ صَبَاحُ الْمُنْذَرِينَ ﴿١٧٧﴾

178. So turn thou away⁴¹⁴⁴
From them for a little while,

وَوَلَّ عَنْهُمْ حَتَّىٰ حِينٍ ﴿١٧٨﴾

4139. The victory will be the victory of Allah's Truth by the forces of Allah, but every soldier in the army of Truth, who has done his duty, will be entitled to claim a share in the victory.

4140. Addressed in the first instance to the holy Prophet, but good for all time. He was not to be discouraged by his initial failures. Soon came victory to him from Allah. So is it always in the struggles of truth and righteousness. The righteous can afford to ignore opposition, confident in the strength which comes from the Grace of Allah.

4141. Watch and wait, for the Right must come to its own.

4142. The last verse enjoined Patience under the attacks of Evil, in the knowledge that evil must be conquered at last. Evil may perhaps turn back scoffingly and say, 'If a punishment is to come, why not bring it on now?' Why indeed? The answer is: when it comes, it will come like a rush by night when the enemy is overpowered, when he least expects it: when the day dawns, it is a sorry plight in which the enemy finds himself. Cf. xxii. 47, and n. 2826; and xxvi. 204, n. 3230.

4143. See last note. The parable is that of an enemy camp in a plain, which is surprised and destroyed by a night attack from the hills. Evil is the plight of any survivors in the morning. Their regrets will be all the more poignant if they had had some sort of a warning before hand and had paid no heed to it!

4144. This and the following verse repeat verses 174-75 (with a slight verbal alteration). The argument in verses 176-77 brought in a new point. When that is finished, the repetition carries us back to the main argument, and rounds off the whole Sūra.

179. And watch (how they fare)
And they soon shall see
(How thou farest)!

وَأَنصِرْفَسُوفَ يُبْصِرُونَ ﴿١٧٩﴾

180. Glory to thy Lord,⁴¹⁴⁵
The Lord of Honour
And Power! (He is free)
From what they ascribe
(To Him)!

سُبْحَنَ رَبِّكَ رَبِّ الْعِزَّةِ عَمَّا يَصِفُونَ ﴿١٨٠﴾

181. And Peace on the messengers!

وَسَلَامٌ عَلَى الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿١٨١﴾

182. And Praise to Allah,
The Lord and Cherisher
Of the Worlds.

وَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٨٢﴾

4145. This and the following two verses recapitulate: (1) Glory, Honour, and Power belong to Allah; (2) No one is equal to Him; (3) He sends messengers and revelations, and His aid will overcome all obstacles; for (4) He loves and cherishes all His Creation.