

INTRODUCTION TO SŪRAT *Ṭā Hā*, 20.

The chronology of this Sūra has some significance: it has some relation to the religious lessons which it teaches.

It was used with great effect in that remarkable scene which resulted in Hadhrat 'Umar's conversion, and which took place about the seventh year before the Hijrat.

The scene is described with dramatic details by Ibn Hishām, 'Umar had previously been one of the greatest enemies and persecutors of Islam. Like his blood-thirsty kinsmen the Quraish, he meditated slaying the Prophet, when it was suggested to him that there were near relations of his that had embraced Islam. His sister Fātima and her husband Sa'ād were Muslims, but in those days of persecution they had kept their faith secret. When 'Umar went to their house, he heard them reciting this Sūra from a written copy they had. For a while they concealed the copy. 'Umar attacked his sister and her husband, but they bore the attack with exemplary patience, and declared their faith. 'Umar was so struck with their sincerity and fortitude that he asked to see the leaf from which they had been reading. It was given to him: his soul was touched, and he not only came into the Faith but became one of its strongest supporters and champions.

The leaf contained some portion of this Sūra, perhaps the introductory portion. The letters *Ṭā Hā* are prefixed to this Sūra. What do they mean? The earliest tradition is that they denote a dialectical interjection meaning "O man!". It takes up the story from the last Sūra, of man as a religious being and illustrates it in further details. It tells the story of Moses in the crisis of his life when he received Allah's Commission and in his personal relations with his mother, and how he came to be brought up in the Pharaoh's house, to learn all the wisdom of the Egyptians, for use in Allah's service, and in his personal relations with Pharaoh, whom we take to be his adoptive father (xxviii. 9). It further tells the story of a fallen soul who misled the Israelites into idolatry, and recalls how man's Arch-enemy Satan caused his fall. Prayer and praise are necessary to man to cure his spiritual blindness and enable him to appreciate Allah's revelation.

Summary.—The revelation of Allah (the Qur-ān) is not an occasion of distress, but is a gift of mercy from Allah Most Gracious (xx. 1-8)

How Moses was first chosen, and led to his mission to Pharaoh with his brother Aaron (xx. 9-36).

How the mother of Moses was directed to cast the infant Moses into the river, to be brought up in Pharaoh's house under Allah's own supervision, in order to preach to Pharaoh and declare Allah's glory (xx. 37-76).

How Moses was directed to lead his people and quell their rebellious spirit, and how that spirit was stirred up by Sāmirī (xx. 77-104).

On the Day of Judgment personal responsibility will be enforced, and Allah's Truth acknowledged: man should guard against Adam's enemy, Satan, and should renounce vanities, purify himself with prayer and praise, and await the call to Allah (xx. 105-135).

Tā-Hā.

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

1. Tā-Hā.²⁵³⁴
2. We have not sent down
The Qur-ān to thee to be
(An occasion) for thy distress,²⁵³⁵
3. But only as an admonition
To those who fear (Allah),-
4. A revelation from Him
Who created the earth
And the heavens on high.
5. The Most Gracious²⁵³⁶
Is firmly established
On the throne.
6. To Him belongs what is
In the heavens and on earth,
And all between them,
And all beneath the soil.²⁵³⁷
7. If thou pronounce the word
Aloud, (it is no matter):

سُورَةُ طه

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

طه ١

مَا أَنزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْقُرْآنَ لِتَشْقَى ١

إِلَّا نَذِيرٌ لِّمَنِ يَخْشَى ٢

تَنزِيلًا مِّمَّنْ خَلَقَ الْأَرْضَ وَالسَّمَوَاتِ الْعُلَى ٣

الرَّحْمَنُ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ اسْتَوَى ٤

لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ
وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا وَمَا تَحْتَ الثَّرَى ٥

وَإِنْ يُجْهَرُ بِالْقَوْلِ فَإِنَّهُ يَعْلَمُ السِّرَ وَأَخْفَى ٦

2534. For an explanation see the Introduction to this Sura.

2535. Allah's revelation may cause some human trouble for two reasons: (1) it checks man's selfishness and narrowness of view, and (2) it annoys the wicked and causes them to jeer and persecute. These are mere incidental things, due to man's own shortcomings. As far as the trouble is concerned, the revelation is meant to give a warning, so that persecutors may be reclaimed, (and of course for men of faith it is comfort and consolation, though that point does not arise in this context).

2536. Cf. x. 3. n. 1386. If things seem to be wrong in our imperfect vision on this earth, we must remember Allah, Who encompasses all Creation and sits on the throne of Grace and Mercy, is in command, and our Faith tells us that all must be right. Allah's authority is not like an authority on earth, which may be questioned, or which may not last. His authority is "firmly established".

2537. An exhaustive definition of everything we can conceive of-what is in the heavens, on the earth, or between, or within the bowels of the earth.

For verily He knoweth
What is secret and what
Is yet more hidden.²⁵³⁸

8. Allah! there is no god
But He! To Him belong
The Most Beautiful Names.²⁵³⁹

9. Was the story of Moses²⁵⁴⁰
Reached thee?

10. Behold, he saw a fire:²⁵⁴¹
So he said to his family,
"Tarry ye; I perceive
A fire; perhaps I can
Bring you some burning brand

اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ لَهُ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَى ﴿٨﴾

وَهَلْ أَتَاكَ حَدِيثُ مُوسَى ﴿٩﴾

إِذْ رَأَى نَارًا فَقَالَ لِأَهْلِهِ امْكُثُوا إِنِّي آنَسْتُ نَارًا
لَعَلِّي آتِيكُمْ مِنْهَا بِخَبَرٍ أَوْ بَرُءٍ
عَلَى النَّارِ هُدًى ﴿١٠﴾

2538. There are two or three implications. (1) Whatever you profess, or say aloud, gives no information to Allah: He knows not only what is secret and perhaps unknown to others, but what people take special care to conceal. (2) It does you no good to make insincere professions: your hidden motives are known to Him, Who alone matters. (3) If you read the Word of Allah, or if you pray to Allah, it is not necessary to raise your voice: in either case, Allah will judge you by your inner thoughts which are like an open book to Him.

2539. Cf. xvii. 110 and n. 2322. Allah is The One and the most beautiful things we can think of are referable to Him. His names refer to His attributes which are like titles of Honour and Glory.

2540. The story of Moses in its different incidents is told in many places in the Qur-ān, and in each case the phase most appropriate in the context is referred to or emphasised. In ii. 49-61, it was a phase from the religious history of mankind; in vii. 103-162, it was a phase from the story of the Ummat (or nation) of Israel, and the story was continued to the times after Moses, in xvii. 101-103, we have a picture of the decline of a soul in the arrogance of Pharaoh; here, in xx. 9-24, we have a picture of the rise of a soul in the commission given to Moses from Allah; in xx. 25-36, we have his spiritual relationship with his brother Aaron; in xx. 37-40, we have his spiritual relation with his mother and sister, and his upbringing; in xx. 41-76, we have his spiritual combat with Pharaoh; and in xx. 77-98, we have his spiritual combat with his own people, the Israelites. For other incidents, consult the Index.

2541. A fire: It appeared like an ordinary fire, which always betokens the presence of men in a desert or a lonely place. Moses made for it alone, to fetch the wherewithal for making a fire for his family, and perhaps to find some direction as to the way, from the people he should meet there. But it was not an ordinary fire. It was a Burning Bush: a Sign of the Glory of Allah.

Therefrom, or find some guidance
At the fire."²⁵⁴²

11. But when he came
To the fire, He was
Called "O Moses!

فَلَمَّا أَنهَا تُورِي يَمُوسَى ﴿١١﴾

12. "Verily I am thy Lord!
Therefore²⁵⁴³
Put off thy shoes: thou art
In the sacred valley Tuwā.²⁵⁴⁴

إِنِّي أَنَا رَبُّكَ فَأَخْلَعْ نَعْلَيْكَ إِنَّكَ بِالْوَادِ الْمُقَدَّسِ
طُوًى ﴿١٢﴾

13. "I have chosen thee:
Listen, then to the inspiration
(Given to thee).

وَأَنَا اخْتَرْتُكَ فَاسْتَمِعْ لِمَا يُوحَى ﴿١٣﴾

14. "Verily, I am Allah:
There is no god but I:
So serve thou Me (only),
And establish regular prayer
For My remembrance.

إِنِّي أَنَا اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنَا
فَاعْبُدْنِي وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِذِكْرِي ﴿١٤﴾

15. "Verily the Hour is coming—²⁵⁴⁵
I have almost kept it
Hidden—²⁵⁴⁶ for every soul

إِنَّ السَّاعَةَ ءَآيَةٌ أَكَادُ أَخْفِيهَا
لَتُجْزَى كُلُّ نَفْسٍ بِمَا تَسْعَى ﴿١٥﴾

2542. The spiritual history of Moses begins here. It was the beginning of his mission. His physical life, infancy, and upbringing are referred to later on, to illustrate another point. Moses, when he grew up, left the palace of Pharaoh and went to the Midianite people, in the Sinai peninsula. He married among them, and was now travelling with his family, when he was called to his mission by Allah. He went to look for a fire for comfort and guidance. He found a higher and holier comfort and guidance. The whole passage is full of portent meaning, which is reflected in the short rhymed verses in the original.

2543. The shoes are to be put off as a mark of respect. Moses was now to put away his mere worldly interests, he having been chosen by Allah, the Most High.

2544. This was the valley just below Mount Sinai, where subsequently he was to receive the Torah.

2545. The first need is to mend our lives and worship and serve Allah, as in the last verse. The next is to realise the meaning of the Hereafter, when every soul will get the meed of its conduct in this life.

2546. *Ukhft* may mean either "keep it hidden", or "make it manifest", and the Commentators have taken, some one meaning and some the other. If the first is taken, it means that the exact hour or day when the Judgment comes is hidden from man; if =

To receive its reward
By the measure of
Its Endeavour.

16. "Therefore let not such as
Believe not therein
But follow their own
Lusts, divert thee therefrom,²⁵⁴⁷
Lest thou perish!"...

فَلَا يَصُدُّكَ عَنْهَا مَنْ لَا يُؤْمِنُ بِهَا
وَاتَّبَعَ هَوَاهُ فَتَرْدَى ﴿١٦﴾

17. "And what is that
In thy right hand,
O Moses?"

وَمَا تِلْكَ بِيَمِينِكَ يَا مُوسَى ﴿١٧﴾

18. He said, "It is²⁵⁴⁸
My rod: on it
I lean; with it
I beat down fodder
For my flocks; and
In it I find
Other uses."

قَالَ هِيَ عَصَايَ أَتَوَكَّؤُا عَلَيْهَا
وَأَهْشُرُ بِهَا عَلَى غَنَمِي وَلِي فِيهَا مَنَازِبُ أُخْرَى ﴿١٨﴾

19. (Allah) said, "Throw it,
O Moses!"

قَالَ أَلْقِهَا يَا مُوسَى ﴿١٩﴾

20. He threw it, and behold!
It was a snake,
Active in motion.²⁵⁴⁹

فَالْقَمْهَا فَاذَاهِيَ حَيَّةٌ تَسْعَى ﴿٢٠﴾

= the second, it means that the fact of the Judgment to come is made known, that man may remember and take warning. I think that both meanings are implied.

2547. Moses had yet to meet the formidable opposition of the arrogant, Pharaoh and his proud Egyptians, and latter, the rebellion of his own people. In receiving his commission, he is warned of both dangers. This relates to man's own soul: when once the light reaches him, let him hold fast to it lest he perish. He will be beset with dangers of all kinds around him; the worst will be the danger of unbelieving people who seem to thrive on their selfishness and in following their own vain desires!

2548. Now comes the miracle of the rod. First of all, the attention of Moses himself is drawn to it, and he thinks of the ordinary uses to which he puts it in his daily life.

2549. Cf. vii. 107, where a different word (*thu'bān* is used for "snake", and the qualifying adjective is "plain (for all to see)". The scene there is before Pharaoh and his magicians and people: the object is to show the hollowness of their magic by a miracle: the rod appears before them as a long and creeping writhing serpent. Here there is a =

21. (Allah) said, "Seize it,
And fear not: We
Shall return it at once
To its former condition"...

قَالَ خُذْهَا وَلَا تَخَفْ سَنُعِيدُهَا
سِيرَتَهَا الْأُولَى ﴿٢١﴾

22. "Now draw thy hand²⁵⁵⁰
Close to thy side:
It shall come forth white
(And shining), without harm
(Or stain),—as another Sign,—

وَأَضْمُ يَدَكَ إِلَى جَنَاحِكَ تَخْرُجُ بَيَاضًا
مِنْ غَيْرِ سَوْءٍ آيَةٍ أُخْرَى ﴿٢٢﴾

23. "In order that We
May show thee
Of our Greater Signs.

لِنُرِيكَ مِنْ آيَاتِنَا الْكُبْرَى ﴿٢٣﴾

24. "Go thou to Pharaoh,²⁵⁵¹
For he has indeed
Transgressed all bounds."

اذْهَبْ إِلَى فِرْعَوْنَ إِنَّهُ طَغَى ﴿٢٤﴾

SECTION 2.

25. (Moses) said: "O my Lord!
Expand me my breast,²⁵⁵²

قَالَ رَبِّ اشْرَحْ لِي صَدْرِي ﴿٢٥﴾

= sign to present Allah's power to Moses's mind and understanding: the rod becomes a *Haiy* (a live snake), and its *active* motion is what is most to be impressed on the mind of Moses, for there were no other spectators.

2550. The second of the greater Miracles shown to Moses was the "White (shining) Hand". Ordinarily, when the skin becomes white, it is a sign of disease, leprosy or something loathsome. Here there was no question of disease: on the contrary, the hand was glorified, and it shone as with a divine light. Such a miracle was beyond Egyptian or human magic.

2551. Moses, having been spiritually prepared now gets his definite commission to go to Pharaoh and point out the error of his ways. So inordinate was Pharaoh's vanity that he had it in his mind to say: "I am your Lord Most High!" (Ixxix. 24).

2552. The breast is reputed to be the seat of knowledge and affections. The gift of the highest spiritual insight is what he prays for first. Cf. xciv. 1. This was the most urgent in point of time. There are three other things he also asks for: viz. (1) Allah's help in his task, which at first appears difficult to him, (2) the gift of eloquence, and the removal of the impediment from his speech; and (3) the counsel and constant attendance with him of his brother Aaron, whom he loved and trusted, for he would otherwise be alone among the Egyptians.

26. "Ease my task for me;

وَيَسِّرْ لِي أَمْرِي ﴿٦٦﴾

27. "And remove the impediment²⁵⁵³
From my speech,

وَأَحْلِلْ عُقْدَةً مِنْ لِسَانِي ﴿٦٧﴾

28. "So they may understand
What I say:

يَفْقَهُوا قَوْلِي ﴿٦٨﴾

29. "And give me a Minister
From my family,

وَأَجْعَلْ لِي وَزِيرًا مِنْ أَهْلِي ﴿٦٩﴾

30. "Aaron, my brother;

هَارُونَ أَخِي ﴿٧٠﴾

31. "Add to my strength²⁵⁵⁴
Through him.

أَشْدِّدْ بِهِ أَزْرِي ﴿٧١﴾

32. "And make him share
My task:

وَأَشْرِكْهُ فِي أَمْرِي ﴿٧٢﴾

33. "That we may celebrate²⁵⁵⁵
Thy praise without stint,

كَيْ نُسَبِّحَكَ كَثِيرًا ﴿٧٣﴾

34. "And remember Thee
Without stint:

وَنَذْكُرَكَ كَثِيرًا ﴿٧٤﴾

35. "For Thou art ever seeing²⁵⁵⁶

إِنَّكَ كُنْتَ بِمَا بَصِيرًا ﴿٧٥﴾

36. (Allah) said: "Granted
Is thy prayer, O Moses!"

قَالَ قَدْ أُوتِيتَ سُؤْلَكَ يَمُوسَى ﴿٧٦﴾

37. "And indeed We conferred
A favour on thee
Another time (before).

وَلَقَدْ مَنَّا عَلَيْكَ مَرَّةً أُخْرَى ﴿٧٧﴾

2553. Literally, "Loosen a knot from my tongue".

2554. Literally, "Strengthen my back with him". A man's strength lies in his back and backbone so that he can stand erect and boldly face his tasks.

2555. The requests that Moses makes are inspired, not by earthly but by spiritual motives. The motive, expressed in the most general terms, is to glorify Allah, not in an occasional way, but systematically and continuously, "without stint". The clauses in this verse and the next, taken together, govern all the requests he makes, from verse 25 to verse 32.

2556. The celebration of Allah's praise and remembrance is one form of showing gratitude on the part of Moses for the Grace which Allah has bestowed upon him.

38. "Behold! We sent²⁵⁵⁷
To thy mother, by inspiration,
The message:

39. " 'Throw (the child)
Into the chest, and throw
(The chest) into the river:
The river will cast him
Up on the bank, and he
Will be taken up by one
Who is an enemy to Me
And an enemy to him':²⁵⁵⁸
But I endured thee with love
From Me:²⁵⁵⁹
And (this) in order that
Thou mayest be reared
Under Mine eye.²⁵⁶⁰

إِذَا وَحْيَنَا إِلَىٰ أُمِّكَ مَا يُوحَىٰ ﴿٣٨﴾

أَنِ اقْذِفِيهِ فِي التَّابُوتِ فَاقْذِفِيهِ فِي الْيَمِّ فَلْيُلْقِهِ الْيَمُّ
بِالسَّاحِلِ يَأْخُذْهُ عَدُوٌّ لِّي وَعَدُوٌّ لَهُ ۚ وَالْقَيْتُ
عَلَيْكَ مَحَبَّةً مِنِّي وَلِئُصْنَعَ عَلَىٰ عَيْنِي ﴿٣٩﴾

2557. The story is not told, but only those salient points recapitulated which bear on the upbringing and work of Moses. Long after the age of Joseph, who had been a Wazir to one of the Pharaohs, there came on the throne of Egypt a Pharaoh who hated the Israelites and wanted them annihilated. He ordered Israelite male children to be killed when they were born. Moses's mother hid him for a time, but when further concealment was impossible, a thought came into her mind that she should put her child into a chest and send the chest floating down the Nile. This was not merely a foolish fancy of hers. It was Allah's Plan to bring up Moses in all the learning of the Egyptians, in order that that learning itself should be used to expose what was wrong in it and to advance the glory of Allah. The chest was floated into the river Nile. It flowed on into a stream that passed through Pharaoh's Garden. It was picked up by Pharaoh's people and the child was adopted by Pharaoh's wife. See xxviii. 4-13.

2558. Pharaoh was an enemy to Allah, because he was puffed up and he blasphemed, claiming to be God himself. He was an enemy to the child Moses, because he hated the Israelites and wanted to have their male children killed; also because Moses stood for Allah's revelation to come.

2559. Allah made the child comely and lovable, and he attracted the love of the very people who, on general grounds, would have killed him.

2560. See n. 2558 above. By making the child Moses so attractive as to be adopted into Pharaoh's household, not only was Moses brought up in the best way possible from an earthly point of view, but Allah's special Providence looked after him in bringing his mother to him, as stated in the next verse, and thus nourishing him on his mother's milk and keeping him in touch with his family.

40. "Behold! thy sister goeth forth
And saith, 'Shall I show you
One who will nurse
And rear the (child)?'²⁵⁶¹
So We brought thee back
To thy mother, that her eye²⁵⁶²
Might be cooled and she
Should not grieve.
Then thou didst slay²⁵⁶³
A man, but We saved thee
From trouble, and We tried
Thee in various ways.
Then didst thou tarry

إِذْ تَمْشِي أُخْتُكَ فَتَقُولُ هَلْ أَدُلُّكُمْ
عَلَىٰ مَنْ يَكْفُلُهُ ۖ فَرَجَعْنَاكَ إِلَىٰ أُمِّكَ كَيْ تَقَرَّ عَيْنُهَا
وَلَا تَحْزَنَ ۚ وَفَنَلْتَ نَفْسًا فَجَعَلْنَاكَ مِنَ الْغَيْرِ
وَفَنَّاكَ فُتُونًا ۚ فَلَمِيتَ سِينِينَ ۚ وَفِي أَهْلِ مَدْيَنَ
ثُمَّ جِئْتَ عَلَىٰ قَدَرٍ يَمْوُئُونَ ۖ

2561. We may suppose that the anxious mother, after the child was floated on the water, sent the child's sister to follow the chest from the bank and see where and by whom it was picked up. When it was picked up by Pharaoh's own family and they seemed to love the child, she appeared like a stranger before them, and said, "Shall I search out a good wet-nurse for the child, that she may rear the child you are going to adopt?" That was exactly what they wanted. She ran home and told her mother. The mother was delighted to come and fold the infant in her arms again and feed it at her own breast, and all openly and without any concealment.

2562. The mother's eyes had, we may imagine, been sore with scalding tears at the separation from her baby. Now they were cooled: a phrase meaning that her heart was comforted.

2563. Years passed. The child grew up. In outward learning he was of the house of Pharaoh. In his inner soul and sympathy he was of Israel. One day, he went to the Israelite colony and saw all the Egyptian oppression under which Israel laboured. He saw an Egyptian smiting an Israelite, apparently with impunity. Moses felt brotherly sympathy and smote the Egyptian. He did not intend to kill him, but in fact the Egyptian died of the blow. When this became known, his position in Pharaoh's household became impossible. So he fled out of Egypt, and was only saved by Allah's grace. He fled to the Sinai Peninsula, to the land of the Midianites, and had various adventures. He married one of the daughters of the Midianite chief, and lived with the Medianites for many years, as an Egyptian stranger. He had many trials and temptations, but he retained his integrity of character.

A number of years
With the people of Midian.²⁵⁶⁴
Then didst thou come hither
As ordained, O Moses!

41. "And I have prepared thee
For Myself (for service)"...

42. Go, thou and thy brother,²⁵⁶⁵
With My signs,
And slacken not,
Either of you, in keeping
Me in remembrance.

43. "Go, both of you, to Pharaoh,"²⁵⁶⁶
For he has indeed
Transgressed all bounds;²⁵⁶⁷

وَاصْطَنَعْتُكَ لِنَفْسِي ﴿٤١﴾

اَذْهَبْ اَنْتَ وَاخْوُكَ بِآيَاتِي وَلَا تَنِيَا فِي ذِكْرِي ﴿٤٢﴾

اَذْهَبَا اِلَىٰ فِرْعَوْنَ إِنَّهُ طَغَىٰ ﴿٤٣﴾

2564. See last note. After many years spent in a quiet life, grazing his father-in-law's flocks, he came one day to the valley of Tuwā underneath the great mountain mass of Sinai, called Tūr (in Arabic). The peak on the Arabian side (where Moses was) was called Horeb by the Hebrews. Then was fulfilled Allah's Plan: he saw the fire in the distance, and when he went up, he was addressed by Allah and chosen to be Allah's Messenger for that age.

2565. We may suppose that Moses had fled alone to the land of Midian, and that he had now come alone (with his family but not with his brother) to Tuwā, as described in n. 2542 above. When he was honoured with his mission, and was granted his request that his brother Aaron should accompany him, we may suppose that he took steps to get Aaron to come to him, and their meeting was in Tuwā. Some time may be supposed to have elapsed before they were in Egypt, and then they prayed, and received these directions in their Egyptian home.

Aaron was either an elder or a younger brother,—we are not told which. In either case he was born when the ban on Israelite new-born babes was not in operation. Moses had been out of touch with him, and it speaks greatly for his family affection that he remembered him and prayed for his comradeship in the most serious spiritual work of his life.

2566. Their mission was in the first instance to Pharaoh and to the Egyptians, and then to lead Israel out of Egypt.

2567. Compare the same phrase in xx. 24. Having glanced at the early life of Moses we come back now to the time when Moses's actual ministry begins. The earlier personal story of Moses is rounded off.

44. "But speak to him mildly;
Perchance he may take
Warning or fear (Allah)."²⁵⁶⁸
45. They (Moses and Aaron) said:
"Our Lord! We fear lest
He hasten with insolence²⁵⁶⁹
Against us, or lest he
Transgress all bounds."
46. He said: "Fear not:
For I am with you:
I hear and see (everything)."
47. "So go ye both to him,
And say, 'Verily we are
Messengers sent by thy Lord:
Send forth, therefore, the Children
Of Israel with us, and
Afflict them not;²⁵⁷⁰
With a Sign, indeed,
Have we come from thy Lord!
And Peace to all
Who follow guidance!²⁵⁷¹

فَقُولَا لَهُ قَوْلًا لِّئَلَّا يَعْتَدِيَ عَلَيْنَا أَوْ يَخْشَى ﴿٤٤﴾

فَالَا رَبَّنَا إِنَّا نَخَافُ أَنْ يُقْرِطَ عَلَيْنَا أَوْ أَنْ يَطْغَى ﴿٤٥﴾

قَالَ لَا تَخَافَا إِنِّي مَعَكُمْ أَسْمَعُ وَأَرَى ﴿٤٦﴾

فَأَنبِئَاهُ فَقُولَا إِنَّا رَسُولَا رَبِّكَ فَأَرْسِلْ مَعَنَا
بَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ وَلَا تَعَذِّبْهُمْ قَدْ جِئْنَاكَ بِثَابِتٍ
مِّنْ رَبِّكَ وَالسَّلَامُ عَلَيَّ مَنِ اتَّبَعَ الْهُدَى ﴿٤٧﴾

2568. So far Pharaoh in his inordinate vanity had forgotten himself and forgotten how small a creature he was before Allah. This was to be brought to his recollection, so that he might perhaps repent and believe, or at least be deterred by fear from "transgressing all bounds". Some men eschew wrong from sincere love of Allah and understanding of their fellow-men, and some (of coarser minds) from the fear of consequences. Even the latter conduct may be a step to the former.

2569. They were now in Egypt (see n. 2565 above) and therefore in the power of the Pharaoh. The local atmosphere called for the greatest courage and firmness on their part to carry out the dangerous mission which had been entrusted to them.

2570. The Children of Israel were subjected to all sorts of oppression and indignities. They were given hard tasks; their leaders were unjustly beaten; they were forced to make bricks without straw; and they "groaned in bondage" (Exod. v. 6-19. vi. 5).

2571. Allah, in His infinite Mercy, always offers Peace to the most hardened sinners, even those who are warring against Him. But, as stated in the next verse, their defiance cannot go on with impunity indefinitely. The punishment must inevitably come for sin, whether the sinner is great or small.

48. " 'Verily it has been revealed
To us that the Chastisement
(Awaits) those who reject
And turn away.' "

إِنَّا قَدْ أُوحِيَ إِلَيْنَا أَنَّ الْعَذَابَ عَلَىٰ مَنْ كَذَّبَ
وَتَوَلَّى ﴿٤٨﴾

49. (When this message was delivered).
(Pharaoh) said: "Who then,
O Moses, is the Lord²⁵⁷²
Of you two?"

قَالَ فَمَنْ رَبُّكُمَا يُمُوسَىٰ ﴿٤٩﴾

50. He said: "Our Lord
He Who gave to each
(Created) thing its form
Then,
Gave (it) guidance."²⁵⁷³

قَالَ رَبُّنَا الَّذِي أَعْطَىٰ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلْقَهُ ثُمَّ هَدَىٰ ﴿٥٠﴾

51. (Pharaoh) said: "What then
Is the condition
Of previous generations?"²⁵⁷⁴

قَالَ فَمَا بَالُ الْقُرُونِ الْأُولَىٰ ﴿٥١﴾

2572. Notice how subtly Pharaoh rejects the implication in Moses's speech, in which Moses had referred to "thy Lord" (verse 47). Pharaoh implicitly repudiates the suggestion that the God who had sent Moses and Aaron could possibly be Pharaoh's Lord. He asks insolently, "Who is this Lord of yours, of Whom ye speak as having sent you?"

2573. The answer of Moses is straightforward, dignified, and illuminating. He will not dispute about "my Lord" or "your Lord," the God of Israel, or the God of Egypt. He and his brother were proud to serve "our Lord," but He was the universal Lord and Cherisher, the One and Only God, Who had created all beings and all things. It was from Him that each created thing derived its form and nature, including such free-will and power as man had got. He, Pharaoh, was subject to the same condition. In order that the free-will should be rightly exercised, Allah had given guidance through His Messengers, and His Signs. Moses and Aaron stood as such Messengers, with such Signs. Will Pharaoh now understand and do right?

2574. But Pharaoh was not the man to accept teaching from the despised Israelite-one, too, who in his eyes was a renegade from the higher Egyptian civilisation. "If," he says in effect, "there is only one God, to Whom all things are referred, this is a new religion. What of the religion of our ancestors? Were they wrong in worshipping the Egyptian gods? And if they were wrong, are they in misery now? He wanted to trap Moses into a scathing denunciation of his ancestors, which would at once have deprived him of the sympathy or the hearing of the Egyptian crowd.

52. He replied: "The knowledge
Of that is with my Lord,²⁵⁷⁵
Duly recorded: my Lord
Never errs, nor forgets,—

قَالَ عَلَّمَهَا عِنْدَ رَبِّي فِي كِتَابٍ لَا يَضِلُّ رَبِّي
وَلَا يَنْسَى ﴿٥٢﴾

53. "He Who has made for you
The earth like a carpet
Spread out; has enabled you
To go about therein by roads²⁵⁷⁶
(And channels); and has sent
Down water from the sky."
With it have We produced²⁵⁷⁷
Diverse pairs of plants²⁵⁷⁸
Each separate from the others.

الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْأَرْضَ مَهْدًا وَاسْلَكْ لَكُمْ فِيهَا
سُبُلًا وَأَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَخْرَجْنَا بِهِ
أَزْوَاجًا مِمَّنْ نَبَاتِ شَقَى ﴿٥٣﴾

54. Eat (for yourselves) and pasture
Your cattle: verily, in this
Are Signs for men
Endued with understanding.

كُلُوا وَارْعَوْا أَنْفُسَكُمْ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ
لِّأُولِي النَّهْيِ ﴿٥٤﴾

2575. Moses did not fall into the trap. He remembered the injunction given to him to speak mildly (xx. 44). He speaks mildly, but does not in any way whittle down the truth. He said in effect: 'Allah's knowledge is perfect, as if, with men, it were a record. For men may make mistakes or may not remember, but Allah never mistakes and never forgets. But Allah is not only All-Knowing: He is also All-Good. Look around you: the whole earth is spread out like a carpet. Men go to and fro in it freely. He sends abundance of water from the skies, which comes down in Nile floods and fertilises the whole soil of Egypt, and feeds men and animals.'

2576. *Sabil* means not only a road, but would include water-roads or channels, and in modern conditions, airways—in fact all means of communication.

2577. This seems to be outside the speech of Moses, and connects itself with the following verses 54-56, as part of the Word of Allah, expanding the speech of Moses and explaining the working of Allah's Providence in nature.

2578. *Azwāj*: we might translate here (as in xv. 88) by "classes" instead of "pairs"; but as sex in plants seems to be referred to elsewhere (see xiii. 3, and n. 1804), I translate "pairs".

SECTION 3.

55. From the (earth) did We
Create you, and into it
Shall We return you,
And from it shall We
Bring you out once again.²⁵⁷⁹

مِنْهَا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ وَفِيهَا نُعِيدُكُمْ
وَمِنْهَا نُخْرِجُكُمْ تَارَةً أُخْرَى ﴿٥٥﴾

56. And We showed Pharaoh
All Our Signs, but he
Did reject and refuse.²⁵⁸⁰

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا إِلَىٰ آلِ فِرْعَوْنَ كُلِّهَا فَأَكْذَبُوا وَآبَىٰ ﴿٥٦﴾

57. He said: "Hast thou come
To drive us out
Of our land with thy magic,²⁵⁸¹
O Moses?

قَالَ أَجِئْتُكَ لِتُخْرِجَنَا
مِنْ أَرْضِنَا بِسِحْرِكَ يَسْمُوسَىٰ ﴿٥٧﴾

58. "But we can surely produce
Magic to match thine!
So make a tryst
Between us and thee,
Which we shall not fail
To keep—neither we nor thou—
In a place where both
Shall have even chances."²⁵⁸²

فَلَنَأْتِيَنَّكَ بِسِحْرٍ مِّثْلِهِ ۖ فَاجْعَلْ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكَ
مَوْعِدًا لَا تُخْلَفُهُ ۚ نَحْنُ وَلَا أَنْتَ مَكَانَ سَوَآءٍ ﴿٥٨﴾

2579. The verse ought really to go into the last Section.

2580. This is a sort of general introduction to the confrontation between Moses and Pharaoh. The Signs are not only the countering of the fraudulent magic of Egypt with real miracles, but the subsequent Plagues (not mentioned here) and the Crossing of the Red Sea by Israel.

2581. The Egyptians accused Moses of a design to deprive them of their land, and of exercising black magic. Both charges were palpably false. What Moses wanted to do was to free his people from bondage. The Egyptians had all the power in their possession. As to magic, the Egyptians judged Moses by themselves. They accused the Prophet of Allah of doing the same, though both his outlook and the source of his strength were altogether different.

2582. *Suwan*: literally, 'equal, even'. It has been construed to mean: (1) a place equally distant for both sides, a central place, or (2) equally convenient to both sides, or (3) an open level plain, where the people can collect with ease. All these are possible meanings, but the one I have adopted is more comprehensive, and includes the others, viz.: (4) a place where both sides shall have even chances. "a fair place," as Palmer loconically translates it.

59. Moses said: "Your tryst
Is the Day of the Festival,²⁵⁸³
And let the people be assembled
When the sun is well up,"

قَالَ مَوْعِدُكُمْ يَوْمَ الزَّيْنَةِ
وَأَنْ يُحْشَرَ النَّاسُ ضُحًى ﴿٥٩﴾

60. So Pharaoh withdrew:
He concerted his plan,²⁵⁸⁴
And then came (back).

فَتَوَلَّى فِرْعَوْنُ فَجَمَعَ كَيْدَهُ ثُمَّ أَتَى ﴿٦٠﴾

61. Moses said to them:
"Woe to you! Forge not
Ye a lie against Allah,
Lest He destroy you (at once)
Utterly by chastisement:
The forger must suffer²⁵⁸⁵
Failure."

قَالَ لَهُمُ مُوسَى وَيْلَكُمْ لَا تَفْتَرُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ
كَذِبًا فَيُسْحِتَكُمْ بِعَذَابٍ
وَقَدْ خَابَ مِنْ أَفْئَتِي ﴿٦١﴾

62. So they disputed, one with
Another, over their affair,
But they kept their talk secret.²⁵⁸⁶

فَنَزَعُوا أَمْرَهُمُ بَيْنَهُمْ وَأَسْرَأُوا السَّجْوَى ﴿٦٢﴾

2583. A great day of a Temple Festival, when the temples and streets were decorated, and people were on holiday, free from work. Moses makes this appointment in order to collect as large a number as possible, for his first duty is to preach the Truth. And he apparently did it with some effect with some Egyptians (xx. 70, 72-76), though the Pharaoh and his high and mighty officers rejected the Truth and afterwards paid the Penalty.

2584. Pharaoh was apparently taken aback at Moses appointing a solemn day of public Festival, when there would be a large concourse and there would be sure to be some people not in the Court clique, who might be critical of Pharaoh's own sorcerers. But probably there was something more in their dark counsels, something unfair and wicked, to which Moses refers in his speech in the next verse.

2585. Moses had some idea of their trickery and deceit. They would palm off their fraudulent magic as coming from Allah or from their gods! He warns them that their tricks will stand exposed, and their hopes will be defeated.

2586. They knew that they had here to deal with no ordinary man, but a man with powers above what they could conceive of. But evil always thinks evil. Judging Moses and Aaron by their own standards, they thought that these two were also tricksters, with some tricks superior to their own. All they had to do was to stand together, and they must win. I construe xx. 63-64 to be private talk among themselves, followed by their open challenge to Moses in xx. 65.

63. They said: "These two
Are certainly (expert) magicians:
Their object is to drive you
Out from your land
With their magic, and
To do away with your
Most cherished way.²⁵⁸⁷

قَالُوا إِنَّ هَٰذَيْنِ لَسَاحِرَانِ يُرِيدَانِ أَنْ يُخْرِجَاكَ
مِنْ أَرْضِكَ بِسِحْرِهِمَا
وَيَذْهَبَا بِطَرِيقَتِكُمُ الْمُثَلَّى ﴿٦٣﴾

64. "Therefore concert your plan,
And then assemble
In (serried) ranks:
He wins (all along) to-day
Who gains the upper hand."²⁵⁸⁸

فَاجْمَعُوا كَيْدَكُمْ ثُمَّ أَتُوا صَفًّا
وَقَدْ أَفْلَحَ الْيَوْمَ مَنْ اسْتَعْلَى ﴿٦٤﴾

65. They said: "O Moses!
Whether wilt thou
That thou throw (first)
Or that we be the first
To throw?"

قَالُوا يَنْمُوسَى إِمَّا أَنْ تُلْقَى
وَإِمَّا أَنْ نَكُونَ أَوَّلَ مَنْ أَلْقَى ﴿٦٥﴾

66. He said, "Nay, throw ye
First!" Then behold
Their ropes and their rods—²⁵⁸⁹
So it seemed to him
On account of their magic—
Began to be in lively motion!

قَالَ بَلْ أَلْقُوا فَإِذَا حِجَابُهُمْ وَعَصِيَّتُهُمْ
يُحِيلُ إِلَيْهِمْ مِنْ سِحْرِهِمْ أُنْهَاسَعَى ﴿٦٦﴾

2587. Cf. xx. 104. 'Your most cherished institutions,' i.e., 'your ancestral and time-honoured religion and magic'. *Muthlā*, feminine of *Amthal*, most distinguished, honoured, cherished. *Tariqat*=way of life, institutions, conduct.

2588. Presumably Pharaoh was in this secret conference, and he promises the most lavish rewards to the magicians if they overcome Moses. See vii. 114. That—but I think more than that—is implied. That day was to be the crisis: if they won then, they would win all along, and Moses and his people would be crushed.

2589. Their bag of tricks was so clever that it imposed upon all beholders. Their ropes and their rods were thrown, and seemed to move about like snakes. So realistic was the effect that even Moses felt the least bit of doubt in his own mind. He of course had no tricks, and he relied entirely on Allah.

67. So Moses conceived
In his mind
A (sort of) fear.²⁵⁹⁰

فَأَوْحَسَ فِي نَفْسِهِ خِيفَةً مُوسَى ﴿٦٧﴾

68. We said: "Fear not!
For thou hast indeed
The upper hand:

قُلْنَا لَا تَخَفْ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْأَعْلَى ﴿٦٨﴾

69. "Throw that which is
In thy right hand:
Quickly will it swallow up
That which they have faked:
What they have faked
Is but a magician's trick:
And the magician
Succeeds not."²⁵⁹¹

وَأَلْقَ مَا فِي يَمِينِكَ تَلْقَفَ مَا صَنَعُوا إِنَّمَا صَنَعُوا كَيْدٌ سِحْرٍ وَلَا يُفْلِحُ السَّاحِرُ حَيْثُ اتَّقَى ﴿٦٩﴾

70. So the magicians were
Thrown down to prostration:
They said, "We believe
In the Lord of Aaron and
Moses".²⁵⁹²

فَأُلْقِيَ السَّحَرَةُ سُجَّدًا
قَالُوا آمَنَّا بِرَبِّ هَارُونَ وَمُوسَى ﴿٧٠﴾

71. (Pharaoh) said: "Believe ye
In Him before I give
You permission? Surely
This must be your leader.
Who has taught you magic!"²⁵⁹³

قَالَ آمَنْتُمْ لَهُ قَبْلَ أَنْ أَدْنِ لَكُمْ إِنَّهُ لَكَبِيرُكُمُ الَّذِي
عَلَّمَكُمُ السِّحْرَ فَلَا قُطْعَانَ أَيْدِيكُمْ وَأَنْجُلُكُمْ

2590. The concerted attack of evil is sometimes so well contrived from all points that falsehood appears and is acclaimed as the truth. The believer of truth is isolated, and a sort of moral dizziness creeps over his mind. But by Allah's grace Faith asserts itself, gives him confidence, and points out the specific truths which will dissipate and destroy the teeming brood of falsehood.

2591. The meaning may be either (1) that falsehood and trickery may have their day, but they cannot win everywhere, especially in the presence of Truth, or (2) that trickery and magic must come to an evil end.

2592. Cf. this passage with vii. 120-126 and the notes thereon.

2593. Pharaoh accuses his sorcerers who have been converted, of having been in league with Moses all the time, and in fact of having been led and taught by him! So arrogance and evil cannot conceive of Allah's worlds and worlds of beauty and truth beyond its own narrow vision! It is truly blind and its very cleverness deludes it to wander far from the truth.

Be sure I will cut off
Your hands and feet
On opposite sides, and I
Will have you crucified
On trunks of palm-trees:
So shall ye know for certain,
Which of us can give
The more severe and the more
Lasting Punishment!"

72. They said: "Never shall we
Prefer thee to what has
Come to us of
The Clear Signs²⁵⁹⁴
Him Who created us!
So decree whatever thou
Desirest to decree: for thou
Canst only decree (touching)
The life of this world."²⁵⁹⁵

73. "For us, we have believed
In our Lord: may He
Forgive us our faults,
And the magic to which
Thou didst compet us:"²⁵⁹⁶

مَنْ خَلَفٍ وَلَا صَلَبٍكُمْ فِي جُدُوعِ النَّخْلِ وَلَنَعْلَمَنَّ
أَيْنَا أَشَدَّ عَذَابًا وَابْقَى (٧١)

قَالُوا لَنْ نُؤْثِرَكَ عَلَى مَا جَاءَنَا مِنَ الْبَيِّنَاتِ وَالَّذِي
فَطَرْنَا فَافْضِ مَا أَنْتَ قَاضٍ إِنَّمَا تَقْضِي
هَذِهِ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا (٧٢)

إِنَّا آمَنَّا بِرَبِّنَا لِيَغْفِرَ لَنَا خَطِيئَتَنَا وَمَا أَكْرَهْتَنَا
عَلَيْهِ مِنَ السِّحْرِ وَاللَّهِ خَيْرٌ وَأَبْقَى (٧٣)

2594. *Clear Signs*: the miracles, the personality of the Messengers of Allah, the logic of events as they unfolded themselves, and the light of inner conviction in their own conscience. There are in addition the Signs and Proofs of Allah in nature, which are referred to in many places, e.g., xx. 53-54.

2595. Thus was the first part of the mission of Moses—that to the Egyptians—fulfilled. See n. 1083 to vii. 126.

2596. The magic mummery, and deceptions which pertained to Egyptian Pagan religion became a creed, a State article of faith, to which all citizens were compelled to bow, and which its priests were compelled actively to practise. And Pharaoh was at the head of the whole system—the high priest or the supreme god. With justice, therefore, do the converted magicians lay the blame on Pharaoh, effectively negating Pharaoh's disingenuous charge that they had been in league with Moses.

These falsehoods and deceptions—combined in many cases with horrid cruelties, open and secret,—were common to many Pagan systems. Some of them have been investigated in detail in Sir John G. Frazer' *Golden Bough*.

For Allah is Best
And Most Abiding."

74. Verily he who comes²⁵⁹⁷
To his Lord as a sinner
(At Judgment),-for him
Is Hell: therein shall he
Neither die nor live.

إِنَّهُ مَنْ يَأْتِ رَبَّهُ مُجْرِمًا
فَإِنَّ لَهُ جَهَنَّمَ لَا يَمُوتُ فِيهَا وَلَا يَحْيَى ﴿٧٤﴾

75. But such as come
To Him as Believers
Who have worked righteous
deeds,-
For them are ranks exalted,-

وَمَنْ يَأْتِهِ مُؤْمِنًا قَدْ عَمِلَ الصَّالِحَاتِ
فَأُولَئِكَ لَهُمْ الدَّرَجَاتُ الْعُلَى ﴿٧٥﴾

76. Gardens of Eternity,
Beneath which flow rivers:
They will dwell therein
For aye: such is the reward
Of those who purify
Themselves (from evil).²⁵⁹⁸

جَنَّاتُ عَدْنٍ يَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا
وَذَٰلِكَ جَزَاءُ مَنْ تَزَكَّى ﴿٧٦﴾

SECTION 4.

77. We sent an inspiration²⁵⁹⁹
To Moses: "Travel by night
With My servants, and strike
A dry path for them

وَلَقَدْ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَى مُوسَى أَنْ أَسْرِ بِعِبَادِي فَاصْرِبْ
لَهُمْ طَرِيقًا فِي الْبَحْرِ يَبَسًا لَا تَخَفُ دَرَكًا
وَلَا تُخَشَى ﴿٧٧﴾

2597. The verses xx. 74-76 are best construed as comments on the story of the converted Egyptians who had "purified themselves (from evil)". But some construe them as a continuation of their speech.

2598. As the Egyptian magicians had done when they confessed the One True God.

2599. Time passes, and at last Moses is commanded to leave Egypt with his people by night. They were to cross the Red Sea into the Sinai Peninsula. They were told to have no fear of Pharaoh or of the sea or of the unknown desert country of Sinai into which they were going. They crossed dry-shod, while Pharaoh who came in pursuit with his troops was overwhelmed by the sea. He and his men all perished. There is no emphasis on this episode here. But the emphasis is laid on the hard task which Moses had with his own people after he had delivered them from the Egyptian bondage.

Through the sea, without fear
Of being overtaken (by Pharaoh)
And without (any other) fear."

78. Then Pharaoh pursued them
With his forces, but
The waters completely
overwhelmed
Them and covered them up.

79. Pharaoh led his people astray
Instead of leading them aright.²⁶⁰⁰

80. O ye Children of Israel!
We delivered you from
Your enemy, and We
Made a Covenant with you
On the right side of²⁶⁰¹
Mount (Sinai), and We sent
Down to you Manna
And quails:

81. "Eat of the good"²⁶⁰²
Things We have provided
For your sustenance, but
Commit no excess therein,
Lest My Wrath should

فَأَلْبَمَهُمْ فِرْعَوْنُ بِجُنُودِهِ

فَغَشَّيَهُمْ مِنَ الْيَمِّ مَا غَشَّيَهُمْ ﴿٧٨﴾

وَأَضَلَّ فِرْعَوْنُ قَوْمَهُ وَمَا هَدَىٰ ﴿٧٩﴾

يَبْنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ ۖ يَلْقَىٰ قَدْ أَفْجَيْنَاكَ مِنْ عَدُوِّكَ ۖ وَوَعَدْنَاكَ جَانِبَ

الْطُّورِ الْأَيْمَنِ وَفَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْمَنَ وَالسَّلَوىٰ ﴿٨٠﴾

كُلُوا مِنْ طَيِّبَاتِ مَا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ وَلَا تَطْغَوْا فِيهِ فَيَحِلَّ

عَلَيْكُمْ غَضَبِي ۖ وَمَنْ يَحْمِلْ عَلَيْهِ غَضَبِي

فَقَدْ هَوَىٰ ﴿٨١﴾

2600. It is the duty of kings and leaders to give the right lead of their people. Instead of that, the evil ones among them lead them astray and are the cause of the whole of the people perishing.

2601. *Right side:* Cf. xix. 52, and n. 2504, towards the end. The Arabian side of Sinai (Jabal Mūsā) was the place where Moses first received his commission before going to Egypt, and also where he received the Torah after the Exodus from Egypt.

2602. Cf. ii. 57 and n. 71; and vii. 160. I should like to construe this not only literally but also metaphorically. 'Allah has looked after you and saved you. He has given you ethical and spiritual guidance. Enjoy the fruits of all this, but do not become puffed up and rebellious (another meaning in the root *Tagā*); otherwise the Wrath of Allah is sure to descend on you.'

Descend on you: and those
On whom descends My Wrath
Do perish indeed!²⁶⁰³

وَأَنزِلْنَا لِقَارِ لَمَنْ تَابَ وَمَا مَن وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا
ثُمَّ أَهْتَدَى ﴿٨٢﴾

82. "But, without doubt, I am
(Also) He that forgives
Again and again, to those
Who repent, believe,
And do right,—who,
In fine, are on
True guidance."

83. (When Moses was up on the
Mount,²⁶⁰⁴

﴿٨٣﴾ وَمَا أَعْجَلَكَ عَنْ قَوْمِكَ يَمُوسَى

Allah said:) "What made thee
Hasten in advance of thy people,
O Moses?"

84. He replied: "Behold, they are
Close on my footsteps:
I hastened to Thee,
O my Lord,
To please Thee."

قَالَ هُمْ أَوْلَاءُ عَلَى أَثَرِي وَعَجِلْتُ إِلَيْكَ
رَبِّ لِتَرْضَى ﴿٨٤﴾

85. (Allah) said: "We have tested
Thy people in thy absence:
The Sāmīrī has led them"²⁶⁰⁵
Astray."

قَالَ فَإِنَّا قَدْ فَتَنَّا قَوْمَكَ مِن بَعْدِكَ وَأَضَلَّهُمُ
السَّامِرِيُّ ﴿٨٥﴾

2603. This gives the key-note to Moses's constant tussle with his own people, and introduces immediately afterwards the incident of the golden calf.

2604. This was when Moses was up on the Mount for forty days and forty nights: ii. 51, and n. 66. Moses had left the elders of Israel with Aaron behind him: Exod. xxiv. 14. While he was in a state of ecstatic honour on the Mount, his people were enacting strange scenes down below. They were tested and tried, and they failed in the trial. They made a golden calf for worship, as described below. See also vii. 148-150 and notes.

2605. Who was this Sāmīrī? If it was his personal name, it was sufficiently near the meaning of the original root-word to have the definite article attached to it: Cf. the name of the Khalifa Mu'tasim (Al-Mu'tasim). What was the root for "Sāmīrī"? If we look to old Egyptian, we have *Shemer*=A stranger, foreigner (Sir E.A. Wallis Budge's *Egyptian Hieroglyphic Dictionary*, 1920, p. 815 b). As the Israelites had just left Egypt, they might quite well have among them an Egyptianised Hebrew bearing that nickname. That the =

86. So Moses returned to his people
In a state of anger
And sorrow. He said:
"O my people! did not
Your Lord make a handsome²⁶⁰⁶
Promise to you? Did then
The promise seem to you
Long (in coming)? Or did ye
Desire that Wrath should
Descend from your Lord on you,
And so ye broke your promise
To me?"

فَرَجَعَ مُوسَىٰ إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِ غَضْبَانَ أَسِفًا قَالَ
يَقَوْمِ أَلَمْ يَعِدْكُمْ رَبُّكُمْ وَعَدًّا حَسَنًا أَفُطِلَ
عَلَيْكُمْ الْعَهْدُ أَمْ أَرَدْتُمْ أَنْ يَحِلَّ عَلَيْكُمْ
غَضَبٌ مِّنْ رَبِّكُمْ فَأَخْلَفْتُم مَّوعِدِي ﴿٨٦﴾

87. They said: "We broke not
The promise to thee, as far
As lay in our power:
But we were made to carry
The weight of the ornaments²⁶⁰⁷

قَالُوا مَا أَخْلَفْنَا مَوْعِدَكَ بِمَلِكِنَا وَلِنَكُنَّا حِمْلًا
أَوْ زَارًا مِّنْ زِينَةِ الْقَوْمِ فَقَذَفْنَاهَا فَكَذَلِكَ
أَلْفَى السَّامِرِيُّ ﴿٨٧﴾

= name *Shemer* was subsequently not unknown among the Hebrews is clear from the Old Testament. In I Kings, xvi. 21 we read that Omri, king of Israel, the northern portion of the divided kingdom, who reigned about 903-896 B.C., built a new city, Samaria, on a hill which he bought from Shemer, the owner of the hill, for two talents of silver. See also Renan: *History of Israel*, ii. 210. For a further discussion of the word, see n. 2608 below.

2606. There are two promises referred to in this verse, the promise of Allah and the promise of the people of Israel. They form one Covenant, which was entered into through their leader Moses. See xx. 80, and ii. 63, n. 78. Allah's promise was to protect them and lead them to the Promised Land, and their promise was to obey Allah's Law and His commandments.

2607. Cf. Exod. xii. 35-36: the Israelites, before they left Egypt, borrowed from the Egyptians "jewels of silver and jewels of gold, and raiment"; and "they spoiled the Egyptians" i.e., stripped them of all their valuable jewellery. Note that the answer of the backsliders is disingenuous in various ways. (1) The Sāmīri was no doubt responsible for suggesting the making of the golden calf, but they could not on that account disclaim responsibility for themselves: the burden of the sin is on him who commits it, and he cannot pretend that he was powerless to avoid it. (2) At most the weight of the gold they carried could not have been heavy even if one or two men carried it, but would have been negligible if distributed. (3) Gold is valuable, and it is not likely that if they wanted to disburden themselves of it, they had any need to light a furnace, melt it, and cast it into the shape of a calf.

Of the (whole) people, and we
Threw them (into the fire),
And that was what
The Sāmīri suggested.²⁶⁰⁸

88. "Then he brought out
(Of the fire) before the (people)
The image of a calf:²⁶⁰⁹
It seemed to low:²⁶¹⁰
So they said: 'This is
Your god, and the god
Of Moses, but (Moses)
Has forgotten!'"²⁶¹¹

فَأَخْرَجَ لَهُمْ عِجْلًا جَسَدًا لَهُ خُورٌ
فَقَالُوا هَذَا إِلَهُكُمْ وَإِلَهُ مُوسَىٰ فَنَسِيَ

89. Could they not see that
It could not return them
A word (for answer), and that
It had no power either
To harm them or
To do them good?²⁶¹²

أَفَلَا يَرَوْنَ أَنَّهُ لَا يُزِجُهُ إِلَيْهِمْ قَوْلًا
وَلَا يَمْلِكُ لَهُمْ ضَرًّا وَلَا نَفْعًا

2608. See n. 2605 about the Sāmīri. If the Egyptian origin of the root is not accepted we have a Hebrew origin in "Shomer" a guard, watchman, sentinel. The Sāmīri may have been a watchman, in fact or by nickname.

2609. See. n. 1113 to vii. 148, where the same words are used and explained.

2610. See n. 1114 to vii. 148.

2611. *Moses has forgotten: i.e., 'forgotten both us and his god. He has been gone for so many days. He is searching for a god on the Mount when his god is really here!'* This is spoken by the Sāmīri and his partisans, but the people as a whole accepted it, and it therefore, becomes their speech.

2612. This is a parenthetical comment. How blind the people were! They had seen *Signs of the true living God*, and yet they were willing to worship this dead image! The true living God had spoken in definite words of command, while this calf could only emit some sounds of lowing, which were themselves contrived by the fraud of the priests. This image could do neither good nor harm, while Allah was the Cherisher and Sustainer of the Universe, Whose Mercy was unbounded and Whose Wrath was terrible.

SECTION 5.

90. Aaron had already, before this
Said to them: "O my people!
Ye are being tested in this:²⁶¹³
For verily your Lord is (Allah)
Most Gracious: so follow me
And obey my command."²⁶¹⁴
91. They had said:²⁶¹⁵ "We will not
Cease to worship it,
Will devote ourselves to it
Until Moses returns to us."²⁶¹⁶
92. (Moses) said: "O Aaron!
What kept thee back, when
Thou sawest them going wrong.
93. "From following me? Didst thou
Then disobey my order?"²⁶¹⁷
94. (Aaron) replied: "O son
Of my mother! Seize (me) not
By my beard nor by
(The hair of) my head!"²⁶¹⁸

وَلَقَدْ قَالَ لَهُمْ هَارُونُ مِنْ قَبْلُ يَقَوْمُ إِنَّمَا فُتِنْتُمْ
بِهِ وَإِنَّ رَبَّكُمُ الرَّحْمَنُ فَاتَّبِعُونِي وَأَطِيعُوا أَمْرِيَ ﴿٩٠﴾

قَالُوا لَنْ نَبْرَحَ عَلَيْهِ عَاكِفِينَ
حَتَّى يَرْجِعَ الْيَسَاءُ مُوسَى ﴿٩١﴾

قَالَ يَهْرُونَ مِمَّا مَنَعَكَ إِذْ رَأَيْتَهُمْ ضَلُّوا ﴿٩٢﴾

أَلَا تَتَّبِعَنِ أَفَعَصَيْتَ أَمْرِي ﴿٩٣﴾

قَالَ يَبْنَؤُمْ لَا تَأْخُذْ بِلِحْيَتِي وَلَا بِرَأْسِي
إِنِّي خَشِيتُ أَنْ تَقُولَ فَرَّقْتَ بَيْنَ بَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ
وَلَمْ تَرْقُبْ قَوْلِي ﴿٩٤﴾

2613. "Resist this temptation: you are being tested in this. Do not follow after the semi-Egyptian Sāmīri, but obey me."

2614. The Bible story makes Aaron the culprit, which is inconsistent with his office as the high priest of Allah and the right hand of Moses. See n. 1116 to vii. 150. Our version is more consistent, and explains in the Sāmīri the lingering influences of the Egyptian cult of Osiris the bull-god.

2615. Obviously Aaron's speech in the last verse, and the rebels' defiance in this verse, were spoken before the return of Moses from the Mount.

2616. The rebels had so little faith that they had given Moses up for lost, and never expected to see him again.

2617. Moses, when he came back, was full of anger and grief. His speech to Aaron is one of rebuke, and he was also inclined to handle him roughly: see next verse. The order he refers to is that stated in vii. 142, "Act for me amongst my people: do right, and follow not the way of those who do mischief."

2618. Cf. vii. 150.

Truly I feared lest thou
Shouldst say, 'Thou hast caused
A division among the Children
Of Israel, and thou didst not
Observe my word!' "2619

95. (Moses) said: "What then
Is thy case, O Sāmīri?"²⁶²⁰

96. He replied: "I saw what
They saw not: so I took
A handful (of dust) from
The footprint of the Messenger,
And threw it (into the calf):
Thus did my soul suggest
To me."²⁶²¹

قَالَ فَمَا خَطْبُكَ يَسْمِيرِيُّ ﴿١٥﴾

قَالَ بَصُرْتُ بِمَا لَمْ يَبْصُرُوا بِهِ، فَقَبَضْتُ
قَبْضَةً مِّنْ أَثَرِ الرَّسُولِ فَنَبَذْتُهَا
وَكَذَلِكَ سَوَّلَتْ لِي نَفْسِي ﴿١٦﴾

2619. This reply of Aaron's is in no way inconsistent with the reply as noted in vii. 150. On the contrary there is a dramatic aptness in the different points emphasised on each occasion. In S. vii. we were discussing the Ummat of Israel, and Aaron rightly says, "The people did indeed reckon me as naught, and went near to slay me!" In addition, "Let not the enemies rejoice over my misfortune" he is referring by implication to his brother's wish to maintain unity among the people. Here the unity is the chief point to emphasise: we are dealing with the Sāmīri as mischief-monger, and he could best be dealt with by Moses, who proceeds to do so.

2620. Moses now turns to the Sāmīri, and the Sāmīri's reply in the next verse sums up his character in a few wonderful strokes of character-painting. The lesson of the whole of this episode is the fall of a human soul that nominally comes to Allah's Truth in a humble position but makes mischief when and as it finds occasion. It is no less dangerous and culpable than the arrogant soul, typified by Pharaoh, which gets into high places and makes its leadership the cause of ruin of a whole nation.

2621. This answer of the Sāmīri is a fine example of unblushing effrontery, careful evasion of issues, and invented falsehoods. He takes upon himself to pretend that he had far more insight than anybody else: he saw what the crowd did not see. He saw something supernatural. "The Messenger" is construed by many Commentators to mean the angel Gabriel. *Rasūl* (plural, *rusul*) is used in several places for "angels" e.g., in xi. 69, 77; xix. 19; and xxxv. 1. But if we take it to mean the Messenger Moses, it means that the Sāmīri saw something sacred or supernatural in his footprints: perhaps he thinks a little flattery would make Moses forgive him. The dust became sacred, and his throwing it into the calf made the calf utter a lowing sound! As if that was the point at issue! He does not answer the charge of making an image for worship. But finally, with arrogant effrontery, he says, "Well, that is what my soul suggested to me, and that should be enough!"

97. (Moses) said: "Get thee gone!
But thy (punishment) in this life
Will be that thou wilt say,²⁶²²
'Touch me not'; and moreover
(For a future penalty) thou hast
A promise that will not fail.²⁶²³
Now look at thy god,
Of whom thou hast become
A devoted worshipper:
We will certainly burn it
In a blazing fire and scatter
It broadcast in the sea!"²⁶²⁴

98. But the God of you all
Is Allah: there is
No god but He: all things
He comprehends in His knowledge.

قَالَ فَاذْهَبْ فَإِنَّ لَكَ فِي الْحَيَاةِ
أَنْ تَقُولَ لَا مِسَاسَ وَإِنَّ لَكَ مَوْعِدًا لَنْ تُخْلَفَهُ
وَأَنْتَظِرُ إِلَى إِلَهِكَ الَّذِي ظَلْتَ عَلَيْهِ عَاكِفًا
لَنْفَرِقَنَّهُ ثُمَّ لَنَنْبِفَنَّه فِي الْيَمِّ نَسْفًا ﴿١٧﴾

إِنَّمَا إِلَهُكُمُ اللَّهُ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ وَسِعَ
كُلَّ شَيْءٍ عِلْمًا ﴿١٨﴾

2622. He and his kind were to become social lepers, untouchables; perhaps also sufficiently arrogant to hold others at arm's length, and say "*Noli me tangere*" (touch me not).

2623. Namely, the promised Wrath of Allah: see xx. 81. lxxxix. 25.

2624. The cast effigy was destroyed. Thus ends the Sāmīrī's story, of which the lessons are indicated in n. 2620 above. It may be interesting to pursue the transformations of the word Sāmīrī in later times. For its origin see notes 2605 and 2608 above. Whether the root of Sāmīrī was originally Egyptian or Hebrew does not affect the later history. Four facts may be noted. (1) There was a man bearing a name of that kind at the time of Moses, and he led a revolt against Moses and was cursed by Moses. (2) In the time of King Omri (903-896 B.C.) of the northern kingdom of Israel, there was a man called Shemer, from whom, according to the Bible, was bought a hill on which was built the new capital of the kingdom, the town of Samaria. (3) The name of the hill was *Shomer* (= watchman, vigilant guardian), and that form of the name also appears as the name of a man (see II Kings xii. 21); some authorities think the town was called after the hill and not after the man (Hastings's *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*), but this is for our present purposes immaterial. (4) There was and is a dissenting community of Israelites called Samaritans, who have their own separate Pentateuch and Targum, who claim to be the true Children of Israel, and who hold the Orthodox Jews in contempt as the latter hold them in contempt; they claim to be the true guardians (*Shomerim*) of the Law, and that is probably the true origin of the name Samaritan, which may go further back in time than the foundation of the town of Samaria. I think it probable that the schism originated from the time of Moses, and that the curse of Moses on the Sāmīrī explains the position.

99. Thus do We relate to thee
Some stories of what happened
Before: for We have sent
Thee a
Reminder from Us.²⁶²⁵

كَذَلِكَ نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ مِنْ أَنْبَاءِ مَا قَدْ سَبَقَ
وَقَدْ آتَيْنَاكَ مِنْ لَدُنَّا ذِكْرًا ﴿١٩﴾

100. If any do turn away
Therefrom, verily they will
Bear a burden
On the Day of Judgment;

مَنْ أَعْرَضَ عَنْهُ فَإِنَّهُ يَحْمِلُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ وِزْرًا ﴿٢٠﴾

101. They will abide in this (state):
And grievous will the burden²⁶²⁶
Be to them on that Day,--

خَالِدِينَ فِيهِ وَسَاءَ لَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ حِمْلًا ﴿٢١﴾

102. The Day when the Trumpet
Will be sounded: that Day,
We shall gather the sinful,
Blear-eyed (with terror).²⁶²⁷

يَوْمَ يُنْفَخُ فِي الصُّورِ وَنَحْشُرُ
الْمُجْرِمِينَ يَوْمَئِذٍ زُرْقًا ﴿٢٢﴾

103. In whispers will they consult
Each other: "Ye tarried not
Longer than ten (Days);"²⁶²⁸

يَسْخَفُونَ بَيْنَهُمْ إِنْ لَيْتُمْ إِلَّا عَشْرًا ﴿٢٣﴾

2625. Thus superseding previous revelations; for this (the Qur-ān) is direct from Allah, and is not a second-hand exposition on other men's authority.

2626. Cf. vi. 31. If people are so immersed in the evanescent falsehoods of this life as to turn away from the True and the Eternal, they will have a rude awakening when the Judgment comes. These very things that they thought so enjoyable here-taking advantage of others, material self-indulgence, nursing grievances instead of doing good, etc., etc.,--will be a grievous burden to them that day, which they will not be able to escape or lighten.

2627. *Zurq*=having eyes different from the normal colour, which in the East is black and white; having blue eyes, or eyes afflicted with dimness or blindness, or squint; hence metaphorically, blear-eyed (with terror).

2628. Faced with eternity they will realise that their life on this earth, or the interval between their sin and their punishment, had a duration which practically amounted to nothing. They express this by the phrase "ten days", but their wiser heads think that even this is an over-estimate. It was but a brief day!

104. We know best what they
Will say, when the best of them
In judgment²⁶²⁹
Will say: "Ye tarried not
Longer than a day!"

SECTION 6.

105. They ask thee concerning²⁶³⁰
The Mountains: say, "My Lord
Will uproot them and scatter
Them as dust;²⁶³¹
106. "He will leave them as plains
Smooth and level;
107. "Nothing crooked or curved
Wilt thou see in their place."
108. On that Day will they follow
The caller²⁶³² (straight): no
crookedness
In him:
And the voices will be hushed

نَحْنُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا يَقُولُونَ إِذْ يَقُولُ أَمْثَلُهُمْ طَرِيقَةً
إِنْ لَبِثْتُمْ إِلَّا يَوْمًا ﴿١٠٤﴾

وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْجِبَالِ فَقُلْ يَنْسِفُهَا رَبِّي نَسْفًا ﴿١٠٥﴾

فَيَذَرُهَا قَاعًا صَفْصَفًا ﴿١٠٦﴾

لَا تَرَى فِيهَا عِوَجًا وَلَا أَمْتًا ﴿١٠٧﴾

يَوْمَئِذٍ يَتَّبِعُونَ الدَّاعِيَ لَا عِوَجَ لَهُ وَخَشَعَتِ
الْأَصْوَاتُ لِلرَّحْمَنِ فَلَا تَسْمَعُ إِلَّا هَمْسًا ﴿١٠٨﴾

2629. Cf. xx. 63 and n. 2587. Note that it is the shrewdest and most versed in Life who will say this, because they will be the first to see the true situation.

2630. In the last verse, it was the deceptiveness and relativity of Time that was dealt with. Here we come to the question of space, solidity, bulk. The question was actually put to the holy Prophet: what will become of the solid Mountains, or in the English phrase, "the eternal hills"? They are no more substantial than anything else in this temporal world. When the "new world", (xiii. 5) of which Unbelievers doubted, is actually in being, the mountains will cease to exist. We can imagine the scene of judgment as a level plain, in which there are no ups and downs and no places of concealment. All is straight and level, without corners, mysteries, or lurking doubts.

2631. The one word *nasafa* carries the ideas of (1) tearing up by the roots, (2) scattering like chaff or dust, and (3) winnowing. Its twofold repetition here intensifies its meaning.

2632. *The Caller*: the angel whose voice will call and direct all souls.

To The Most Gracious:
So that thou hearest not
But murmuring.²⁶³³

109. On that Day shall no
Intercession avail
Except for those for whom²⁶³⁴
Permission has been granted
By The Most Gracious
And whose word is
Acceptable to Him.

يَوْمَئِذٍ لَا تَنْفَعُ الشَّفَعَةُ إِلَّا مَنْ أَذِنَ لَهُ الرَّحْمَنُ
وَرَضِيَ لَهُ قَوْلًا ﴿١٠٩﴾

110. He knows what is before
Or after or behind them:²⁶³⁵
But they shall comprehend Him
not.

يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ وَلَا يُحِيطُونَ بِهِ
عِلْمًا ﴿١١٠﴾

111. (All) faces shall be humbled
Before- the Living,
The Self-Subsisting, The Sustainer
Hopeless indeed will be
The man that carries
Iniquity (on his back).²⁶³⁶

وَعَنَتِ الْوُجُوهُ لِلْحَيِّ الْقَيُّومِ وَقَدْ خَابَ
مَنْ حَمَلَ ظُلْمًا ﴿١١١﴾

2633. A beautiful personification of hushed Sound. First there is the loud blast of the Trumpet. Then there is the stillness and hush of awe and reverence: only the tramp of the ranks marching along will be heard.

2634. Cf. ii. 255 in the Verse of the Throne. Here *man* is in the accusative case governed by *tanfa'u*, and it is better to construe as I have done. That is, intercession will benefit no one except those for whom Allah has granted permission, and whose word (of repentance) is true and sincere, and therefore acceptable to Allah. Others construe: no intercession will avail, except *by* those to whom Allah has granted permission, and whose word (of intercession) is acceptable to Allah. In that case the two distinct clauses have no distinct meanings.

2635. Cf. ii. 255 and n. 297. The slight difference in phraseology (which I have tried to preserve in the Translation) will be understood as a beauty when we reflect that here our attention is directed to the Day of Judgment, and in ii. 255 the wording is general, and applies to our present state also.

2636. The metaphor of the burden of sin which the unjust carry on their backs is referred to in xx. 100-101 (see n. 2626), in vi. 31, and in other passages. Note that *all* faces, those of the just as well as of the unjust, will be humble before Allah: the best of us can claim no merit equal to Allah's Grace. But the just will have Hope: while the unjust, now that the curtain of Reality has risen, will be in absolute Despair!

112. But he who works deeds
Of righteousness, and has faith,
Will have no fear of harm
Nor of any curtailment²⁶³⁷
(Of what is his due).

وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِنَ الصَّالِحَاتِ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَلَا يَخَافُ
ظُلُمًا وَلَا هَضْمًا ﴿١١٢﴾

113. Thus have We sent this
Down—an Arabic Qur-ān—
And explained therein in detail
Some of the warnings,
In order that they may
Fear Allah, or that it may
Cause their remembrance
(of Him).²⁶³⁸

وَكَذَلِكَ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا وَصَرَّفْنَا فِيهِ
مِنَ الْوَعِيدِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ أَوْ يُحْدِثُ لَهُمْ ذِكْرًا ﴿١١٣﴾

114. High above all is Allah,
The King, the Truth!
Be not in haste
With the Qur-ān before
Its revelation to thee²⁶³⁹
Is completed, but say,
“O my Lord! increase me
In knowledge.”

فَعَلَى اللَّهِ الْمَلِكُ الْحَقُّ وَلَا تَعْجَلْ بِالْقُرْآنِ
مِن قَبْلِ أَنْ يُقْضَى إِلَيْكَ وَحْيُهُ وَقُلْ رَبِّ
زِدْنِي عِلْمًا ﴿١١٤﴾

2637. See the last note. Unlike the unjust, the righteous, who have come with Faith, will now find their Faith justified: not only will they be free from any fear of harm, but they will be rewarded to the full, or, as has been said in other passages, where His bounty rather than His justice is emphasised, they will get more than their due reward (iii. 27; xxxix. 10).

2638. The Qur-ān is in clear Arabic, so that even an unlearned people like the Arabs might understand and profit by its warnings, and the rest of the world may learn through them, as they did in the first few centuries of Islam and may do again when we Muslims show ourselves worthy to explain and exemplify its meaning. The evil are warned that they may repent; the good are confirmed in their Faith and strengthened by their remembrance of Him.

2639. Allah is above every human event or desire. His purpose is universal. But He is the Truth, the absolute Truth; and His kingdom is the true kingdom, that can carry out its will. That Truth unfolds itself gradually, as it did in the gradual revelation of the Qur-ān to the holy Prophet. But even after it was completed in a volume, its true meaning and purpose only gradually unfold themselves to any given individual or nation. No one should be impatient about it. On the contrary, we should always pray for increase in our own knowledge, which can never at any given moment be complete.

115. We had already, beforehand,²⁶⁴⁰
Taken the covenant of Adam,
But he forgot: and We found
On his part no firm resolve.

وَلَقَدْ عَهِدْنَا إِلَىٰ آدَمَ مِنْ قَبْلُ
فَنَسِيَ وَلَمْ نَجِدْ لَهُ عَزْمًا ﴿١١٥﴾

SECTION 7.

116. When We said to the angels,
"Prostrate yourselves to Adam",
They prostrated themselves, but not
Iblis: he refused.

وَإِذْ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ اسْجُدُوا لِآدَمَ
فَسَجَدُوا إِلَّا إِبْلِيسَ أَبَىٰ ﴿١١٦﴾

117. Then We said: "O Adam!
Verily, this is an enemy
To thee and thy wife:
So let him not get you
Both out of the Garden,
So that thou art landed
In misery."²⁶⁴¹

فَقُلْنَا يَا آدَمُ إِنَّ هَذَا عَدُوٌّ لَكَ وَلِزَوْجِكَ
فَلَا تَخْرُجْ حَتَّىٰ مِنَ الْجَنَّةِ فَتَشْقَىٰ ﴿١١٧﴾

118. "There is therein (enough
provision)
For thee not to go hungry ²⁶⁴²
Nor to go naked,

إِنَّ لَكَ أَلَّا تَجُوعَ فِيهَا وَلَا تَعْرَىٰ ﴿١١٨﴾

119. "Nor to suffer from thirst,
Nor from the sun's heat."

وَأَنَّكَ لَا تَظْمَأُ فِيهَا وَلَا تَصْحَىٰ ﴿١١٩﴾

2640. The spiritual fall of two individual souls, Pharaoh and the Sāmīrī, having been referred to, the one through overweening arrogance, and the other through a spirit of mischief and false harking back to the past, our attention is now called to the prototype of Evil (satan) who tempted Adam, the original Man, and to the fact that though man was clearly warned that satan is his enemy and will only effect his ruin, he showed so little firmness that he succumbed to it at once at the first opportunity.

2641. See last note. The story is referred to in order to draw attention to man's folly in rushing into the arms of satan though he had been clearly forewarned.

2642. Not only had the warning been given that satan is an enemy to man and will effect his destruction, but it was clearly pointed out that all his needs were being met in the Garden of Happiness. Food and clothing, drink and shelter, were amply provided for.

120. But Satan whispered evil
To him: he said, "O Adam!
Shall I lead thee to
The Tree of Eternity²⁶⁴³
And to a kingdom
That never decays?"
121. In the result, they both
Ate of the tree, and so
Their nakedness appeared²⁶⁴⁴
To them: they began to sew
Together, for their covering,
Leaves from the Garden:
Thus did Adam disobey
His Lord, and fell into error.²⁶⁴⁵
122. But his Lord chose him
(For His Grace): He turned
To him, and gave him guidance.
123. He said: "Get ye down,
Both of you,—all together,²⁶⁴⁶
From the Garden, with enmity
One to another: but if.

فَوَسْوَسَ إِلَيْهِ الشَّيْطَانُ قَالَ يَتَّادِمُ
هَلْ أَذْكَ عَلَى شَجَرَةِ الْخُلْدِ وَمُلْكٍ لَّا يَبْلَى ﴿١٢٠﴾

فَآكَلَا مِنْهَا فَبَدَتْ لَهُمَا سَوْءُهُمَا وَطَفِقَا
يَخِصِمَانِ عَلَيْهِمَا مِنْ وَرَقِ الْجَنَّةِ
وَعَصَى آدَمُ رَبَّهُ فَغَوَى ﴿١٢١﴾

ثُمَّ اجْنَبْهُ رَبُّهُ فَقَابَ عَلَيْهِ وَهَدَى ﴿١٢٢﴾

قَالَ اهْبِطَا مِنْهَا جَمِيعًا بَعْضُكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ
فَأَمَّا يَأْتِيَنَّكُمْ مِنِّي هُدًى
فَمَنِ اتَّبَعَ هُدَايَ فَلَا يَضِلُّ وَلَا يَشْقَى ﴿١٢٣﴾

2643. The suggestion of satan is clever, as it always is: it is false, and at the same time plausible. It is false, because (1) that felicity was not temporary, like the life of this world, and (2) they were supreme in the Garden, and a "kingdom" such as was dangled before them would only add to their sorrows. It was plausible, because (1) nothing had been said to them about Eternity, as the opposite of Eternity was not yet known, and (2) the sweets of Power arise from the savour of Self, and Self is an alluring (if false) attraction that misleads the Will.

2644. Hitherto they knew no evil. Now, when disobedience to Allah had sullied their soul and torn off the garment, their sullied Self appeared to themselves in all its nakedness and ugliness, and they had to resort to external things (leaves of the Garden) to cover the shame.

2645. Adam had been given the will to choose, and he chose wrong, and was about to be lost when Allah's Grace came to his aid. His repentance was accepted, and Allah chose him for His Mercy, as stated in the next verse.

2646. The little variations between this passage and ii. 38 are instructive, as showing how clearly the particular argument is followed in each case. Here *ihbiṭā* ('get ye down') is in the dual number, and refers to the two individual souls, our common ancestors.

As is sure, there comes to you
Guidance from Me, whosoever
Follows My guidance, will not
Lose his way, nor fall²⁶⁴⁷
Into misery.

124. "But whosoever turns away
From My Message, verily
For him is a life narrowed
Down, and We shall raise
Him up blind on the Day²⁶⁴⁸
Of Judgment."

125. He will say: "O my Lord!
Why hast thou raised me
Up blind, while I had
Sight (before)?"²⁶⁴⁹

126. (Allah) will say: "Thus
Didst thou, when Our Signs
Came unto thee, forgot
Them: so wilt thou,
This day, be forgotten."²⁶⁵⁰

وَمَنْ أَعْرَضَ عَنْ ذِكْرِي فَإِنَّ لَهُ مَعِيشَةً ضَنْكًا
وَنَحْشُرُهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ أَعْمَى ﴿١٢٤﴾

قَالَ رَبِّ لِمَ حَشَرْتَنِي أَعْمَى وَقَدْ كُنْتُ بَصِيرًا ﴿١٢٥﴾

قَالَ كَذَلِكَ أَنتَ كَذَبٌ ۖ آيَاتُنَا فَنَسِيْنَهَا وَكَذَلِكَ
الْيَوْمَ نُنَسِيْكَ ﴿١٢٦﴾

2647. For the same reason as in the last note, we have here the consequences of Guidance to the individual, viz.: being saved from going astray or from falling into misery and despair. In ii. 38, the consequences expressed, though they apply to the individual, are also appropriate taken collectively: "on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve."

2648. Again, as in the last two verses, there is a variation from the previous passage (ii. 39). The consequences of the rejection of Allah's guidance are here expressed more individually: a life narrowed down, and a blindness that will persist beyond this life. "A life narrowed down" has many implications: (1) it is a life from which all the beneficent influences of Allah's wide world are excluded; (2) in looking exclusively to the "good things" of this life, it misses the true Reality.

2649. Because Allah gave him physical sight in this life for trial, he thinks he should be favoured in the real world, the world that matters! He misused his physical sight and made himself blind for the other world.

2650. 'You were deliberately blind to Allah's Signs: now you will not see Allah's favours, and will be excluded from His Grace.'

127. And thus do We recompense
Him who transgresses beyond
bounds
And believes not in the Signs
Of his Lord: and the Chastisement
Of the Hereafter is far more
Grievous and more enduring.²⁶⁵¹

وَكَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي مَنْ أَشْرَفَ وَلَمْ يُؤْمِنْ بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِ
وَلْعَذَابُ الْآخِرَةِ أَشَدُّ وَأَبْقَى ﴿١٢٧﴾

128. Is it not a guidance to such
Men (to call to mind)
How many generations before
them
We destroyed, in whose haunts
They (now) move? Verily,
In this are Signs for men
Endued with understanding.²⁶⁵²

أَفَلَمْ يَهْدِ لَهُمْ كَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا قَبْلَهُمْ مِنَ الْقُرُونِ يَمْشُونَ
فِي مَسْكِنِهِمْ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّأُولِي النَّهْيِ ﴿١٢٨﴾

SECTION 8.

129. Had it not been
For a Word that went forth
Before from thy Lord,²⁶⁵³
(Their punishment) must
necessarily
Have come; but there is
A term appointed (for respite).

وَلَوْلَا كَلِمَةٌ سَبَقَتْ مِنْ رَبِّكَ لَكَانَ لِزَامًا
وَأَجَلٌ مُّسَمًّى ﴿١٢٩﴾

2651. Blindness in the world of enduring Reality is far worse than physical blindness in the world of probation.

2652. Cf. xx. 54. This phrase concluded the argument of Moses with Pharaoh about Pharaoh's blindness to Allah and the Signs of Allah. Now it concludes the more general argument about men, concerning whom the saying arose: 'none are so blind as those who will not see.'

2653. Cf. x. 19 and n. 1407; also xi. 110. In Allah's holy plan and Purpose, there is a wise adjustment of all interests, and a merciful chance and respite given to all, the unjust as well as the just, and His decree or word abides. The most wicked have a term appointed for them for respite. Had it not been so, the punishment must necessarily have descended on them immediately for their evil deeds.

130. Therefore be patient with what
They say, and celebrate
(constantly)²⁶⁵⁴
The praises of thy Lord,
Before the rising of the sun.
And before its setting;
Yea, celebrate them
For part of the hours
Of the night, and at the sides²⁶⁵⁵
Of the day: that thou
May be pleased.

فَاصْبِرْ عَلَىٰ مَا يَقُولُونَ وَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ
قَبْلَ طُلُوعِ الشَّمْسِ وَقَبْلَ غُرُوبِهَا وَمِنْ آنَاءِ اللَّيْلِ
فَسَبِّحْ وَأَطْرَافَ النَّهَارِ لَعَلَّكَ تَرْضَىٰ ﴿١٣٠﴾

131. Nor strain thine eyes in longing
For the things We have given
For enjoyment to parties
Of them, the splendour
Of the life of this world,

وَلَا تَمُدَّنَّ عَيْنَيْكَ إِلَىٰ مَا مَتَّعْتَنَاهُ زُجْجًا مِنْهُمْ زَهْرَةَ
الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا لِنَفِثْنَهُمْ فِيهِ وَرِزْقُ رَبِّكَ خَيْرٌ وَأَبْقَىٰ ﴿١٣١﴾

2654. All good men must be patient with what seems to them evil around them. That does not mean that they should sit still and do nothing to destroy evil; for the fight against evil is one of the cardinal points in Islam. What they are told is that they must not be impatient: they must pray to Allah and commune with Him, so that their patience and faith may be strengthened, and they may be able the better to grapple with evil. For they thus not only get strength in this world but pleasure of Allah in the Hereafter as well.

2655. *Taraf*, plural *atrāf*, may mean sides, ends, extremities. If the day be compared to a tubular figure standing erect, the top and bottom are clearly marked, but the sides are not so clearly marked: they would be *atrāf* (plural), not *tarafain* (dual). Now the prayer before sunrise is clearly Fajr; that before sunset is 'Asr: "part of the hours of the night" would indicate Magrib (early night, just after sunset), and 'Ishā, before going to bed. There is left *Zuhr*, which is in the indefinite side or middle of the day: it may be soon after the sun's decline from noon, but there is considerable latitude about the precise hour. The majority of Commentators interpret in favour of the five Canonical prayers, and some include optional prayers. But I think the words are even more comprehensive. A good man's life is all one sweet Song of Praise to Allah.

Through which We test them:
But the provision of thy Lord²⁶⁵⁶
Is better and more enduring.

132. Enjoin prayer on thy people,
And be constant therein.
We ask thee not to provide²⁶⁵⁷
Sustenance: We provide it
For thee. But the (fruit of)
The Hereafter is for Righteousness.

133. They say: "Why does he not²⁶⁵⁸
Bring us a Sign from
His Lord?" Has not
A Clear Sign come to them
Of all that was
In the former Books
Of revelation?

وَأْمُرْ أَهْلَكَ بِالصَّلَاةِ وَاصْطَبِرْ عَلَيْهَا لَا نَسْأَلُكَ رِزْقًا
نَحْنُ نَرْزُقُكَ وَالْعَاقِبَةُ لِلتَّقْوَى ﴿١٣٢﴾

وَقَالُوا أَلَوْلَا يَأْتِينَا بِآيَةٍ مِنْ رَبِّهِ
أَوَلَمْ تَأْتِهِم بَيِّنَةٌ مَا فِي الصُّحُفِ الْأُولَى ﴿١٣٣﴾

2656. The good things of this life make a brave show, but they are as nothing compared with the good of the Hereafter. Both are provided by Allah. But the former are given to the just and the unjust as a test and trial, and in any case will pass away; while the latter come specially from Allah for His devoted servants, and are incomparably of more value and will last through eternity.

2657. Sustenance, in the sense of the ordinary needs of life, the man of Allah does not worry about. That is provided by Allah for all, the just and the unjust. But the special provision, the real Sustenance, the spiritual fruit, is for a righteous life in the service of Allah.

2658. The question or plea of the Unbelievers is disingenuous. Many Signs have come with this Revelation. But the one that should have appealed to those who believed in former revelations and should have convinced them was what was in their own books.

134. Had We destroyed them with
A punishment before this.²⁶⁵⁹
They would have said:
"Our Lord! If only thou
Hadst sent us a messenger,
We should certainly have followed
Thy Signs before we were
Humbled and put to shame."

135. Say: "Each one (of us)
Is waiting: wait ye, therefore,²⁶⁶⁰
And soon shall ye know
Who it is that is
On the straight and even²⁶⁶¹
Way, and who it is
That has received guidance."

وَلَوْ أَنَّا أَهْلَكْنَاهُمْ بِعَذَابٍ مِّن قَبْلِهِ
لَقَالُوا إِنَّا لَنَرِيْنَا لَوْلَا أَرْسَلْتَ إِلَيْنَا رَسُولًا
فَتَنفَعَنَا إِنِّيكَ مِن قَبْلِ أَنْ نَزِلَ وَنُخْزَىٰ ﴿١٣٤﴾

قُلْ كُلُّ مُتَرَبِّصٍ فَتَرَبَّصُوا فَسَتَعْلَمُونَ
مَنْ أَصْحَابُ الصِّرَاطِ السَّوِيِّ وَمَنِ اهْتَدَىٰ ﴿١٣٥﴾

2659. If the Sign mentioned in the last note did not convince them, it would mean that they were not true to their own faith. They were not straight with themselves. In justice they should have been punished for their falsehood. But they were given further respite. Or they would again have argued in a circle, and said: "If only Allah had sent us a living messenger we should have believed!" The living messenger they flout because they want a Sign. The Sign they wish to ignore, because they want a living messenger!

2660. If people will not be true to their own lights, what further argument is left? The Prophet of Allah can only say: "Let us wait the issue: my faith tells me that Allah's Truth must prevail." Cf. ix. 52.

2661. Cf. xix. 43. The straight and even Way must endure, and show that the man who follows it has received true guidance. All falsehood and crookedness must ultimately disappear.