

INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY: SŪRAT *Nuh*, 71.

This is another early Makkan Sūra, of which the date has no significance. The theme is that while Good must uphold the standard of Truth and Righteousness, a stage is reached when it must definitely part company with Evil, lest Evil should spread its corruption. The story of Noah's agony is almost a Parable for the holy Prophet's persecution in the Makkan period.

Nūh, or Noah.

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

1. We sent Noah⁵⁷⁰⁵
To his People
(With the Command):
"Do thou warn thy People
Before there comes to them
A grievous Chastisement."
2. He said: "O my People!
I am to you
A Warner, clear and open:⁵⁷⁰⁶
3. "That ye should worship
Allah, fear Him,
And obey me:⁵⁷⁰⁷
4. "So He may forgive you
Your sins and give you
Respite for a stated Term:
For when the Term given
By Allah is accomplished,
It cannot be put forward:⁵⁷⁰⁸
If ye only knew."

سُورَةُ نُوحٍ

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَا نُوحًا إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِ أَنْ أَنْذِرْ قَوْمَكَ مِنْ قَبْلِ
أَنْ يَأْتِيَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿١﴾

قَالَ يَقَوْمِ إِنِّي لَكُمْ نَذِيرٌ مُّبِينٌ ﴿٢﴾

أَنِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَاتَّقُوهُ وَأَطِيعُوا ﴿٣﴾

يَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ مِنْ ذُنُوبِكُمْ وَيُخَخِّرْكُمْ إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى
إِنَّ أَجَلَ اللَّهِ إِذَا جَاءَ لَا يُؤَخَّرُ لَوْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٤﴾

5705. Noah's mission is referred to in many places. See specially xi. 25-49 and notes. His contemporaries had completely abandoned the moral law. A purge had to be made, and the great Flood made it. This gives a new starting point in history for Noah's People,—i.e., for the remnant saved in the Ark.

5706. His Warning was to be both clear (i.e., unambiguous) and open (i.e., publicly proclaimed). Both these meanings are implied in *Mubīn*. Cf. lxvii. 26. The meaning of the Warning was obviously that if they had repented, they would have obtained mercy.

5707. Three aspects of man's duty are emphasized: (1) true worship with heart and soul; (2) God-fearing recognition that all evil must lead to self-deterioration and Judgment; (3) hence repentance and amendment of life, and obedience to good men's counsels.

5708. Allah gives respite freely; but it is for Him to give it. His command is definite and final; neither man nor any other authority can alter or in any way modify it. If we could only realise this to the full in our inmost soul, it would be best for us and lead to our happiness.

5. He said: "O my Lord!
I have called to my People
Night and day:
6. "But my call only
Increases (their) flight
(From the Right).⁵⁷⁰⁹
7. "And every time I have
Called to them, that Thou
Mightest forgive them,
They have (only) thrust
Their fingers into their ears,
Covered themselves up with⁵⁷¹⁰
Their garments, grown obstinate,
And given themselves up
To arrogance.
8. "So I have called to them
Aloud;
9. "Further I have spoken
To them in public⁵⁷¹¹
And secretly in private,
10. "Saying, 'Ask forgiveness
From your Lord,
For He is Oft-Forgiving;

قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّي دَعَوْتُ قَوْمِي لَيْلًا وَنَهَارًا ﴿٥﴾

فَلَمْ يَزِدْهُمْ دُعَائِي إِلَّا فِرَارًا ﴿٦﴾

وَإِنِّي كُلَّمَا دَعَوْتُهُمْ لِتَغْفِرَ لَهُمْ جَعَلُوا أَصْبُعَهُمْ
فِي آذَانِهِمْ وَاسْتَغْشَوْا ثِيَابَهُمْ وَأَصْرُوا وَاسْتَكْبَرُوا
اسْتِكْبَارًا ﴿٧﴾

ثُمَّ إِنِّي دَعَوْتُهُمْ جَهْرًا ﴿٨﴾

ثُمَّ إِنِّي أَعْلَنْتُ لَهُمْ وَأَسْرَرْتُ لَهُمْ إِسْرَارًا ﴿٩﴾

فَقُلْتُ اسْتَغْفِرُوا رَبَّكُمْ إِنَّكُمْ كَانَتْ عَفَا رًا ﴿١٠﴾

5709. When convincing arguments and warnings are placed before sinners, there are two kinds of reactions. Those who are wise receive admonition, repent, and bring forth fruits of repentance, i.e., amend their lives and turn to Allah. On the other hand, those who are callous to any advice take it up as a reproach, fly farther and farther from righteousness, and shut out more and more the channels through which Allah's healing Grace can reach them and work for them.

5710. The literal meaning would be that, just as they thrust their fingers into their ears to prevent the voice of the admonisher reaching them, so they covered their bodies with their garments that the light of truth should not penetrate to them and that they should not even be seen by the Prophet.

5711. Noah used all the resources of the earnest preacher: he dinned the Message of Allah into their ears; he spoke in public places; and he took individuals into his confidence, and appealed privately to them; but all in vain.

11. " 'He will send rain⁵⁷¹²
To you in abundance;
12. " 'Give you increase
In wealth and sons;
And bestow on you
Gardens and bestow on you
Rivers (of flowing water).⁵⁷¹³
13. " 'What is the matter
With you, that ye
Are not conscious
Of Allah's majesty,^{5713-A}
14. " 'Seeing that it is He
That has created you
In diverse stages?⁵⁷¹⁴
15. " 'See ye not
How Allah has created
The seven heavens
One above another,⁵⁷¹⁵

يُرْسِلُ السَّمَاءَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِدْرَارًا ﴿١١﴾

وَيُمِدُّكُمْ بِأَمْوَالٍ وَبَنِينَ وَيَجْعَلُ
لَكُمْ جَنَّاتٍ وَيَجْعَلُ لَكُمْ أَنْهَارًا ﴿١٢﴾

مَا لَكُمْ لَا تَرْجُونَ لِلَّهِ وَقَارًا ﴿١٣﴾

وَقَدْ خَلَقَكُمْ أَطْوَارًا ﴿١٤﴾

الَّذِينَ رَوَّا كَيْفَ خَلَقَ اللَّهُ سَبْعَ سَمَوَاتٍ طِبَاقًا ﴿١٥﴾

5712. They had perhaps been suffering from drought or famine. If they had taken the message in the right way, the rain would have been a blessing to them. They took it in the wrong way, and the rain was a curse to them, for it flooded the country and drowned the wicked generation. In the larger Plan, it was a blessing all the same; for it purged the world, and gave it a new start, morally and spiritually.

5713. Each of these blessings—rain and crops, wealth and man-power, flourishing gardens, and perennial streams—are indications of prosperity, and have not only a material but also a spiritual meaning. Note the last point, "rivers of flowing water". The perennial springs make the prosperity as it were permanent: they indicate a settled population, honest and contented, and enjoying their blessings here on earth as the foretaste of the eternal joys of heaven.

5713-A. *I.e.*, why don't you fear Allah's Majesty, His greatness and consequent punishment for your sinfulness, and hope for His mercy, kindness and reward for your faith and good deeds. The words of the verse contain the twin strands—fear and hope—simultaneously.

5714. *Cf.* xxii. 5, and notes 2773-2777; also xxiii. 12-17, and notes 2872-2875. The meaning here may be even wider. Man in his various states exhibits various wonderful qualities or capacities, mental and spiritual, that may be compared with the wonderful workings of nature on the earth and in the heavens. Will he not then be grateful for these Mercies and turn to Allah, Who created all these marvels?

5715. See n. 5559 to lxvii. 3.

16. " 'And made the moon
A light in their midst,
And made the sun
As a (Glorious) Lamp?⁵⁷¹⁶

وَجَعَلَ الْقَمَرَ فِيهِ نُورًا وَجَعَلَ الشَّمْسُ مِرْجَا ۝١٦

17. " 'And Allah has produced
You from the earth,
Growing (gradually),⁵⁷¹⁷

وَاللَّهُ أَنْبَتَكُمْ مِنَ الْأَرْضِ بِأَنَاء ۝١٧

18. " 'And in the End
He will return you
Into the (earth),
And raise you forth
(Again at the Resurrection)?

ثُمَّ يُعِيدُكُمْ فِيهَا وَيُخْرِجُكُمْ إِخْرَاجًا ۝١٨

19. " 'And Allah has made
The earth for you
As a carpet (spread out),⁵⁷¹⁸

وَاللَّهُ جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْأَرْضَ بِسَاطًا ۝١٩

20. " 'That ye may go about
Therein, in spacious roads.' »⁵⁷¹⁹

لِتَسْلُكُوا مِنْهَا سُبُلًا فِجَاجًا ۝٢٠

SECTION 2.

21. Noah said: "O my Lord
They have disobeyed me,

قَالَ نُوحٌ رَبِّ إِنِّي أَسْأَلُكَ بِرَحْمَتِكَ وَأَنْتَ أَعْلَمُ الْغُيُوبِ ۝٢١
إِنَّهُمْ عَصَوْا وَتَّبَعُوا مَا يُلْفُوا ۝٢٢
وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ مِنْ رَحْمَةٍ إِلَّا أَنْبَأْنَا بِآيَاتِنَا أَفَلَا تَتَذَكَّرُ ۝٢٣

5716. Cf. xxv. 61, where the sun is referred to as the glorious Lamp of the heavens: "Blessed is He Who made the Constellations in the skies, and placed therein a lamp, and a moon giving light."

5717. Cf. iii. 37, where the growth of the child Mary the Mother of Jesus is described by the same word *nabāt*, ordinarily denoting the growth of plants and trees. The simile is that of a seed sown, that germinates, grows, and dies, and goes back to the earth. In man, there is the further process of the Resurrection. Cf. also xx. 55.

5718. Cf. xx. 53.

5719. *Fijāj* implies valley-roads or passes between mountains. Though there are mountain chains on the earth, Allah's artistry has provided even in such regions, valleys and channels by which men may go about. Mountain roads usually follow the valleys.

But they follow (men)^{5719-A}
Whose wealth and children
Give them no Increase
But only Loss.

22. "And they have devised
A tremendous Plot."⁵⁷²⁰

23. "And they have said
(To each other),
'Abandon not your gods:⁵⁷²¹
Abandon neither Wadd
Nor Suwā', neither
Yagūth nor Ya'ūq,
Nor Nasr';-

24. "They have already
Misled many; and
Grant Thou no increase
To the wrong-doers but in
Straying (from their mark)."⁵⁷²²

25. Because of their sins
They were drowned

وَمَكْرُؤًا مَّكْرًا كَبِيرًا ﴿٦١﴾

وَقَالُوا لَا تَنْدَرْنَ الْهَيْكَلُ وَلَا تَنْدَرْنَ وَدًّا وَلَا سَوَاعَا

وَلَا يَغُوثَ وَيَعُوقَ وَنَسْرًا ﴿٦٢﴾

وَقَدْ أَضَلُّوا كَثِيرًا وَلَا تَزِدِ الظَّالِمِينَ إِلَّا ضَلَالًا ﴿٦٣﴾

مِمَّا خَطِبْتَنَّهُمْ أَغْرِقُوا فَأَذَلُّوا نَارًا فَلَمْ يَجِدُوا لَهُمْ

مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ أَنْصَارًا ﴿٦٤﴾

5719-A. Sinners always resent it as a reproach that righteous men should speak to them for their own good. They prefer smooth flatterers, and they worship power even though the depositaries of power are selfish men, who neither profit themselves nor profit others by the wealth and man-power that they collect round themselves. They forget that mere material things may be a delusion and a snare unless the moral and spiritual factor behind them sanctifies them.

5720. Having got material resources the wicked devise plots to get rid of the righteous whose presence is a reproach to them. For a time their plots may seem tremendous and have the appearance of success, but they can never defeat Allah's Purpose.

5721. For an account of how these Pagan gods and superstitions connected with them originated, and how they became adopted into the Arabian Pagan Pantheon.

5722. Such Pagan superstitions and cults do not add to human knowledge or human well-being. They only increase error and wrong-doing. For example, how much lewdness resulted from the Greek and Roman Saturnalia! And how much lewdness results from ribald Holi songs! This is the natural result, and Noah in his bitterness of spirit prays that Allah's grace may be cut off from men who hug them to their hearts. They mislead others: let them miss their own mark! See also verse 28 below.

(In the flood),⁵⁷²³

And were made to enter

The Fire

And they found—

In lieu of Allah—

None to help them.

26. And Noah said:

“O my Lord! Leave not

Of the Unbelievers,

A single one on earth!”⁵⁷²⁴

27. “For, if Thou dost leave

(Any of) them, they will

But mislead Thy devotees,

And they will breed none

But wicked ungrateful ones.

28. “O my Lord! Forgive me,

My parents, all who

Enter my house in Faith,

And (all) believing men

And believing women:⁵⁷²⁵

And to the wrong-doers

Grant Thou no increase

But in Perdition!”⁵⁷²⁶

وَقَالَ نُوحٌ رَبِّ لَا تَذَرْنِي عَلَى الْأَرْضِ مِنَ الْكَافِرِينَ

دِيَارًا ﴿٦٦﴾

إِنَّكَ إِن تَذَرَهُمْ يَضِلُّوا عِبَادَكَ وَلَا يَلِدُوا إِلَّا فَاجِرًا

كَفَّارًا ﴿٦٧﴾

رَبِّ اغْفِرْ لِي وَلِوَالِدَيَّ وَلِمَنْ دَخَلَ بَيْتِي

مُؤْمِنًا وَالْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ وَلَا تَزِدِ الظَّالِمِينَ

إِلَّا بَارًا ﴿٦٨﴾

5723. The Punishment of sin seizes the soul from every side and in every form. Water (drowning) indicates death by suffocation, through the nose, ears, eyes, mouth, throat, and lungs. Fire has the opposite effects: it burns the skin, the limbs, the flesh, the brains, the bones, and every part of the body. So the destruction wrought by sin is complete from all points of view. And yet it is not death (xx. 74); for death would be a merciful release from the Penalty, and the soul steeped in sin has closed the gates of Allah's Mercy on itself. There they will abide, unless and “except as Allah willeth” (vi. 128). For time and eternity, as we conceive them now, have no meaning in the wholly new world.

5724. The Flood was sent in order to purge all sin. The prayer of Noah is not vindictive. It simply means, “Cut off all the roots of sin”. See next note.

5725. Indeed he prays for himself, his parents, his guests, and all who in earnest faith turn to Allah, in all ages and in all places. Praying for their forgiveness is also praying for the destruction of sin.

5726. This is slightly different in form from verse 24 above, where see n. 5722. See also last note.