

## INTRODUCTION TO SŪRAT AI-A'RĀF, 7

This Sūra is closely connected, both chronologically and in respect of the argument, with the previous Sūra. But it expounds the doctrine of revelation and man's religious history by illustrations from Adam onwards, through various Prophets, and the details of Moses's struggles, to the time of the Prophet Muḥammad, in whom Allah's revelation is completed.

*Summary.*—The note, "learn from the past," is struck from the very beginning. The opposition of Evil to Good is illustrated by the story of Adam and Iblis. Arrogance leads to rebellion; the rebel is jealous and tempts the natural man, who is warned against deceit and all excess (vii. 1-31).

If the warning is not heeded, the future penalties are indicated, while the privileges and the bliss and peace of the righteous are shown in a picture of the Hereafter, as well as in the power and goodness of Allah in the world that we see around us (vii. 32-58).

The story of Noah and the Flood, and the stories of Hūd, Ṣālih, Lot, and Shu'aib, all point to the lesson that the Prophets were resisted and rejected, but truth triumphed in the end, and evil was humbled, for Allah's Plan never fails (vii. 59-99).

The story of Moses is told in greater detail, not only in his struggles with Pharaoh, but in his preparation for his mission, and his struggles with his own rebellious people. Even from the time of Moses the coming of the unlettered Prophet was foreshadowed (vii. 100-157).

But the people of Moses frequently lapsed from Allah's Law as promulgated to them, and transgressed Allah's Covenant, and they were scattered through the earth in sections (vii. 158-171).

The children of Adam have multiplied, but many of them have rejected truth and go by degrees to destruction in ways that they do not realise. The righteous listen to the Message of Allah, and serve Him in humility (vii. 172-206).

*Al-A'rāf. or The Heights.*

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

1. Alif, Lām, Mīm, Sād.<sup>989</sup>
2. A Book revealed unto thee,-  
So let thy heart be oppressed<sup>990</sup>  
No more by any difficulty  
On that account,-  
That with it thou mightest  
Warn (the erring) and a reminder to  
The Believers.
3. Follow (O men!) the revelation  
Given unto you from your Lord,  
And follow not, as friends  
Or protectors, other than Him.  
Little it is ye remember  
Of admonition.<sup>991</sup>

سُورَةُ الْأَعْرَافِ

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

الْمَصَ

كَتَبْ أَنْزَلَ إِلَيْكُمْ فَلَا يَكُنْ فِي صَدْرِكَ حَرَجٌ مِّنْهُ

لِشَذِّرَيْهِ وَذَكْرِي لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ

أَتَيْعُوا مَا أَنْزَلَ إِلَيْكُمْ مِّنْ رِّبِّكُمْ وَلَا تَأْتِيْعُوا

مِنْ دُونِهِ أُولَٰئِهُ قَلِيلًا مَا تَذَكَّرُونَ

989. This is a combination of four Abbreviated Letters. For Abbreviated Letters generally, see Appendix I (at the end of Sūra II). The combination here includes the three letters A.L.M., which occurred at the beginning of Sūra II, and are discussed in n. 25 to ii. 1.

The additional letter Sād occurs in combination here and in Sūra xix, and by itself at the beginning of S. xxxviii, and nowhere else. The factor common to S. vii. S. xix, and S. xxxviii, is that in each case the core of the Sūra consists in the stories (*qisās*) of the Prophets. In this Sūra we have the stories of Noah, Hūd, Sālih, Lōt, Shu'aib, and Moses, leading up to Muḥammad, and in S. xxxviii, the stories of David Solomon, and Job similarly lead up to Muḥammad, occupying three out of the five sections. Sūra xix consists almost entirely of such stories. In this Sūra vii, we have the religious history of mankind traced—the Beginning the Middle, and the End.

990. *Heart:* in the original, *breast*. I have used the word most appropriate to the English idiom. The meaning is that Al-Muṣṭafā is consoled for all the difficulties which he encountered in his mission, with the fact that he had clear guidance in the Book for his preaching.

991. This is added in order that men might not be puffed up with such little knowledge as they possessed, for there are great heights to be scaled in the spiritual kingdom.

4. How many towns have We Destroyed (for their sins)? Our punishment took them On a sudden by night Or while they slept For their afternoon rest.
5. When (thus) Our punishment Took them, no cry Did they utter but this: "Indeed we did wrong." <sup>992</sup>
6. Then shall we question Those to whom Our Message Was sent and those by whom <sup>993</sup> We sent it.
7. And verily, We shall recount Their whole story With knowledge, for We Were never absent (At any time or place). <sup>994</sup>
8. The balance that day Will be true (to a nicety): Those whose scale (of good) Will be heavy, will prosper:
9. Those whose scale will be light, Will find their souls

وَكُمْ مِنْ قَرِيبَةِ أَهْلَكْتَهَا فَجَاءَهَا بِأَسْبَابَتِنَا  
أَوْهُمْ قَاتِلُونَ ﴿١﴾

فَمَا كَانَ دَعْوَنَاهُمْ إِذْ جَاءَهُمْ بِأَسْبَابَ إِلَّا أَنْ فَالَّوْا  
إِنَّا كُنَّا أَطْلَبِينَ ﴿٢﴾

فَلَنَسْأَلَنَّ الَّذِينَ أُرْسِلُ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَنَسْأَلَنَّ  
الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿٣﴾

فَلَنُقْصَنَ عَلَيْهِمْ يَعْلَمُ وَمَا كَانُوا غَافِلِينَ ﴿٤﴾

وَالْوَزْنُ يَوْمَئِذٍ الْحَقُّ فَمَنْ ثَقَلَتْ مَوَازِينُهُ  
فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٥﴾

وَمَنْ حَفَظَ مَوَازِينُهُ فَأُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ حَسِرُوا  
أَنفُسَهُمْ يَمَا كَانُوا إِنْتَنَا يَظْلِمُونَ ﴿٦﴾

992. The religious story of man begins with a prelude. Think of the towns and nations ruined by their iniquity. Allah gave them many opportunities, and sent them warners and teachers. But they arrogantly went on in their evil ways, till some dreadful calamity came and wiped out their traces. In a warm climate the disturbance in the heat of the midday rest is even more than the disturbance at night. It was when the catastrophe came that the people realised their sins, but it was too late.

993. In the final reckoning, the warners and teachers will give evidence of their preaching the truth, and the wicked will themselves have to acknowledge the truth. We picture it like a court scene, when the story is related, but the Judge knows all, even more than the parties can tell.

994. Allah (being all-knowing) is never absent from any place or at any time, for Time and Place are relative conceptions for our limited natures, while He is the Absolute, independent of such relative conceptions.

In perdition, for that they  
Wrongfully treated Our Signs.

10. It is We Who have  
Placed you with authority  
On earth, and provided  
You therein with means  
For the fulfilment of your life:<sup>995</sup>  
Small are the thanks  
That ye give!

## SECTION 2.

11. It is We Who created you  
And gave you shape:<sup>996</sup>  
Then We bade the angels  
Prostrate to Adam, and they  
Prostrated, not so Iblis;  
He refused to be of those<sup>997</sup>  
Who prostrate.
12. (Allah) said: "What prevented  
Thee from prostrating  
When I commanded thee?"  
He said: "I am better  
Than he: Thou didst create  
Me from fire, and him from clay".<sup>998</sup>

وَلَقَدْ مَكَّنْتُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ فِيهَا

مَعِيشًا قَلِيلًا مَا شَكُورُونَ ﴿١١﴾

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْتُمْ ثُمَّ صَوَّرْتُمْ ثُمَّ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ

أَسْجُدُوا لِلنَّاسِ فَسَجَدُوا إِلَّا إِبْلِيسَ

لَرَبِّكُنْ مِنَ السَّاجِدِينَ ﴿١٢﴾

فَأَلَّا مَانَعَكُمْ أَلَا تَسْجُدُوا إِذْ أَمْرَكُمْ فَقَالُوا أَنَا خَيْرٌ مِنْهُ

خَلَقْتَنِي مِنْ نَارٍ وَخَلَقْتَهُ مِنْ طِينٍ ﴿١٣﴾

995. That is, all the material things which are necessary to sustain, beautify, and refine life, as well as all those powers, faculties, and opportunities which are instrumental in bringing up life to a higher plane and preparing man for his high destiny.

996. It was after Adam (as standing for all mankind) had been so taught that the angels were asked to prostrate to him, for, by Allah's grace, his status had actually been raised higher. Note the transition from "you" (plural) in the first clause to "Adam" in the second clause: Adam and mankind are synonymous: the plural is reverted to in vii. 14, 16-18.

997. Iblis not only refused to bow down: he refused to be of those who prostrated. In other words he arrogantly despised the angels who prostrated as well as man to whom they prostrated and he was in rebellion against Allah for not obeying His order. Arrogance, jealousy, and rebellion were his triple crime.

998. Notice the subtle wiles of Iblis: his egotism in putting himself above man, and his falsehood in ignoring the fact that Allah had not merely made man's body from clay, but had given him spiritual form.—in other words, had taught him the nature of things and raised him above the angels.

13. (Allah) said: "Get thee down From it;<sup>999</sup> it is not For thee to be arrogant Here: get out, for thou Art of the meanest (of creatures)."
14. He said: "Give me respite Till the day they are Raised up."
15. (Allah) said: "Be thou Among those who have respite."<sup>1000</sup>
16. He said: "Because thou Hast thrown me out<sup>1001</sup> (Of the Way), lo! I will Lie in wait for them On Thy Straight Way:
17. "Then will I assault them From before them and behind them, From their right and their left: Nor wilt Thou find, In most of them, Gratitude (for Thy mercies)."<sup>1002</sup>
18. (Allah) said: "Get out From this, despised

قَالَ فَأَهْبِطْ مِنْهَا فَمَا يَكُونُ لَكَ أَنْ تَكْبِرَ

فِيهَا فَأَخْرُجْ إِنَّكَ مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ

قَالَ أَنْظِرْنِي إِلَى يَوْمِ يُبَعَّثُونَ

قَالَ إِنَّكَ مِنَ الْمُنْظَرِينَ

قَالَ فِيمَا أَغْوَيْتِنِي لَا قُدْرَةَ لَهُمْ صِرَاطُكَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ

شَمَّ لَا نَتَّهُمْ مِنْ بَيْنِ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ وَعَنْ أَيْمَانِهِمْ

وَعَنْ شَمَائِلِهِمْ وَلَا يَجِدُ أَكْثَرُهُمْ شَكِيرِينَ

قَالَ أَخْرُجْ مِنْهَا مَذْءُومًا وَمَا مَذْهُورًا لَمْ يَعْكِبْ مِنْهُمْ

لَا مَلَانَ جَهَنَّمْ مِنْكُمْ أَجْمَعُونَ

999. The incident marks the extirpation of Iblis from the Garden owing to his rebelliousness born of arrogance.

1000. Are there others under respite? Yes, Iblis has a large army of wicked seducers, and those men who are their dupes. For though degradation takes effect at once, its appearance may be long delayed.

1001. Another instance of Iblis's subtlety and falsehood. He waits till he gets the respite. Then he breaks out into a lie and impudent defiance. The lie is in suggesting that Allah had thrown him out of the Way, in other words misled him; whereas his own conduct was responsible for his degradation. The defiance is in his setting snares on the Straight Way to which Allah directs men.

1002. The assault of evil is from all sides. It takes advantage of every weak point, and sometimes even our good and generous sympathies are used to decoy us into the snares of evil. Man has every reason to be grateful to Allah for all His loving care and yet man in his folly forgets his gratitude and does the very opposite of what he should do.

And expelled. If any  
Of them follow thee,-  
Hell will I fill  
With you all.

19. "O Adam! dwell thou<sup>1003</sup>  
And thy wife in the Garden,  
And enjoy<sup>1004</sup> (its good things)  
As ye wish: but approach not  
This tree, lest you become of  
The unjust."
20. Then began Satan<sup>1005</sup> to whisper  
Suggestions to them,  
In order to reveal to them  
Their shame<sup>1006</sup>  
That was hidden from them  
(Before): he said: "Your Lord  
Only forbade you this tree,  
Lest ye should become angels  
Or such beings as live for ever."
21. And he swore to them  
Both, that he was  
Their sincere adviser.
22. So by deceit he brought about  
Their fall: when they  
Tasted of the tree,

وَيَقَادُمْ أَسْكِنْ أَنْتَ وَزَوْجُكَ الْجَنَّةَ فَكُلَا مِنْ حِيتَ  
شَنَّشَاوَلَأَنْقَرَبَا هَذِهِ الشَّجَرَةَ فَتَكُونَا مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ ١١

فَوَسَمَ لَهُمَا الشَّيْطَانُ يُبَدِّي لَهُمَا مَا وُرِيَ  
عَنْهُمَا مِنْ سَوْءَاتِهِمَا وَقَالَ مَا نَهَاكُمَا بِكُمَا  
عَنْ هَذِهِ الشَّجَرَةِ إِلَّا أَنْ كَوَنَا مَلَكِينَ أَوْ كَوَنَا  
مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ ٢٠

وَقَاسَمُهُمَا إِنِّي لِكُلَّ أَيْمَنٍ أَنْتَصِرِيكَ

فَدَلَّهُمَا بِقُرُورٍ فَلَمَّا ذَاقَا الشَّجَرَةَ بَدَّتْ لَهُمَا  
سَوْءَاتِهِمَا وَطَفِقَا يَخْصِفَانِ عَلَيْهِمَا مِنْ وَرَقِ الْجَنَّةِ

1003. Now the story turns to man. He was placed in the Garden of comfort and bliss, but it was Allah's Plan to give him a limited faculty of choice. All that he was forbidden to do was to approach the Tree, but he succumbed to Satan's suggestions.

1004. *Enjoy*: literally, "eat." Cf. the meaning of *ta'ama* in vi. 14, n. 847 and *akala* in v. 66, n. 776.

1005. The transition from the name "Iblis" to the name "Satan" is similar to that in ii. 36, where it is explained in n. 52.

1006. Our first parents as created by Allah (and this applies to all of us) were innocent in matters material as well as spiritual. They knew no evil. But the faculty of choice, which was given to them and which raised them above the angels, also implied that they had the capacity of evil, which by the training of their own will, they were to reject. They were warned of the danger. When they fell, they realised the evil. They were (and we are) still given the chance, in this life on a lower plane, to make good and recover the lost status of innocence and bliss.

Their shameful parts became manifest  
To them, and they began  
To sew together the leaves  
Of the Garden over their bodies.  
And their Lord called  
Unto them: "Did I not  
Forbid you that tree,  
And tell you that Satan  
Was an avowed  
Enemy unto you?"

23. They said: "Our Lord  
We have wronged our own souls:  
If Thou forgive us not  
And bestow not upon us  
Thy Mercy, we shall  
Certainly be lost.

24. (Allah) said: "Get ye down,  
With enmity between yourselves.  
On earth will be your dwelling-place  
And your means of livelihood,-  
For a time."

25. He said: "Therein shall ye  
Live, and therein shall ye  
Die: but from it shall ye  
Be taken out (at last)."<sup>1007</sup>

## SECTION 3.

26. O ye Children of Adam!  
We have bestowed raiment<sup>1008</sup>

وَنَادَهُمْ أَرْبَهُمْ أَلَا تَأْنِي كُلَّكُمْ عَنِ تِلْكُمَا

الشَّجَرَةِ وَأَقْلَلَكُمَا إِنَّ الشَّيْطَنَ لَكُمْ أَدُوْمَيْنَ

فَلَا أَرَيْتَ أَنَّا أَنْفَسَنَا وَإِنْ لَرْغَفْرَنَا وَرَحْمَنَا

لَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْخَسِيرِينَ

قَالَ أَهِيْطُوا بِعَصْكُرْ لِيَعْسِ عَدُوْ

وَلَكُوفِي الْأَرْضِ مُسْقَرُو مُنْتَعِنِي إِلَى حِينِ

قَالَ فِيهَا تَحْيَوْنَ وَفِيهَا تَمُوتُونَ وَمِنْهَا

مُخْرَجُونَ

يَبْنِيْنَ آدَمَ قَدْ أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكُمْ لِيَاسَا يَوْرِي سَوَّهَ تِكْمَ

1007. Cf. this whole passage about Adam with the passage in ii. 30-39, and with other passages in subsequent Sūras. In places the words are precisely the same, and yet the whole argument is different. In each case it exactly fits the context. In S. ii. the argument was about the origin of man. Here the argument is a prelude to his history on earth, and so it continues logically in the next section to address the Children of Adam, and goes on afterwards with the story of the various prophets that came to guide mankind. Truth is one, but its apt presentment in words shows a different facet in different contexts.

1008. The body: is pure and beautiful, as long as it is not defiled by misuse: its clothing and ornaments may be good or meretricious, according to the motives in the =

Upon you to cover  
Your shame, as well as  
To be an adornment to you,  
But the raiment of righteousness—  
That is the best.  
Such are among the Signs  
Of Allah, that they  
May receive admonition!

27. O ye Children of Adam!  
Let not Satan seduce you,  
In the same manner as<sup>109</sup>  
He got your parents out  
Of the Garden, stripping them  
Of their raiment, to expose  
Their shame: for he  
And his tribe see you  
From a position where ye  
Cannot see them: We made  
The Satans friends  
(Only) to those without Faith.

28. When they commit an  
Indecency, they say:  
“We found our fathers  
Doing so”; and “Allah  
Commanded us thus”;  
Say: “Nay, Allah never  
Command what is Indecent:  
Do ye say of Allah  
What ye know not?

وَرِدْنَا وَلِيَاسُ أَنَّقُوئَ ذَلِكَ خَيْرٌ  
ذَلِكَ مِنْ مَا إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَذَكُرُونَ ﴿٢٨﴾

يَنْبِئُكُمْ آدَمَ لَا يَقِنَّتُكُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ كَمَا أَخْرَجَ  
أَبْوَيْكُمْ مِنَ الْجَنَّةِ يَنْعُزُ عَنْهُمَا لِبَرِّهِمَا  
سَوْءَهُمَا إِنَّهُمْ يَرَنُوكُمْ هُوَ وَقَبِيلُهُ مِنْ حَيَّاتِ  
لَا تَرَوْهُمْ إِنَّا جَعَلْنَا الشَّيْطَانَ أُولَئِكَ  
لِلَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٢٩﴾

وَإِذَا فَعَلُوا فَحِشَةً قَالُوا وَجَدْنَا عَلَيْهَا آبَاءَنَا  
وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا يَعْمَلُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَأْمُرُ بِالْفَحْشَاءِ  
أَنْقُلُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٣٠﴾

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= mind and character: if good, they are the symbols of purity and beauty: but the best clothing and ornament we could have comes from righteousness, which covers the nakedness of sin, and adorns us with virtues.

109. That is, by fraud and deceit,—by putting you off your guard and telling lies. Adam's story here becomes an introduction to the later religious history of mankind: vii. 20-22. In the Garden, Satan's deceit stripped off their raiment of honour and innocence. In this life on a lower plane he seeks to strip us of the raiment of righteousness. And he can take up positions on a vantage ground of worldly power or influence or riches, in which he and his confederates are not seen in their true colours. They may assume a fair-seeming disguise of disinterested friendship or high motives of patriotism or public spirit, or loyalty to ancestors, when beneath it there is nothing but spite and selfishness.

29. Say: "My Lord hath commanded Justice; and that ye set Your whole selves (to Him)<sup>1010</sup> At every time and place Of prayer, and call upon Him, Making your devotion sincere Such as He created you<sup>1011</sup> In the beginning, so Shall ye return."

30. Some He hath guided: Others have Deserved the loss of their way,<sup>1012</sup> In that they took The Satans in preference To Allah, for their friends And protectors, and think That they receive guidance.

31. O Children of Adam! Wear your beautiful apparel<sup>1013</sup>

قُلْ أَسْرِرْتِي بِالْفَقْسَطِ وَأَفِسْمُوا بِجُوهِكُمْ عِنْدَ كُلِّ مَسْجِدٍ وَأَدْعُوهُ مُخْلِصِينَ لِهِ الَّذِينَ كَانُوا يَدْعُونَ

فَرِيقًا هَدَى وَفَرِيقًا حَقَّ عَلَيْهِمُ الظَّلَلَةُ إِنَّهُمْ أَنْخَذُوا أَلِيَّاً مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَيَخْسِبُونَ أَهْمَمَهُمْ مُهْتَدُونَ

يَسِّيَّ إِدَمَ حُذُوا زِينَتُكُمْ عِنْدَكُلِّ مَسْجِدٍ وَكُلُّوْنَ

1010. For *wajh*, see ii. 112 and n. 114. Our devotion should be sincere, not as in other men's sight, but by presenting our whole selves, heart and soul, to Allah. Even so, it may not be enough; for the sight of our heart and soul may be faulty. We should call upon Allah to give us the light, by which our sincerity may commend itself to Him as true sincerity "as in His sight".

1011. Cf. vi. 94. Our sincerity should be real sincerity, as in His sight for when we return to Him, we shall be stripped of all pretence, even such self-deception as may satisfy us in this life.

1012. Guidance is for all. But in some it takes effect: in others the doors are closed against it, because they have taken Satan for their friend. If they have lost their way, they have richly deserved it; for they deliberately took their choice, even though, in their self-righteousness, they may think that their sin is their virtue, and that their Evil is their Good.

1013. *Beautiful apparel: zinat:* adornments or apparel for beautiful living: construed to mean not only clothes that add grace to the wearer, but toilet and cleanliness, attention to hair, and other small personal details which no self-respecting man or woman ought to neglect when going solemnly even before a great human dignitary, if only out of respect for the dignity of the occasion. How much more important it is to attend to these details when we solemnly apply our minds to the Presence of Allah. But the caution against excess applies: men must not go to prayer in silks or ornaments appropriate to women. Similarly sober food, good and wholesome, is not to be divorced from offices of religion; only the caution against excess applies strictly. A dirty, unkempt, slovenly Faqir could not claim sanctity in Islam.

At every time and place  
Of prayer: eat and drink:  
But waste not by excess,  
For Allah loveth not the wasters.

## SECTION 4.

32. Say: Who hath forbidden  
The beautiful (gifts) of Allah,<sup>1014</sup>  
Which He hath produced  
For His servants,  
And the things, clean and pure,  
(Which He hath provided)  
For sustenance?  
Say: They are, in the life  
Of this world, for those  
Who believe, (and) purely<sup>1015</sup>  
For them on the Day  
Of Judgment. Thus do We  
Explain the Signs in detail  
For those who know.
33. Say: The things that my Lord  
Hath indeed forbidden are:<sup>1016</sup>  
Indecent deeds, whether open  
Or secret; sins and trespasses

وَأَنْتُمْ بُوَالْأَسْرِ فَوْقَ إِلَهٍ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُسْرِفِينَ

قُلْ مَنْ حَرَمَ زِينَةَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي أَخْرَجَ لِعِبَادِهِ  
وَالظَّبَابِتُ مِنَ الرِّزْقِ قُلْ هُنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا  
فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا خَالِصَةً يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ كَذَلِكَ  
نَفَضَلُ الْآيَتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ

قُلْ إِنَّا حَرَمَ رِفِيَّ الْفَوْحَشَ مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَمَا بَطَنَ

1014. Asceticism often means the negation of art and beauty, it has no necessary sanctity attached to it.

1015. The beautiful and good things of life are really meant for, and should be the privilege of those with faith in Allah. If they do not always have them in this life, and if there is sometimes the semblance of others having them who do not deserve them, let us remember that this is a test from Allah. In the life to come they will be purely for the faithful.

1016. The forbidden things are described in four categories: (1) what is shameful or unbecoming; the sort of things which have also legal and social sanctions, not of a local but of a universal kind; they may be called offences against society: (2) sins against self and trespasses or excesses of every sort; these are against truth and reason; here would come in indiscipline, failure in doing intangible duties not clearly defined by law; selfishness or self-aggrandisement, which may be condoned by custom and not punished by law, etc.: (3) erecting fetishes or false gods; this is treason against the true God; and (4) corrupting religion by debasing superstitions, etc.

Against truth or reason; assigning  
Of partners to Allah, for which  
He hath given no authority;  
And saying things about Allah  
Of which ye have no knowledge.

34. To every People is a term.<sup>1017</sup>  
Appointed: when their term  
Is reached, not an hour  
Can they cause delay,  
Nor (an hour) can they  
Advance (it in anticipation).
35. O ye Children of Adam!  
Whenever there come to you  
Messengers from amongst you,  
Rehearsing My Signs unto you,-  
Those who are righteous  
And mend (their lives).-  
On them shall be no fear  
Nor shall they grieve.
36. But those who reject  
Our Signs and treat them  
With arrogance,-they  
Are Companions of the Fire,  
To dwell therein (for ever).
37. Who is more unjust  
Than one who forges  
A lie against Allah  
Or rejects His Signs?

وَالْإِثْمُ وَالْبَغْيُ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ وَأَنْ تُشْرِكُوا بِاللَّهِ مَا لَمْ يُنْزِلْ  
بِهِ سُلْطَانًا وَأَنْ تَقُولُوا أَعْلَى اللَّهِ مَا لَا نَعْلَمُونَ

وَلَكُلُّ أُمَّةٍ أَجَلٌ فَإِذَا جَاءَ أَجَلُهُمْ لَا يَسْتَأْخِرُونَ  
سَاعَةً وَلَا يَسْقِدُونَ

بَنَّبِيَّا مَادِمًا يَأْتِيَنَّكُمْ رُسُلٌ مِّنْكُمْ يَعْصُمُونَ  
عَلَيْكُمْ كُلُّ مَا يَتَّقَى فَمَنْ أَتَقَنَّ وَأَصْلَحَ فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ  
وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ

وَالَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا وَأَسْتَكَرُوا عَنْهَا أُولَئِكَ  
أَضَحَّبُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَلِيلُونَ

فَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ أَفْرَى عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا أَوْ كَذَبَ بِآيَاتِهِ  
أُولَئِكَ يَنْهَا لَهُمْ نَصِيبُهُمْ مِّنَ الْكَنْتِ حَقٌّ إِذَا جَاءَهُمْ

1017. People: *ummah*. I do not know whether "generation" would not be more appropriate here. If so, it would refer to the Time-Spirit, for it affects a whole number of people living contemporaneously, and while we deal grammatically with a group, we really have in mind the individuals composing the group. Anyway, the lesson is what is suggested in the following verses. There is only a limited time for an individual or for a group of people. If they do not make good during that time of probation, the chance is lost, and it cannot come again. We cannot retard or advance the march of time by a single hour or minute. ("Hour" in the text expresses an indefinite but short period of time).

For such, their portion<sup>1018</sup>  
Appointed must reach them  
From the Book (of Decrees):  
Until, when Our messengers  
(Of death) arrive and take  
Their souls, they say:  
“Where are the things  
That ye used to invoke  
Besides Allah?”  
They will reply, “They  
Have left us in the lurch,”  
And they will bear witness  
Against themselves, that they  
Had rejected Allah.

38. He will say: “Enter ye  
In the company of  
The Peoples who passed away  
Before you-men and Jinns,-  
Into the Fire. Every time  
A new People enters,  
It curses its sister-People  
(That went before), until  
They follow each other, all  
Into the Fire.  
Saith the last  
About the first: “Our Lord!  
It is these that misled us:  
So give them a double  
Punishment in the Fire.”

رَسُلًا يَتَوَفَّهُمْ قَالُوا إِنَّ مَا كُنَّا نَدْعُونَ  
مِنْ دُورِنَا أَنَّهُمْ قَالُوا ضَلَّوْا عَنَّا وَشَهَدُوا  
عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ أَنَّهُمْ كَانُوا كُفَّارِينَ

قَالَ اذْخُلُوهُ فِي أَمْرٍ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قِبْلِكُمْ مِنَ الْجِنِّ  
وَالإِنْسِ فِي النَّارِ كُلُّمَا دَخَلَتْ أُمَّةٌ لَمْنَتْ أَخْنَهَا  
حَتَّىٰ إِذَا أَدَارَكُوْهُمْ بِأَجْمَعِهَا قَالَتْ أُخْرَهُمْ  
لَا أُولَئِمْ رَبِّنَا هُوَ لَاءُ أَكْثُرُنَا فَأَنَّهُمْ عَدَابًا صَنَعُوا  
مِنَ النَّارِ قَالَ لِكُلِّ ضَعْفٍ وَلَنْكِنَ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

1018. It must not be supposed that the rebels against Allah would at once be cut off in this life for their sins. They will get the portion allotted to them, including the good things of life and the chance of repentance and reformation, during their probationary period on this earth. During that period they will have a full run. After that period expires, they will be called to account. They will themselves see that the false things, in which they put their trust, were false, and they will confess their sin, but it will be too late.

He will say: "Doubled<sup>1019</sup>  
For all": but this  
Ye do not know.

39. Then the first will say  
To the last: "See then!  
No advantage have ye  
Over us; so taste ye  
Of the Chastisement for all  
That ye did!"<sup>1020</sup>

## SECTION 5.

40. To those who reject  
Our Signs and treat them  
With arrogance, no opening  
Will there be of the gates  
Of heaven, nor will they  
Enter the Garden, until  
The camel can pass  
Through the eye of the needle:  
Such is Our reward  
For those in sin.

41. For them there is  
Hell, as a couch  
(Below) and folds and folds

وَقَالَتْ أُولَئِنَّهُمْ لِأَخْرَنَهُمْ فَمَا كَانَ لَكُمْ عَلَيْنَا  
مِنْ فَضْلٍ فَذُوقُوا الْعَذَابَ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْسِبُونَ

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا وَأَسْكَنْبَرُوا عَنْهَا الْفَتنَةَ  
لَهُمْ أَبْوَابُ السَّلَامِ وَلَا يَدْخُلُونَ الْجَنَّةَ حَقَّ بَلِيجَ الْجَنَّلِ  
فِي سَمَاءِ الْفَيَاطِ وَكَذَّالِكَ نَجْزِي  
الْمُجْرِمِينَ

لَهُمْ مِنْ جَهَنَّمَ مَهَادٌ وَمِنْ فَوْقَهُمْ غَوَاثٌ  
وَكَذَّالِكَ نَجْزِي الظَّلَّمِينَ

1019. The earlier generations committed a double crime: (1) their own sins, (2) the bad example they set for those that followed. We are responsible not only for our own misdeeds, but for those which our example and our teaching to our juniors may induce them to commit. But it does not lie in the mouth of the juniors to ask for a double punishment for seniors: the motive is not justice, but pure spite, which is itself a sin. Further, the later generations have to answer for two things: (1) their own sins, and (2) their failure to learn from the past, from the experiences of those who preceded them. They should have an advantage in this respect, being "in the foremost files of Time," but they did not learn. Thus there was nothing to choose between the earlier and later generations in the matter of guilt. But how few people understand this!

In vi. 160, we were told that good was rewarded tenfold, but evil was punished according to its guilt, in perfect justice. This verse is in no way inconsistent with it. Two crimes must have a double penalty.

1020. Wrong-doers have really no sense of honour towards each other. "Honour among thieves" is an exceptional, not an ordinary, experience. In real life, guilt and crime are apt to indulge in mean spite and bitter recriminations against accomplices.

Of covering above: such  
Is Our requital of those  
Who do wrong.

42. But those who believe  
And work righteousness,-  
No burden do We place  
On any soul, but that  
Which it can bear,-  
They will be Companions  
Of the Garden, therein  
To dwell (for ever).
43. And We shall remove  
From their hearts any  
Rancour;<sup>1021</sup>  
Beneath them will be  
Rivers flowing;—and they  
Shall say: “Praise be to Allah,  
Who hath guided us  
To this (felicity): never  
Could we have found  
Guidance, had it not been  
For the guidance of Allah:  
Indeed it was the truth  
That the Messengers of our Lord  
Brought unto us.” And they  
Shall hear the cry:  
“Behold! the Garden before you!  
Ye have been made<sup>1022</sup>

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ  
لَا نَكْلُفُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا أُولَئِكَ أَصْحَابُ  
الْجَنَّةِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَلِيلُونَ ﴿٤٤﴾

وَرَغَّبَنَا فِي صُدُورِهِمْ مِنْ غَلِّ تَهْرِيٍّ مِنْ تَهْنِيٍّ  
أَلَّا يَنْهَرُ وَقَالُوا لَهُمْ حَمْدُ اللَّهِ الَّذِي هَدَنَا إِلَيْهِنَا  
وَمَا كَانَ لِلنَّاسِ إِلَّا لَوْلَا أَنْ هَدَنَا اللَّهُ لَقَدْ جَاءَتْ  
رُسُلُ رَبِّنَا بِالْحَقِّ وَنُودُّ أَنْ يَنْلَمِعُ لَنَا الْجَنَّةُ  
أُولَئِنَّمُ هَا إِيمَانًا كُثُرًا تَعْمَلُونَ

1021. A man who may have suffered or been disappointed may have a lurking sense of injury at the back of his mind, which may spoil his enjoyment on account of past memory intruding in the midst of felicity. In such cases memory itself is pain. Even sorrow is intensified by memory: as Tennyson says, “A sorrow’s crown of sorrows is remembering happier things.” But that is in this our imperfect life. In the perfect felicity of the righteous, all such feelings will be blotted out. No “heartaches” then and no memories of them! The clouds of the past will have dissolved in glorious light, and no past happiness will be comparable with the perfect happiness which will have then been attained. Nor will any sense of envy or shortcoming be possible in that perfect bliss.

1022. Jesus said: “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth”: Matt. v. 5. Here we are told: blessed are the righteous, for they shall inherit the kingdom of heaven. The stress here is on actual practical deeds of righteousness: whether they find their rewards on earth or not is immaterial: their attention is directed to an infinitely =

Its inheritors, for your  
Deeds (of righteousness)."

44. The Companions of the Garden  
Will call out to the Companions  
Of the Fire: "We have  
Indeed found the promises  
Of our Lord to us true:  
Have you also found  
Your Lord's promises true?"  
They shall say, "Yes": but<sup>1023</sup>  
A Crier shall proclaim  
Between them: "The curse  
Of Allah is on the wrong-doers;—
45. "Those who would hinder (men)  
From the path of Allah  
Desiring to make  
Something crooked;<sup>1024</sup>  
They were those who  
Denied the Hereafter."
46. Between them shall be  
A veil, and on the Heights<sup>1025</sup>

= greater reward, the kingdom of heaven. In the Sermon on the Mount this is promised to the "poor in spirit": Matt. v. 3.

1023. The Companions of the Fire can only answer a single word, "Yes," such is their state of misery. Even so, their voice is drowned in the voice of the Crier, who explains their state: they are in a state of curse, that is, deprivation of the grace and mercy of Allah. Such deprivation is the highest misery that souls can suffer.

1024. The unrighteous reflect their own crooked minds when the path of Allah is before them. Instead of going straight, they try to find something in it that suits their own crooked ideas. Frankly they have no faith in the final Goal, the Hereafter.

1025. This is a difficult passage, and Commentators have interpreted it in different ways. Three distinct schools of thought may be discerned in the interpretation. (1) One school thinks that the men on the Heights are angels, or such men of exalted spiritual dignity (e.g., the great prophets), as will be able to know the souls at sight as regards their real worth: the Heights will be their exalted stations, from which they will welcome the righteous with a salutation of peace, even before the righteous have entered heaven; the salutation of peace being itself an assurance of salvation to those whom they salute. (2) Another school of thought thinks that the men on the Heights are such souls as are not decidedly on the side of merit or decidedly on the side of sin, but evenly balanced on a partition between heaven and hell. Their case is yet to be decided, but their salutation to the righteous is a wistful salutation, because they hope for Allah's Mercy.

وَنَادَى أَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةَ أَصْحَابَ النَّارِ أَنْ قَدْ وَجَدْنَا<sup>١٠٢٣</sup>  
مَا وَعْدَنَا رَبُّنَا حَتَّىٰ هَلَّ وَجَدْنَا مَا وَعَدَنَا رَبُّنَا حَتَّىٰ  
فَالْوَانْعَمَ فَإِذَا ذُمُّواْنَ بِيَنْهُمْ أَنْ لَهُنَّ اللَّهُ  
عَلَى الظَّالِمِينَ ١٠٢٤

أَلَّذِينَ يُشَدُّونَ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَيَعْرُجُونَهَا عَوْجَاهًا وَهُمْ  
بِالآخِرَةِ كَفَرُونَ ١٠٢٥

وَيَنْهَا حَاجَبٌ وَعَلَى الْآخِرَةِ يَرْجَأُونَ كُلًا

Will be men  
Who would know every one  
By his marks: they will call  
Out to the Companions  
Of the Garden, "Peace be upon you":  
They have not entered it,  
But they still hoped.  
To (enter it).

47. When their eyes<sup>1026</sup> shall be turned  
Towards the Companions  
Of the Fire, they will say:  
"Our Lord! send us not  
To the company  
Of the wrong-doers."

## SECTION 6

48. The men on the Heights  
Will call to certain men  
Whom they will know  
From their marks, saying:<sup>1027</sup>  
"Of what profit to you  
Were your hoards and your  
Arrogant ways?  
49. "Behold! are these not  
The men whom you swore  
That Allah with His Mercy

بِسَمْنَتُمْ وَنَادُوا أَصْبَحَ الْجَنَّةَ أَنْ سَلَمَ عَيْتَكُمْ  
لَرِيدَ حَلُوَهَا وَهُمْ يَطْمَعُونَ

وَإِذَا صُرِفَتْ أَبْصَرُهُمْ نِلَاقَهُمْ أَصْبَحَ النَّارِ قَالُوا رَبَّنَا  
لَا جَعَلْنَا مِعَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ

وَنَادَى أَصْبَحَ الْأَغْرِيفَ رِبَّا لَيْعَرَ فُونَمْ بِسَمْنَتُمْ  
فَالْوَآمَا أَغْفَقَ عَنْكُمْ جَمِيعُكُو وَمَا كُنْتُمْ  
تَشْكِرُونَ

أَهْتَلَّا لِلَّذِينَ أَقْسَمْتَ لَيْسَ اللَّهُ بِرَحْمَةٍ

1026. *Their eyes:* according to interpretation (2) of the last note, "their" would refer to the people whose fate has not yet been decided, and the speech would be theirs; according to interpretations (1) and (3) in that note, "their" would refer to the Companions of the Garden, who would realise the terrible nature of hell, and express their horror of it. I prefer the latter. Then the mention of the "men on the Heights" and their speech in verse 48 comes in naturally as a different kind of speech from a different kind of men.

1027. This speech is in three parts: (1) the last lines of this verse are addressed to the Companions of the Fire, reminding them (as a bench of judges might speak to a prisoner) of the futility of their wealth and riches and arrogance in their earthly life: (2) the second part, in the first half of verse 49, recalls to their minds how false was their contempt of the good but lowly men who are now to be the inheritors of heaven: and (3) the latter part of verse 49, "enter ye the Garden" is addressed to the Blessed, to give them a welcome to their state of felicity.

Would never bless?  
Enter ye the Garden:  
No fear shall be on you,  
Nor shall ye grieve."

50. The Companions of the Fire  
Will call to the Companions  
Of the Garden: "Pour down  
To us water or anything  
That Allah doth provide  
For your sustenance."  
They will say: "Both  
These things hath Allah forbidden  
To those who rejected Him;"<sup>1028</sup>
51. "Such as took their religion  
To be mere amusement  
And play, and were deceived  
By the life of the world."  
That day shall We forget them<sup>1029</sup>  
As they forgot the meeting  
Of this day of theirs,  
And as they were wont  
To reject Our Signs.
52. For We had certainly  
Sent unto them a Book,  
Based on knowledge,  
Which We explained  
In detail,—a guide  
And a mercy  
To all who believe.

أَدْخُلُوا الْجَنَّةَ لَا حَوْفٌ عَلَيْكُمْ وَلَا أَنْتُمْ

حَزِينُونَ ﴿٦﴾

وَقَادَى أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ أَصْحَابَ الْجَنَّةَ أَنْ أَفِيشُوا  
عَيْنَانِ الْمَاءِ أَوْ مَارِرَ قَمَرَكُمْ اللَّهُ قَالُوا  
إِنَّ اللَّهَ حَرَمَهُمَا عَلَى الْكُفَّارِ ﴿٦١﴾

الَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا دِينَهُمْ لَهُوَا وَلَعِبًا  
وَغَرَّتْهُمْ الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا فَالْيَوْمَ نَنْسَهُهُمْ  
كَمَا نَسَوْا إِلَيْهَا يَوْمَهُمْ هَذَا وَمَا كَانُوا  
بِأَيْمَانِنَا بِمَحْدُودٍ ﴿٦٢﴾

وَلَقَدْ جِئْنَاهُمْ بِكِتَابٍ فَصَلَّنَاهُ عَلَى عَلِيهِ هُدًى  
وَرَحْمَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٦٣﴾

1028. The Companions of the Fire will thirst for water and not get it, and for sustenance which will not be theirs, while the Companions of the Garden will have the crystal waters of the springs and rivers and they will enjoy the bliss of Allah's Countenance, which will be their supreme nourishment and the fruit of their life of probation and seeking. These things will not be transferable. Cf. also xxxvii. 41-47, 62-67.

1029. "Forgetfulness" may be involuntary, from a defect of memory, or figuratively, a deliberate turning away from, or ignoring of, something we do not want, as when we say in an argument, "you conveniently forget that so-and-so is so-and-so." Here the latter kind is meant. If men deliberately ignored the Hereafter in spite of warnings, can they expect to be received by Allah, Whom they themselves rejected?

53. Are they waiting for its fulfilment?  
On the day when it is fulfilled<sup>1030</sup>  
Those who have forgotten it  
Before will say: "The Messengers  
Of our Lord did indeed  
Bring true (tidings). Have we  
No intercessors now to intercede  
On our behalf? Or could we  
Be sent back? Then should we  
Behave differently from our  
Behaviour in the past."  
In fact they will have lost  
Their souls, and the things  
They forged will leave  
Them in the lurch.

## SECTION 7.

54. Your Guardian Lord  
Is Allah, Who created  
The heavens and the earth<sup>1031</sup>  
In six Days, then He  
Settled Himself on the Throne:<sup>1032</sup>

هَلْ يَتَظَرُونَ إِلَّا تَأْوِيلَهُ يَوْمَ يَأْتِي تَأْوِيلُهُ يَعْوَلُ  
الَّذِينَ نَسُوا مِنْ قَبْلِ قَدْجَاءَتْ رُسُلُ رَبِّنَا  
بِالْحَقِّ فَهَلْ لَنَا مِنْ شُفَعَاءَ فَيَشْفَعُونَا إِذَا أُوذِنَّا  
فَنَعْمَلُ عَيْرَ الَّذِي كَانَ نَعْمَلُ قَدْ خَسِرُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ  
وَضَلَّ عَنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يَفْتَرُونَ



إِنَّ رَبَّكُمْ اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ  
فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ أَسْتَوَى عَلَى الْمَرْقَبِ يَعْشِي  
أَيْلَالَ النَّهَارِ يَطْلُبُهُ حَيْثَا وَالشَّمْسُ وَالْقَمَرُ

1030. If those without Faith want to wait and see what happens in the Hereafter, they will indeed learn the truth, but it will be too late for them to profit by it then. All the false ideals and false gods which they put their trust upon will leave them in the lurch. If they thought that the goodness or greatness of others would help them, they will be undeceived on the day when their personal responsibility will be enforced. There will be no salvation except on their own record. How they will then wish that they had another chance! But their chance will be gone.

1031. A sublime verse, comparable to the Throne Verse ii. 255. As for the Creation in *six Days*, in xxii. 47, we are told that a Day in the sight of Allah is *like* a thousand years of our reckoning, and in lxx. 4, the comparison is with 50,000 of our years. In the history of our material earth, we may reckon six great epochs of evolution.

1032. Here, we are told of the creation of the heavens and the earth in six days. But lest we should be obsessed with the Jewish idea that Allah *rested* on the seventh day, we are told that the Creation was but a prelude to Allah's work: for His authority is exercised constantly by the laws which He establishes and enforces in all parts of His Creation. The beautiful imagery of night and day seeking out each other in rapid succession is still further enforced in the Arabic by the double accusative of the verb *yugshī*, showing the *mutual* interactions of the day and the night, each covering the other in turn. The heavenly bodies show an order which is evidence of His *constant* care and government. Not only that, but it is only He Who creates, maintains, and governs, and no one else.

He draweth  
The night as a veil  
O'er the day, each seeking  
The other in rapid succession:  
And the sun,  
The moon, and the stars,  
(All) are subserviant  
By His Command.  
Verily, His are the  
Creation and the Command  
Blessed

Be Allah, the Cherisher  
And Sustainer of the Worlds!

55. Call on your Lord  
With humility and in private:<sup>1033</sup>  
For Allah loveth not  
Those who trespass beyond bounds.
56. Do not mischief on the earth,  
After it hath been<sup>1034</sup>  
Set in order, but call  
On Him with fear<sup>1035</sup>  
And longing (in your hearts):  
For the Mercy of Allah  
Is (always) near  
To those who do good.
57. It is He Who sendeth  
The Winds like heralds

وَالنُّجُومُ مُسَخَّرَتٍ بِأَمْرِهِ إِلَّا لَهُ الْخَلْقُ  
وَالْأَمْرُ مُتَبَارِكٌ اللَّهُ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٦٦﴾

أَدْعُوكُمْ تَضَرُّعًا وَحْقَيْةً إِنَّمَا لَا يُجِيبُ  
الْمُعْتَدِيَنَ ﴿٦٦﴾

وَلَا فُسُدُّ وَفِي الْأَرْضِ بَعْدَ إِصْلَاحِهَا  
وَأَدْعُوكُمْ خَوْفًا وَطَمَعاً إِنَّ رَحْمَةَ اللَّهِ قَرِيبٌ  
مِّنَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٦٦﴾

وَهُوَ الَّذِي يُرْسِلُ الرِّيحَ بُشْرَابِئِنَ يَدَى

1033. In prayer, we must avoid any arrogance or show or loudness, or vanity of requests or words. If excess is condemned in all things, it is specially worthy of condemnation when we go humbly before our Lord.—we poor creatures before the Omnipotent Who knoweth all.

1034. The man who prays with humility and earnestness finds the ground prepared by Allah for his spiritual advancement. It is all set in order, and cleared of weeds. He does not, like the wicked, upset that order, to introduce evil or mischief into it.

1035. *Fear and longing:* the fear of Allah is really a fear lest we should diverge from His Will, or do anything which would not be pleasing to Him: unlike ordinary fear, it therefore brings us nearer to Allah, and in fact nourishes our longing and desire for Him.

Of glad tidings, going before<sup>1036</sup>  
 His Mercy: when they have  
 Carried the heavy-laden  
 Clouds. We drive them  
 To a land that is dead,  
 Make rain to descend thereon,  
 And produce every kind  
 Of harvest therewith: thus  
 Shall We raise up the dead:  
 Perchance ye may remember.

58. From the land that is clean  
 And good, by the Will  
 Of its Cherisher, springs up  
 Produce, (rich) after its kind:<sup>1037</sup>  
 But from the land that is  
 Bad, springs up nothing  
 But that which is scanty  
 Thus do we explain the Signs  
 By various (symbols) to those  
 Who are grateful.<sup>1038</sup>

رَحْمَتِهِ، حَقَّ إِذَا أَفْلَتْ سَعَابًا يُثَلَّا سُقْنَةً  
 لِيَكْلِمَ مَيْتَ فَأَنْزَلْنَا بِهِ الْمَاءَ فَأَخْرَجْنَا بِهِ مِنْ كُلِّ  
 الْمَرْءَتِ كَذَلِكَ تُخْرِجُ الْمَوْتَنَ لَعَلَّكُمْ  
 تَذَكَّرُونَ

وَأَنْبَلَ اللَّطِيبَ بِخَرْجِ نَبَاتِهِ بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِ وَالَّذِي  
 خَبَّثَ لَا يَخْرُجُ إِلَّا كَذِلِكَ نُصَرِّفُ  
 الْأَيْمَنَ لِقَوْمٍ يَشْكُرُونَ

1036. The Parable is complete in its triple significance. (1) In the physical world the winds go like heralds of glad tidings; they are the advance guard, behind which is coming a great army of winds driving heavily laden clouds before it; the wise Providence of Allah is their General, who directs them towards a parched land, on which the clouds deliver their gladdening showers of mercy, which convert the dead land into a living, fertile, and beautiful land bearing a rich harvest. (2) In the spiritual world, the winds are the great motive forces in the mind of man, or in the world around him, that bring the clouds or instruments of Allah's Mercy, which descend and fertilise souls hitherto spiritually dead. (3) If we can see or experience such things in our life here below, can we doubt the resurrection?

1037. The triple parable explained in the last note is here continued. (1) In the physical world, the fertilising showers of rain yield a rich harvest on good soil, but bad soil yields little or nothing. (2) In the spiritual world, also, Allah's Mercies evoke no response in some souls which have chosen evil. (3) In the final reckoning, though all will be raised, not all will achieve the fulfilment of their lives.

1038. *Those who are grateful* are those who joyfully receive Allah's Message, and respond to it by deeds of righteousness.

## SECTION 8.

59. We sent Noah to his people.<sup>1039</sup>  
He said: "O my people!  
Worship Allah! ye have  
No other god but Him.  
I fear for you the Punishment  
Of a dreadful Day!"
60. The leaders of his people  
Said: "Ah! we see thee  
In evident error."
61. He said: "O my people!  
There is no error  
In me: on the contrary  
I am a messenger from  
The Lord and Cherisher  
Of the Worlds!"
62. "I but convey to you"  
The Message of my Lord.  
Sincere is my advice to you,  
And I know from Allah  
Something that ye know not.
63. "Do ye wonder that  
There hath come to you  
A reminder from your Lord,  
Through a man of your own  
People, to warn you,—  
So that ye may fear Allah  
And haply receive His Mercy?"
64. But they rejected him,  
And We delivered him,  
And those with him,  
In the Ark:

لَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا نُوحًا إِلَى قَوْمِهِ، فَقَالَ يَقُولُ أَعْبُدُوا  
اللَّهَ مَالَكُمْ مِنْ إِلَهٍ غَيْرُهُ، إِنِّي أَخَافُ عَنِّيْكُمْ  
عَذَابًا يَوْمٌ عَظِيمٌ

قَالَ الْمَلَأُ مِنْ قَوْمِهِ إِنَّا لَرَذِيلُكَ فِي ضَلَالٍ  
مُّبِينٍ

فَقَالَ يَقُولُ لَيْسَ بِي ضَلَالٌ لَهُ وَلَكُنْتَ رَسُولًا  
مِنْ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

أَبِلِغُوكُمْ رِسَالَتِي رَبِّي وَأَنْصَحُ لَكُمْ  
وَأَعْلَمُ مِنْ اللَّهِ مَا لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

أَوْعِجْتُمْ أَنْ جَاءَكُمْ ذِكْرُ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ عَلَى رَجُلٍ  
مِنْكُمْ لِيُنذِيرُكُمْ وَلَنْقُوا وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَرْجُونَ

فَكَذَّبُوهُ فَأَبْحَيْتُهُ وَالَّذِينَ مَعَهُ فِي الْفَلَكِ وَأَغْرَقْتُنَا  
الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِثَابِتِنَا إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا

1039. The story of Noah in greater detail will be found in xi. 25-49. Here the scheme is to tell briefly the stories of some of the Prophets between Noah and Moses, and lead up thus to a lesson for the contemporaries of the Prophet Muhammad himself. When Noah attacked the wickedness of his generation, he was laughed at for a madman, for he mentioned the Great Day to come in the Hereafter. Allah's retribution came soon afterwards—the great Flood, in which his unbelieving people were drowned, but he and those who believed in him and came into the Ark were saved.

فَوْمَاعِينَ  
١٦

But We overwhelmed  
In the Flood those  
Who rejected Our Signs,  
They were indeed  
A blind people!

## SECTION 9.

65. To the 'Ād people,<sup>1040</sup>  
(We sent) Hūd, one  
Of their (own) brethren:  
He said: "O my people!  
Worship Allah! ye have  
No other god but Him.  
Will ye not fear (Allah)?"
66. The leaders of the unbelievers  
Among his people said:  
"Ah! we see thou art  
In folly!" and "We think  
Thou art a liar!"
67. He said: "O my people!  
There is no folly in me" but  
(I am) a messenger from  
The Lord and Cherisher  
Of the Worlds!

وَإِلَيْهِ عَادٍ أَخَاهُمْ هُودًا قَالَ يَنْقُومُ أَعْبُدُ وَأَلَّهَ  
مَا لَكُمْ مِنْ إِلَهٍ غَيْرِهِ فَأَفَلَا يَنْقُومُونَ  
١٦

قَالَ الْمَلَائِكَةُ كَفَرُوا مِنْ قَوْمِهِ  
إِنَّ الْفَرِنكَ فِي سَفَاهَتِهِ وَإِنَّا نَظُنُّكَ  
مِنَ الْكَذَّابِينَ  
١٧

قَالَ يَنْقُومُ لَيْسَ فِي سَفَاهَةٍ وَلَدِكِنِي رَسُولٌ  
مِنْ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ  
١٨

1040. The 'Ād people, with their prophet Hūd, are mentioned in many places. See especially xxvi. 123-140, and xlvi. 21-26. Their story belongs to Arabian tradition. Their eponymous ancestor 'Ād was fourth in generation from Noah, having been a son of 'Aus, the son of Aram, the son of Sām, the son of Noah. They occupied a large tract of country in Southern Arabia, extending from Ummān at the mouth of the Arabian Gulf to Hadhramaut and Yemen at the southern end of the Red Sea. The people were tall in stature and were great builders. Probably the long, winding tracts of sands (ahqāf) in their dominions (xlvi. 21) were irrigated with canals. They forsook the true God, and oppressed their people. A three years famine visited them, but yet they took no warning. At length a terrible blast of wind destroyed them and their land, but a remnant, known as the second 'Ād or the Thamūd (see below) were saved, and afterwards suffered a similar fate for their sins.

The tomb of the Prophet Hūd (*qabr Nabi Hūd*) is still traditionally shown in Hadhramaut, latitude 16° N, and longitude 49 ½ E, about 90 miles north of Mukalla. There are ruins and inscriptions in the neighbourhood. See "Hadhramaut, Some of its Mysteries Unveiled," by D. van der Meulen and H. von Wissmann, Leyden, 1932.

68. "I but convey to you  
The messages of my Lord:  
I am to you a sincere  
And trustworthy adviser".

69. "Do ye wonder that  
There hath come to you  
A message from your Lord  
Through a man of your own  
People, to warn you?  
Call in remembrance  
That He made you  
Inheritors after the people  
Of Noah, and gave you  
A stature tall among the nations.  
Call in remembrance  
The benefits (ye have received)  
From Allah: that so  
Ye may prosper."

70. They said: "Comest thou  
To us, that we may worship  
Allah alone, and give up  
That which our fathers used to worship  
Bring us what thou  
Threatenest us with,  
If so be that thou  
Tellest the truth!"

71. He said: "Punishment  
And wrath have already<sup>1041</sup>  
Come upon you from your Lord:  
Dispute ye with me  
Over names which ye<sup>1042</sup>

أَتَلْعَكُمْ رِسَالَتِ رَبِّي وَأَنَا لَكُمْ نَاجِحٌ أَمِينٌ ﴿٦٨﴾

أَوْ يَعْبُدُونَ أَنْ جَاءَكُمْ ذِكْرِي مِنْ زَيْكُمْ عَلَى رَجْلِي  
مِنْكُمْ لِشَذِيرَكُمْ وَأَذْكُرُوا إِذْ جَعَلْتُكُمْ  
خُلْفَاءَ مِنْ بَعْدِ قَوْمٍ ثُوِيجٍ وَزَادَكُمْ فِي الْخَلْقِ  
بَصْطَلَةً فَأَذْكُرُوا إِذْ أَلَّهَ لَعْنَكُمْ  
ثَقْلَهُونَ ﴿٦٩﴾

قَالُوا أَيْحِنَا لَنْعَبْدَ اللَّهَ وَحْدَهُ وَنَذَرْ  
مَا كَانَ يَعْبُدُ إِلَيْاهُ أَبَا وَنَانَ فَأَنْبَأَنَا مَا قَدَّمْنَا  
إِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ ﴿٧٠﴾

قَالَ قَدْ وَقَعَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِنْ زَيْكُمْ رِجْسٌ  
وَغَضَبٌ أَتَجَدِلُونِي فِي أَسْمَاءٍ

1041. The past tense may be understood in three ways. (1) A terrible famine had already afflicted the 'Ad as a warning before they were overwhelmed in the final blast of hot wind (see the last note). (2) The terrible insolence and sin into which they had fallen was itself a punishment. (3) The prophetic past is used, as much as to say: "Behold! I see a dreadful calamity: it is already on you!"

1042. Why dispute over names and imaginary gods, the inventions of your minds? Come to realities. If you ask for the punishment and are waiting in insolent defiance, what can I do but also wait?—in fear and trembling for you, for I know that Allah's punishment is sure!

Have devised—ye  
And your fathers,—  
Without authority from Allah?  
Then wait: I am  
Amongst you, also waiting.”

72. We saved him and those  
Who adhered to him,  
By Our Mercy and We  
Cut off the roots of those  
Who rejected Our Signs  
And did not believe.

## SECTION 10.

73. To the Thamūd people<sup>1043</sup>  
(We sent) Ṣalīḥ, one  
Of their own brethren:  
He said: “O my people!

سَمِّيَ شَمُوْهَا أَنْتُ وَمَابَأْ كُمْ مَانَزَلَ اللَّهُ  
بِهَا مِنْ سُلْطَنٍ فَإِنَّظُرُوا إِنِّي مَعَكُمْ

٦١ مِنَ الْمُنْتَظَرِينَ

فَأَنْجِسْتُهُ وَالَّذِينَ مَعَهُ بِرَحْمَةِ مِنَا وَقَطَعْنَا<sup>٦٢</sup>  
دَارِ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِإِيمَانِنَا وَمَا كَانُوا

مُؤْمِنِينَ

وَإِنَّ شَمُودًا خَاهُمْ صَدِيقَاتٍ حَافَالَ يَنْقُومُ أَعْبَدُوا  
اللَّهَ مَالِكُمْ مِنِ اللَّهِ غَيْرُهُ فَذَجَاءَ تَكْثُرٌ

1043. The Thamūd people were the successors to the culture and civilisation of the 'Ād people, for whom see n. 1040 and vii. 65 above. They were cousins to the 'Ād, apparently a younger branch of the same race. Their story also belongs to Arabian tradition, according to which their eponymous ancestor Thamūd was a son of 'Abir (a brother of Aram), the son of Sām, the son of Noah. Their seat was in the north-west corner of Arabia (Arabia Petraea), between Madinah and Syria. It included both rocky country (*hijr.* xv. 80), and the spacious fertile valley (Wādi) and plains country of Qurā, which begins just north of the City of Madinah and is traversed by the Hijāz Railway. When the holy Prophet in the 9th year of the Hijra led his expedition to Tabūk (about 400 miles north of Madinah) against the Roman forces, on a reported Roman invasion from Syria, he and his men came across the archaeological remains of the Thamūd. The recently excavated rock city of Petra, near Ma'ān, may go back to the Thamūd, though its architecture has many features connecting it with Egyptian and Graeco-Roman culture overlaying what is called by European writers Nabataean Culture. Who were the Nabataeans? They were an old Arab tribe which played a considerable part in history after they came into conflict with Antigonus I in 312 B.C. Their capital was Petra, but they extended their territory right up to the Euphrates. In 85 B.C. they were lords of Damascus under their king Hāritha (Aretas of Roman history). For some time they were allies of the Roman Empire and held the Red Sea littoral. The Emperor Trajan reduced them and annexed their territory in A.D. 105. The Nabataeans succeeded the Thamūd of Arabian tradition. The Thamūd are mentioned by name in an inscription of the Assyrian King Sargon, dated 715 B.C., as a people of Eastern and Central Arabia (*Encyclopaedia of Islam*). See also Appendix VII to S. xxvi.

With the advance of material civilisation, the Thamūd people became godless and arrogant, and were destroyed by an earthquake. Their prophet and warner was Ṣalīḥ, and the crisis in their history is connected with the story of a wonderful she-camel: see next note.

Worship Allah; ye have  
No other god but Him.  
Now hath come unto you  
A clear (Sign) from your Lord!  
This she-camel of Allah  
Is a Sign unto you:  
So leave her to graze  
In Allah's earth, and let her  
Come to no harm,  
Or ye shall be seized  
With a grievous punishment.”<sup>1044</sup>

74. “And remember how He  
Made you inheritors  
After the ‘Ad people  
And gave you habitations  
In the land: ye build  
For yourselves palaces and castles  
In (open) plains, and carve out  
Homes in the mountains;  
So bring to remembrance  
The benefits (ye have received)  
From Allah, and refrain  
From evil and mischief  
On the earth.”
75. The leaders of the arrogant  
Party among his people said  
To those who were reckoned

بَيْتَنَةٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ هَذِهِ نَاقَةُ اللَّهِ لَكُمْ  
إِيمَانُهُ فَذَرُوهَا تَأْكُلُ فِي أَرْضِ اللَّهِ  
وَلَا تَمْسُوهَا بِسُوءٍ فَيَأْخُذُكُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ

وَأَذْكُرُوا إِذْ جَعَلْتُكُنْ خَلْقَاهُ مِنْ بَعْدِ عَادٍ  
وَبَوَّأْكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ تَنَحُّدُونَ  
مِنْ سُهُولِهَا فَصُورُكُمْ وَنَجْحُونَ الْجِبالُ يُوْقَأُ  
فَأَذْكُرُوا إِلَاهَ اللَّهِ وَلَا تَعْثُوْفُ فِي الْأَرْضِ  
مُقْسِدِينَ

قَالَ الْمَلَائِكَةُ إِنَّكَ لَا تَرَوْنَا مِنْ قَوْمِهِ  
لِلَّذِينَ أَسْتَضْعِفُوْلِئِنْ أَمَنَّ وَنَهَمْ

1044. The story of this wonderful she-camel, that was a sign to the Thamûd, is variously told in, tradition. We need not follow the various versions in the traditional story. What we are told in the Qur’ân is: that (1) she was a Sign or Symbol, which the prophet Sâlih, used for a warning to the haughty oppressors of the poor: (2) there was scarcity of water, and the arrogant or privileged classes tried to prevent the access of the poor or their cattle to the springs, while Sâlih intervened on their behalf (xxvi. 155, liv. 28); (3) like water, pasture was considered a free gift of nature, in this spacious earth of Allah (vii. 73), but the arrogant ones tried to monopolise the pasture also; (4) this particular she-camel was made a test case (liv. 27) to see if the arrogant ones would come to reason; (5) the arrogant ones, instead of yielding to the reasonable rights of the people, ham-strung the poor she-camel and slew her, probably secretly (xcii. 14, liv. 29): the cup of their iniquities was full, and the Thamûd people were destroyed by a dreadful earthquake, which threw them prone on the ground and buried them with their houses and their fine buildings.

Powerless—those among them<sup>1045</sup>  
 Who believed: "Know ye  
 Indeed that Ṣāliḥ is  
 A messenger from his Lord?"  
 They said: "We do indeed  
 Believe in the revelation<sup>1046</sup>  
 Which hath been sent  
 Through him."

76. The arrogant party said:  
 "For our part, we reject  
 What ye believe in."
77. Then they ham-strung  
 The she-camel, and insolently  
 Defied the order of their Lord,  
 Saying: "O Ṣāliḥ! bring about  
 Thy threats, if thou art  
 A messenger (of Allah)!"
78. So the earthquake took them<sup>1047</sup>  
 Unawares, and they lay  
 Prostrate in their homes  
 In the morning!
79. So Ṣāliḥ left them,<sup>1048</sup>

أَتَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّ صَالِحًا مَرْسَلٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِ  
 فَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ

وَ

قَالَ الَّذِينَ أَسْتَكَنُوا إِنَّا بِالَّذِي  
 مَا نَسْتَمِيهِ، كَفَرُوكُنَّ

فَعَفَرُوا أَنَّا لَنَّا فَعَزَّزُوكُنَّ  
 وَقَالُوا يَا صَلِحُكُنَّ إِنَّا مَا نَعْدُنَا إِنْ كُنَّ  
 مِّنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ

وَ

فَأَخْذَهُمُ الرَّجْفَةُ فَأَصْبَحُوْهُ فِي دَارِهِمْ  
 جَنِيشِمَنَ

فَتَوَلَّ عَنْهُمْ وَقَالَ يَنْقُوْمَ لَقَدْ أَلْغَتُكُمْ

1045. As usually happens in such cases, the Believers were the lowly and the humble, and the oppressors were the arrogant, who in selfishly keeping back nature's gifts (which are Allah's gifts) from the people, were deaf to the dictates of justice and kindness. Ṣāliḥ took the side of the unprivileged, and was therefore himself attacked.

1046. Notice the relation between the question and the answer. The godless chiefs wanted to discredit Ṣāliḥ, and put a personal question, as much as to say, "Is he not a liar?" The Believers took back the issue to the higher plane, as much as to say. "We know he is a man of Allah, but look at the justice for which he is making a stand: to resist it is to resist Allah". The answer of the godless was to reject Allah in words, and in action to commit a further act of cruelty and injustice in ham-stringing and killing the she-camel, at the same time hurling defiance at Ṣāliḥ and his God.

1047. The retribution was not long delayed. A terrible earthquake came and buried the people and destroyed their boasted civilisation. The calamity must have been fairly extensive in area and intense in the terror it inspired, for it is described (liv. 31) as a "single mighty blast" (*saihatan wāhidatan*), the sort of terror-inspiring noise which accompanies all big earthquakes.

1048. Ṣāliḥ was saved by Allah's mercy as a just and righteous man. His speech here may be either a parting warning, or it may be a soliloquy lamenting the destruction of his people for their sin and folly.

Saying: "O my people!  
I did indeed convey to you  
The message for which  
I was sent by my Lord:  
I gave you good counsel,  
But ye love not good counsellors!"

80. We also (sent) Lüt:<sup>1049</sup>  
He said to his people:  
"Do ye commit lewdness  
Such as no people  
In creation (ever) committed  
Before you?"
81. "For ye practise your lusts  
On men in preference  
To women: ye are indeed  
A people transgressing  
Beyond bounds".
82. And his people gave  
No answer but this:  
They said, "Drive them out  
Of your city: these are

رِسَالَةٌ رَّبِّيْ وَنَصَّحْتُ لَكُمْ وَلَكِنَّ لَا يَخْبُونَ  
النَّاصِيْحِينَ

وَلُوطًا إِذْ قَالَ لِقَوْمِهِ أَتَأْتُونَ الْفَحْشَةَ  
مَا سَبَقَكُمْ بِهَا مِنْ أَحَدٍ مِّنَ الْعَالَمِينَ

إِنَّكُمْ لَتَأْتُونَ الْرِّجَالَ شَهْوَةً مِّنْ دُونِ  
النِّسَاءِ بَلْ أَنْتُمْ فَوْمٌ مُّسَرِّفُونَ

وَمَا كَانَ جَوَابَ قَوْمِهِ إِلَّا أَنْ قَالُوا  
آخِرُ جُوْهُمْ مِّنْ قَرِيبٍ كُمْ لِمَ إِنَّهُمْ أَنَّاسٌ  
يَنْظَهُرُونَ

1049. Lüt is the Lot of the English Bible. His story is biblical, but freed from some shameful features which are a blot on the biblical narrative, (e.g., see Gen. xix. 30-36). He was a nephew of Abraham, and was sent as a Prophet and warner to the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, cities utterly destroyed for their unspeakable sins. They cannot be exactly located, but it may be supposed that they were somewhere in the plain east of the Dead Sea. The story of their destruction is told in the 19th chapter of Genesis. Two angels in the shape of handsome young men came to Lot in the evening and became his guests by night. The inhabitants of Sodom in their lust for unnatural crime invaded Lot's house but were repulsed. In the morning, the angels warned Lot to escape with his family. "Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven; and He overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground. But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt." (Gen. xix. 24-26).

Note that Lot's people are the people to whom he is sent on a mission. He was not one of their own brethren, as was Shāliḥ or Shu'aib. But he looked upon his people as his brethren (l. 13), as a man of God always does.

Indeed men who want  
To be clean and pure!<sup>1050</sup>

83. But We saved him  
And his family, except  
His wife: she was  
Of those who lagged behind<sup>1051</sup>

84. And we rained down on them  
A shower (of brimstone):<sup>1052</sup>  
Then see what was the end  
Of those who indulged  
In sin and crime!

## SECTION 11.

85. To the Madyan people<sup>1053</sup>

فَأَبْخِسْتَهُ وَأَهْلَهُ إِلَّا أَنْرَأَتْهُ كَانَتْ  
مِنْ الْغَارِبِينَ AT

وَأَمْطَرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ مَطَرًا فَانظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ  
عِنْدَهُ الْمُجْرِمِينَ AE

وَإِنَّ مَذِينَ أَخَاهُمْ شَعِيبًا قَالَ يَقُولُونَ

1050. An instance of the withering sarcasm that hardened sinners use against the righteous. They wound with words, and follow up the insult with deeds of injustice, thinking that they would bring the righteous into disgrace. But Allah looks after His own, and in the end, the wicked themselves are overthrown when the cup of their iniquity is full.

1051. In the biblical narrative she looks back, a physical act (see n. 1049): here she is a type of those who lag behind, *i.e.* whose mental and moral attitude, in spite of their association with the righteous, is to hark back to the glitter of wickedness and sin. The righteous should have one sole objective, the Way of Allah. They should not look behind, nor yet to the right or the left.

1052. The shower is expressly stated in Q. xi. 82 to have been of stones. In xv. 73-74, we are told that there was a terrible blast or noise (*ṣaiḥat*) in addition to the shower of stones. Taking these passages into consideration along with Gen. xix. 24. (see n. 1049 above), I think it is legitimate to translate: "a shower of brimstone."

1053. "Madyan" may be identified with "Midian". Midian and the Midianites are frequently mentioned in the Old Testament, though the particular incident here mentioned belongs to Arab rather than to Jewish tradition. The Midianites were of Arab race, though, as neighbours of the Canaanites, they probably intermixed with them. They were a wandering tribe: it was Midianite merchants to whom Joseph was sold into slavery, and who took him to Egypt. Their principal territory in the time of Moses was in the north-east of the Sinai Peninsula, and east of the Amalekites. Under Moses the Israelites waged a war of extermination against them: they slew the kings of Midian, slaughtered all the males, burnt their cities and castles, and captured their cattle (Num. xxxi, 7-11). This sounds like total extermination. Yet a few generations afterwards, they were so powerful that the Israelites for their sins were delivered into the captivity of the Midianites for seven years: both the Midianites and their camels were without number: and the Israelites hid from them in "dens..... caves, and strongholds" (Judges vii. 1-6). Gideon destroyed them again, (Judges vii. 1-25), say about two centuries after Moses. As the decisive battle was near the hill of Moreh, not far south of Mount Tabor, we may localise the Midianites =

We sent Shu'aib,<sup>1054</sup> one  
Of their own brethren: he said:  
"O my people! worship Allah;  
Ye have no other god  
But Him. Now hath come  
Unto you a clear (Sign)  
From your Lord! Give just  
Measure and weight, nor withhold  
From the people the things  
That are their due; and do  
No mischief on the earth  
After it has been set  
In order: that will be best  
For you, if ye have Faith."

أَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ إِلَهٍ غَيْرُهُ فَدَّ  
جَاءَنَّكُمْ بِنَّةٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ فَأَوْفُوهُ  
الْكَيْلَ وَالْمِيزَانَ وَلَا يَنْحُسُوا النَّاسَ  
أَشْيَاءً هُنَّ وَلَا تُقْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ  
بَعْدَ إِصْلَاحِهَا ذَلِكُمْ خَيْرُكُمْ  
إِنَّ كُثُرًا مُّؤْمِنُونَ

٨٥

= on this occasion in the northern parts of the Jordan valley, at least 200 miles north of the Sinai Peninsula.

This and the previous destruction under Moses were local, and mention no town of Midian. In later times there was a town of Madyan on the east side of the Gulf of 'Aqaba. It is mentioned in Josephus, Eusebius, and Ptolemy: (*Encyclopaedia of Islam*). Then it disappears from geography. In Muslim times it was a revived town with quite a different kind of population, but it never flourished. The Midianites disappeared from history.

1054. Shu'aib belongs to Arab rather than to Jewish tradition, to which he is unknown. His identification with Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses, has no warrant, and I reject it. There is no similarity either in names or incidents, and there are chronological difficulties (see n. 1064 below). If, as the Commentators tell us, Shu'aib was in the fourth generation from Abraham, being a great-grandson of Madyan (a son of Abraham), he would be only about a century from the time of Abraham, whereas the Hebrew Bible would give us a period of four to six centuries between Abraham and Moses. The mere fact that Jathro was a Midianite and that another name, Hobab, is mentioned for a father-in-law of Moses in Num. x. 29, is slender ground for identification. As the Midianites were mainly a nomad tribe, we need not be surprised that their destruction in one or two settlements did not affect their life in wandering sections of the tribe in other geographical regions. Shu'aib's mission was apparently in one of the settled towns of the Midianites, which was completely destroyed by an earthquake (vii. 91). If this happened in the century after Abraham, there is no difficulty in supposing that they were again a numerous tribe, three or five centuries later, in the time of Moses (see last note). As they were a mixed wandering tribe, both their resilience and their eventual absorption can be easily understood. But the destruction of the settlement or settlements (if the Wood or Aika was a separate settlement, see n. 2000 to xv. 78) to which Shu'aib was sent to preach was complete, and no traces of it now remain.

The name of the highest mountain of Yemen, Nabi Shu'aib (11,000 ft.) has probably no connection with the geographical territory of the nomad Midianites, unless we suppose that their wanderings extended so far south from the territories mentioned in the last note.

86. "And squat not on every road,  
Breathing threats, hindering  
From the path of Allah  
Those who believe in Him,  
And seek to make it crooked;  
But remember how ye were  
Little, and He gave you increase.  
And see  
What was the end  
Of those who did mischief.<sup>1055</sup>

87. "And if there is a party  
Among you who believes  
In the Message with which  
I have been sent, and a party  
Which does not believe,<sup>1056</sup>  
Hold yourselves in patience  
Until Allah doth decide

وَلَا نَقْعُدُ وَأَبِي كُلَّ صَرَاطٍ تُوعَدُونَ  
وَنَصْدُورُكُمْ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ مَنْ مَأْمَنَ بِهِ  
وَتَبْغُونَهَا أَعِوجَاجًا وَأَذْكَرُوا  
إِذْ كُنْتُمْ قَلِيلًا فَكَرِهْتُمْ وَأَنْظَرْتُمْ  
كَيْفَ كَانَ عَذَابُ الْمُفْسِدِينَ ﴿٤٧﴾

وَإِنْ كَانَ طَآئِفَةٌ مِنْكُمْ أَمْثُوا بِالَّذِي  
أَرْسَلْتُ إِلَيْهِ وَطَآئِفَةٌ لَمْ يُؤْمِنُوا فَأَصْبِرْ وَاحْتَى  
يَحْكُمُ اللَّهُ بَيْنَنَا وَهُوَ خَيْرُ الْحَكَمِينَ ﴿٤٨﴾

1055. The Midianites were in the path of a commercial highway of Asia, viz., that between two such opulent and highly organised nations as Egypt and the Mesopotamian group comprising Assyria and Babylonia. Their besetting sins are thus characterised here: (1) giving short measure or weight, whereas the strictest commercial probity is necessary for success, (2) a more general form of such fraud, depriving people of rightful dues, (3) producing mischief and disorder, whereas peace and order had been established (again in a literal as well as a metaphorical sense); (4) not content with upsetting settled life, taking to highway robbery, literally as well as (5) metaphorically, in two ways, viz., cutting off people from access to the worship of Allah, and abusing religion and piety for crooked purposes, i.e., exploiting religion itself for their crooked ends, as when a man builds houses of prayer out of unlawful gains or ostentatiously gives charity out of money which he has obtained by force or fraud, etc. After setting out this catalogue of besetting sins Shu'aib makes two appeals to the past: (1) You began as an insignificant tribe, and by Allah's favour you increased and multiplied in numbers and resources: do you not then owe a duty to Allah to fulfil His Law? (2) What was the result in the case of those who fell into sin? Will you not take warning by their example?

So Shu'aib began his argument with faith in Allah as the source of all virtue, and ended it with destruction as the result of all sin. In the next verse he pleads with them to end their controversies and come to Allah.

1056. Madyan is torn by internal conflict. Shu'aib comes as a peace-maker, not in virtue of his own wisdom, but by an appeal to the truth, righteousness and justice of Allah. As we see later, the real motives of his opponents were selfishness, arrogance, violence, lawlessness, and injustice. But he appeals to their better nature, and is prepared to argue on the basis that the party which wants to suppress those who believe in Allah's Message and in righteousness, has some sincere mental difficulty in accepting Shu'aib's mission. "If," he says to them, "that is the case, do you think it justifies your intolerance. =

Between us: for He  
Is the best to decide.”<sup>1057</sup>

88. The leaders, the arrogant  
Party among his people, said:<sup>1058</sup>  
“O Shu'aib! we shall  
Certainly drive thee out  
Of our city-(thee) and those  
Who believe with thee;  
Or else ye (thou and they)  
Shall have to return  
To our religion.”  
He said: “What! even  
Though we do detest (them)?”

89. “We should indeed forge<sup>1059</sup>  
A lie against Allah,

فَقَالَ الْمَلَأُ الَّذِينَ أَسْتَكَرُوا مِنْ قَوْمِهِ لَنُخْرِجَنَّكَ  
يَشْعِيبُ وَالَّذِينَ أَمْسَأْتَ مَعَكَ مِنْ قَرِبَتِنَا أَوْ نَعُودُنَّ  
فِي مَلَيْكَاتِنَا قَالَ أَولَئِكُمْ كَاكِيرُهُنَّ

قَدْ أَفْتَرْتُنَا عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا إِنْ عَذَّابَ فِي مَلَيْكَاتِنَا

= your violence, or your persecution? On the contrary, events will prove by themselves who is right and who is wrong.” To the small band who believe in his mission and follow his teaching, he would preach patience and perseverance. His argument to them would be: “You have faith; surely your faith is strong enough to sustain you in the hope that Allah’s truth will triumph in the end; there is no cause for despair or dejection.”

How exactly these past experiences fit the times of our holy guide Muhammad! And it is for that analogy and that lesson that the stories of Noah, Hûd, Sâlih, Lut, and Shu'aib are related to us,—all different, and yet all pointing to the great lessons in Muhammad’s life.

1057. See the argument in the last note. Allah’s decision may come partly in this very life, either for the same generation or for succeeding generations, by the logic of external events. But in any case it is bound to come spiritually on a higher plane eventually, when the righteous will be comforted and the sinners will be convinced of sin from their own inner conviction.

1058. The gentle, all-persuasive arguments of Shu'aib fell on hard hearts. Their only reply was: “Turn him out!—him and his people.” When courtesy and a plea for toleration are pitted against bigotry, what room is there for logic? But bigotry and unrighteousness have their own crooked ways of pretending to be tolerant. “O yes!” they said, “we are very tolerant and long-suffering! But we are for our country and religion. Come back to the ways of our fathers, and we shall graciously forgive you!” “Ways of their fathers!”—they meant injustice and oppression, high-handedness to the poor and the weak, fraud under cover of religion, and so on! Perhaps the righteous were the poor and the weak. Were they likely to love such ways? Perhaps there was implied a bribe as well as a threat. “If you come back and wink at our iniquities, you shall have scraps of prosperity thrown at you. If not, out you go in disgrace!”

1059. The answer of the righteous is threefold. (1) “Coming back is all very well. But do you mean that we should practise the vices we detest?” (2) “You want us to lie against our conscience and our Lord, after we have seen the evil of your ways.” (3) =

If we returned to your religion  
 After Allah hath rescued  
 Us therefrom; nor could we  
 By any manner of means  
 Return thereto unless it be  
 As in the will of Allah,<sup>1060</sup>  
 Our Lord. Our Lord  
 Comprehends all things in  
 His knowledge  
 In Allah is our trust.  
 Our Lord! Decide thou<sup>1061</sup>  
 Between us and our people  
 In truth, for thou  
 Art the best to decide."

90. The leaders, the Unbelievers  
 Among his people, said:  
 "If ye follow Shu'aib,  
 Be sure then ye are ruined!"<sup>1062</sup>

بَعْدَ إِذْ جَعَلْنَا اللَّهَ مِنْهَا وَمَا يَكُونُ لَنَا أَنْ نَمُودَ فِيهَا  
 إِلَّا أَنْ يَشَاءَ اللَّهُ رَبُّ الْأَوَّلِ وَالْآخِرِ كُلُّ شَيْءٍ وَعِلْمًا  
 عَلَى اللَّهِ تَوَكَّلْنَا أَفَسَخَ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَ قَوْمَنَا  
 بِالْحَقِّ وَأَنْتَ خَيْرُ الْفَاتِحِينَ

١٠٦١

وَقَالَ الْمَلَائِكَةُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ قَوْمِهِ لِمَنِ اتَّبَعَهُمْ  
 شَعِيبًا إِنَّكُمْ أَذَلُّ الْخَسِيرُونَ

١٠٦٢

= "Neither bribes nor threats, nor specious appeals to patriotism or ancestral religion can move us: the matter rests with Allah. Whose will and pleasure we obey, and on Whom alone we rely. His knowledge will search out all your specious pretences."

1060. This, of course, does not mean that any one can ever return to evil ways with Allah's consent. Shu'aib has already emphatically repudiated the idea of returning "to your ways after Allah hath rescued us therefrom." But even if their ways had been good, the human will, he goes on to say, has no data to rely upon, and he and his followers would only be guided by Allah's Will and Plan.

1061. Having answered the insincere quibblers among the godless, the righteous turn to Allah in earnest prayer. The endless controversies in this world about abstract or speculative things never end even where both sides are sincere in their beliefs. The decision must be taken to Allah, Who sits on the throne of Truth, and Whose decisions will, therefore, be free from the errors and imperfections of all human judgment. The sincere have nothing to fear in the appeal to Him, as their motives are pure.

1062. The answer of the Unbelievers is characteristic. As all their bribes and subtleties have failed, they resort to threats, which are worse than the argument of the stick. "All right," they say, "there is nothing but ruin before you!" That means that the Believers will be persecuted, held up to obloquy, ostracised, and prevented from access to all means of honourable livelihood; their families and dependants will be insulted, reviled, and tortured, if they could but be got into the enemy's power: their homes destroyed, and their names held up to ridicule and contempt even when they are gone. But, as verse 92 says, their wicked designs recoiled on themselves; it was the wicked who were ruined and blotted out.

91. But the earthquake took them  
Unawares, and they lay  
Prostrate in their homes  
Before the morning!<sup>1063</sup>

92. The men who rejected  
Shu'aib became as if  
They had never been  
In the homes where they  
Had flourished: the men  
Who rejected Shu'aib—  
It was they who were ruined!

93. So Shu'aib left them,  
Saying: "O my people!  
I did indeed convey to you  
The Messages for which  
I was sent by my Lord:  
I gave you good counsel,  
But how shall I lament  
Over a people who refuse  
To believe!"<sup>1064</sup>

فَأَخْذَهُمُ الرَّجْفَةُ فَأَضْبَحُوا فِي دَارِهِنْ

جَنِيشِينَ ١١

الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا شَعِيبًا كَانُوا لَمْ يَقْتُلُوا فِيهَا الَّذِينَ

كَذَّبُوا شَعِيبًا كَانُوا هُمُ الْخَسِيرُونَ ١٢

فَنَوَّلَ عَنْهُمْ وَقَالَ يَقُولُ لَقَدْ أَلْغَفْنَاكُمْ

رِسَالَتِ رَبِّي وَنَصَّحْنَا لَكُمْ فَكَيْفَ هَاءُونَ

عَلَى قَوْمٍ كَفَرُونَ ١٣

1063. The fate of the Madyan people is described in the same terms as that of the *Thamud* in verse 78 above. An earthquake seized them by night, and they were buried in their own homes, no longer to vex Allah's earth. But a supplementary detail is mentioned in xxvi. 189, "the punishment of a day of overshadowing gloom," which may be understood to mean a shower of ashes and cinders accompanying a volcanic eruption. Thus a day of terror drove them into their homes, and the earthquake finished them. The lament of Shu'aib in verse 93 is almost the same as that of Sālih in verse 79, with two differences: (1) Shu'aib's messages attacked the many sins of his people (see n. 1055) and are, therefore, expressed in the plural, while Sālih's fight was chiefly against selfish arrogance, and his message is expressed in the singular; (2) the *Thamud* were the more cultured people of the two, and perished in their own pride; as Sālih said, "ye love not good counsellors"; the Midianites were a rougher people, and their minds were less receptive of argument or faith; as Shu'aib said, they were a people who "refused to believe."

1064. Can we get any idea of the chronological place of the destruction of the Midianites? In n. 1053 (vii. 85) we have discussed the geographical aspects. The following considerations will help us in getting some idea of their period. (1) The stories of Noah, Hūd, Sālih, Lūt, and Shu'aib seem to be in chronological order. Therefore Shu'aib came after Abraham, whose nephew Lūt was. (2) If Shu'aib was in the fourth generation from Abrahaim, (see n. 1590 to xi. 89), it would be impossible for him to have been a contemporary of Moses, who came many centuries later. This difficulty is recognised by Ibn Kathir and other classical commentators. (3) The identification of Shu'aib with Jethro the father-in-law of Moses is without warrant; see n. 1054 (vii. 85). (4) Shu'aib =

## SECTION 12.

94. Whenever We sent a prophet To a town, We took up Its people in suffering And adversity, in order That they might call in humility.<sup>1065</sup>
95. Then We changed their suffering Into prosperity, until they grew<sup>1066</sup> And multiplied, and began To say: "Our fathers (too) Were touched by suffering And affluence" .. Behold! We took them to account Of a sudden, while they Realised not (their peril).
96. If the people of the towns Had but believed and feared Allah, We should indeed Have opened out to them (All Kinds of) blessings From heaven and earth;

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا فِي قَرِيبٍ مِّنْ تَيْمٍ إِلَّا أَخْذَنَا أَهْلَهَا  
يَا لِبَاسَاءِ وَالضَّرَاءِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَصْرَعُونَ ﴿١٦﴾

ثُمَّ بَدَأْنَا مَكَانَ السَّيِّئَةِ الْحَسَنَةَ حَتَّىٰ عَفَوْا  
وَقَاتُلُوا فَدَمَسَ مَسْءَىٰ ابْنَاءَ نَاسًا أَصْرَاءَ وَالسَّرَّاءَ  
فَأَخْذَنَاهُمْ بَعْثَةً وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿١٧﴾

وَلَوْا نَأْهَلَ الْقُرَىٰ مَا مَنَّا وَأَتَقْوَى الْفَتَحَنَا  
عَلَيْهِمْ بَرَكَتٌ مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَلِكُنْ  
كَذِبُوا فَأَخْذَنَاهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ ﴿١٨﴾

= must have been before Moses; see vii. 103. (5) The Medianites who were destroyed by Moses and by Gideon after him (n. 1053) were local remnants, as we may speak of the Jews at the present day; but their existence as a nation in their original home-lands seems to have ended before Moses: "they became as if they had never been in the homes where they had flourished" (vii. 92). (6) Josephus, Eusebius, and Ptolemy mention a town of Madyan, but it was not of any importance (n. 1053). (7) After the first centuries of the Christian era, Madyan as a town appears as an unimportant place resting on its past.

1065. Man was originally created pure. The need of a prophet arises when there is some corruption and iniquity, which he is sent to combat. His coming means much trial and suffering, especially to those who join him in his protest against wrong. Even so peaceful a prophet as Jesus said: "I came not to send peace but a sword" (Matt. x. 34). But it is all in Allah's Plan, for we must learn humility if we would be worthy of Him.

1066. Allah gives enough rope to the sinful. They grow and multiply, and become scornful. Neither suffering nor affluence teaches them the lessons which they are meant to learn, viz., patience and humility, gratitude and kindness to others. They take adversity and prosperity alike as a matter of chance. "O yes!" they say, "such things have happened in all ages! Our fathers had such experience before us, and our sons will have them after us. Thus goes on the world for all time!" But does it? What about the decree of Allah? They are found napping when Nemesis overtakes them in the midst of their impious tomfoolery!

But they rejected (the truth),  
And We brought them  
To book for their misdeeds.

97. Did the people of the towns  
Feel secure against the coming<sup>1067</sup>  
Of Our wrath by night  
While they were asleep?

98. Or else did they feel  
Secure against its coming  
In broad daylight while they  
Played about (care-free)?

99. Did they then feel secure  
Against Allah's devising  
But no one can feel  
Secure from the Plan  
Of Allah, except those  
(Doomed) to ruin!<sup>1068</sup>

## SECTION 13.

100. To those who inherit  
The earth in succession  
To its (previous) possessors,  
Is it not a guiding (lesson)  
That, if We so willed,

أَفَمِنْ أَهْلَ الْقُرَىٰ أَنْ يَأْتِيهِمْ بِأَشْتَابِكُنَّا  
وَهُمْ نَاءِمُونَ ١٠٦٧

أَوْ أَمِنَ أَهْلُ الْقُرَىٰ أَنْ يَأْتِيهِمْ بِأَشْنَاصِكُنَّا  
وَهُمْ يَلْعَبُونَ ١٠٦٨

أَفَمِنْؤَامَكُرَاللَّهِ فَلَا يَأْمُنُ مَكْرَاللَّهِ  
إِلَّا الْقَوْمُ الْخَيْرُونَ ١٠٦٩

أَوْ لَزِيَّهُدَلَّذِينَ يَرْثُونَ الْأَرْضَ مِنْ بَعْدِ  
أَهْلِهَا أَنْ لَوْنَشَاءَ أَصْبَتَهُمْ بِذُوبِهِمْ  
وَنَطَبَعَ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ فَهُمْ لَا يَسْمَعُونَ ١٠٧٠

1067. This and the two following verses should be read together. They furnish a commentary on the story of the five prophets that has already been related. Allah's wrath may come by night or by day, whether people are arrogantly defying Allah's laws or are sunk in lethargy or vain dreams of unreality. Who can escape Allah's decree, and who can feel themselves outside it except those who are seeking their own ruin?

1068. This closes that chapter of the narrative which deals with Prophets who were rejected by their own people, but who stood firm on Allah's message and were able to rescue a remnant who believed. In each case there were special circumstances and special besetting sins, which have been explained in the notes. The nations which as a body could not be won over to Allah's Law perished. So far we have been dealing with the corruptions and iniquities within each nation. In the story of Moses we have first a struggle against the bondage of Egypt, one of the foremost powers then in the world, the rescue of the Israelites and their wanderings, and their proving themselves unworthy and being left to wander in a new sense when they rejected the new Prophet (Muhammad) who came to renew Allah's Message.

We could punish them (too)  
For their sins, and seal up  
Their hearts so that they  
Could not hear?<sup>1069</sup>

101. Such were the towns  
Whose story We (thus)  
Relate unto thee:  
There came indeed to them  
Their Messengers with clear (Signs);  
But they would not believe  
What they had rejected before.<sup>1070</sup>  
Thus doth Allah seal up  
The hearts of those  
Who reject Faith.
102. Most of them We found not  
Men (true) to their covenant:  
But most of them We found  
Rebellious and disobedient.
103. Then after them We sent  
Moses with Our Signs  
To Pharaoh and his chiefs.  
But they wrongfully rejected them:  
So see what was the end  
Of those who made mischief.

١٠٦٩ تِلْكَ الْقُرْيَ نَفَّصْ عَلَيْكَ مِنْ أَنْبَابِهَا وَلَقَدْ  
جَاءَهُمْ رَسُلُهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ فَمَا كَانُوا لِيُؤْمِنُوا  
بِمَا كَذَّبُوا مِنْ قَبْلٍ  
كَذَّلِكَ يَطْبِعُ اللَّهُ عَلَى قُلُوبِ الْكُفَّارِ

١٠٧٠ وَمَا وَجَدْنَا إِلَّا كُتَّرِهِمْ مِنْ عَهْدِهِ وَإِنْ وَجَدْنَا  
أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَفَسِيقِينَ

١٠٧١ شَمَّ بَعْشَانِي مَنْ بَعْدِهِمْ مُوسَىٰ بِمَا يَدَنَا إِلَى فِرْعَوْنَ  
وَمَلَائِكَهُ فَظَلَمُوا إِلَيْهِمْ فَأَنْظَرَ كَيْفَ كَانَ عِنْقَةُ  
الْمُفْسِدِينَ

1069. The stories which have been related should give a warning to present and future generations which have inherited the land, the power, or the experience of the past. They should know that if they fall into the same sins they will meet with the same fate: when through their contumacy their hearts are hardened, they do not listen to the advice that falls on their ears.

1070. Those who have heard the Message and rejected it find it more difficult afterwards to retrace their steps. Evil has blocked the channels of Allah's grace to them. It begins with their breaking their Covenant with Allah; with each step afterwards they fall deeper and deeper into the mire.

104. Moses<sup>1071</sup> said: "O Pharaoh!<sup>1072</sup>  
I am a messenger from  
The Lord of the Worlds,-
105. One for whom it is right  
To say nothing but truth  
About Allah. Now have I  
Come unto you (people), from<sup>1073</sup>  
Your Lord with a clear (Sign):  
So let the Children of Israel  
Depart along with me."
106. (Pharaoh) said: "If indeed  
Thou hast come with a Sign,

وَقَالَ مُوسَى يَقْرَبُونَ إِنِّي رَسُولٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّ  
الْعَالَمِينَ

حَقِيقٌ عَلَى أَنْ لَا أَقُولَ عَلَى اللَّهِ إِلَّا الْحَقُّ فَدَّ  
جِئْتُكُمْ بِنَصِيبِهِ مِنْ رَّبِّكُمْ فَأَزِيلُ مَعَ بَيْعَ  
إِسْرَائِيلَ

قَالَ إِنَّ كُنْتَ جِئْتَ بِنَاصِيَةٍ فَأَنْتَ بِهَا إِنْ كُنْتَ  
مِنَ الْصَّادِقِينَ

1071. The story of Moses is told in many places in the Holy Qur-an, with a special lesson in each context. In ii. 49-71, the story is an appeal to the Jews from their own scripture and traditions, to show their true place in the religious history of mankind, and how they forfeited it. Here we have an instructive parallelism in that story to the story of Muhammad's mission,—how both these men of Allah had to fight against (1) a foreign foe, arrogant, unjust, faithless, and superstitious, and (2) against the same class of internal foe among their own people. Both of them won through. In the case of Moses, the foreign foe was Pharaoh and his Egyptians, who boasted of their earlier and superior civilisation; in the case of the Prophet Muhammad the foreign foes were the Jews themselves and the Christians of his day. Moses led his people nearly to the Land of promise in spite of rebellions among his own people; Muhammad succeeded completely in overcoming the resistance of his own people by his own virtues and firmness of character, and by the guidance of Allah. What was a hope when these Makkah verses were revealed became an accomplishment before the end of his life and mission on earth.

1072. "Pharaoh" (Arabic, *Fir'aun*) is a dynastic title, not the name of any particular king in Egypt. It has been traced to the ancient Hieroglyphic words, *Per-ādu*, which mean "Great House." The *nūn* is an "infirm" letter added in the process of Arabisation. Who was the Pharaoh in the story of Moses? If the Inscriptions had helped us, we could have answered with some confidence, but unfortunately the Inscriptions fail us. It is probable that it was an early Pharaoh of the XVIIIth Dynasty, say Thothmes I, about 1540 B.C. See appendix IV. on Egyptian Chronology and Israel, printed at the end of this Sûra.

1073. Notice that Moses, in addressing Pharaoh and the Egyptians, claims his mission to be not from *his* God, or *his people's* God but from "your Lord," from "the Lord of the Worlds." And his mission is not to *his* people only: "I come unto you (Egyptian people) from *your* Lord." "The spirit of our version is entirely different from the spirit of the same story as told in the Old Testament (Exod. chapters i. to xv.). In Exod. iii. 18, the mission of Moses is expressed to be as from "the Lord God of the Hebrews."

The essence of the whole Islamic story is this: Joseph's sufferings and good fortune were not merely a story in a romance. Joseph was a prophet; his sufferings and his subsequent rise to power and position in Egypt were to be a lesson (a) to his wicked brothers who sold him into slavery, (b) to his people who were stricken with famine and found a welcome in Egypt, and (c) to the Egyptians, who were arrogant over their high =

Show it forth,—  
If thou tellest the truth.”<sup>1074</sup>

107. Then (Moses) threw his rod,  
And behold! it was  
A serpent, plain (for all to see)!<sup>1075</sup>
108. And he drew out his hand,  
And behold! it was white  
To all beholders!<sup>1076</sup>

## SECTION 14.

109. Said the Chiefs of the people  
Of Pharaoh: “This is indeed  
A sorcerer well-versed.

فَأَلْقَى عَصَاهُ فِي أَذَانِ مُّبَينٍ

وَنَزَعَ يَدَهُ فِي أَذَانِ بَيْضَاءَ لِلنَّظَرِينَ

قَالَ الْمَلَائِكَةُ مِنْ قَوْمِ فِرْعَوْنَ إِنَّ هَذَا سَاحِرٌ

عَلَيْهِ عَلَيْهِ

= material civilisation, but had yet to be taught the pure faith of Abraham. Israel prospered in Egypt, and stayed there perhaps two to four centuries. (Renan allows only one century). Times changed, and the racial bigotry of the Egyptians showed its head again, and Israel was oppressed. Moses was raised up with a threefold mission again (a) to learn all the learning of the Egyptians and preach Allah's Truth to them as one who had been brought up among themselves, (b) to unite and reclaim his own people, and (c) to rescue them and lead them to a new world, which was to open out their spiritual horizon and lead them to the Psalms of David and the glories of Solomon.

1074. The ensuing dialogue shows the psychology on the two sides. Pharaoh is sitting in his court, with his ministers and chiefs around him. In their arrogance they are only amused at the effrontery and apparent revolt of the Israelite leaders, and they rely upon their own superior worldly power, aided by the magic which was a part of the Egyptian religion. Confronting them stand two men, Moses with his mission from Allah, and his brother Aaron who was his lieutenant. They are confident, not in their own powers, but in the mission they had received. The first thing they have to do is to act on the subjective mind of the Egyptians, and by methods which by Allah's miracle show that Egyptian magic was nothing before the true power of Allah.

1075. The serpent played a large part in Egyptian mythology. The great sun-god Ra won a great victory over the serpent Apophis, typifying the victory of light over darkness. Many of their gods and goddesses took the forms of snakes to impress their foes with terror. Moses's rod as a type of a serpent at once appealed to the Egyptian mentality. The contempt which the Egyptians had entertained in their minds before was converted into terror. Here was some one who could control the reptile which their great god Ra himself had such difficulty in overcoming!

1076. But the second Sign displayed by Moses was even more puzzling to the Egyptians. Moses drew out his hand from the folds of the garments on his breast, and it was white and shining as with divine light! This was to counter any suggestions of evil, which the serpent might have created. This was no work of evil,—of black magic, or a trick or illusion. His hand was transfigured—with a light which no Egyptian sorcerers could produce. In Islamic literature the “white hand” of Moses has passed into a proverb, for a symbol of divine glory dazzling to the beholders.

110. "His plan is to get you out  
Of your land: then  
What is it ye counsel?"<sup>1077</sup>
111. They said: "Keep him  
And his brother in suspense  
(For a while); and send  
To the cities men to collect-
112. And bring up to thee  
All (our) sorcerers well-versed."<sup>1078</sup>
113. So there came  
The sorcerers to Pharaoh:  
They said, "Of course  
We shall have a (suitable)  
Reward if we win!"<sup>1079</sup>
114. He said: "Yea, (and more),—  
For ye shall in that case  
Be (raised to posts)  
Nearest (to my person)."
115. They said: "O Moses!  
Wilt thou throw (first),

يُرِيدُنَّ يُخْرِجَكُمْ مِّنْ أَرْضِكُمْ فَمَاذَا تَأْمُرُونَ

قَالُوا أَرْجِه وَلَخَاهُ وَأَرْسِلْ فِي الْمَدَائِنِ

حَشِيرِينَ

يَا أَنُوكَ بِكُلِّ سَحْرٍ عَلَيْمٍ

وَجَاءَ السَّاحِرُ فَرْعَوْنَ قَالُوا إِنَّا لَأَخْرَى

إِنْ كَنَّا نَحْنُ الْغَنِيلِينَ

قَالَ نَعَمْ وَإِنَّكُمْ لِمَنِ الْمُفْرِينَ

قَالُوا يَسْمُوْسَى إِنَّا أَنْ تُلْقِي وَإِنَّا أَنْ نَكُونَ

1077. The two Signs had the desired effect on the Egyptians. They were impressed, but they judged them by their own standards. They thought to themselves, "These are ordinary sorcerers: let us search out our best sorcerers and show them that they have superior power." But like all worldly people, they began to fear for their own power and possessions. It was far from Moses's intention to drive out the Egyptians from their own land. He merely wanted to end the Egyptian oppression. But the Egyptians had a guilty conscience, and they judged other people's motives by their own. They discussed the matter in Council on quite wrong premises.

1078. The advice of the Council to Pharaoh shows a misreading of the situation. They were in a panic about what the magic of this evidently powerful sorcerer could do against them. So they advised the Pharaoh to summon their most powerful sorcerers from all over the country, and in the meantime to hold Moses and Aaron in suspense,—neither to yield to them nor definitely to oppose them. The Prophets of Allah could well afford to wait. Time is always in favour of Truth.

1079. The most noted sorcerers of Pharaoh came. Their art was built up on trickery and imposture, and the first thing they could think of was to make a selfish bargain for themselves. The Pharaoh and his Council would in their present state of panic agree to anything. And so they did. Pharaoh not only promised them any rewards they desired if they foiled the strange power of these men, but he also promised them the highest dignities round his own person. And so the contest begins, with due observance of the amenities observed by combatants before they come to close grips.

Or shall we have  
The (first) throw?"

116. Said Moses: "Throw ye (first)." So when they threw, They bewitched the eyes Of the people, and struck Terror into them: and they Showed a great (feat of) magic.<sup>1080</sup>
117. We revealed to Moses "Throw thy rod": and behold! It swallows up All the falsehoods Which they fake!
118. Thus truth was confirmed. And all that they did Was made of no effect.
119. So they were vanquished There and then, and Turned about humble.<sup>1081</sup>
120. But the sorcerers fell down Prostrate in adoration.
121. Saying: "We believe In the Lord of the Worlds.

١١٦ تَخْنُ الْمُلْقِيْنَ

قَالَ أَتَقْوَى فَلَمَا أَقْوَى سَحَرُوا أَعْيَنَ النَّاسِ

وَأَسْرَهُبُوهُمْ وَجَاهُهُو بِسْرَحٍ عَظِيمٍ

﴿١١٦﴾ وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَى مُوسَى أَنَّ الَّذِي عَصَاكُ فَإِذَا هُوَ

تَلْقَفُ مَا يَأْفِكُونَ

فَوَقَعَ الْحَقُّ وَبَطَلَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

فَعَلِبُوا هُنَالِكَ وَانْقَلَبُوا صَاغِرِينَ

وَأَلْقَى السَّحَرَةُ سَجِدِينَ

قَالُوا إِنَّا مُنَاهَرُ الْعَالَمِينَ

1080. Moses and his brother Aaron were pitted against the most skilful magic-men of Egypt, but they were calm and confident and let the magic-men have their innings first. As is usual in this world, the magicians trickery made a great impression on the people, but when Moses threw his rod, the illusion was broken, and the falsehood was all shown up. In the Old Testament story (Exod. vii. 10-12) it was Aaron that threw the rod, and he threw it before the magicians. Aaron's rod became a serpent. Then the magicians threw their rods, and they became serpents, but Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods. The story given to us is more dramatic and less literal. We are told in general terms that Moses first allowed the magic-men to play their tricks. It was a simple shepherd's crook with which he used to feed his flocks. With Allah's grace behind him, he was able to expose all false trickery and establish the Truth.

1081. The proud ones of the Court-Pharaoh and his chiefs-were hard-hearted, and the exposure of the imposture only made them wreak their rage on those whom they could reach. On the other hand the effect on the humbler ones-those who had been made the dupes and instruments of the imposture-was quite different. Their conscience was awakened. They fell down to the ground in adoration of the Lord of the Worlds, and confessed their faith.

122. "The Lord of Moses and Aaron."

123. Said Pharaoh: "Believe ye  
In Him before I give  
You permission? Surely  
This is a trick which ye  
Have planned in the City  
To drive out its people:  
But soon shall ye know  
(The consequences)." <sup>1082</sup>

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

125. They said: "For us,  
We are but sent back  
Unto our Lord."

126. "But thou dost wreak  
Thy vengeance on us  
Simply because we believed  
In the Signs of our Lord  
When they reached us!  
Our Lord! pour out on us  
Patience and constancy, and take  
Our souls unto Thee

رَبِّ مُوسَى وَهَارُونَ

قَالَ فَرْعَوْنُ أَمَنْتُم بِهِ قَبْلَ أَنْ آذَنَ لَكُمْ إِنْ هَذَا  
لِمَكْرٍ مَكْرُ تَمَوَّهُ فِي الْمَدِينَةِ لِتُخْرِجُوا مِنْهَا أَهْلَهَا

فَسَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ

لَا تَقْطَعْنَا إِلَيْكُمْ وَلَا جُلْكُمْ مِنْ خَلْقِنَا  
شَمْ لَا صِلْكُمْ لِجَمِيعِنَا

فَأُلُوَّا إِنَّا إِلَى رَبِّنَا مُنْقَلِبُونَ

وَمَا نَقْمُدُ إِلَّا أَنْتَ مَأْنَى إِنَّا إِلَيْكَ رَبِّنَا لِمَاجَاهَتَنَا  
رَبِّنَا أَفْرَغَ عَلَيْنَا صَبَرًا وَتُوفَّنَا مُسْلِمًا

1082. Pharaoh and his Court were doubly angry: first because they were made to look small when confronted by the power of Allah, and secondly, because their dupes and instruments were snatched away from them. These men, the sorcerers, at once recognised the Signs of Allah, and in their case the mission of Moses, and Aaron was fulfilled. They turned back on their past life of false worship, and oppression of the weak, and confessed the One true God. As usually happens, hardened sinners resent all the more the saving of any of their companions from sin and error. Judging other people's motives by their own, they accuse them of duplicity, and if they have the power, they take cruel revenge. Here the Pharaoh threatens the repentant sinners with the extreme punishment for treason and apostasy (cutting off of hands and feet, combined with an ignominious death on the cross, as in the case of the worst malefactors). But they remained firm, and prayed to Allah for patience and constancy. Probably their influence spread quietly in the commonalty. Ultimately it appeared on the Throne itself, in the person of Amenophis IV about five or six generations afterwards.

As Muslims (who bow  
To Thy Will)!<sup>1083,,</sup>

## SECTION 15.

127. Said the chiefs of Pharaoh's People: "Wilt thou leave Moses and his people, To spread mischief in the land, And to abandon thee And thy gods?" He said "Their male children will we Slay; (only) their females Will we save alive; And we have over them (Power) irresistible."<sup>1084</sup>
128. Said Moses to his people: "Pray for help from Allah,"

وَقَالَ الْمُلَائِكَةُ لِقَوْمِ فِرْعَوْنَ أَنْدَرْ مُوسَى وَقَوْمَهُ،  
لِيُقْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَيَذْرَكُ وَأَهْنَاكَ قَالَ  
سَنَقْتُلُ أَبْنَاءَهُمْ وَنَسْتَحْيِي نِسَاءَهُمْ وَإِنَّا فَوْقُهُمْ  
فَهُوَ أَكْبَرٌ

قَالَ مُوسَى لِقَوْمِهِ أَسْتَعِينُ بِاللَّهِ وَأَصْبِرُ وَأَرْ

1083. These Egyptians, by their patience and constancy, show that their repentance was true. Thus in their case the mission of Moses was fulfilled directly, and their number must have amounted to a considerable figure. They were martyrs to their faith, and their martyrdom affected their nation in two ways. In the first place, as they were the pick of those who practised magic in Egypt, their conversion and disappearance dealt a staggering blow to the whole system. Secondly, the indirect effect of their martyrdom on the commonality of Egypt must have been far greater than can be measured by numbers. The banner of Allah was planted, and the silent spiritual fight must have gone on ever since, though history, in recording outward events, is silent on the slow and gradual processes of transformation undergone by Egyptian religion. From a chaotic pantheon of animals and animal gods, the worship of the sun and the heavenly bodies, and the worship of the Pharaoh as the embodiment of power, they gradually came to realise the oneness and mercy of the true God. After many glimpses of Monotheism on Egyptian soil itself, the Gospel of Jesus reached them, and eventually Islam.

1084. Pharaoh's order against the sorcerers was drastic enough. But his Council is not satisfied. What about Moses and the Israelites? They had a seeming victory, and will now be more mischievous than ever. They appeal to Pharaoh's vanity and his superstition and sense of power. "If you leave them alone," they say, "where will be your authority? You and your gods will be defied!" Pharaoh has a ready answer. He was really inwardly cowed by the apparent power of Moses. He dared not openly act against him. But he had already, before the birth of Moses, passed a cunning order to destroy the whole people of Israel. Through the instrumentality of midwives (Exod. i. 15) all the male children were to be destroyed, and the females would then be for the Egyptians: the race of Israel would thus be at an end. This order was still in force, and would remain in force until the despised race was absorbed. But Egyptian cunning and wickedness had no power against Allah's Plan for those who had faith. See verse 129 below.

And (wait) in patience and constancy:  
For the earth is Allah's,  
To give as a heritage  
To such of His servants  
As He pleaseth; and the end  
Is (best) for the righteous.<sup>1085</sup>

129. They said: "We have had (Nothing but) trouble, both before And after thou camest<sup>1086</sup>  
To us." He said:  
"It may be that your Lord Will destroy your enemy And make you inheritors<sup>1087</sup>  
In the earth; that so He may see how ye act."

## SECTION 16.

130. We punished the people Of Pharaoh with years (Of drought) and shortness Of crops; that they might Receive admonition.

131. But when good (times) came, They said, "This is due To us;" when gripped By calamity, they ascribed it

إِنَّ الْأَرْضَ لِلَّهِ يُورِثُهَا مَنْ يَشَاءُ  
مِنْ عِبَادِهِ وَالْعَدِيقَةُ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ

فَالْأُولَاؤ ذِيَّنَا مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ تَأْتِيَنَا وَمِنْ بَعْدِ  
مَا حِنْتَنَا قَالَ عَسَى رَبُّكُمْ أَنْ يَهْلِكَ  
عَدُوَّكُمْ وَيَسْتَخْلِفَكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ  
فَيَنْظُرُ كَيْفَ تَعْمَلُونَ

وَلَقَدْ أَخْذَنَا إِلَّا فَرْعَوْنَ بِالسِّينِ وَنَفْعِ  
مِنَ الشَّمَرِاتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَذَكَّرُونَ

فَإِذَا جَاءَتْهُمْ الْحَسَنَةُ قَالُوا نَاهَذُهُ وَلَنْ نُصْبِهُمْ  
سِيَّئَةً يَطْبِرُوا بِمُؤْسَنٍ وَمَنْ مَعَهُمْ أَلَا إِنَّمَا

1085. Notice the contrast between the arrogant tone of Pharaoh and the humility and faith taught by Moses. In the end the arrogance was humbled, and humility and faith were protected and advanced.

1086. There is a slight note of querulousness in the people's answer. But Moses allays it by his own example and courage, and his vision of the future: which was amply fulfilled in time. See verse 137 below.

1087. The Israelites, despised and enslaved, were to be rescued and made rulers in Palestine. David and Solomon were great kings and played a notable part in history. But the greatness of Israel was conditional: they were to be judged by their deeds. When they fell from grace, other people were given honour and power. And so it came to be the turn of the Muslims, and so on. Allah gives His gifts to those who are righteous and obey His Law.

To evil omens connected  
With Moses and those with him!  
Behold! in truth the omens  
Of evil are theirs<sup>1088</sup>  
In Allah's sight, but most  
Of them do not understand!

132. They said (to Moses):  
“Whatever be the Signs  
Thou bringest, to work  
Therewith thy sorcery on us,”<sup>1089</sup>  
We shall never believe  
In thee”
133. So We sent on them:  
Wholesale Death,<sup>1090</sup>  
Locusts, Lice, Frogs,  
And Blood: Signs openly<sup>1091</sup>  
Self-explained: but they  
Were steeped in arrogance,  
A people given to sin.
134. And when the Plague  
Fell on them, they said:  
“O Moses! on our behalf  
Call on thy Lord in virtue

طَّيْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ  
لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

وَقَالُوا مَهَمَا تَأْتِنَا بِهِ مِنْ أَيْةٍ لَتَسْحِرَنَا إِلَيْهَا فَإِنَّا

نَحْنُ لَكَ بِمُؤْمِنِينَ

فَارْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمُ الْطُّوفَانَ وَالْجَرَادَ وَالْقَمَلَ  
وَالضَّفَاعَ وَالدَّمَ، لَيْسَ مُفَصَّلَتِ فَاسْتَكَبَرُوا  
وَكَانُوا فَوْقَ مَا يُنْهَى مِنْ

وَلَنَأْفَعَ عَلَيْهِمُ الرِّجْزُ قَالُوا يَمُوسَى أَدْعُ لَنَا  
رَبَّكَ بِمَا عَاهَدَ عِنْدَكَ لَئِنْ كَشَفْتَ عَنَّا

1088. Their superstition ascribed the punishment of their own wickedness to some evil omen. They thought Moses and his people brought them ill-luck. They did not look within themselves to see the root of evil, and the cause of their punishment! So it happens in all ages. People blame the righteous for something which they do, different from other men, instead of searching out their own lapses from rectitude, which are punished by Allah.

1089. A type of obstinacy and resistance to Allah's message. As they believed in sorcery and magic, they thought anything unusual was but sorcery and magic, and hardened their hearts against Truth.

1090. *Tufān* = a widespread calamity, causing wholesale death and destruction. It may be a flood, or a typhoon, or an epidemic, among men or cattle. Perhaps the last is meant, if we may interpret by the Old Testament story. See also Exod. ix. 3, 9, 15; xii. 29.

1091. In xvii. 101, the reference is to nine Clear Signs. These are: (1) the Rod (vii. 107), (2) the Radiant Hand (vii. 108), (3) the years of drought or shortage of water (vii. 130), (4) short crops (vii. 130), and the five mentioned in this verse, viz., (5) epidemics among men and beasts, (6) locusts, (7) lice, (8) frogs, and (9) the water turning to blood.

Of his promise to thee:  
If thou wilt remove  
The Plague from us,  
We shall truly believe in thee,  
And we shall send away  
The Children of Israel  
With thee.”<sup>1092</sup>

135. But when We removed  
The Plague from them  
According to a fixed term  
Which they had to fulfil.—<sup>1093</sup>  
Behold! they broke their word!
136. So We exacted retribution  
From them: We drowned them<sup>1094</sup>  
In the sea, because they  
Rejected Our Signs, and failed  
To take warning from them.<sup>1095</sup>

أَلْرِجَزُ لَتُؤْمِنَ لَكَ وَلَنُرْسِلَنَ مَعَكَ بَنِي

إِسْرَائِيلَ

فَلَمَّا كَشَفْنَا عَنْهُمُ الْرِجَزَ إِلَى أَجَلٍ

هُمْ بَلَغُوهُ إِذَا هُمْ يَنْكُثُونَ

فَأَنْقَمْنَا عَنْهُمْ فَأَغْرَقْنَاهُمْ فِي الْيَمِّ يَأْتِيهِمْ كَذِبُوا

بِمَا يَنْهَا وَكَانُوا عَنْهَا عَنِفُلَاتٍ

1092. The demand of Moses was two-fold: (1) come to Allah and cease from oppression, and (2) let me take Israel out of Egypt. At first it was laughed at and rejected with scorn. When the Plagues came for punishment, each time the Egyptians suffered, they promised amendment and begged Moses to intercede and cause the plague to cease. But every time it ceased, they went back to their evil attitude, until the final retribution came. This is a type of the sinner's attitude for all times.

1093. The intercession of Moses was to pray. Each plague or penalty had its appointed term in Allah's decree. That term was duly fulfilled before the plague ceased. The intercession meant two things: (1) that Allah's name was invoked and His presence duly brought home to the mind and heart of the sinner who promised repentance, and (2) that the sinner was given a further chance when the prayer was accepted. This again is a universal truth.

1094. When at last Pharaoh let Israel go, they selected, not the highway to Canaan, along the Mediterranean and by Gaza, because they were unarmed and would have encountered immediate opposition there, but by way of the wilderness of Sinai. They crossed the Red Sea, while Pharaoh's host which came in pursuit was drowned. Cf. ii. 50.

1095. Where was the Council of Pharaoh held in which Moses addressed Pharaoh? Egypt's primary capital in the XVIIIth Dynasty was Thebes (=Not-Ammon), but that was more than 400 miles to the south of the Delta, in whose corner Israel dwelt. Memphis, on the apex of the Delta, a little south of where Cairo is now, was also over 100 miles from Israel's habitations. The interview must have been either in a Palace near Goshen, where the Israelites dwelt, or in Zoan (=Tanis), the Deltaic capital built by a former dynasty, which was of course still available for the reigning dynasty, and which was not far from the Israelite settlement.

137. And We made a people,  
Considered weak (and of no  
account),  
Inheritors of lands  
In both East and West,—  
Lands whereon We sent  
Down Our blessings.  
The fair promise of thy Lord  
Was fulfilled for the Children  
Of Israel, because they had  
Patience and constancy,  
And We levelled to the ground  
The great Works and fine Buildings  
Which Pharaoh and his people  
Erected (with such pride).<sup>1096</sup>
138. We took the Children of Israel  
(With safety) across the sea.  
They came upon a people  
Devoted entirely to some idols<sup>1097</sup>  
They had. They said:  
“O Moses! fashion for us

وَأَوْرَثْنَا الْقَوْمَ الَّذِينَ كَانُوا يُسْتَضْعَفُونَ  
مَشْرِقَ الْأَرْضِ وَمَغَارِبَهَا الَّتِي بَنَرَكَنَافِهَا  
وَتَمَّتْ كَلِمَتُ رَبِّكَ الْحُسْنَى عَلَى إِسْرَئِيلَ  
بِمَا صَبَرُوا وَدَمَرْنَا مَا كَانَ يَصْنَعُ  
١٣٧ فِرْعَوْنَ وَQَوْمَهُ وَمَا كَانُوا يَعْرِشُونَ

وَجَنَّوْزَنَابِيَّ إِسْرَئِيلَ الْبَحْرَ فَأَنْوَاعَ قَوْمٍ  
يَعْكُثُونَ عَلَى أَصْنَامٍ لَهُمْ قَالُوا يَمْوَسَى  
أَجْعَلْنَا إِلَيْهَا كَمَا هُمْ أَهْلُهُ فَالْهُمْ قَالُوا إِنَّكُمْ قَوْمٌ  
جَاهِلُونَ ١٣٨

1096. Israel, which was despised, became a great and glorious nation under Solomon. He had goodly territory, and was doubly blest. His land and people were prosperous, and he was blessed with wisdom from Allah. His sway and his fame spread east and west. And thus Allah's promise to Israel was fulfilled. Note that Syria and Palestine had once been under the sway of Egypt. At the same time the proud and rebellious Pharaoh and his people were brought low. The splendid monuments which they had erected with so much skill and pride were mingled with the dust. Their great cities—Thebes (or No-Ammon), Memphis (or Noph, sacred to the Bull of Osiris), and the other splendid cities, became as if they had not existed, and archaeologists have had to dig up their ruins from the sands. The splendid monuments—temples, palaces, tombs, statues, columns, and stately structures of all kinds—were buried in the sands. Even monuments like the Great Sphinx, which seem to defy the ages, were partly buried in the sands, and owe their rescue to the comparatively recent researches of archaeologists. As late as 1743 Richard Pococke in his *Travels in Egypt* (p. 41), remarked: "Most of those pyramids are very much ruined."

1097. Who were these people? We are now in the Sinai Peninsula. Two conjectures are possible. (1) The Amalekites of the Sinai Peninsula were at perpetual war with the Israelites. They were probably an idolatrous nation, but we have very little knowledge of their cult. (2) From Egyptian history we know that Egypt had worked from very ancient times some copper mines in Sinai. An Egyptian settlement may have been here. Like all mining camps it contained from the beginning the dregs of the population. When the mines ceased to be worked, the settlement, or what remained of it, must have =

A god like unto the gods  
They have." He said:  
"Surely ye are a people  
Without knowledge".

139. "As to these folk,-  
The cult they are in  
Is bound to destruction,<sup>1098</sup>  
And vain is the (worship)  
Which they practise."

140. He said: "Shall I seek for you  
A god other than  
Allah, when it is He  
Who hath endowed you  
With gifts above the nations?"

141. And remember We rescued you  
From Pharaoh's people,  
Who afflicted you with  
The worst of punishment  
Who slew your male children  
And saved alive your females:  
In that was a momentous  
Trial from your Lord.<sup>1099</sup>

إِنَّهُنَّ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُمْ فِيهِ وَيَنْتَطِلُّ مَا كَانُوا

يَعْمَلُونَ

قَالَ أَغَيْرَ اللَّهِ أَنْ يُغَيِّرُ كُمْ إِلَّاهًا وَهُوَ

فَضَلَّكُمْ عَلَى الْمُنَّاَمِينَ

وَإِذَا أَبْحَيْتُكُمْ مِنْ إِلَيْ فِرْعَوْنَ

يَسْوُمُنَّكُمْ سُوَءَ الْعَذَابِ يُقْتَلُونَ أَبْنَاءَكُمْ

وَيَسْتَحْيُونَ نِسَاءَكُمْ وَفِي ذَلِكُمْ

بَلَاءٌ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ عَظِيمٌ

= degenerated further. Cut off from civilisation, its cult must have become still narrower, without the refining influences which a progressive nation applies even to its idolatry. Perhaps Apis, the sacred bull of Memphis, lost all its allegorical meaning for them, and only gross and superstitious rites remained among them. The text speaks of "some idols they had," implying that they had merely a detached fragment of a completer religion. This was a snare in the path of the Israelites, whom many generations of slavery in Egypt had debased into ignorance and superstition.

1098. If conjecture 2 in the last note is correct, this idolatrous worship was but the fragment of a ruin from Egypt, and Moses's reproach is biting: "You, who have been rescued from the bondage of living Egypt,—do you hanker after the bondage of a dead cult debased even from that from which you have been rescued?"

*Mutabbar* = broken in pieces, smashed into fragments, destroyed.

1099. This is Allah's reminder to Israel through the mouth of Moses. There was a double trial: (1) while the bondage lasted, the people were to learn patience and constancy in the midst of affliction; (2) when they were rescued, they were to learn humility; justice, and righteous deeds of prosperity.

## SECTION 17.

142. We appointed for Moses  
Thirty nights, and completed  
(The period) with ten (more):  
Thus was completed the term  
With his Lord,<sup>1100</sup>  
Forty nights. And Moses  
Had charged his brother Aaron  
(Before he went up):  
“Act for me amongst my people:  
Do right, and follow not  
The way of those  
Who do mischief.”<sup>1101</sup>
143. When Moses came  
To the place appointed by Us,  
And his Lord addressed him,  
He said: “O my Lord!  
Show (Thyself) to me,  
That I may look upon Thee.”<sup>1102</sup>  
Allah said: “By no means  
Canst thou see Me (direct);

وَوَعَدْنَا مُوسَى ثَلَاثِينَ لَيْلَةً وَأَتَمْنَهَا  
يُعَشِّرِ قَتَمَ مِقْدُرٌ رَبِّهِ أَرْبَعَتْ لَيْلَةً وَقَارَأَ  
مُوسَى لِأَخِيهِ هَرُونَ أَخْلُقَنِي فِي قُوَّى  
وَأَصْبِعْ وَلَا تَنْعِنْ سَبِيلَ الْمُفْسِدِينَ

وَلَمَّا جَاءَهُ مُوسَى لِمِيقَاتِنَا وَكَلَمَهُ رَبُّهُ قَالَ رَبِّي  
أَرْبَيْنَ أَنْظُرْنِي إِلَيْكَ قَالَ لَنْ تَرَنِي وَلَكِنْ أَنْظُرْ  
إِلَى الْجَبَلِ فَإِنْ أَسْتَقْرَمَ مَكَانَهُ فَسُوفَ تَرَنِي  
فَلَمَّا بَجَلَ رَبُّهُ لِلْجَبَلِ جَعَلَهُ دَكَّاً وَحْرَ

1100. The forty nights' exclusion of Moses on the Mount may be compared with the forty days fast of Jesus in the wilderness before he took up his ministry (Matt. iv. 2). In each case the Prophets lived alone apart from their people, before they came into the full blaze of the events of their Ministry.

1101. When for any reason the man of God is absent from his people, his duty of leadership (*khilāfat*) should be taken up by his brother,—not necessarily a blood-brother, but one of his society or brotherhood. The deputy should discharge it in all humility, remembering three things: (1) that he is only a deputy, and bound to follow the directions of his Principal, (2) that right and justice are of the essence of power, and (3) that mischief gets its best chance to raise its head in the absence of the Principal, and that the deputy should always guard against the traps laid for him in the Principal's absence.

1102. Even the best of us may be betrayed into overweening confidence of spiritual ambition not yet justified by the stage we have reached. Moses had already seen part of the glory of Allah in his Radiant White Hand, that shone with the glory of Divine light (vii. 108, n. 1076). But he was still in the flesh, and the mission to his people was to begin after the Covenant of Sinai.

But look upon the mount;  
 If it abide  
 In its place, then  
 Shalt thou see Me.”<sup>1103</sup>  
 When his Lord manifested  
 Himself to the Mount,  
 He made it as dust,  
 And Moses fell down  
 In a swoon. When he  
 Recovered his senses he said:  
 “Glory be to Thee! To Thee  
 I turn in repentance, and I  
 Am the first to believe.”<sup>1104</sup>

144. (Allah) said: “O Moses!  
 I have chosen thee  
 Above (other) men,<sup>1105</sup>  
 By the messages I (have  
 Given thee) and the words  
 I (have spoken to thee);  
 Take then the (revelation)  
 Which I give thee,  
 And be of those  
 Who give thanks.”<sup>1106</sup>

مُوسَى صَعِقَ فَمَا أَفَاقَ قَالَ شَبَحْتَكَ  
 بَئْتُ إِلَيْكَ وَأَنَا أَوَّلُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

قَالَ يَنْمُوسَى إِنِّي أَخْصَطَفَيْتُكَ عَلَى النَّاسِ بِرِسَالَتِي  
 وَيَكْلِمِي فَخَذْ مَاءَ اتَّبَعْتُكَ  
 وَكُنْ مِنْ الشَّاكِرِينَ

1103. But Allah—the Cherisher of all His creatures—treats even our improper requests with mercy, compassion, and understanding. Even the reflected glory of Allah is too great for the grosser substance of matter. The peak on which it shone became as powder before the ineffable glory, and Moses could only live by being taken out of his bodily senses. When he recovered from his swoon, he saw the true position, and the distance between our grosser bodily senses and the true splendour of Allah's glory. He at once turned in penitence to Allah, and confessed his faith.

1104. “First to believe.” Cf. the expression “first of those who bow to Allah in Islam” in vi. 14 and vi. 163. “First” means here not the first in time, but most zealous in faith. It has the intensive and not the comparative meaning.

1105. “Above (other) men”: i.e. among his contemporaries. He had a high mission, and he had the honour of speaking to Allah.

1106. Allah's revelation is for the benefit of His creatures, who should receive it with reverence and gratitude. While Moses was having these great spiritual experiences on the Mount, his people below were ungrateful enough to forget Allah and make a golden calf for worship (vii. 147).

145. And We ordained  
For him in the Tablets  
In all matters, Admonition  
And explanation of  
All things, (and said):  
“Take and hold these  
With firmness, and enjoin  
Thy people to hold fast  
By the best in the precepts:<sup>1107</sup>  
Soon shall I show you<sup>1108</sup>  
The homes of the wicked,—<sup>1109</sup>  
(How they lie desolate).”

146. Those who behave arrogantly  
On the earth in defiance  
Of right—them will I  
Turn away from My Signs:<sup>1110</sup>  
Even if they see all the Signs,  
They will not believe in them;  
And if they see the way  
Of right conduct, they will

وَكَتَبْنَا لَهُ فِي الْأَلْوَاحِ مِن كُلِّ شَيْءٍ  
مَوْعِظَةً وَنَفْصِيلًا لِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَفَخُذْهَا بِقُوَّةٍ  
وَأَمْرُرْ قَوْمَكَ يَأْخُذُوا إِلَيْهَا سَارِيرِكَ  
دارَ الْفَنِيسِينَ 110

سَاصِرِفْ عَنْهُ أَيْنِيَ الَّذِينَ يَكْبُرُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ  
يُغَيِّرُ الْحَقِّ وَإِنْ يَرَوْا كُلَّ مَا يَعْلَمُ لَا يُؤْمِنُوا  
بِهَا وَإِنْ يَرَوْا سَيِّلَ الرُّشْدِ لَا يَتَجَدَّوْهُ سِيِّلًا

1107. The Tablets of the Law contained the essential Truth, from which were derived the positive injunctions and prohibitions, explanations and interpretations, which it was the function of the prophetic office to hold up for the people to follow. The precepts would contain, as the Shari'at does, matters absolutely prohibited, matters not prohibited but disapproved, matters about which there was no prohibition or injunction, but in which conduct was to be regulated by circumstances; matters of positive and universal duty, matters recommended for those whose zeal was sufficient to enable them to work on higher than minimum standards. No soul is burdened beyond its capacity; but we are asked to seek the best and highest possible for us in conduct.

1108. Notice the transition from the “We” of authority and honour and impersonal dignity, to the “I” of personal concern in specially guiding the righteous.

1109. Literally, the homes of the wicked, both individuals and nations, lie desolate, as in the case of the ancient Egyptians, the ‘Ad., and the Thamud.

1110. The argument may be simplified thus in paraphrase. The right is established on the earth as Allah created it: Nature recognises and obeys Allah's law as fixed for each portion of Creation. But man, because of the gift of Will, sometimes upsets this balance. The root-cause is his arrogance, as it was in the case of Iblis. Allah's Signs are everywhere, but if they are rejected with scorn and blasphemy, Allah will withdraw His grace, for sin hardens the heart and makes it impervious to the truth. Want of faith produces a kind of blindness to spiritual facts, a kind of deafness to the warnings of a Day of Account. If we had contumaciously rejected faith, can we hope for anything but justice,—the just punishment of our sins.

Not adopt it as the Way;  
But if they see the way  
Of error, that is  
The Way they will adopt.  
For they have rejected<sup>1111</sup>  
Our Signs, and failed  
To take warning from them.

147. Those who reject Our Signs  
And the Meeting in the Hereafter,  
Vain are their deeds:  
Can they expect to be rewarded  
Except as they have wrought?

## SECTION 18.

148. The people of Moses made,  
In his absence, out of their  
    ornaments,<sup>1112</sup>  
The body of a calf, (for worship):<sup>1113</sup>

وَإِن يَرْقُوا سَبِيلَ الْغَيْرِيْسَيْدِيْلَهُ سَبِيلًا ذَلِكَ  
يَا تَمَّ كَذَبُوا بِأَيْمَانِنَا وَكَثُرُوا عَنْهَا غَنِيْلَيْنَ

وَالَّذِيْنَ كَذَبُوا بِأَيْمَانِنَا وَلِكَاءَ الْآخِرَةِ  
حَيْطَتْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ هَلْ مُجْزَوْنَ إِلَامَا كَانُوا  
يَعْمَلُونَ

وَأَخْذَ قَوْمً مُوسَىٰ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ مِنْ حُلْيَهُهُ عِجَالًا  
جَسَدًا لَهُ خُوارٌ الْمَرِّرُوا إِنَّهُ لَا يَنْكِلُهُمْ

1111. *Rejected Our Signs:* again a return to the Plural of impersonal Dignity and Authority, from the singular of personal concern in granting grace and guidance to the righteous.

1112. The making of the golden calf and its worship by the Israelites during the absence of Moses on the Mount were referred to in ii. 51, and some further details are given in xx. 85-97. Notice how in each case only those points are referred to which are necessary to the argument in hand. A narrator whose object is mere narration, tells the story in all its details, and is done with it. A consummate artist, whose object is to enforce lessons, brings out each point in its proper place. Master of all details, he does not ramble, but with supreme literary skill, just adds the touch that is necessary in each place to complete the spiritual picture. His object is not a story but a lesson. Here notice the contrast between the intense spiritual communion of Moses on the Mount and the simultaneous corruption of his people in his absence. We can understand his righteous indignation and bitter grief (vii. 150). The people had melted all their gold ornaments, and made the image of a calf like the bull of Osiris in the city of Memphis in the wicked Egypt that they had turned their backs upon.

1113. *Image of a Calf. Jasad* is literally a body, especially the body of a man according to *Khalil* quoted by *Rāgib*. In xxi. 8, it is used obviously for the human body, as also in xxxviii. 34; but in the latter case, the idea of an image, without any real life or soul, is also suggested. In the present passage I understand many suggestions: (1) that it was a mere image, without life; (2) as such, it could not low, therefore the appearance of lowing, mentioned immediately afterwards, was a fraud; (3) unlike its prototype, the bull of Osiris, it had not even the symbolism of Osiris behind it; the Osiris myth, in the living religion of Egypt, had at least some ethical principles behind it.

Having lowing sound did they<sup>1114</sup>  
 Not see that it could  
 Neither speak to them, nor  
 Show them the Way?  
 They took it for worship  
 And they did wrong.

149. When they repented, and saw  
 That they had erred,  
 They said: "If our Lord  
 Have not mercy upon us  
 And forgive us, we shall  
 Indeed be among the Losers.
150. When Moses came back  
 To his people, angry and grieved,  
 He said: "Evil it is that ye  
 Have done in my place  
 In my absence: did ye<sup>1115</sup>  
 Make haste to bring on  
 The judgment of your Lord?"  
 He put down the Tablets,<sup>1116</sup>  
 Seized his brother by (the hair

وَلَا يَهِيدُهُمْ سَبِيلًا أَخْذُوهُ  
 وَكَانُوا ظَلَّالِيْرَ

وَلَمَّا سَقَطَ فِتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَرَأُوا أَنَّهُمْ قَدْ ضَلَّوْا  
 قَالُوا إِنَّا لَمْ يَرَحْمَنَا بُنَىٰ وَيَغْفِرُ لَنَا  
 لَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْخَسِيرِيْنَ

وَلَمَّا رَأَيْخَ مُوسَىٰ إِلَى قَوْمِهِ غَضِبَنَ أَسْفَاقَ الْيَشْمَامَا  
 حَلَقَتِهِ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ أَعْجَلَتْهُ أَمْرَ رَبِّكُمْ وَالْقَى  
 الْأَلْوَاحَ وَأَخْذَ بِرَأْسِ أَخِيهِ بِحَرْهَ إِلَيْهِ قَالَ أَبْنَ أَمْ  
 إِنَّ الْقَوْمَ أَسْتَضْعَفُونِي وَكَادُوا يَقْتُلُونِي

1114. The lowing of the golden calf was obviously a deception practised by the promoters of the cult. Lytton in his "Last Days of Pompeii" exposes the deception practised by the priests of Isis. Men hidden behind images imposed on the credulity of the commonalty.

1115. *Did ye make haste...?* 'In your impatience, could you not wait for me? Your lapse into idolatry has only hastened Allah's wrath. If you had only waited, I was bringing to you in the Tablets the most excellent teaching in the commands of Allah.' There is subtle irony in the speech of Moses. There is also a play upon words: '*ijl* = calf; and '*ajila* = to make haste: no translation can bring out these niceties.

1116. *Put down the Tablets:* we are not told that the Tablets were broken: in fact vii. 154 (below) shows that they were whole. They contained Allah's Message. There is a touch of disrespect (if not blasphemy) in supposing that Allah's Messenger broke the Tablets in his incontinent rage, as is stated in the Old Testament: "Moses's anger waxed hot, and he cast the tablets out of his hands, and brake them beneath the Mount." (Exod. xxxii. 10). On this point and also on the point that Aaron (in the Old Testament story) ordered the gold to be brought, made a molten calf, fashioned it with a graving tool, and built an altar before the calf (Exd. xxxii. 2-5), our version differs from that of the Old Testament. We cannot believe that Aaron, who was appointed by Allah to assist Moses as Allah's Messenger, could descend so low as to seduce the people into idolatry, whatever his human weaknesses might be.

Of) his head, and dragged him<sup>1117</sup>  
To him. Aaron said:  
“Son of my mother! The people  
Did indeed reckon me  
As naught, and went near  
To slaying me! Make not  
The enemies rejoice over  
My misfortune, nor count thou  
Me amongst the people  
Of sin.”<sup>1118</sup>

فَلَا تُشْتِمْ فِي الْأَعْدَاءِ وَلَا يَجْعَلْنِي مَعَ الظَّالِمِينَ  
الظَّالِمِينَ ١٥١

151. Moses prayed: “O my Lord!  
Forgive me and my brother!<sup>1119</sup>  
Admit us to Thy mercy!  
For Thou art the Most Merciful  
Of those who show mercy!”

#### SECTION 19.

152. Those who took the calf  
(For worship) will indeed  
Be overwhelmed with wrath  
From their Lord and with  
Shame in this life:<sup>1120</sup>

قَالَ رَبِّي أَغْفِرْ لِي وَلَا يُخْزِنْنِي  
فِي رَحْمَتِكَ وَأَنْتَ أَرْحَمُ الرَّاحِمِينَ  
١٥٢

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ أَحَدُوا أَعْجَلَ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ غَضَبَ  
مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ وَذَلَّةٌ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَكَذَلِكَ  
بَخْزِي الْمُفْتَرِينَ  
١٥٣

1117. Moses was but human. Remembering the charge he had given to Aaron (vii. 142) he had a just grievance at the turn events had taken. But he did not wreak his vengeance on the Tablets of Allah's law by breaking them. He laid hands on his brother, and his brother at once explained.

1118. Aaron's speech is full of tenderness and regret. He addresses Moses as “son of my mother.”—an affectionate term. He explains how the turbulent people nearly killed him for resisting them. And he states in the clearest terms that the idolatry neither originated with him nor had his consent. In xx. 85, we are told that a fellow described as the Sāmīrī had led them astray. We shall discuss this when we come to that passage.

1119. As Moses was convinced that his brother was guiltless, his wrath was turned to gentleness. He prayed for forgiveness—for himself and his brother: for himself because of his wrath and for his brother because he had been unable to suppress idolatry among his people. And like a true leader that he is, he identifies himself with his lieutenant for all that has happened. Even more, he identifies himself with his whole people in his prayer in verse 155 below. Herein, again, is a type of what the Holy Prophet Muhammad did for his people.

1120. The consequences were twofold: (1) spiritual, in that Allah's grace is withdrawn, and (2) even in the present life of this world, in that godly men also shun the sinner's company, and he is isolated.

Thus do We recompense  
Those who invent (falsehoods).

153. But those who do wrong  
But repent thereafter and  
(Truly) believe,—verily  
Thy Lord is thereafter  
Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.
154. When the anger of Moses  
Was appeased, he took up  
The Tablets: in the writing  
Thereon was Guidance and Mercy  
For such as fear their Lord.
155. And Moses chose seventy<sup>1121</sup>  
Of his people for Our place  
Of meeting: when they  
Were seized with violent quaking,<sup>1122</sup>  
He prayed: "O my Lord!  
If it had been Thy Will  
Thou couldst have destroyed,  
Long before, both them  
And me: wouldst Thou  
Destroy us for the deeds  
Of the foolish ones among us?  
This is no more than<sup>1123</sup>  
Thy trial: by it Thou causest

وَالَّذِينَ عَمِلُوا السَّيِّئَاتِ ثُمَّ تَابُوا مِنْ بَعْدِهَا  
وَأَمْنَوْا إِنَّ رَبَّكَ مِنْ بَعْدِهَا لِغَفْرَانٍ رَّحِيمٌ

وَلَمَّا سَكَتَ عَنْ مُوسَى الْفَضْبُ أَخْذَ الْأَلْوَاحَ  
وَفِي نُسْخَتِهَا هَدَى وَرَحْمَةً لِلَّذِينَ هُمْ  
لِرَبِّهِمْ يَرْهَبُونَ

وَأَخْنَارَ مُوسَى قَوْمَهُ سَبْعِينَ رَجُلًا لِمِيقَاتِنَا فَلَمَّا  
أَخْذُوهُمُ الرَّجْفَةُ قَالَ رَبُّهُ لَوْشِنَتْ أَهْلَكَنَاهُمْ  
مِنْ قَبْلٍ وَلَتَرَى أَهْلَكُنَا بِمَا فَعَلَ الْسُّفَهَاءُ مِنَّا إِنَّهُ  
إِلَّا فِتْنَكَ تُضْلِلُ بِهَا مَنْ تَشَاءُ وَتَهْدِي مَنْ تَشَاءُ  
أَنْتَ وَلَنَا فَعِزْلًا وَارْجَنَا وَأَنْتَ خَيْرُ الْعَفِيفِينَ

1121. Seventy of the elders were taken up to the Mount, but left at some distance from the place where Allah spoke to Moses. They were to be silent witnesses, but their faith was not yet complete, and they dared to say to Moses: "We shall never believe in thee until we see Allah in public" (ii.55). They were dazed with thunder and lightning, and might have been destroyed but for Allah's mercy on the intercession of Moses.

1122. *Rajfat*: violent quaking, earthquake, I take it to refer to the same event as is described by the word *Sā'iqa* in ii. 55, the thunder and lightning that shook the mountain-side.

1123. Moses was guiltless, but he identifies himself with his whole people, and intercedes with Allah on their behalf. He recognises that it was a trial, in which some of his people failed to stand the test. Such failure was worthy of punishment. But he pleads for mercy for such as erred from weakness and not from contumacy, and were truly repentant, although all who erred were in their several degrees worthy of punishment.

Whom Thou wilt stray,<sup>1124</sup>  
 And Thou leadest whom  
 Thou wilt into the right path.  
 Thou art our Protector:  
 So forgive us and give us  
 Thy mercy; for Thou art  
 The Best of those who forgive.

156. "And ordain for us  
 That which is good,  
 In this life  
 And in the Hereafter:  
 For we have turned unto Thee."  
 He said: "I afflict My Punishment  
 On whom I will;  
 But My Mercy extendeth<sup>1125</sup>  
 To all things. That (Mercy)  
 I shall ordain for those  
 Who do right, and pay  
 Zakat and those  
 Who believe in Our Signs;—<sup>1126</sup>
157. "Those who follow the Messenger,  
 The unlettered Prophet,  
 Whom they find mentioned  
 In their own (Scriptures).—<sup>1127</sup>

وَأَنْتَ شُبَّابٌ لَّا فِي هَذِهِ الْأُمَّةِ أَحَدٌ أَكْفَلُهُ مِنْكَ وَفِي  
 الْآخِرَةِ إِنَّا هُدَّنَا إِلَيْكَ قَالَ عَذَّابٍ أُصِيبُ بِهِ  
 مَنْ أَشَاءَ مِنْ رَّحْمَتِي وَسَعَتْ كُلُّ شَيْءٍ  
 فَسَأَكْتُبُهُ لِلَّذِينَ يَتَقَوَّلُونَ وَيَقُولُونَ  
 الرَّحْمَةُ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ بِكَائِنُوا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١٦﴾

الَّذِينَ يَتَّبِعُونَ الرَّسُولَ الَّذِي أَنْذَلْنَا إِلَيْهِ  
 يَحْذُفُونَ مَكْتُوبًا عِنْدَهُمْ فِي التَّوْرَةِ

1124. Cf. ii. 26.

1125. Allah's mercy is in and for all things. All nature subserves a common purpose, which is for the good of all His creatures. Our faculties and our understandings are all instances of His grace and mercy. Each unit or factor among his creatures benefits from the others and receives them as Allah's mercy to itself: and in its turn, each contributes to the benefit of the others and is thus an instance of Allah's mercy to them. His mercy is universal and all-pervasive; while His justice and punishment are reserved for those who swerve from His plan and (to use a mediaeval judicial formula) go out of His Peace.

1126. The personal grace and mercy—and their opposite—are referred to the singular pronoun "I" while the impersonal Law, by which Allah's Signs operate in His universe, is referred to the plural pronoun of authority and dignity, "We".

1127. In this verse is a pre-figuring, to Moses, of the Arabian Messenger, the last and greatest of the messengers of Allah. Prophecies about him will be found in the Taurât and the Injil. In the reflex of the Taurât as now accepted by the Jews, Moses says: "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, =

In the Taurat and the Gospel;—  
 For he commands them  
 What is just and Forbids them  
 What is evil; he allows  
 Them as lawful what is good  
 (And pure) and prohibits them  
 From what is bad (and impure);  
 He releases them  
 From their heavy burdens  
 And from the yokes<sup>1128</sup>  
 That are upon them.  
 So it is those who believe  
 In him, honour him,  
 Help him, and follow the Light  
 Which is sent down with him,—<sup>1129</sup>  
 It is they who will prosper.”<sup>1130</sup>

## SECTION 20.

158. Say: “O men! I am sent<sup>1131</sup>  
 Unto you all, as the Messenger

وَإِلَيْنِحِيلٍ يَا مُرُّهُم بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَبَتَهُمْ  
 عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَجِيلٌ لَهُمُ الظِّبَابَتِ وَيُحَرِّمُ  
 عَلَيْهِمُ الْخَبِيبَتِ وَيَضْعُ عَنْهُمْ إِصْرَهُمْ  
 وَالْأَغْلَلَ الَّتِي كَانَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ فَالَّذِينَ اَمْنَأْيَهُ  
 وَعَرَزُوهُ وَنَصَرُوهُ وَاتَّبَعُوا النُّورَ الَّذِي أُنْزَلَ  
 مَعَهُ، اُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٦﴾

قُلْ يَكَانُهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ إِلَيْكُمْ

= like unto me” (Deut. xviii. 15): the only Prophet who brought a *Shari’at* like that of Moses was Muhammad Al-Muṣṭafā, and he came of the house of Ismā’il the brother of Isaac the father of Israel. In the reflex of the Gospel as now accepted by the Christians, Christ promised another Comforter (John xiv. 16): the Greek word *Paraclete* which the Christians interpret as referring to the Holy Spirit is by our Doctors taken to be *Pericyte*, which would be the Greek form of Ahmad. See Q. lxi. 6.

1128. *Aglāl*: plural of *gullūn*, a yoke, an iron collar. In the formalism and exclusiveness of the Jews there were many restrictions which were removed by Islam, a religion of freedom in the faith of Allah, of universality in the variety of races, languages, manners and customs.

1129. *Light which is sent down with him*: the words are “with him”, not “to him”, emphasizing the fact that the Light which he brought illuminates every one who has the privilege of joining his great and universal Fellowship.

1130. *Falāḥ* = prosperity in its general sense as well as in its spiritual sense. In the general sense it means that right conduct is the only door to happiness and well-being. In the spiritual sense it means that Faith and its fruits (right conduct) are the only gates to salvation.

1131. Our attention having been directed to various prophets, who were sent with missions to their several peoples, and in each of whose careers there is some pre-figuration of the life of the last and greatest of them, we are now asked to listen to the proclamation of Muhammad’s universal mission. We contemplate no longer, after this, =

Of Allah, to Whom belongeth  
The dominion of the heavens  
And the earth: there is no god  
But He: it is He that giveth  
Both life and death. So believe  
In Allah and His Messenger.  
The unlettered Prophet,<sup>1132</sup>  
Who believeth in Allah  
And His Words: follow him  
That (so) ye may be guided."

جَيْعَانَ الَّذِي لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ  
لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ فَقَادِمُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ  
الَّتِي أَلْمَى الَّذِي يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ  
وَكَلَمَتِهِ وَأَتَيْهُ عَلَيْكُمْ  
تَهْدِيُوكُمْ

١٦٤

159. Of the people of Moses  
There is a section  
Who guide and do justice  
In the light of truth.

وَمِنْ قَوْمٍ مُوسَىٰ أُمَّةٌ يَهْدُونَ بِالْحَقِّ وَيَهْدَى  
يَعْدُلُونَ

١٦٥

160. We divided them into twelve  
Tribes<sup>1133</sup>  
Or nations. We directed  
Moses by inspiration,  
When his (thirsty) people asked  
Him for Water: "Strike the rock  
With thy staff": out of it  
There gushed forth twelve springs:

وَقَطَعْنَاهُمْ أَثْنَى عَشَرَةَ أَسْبَاطًا أَمْمًا وَأَوْجَيْنَا  
إِلَى مُوسَىٰ إِذَا سَأَلَنَاهُ فَوْمَهُ أَنِ اصْرِبْ  
عَصَالَ الْجَرَ فَابْجَسْتَ مِنْهُ  
أَثْنَى عَشَرَةَ عَيْنًا فَدَعَلَمَ كُلُّ أَنْسَى  
مَشْرِبَهُمْ وَظَلَّلَنَا عَلَيْهِمُ الْغَمْمَ وَأَزَّنَا

= partial truths. It is not now a question of saving Israel from the bondage of Egypt, nor teaching Midian the ethics of business, nor reclaiming the people of Lot from sexual sin or Thamud from the sin of oppression in power, or 'Ad from arrogance and ancestor-worship. Now are set forth plainly the issues of Life and Death, the Message of Allah, the One Universal God to all mankind.

1132. "Unlettered," as applied to the Prophet here and in verse 157 above, has three special significations. (1) He was not versed in human learning; yet he was full of the highest wisdom, and had a most wonderful knowledge of the previous Scriptures. This was a proof of his inspiration. It was a miracle of the highest kind, a "Sign", which every one could test then, and every one can test now. (2) All organised human knowledge tends to be crystallized, to acquire a partial bias or flavour of some "school" of thought. The highest Teacher had to be free from any such taint, just as a clean slate is necessary if a perfectly clear and bold message has to be written on it. (3) In iii. 20 and lxii. 2, the epithet is applied to the Pagan Arabs, because, before the advent of Islam, they were unlearned.

1133. We now come to some incidents in Jewish history, which have been referred to in ii. 57-60. Here they have special reference to their bearing on the times when early Islam was preached. The Twelve Tribes and the parable drawn from them have been explained in n. 73 to ii. 60.

Each group knew its own place  
For water. We gave them  
The shade of clouds, and sent  
Down to them manna and quails,  
(Saying): "Eat of the good things  
We have provided for you":  
(But they rebelled); to Us  
They did no harm, but  
They harmed their own souls.<sup>1134</sup>

161. And remember it was  
Said to them:  
"Dwell in this town  
And eat<sup>1135</sup> therein as ye wish,  
But say forgive (us)  
And enter the gate  
In a posture of humility:  
We shall forgive you  
Your faults; We shall increase  
(The portion of) those who do  
good."<sup>1136</sup>
162. But the transgressors among them  
Changed the word from that  
Which had been given them  
So we sent on them  
A plague from heaven.  
For that they repeatedly  
transgressed.<sup>1136</sup>

## SECTION 21.

163. Ask them concerning the town  
Standing close by the sea.

عَلَيْهِمُ الْمَنْ وَالسَّلَوَى كُلُّاً مِنْ طِبِّنَتْ  
مَارِزَقَتْ كُلُّهُ وَمَا ظَلَمُونَا وَلَكِنْ  
كَانُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ ﴿١٦٣﴾

وَإِذْ قِيلَ لَهُمْ أَسْكُنُوهُنْدِهِ الْقَرْبَةَ وَكُلُّا  
مِنْهَا حَيْثُ شِئْتُمْ وَقُولُوا حَظَّةٌ وَادْخُلُوا  
الْبَابَ سُجْدًا لَغَفْرَانَكُمْ خَطِيَّتِهِ كُلُّهُ  
سَأَزِيدُ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿١٦٤﴾

فَبَدَلَ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مِنْهُمْ قَوْلًا غَيْرَ الَّذِي  
قِيلَ لَهُمْ فَأَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ رِجْزَاتِ  
السَّكَاءِ بِمَا كَانُوا يَظْلِمُونَ ﴿١٦٥﴾

وَسَأَلَنَّهُمْ عَنِ الْقَرْبَةِ الَّتِي كَانَتْ حَاضِرَةً

1134. Cf. ii. 57 and n. 71.

1135. As in vii. 19, we may construe "eat" here to mean not only eating literally, but enjoying the good things of life.

1136. Cf. ii. 58-59, and n. 72. The story is here told by way of parable for the times of Islam. Hence we have a few verbal changes: e.g., "dwell in this town" instead of "enter this town." etc.

Behold! they transgressed  
In the matter of the Sabbath,<sup>1137</sup>  
For on the day of their Sabbath  
Their fish did come to them,  
Openly (holding up their heads.)  
But on the day they had  
No Sabbath, they came not:  
Thus did We make a trial  
Of them, for they were  
Given to transgression.

164. When some of them said:  
“Why do ye preach  
To a people whom Allah  
Will destroy or visit  
With a terrible punishment?” –<sup>1138</sup>  
Said the preachers: “To discharge  
Our duty to your Lord  
And perchance they may fear Him.”
165. When they disregarded the warnings  
That had been given them,  
We rescued those who forbade  
Evil; but We visited  
The wrong-doers with a  
Grievous punishment, because  
They were given to transgression.
166. When in their insolence  
They transgressed (all) prohibitions,

البَخْرِ إِذْ يَعْدُونَ فِي السَّبْتِ إِذَا تَأْتِيهِمْ  
جِئْتَهُمْ يَوْمَ سَبْتِهِمْ شَرَّعًا وَيَوْمَ  
لَا يَسْتِرُونَ لَا تَأْتِيهِمْ كَذَلِكَ بَلُوْهُمْ  
بِمَا كَانُوا يَفْسُدُونَ



وَإِذْ قَاتَ أَمَةً مِنْهُمْ لَمْ يَعْظُمُوا قَوْمًا إِلَّا مُهْلِكُهُمْ  
أَوْ مُعَذِّبُهُمْ عَذَابًا شَدِيدًا فَإِذَا لَمْ يَعْذِرُهُمْ  
وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ



فَلَمَّا سُوِّمَ أَمَادُكَرُوا يَهُهُ أَبْجَيْنَا الَّذِينَ يَنْهَوْنَ  
عَنِ الشَّوْءِ وَأَخْذَنَا الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا بِعَذَابٍ بَشِّيرٍ  
بِمَا كَانُوا يَفْسُدُونَ



فَلَمَّا عَتَّأْنَ مَاهُوْأَعْنَهُ قُلْنَا لَهُمْ كُوْنُوا قَرَدَةً

1137. Cf. ii. 65 and n. 79. Fishing, like every other activity, was prohibited to Israel on the Sabbath day. As this practice was usually observed, the fish used to come up with a sense of security to their water channels or pools openly on the Sabbath day, but not on other days when fishing was open. This was a great temptation to the law-breakers, which they could not resist. Some of their men of piety protested, but it had no effect. When their transgressions, which we may suppose, extended to other commandments, passed beyond bounds, the punishment came.

1138. There are always people who wonder, no doubt sincerely, what good it is to preach to the wicked. The answer is given to them here: (1) every man who sees evil must speak out against it; it is his duty and responsibility to Allah; (2) there is always a chance that the warning may have effect and save a precious soul. This passage has a special meaning for the times when our Holy Prophet was preaching in Makkah, apparently without results. But it applies to all times.

We said to them:  
“Be ye apes,  
Despised and rejected.”<sup>1139</sup>

167. Behold! thy Lord did declare<sup>1140</sup>  
That He would send  
Against them, to the Day  
Of Judgment, those who would  
Afflict them with grievous  
Chastisement. Thy Lord is quick  
In retribution, but He is also  
Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.
168. We broke them up  
Into sections on this earth.<sup>1141</sup>  
There are among them some  
That are the righteous, and some  
That are the opposite.  
We have tried them  
With both prosperity and adversity:  
In order that they  
Might turn (to Us).
169. After them succeeded  
An (evil) generation: they  
Inherited the Book, but  
They chose (for themselves)<sup>1142</sup>  
The vanities of this world,

## خَيْرِيَت

وَإِذْنَادَنَ رَبُّكَ لِيَتَعَنَّ عَلَيْهِمْ إِلَى يَوْمِ  
الْقِيَمَةِ مَن يَسُوءُهُمْ سُوءُ الْعَذَابِ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ  
لَسَرِيعُ الْعِقَابِ وَإِنَّهُ لَغَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ

وَقَطَعْنَاهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ أَمْمَاتِهِمْ  
الصَّالِحُونَ وَمِنْهُمْ دُونَ ذَلِكَ وَبِلَوْنَهُمْ  
بِالْخَسَنَاتِ وَالسَّيِّئَاتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ

فَخَلَفَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ خَلْفٌ وَرَثُوا الْكِتَابَ يَأْخُذُونَ  
عَرَضَ هَذَا الْأَدْنَى وَيَهُولُونَ سَيْقَرُ لَنَا وَإِنَّ يَأْتِهِمْ  
عَرَضٌ مِثْلُهُ يَأْخُذُوهُ الَّذِي يَوْمَ عَلَيْهِمْ مِيقَاتُ الْكِتَابِ

1139. Cf. ii. 65, n. 79.

1140. See Deut. xi. 28: “A curse if ye will not obey the commandments of the Lord your God but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day”: also Deut. xxviii. 49; “The Lord shall bring a nation against thee from afar, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flieth: a nation whose tongue thou shalt not understand”; and many other passages.

1141. The dispersal of the Jews is a great fact in the world's history. Nor has their persecution ended yet, nor is it likely to end as far as we can foresee.

1142. Merely inheriting a Book, or doing lip service to it, does not make a nation righteous. If they succumb to the temptations of the world, their hypocrisy becomes all the more glaring. “High finance” is one of these temptations. Cf. also ii. 80: “the Fire shall not touch us except for a few numbered days”: and ii. 88, about their blasphemous self-sufficiency.

Saying (for excuse): “(Everything) Will be forgiven us.”  
 (Even so), if similar vanities Came their way, they would (Again) seize them.  
 Was not the Covenant<sup>1143</sup> Of the Book taken from them, That they would not Ascribe to Allah anything But the truth? And they Study what is in the Book. But best for the righteous Is the Home in the Hereafter. Will ye not understand?

170. As to those who hold fast By the Book and establish Regular Prayer,—never Shall we suffer the reward Of the righteous to perish.
171. When We raised the Mount Over them, as if it had been A canopy, and they thought It was going to fall on them (We said): “Hold firmly<sup>1144</sup> To what We have given you, And bring (ever) to remembrance What is therein;<sup>1145</sup> Perchance ye may fear Allah”.

## SECTION 22.

172. When thy Lord drew forth<sup>1146</sup> From the Children of Adam—

أَن لَا يَقُولُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ إِلَّا الْحَقُّ وَدَرَسُوا مَا فِيهِ  
 وَالدَّارُ الْآخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ لِلَّذِينَ  
 يَتَّقُونَ أَفَلَا يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٣٦﴾

وَالَّذِينَ يُمْسِكُونَ بِالْكِتَبِ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ  
 إِنَّا لَا نُنْصِعُ أَغْرِيَ الظَّالِمِينَ

وَإِذْ نَنْقَنَّ الْجَبَلَ فَوْقَهُمْ كَانَهُ طَلَةٌ وَظَنُوا أَنَّهُ  
 وَاقِعٌ بَيْنَ هُنُودَ أَمَاءَ اتَّبَعْتُمْ يَقْوَةً وَإِذْ كُرُوا مَا فِيهِ  
 لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقَوْنَ ﴿٣٧﴾

وَإِذْ أَخَذَ رَبُّكَ مِنْ بَنِي آدَمَ مِنْ ظُهُورِهِ ذِرَّتْهُمْ

1143. Cf. Exod. xix. 5-8; xxiv. 3; xxxiv. 27; and many other passages.

1144. Cf. ii. 63 and n.

1145. *Therein* = in the Book or Revelation, in “what We have given you.”

1146. This passage has led to differences of opinion in interpretation. According to the dominant opinion of commentators each individual in the posterity of Adam had a separate existence from the time of Adam, and a Covenant was taken from all of them. =

From their loins—  
Their descendants, and made them  
Testify concerning themselves,  
(saying):

“Am I not your Lord  
(Who cherishes and sustains you)?”—  
They said: “Yea!  
We do testify!”<sup>1147</sup> (This), lest  
Ye should say on the Day  
Of Judgment: “Of this we  
Were never mindful”:

173. Or lest ye should say:  
“Our fathers before us  
Took false gods,  
But we are (their) descendants  
After them: wilt Thou then  
Destroy us because of the deeds  
Of men who followed falsehood”<sup>1148</sup>

174. Thus do We explain  
The Signs in detail;

وَأَشْهِدُهُمْ عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمُ الْأَسْتَرِيْكُمْ قَالُوا  
بِلَّ شَهِيْدًا ثَانٍ تَقُولُوا يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ إِنَّا كُنَّا  
عَنْ هَذَا غَافِلِيْنَ

أَوْقَنُوكُمْ أَنَّا شَرِكَّا بِآبَاؤُنَا مِنْ قَبْلِ وَكَنَادِيرِهِ  
مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ أَفَهِلُكُمْ كُنَّا مَا فَعَلَ الْمُبْطَلُونَ

وَكَذَلِكَ نَفْصِلُ الْآيَتِ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ

= which is binding accordingly on each individual. The words in the text refer to the descendants of the Children of Adam, i.e., to all humanity, born or unborn, without any limit of time. Adam's seed carries on the existence of Adam and succeeds to his spiritual heritage. Humanity has been given by Allah certain powers and faculties, whose possession creates on our side special spiritual obligations which we must faithfully discharge: see v. l. and n. 682. These obligations may from a legal point of view be considered as arising from implied Covenants. In the preceding verse (vii 171) a reference was made to the implied Covenant of the Jewish nation. Now we consider the implied Covenant of the whole of humanity, for the Holy Prophet's mission was world-wide.

1147. The Covenant is completed in this way. We acknowledge that Allah is our Creator, Cherisher, and Sustainer: therefore we acknowledge our duty to Him: when we so testify concerning ourselves, the obligation is as it were assumed by us; for it follows from our very nature when it is pure and uncorrupted.

1148. The latent faculties in man are enough to teach him the distinction between good and evil, to warn him of the dangers that beset his life. But to awaken and stimulate them, a personal appeal is made to each individual through the “still small voice” within him. This in its uncorrupted state acknowledges the truth and, as it were, swears its Covenant with Allah. There is, therefore, no excuse for any individual to say, either (1) that he was unmindful, or (2) that he should not be punished for the sins of his fathers, because his punishment (if any) comes from his personal responsibility and is for his own rejection of faith and the higher spiritual influences.

And perchance they may turn  
(Unto Us).

175. Relate to them the story<sup>1149</sup>  
Of the man to whom  
We sent Our Signs,  
But he passed them by:  
So Satan followed him up,  
And he went astray.

176. If it had been Our Will,  
We should have elevated him  
With Our Signs: but he  
Inclined to the earth,  
And followed his own vain

desires.<sup>1150</sup>

His similitude is that  
Of a dog: if you attack  
Him, he lolls out his tongue,  
Or if you leave him alone,  
He (still) lolls out his tongue.<sup>1151</sup>  
That is the similitude  
Of those who reject Our Signs;  
So relate the story;  
Perchance they may reflect.

وَأَتْلُ عَلَيْهِمْ بِنَا الَّذِي أَتَيْنَاهُ إِيَّنَا فَانْسَأَخَ  
مِنْهَا فَاتَّبَعَهُ الشَّيْطَنُ فَكَانَ  
مِنَ الْفَارِينَ

وَلَوْشَنَّا لِرَفْقَتِهِ هَاهُولَنَّكَهُ أَخْلَدَ  
إِلَى الْأَرْضِ وَاتَّبَعَ هُونَهُ فَشَلَهُ كَثُنَّ  
الْكَلْبِ إِنْ تَحْمِلْ عَلَيْهِ يَلْهَثُ  
أَوْ تَرْكَهُ يَلْهَثُ ذَلِكَ مَثَلُ الْقَوْمِ الَّذِينَ  
كَذَّبُوا إِنَّا يَنْهَا فَأَصْصِنَ الْقَصَصَ  
لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ

1149. Commentators differ whether this story or parable refers to a particular individual, and if so, to whom. The story of Balaam the seer, who was called out by Israel's enemies to curse Israel, but who blessed Israel instead, (Num. xxii., xxiii., xxiv.) is quite different. It is better to take the parable in general sense. There are men, of talents and position, to whom great opportunities of spiritual insight come, but they perversely pass them by. Satan sees his opportunity and catches them up. Instead of rising higher in the spiritual world, their selfish and worldly desires and ambitions pull them down, and they are lost.

1150. Notice the contrast between the exalted spiritual honours which they would have received from Allah if they had followed His Will, and the earthly desires which eventually bring them low to the position of beasts and worse.

1151. The dog, especially in the hot weather, lolls out his tongue, whether he is attacked and pursued and is tired, or he is left alone. It is part of his nature to slobber. So with the man who rejects Allah. Whether he is warned or left alone, he continues to throw out his dirty saliva. The injury he will do will be to his own soul. But there may be infection in his evil example. So we must protect others. And we must never give up hope of his own amendment. So we must continue to warn him and make him think.

177. Evil as the example are  
People who reject Our Signs  
And wrong their own souls.
178. Whom Allah doth guide,—  
He is on the right path:  
Whom He rejects from His  
guidance.—  
Such are the persons who lose!<sup>1152</sup>
179. Many are the Jinns and men  
We have made for Hell:  
They have hearts wherewith they  
Understand not, eyes wherewith<sup>1153</sup>  
They see not, and ears wherewith  
They hear not. They are  
Like cattle,—nay more  
Misguided: for they  
Are heedless (of warning).
180. The most beautiful names<sup>1154</sup>  
Belong to Allah:  
So call on him by them;  
But shun such men as  
Distort His names:  
For what they do, they will  
Soon be requited.
181. Of those We have created  
Are people who direct

سَاءَ مَثَلًا الْقَوْمُ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا إِنَّا نَعْلَمُ  
وَأَنفُسَهُمْ كَانُوا يَظْلَمُونَ

مَنْ يَهْدِ اللَّهُ فَهُوَ الْمُهَدِّدِيٌّ وَمَنْ يُضْلِلُ  
فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ

وَلَقَدْ ذَرَنَا لِجَهَنَّمَ كَثِيرًا مِنَ الْجِنِّينَ وَالْإِنْسِينَ  
لَهُمْ قُلُوبٌ لَا يَفْقَهُونَ بِهَا وَلَهُمْ أَعْيُنٌ لَا يَبْصِرُونَ بِهَا  
وَلَهُمْ أَذْنَانٌ لَا يَسْمَعُونَ بِهَا أُولَئِكَ كَالْأَنْفَلِينَ بَلْ هُمْ  
أَصَمٌ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْغَافِلُونَ

وَلَلَّهُ أَكْثَرُ الْأَسْمَاءِ الْمُحْسَنَى فَادْعُوهُ بِهَا وَذَرُوا الَّذِينَ  
يُنْجِدُونَ فِي أَسْمَائِهِ سَيَجْزَوْنَ مَا كَانُوا  
يَعْمَلُونَ

وَمَنْ خَلَقَنَا مَثَلَهُ يَهْدُونَ بِالْحَقِّ وَيَهُ

1152. Those who reject Allah will be deprived of Allah's grace and guidance. His Mercy is always open for sincere repentance. But with each step downwards, they go lower and lower, until they perish.

1153. Cf. ii. 18. Though they have apparently all the faculties of reason and perception, they have so deadened them that those faculties do not work, and they go headlong into Hell. They are, as it were, made for Hell.

1154. As we contemplate Allah's nature, we can use the most beautiful names to express His attributes. There are hundreds of such attributes. In the opening Sūra, we have these indicated in a few comprehensive words, such as *Rahmān* (most Gracious), *Rahim* (most Merciful), *Rabb-ul-'ālamīn* (Cherisher and Sustainer of the worlds). Our bringing such names to remembrance is part of our Prayer and Praise. But we must not associate with people who use Allah's names profanely, or so as to suggest anything derogatory to His dignity or His unity. Cf. xvii. 110.

(Others) with truth,  
And dispense justice therewith.

## SECTION 23.

182. Those who reject Our Signs,  
We will lead them step by step  
To ruin while they know not:<sup>1154-A</sup>
183. Respite will I grant  
Unto them: for My scheme  
Is strong (and unfailing).
184. Do they not reflect?  
Their Companion is not seized<sup>1155</sup>  
With madness: he is but  
A perspicuous warner.<sup>1156</sup>
185. Do they see nothing  
In the kingdom of the heavens  
And the earth and all  
That Allah hath created?<sup>1157</sup>  
(Do they not see) that  
It may well be that  
Their term is nigh  
Drawing to an end?

يَعْلُوْنَ

وَالَّذِينَ كَذَّبُواْ بِآيَاتِنَا سَنَسْتَدِرُ جَهَنَّمَ مِنْ حَيْثُ

لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

وَأَتَنَا لَهُمْ إِذْ كَيْدِي مَتَّيْنَ

أَوْلَمْ يَنْفَكِرُواْ مَا يَصْحِحُونَ مِنْ حِجَّةَ

إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا نَذِيرٌ مُّبِينٌ

أَوْلَئِنْظُرُواْ فِي مَلْكُوتِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ  
وَمَا حَلَقَ اللَّهُ مِنْ شَيْءٍ وَأَنْ عَسَى أَنْ يَكُونَ قَدْ أَقْرَبَ

أَجَلَهُمْ فِيَّ حَدِيثٍ بَعْدَهُ يَوْمَيْنَ

1154-A. See also lxviii. 44 and n. 5626.

1155. *Their companion*, i.e., the Holy Prophet, who lived with and amongst them. He was accused of madness because he behaved differently from them. He had no selfish ambitions; he was always true, in thought, word, and deed: he was kind and considerate to the weak, and was not dazzled by worldly power or wealth or position: he was undeterred by fear of the strong, the mockery of the cynics, the bitterness of the evil, or the indifference of the heedless. That is why he stood out boldly against wrong: he did not mince his words, and his warnings were not mealy-mouthed.

1156. *Mubin*; perspicuous. The reason why I have not used a simpler word, such as "plain" or "clear" is explained in n. 716 to v. 15. Al-Mustafa's sermons were not polite reminders, with an eye to the flattery of weaknesses in high places or national vanities or crowd passions. They brought out every foible into the glare of light, by a fiery eloquence fed by inspiration from Allah.

1157. An appeal to Allah's most wonderful universe should at once convince a thinking mind of man's nothingness, and Allah's power, glory, and goodness. Man's term here is fleeting. If he is not warned by the great Signs, and the Messages which call his attention to them, is he capable of any faith at all?

In what Message after this  
Will they then believe?

186. To such as Allah rejects  
From His guidance, there can be  
No guide: He will  
Leave them in their trespasses,  
Wandering in distraction.<sup>1158</sup>
187. They ask thee about  
The (final) Hour—when  
Will be its appointed time?  
Say: “The knowledge thereof  
Is with my Lord (alone):  
None but He can reveal  
As to when it will occur.”<sup>1159</sup>  
Heavy were its burden through  
The heavens and the earth.  
Only, all of a sudden  
Will it come to you.”  
They ask thee as if thou  
Wert eager in search thereof:<sup>1160</sup>  
Say: “The knowledge thereof  
Is with Allah (alone),  
But most men know not.”
188. Say: “I have no power  
Over any good or harm  
To myself except as Allah

مَنْ يُضْلِلَ اللَّهُ فَلَا هَادِي لَهُ وَيَذْرُهُمْ فِي طُغْيَتِهِمْ

يَعْمَلُونَ

يَسْأَلُوكُمْ عَنِ السَّاعَةِ أَيَانَ مُرْسَنَهَا قُلْ إِنَّمَا عِلْمُهَا  
عِنْدَ رَبِّهِ لَا يُحِلُّ لَهَا الْوَقْتُ إِلَّا هُوَ نَهَلَتْ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ  
وَالْأَرْضِ لَا تَأْتِكُمْ إِلَّا بِغَثَّةٍ يَسْأَلُوكُمْ كَانَ ذَكَرُ حَفْظِ  
عَنْهَا قُلْ إِنَّمَا عِلْمُهَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ  
لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

قُلْ لَا أَمْلِكُ لِنَفْسِي نَفَعًا وَلَا ضَرًا إِلَّا مَا شَاءَ اللَّهُ

1158. Cf. ii. 15. If Allah's light is removed, the best of them can only wander hither and thither, like blind men, in distraction.

1159. The fact of its coming is a certainty: the exact time appointed for it is not revealed by Allah. If it were it would be so momentous as to disturb our thoughts and life. It would be a heavy burden to us. Our duty is to be prepared for it at all times. It will come when we least expect it. In the present Gospels Jesus says the same thing: he does not know the Hour, but it will come suddenly. “But of that day and that Hour knoweth no man, no, not the angles which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is.” (Mark. xiii. 32-33).

1160. *Hafi* is usually construed to mean; “eager or anxious in search of”: the preposition following here is ‘an = concerning, about. Some commentators (including Rāhib) understand it in this passage to mean “well-acquainted.” In xix. 47, with the preposition *bi* following it, it signifies “well-disposed to”, favourable to, good to, kind to.”

Willett. If I had knowledge  
Of the unseen, I should have  
Multiplied all good, and no evil  
Should have touched me:  
I am but a warner,  
And a bringer of glad tidings  
To those who have faith.”<sup>1161</sup>

## SECTION 24.

189. It is He Who created  
You from a single person,  
And made his mate  
Of like nature,<sup>1162</sup> in order  
That he might dwell with her  
(In love). When they are  
United, she bears a light  
Burden and carries it about  
(Unnoticed). When she grows  
Heavy, they both pray<sup>1163</sup>  
To Allah their Lord (saying):  
“If Thou givest us  
A goodly child,<sup>1164</sup>  
We vow we shall  
(Ever) be grateful.”

وَلَوْكُنْتُ أَغْلَمُ الْعَيْبَ لَا سَتَّكَنْتُ  
مِنَ الْخَيْرِ وَمَا مَسَّنِيَ السُّوءُ إِنَّا إِلَّا نَذِيرٌ  
وَبَشِّرُ لِقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ

﴿ هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَجَدَرَ وَجَعَلَ  
مِنْهَا رُوْجَهًا لِيُسْكُنَ إِلَيْهَا فَلَمَّا تَقْسَمَنَا  
حَمَلَتْ حَمَلًا حَفِيْنَاهَا فَمَرَّتْ بِهِ فَلَمَّا آتَتْ  
دُعَوْا اللَّهَ رَبِّهِمَا لِيَنْ عَاتَّنَا صَلِحًا نَكُونُونَ  
مِنَ الشَّاكِرِينَ ﴾

1161. A warner to all, and a bringer of glad tidings to those who have faith, because they will profit by the glad tidings. As every one is invited to faith, the glad tidings are offered to all, but they are not necessarily accepted by all.

1162. Cf. iv. 1, and n. 504, where the construction is explained.

1163. The mystery of the physical birth of man, as it affects the father and the mother, only touches the imagination of the parents in the later stages when the child is yet unborn and yet the life stirs within the body of the expectant mother. The coming of the new life is a solemn thing, and is fraught with much hope as well as much unknown risk to the mother herself. The parents in their anxiety turn to Allah. If this feeling of solemnity, hope, and looking towards Allah were maintained after birth, all would be well for the parents as well as for the rising generation. But the attitude changes, as the verses following show.

1164. Goodly: *ṣalih*: includes the following ideas: sound in body and mind; healthy; righteous; of good moral disposition.

190. But when He giveth them  
A goodly child, they ascribe<sup>١١٦٥</sup>  
To others a share in the gift  
They have received:  
But Allah is exalted  
High above the partners  
They ascribe to Him.
191. Do they indeed ascribe  
To Him as partners things  
That can create nothing,  
But are themselves created?
192. No aid can they give them,  
Nor can they aid themselves!
193. If ye call them to guidance,  
They will not obey:  
For you it is the same  
Whether ye call them  
Or ye keep silent.<sup>١١٦٦</sup>
194. Verily those whom ye  
Call upon besides Allah  
Are servants like unto you:<sup>١١٦٧</sup>  
Call upon them, and let them  
Listen to your prayer,  
If ye are (indeed) truthful!
195. Have they feet to walk with?

فَلَمَّا آتَهُمَا صِلْحًا جَعَلَ لَهُ شَرِكَاءَ فِيمَا  
أَتَهُمَا فَتَعَنَّلَ اللَّهُ عَمَّا يُشَرِّكُونَ

١١٦٥ إِنَّ شَرِكَوْنَ مَا لَا يَحْلُقُ سَيِّئًا وَهُمْ يُخْلُقُونَ

وَلَا يَسْتَطِعُونَ لَهُمْ نَصْرًا وَلَا أَنْفَسُهُمْ  
يَنْصُرُونَ

وَإِنْ تَدْعُهُمْ إِلَى الْهُدَىٰ لَا يَسْتَعْوِذُونَ سَوَاءٌ عَلَيْكُمْ  
أَدْعُوكُمُوهُمْ أَمْ أَنْتَ صَانِعُهُمْ

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ عِبَادٌ  
أَمْثَالُكُمْ فَإِذَا دَعُوكُمْ فَلَيَسْتَجِبُوا  
لَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ

أَهُمْ أَرْجُلٌ يَمْشُونَ بِهَا أَمْ هُمْ أَنْتَ دِيْنَ بَطَشُونَ

١١٦٥. When the child is born, the parents forget that it is a precious gift of Allah, -a miracle of Creation, which should lift their minds up to the higher things of Allah. Instead, their gradual familiarity with the new life makes them connect it with many superstitious ideas or rites and ceremonies, or they take it as a matter of course, as a little plaything of the material world. This leads to idolatry or false worship, or the setting up of false standards, in derogation of the dignity of Allah.

١١٦٦. When false worship takes root, the teacher of Truth finds much to discourage him. As far as *he* is concerned, it seems as if he has produced no effect. Yet his duty is to continue his work, in the spirit of verse 199 below, forgiving all opposition, teaching what is right, and not joining the ignorant in their attitude of doubt and indecision.

١١٦٧. False gods, whether idols or deified men, or ideas and superstitions, have no existence of their own, independent of Allah's creation. They are Allah's creatures, and like servants are subject to His authority. Deified men are not real men, but false ideas of men. They cannot help themselves: how can they help others?

Or hands to lay hold with?  
Or eyes to see with?  
Or ears to hear with?  
Say: "Call your 'god-partners',<sup>1168</sup>  
Scheme (your worst) against me,  
And give me no respite!"

196. "For my Protector is Allah,  
Who revealed the Book,  
(From time to time),  
And He will  
Befriend the righteous.

197. "But those ye call upon  
Besides Him, are unable  
To help you, and indeed  
To help themselves."

198. If thou callest them  
To guidance, they hear not.  
Thou wilt see them  
Looking at thee, but  
They see not."<sup>1169</sup>

199. Hold to forgiveness;  
Command what is right;  
But turn away from the ignorant.<sup>1170</sup>

بِهَا أَفْلَاهُمْ أَعْيُنٌ يُبَصِّرُونَ بِهَا مَأْمَلُهُمْ كَذَابٌ

يَسْمَعُونَ بِهَا قُلْ أَدْعُوا شُرَكَاءَ كُمْ كُمْ كَيْدُونَ

فَلَا يُنْظَرُونَ

إِنَّ وَلِيَّ اللَّهُ الَّذِي نَزَّلَ الْكِتَابَ وَهُوَ تَوَلِّ

الصَّالِحِينَ

وَالَّذِينَ تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِنِي، لَا يَسْتَطِعُونَ

نَصْرَكُمْ وَلَا أَنْفَسَهُمْ يَنْصُرُونَ

وَإِنْ تَدْعُهُمْ إِلَى الْهُدَى لَا يَسْمَعُونَ وَرَأْنَهُمْ

يُنْظَرُونَ إِلَيْكَ وَهُمْ لَا يُبَصِّرُونَ

خُذِ الْمَغْفِرَةَ مِنْ بِالْعُرْفِ وَأَغْرِضْ

عَنِ الْجَهَلِينَ

1168. Here is a test and a challenge. If the false gods had any power or even existence, collect them all together, and, says the Prophet of Allah. "Let them do their worst against me." They cannot: because the whole thing is based on a superstition and a chimera.

1169. The beauty and righteousness of Al-Muṣṭafa's life were acknowledged on all hands, until he received the mission to preach and to fight against evil. What happened then? Evil erected barricades for itself. It had eyes, but it refused to see. It had ears, but it refused to hear. It had intelligence, but it blocked up its channels of understanding. Even now, after Fourteen centuries, a life of unexampled purity, probity, justice, and righteousness is seen in false lights by blind detractors!

1170. Allah comforts the Prophet and directs his mind to three precepts: (1) to forgive injuries, insults, and persecution; (2) to continue to declare the faith that was in him, and not only to declare it, but to act up to it in all his dealings with friends and foes; (3) to pay no attention to ignorant fools, who raised doubts or difficulties, hurled taunts or reproaches, or devised plots to defeat the truth: they were to be ignored and passed by, not to be engaged in fights and fruitless controversies, or conciliated by compromises.

200. If a suggestion from Satan  
Assail thy (mind),<sup>1171</sup>  
Seek refuge with Allah;  
For He heareth and knoweth  
(All things).
201. Those who fear Allah,  
When a thought of evil  
From Satan assaults them,  
Bring Allah to remembrance,  
When lo! they see (aright)!<sup>1172</sup>
202. But their brethren (the evil ones)<sup>1173</sup>  
Plunge them deeper into error,  
And never relax (their efforts).
203. If thou bring them not  
A revelation,<sup>1174</sup> they say:  
“Why hast thou not  
Got it together?”  
Say: “I but follow  
What is revealed to me  
From my Lord:

وَإِمَّا يَنْزَلَنَّكَ مِنَ الشَّيْطَنِ نَزَّلْ فَأَسْتَعِدُ

بِاللَّهِ إِنَّمَا سَمِيعٌ عَلَيْهِ

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ أَتَقْوَى إِذَا مَسَّهُمْ طَغْيَانٍ  
مِّنَ الشَّيْطَنِ تَذَكَّرُوا فَإِذَا هُمْ مُبْصِرُونَ

وَإِخْوَانَهُمْ يَمْدُودُهُمْ فِي الْفَحْشَاءِ  
لَا يُفْصِرُونَ

وَإِذَا لَمْ تَأْتِهِمْ بِآيَةٍ قَالُوا إِنَّا لَا أَجْتِنَّهَا  
قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَتَيْتُكُمْ مَا يُوحَى إِلَيْكُمْ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ هَذَا بَصَارَتِ  
مِنْ رَّبِّكُمْ وَهُدَى وَرَحْمَةٌ لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ

1171. Even a Prophet of Allah is but human. He might think that revenge or retaliation, or a little tactful silence when evil stalks abroad, or some compromise with ignorance, might be best for the cause. He is to reject such suggestions.

1172. Allah protects His own, as no one else can. He is the sure refuge-and the only one-for men of faith. If we are confused or angry, being blinded by this world, He will open our eyes.

1173. We go back to consider the ungodly, whom we left at verse 198, in order to be taught our behaviour towards evil. The forces of evil never relax their efforts to draw their "brethren" (those who go into their family) deeper and deeper into the mire of sin and destruction.

1174. "Ayat" here, I think, means specially an Ayat of the Holy Qur-ân. The infidels did not believe in revelation, and used to taunt the Holy Prophet, as much as to say that he used to put together words and promulgate them as revelation. The answer is contained in the sentence that follows. No human composition could contain the beauty, power, and spiritual insight of the Qur-ân. Without inspiration it is impossible to suppose that a man, with or without literary and philosophic training could produce such a book as the Qur-ân. Commentators of the Qur-ân, however, consider Ayah here to refer to miracle as the context seems to evidence.

This is (nothing but)  
Lights from your Lord,<sup>1175</sup>  
And Guidance, and Mercy,  
For any who have Faith."

204. When the Qur-ān is read,  
Listen to it with attention,  
And hold your peace:  
That ye may receive Mercy.
205. And do thou (O reader!)  
Bring thy Lord to remembrance  
In thy (very) soul,  
With humility and remember  
Without loudness in words,  
In the mornings and evenings;  
And be not thou  
Of those who are unheedful.
206. Those who are near<sup>1176</sup>  
To thy Lord, disdain not  
To worship Him:  
They glorify Him  
And prostrate before Him.<sup>1177</sup>

وَإِذَا قرئَ الْقُرْآنَ فَاسْتَمِعُوهُ  
وَأَنْصِتُوا لِلَّهِمَّ تَرْحُمُونَ

وَأَذْكُرْ رَبَّكَ فِي نَفْسِكَ تَضَرَّعًا وَخِيفَةً  
وَدُونَ الْجَهَرِ مِنَ الْقَوْلِ بِالْغُدُوِّ وَالآصَابِ  
وَلَا تَكُنْ مِنَ الْغَنَثِلِينَ

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ لَا يَسْتَكِنُونَ عَنْ عِبَادَتِهِ  
وَيُسَبِّحُونَهُ وَلَهُ يَسْجُدُونَ

1175. "Lights": eyes, faculty of spiritual insight. The revelation is for us (1) spiritual eyes, (2) guidance, and (3) mercy, (1) is the highest in degree: just as a blind man, if he is given eyes and the faculty of sight, is at once removed into an entirely new world, so those who can reach the stage of spiritual insight pass into and become citizens of a wholly new spiritual World, (2) is next in degree; the man of the world can act up to the teaching about right conduct and prepare for the Hereafter, (3) is the Mercy of Allah, free to every one, saint and sinner, who sincerely believes and puts his trust in Allah.

1176. The higher you are in spiritual attainment, the more is your desire and your opportunity to serve and worship your Lord and Cherisher and the Lord and Cherisher of all the worlds: and the greater is your pride in that service and that worship.

1177. At this stage a *Sajda* or prostration is indicated, as a sign of our humble acceptance of the privilege of serving and worshipping Allah,—a fitting close to Sura in which we are led, through a contemplation of the stories of the Messengers of Allah, to the meaning of revelation and its relation to our moral and spiritual progress.