

TAFSEER AS-SA'DI

JUZ' 1-3

تفسير السجدي
تيسير الكريم الرحمن في تفسير كلام المنان

'Abdur-Rahmân Nâsir as-Sa'di

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IN THE NAME OF

ALLAH

THE MOST GRACIOUS, THE MOST MERCIFUL



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Abdur-Rahmân Nâsir as-Sa'di

Translated by
Nasiruddin al-Khattab

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03.

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Pronunciation and Transliteration Chart



Arabic script	Pronunciation	Transliterated form
أ	short 'a', as in <i>cat</i>	a
آ — آي	longer 'a', as in <i>cab</i> (not as in <i>cake</i>)	â
ب	/b/ as in <i>bell</i> , <i>rubber</i> and <i>tab</i>	b
ت	/t/ as in <i>tap</i> , <i>mustard</i> and <i>sit</i>	t
ة	takes the sound of the preceding diacritical mark sometimes ending in h (when in pausal form): ah, ih or ooh; or atu(n), ati(n) or ata(n) when uninterrupted	h or t (when followed by another Arabic word)
ث	/th/ as in <i>thing</i> , <i>maths</i> and <i>wealth</i>	th
ج	/j/ as in <i>jam</i> , <i>ajar</i> and <i>age</i>	j
ح	a 'harsher' sound than the English initial /h/, and may occur medially and in word-final position as well	ħ
خ	as in <i>Bach</i> (in German); may occur initially and medially as well	kh
د	/d/ as in <i>do</i> , <i>muddy</i> and <i>red</i>	d
ذ	as in <i>this</i> , <i>father</i> and <i>smooth</i>	dh

Arabic script	Pronunciation	Trans-literated form
ر	/r/ as in <i>raw</i> , <i>arid</i> and <i>war</i> ; may also be a rolled 'r', as pronounced in Spanish	r
ز	/z/ as in <i>zoo</i> , <i>easy</i> and <i>gaze</i>	z
س	/s/ as in <i>so</i> , <i>messy</i> and <i>grass</i>	s
ش	as in <i>ship</i> , <i>ashes</i> and <i>rush</i>	sh
ص	no close equivalent in English, but may be approximated by pronouncing it as /sw/ or /s/ farther back in the mouth	ṣ
ض	no close equivalent in English, but may be approximated by pronouncing it as /d/ farther back in the mouth	ḍ
ط	no close equivalent in English, but may be approximated by pronouncing it as /t/ farther back in the mouth	ṭ
ظ	no close equivalent in English, but may be approximated by pronouncing 'the' farther back in the mouth	<u>dh</u>
ع	no close equivalent in English: a guttural sound in the back of the throat	ʿ
غ	no close equivalent in English, but may be closely approximated by pronouncing it like the French /r/ in 'rouge'	gh
ف	/f/ as in <i>fill</i> , <i>effort</i> and <i>muff</i>	f

Arabic script	Pronunciation	Transliterated form
ق	no close equivalent in English, but may be approximated by pronouncing it as /k/ farther back in the mouth	q
ك	/k/ as in <i>king</i> , <i>buckle</i> and <i>tack</i>	k
ل	/l/ as in <i>lap</i> , <i>halo</i> ; in the word <i>Allah</i> , it becomes velarized as in <i>ball</i>	l
م	/m/ as in <i>men</i> , <i>simple</i> and <i>ram</i>	m
ن	/n/ as in <i>net</i> , <i>ant</i> and <i>can</i>	n
هـ - ه - ح	/h/ as in <i>hat</i> ; unlike /h/ in English, in Arabic /h/ is pronounced in medial and word-final positions as well	h
و	as in <i>wet</i> and <i>away</i>	w
و	long 'u', as in <i>boot</i> and <i>too</i>	oo
ي	as in <i>yard</i> and <i>mayo</i>	y
ي	long 'e', as in <i>eat</i> , <i>beef</i> and <i>see</i>	ee
ء	glottal stop: may be closely approximated by pronouncing it like 't' in the Cockney English pronunciation of <i>butter</i> : <i>bu'er</i> , or the stop sound in <i>uh-oh!</i>	(omitted in initial position)

Diphthongs

Arabic script	Pronunciation	Trans-literated form
أَوْ، وَو	long 'o', as in <i>owe</i> , <i>boat</i> and <i>go</i>	au, aw
أَي، يِي	long 'a', as in <i>aid</i> , <i>rain</i> and <i>say</i>	ay, ai, ei

Diacritical marks (tashkeel)

Name of mark	Pronunciation	Trans-literated form
◌َ fathah	very short 'a' or schwa (unstressed vowel)	a
◌ِ kasrah	shorter version of ee or schwa (unstressed vowel)	i
◌ُ dammah	shorter version of oo	u
◌ّ shaddah	a doubled consonant is stressed in the word, and the length of the sound is also doubled	double letter
◌ْ sukoon	no vowel sound between consonants or at the end of a word	absence of vowel



Arabic honorific symbols



- | | | |
|-----|---------------------------------------|--|
| (ﷲ) | <i>Subhānahu wa Ta'ālā</i> | The Exalted |
| (ﷺ) | <i>ṣalla Allāhu 'alayhi wa sallam</i> | Blessings and peace be upon him |
| (ﷺ) | <i>'alayhi as-salām</i> | May peace be upon him |
| (ﷺ) | <i>raḍiya Allāhu 'anhu</i> | May Allah be pleased with him |
| (ﷺ) | <i>raḍiya Allāhu 'anhā</i> | May Allah be pleased with her |
| (ﷺ) | <i>raḍiya Allāhu 'anhumā</i> | May Allah be pleased with both of them |
| (ﷺ) | <i>raḍiya Allāhu 'anhum</i> | May Allah be pleased with all of them |
| (ﷺ) | <i>raḍiya Allāhu 'anhunna</i> | May Allah be pleased with all of them (females only) |



Hadith grade terms



Sound: *ṣaḥeḥ*

Reliable: *ḥasan*

Weak: *ḍa'eef*

Odd: *ghareeb*

Authentic: includes sound, reliable, or any grade in between

Acceptable: *sakat 'anhu*; the grader of the hadith did not comment on it, meaning that he found nothing unacceptable in it



About the Word ‘*Lord*’



The word *lord* in English has several related meanings. The original meaning is ‘master’ or ‘ruler’, and in this sense it is often used to refer to human beings: ‘the lord of the mansion’ or ‘Lord So-and-So’ (in the United Kingdom, for example). The word *Lord* with a capital L is used in the lexicon of Islam to refer to the One and Only God — Allah. In Islam, there is no ambiguity about the meaning of this word. While it is true that one may occasionally use the word *lord* (whether capitalized or not) to refer to a human being, in Islamic discourse the reference of this term is always clear from the context. Whereas for Christians, Hindus and other polytheists, the word *Lord* with a capital L may refer to Allah, to Jesus or to some imagined deity, for Muslims, there can be no plurality of meaning. Allah alone is the Lord, and the Lord is Allah — not Jesus, not Rama, not any other being.

The Editor



Publisher's Note



All praise and thanks belong to Allah alone, the One, the Almighty, and All-Merciful. Blessings and peace be upon Prophet Muhammad, the last of His messengers and prophets, and upon his family, his Companions, and all those who follow in his footsteps until the end of time.

It is quite disheartening that even though many Muslims today recite the Qur'an regularly, its application in their daily lives is almost non-existent. It all comes down to the fact that the Qur'an needs to be read with translation and explanation so that the context of each verse becomes clear as well as the different ways it applies to one's daily routine.

This comprehensive ten-volume exegesis of the Qur'an, beautifully penned by Imam Abdur-Rahmân Nâsir as-Sa'di and translated by Nasiruddin al-Khattab, attempts to do just that: make the meanings and explanation of the Qur'an easy to understand for the English-language readers and give them take-home lessons from the incidents mentioned in it. May Allah accept the efforts of all those who contributed to the production of this book, and may it be acceptable to Him, *âmeen*.

Muhammad Abdul Mohsin al-Tuwaijri
Managing Director
International Islamic Publishing House
Riyadh, Saudi Arabia



01.
Soorat al-Fâtiḥah
(Makki)¹



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



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ ﴿١﴾ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْمَلَائِكِ
الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ ﴿٢﴾ مَلِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ ﴿٣﴾ إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ
﴿٤﴾ اهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ ﴿٥﴾ صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ
عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ ﴿٦﴾ ﴿٧﴾ (سورة الفاتحة: ١-٧)

- 1:1. In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.²
1:2. Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds,
1:3. The Most Gracious, the Most Merciful,
1:4. Master of the Day of Judgement.
1:5. You [alone] we worship, and You [alone] we ask for help;

¹ In as-Sa'di's original work, these notes are mentioned with some chapters, but not mentioned with all 114 chapters. (Editor)

² The meanings of the verses of the Qur'an in this book (with some minor changes to the punctuation) have been translated by the translator. (Editor)

- 1:6. Guide us to the straight path,
 1:7. The path of those whom You have blessed; not of those who have incurred Your wrath, nor of those who have gone astray.

«In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful» that is, I begin with every name of Allah (*Subhânahu wa Ta'âlâ* – Glorified and Exalted is He); this includes all the (beautiful) names of Allah.

«Allah» – He is the One Who is worshipped, the only One Who deserves to be worshipped, because of the divine attributes He has, which are attributes of perfection.

«the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful». These two names indicate that He possesses great mercy that encompasses all things and includes all living beings, and He has decreed it for the pious, the followers of His Prophets and Messengers. Absolute mercy is for them; others have a share of it.

It should be noted that one of the basic principles on which the early generations of the Ummah and its leading scholars are agreed is belief in the names and attributes of Allah and how those attributes are manifested. For example, they believe that He is Most Gracious, Most Merciful; He possesses mercy that is one of His attributes and this mercy has an impact on His creation. So all types of blessings are signs of His mercy. The same applies to all of His names. We may say concerning the All-Knowing that He has (unlimited) knowledge, by means of which He knows all things. Similarly, the All-Powerful is possessed of might and has power over all things.

«Praise be to Allah». This refers to praising Allah for the attributes of perfection and for His actions that are based on generosity and justice. So to Him be perfect praise in all ways.

«the Lord of the worlds». The Lord is the One Who sustains all creatures – which refers to all beings other than Allah – because He

created them, granted them everything that they need and bestowed great blessings upon them; if they were deprived of those blessings they would not be able to survive, for whatever blessings they enjoy come from Him.

He sustains His creation in two ways, general and specific.

In general terms, this refers to His creation of all creatures, His granting of provision to them and His guiding them to that which is in their best interests, which enables them to survive in this world.

In specific terms, it refers to His cherishing of His close friends, by means of instilling faith in their hearts, guiding them to it, perfecting it for them and warding off from them distractions and obstacles that come between them and faith. In real terms, this means guiding them to everything that is good and protecting them from everything that is bad. Perhaps it is for this reason that most of the supplications of the Prophets used the word Lord (*Rabb*),³ since all their requests and needs came under His special cherishing.

The phrase «the Lord of the worlds» indicates that He alone has the power to create, and He alone controls His creation, bestows blessings and is completely independent of means, whilst all of creation is dependent upon Him in all respects.

«Master of the Day of Judgement» The Master (*Mâlik*) is the one who possesses the attributes of sovereignty, one of the implications of which is that He enjoins and forbids, rewards and punishes, and controls His subjects in all ways. This sovereignty is connected to the Day of Judgement, which is the Day of Resurrection, the day on which people will be judged on the basis of their deeds, both good and bad. On that day, His perfect sovereignty, justice and wisdom

³ Wherever possible, Arabic terms have been translated into English. In cases where we have chosen to retain the Arabic, the transliterated word or phrase is shown in italics the first time it appears in the text. The term is also defined in the glossary found at the end of this book. (Editor)

will become completely clear to His creation, and they will realise that created beings have no sovereignty at all. On that day, kings and subjects, slaves and free, will all be equal and will submit fully to His might, awaiting the reckoning, hoping for His reward and fearing His punishment. Hence this day is singled out for mention; otherwise, He is the Master of the Day of Judgement and of all other days.

﴿You [alone] we worship, and You [alone] we ask for help﴾ that is, we single out You alone to worship and ask for help. Putting the object at the beginning of the sentence conveys the meaning of exclusivity. In other words: we worship You, and we do not worship anyone other than You; we ask You for help and we do not ask anyone other than You for help.

Worship is mentioned before seeking help by way of mentioning what is general before what is specific, and also to give precedence to Allah's dues over those of His slaves.

“Worship” (*ibādah*) refers to everything that Allah loves and is pleased with of actions and words, both outward and inward. “Seeking help” refers to relying upon Allah (ﷻ) when seeking to attain what is beneficial and ward off what is harmful, whilst trusting that one will attain that.

Worshipping Allah and seeking His help is the means of attaining eternal happiness and salvation from all evils; there is no other way of attaining salvation apart from doing these two things. True worship can only be that which is learned from the Messenger of Allah (*salla Allāhu ‘alayhi wa sallam* – blessings and peace be upon him) and done with the intention of seeking the pleasure of Allah. If it includes these two things, then it is worship. Seeking help is mentioned after worship, even though it is a part of worship, because in offering all types of worship the individual needs the help of Allah (ﷻ); if Allah does not help him, he will not attain what he wants to of fulfilling commands and heeding prohibitions.

«Guide us to the straight path» that is, show us and help us to follow the straight path, which is the clear path that leads to Allah and to His paradise, which in turn means knowing the truth and acting upon it. (This is a prayer) for guidance to the straight path and guidance when following the path. Guidance to the straight path means adhering to the religion of Islam and forsaking all other religions; guidance when following the path includes guidance concerning all the details of religion, in knowledge and action. This supplication is one of the most concise, comprehensive and beneficial of supplications. Hence it is obligatory to call upon Allah with it in every *rak'ah* of the prayer, because we are in need of that.

This straight path is «The path of those whom You have blessed», namely the Prophets, *ṣiddeeqeen* (strong and true in faith), martyrs and righteous people.

«not» the path «of those who have incurred Your wrath» those who came to know the truth but drifted away from it, such as the Jews and others like them; and not the path «of those who have gone astray», those who drifted away from the truth because of ignorance and misguidance, such as the Christians and others like them.

Although this *soorah* is brief, it contains that which no other *soorah* of the Qur'an contains. It refers to the three types of *tawḥeed* (affirmation of the oneness of Allah). *Tawḥeed ar-ruboobiyah* (affirmation of the oneness of the divine Lordship) is seen in the verse «the Lord of the worlds». *Tawḥeed al-uloohiyah* (affirmation of the oneness of divinity), which refers to worshipping Allah alone, is seen in the phrases «Praise be to Allah» and «You [alone] we worship». *Tawḥeed al-asmâ' waṣ-ṣifât* (affirmation of the oneness of the divine names and attributes), which means affirming that the attributes of perfection belong to Allah (ﷻ) alone, which He ascribed to Himself and which His Messenger (ﷺ) affirmed, without denying

the apparent meanings or likening Him to His creation, is seen in the word «Praise», as discussed above.

It affirms prophethood in the words «Guide us to the straight path», because that guidance is not possible without sending Messengers.

It affirms recompense for deeds in the words «Master of the Day of Judgement», and tells us that the recompense will be on the basis of justice, because this is the meaning of the word judgement.

It affirms the divine decree, and tells us that humans act on the basis of free will, which is contrary to the views of the Qadaris⁴ and Jabarīs.⁵ In fact, it refutes all the followers of innovation [and misguidance] in the verse «Guide us to the straight path» because the straight path is knowing the truth and acting upon it, but everyone who follows innovation [and misguidance] does the opposite of that.

It speaks of being sincere towards Allah in terms of worship and seeking help, in the verse «You [alone] we worship, and You [alone] we ask for help».

Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds.

This is the end of the commentary on Soorat al-Fâtiḥah.

All praise and thanks are for Allah, and may the blessings and peace of Allah be upon Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ), his family, and his Companions abundantly until the Day of Judgement.



⁴ Qadari: follower of a theological school of thought that denied the divine will and decree, and said that man has absolute free will, therefore whatever he does is purely his choice and his will is independent of the will of Allah.

⁵ Jabari: follower of a theological school of thought that said that man has no free will, and whatever he does of good or evil is because it is decreed for him, and he is therefore compelled to do it and has no choice in the matter.

02. Soorat al-Baqarah

(Maadani)



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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



﴿١﴾ ذَلِكَ الْكِتَابُ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿٢﴾ الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْغَيْبِ
وَيُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنفِقُونَ ﴿٣﴾ وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ وَمَا أُنزِلَ مِن قَبْلِكَ
وَبِالْآخِرَةِ هُمْ يُوقِنُونَ ﴿٤﴾ أُولَئِكَ عَلَى هُدًى مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٥﴾

(سورة البقرة: ١-٥)

- 2:1. Alif. Lãm. Meem.⁶
- 2:2. This is the Book about which there is no doubt; in it is guidance for those who fear Allah,
- 2:3. Who believe in the unseen, establish prayer, and spend out of what We have provided for them;

⁶ Groups of letters (*al-huroof al-muqatta'ah*) appear at the beginning of several soorahs. The most correct scholarly view states that we are required to believe in them as they appear to be, without delving into their meaning, knowledge of which we should leave to Allah. We believe that they were not revealed in vain, and that there is wisdom behind them of which we are not aware.

- 2:4. And who believe in the Revelation sent down to you, and in what was sent before your time, and believe with certainty in the hereafter.
- 2:5. It is they who are following guidance from their Lord and it is they who will prosper.

We have discussed the *basmalah* (the phrase *bismillâh ir-Rahmân ir-Raḥeem*) above. With regard to the letters that appear at the beginning of some soorahs, the most prudent approach is to refrain from discussing their meaning, without basing that on any *shar'î* (of or pertaining to Sharia; Islamic) text, whilst being certain that Allah (ﷻ) did not reveal them in vain; rather there is wisdom behind that, of which we are not aware.

«This is the Book» that is, this great Book is the Book in a true sense; it contains that which the previous Books did not contain of great knowledge and clear truth. So «there is no doubt» about it in any way, shape or form. Stating that there is no doubt implies the opposite; the opposite of doubt is certainty, so this Book contains certain knowledge that dispels doubt. This is a useful principle to note, that when it is stated that something is not the case, that inevitably refers to the opposite.

As it is based on certainty, and guidance cannot be attained except on the basis of certainty, Allah says: «in it is guidance for those who fear Allah». Guidance is the means of being directed away from misguidance and doubt, and it is the means of following the proper ways. Guidance is mentioned, but to what is not mentioned; Allah did not say guidance towards achieving such and such a purpose or to such and such a thing, because He intended it to be general in meaning. It is guidance to that which is in people's best interests in both realms (this world and the hereafter). So it is guidance for people in all matters, both fundamental and minor. It differentiates true from

false, sound from flawed, and it explains to them how to follow the paths that will benefit them in this world and in the hereafter.

Allah (ﷻ) says elsewhere: ﴿as guidance for humankind﴾ (2: 185) – which is general in meaning, but here and elsewhere He says ﴿guidance for those who fear Allah﴾ because it is, in and of itself, guidance for all people, but those who are doomed do not pay heed and they do not accept the guidance of Allah. Thus proof is established against them and they do not benefit from it because they are doomed. But the pious are those who have attained the main cause of achieving guidance, namely *taqwā* (piety or fear of Allah), the true meaning of which is taking measures to protect themselves from the wrath and punishment of Allah by obeying His commands and heeding His prohibitions. So they are guided by it and they benefit from it in the fullest sense.

Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿O you who believe. If you fear Allah, He will give you the insight to distinguish between right and wrong...﴾ (*al-Anfāl* 8: 29)

So the pious are the ones who benefit from the verses (*āyāt*, lit. signs) of the Qur'an and the signs in creation.

Guidance is of two types: guidance in the sense of being aware of the message, and guidance in the sense of being helped to follow the message. The pious have been granted both types of guidance, whereas others have not been helped to follow the message. Being aware of the message without being helped to act upon it is not guidance in any real or complete sense.

Then Allah describes the pious in terms of both inward and outward deeds, because piety (*taqwā*) includes both. He says: ﴿Who believe in the unseen﴾. The true meaning of belief or faith is complete affirmation of what the Messengers taught; this also includes physical actions. It does not refer to believing in things that are visible or may be known through any of the physical senses, because in that regard there is no difference between the Muslim and the disbeliever. Rather the issue

here is belief in the unseen, which we cannot see or know through any of the physical senses; rather we believe in it because Allah and His Messenger (ﷺ) have told us of it. This faith is what distinguishes the Muslim from the disbeliever, because it is believing and affirming, with no hesitation, what Allah and His Messenger (ﷺ) said. So the believer believes everything that Allah or His Messenger (ﷺ) have told him, whether he sees it or not and whether he understands it and comprehends it or not, unlike the heretics and those who disbelieve in the unseen, because their limited intellects could not grasp it, so they rejected what they could not comprehend. Thus their intellect was corrupted and their thinking was flawed, whilst the thinking of the believers, who were guided by Allah, was sound.

Belief in the unseen includes belief in everything that Allah and His Messengers have told us about unseen matters in the past and in the future, events of the hereafter and the reality of the divine attributes and their essence. So they believe in the attributes of Allah in a true sense and with certain faith, even if they do not understand their essence.

Then Allah says: ﴿establish prayer﴾. He did not say that they “do” the prayer or “perform” the prayer, because it is not sufficient to only do the outward motions. Establishing prayer means establishing its outward form completely, with all its essential and obligatory parts and fulfilling its conditions, as well as establishing it inwardly, paying attention to its essence, which means having presence of mind whilst praying, and pondering the meaning of what one is saying and doing. Such is the prayer of which Allah says:

﴿...for verily prayer keeps [one] away from obscenity and wickedness...﴾ (al-'Ankaboot 29: 45)

– and this is the prayer that brings reward. The individual will be rewarded for his prayer only inasmuch he offered it with presence of mind. This applies to both obligatory and supererogatory prayers.

﴿and spend out of what We have provided for them﴾. This includes both obligatory spending, such as *zakāh* and spending on one's wives,

relatives, slaves and so on, and spending on all kinds of charitable causes, which is encouraged in Islam (*mustahabb*). The recipients of this spending are not mentioned, because there are so many different ways of spending and because spending in and of itself is a means of drawing close to Allah. The word *min* (translated here as ﴿out of﴾) refers to some of the wealth; this draws attention to the fact that all that is expected of them is to give a small portion of their wealth, in such a way that does not harm them and is not burdensome; in fact they themselves benefit from spending and their brothers will also benefit.

﴿what We have provided for them﴾. This indicates that this wealth that you possess was not obtained by your strength and efforts; rather it is provision that Allah has bestowed upon you and blessed you with. Therefore, as He has blessed you and favoured you above many of His slaves, you should show gratitude to Him by giving some of that with which He has blessed you, thus helping (literally, consoling) your brothers who are destitute.

Allah (ﷻ) often mentions prayer and zakâh together in the Qur'an, because prayer is a reflection of sincerity towards Allah, and zakâh and spending are a reflection of kindness towards His slaves. The sign of a person's being blessed (destined for paradise) is his sincerity towards Allah and his striving to help and benefit people, just as the sign of a person's being doomed (destined for hell) is that he does not have these two characteristics, sincerity and kindness.

﴿And who believe in the Revelation sent down to you﴾, namely the Qur'an and Sunnah. Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿...For Allah has sent down to you the Book and wisdom...﴾ (*an-Nisâ' 4: 113*)

So the pious believe in everything that the Messenger (ﷺ) brought, and they do not differentiate between what he brought, believing in some parts and not believing in others, either by rejecting them or interpreting them in a manner other than that which was intended, as some of the innovators do, who misinterpret the texts that point

to something other than what they say, which results in them not believing in the correct meaning, even if they believe the wording. Therefore they do not believe in them in a true sense.

﴿and in what was sent before your time﴾. This includes belief in all the previous Books; belief in the Books implies belief in the Messengers and everything that the Books contain, especially the Torah, Gospel and Psalms. This is something unique to the believers, that they believe in all the divinely revealed Books and in all the Messengers, and they do not differentiate between any of them.

﴿and believe with certainty in the hereafter﴾. The hereafter is that which comes after death; it is singled out for mention after discussing beliefs in general terms, because belief in the Last Day is one of the pillars of faith, and because it gives one the strongest motive to hope for reward, fear punishment and strive hard. Certainty is perfect knowledge that leaves no room for doubt at all and should prompt one to strive hard and do righteous deeds.

﴿It is they﴾ that is, those who have these praiseworthy characteristics ﴿who are following guidance from their Lord﴾. The word guidance (*hudā*) appears in the indefinite form, which in Arabic is an indication of how great it is; what guidance can be greater than the characteristics mentioned above, of having sound belief and righteous deeds? True guidance cannot be anything but the guidance followed by these people; anything that is contrary to that is misguidance.

The preposition (in the phrase translated here as ﴿It is they who are following guidance﴾, *lit.* “on guidance”) is indicative of superiority. A different preposition is used when referring to misguidance, as in the verse:

﴿...and verily either we or you are rightly guided or clearly misguided.﴾ (*Saba' 34: 24*)

– because the one who is guided is elevated to a superior position by means of that guidance, whereas the one who is misguided is sinking in it and is despised as a result.

﴿it is they who will prosper﴾. Prosperity means achieving what you are seeking and being saved from what you fear. Prosperity is exclusive to them, because there is no way of attaining prosperity except by following their path. Any paths other than that are paths that lead to doom, loss and destruction.

Therefore, when Allah mentions the characteristics of the true believers, He also mentions the characteristics of the disbelievers, who openly show their disbelief, stubbornly opposing the Messenger:



﴿إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا سَوَاءٌ عَلَيْهِمْ أُنذِرْتَهُمْ أَمْ لَمْ تُنذِرْتَهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ﴾ ختم الله
 عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ وَعَلَى سَمْعِهِمْ وَعَلَى أَبْصَارِهِمْ غِشْوَةٌ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿٧﴾ (سورة

البقرة: ٦-٧)

- 2:6. As for those who disbelieve, it is the same to them whether you warn them or do not warn them; they will not believe.
- 2:7. Allah has placed a seal on their hearts and on their hearing, and over their eyes is a cover; theirs will be a severe penalty.

Here Allah tells us concerning those who disbelieve – that is, those who have the characteristics of disbelief, which has become a definitive part of their identity – that nothing can deter them from their disbelief and no exhortation can make them give it up. They will persist in their disbelief, so it is all the same to them whether you warn them or not, for they will not believe. The essence of disbelief is rejection or partial rejection of that which the Messenger (ﷺ) brought. These disbelievers do not benefit from the call (to Islam); it is only given in order to establish proof against them. It is as if this was intended to put an end to hope on the part of the Messenger (ﷺ)

that they might believe: do not grieve over them (cf. 5: 26) and do not destroy yourself with grief for them (cf. 35: 8).

Then mention is made of the impediments that prevent them from believing:

﴿Allah has placed a seal on their hearts and on their hearing﴾ that is, He has sealed them up so that faith will not enter them or penetrate them, and thus they will not understand or hear that which might benefit them.

﴿and over their eyes is a cover﴾ that is, a cover that prevents them from seeing that which might benefit them. Thus the means of attaining knowledge and goodness are blocked for them, so there is no hope for them and no goodness is to be expected of them. Rather that has been withheld from them and the door to faith is closed for them because of their disbelief, rejection and stubbornness after the truth became clear to them, as Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿We will turn their hearts and eyes away [from the truth], since they refused to believe in it the first time...﴾ (al-An'âm 6: 110)

This is an immediate punishment (in this world).

Then Allah mentions the punishment in the hereafter: ﴿their will be a severe penalty﴾ namely the punishment of hellfire and the eternal, everlasting wrath of the Compeller (al-Jabbâr).

Then He describes the hypocrites who make an outward display of being Muslim whilst concealing disbelief in their hearts:



﴿وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يَقُولُ ءَامَنَّا بِاللَّهِ وَبِالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَمَا هُمْ بِمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٨﴾ يُخَادِعُونَ اللَّهَ وَالَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَمَا يَخْدَعُونَ إِلَّا أَنفُسَهُمْ وَمَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿٩﴾ فِي قُلُوبِهِم مَّرَضٌ فَزَادَهُمُ اللَّهُ مَرَضًا وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْذِبُونَ ﴿١٠﴾﴾ (سورة البقرة: ٨-١٠)

- 2:8. Among people there are some who say: We believe in Allah and the Last Day, but in fact they are not believers.
- 2:9. They seek to deceive Allah and those who believe, but they are not deceiving anyone except themselves, although they do not realise.
- 2:10. In their hearts is a disease; and Allah has increased their disease. Theirs will be a painful penalty for their persistent lying.

Hypocrisy means outwardly pretending to be good whilst concealing evil. This definition includes both hypocrisy in beliefs and hypocrisy in actions. The Prophet (ﷺ) mentioned something similar when he said:

«The signs of the hypocrite are three: when he speaks he lies, when he makes a promise he breaks it, and when he is entrusted with something he betrays that trust.» (Bukhari and Muslim)⁷

Another report adds:

«When he disputes, he resorts to foul speech.» (Bukhari and Muslim)

«We will turn their hearts and eyes away [from the truth], since they refused to believe in it the first time...» (al-An'ām 6: 110)

The kind of hypocrisy in belief that puts one beyond the pale of Islam is that which Allah ascribed to the hypocrites in this soorah and elsewhere. Hypocrisy did not exist before the migration of the Messenger (ﷺ) from Makkah to Madinah; after he migrated, in the battle of Badr Allah caused the believers to prevail and made them

⁷ All hadiths in this text have been checked and verified by IIPH's researchers. It is rare, but it does happen that a hadith is not verifiable within the timeframe of researching and editing the book. In that case, a decision is made by the editorial board as to whether or not to include the hadith. It is IIPH's policy not to include weak hadiths or fabricated (fake) hadiths in our publications. If a weak hadith is included in any text, it is only because the author of the book discusses it **as** a weak hadith. (Editor)

victorious, and those people in Madinah who had not become Muslim were humiliated. For that reason, some of them pretended to become Muslim, out of fear and by way of deceit, in order to protect themselves and their wealth. So they lived among the Muslims, pretending to be of their number, when in reality they were not Muslims.

By His kindness towards the believers, Allah described the characteristics (of the hypocrites) by which they might be recognised, so that the believers would not be deceived by them and so that (the hypocrites themselves) might be discouraged from committing many of their evil actions. Allah (ﷻ) said:

﴿The hypocrites are afraid lest a soorah be sent down concerning them...﴾ (at-Tawbah 9: 64)

(In this passage), Allah described them in terms of the essence of hypocrisy:

﴿Among people there are some who say: We believe in Allah and the Last Day – but in fact they are not believers﴾. They paid lip service to that which was not in their hearts, so Allah showed them to be liars by saying ﴿but in fact they are not believers﴾, because true faith is that which is confirmed in the heart and on the lips. Theirs was an attempt to deceive Allah and His believing slaves.

Deceit means pretending one thing whilst concealing something else so that the deceiver may get what he wants from the one whom he is deceiving. These hypocrites were behaving in this manner with Allah and His slaves, but their deceit backfired on them. This is a kind of miracle or wonder, because the deceiver usually either gets what he wants or he remains safe without gaining or losing anything. But in this case, the deceit of the hypocrites backfired on them. It was as if they did what they did of plotting and scheming in order to harm and doom themselves, because Allah (ﷻ) is not harmed by their deceit at all, and neither are His believing slaves. The believers are not harmed if the hypocrites pretend to believe in order to protect their wealth and lives, because their plotting will eventually backfire on them, which

will result in disgrace and scandal in this world, as well as ongoing regret because of what the believers achieve of power and victory.

Then in the hereafter, they will have a painful and devastating punishment because of their lies, disbelief and evil doing. But in their ignorance and foolishness they do not realise that.

﴿In their hearts is a disease﴾. What is meant by disease here is the disease of doubt, confusion and hypocrisy. The heart is vulnerable to two (spiritual) diseases that make it unhealthy and unbalanced: the disease of false doubts and the disease of desires that may lead to destruction. Disbelief, hypocrisy, doubt and innovation are all (spiritual) diseases that result from doubts and confusion. *Zinâ* (illicit sexual activity) and the inclination towards immoral actions and sin result from the disease of desires, as Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿...lest one in whose heart is a disease should be moved with desire...﴾ (al-Ahzâb 33: 32)

– this has to do with the desire for *zinâ* (fornication or adultery). The one who is truly safe is the one who is protected from these two diseases, for he will have certainty and faith, and will be patient in refraining from all sins; thus he will enjoy good spiritual health.

﴿In their hearts is a disease; and Allah has increased their disease﴾. This verse, which speaks of the hypocrites, highlights Allah's wisdom in decreeing sin for the sinners: because of their previous sins, He causes them to commit further sins that will incur His punishment, as He says elsewhere:

﴿We will turn their hearts and eyes away [from the truth], since they refused to believe in it the first time...﴾ (al-An'âm 6: 110)

﴿...So when they chose to deviate [from the truth], Allah caused their hearts to deviate [from right guidance]...﴾ (as-Saff 61: 5)

﴿As for those in whose hearts is a disease, it will add doubt to their doubt...﴾ (at-Tawbah 9: 125)

So the punishment for sin is more sin, just as the reward for good deeds is more good deeds. Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿Allah increases in guidance those who are guided...﴾ (Maryam 19: 76)



﴿وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ لَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ قَالُوا إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ مُصْلِحُونَ ﴿١١﴾ أَلَا إِنَّهُمْ هُمُ الْمُفْسِدُونَ وَلَكِنْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿١٢﴾﴾ (سورة البقرة: ١١-١٢)

- 2:11. When it is said to them: Do not make mischief in the land, they say: We only want to put things right.
- 2:12. Indeed they are the ones who make mischief, but they do not realise.

When these hypocrites are told not to make mischief in the land, which means committing sins and deeds based on disbelief, including disclosing the secrets of the believers to their enemies and taking the disbelievers as close friends,

﴿they say: We only want to put things right﴾. Thus they both strive to cause mischief in the land and defend their actions as being an effort to put things straight rather than causing mischief – contrary to what is really happening, and combining wrongdoing with the belief that it is right. This is a greater offence than committing sin whilst believing that it is indeed a sin; the one who does that is better off and there is more hope that he will return to the right path.

Because their saying ﴿We only want to put things right﴾ would seem to imply that they are the only ones who are putting things right, which in turn would imply that the believers are not putting things right, Allah refuted their claims by saying: ﴿Indeed they are the ones who make mischief﴾. There is no greater mischief than that of those who disbelieve in the signs of Allah, bar people from following the path of Allah, try to deceive Allah and His close friends and take as allies those who wage war against Allah and His Messenger (ﷺ), yet still claim that they are putting things right. Can there be any

mischief greater than this? But they do not know anything that will benefit them, even though the knowledge that they have is sufficient to establish proof against them. Committing sin is only regarded as mischief because it results in damage to whatever is on the face of the earth of grains, fruits, trees and plants, as a result of the blights that befall them because of sin, and because putting things right on earth is achieved when people obey Allah and believe in Him. It is for this purpose that Allah created humanity and caused them to dwell on earth, and He bestowed provisions upon them to help them to obey and worship Him. If they do the opposite of that on earth, then they are spreading corruption which causes ruin by using what is on earth in a way other than that for which it was created.



﴿ وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ ءَامِنُوا كَمَا ءَامَنَ النَّاسُ قَالُوا أَنُؤْمِنُ كَمَا ءَامَنَ السُّفَهَاءُ أَلَا إِنَّهُمْ هُمُ السُّفَهَاءُ وَلَكِن لَّا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴾ (سورة البقرة: ١٣)

- 2:13. When it is said to them: Believe as the people believe, they say: Shall we believe as the fools believe? Indeed it is they who are the fools, but they do not know.

That is, when it is said to the hypocrites: Believe as the people believe; this refers to the Companions (*radiya Allāhu ‘anhum* – may Allah be pleased with all of them), whose faith was affirmed in their hearts and on their lips. But the hypocrites said, on the basis of their false accusation: Shall we believe as the fools believe? They were referring to the Companions (ﷺ), thinking that it was their alleged foolishness that had led them to believe and to leave their homelands and oppose the disbelievers. In their (the hypocrites’) view, wisdom dictated the opposite of that. So they described them

as foolish, implying that they themselves were people of wisdom and understanding.

But Allah (ﷻ) refuted their argument and stated that in reality they were the fools, because real foolishness is for a person to ignore what is in his best interests and strive for that which will harm him, and this description was true in their case. On the other hand, wisdom and reason are reflected in a person's knowing what is in his best interests and striving for that which will benefit him and ward off harm from him, which was true in the case of the Companions and the believers. What matters is sound proof, not mere claims and empty words.

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﴿ وَإِذَا لَقُوا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا قَالُوا ءَامَنَّا وَإِذَا خَلَوْا إِلَىٰ شَيَاطِينِهِمْ قَالُوا إِنَّا مَعَكُمْ إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ مُسْتَهْزَءُونَ ﴿١٤﴾ اللَّهُ يَسْتَهْزِئُ بِهِمْ وَيَمُدُّهُمْ فِي طُغْيَانِهِمْ يَعْمَهُونَ ﴿١٥﴾ ﴾ (سورة البقرة: ١٤ - ١٥)

- 2:14. When they meet those who believe, they say: We believe; but when they are alone with their devils, they say: We are really with you; we were only mocking.
- 2:15. Allah is mocking them, and gives them free rein in transgression so that they wander blindly.

This refers to them saying verbally that which was not in their hearts. When they met the believers, they would pretend that they were following their path and that they were with them, but when they were alone with their devils – that is, their leaders in evil – they said: We are really with you; we were only mocking the believers by pretending to them that we are following their path. This is how they are inwardly and outwardly, but the plotting of evil only rebounds on those who plot (*cf.* 35: 43).

﴿Allah is mocking them, and gives them free rein in transgression so that they wander blindly﴾. This is their punishment for mocking His slaves. By way of mocking them, Allah makes attractive to them the miserable situation in which they are and the evil way they are following, to the point that they think that they are with the believers, because Allah did not give the believers power over them. And He will mock them on the Day of Resurrection by giving them visible light along with the believers, then when the believers begin to walk in their light, the light of the hypocrites will be extinguished and they will be left in confusion after the light has gone. How great will be their despair after their hopes had been raised.

﴿The hypocrites will call out to the believers: Were we not with you? They will say: Yes, but you gave in to confusion and temptation, you kept waiting [for some misfortune to befall us], you doubted...﴾
(*al-Hadeed 57: 14*)

﴿and gives them free rein﴾ that is, He lets them get carried away
﴿in transgression﴾ that is, in their evildoing and disbelief
﴿so that they wander blindly﴾ that is, confused and hesitant. This is how Allah (ﷻ) mocks them.

Then Allah (ﷻ) describes how they really are:



﴿أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ اشْتَرُوا الضَّلٰلَةَ بِالْهُدٰى فَمَا رٰبِحَتْ يٰحٰزِرُهُمْ وَمَا كَانُوْا مُهْتَدِيْنَ﴾

﴿(سورة البقرة: ١٦)﴾

2:16. These are the ones who have traded guidance for error, but their trade brings no profit and they are not guided.

These people, namely the hypocrites who have the characteristics described here, ﴿are the ones who have traded guidance for error﴾ that is, they preferred misguidance, like a buyer who wants a particular

item and because of his desire for it, he is willing to pay a high price. This is one of the best likenesses that explain how they are, because it likens misguidance, which is the ultimate evil, to an item for purchase, and it likens guidance, which is the ultimate good, to the price. So they gave away guidance and had no interest in it, in return for misguidance because they wanted it. This is their trade, and what a bad deal it is.

If the one who trades a dinar (gold coin) for a dirham (silver coin) is a loser, then how about the one who trades a precious stone for a dirham? How about the one who trades guidance for misguidance, chooses doom over blessing, and prefers the most vile and base of things to the most sublime? His trade brings no profit; rather it incurs the greatest loss.

﴿...Say: Indeed, the real losers will be those who lose their own souls and their families on the Day of Resurrection. That is indeed manifest loss.﴾ (az-Zumar 39: 15)

﴿and they are not guided﴾ this confirms that they are misguided, and that they did not gain anything from guidance. These are their abhorrent characteristics.

Then a likeness is given that highlights their character in a very clear manner:

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﴿مَثَلُهُمْ كَمَثَلِ الَّذِي اسْتَوْقَدَ نَارًا فَلَمَّا أَضَاءَتْ مَا حَوْلَهُ ذَهَبَ اللَّهُ بِنُورِهِمْ وَتَرَكَهُمْ فِي ظُلُمَاتٍ لَا يُبْصِرُونَ ﴿١٧﴾ ضُمُّ بُكُمْ عُنَىٰ فَهُمْ لَا يَرْجِعُونَ ﴿١٨﴾ أَوْ كَصَيْبٍ مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ فِيهِ ظُلُمَاتٌ وَرَعْدٌ وَبَرْقٌ يَجْعَلُونَ أَصْنَعَهُمْ فِيءِ إِذَانِهِمْ مِّنَ الصُّورِ حِدْرَ الْمَوْتِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ مُحِيطٌ بِالْكَافِرِينَ ﴿١٩﴾ يَكَادُ الْبَرْقُ يَخْطَفُ أَبْصَارَهُمْ كُلَّمَا أَضَاءَ لَهُمْ مَشَوْا فِيهِ وَإِذَا أَظْلَمَ عَلَيْهِمْ قَامُوا ۗ وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَذَهَبَ بِسَمْعِهِمْ وَأَبْصَارِهِمْ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿٢٠﴾﴾ (سورة البقرة: ١٧-٢٠)

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- 2:17. Their likeness is that of a man who kindled a fire; when it illuminated all around him, Allah took away their light and left them in utter darkness, unable to see.
- 2:18. Deaf, dumb, and blind, they will not return [to the right path].
- 2:19. Or [another likeness] is that of a heavy downpour from the sky, accompanied by darkness, thunder and lightning. They put their fingers in their ears to keep out the stunning thunder-clap, for fear of death. But Allah encompasses the disbelievers.
- 2:20. The lightning almost snatches away their sight; every time it flashes, they walk [a few steps] therein, but when the darkness overtakes them again, they stand still. And if Allah willed, He could take away their hearing and their sight; for Allah has power over all things.
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The exact likeness that describes the situation they are in is that of a man who kindled fire; when it was very dark and his need for a fire was great, he lit it from someone else's fire, as he had no fire of his own and needed to bring it from someone else. Then when the fire illuminated the area around him and he could see his surroundings and any potential dangers, and thus he felt safe and benefitted from the fire and was pleased with it, thinking that he was in control of it – whilst he was like that, Allah took away its light, so that he lost the light and any pleasure that he had felt because of it, and he remained in deep darkness with the fire still burning, as its illumination has disappeared but its burning effect still remained. Thus he was left in many layers of darkness: the darkness of the night, the darkness of the cloud, the darkness of the rain and the darkness that comes after the light disappears. How will the one who is in such a situation be? That is how these hypocrites are. They took the fire of faith from the believers, but having faith was not characteristic of them; rather they took the fire of faith in order to protect their lives and keep their wealth safe, so they had a kind of security in this world. Then whilst they

were like that, death came to them and took away the benefit of that light, and there befell them all kinds of distress, grief and torment, as well as the darkness of disbelief, the darkness of hypocrisy and the darkness of various kinds of sin. After that came the darkness of hellfire – an evil place to settle in (*cf.* 14: 29).

Hence Allah says concerning them: «Deaf» that is, unable to hear the truth.

«dumb» that is, unable to speak the truth

«blind» that is, unable to see the truth.

«they will not return [to the right path]» because they have forsaken the truth after having come to know it, so they will not return to it, unlike those who kept away from the truth as the result of ignorance and misguidance; they did not understand it and they are more likely to come back to it than the hypocrites.

«Or [another likeness] is that of a heavy downpour from the sky» that is, they are like one who is caught in a heavy downpour from the sky, which is rain that comes down in copious amounts.

«accompanied by darkness» namely the darkness of the night, the darkness of the cloud and the darkness of the rain

«thunder» which is the sound that is heard from the cloud

«and lightning» which is the flashing light that is seen with the cloud.

«every time it flashes» that is, every time the lightning flashes in that darkness «they walk [a few steps] therein, but when the darkness overtakes them again, they stand still» that is, they halt.

This is the situation of the hypocrites. When they hear the Qur'an and its commands and prohibitions, promises and warnings, they put their fingers in their ears and turn away from its commands and prohibitions, promises and warnings. They are terrified of its warnings and disturbed by its promises (to the believers). Hence they turn away as much as they can and they hate it as the one who is caught in a downpour hates it, and when he hears the thunder he puts his

fingers in his ears, for fear of death. In the case of the one who is caught in a downpour, that could help him to be safe, but in the case of the hypocrites, how could they become safe at the time when Allah encompasses them by His power and knowledge, so they cannot escape from Him or frustrate Him; rather He records their deeds and will requite them in full.

As they are suffering from deafness, dumbness and blindness in a metaphorical sense, and they are barred from the paths to faith, Allah (ﷻ) says: ﴿And if Allah willed, He could take away their hearing and their sight﴾ that is, in a physical sense. This is a warning to them aimed at making them afraid of punishment in this world, so that they will adopt caution and be deterred from some of their evil and hypocrisy. ﴿for Allah has power over all things﴾, hence nothing is beyond Him; by His power, if He wills something He does it, and no one can prevent Him or oppose Him.

In this verse and others like it we see a refutation of the Qadaris⁸ who say that their deeds are not subject to the power and control of Allah (ﷻ), as this verse shows that their deeds are among the things that are included in the words ﴿for Allah has power over all things﴾.



﴿يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اعْبُدُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ
 (٢١) الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمْ الْأَرْضَ فِرَاشًا وَالسَّمَاءَ بِنَاءً وَأَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَخْرَجَ بِهِ
 مِنَ الشَّجَرَاتِ رِزْقًا لَكُمْ فَلَا تَجْعَلُوا لِلَّهِ أَنْدَادًا وَأَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٢٢﴾ (سورة البقرة:

(٢٢-٢١)

⁸ Qadari: follower of a theological school of thought that denied the divine will and decree and said that man has absolute free will, therefore whatever he does is purely his choice and his will is independent of the will of Allah.

- 2:21. O people! Worship your Lord, Who created you and those who came before you, that you may become pious;
- 2:22. Who has made the earth a resting-place for you, and the heavens an edifice; and sent down rain from the heavens; and brought forth therewith fruits as a provision for you; so do not set up rivals to Allah when you know better.

This is a general command that is addressed to all people, instructing them to worship Him in a comprehensive way by obeying the commands of Allah, heeding His prohibitions and believing in His words. Thus He commands them to do that for which He created them, as He says:

﴿I have not created the jinn and humans except to worship Me.﴾
(*adh-Dhāriyāt* 51: 56)

Then Allah tells us why it is obligatory to worship Him alone, for He is your Lord Who has bestowed upon you all kinds of blessings: He created you after you were nothing, He created those who came before you and He bestowed upon you blessings both obvious and hidden. He made the earth a resting-place for you, on which you build structures for your benefit; He caused you to cultivate it and till it; He enabled you to travel from one place to another; and He granted you many ways of benefitting from it. He made the heavens an edifice for the earth on which you dwell, and He placed in it benefits that you need, such as the sun, moon and stars.

﴿and sent down rain from the heavens﴾. The word *samā'* (translated here as ﴿heavens﴾) refers to anything that is above you. Hence the commentators said that what is meant by ﴿heavens﴾ (*samā'*) here is the clouds, from which Allah (ﷻ) sends down rain.

﴿and brought forth therewith fruits﴾ this may include other crops such as grains, dates and so on.

﴿as a provision for you﴾, to feed and sustain you so that you might survive by means of it and enjoy it.

﴿so do not set up rivals to Allah﴾ that is, equals from among His creation which you worship as you should worship Allah and love as you should love Allah, although they are created beings like you who receive provision and are under His control, having not the slightest power either in heaven or on earth, and they cannot benefit or harm you at all.

﴿when you know better﴾ that is, when you know that Allah has no partner or equal with regard to the power of creation, granting of provision or control of the universe, and He has no partner in worship. So how can you worship other gods besides Him when you know these things? This is something that is very strange and extremely foolish.

This verse combines the command to worship Allah alone and the prohibition on worshipping anything other than Him. It offers clear evidence that it is obligatory to worship Him and that the worship of anything other than Him is invalid. This refers to *tawhīd ar-ruboobiyah* (oneness of the divine Lordship), which implies that He is the only One Who creates, grants provision and controls. If anyone accepts that He has no partner in these things, then by the same token he should also accept that Allah has no partner in worship. This is the clearest rational evidence for the oneness of the Creator and the invalidity of associating partners with Him.

The words ﴿that you may become pious﴾ may be understood as meaning that if you worship Allah alone, then you will avoid His wrath and punishment, because you have taken measures to ward that off from yourselves. Or it may mean that if you worship Allah (alone), you will become one of the pious who are described as fearing Allah. Both meanings are sound and complement one another. The one who worships Allah properly is one of the pious, and whoever is pious will be saved from the wrath and punishment of Allah (﴿﴾).



﴿وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِي رَيْبٍ مِمَّا نَزَّلْنَا عَلَىٰ عَبْدِنَا فَأْتُوا بِسُورَةٍ مِثْلِهِ وَادْعُوا شُهَدَاءَكُمْ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿٢٣﴾ فَإِنْ لَمْ تَفْعَلُوا وَلَنْ تَفْعَلُوا فَأْتُوا نَارَ الَّتِي وَقُودُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ أُعِدَّتْ لِلْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٢٤﴾﴾ (سورة البقرة: ٢٣-٢٤)

- 2:23. And if you are in doubt concerning what We have revealed to Our slave, then produce a soorah like it; and call your helpers besides Allah, if you are truthful [in your claim].
- 2:24. But if you cannot do it, and you can never do it, then beware of the fire whose fuel is men and stones, which is prepared for the disbelievers.

These verses provide rational evidence that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) was genuine and that his message was true.

﴿And if you are in doubt...﴾ This is addressed to those who opposed the Messenger (ﷺ) and rejected his message, saying that he was lying. (What is meant is:) if you are doubtful and are uncertain concerning what We have sent down to Our slave, as to whether it is true or not, then here is a fair argument which will decide the matter between you and him. That argument is that he is a human being like you; he is not the most eloquent or most knowledgeable among you. You have known him from when he was small, as he grew up among you. He does not read or write, yet he has brought you a Book that he says is from Allah, but you say that he is speaking of his own accord and has made it up. If the matter is as you say, then produce a soorah like it, with the help of any one you can find among your helpers and witnesses; this will be something easy for you, especially since you are people of eloquence and oratory, and you are fuelled by deep enmity towards the Messenger (ﷺ). If you can produce a soorah like it, then he is as you say, but if you cannot produce a soorah like

it, and you fail utterly, (rest assured that) you will never be able to produce a soorah like it. However, this (challenge) is offered by way of showing fairness and going along with you. This is a great sign and clear evidence that he is telling the truth and that his message is true. Then (if you fail to meet the challenge) it will be obligatory for you to follow him and protect yourselves from hellfire which reached the ultimate heat because its fuel is people and stones; it is not like the fire of this world that is fuelled with wood. The fire of hell is prepared for those who disbelieve in Allah and His Messenger (ﷺ), so beware of disbelieving in his Messenger (ﷺ) after it has become clear to you that he is indeed the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ).

This and similar verses are called the verses of challenge; they prove that people are incapable of producing anything like this Qur'an. Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿Say: Verily, if all of humankind and the jinn were to come together to produce the like of this Qur'an, they could never produce the like thereof, even if they helped one another.﴾ (al-Isrâ' 17: 88)

How can the words of one who is created from dust be like the words of the Lord of lords? How can one who is lacking in all aspects produce words like the words of the Most Perfect, Whose perfection is absolute and Who is completely independent of means? This is not possible and it is not within any human's capability. Anyone who has the slightest knowledge and appreciation of (Arabic) literary and oratory style will, if he compares the Qur'an with other eloquent speech, clearly see a great difference between them.

﴿And if you are in doubt...﴾ This verse indicates that the one for whom there is hope of guidance away from misguidance is the one who has doubts and is confused, who cannot tell truth from falsehood. When the truth becomes clear to such a one, he is more likely to be guided if he is sincere in seeking the truth. As for the stubborn one who recognises the truth but ignores it, he cannot come back because

he has turned away from the truth after it became clear to him and he did not turn away from it out of ignorance, so he is a hopeless case.

By the same token, the doubter who is not sincere or serious in seeking the truth and turns away indifferently will usually not be guided.

Describing the Messenger (ﷺ) as being a slave in the context of discussing such an important matter is indicative of his greatest characteristic, which is being a true slave of Allah, doing his duty towards Him in a manner unmatched by anyone else before or since.

He is also described as being a slave in the context of the *isrâ'* (Prophet's Night Journey), as Allah says:

«Glory be to Him Who took His slave for a journey by night...» (*al-Isrâ' 17: 1*)

– and in the context of sending down Revelation, as He says:

«Blessed be He Who sent down the criterion [between right and wrong, namely the Qur'an] to His slave, so that it may be a warning to the worlds.» (*al-Furqân 25: 1*)

«which is prepared for the disbelievers» this and similar verses support the view of *ahl as-Sunnah wal-jamâ'ah*, which is that paradise and hell are two created entities; this is unlike the view of the Mutazilites. It also tells us that the monotheists, even if they commit some sins, will not remain in hell forever, because Allah says that it is «prepared for the disbelievers». If the sinners among the monotheists were to remain therein forever, it would not say that it is prepared for the disbelievers alone. This is unlike the view of the Kharijites and Mutazilites.

It also indicates that punishment becomes due for reasons, namely disbelief and various kinds of sin.



﴿وَبَشِّرِ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ أَنَّ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرَى مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ
كُلَّمَا رُزِقُوا مِنْهَا مِنْ ثَمَرٍ رِزْقًا قَالُوا هَذَا الَّذِي رُزِقْنَا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَأَنُوتُوا بِهِ
مُتَشَابِهًا وَلَهُمْ فِيهَا أَزْوَاجٌ مُطَهَّرَةٌ وَهُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿٢٥﴾ (سورة البقرة:

(٢٥)

- 2:25. And give glad tidings to those who believe and do righteous deeds, that they will have gardens, through which rivers flow. Every time they are provided with fruits therefrom, they will say: This is what we were provided with before, because they will be given things that resemble one another; and they will have therein pure spouses; and they will abide therein forever.

As Allah mentioned the requital of the disbelievers, here He mentions the reward of the believers, those who do righteous deeds. This is the style of the Qur'an, which combines encouragement with deterrent so that the individual will be motivated and deterred at the same time, and he will balance fear with hope.

﴿And give glad tidings﴾ that is, O Messenger and those who convey his message

﴿to those who believe﴾ in their hearts

﴿and do righteous deeds﴾ by taking physical action, thus confirming their faith with their good deeds.

Good deeds are described as righteous (*ṣāliḥāt*) because by means of them people's affairs, both religious and worldly, in this world and in the hereafter, are set straight or put right (*taṣluḥ*), and all troubles will be eliminated. Thus he will become one of the righteous (*ṣāliḥoon*) who are qualified to be close to the Most Merciful in His paradise.

So give them the glad tidings ﴿that they will have gardens﴾ filled with wonderful trees, fine fruits and extensive shade, hence the one who enters this garden will enjoy it and the one who dwells in it will be happy.

﴿through which rivers flow﴾ that is, rivers of water, milk, honey and wine, which they will cause to spring up whenever they want and direct them wherever they want; those trees will be irrigated by them and will produce all kinds of fruits.

﴿Every time they are provided with fruits therefrom, they will say: This is what we were provided with before﴾ that is, this is the same type, with the same qualities. All of them will be similar in beauty and delicious taste; there will be no fruit that stands out from the others (because all of them will be good). There will be no time in which they are deprived of pleasure; they will constantly have the delight of eating these fruits.

﴿because they will be given things that resemble one another﴾. It was said that they will resemble one another in name, but will have different tastes; or that they will resemble one another in colour, but will have different names; or that they will resemble one another in beauty, delicious taste and enjoyability. Perhaps this last view is the one that is correct.

Then, having mentioned their dwellings and the provision of food, drink and fruits, Allah mentions their spouses and describes them in the most perfect, concise and clear way:

﴿and they will have therein pure spouses﴾. He did not describe them as purified from a specific defect; this indicates that they will be pure in all aspects. They will be pure in terms of their attitude and character, free of physical defects, pure in speech and chaste in their gaze. With regard to their attitude, they will be friendly and endearing to their husbands because of their good attitude; they will behave in a manner that is expected of a good wife and will be well-mannered in word and deed. With regard to being physically pure, they will be

free of menses, postpartum bleeding, vaginal discharges, urine, stools, mucus, sputum and bad smells. They will also be physically pure in the sense that they will possess perfect beauty, with no physical defect or hint of ugliness; rather they will be good and beautiful (cf. 55: 70). They will be pure in speech and chaste in their gaze, gazing only at their husbands and refraining from all foul speech.

This verse speaks of the giver of glad tidings, the recipients thereof, the things promised in those tidings and the means of attaining what is promised. The giver of glad tidings is the Messenger (ﷺ) or those among his Ummah who convey his message. The recipients of the glad tidings are the believers who do righteous deeds. The things promised in these glad tidings are the gardens described in this manner (that is, the gardens of paradise). The means of attaining what is promised is faith and righteous deeds. There is no other way of attaining it. This is the greatest of glad tidings, conveyed by the best of Allah's creation, highlighting the best means.

It also shows us that it is encouraged to give glad tidings to the believers and to motivate them to do good deeds by referring to the reward and fruits of those deeds. Thus doing such deeds will become light and easy. The greatest good sign (of glad tidings) is when an individual is guided and enabled to believe and do righteous deeds. That is the first sign of glad tidings, and the foundation thereof. The second such sign is when the angels give him glad tidings at the time of death. The final good sign is when he reaches those eternal blessings (in paradise). We ask Allah to make us among those who are given these glad tidings.



﴿ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَسْتَحْيِي ۚ أَنْ يَضْرِبَ مَثَلًا مَّا بَعُوضَةً فَمَا فَوْقَهَا ۚ فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا فَيَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ ۗ وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَيَقُولُونَ مَاذَا

أَرَادَ اللَّهُ بِهَذَا مَثَلًا يُضِلُّ بِهِ كَثِيرًا وَيَهْدِي بِهِ كَثِيرًا وَمَا يُضِلُّ بِهِ إِلَّا الْفٰسِقِينَ ﴿٢٦﴾ الَّذِينَ يَنْقُضُونَ عَهْدَ اللَّهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مِيثَاقِهِ وَيَقْطَعُونَ مَا أَمَرَ اللَّهُ بِهِ أَنْ يُوصَلَ وَيُفْسِدُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْخٰسِرُونَ ﴿٢٧﴾ ﴿سورة البقرة:

(٢٧-٢٦)

- 2:26. Allah is not ashamed to present an example – that of a mosquito, or of something even more insignificant. Those who believe know that it is truth from their Lord; but those who disbelieve say: What does Allah mean by this example? He causes many to go astray thereby and He guides many thereby, but He does not cause any to go astray thereby except the evildoers.
- 2:27. Those who break Allah's covenant after it has been made binding, and sever the bonds that Allah has commanded to be upheld, and spread mischief in the land – they are the ones who are the losers.

«Allah is not ashamed to present an example» and it does not matter what it is

«that of a mosquito, or of something even more insignificant», because these examples or likenesses convey wisdom and highlight the truth, and Allah is not ashamed to tell the truth. It is as if this is a response to those who disliked the giving of examples that referred to insignificant things and objected to Allah doing such a thing. But there is no room for objection here; rather this is a means by which Allah teaches His slaves and it is a sign of His mercy towards them. So it should be accepted gratefully. Hence Allah says:

«Those who believe know that it is truth from their Lord», so they understand it and ponder its meaning. If they understand its message in a comprehensive manner, then their faith and belief will be increased thereby; if not, they still acknowledge that it is truth and that its meaning is true, even if the message is unclear to them. That is because

they know that Allah does not give any examples or likenesses in vain; rather there is great wisdom behind it and great blessing in it.

﴿but those who disbelieve say: What does Allah mean by this example?﴾ They object to it and are confused, which only increases them in disbelief as it increases the believers in faith. Hence Allah says:

﴿He causes many to go astray thereby and He guides many thereby﴾. This is a description of the response of the believers and disbelievers when Qur'anic verses were believed. Allah (ﷻ) says elsewhere:

﴿Whenever a soorah is revealed, some of them [the hypocrites] say: Which of you has this increased in faith? As for those who believe, it does indeed increase their faith and they rejoice. As for those in whose hearts is a disease, it will add doubt to their doubt, and they will die while they are still disbelievers.﴾ (at-Tawbah 9: 124-125)

There is no greater blessing to people than the revelation of Qur'anic verses, yet for some it is a trial and a source of confusion and misguidance which only adds further to their evil, whilst for others it is a gift and mercy that increases them in goodness. Glory be to the One Who makes His slaves so different and is the only One Who guides them or leaves them astray.

Then Allah speaks of His wisdom in leaving some of them to go astray, and confirms that the reason for that is justice on His part.

﴿but He does not cause any to go astray thereby except the evildoers﴾ that is, those who rebel and disobey Allah, those who stubbornly oppose the Messengers of Allah, those for whom evildoing is an essential part of their character which they do not seek to change. As wisdom dictates that they should go astray because they are not qualified to be guided, by the same token, His wisdom and grace dictate that those who believe and do righteous deeds should be guided.

Evildoing (*fisq*) is of two types, the first of which is that which puts one beyond the pale of Islam, such as that which is mentioned in this and similar verses. The second type does not put one beyond the pale of Islam, as mentioned in the verse in which Allah (ﷻ) says: ﴿O you who believe, if a wrongdoer comes to you with any news, investigate [and verify the facts]...﴾ (*al-Hujurât* 49: 6)

Then Allah describes the evildoers:

﴿Those who break Allah's covenant after it has been made binding﴾. This includes covenants between them and Him as well as covenants between them and other people which Allah has made binding upon them in the strongest terms, but they do not care about those binding obligations; rather they break them, ignore His commands, do that which He has forbidden and transgress the covenants between them and other people.

﴿and sever the bonds that Allah has commanded to be upheld﴾. This includes many things. Allah has commanded us to uphold the bond between us and Him by believing in Him, carrying out duties as His slaves. He has commanded us to uphold the bond between us and His Messenger (ﷺ) by believing in him, loving him, respecting him and fulfilling our duties towards him. He has also commanded us to uphold the bonds between us and our parents, relatives, friends and all other people by respecting those rights that Allah has commanded us to uphold.

The believers uphold the bonds that Allah has commanded us to uphold and they fulfil the related duties in a proper manner. The evildoers, on the other hand, sever those bonds and ignore them completely, replacing them with evildoing, breaking of ties and striving in sin; this is spreading mischief in the land.

﴿they﴾ namely those who meet this description ﴿are the ones who are the losers﴾ in this world and in the hereafter. They are the only ones who are losers, because their losses affect them in all circumstances,

whatever they do or say. They do not achieve any success at all, because the condition for righteous deeds to be accepted is faith, so the one who has no faith has no righteous deeds to his credit. This kind of loss is the result of disbelief. However, with regard to that loss that may be the result of disbelief, committing sins or neglecting to do deeds that are recommended, as mentioned in the verse in which Allah says:

﴿Verily man is in a state of utter loss.﴾ (al-'Asr 103: 2)

– this is general in application and may include all humans, except those who have the characteristics of faith and righteous deeds, and exhort one another to hold fast to the truth and exhort one another to hold fast to patience (cf. 103: 3). What loss really means is missing out on something good that one could have achieved and that was within one's means.



﴿كَيْفَ تَكْفُرُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَكُنْتُمْ أَمْوَاتًا فَأَحْيَاكُمْ ثُمَّ يُمِيتُكُمْ ثُمَّ يُحْيِيكُمْ ثُمَّ إِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ﴾ (سورة البقرة: ٢٨)

- 2:28. How can you disbelieve in Allah, when you were lifeless, then He gave you life, then He will cause you to die, then He will bring you back to life, then to Him you will return?

This is a question which is intended to reflect astonishment as well as to rebuke and denounce. In other words, how could you disbelieve in Allah, Who created you from nothing and bestowed upon you all types of blessings, then He will cause you to die when you reach the appointed time, and He will requite you in the grave, then He will bring you back to life at the time of the Resurrection, then to Him you will return and He will repay you in full? As you are under His

control, encompassed by His kindness and subject to His commands, after which you will be brought to account, is it befitting for you to disbelieve in Him? Can that be anything other than great ignorance and foolishness? Rather what is befitting for you is to believe in Him, be aware of Him, be grateful to Him, fear His punishment and hope for His reward.



﴿هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مَا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا ثُمَّ أَسْتَوَىٰ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ فَسَوَّاهُنَّ سَبْعَ سَمَاوَاتٍ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ﴾ (سورة البقرة: ٢٩)

2:29. It is He Who has created for you all things that are on earth, then He turned towards the heaven and made them seven heavens, and He has knowledge of all things.

﴿It is He Who has created for you all things that are on earth﴾. He has created for you, out of kindness and mercy towards you, all things on the face of the earth so that you might benefit from them, enjoy them and learn from them.

This verse indicates that the basic principle concerning all things is that they are permissible and pure, because the context here is one of reminding us of His blessings. Excluded from that is everything that is evil or foul; the prohibition on such things may also be understood from the meaning of this verse. Allah has created (all things) for our benefit, so whatever is harmful is excluded from that, and it is a blessing from Him that He has forbidden foul things to us so as to protect us from them.

﴿then He turned towards the heaven and made them seven heavens, and He has knowledge of all things﴾.

﴿He turned towards﴾. The phrase *astawâ ilâ* (translated here as «turned towards») has three meanings in the Qur'an. When it appears without any preposition after it, it means attaining a level of complete perfection, as when Allah says concerning Moosâ:

﴿When he reached his prime and became fully mature [*astawâ*]...﴾
(*al-Qaşaş* 28: 14)

When it is followed by the preposition '*alâ* (upon), it means rising above, as when Allah says:

﴿...and then [He] rose over [*astawâ 'alâ*] the Throne...﴾ (*al-A'râf* 7: 54)

When it is followed by the preposition *ilâ* (to), it means turning to or deciding, as in this verse, where what is meant is: when Allah (ﷻ) had created the earth, he turned to the creation of the heavens.

﴿and made them seven heavens﴾. He created them and perfected them

﴿and He has knowledge of all things﴾. So:

﴿He knows all that goes into the earth and all that comes out of it, and all that descends from heaven and all that ascends to it...﴾ (*Saba* '34: 2)
– and:

﴿Allah knows what you conceal and what you disclose.﴾ (*an-Nahl* 16: 19)

He knows what is secret and what is yet more hidden.

Mention of Allah's creation of the universe is often followed by affirmation of His omniscience, as in this verse and as in the verse in which Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿How could He Who created not know His own creation, when He is the Knower of subtleties, the All-Aware?﴾ (*al-Mulk* 67: 14)

That is because His creation of all things is the clearest evidence of His knowledge, wisdom and might.



﴿وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً قَالُوا أَتَجْعَلُ فِيهَا مَن يُفْسِدُ فِيهَا وَيَسْفِكُ الدِّمَاءَ وَنَحْنُ نُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِكَ وَنُقَدِّسُ لَكَ قَالَ إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٣٠﴾ وَعَلَّمَ آدَمَ الْأَسْمَاءَ كُلَّهَا ثُمَّ عَرَضَهُمْ عَلَى الْمَلَائِكَةِ فَقَالَ أَنْبِئُونِي بِأَسْمَاءِ هَؤُلَاءِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿٣١﴾ قَالُوا سُبْحَانَكَ لَا عِلْمَ لَنَا إِلَّا مَا عَلَّمْتَنَا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿٣٢﴾ قَالَ يَا آدَمُ أَنْبِئْهُمْ بِأَسْمَائِهِمْ فَلَمَّا أَنْبَأَهُمْ بِأَسْمَائِهِمْ قَالَ أَلَمْ أَقُلْ لَكُمْ إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ غَيْبَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَأَعْلَمُ مَا تُبْدُونَ وَمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْتُمُونَ ﴿٣٣﴾ وَإِذْ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ اسْجُدُوا لِآدَمَ فَسَجَدُوا إِلَّا إِبْلِيسَ أَبَى وَاسْتَكْبَرَ وَكَانَ مِنَ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٣٤﴾﴾ (سورة البقرة: ٣٠-٣٤)

- 2:30. When your Lord said to the angels: I am going to place on earth successive generations, they said: Will You place therein those who will make mischief therein and shed blood, whilst we glorify You with Your praises and proclaim Your holiness? He said: I know that which you do not know.
- 2:31. And He taught Adam the names of all things; then He showed them to the angels, and said: Tell me the names of these if you are right.
- 2:32. They said: Glory be to You, we do not know anything except what You have taught us; verily You are the All-Knowing, Most Wise.
- 2:33. He said: O Adam! Tell them the names of these [things]. When he had told them their names, [Allah] said: Did I not tell you that I know what is unseen in heaven and on earth, and I know what you disclose and what you conceal?
- 2:34. And when We said to the angels: Prostrate before Adam, and they [all] prostrated except Iblees; he refused and was arrogant; he was one of the disbelievers.

This is the beginning of the passage that speaks of the superiority of Adam (*'alayhi as-salâm* – peace be upon him), the father of humankind. When Allah wanted to create him, He informed the angels of that and said that He was going to place him on the earth, to be followed by successive generations.

The angels (peace be upon them) said: ﴿Will You place therein those who will make mischief therein﴾ by committing sin ﴿and shed blood?﴾ This (shedding blood) is a specific matter that is mentioned after a general statement (making mischief); it is mentioned in order to highlight the seriousness of killing. This was based on what the angels thought, that the successive generations who were going to dwell on earth would do that, so they declared that the Creator was above creating such a being and that it was not befitting for Him to do so; they glorified Him and declared that they were persistent in worshipping Allah in a manner that was free of any mischief, as they said: ﴿whilst we glorify You with Your praises﴾ that is, we declare You to be above all shortcomings.

﴿And proclaim Your holiness [*nuqaddisu lak*﴾. It may be understood as meaning: and we proclaim You alone to be holy. The phrase 'nuqaddisu lak' may also be understood as meaning: we purify ourselves for Your sake; that is, we purify ourselves by acquiring good characteristics, such as loving, fearing and glorifying Allah, and by ridding ourselves of bad characteristics.

Allah (ﷻ) said to the angels: ﴿I know﴾ concerning these successive generations ﴿that which you do not know﴾, because you are speaking on the basis of speculation, whereas I know what is apparent and what is hidden, and I know that the good that will result from the creation of these successive generations is many times greater than any evil that may result from it. If there was nothing more involved in that but that Allah (ﷻ) wanted to choose from among them the prophets, the *ṣiddeeqeen*, the martyrs and the righteous; and so that His signs might become manifest to His creation; and so that many acts of

worship might be done that would not be done without the creation of these successive generations, such as jihad and so on; and so that the hidden potentials of the sons of Adam, both good and evil, might be demonstrated by means of testing them; and so that His enemies might be distinguished from His close friends, and His supporters from His opponents; and so that the hidden evil in the heart of Iblees, that was the main part of his character, might be made manifest – these are all great reasons, some of which, let alone all of them, would have been sufficient reason for that.

Because the statement of the angels was indicative of their feelings of superiority towards the successive generations that Allah was going to place on earth, Allah (ﷻ) wanted to explain to them the superiority of Adam so that they might acknowledge his status and see the perfection of Allah's wisdom and knowledge. So ﴿He taught Adam the names of all things﴾, and what these names applied to; in other words, He taught them words and meanings, to the extent that He taught them what to call large and small items.

﴿then He showed them﴾ that is, the things that were named ﴿to the angels﴾, as a test for them: would they know what these things were or not?

﴿and said: Tell me the names of these if you are right﴾, as you claim to be superior to these successive generations.

﴿They said: Glory be to You﴾ that is, it is not appropriate on our part to raise any objection to You or to go against Your command.

﴿we do not know anything﴾ whatsoever

﴿except what You have taught us﴾ by Your grace and kindness.

﴿verily You are the All-Knowing, Most Wise﴾; You encompass all things with Your knowledge, so nothing is hidden from You, even so much as a small ant or anything greater than that, on earth or in heaven.

The Most Wise is the One to Whom belongs perfect wisdom from which no creature is excluded; nothing of what He commands is beyond His wisdom. He has not created anything except for a reason

and He has not commanded anything except for a reason. Wisdom means putting things in the appropriate place. So the angels recognised the wisdom and knowledge of Allah and acknowledged their own inability to know the slightest thing. They also acknowledged Allah's grace towards them and His teaching them that which they did not know.

Then Allah said: ﴿O Adam! Tell them the names of these [things]﴾ that is, the names of the things that Allah had shown to the angels but they were unable to name them.

﴿When he had told them their names﴾, it became clear to the angels that Adam was superior to them, and they clearly saw the wisdom and knowledge of the Creator in creating these successive generations.

﴿[Allah] said: Did I not tell you that I know what is unseen in heaven and on earth﴾. This refers to what is hidden from us, so we do not see it. If He knows what is hidden or unseen, it is more appropriate that He knows what is visible.

﴿and I know what you disclose﴾ that is, show openly ﴿and what you conceal﴾.

Then Allah (ﷻ) commanded them to prostrate to Adam, as a sign of honour and respect to him and as an act of obedience and worship to Allah (ﷻ). So they obeyed the command of Allah and they all hastened to prostrate, ﴿except Iblees; he refused﴾ to prostrate. He was too arrogant to obey the command of Allah and he looked down on Adam and said:

﴿...Should I prostrate before one whom You have created from clay?﴾
(*al-Isrā' 17: 61*)

This refusal and arrogance on his part stemmed from the disbelief that was a fundamental component of his character. At that point his enmity towards Allah and towards Adam, as well as his disbelief and arrogance, became clear.

We learn several things from these verses, which confirm that Allah (ﷻ) spoke and that He still speaks; He says whatever He wills and He speaks as He wills; and He is All-Knowing, Most Wise. We also learn that if the wisdom behind some of the things that Allah creates and some of the things that He commands is hidden to us, what we must do is surrender to Him, assume that it is our reasoning that is flawed, and affirm the wisdom of Allah. In these verses, we also see how Allah cared about the angels and showed kindness to them by teaching them that which they did not know and pointing out to them that of which they were not aware.

These verses also teach us the virtue of knowledge, from several angles. For example, Allah highlighted His knowledge and wisdom to His angels, and He highlighted to them the superiority of Adam, which was based on his knowledge; knowledge is the best characteristic that a person may have; and Allah commanded the angels to prostrate to Adam as an honour to him, when his superiority in knowledge became clear to them.

From this passage we also learn that it is important to test others (by asking them questions first, before giving the answers, instead of giving away information freely); if they are unable to answer when tested, then the one who is superior in terms of knowledge should tell them. This is more effective in proving the point.

We also learn from the contrast between the fathers of humanity and of the jinn; the superiority of Adam; the way in which Allah honoured him; the enmity of Iblees towards him; and other lessons.



﴿ وَقُلْنَا يَا آدَمُ اسْكُنْ أَنْتَ وَزَوْجُكَ الْجَنَّةَ وَكُلَا مِنْهَا رَغَدًا حَيْثُ شِئْتُمَا وَلَا تَقْرَبَا هَذِهِ الشَّجَرَةَ فَتَكُونَا مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٢٥﴾ فَأَزَلَّهُمَا الشَّيْطَانُ عَنْهَا فَأَخْرَجَهُمَا مِمَّا كَانَا فِيهِ ﴾

وَقُلْنَا أَهْبِطُوا بَعْضُكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ وَلَكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ مُسْتَقَرٌّ وَمَتَعٌ إِلَىٰ حِينٍ ﴿٣٦﴾ (سورة
البقرة: ٣٥-٣٦)

- 2:35. We said: O Adam! Dwell, you and your wife in paradise; and eat freely from it wherever you may wish; but do not approach this tree, or else you will both become transgressors.
- 2:36. Then Shayṭān made them slip from the [garden] and brought them out of the state [of felicity] they had been in. We said: Go down from here [all of you] as enemies to each other. On earth you will have an abode and your means of livelihood for a while.

When Allah created Adam and honoured him, He completed His blessing towards him by creating from him his wife (Ḥawwa’), so that he might enjoy the pleasure of living with her and so that he might enjoy her companionship, and He commanded them to dwell in paradise and eat from it in abundance and freely «wherever you may wish», that is, they were to eat different kinds of fruit. Allah said to him:

«[But] here [in paradise] it is granted to you that you will not go hungry or be naked, nor will you be thirsty here [in paradise] or suffer from the sun’s heat.» (Tā Hā 20: 118-119)

«but do not approach this tree» which was one kind of the trees of paradise; Allah knows best what it was. He only forbade them to approach it as a test and trial, or for a reason that is not known to us. «or else you will both become transgressors». This indicates that the prohibition was in the sense of it being haram (forbidden), because it would result in transgression or wrongdoing.

But their enemy kept whispering to them and making attractive to them the idea of eating that which was forbidden to them, until he caused them to slip; in other words he made them slip by making it look good to them:

﴿And he swore to them both [saying]: I am to you a sincere adviser.﴾
(*al-A'raf* 7: 21)

– and they were deceived by him and they obeyed him. Thus he caused them to be expelled from the state of felicity and abundance in which they had been, and to be sent down to the realm of exhaustion, striving and struggle.

﴿as enemies to each other﴾. What is meant is that Adam and his progeny would be enemies of Iblees and his progeny. It is well known that enemies strive hard to cause harm to one another and to deprive one another of good by all means. This is an implicit warning to the sons of Adam against Shayṭān, as Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿Verily, the Shayṭān is an enemy to you, so take him as an enemy. He only calls his followers so that they may become inhabitants of the raging fire.﴾ (*Fâtir* 35: 6)

﴿... Will you then take him and his progeny as allies instead of Me, even though they are enemies to you? What a wretched exchange for the wrongdoers!﴾ (*al-Kahf* 18: 50)

Then Allah speaks of their destination on earth: ﴿On earth you will have an abode﴾ that is, a dwelling place ﴿and your means of livelihood for a while﴾, until the end of your allotted time, then you will move from the earth to the realm for which you were created and which was created for you. This verse tells us that the duration of this life is brief and transient. This world is not our true home; rather it is a place through which we pass and from which we seek provision to help us reach that other realm, and it is not to be regarded as our permanent abode.



﴿فَلَقَىٰ آدَمُ مِنْ رَبِّهِ كَلِمَاتٍ فَتَابَ عَلَيْهِ إِنَّهُ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ﴾ (سورة البقرة: ٣٧)

- 2:37. Then Adam received some words from his Lord, and He accepted his repentance, for He is the Acceptor of repentance, the Most Merciful.

«Then Adam received some words from his Lord» that is, Allah inspired him and prompted him. This refers to the words:

«...Our Lord, we have wronged ourselves. If You do not forgive us and have mercy on us, we will certainly be among the losers.» (*al-A'raf* 7: 23)

So Adam admitted his sin and asked Allah for His forgiveness.

«and He» that is, Allah (ﷻ)

«accepted his repentance» and had mercy on him.

«For He is the Acceptor of repentance» for the one who turns to Him.

Allah's acceptance of repentance is indicated by two things: being guided to repent, then repentance is accepted when all its conditions are met.

«the Most Merciful» towards His slaves. By His mercy towards them, He guides and enables them to repent, and He forgives them.



﴿قُلْنَا اهْبِطُوا مِنْهَا جَمِيعًا فَإِمَّا يَأْتِيَنَّكُمْ مِنِّي هُدًى فَمَنْ تَبِعَ هُدَايَ فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ﴿٣٨﴾ وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَكَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿٣٩﴾﴾ (سورة البقرة: ٣٨-٣٩)

- 2:38. We said: Go down from here, all of you; then when guidance comes from Me, whosoever follows My guidance will have no fear nor will they grieve.
- 2:39. But those who disbelieve and reject Our signs, they shall be inhabitants of the fire; they shall abide therein forever.

The idea of getting down is repeated as the basis for what comes next, which is the words ﴿then when guidance comes from Me﴾. In other words, whenever guidance comes from Me, O humankind and jinn; that is, a Messenger and a Book which will guide you to that which will bring you closer to Me and help you to do that which pleases Me.

﴿whosoever﴾ among you ﴿follows My guidance﴾, by believing in My Messengers and Books and following them, which means believing in everything the Messengers and Books say, obeying the commands and heeding the prohibitions

﴿will have no fear nor will they grieve﴾.

Elsewhere, Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿...whoever follows My guidance will not go astray or suffer wretchedness.﴾ (Tā Hā 20: 123)

Thus, four things will result from following His guidance:

The one who does that will be safe from fear and grief. The difference between them is that if harm has already befallen a person, that causes grief, and if it is still expected (and has not yet happened), that causes fear. But here Allah tells us that the one who follows His guidance will be safe from both, and the one who is safe from both will attain the opposite, which is complete security. Similarly, Allah states that the one who follows His guidance will not go astray and will not fall into misery; again, the one who is safe from both will attain the opposite, which is guidance and happiness. So the one who follows His guidance will attain security and happiness in this world and the hereafter, and he will be protected from any negative outcomes, such as fear, grief, misguidance and misery. Thus he will attain what he is seeking, and what he fears will be warded off from him. This is the opposite of the one who does not follow His guidance, disbelieves in Him and rejects His signs.

﴿they shall be inhabitants of the fire﴾ that is, they will be the ones who stay in it and do not depart from it

﴿they shall abide therein forever﴾; they will never come out of it, the punishment will never be reduced for them and they will never be helped.

These and similar verses indicate that creation, both humans and jinn, will be divided into two groups: those who are blessed (destined for paradise) and those who are doomed (destined for hell). These verses also describe the two groups and the deeds that may lead to that. The jinn are like humans with regard to the reward and punishment, just as they are like them with regard to commands and prohibitions.

Then Allah (ﷻ) begins to remind the Children of Israel of His favours and kindness towards them:



﴿يَبْنَئِي إِسْرَائِيلَ أَذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتِيَ الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَأَوْفُوا بِعَهْدِي أُوفِ بِعَهْدِكُمْ وَإِنَّي
فَارْهَبُونِ ﴿٤٠﴾ وَأَمِنُوا بِمَا أَنْزَلْتُ مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا مَعَكُمْ وَلَا تَكُونُوا أَوَّلَ كَافِرِينَ بِهِ
وَلَا تَشْتَرُوا بِعَهْدِي ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا وَإِنِّي فَاتِنُونَ ﴿٤١﴾ وَلَا تَلْسِسُوا الْحَقَّ بِالْبَطْلِ وَتَكْفُرُوا
الْحَقَّ وَأَنْتُمْ تَعْمُونَ ﴿٤٢﴾ وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَارْكَعُوا مَعَ الرَّاكِعِينَ ﴿٤٣﴾﴾

(سورة البقرة: ٤٠-٤٣)

2:40. O Children of Israel! Remember the favours which I bestowed upon you, and fulfil your covenant with Me and I shall fulfil My covenant with you, and fear none but Me.

2:41. And believe in what I have sent down, which confirms that which is [already] with you, and do not be the first to disbelieve therein or sell My revelations for a small price; and fear Me, and Me alone.

2:42. And do not confuse truth with falsehood, nor conceal the truth knowingly.

2:43. And establish prayer, give zakâh; and bow [in worship] with those who bow.

﴿O Children of Israel﴾ the name Israel here refers to Ya'qoob (ﷺ), and it is addressed to all the tribes of the Jews who were in Madinah and its environs, as well as those who would come after them. Thus Allah commanded them in general terms: ﴿Remember the favours which I bestowed upon you﴾. This includes all the favours and blessings, some of which are mentioned in this soorah. What is meant is remembering them and acknowledging them in the heart, praising Allah verbally for them and using these blessings in ways that Allah loves and is pleased with.

﴿and fulfil your covenant with Me﴾. This refers to the covenant that He made with them, that they should believe in Him and His Messengers, and establish His laws.

﴿and I shall fulfil My covenant with you﴾ which is that He will reward them for that.

What is meant by that is what Allah mentions in the following verse:

﴿Allah took a covenant from the Children of Israel, and We appointed twelve leaders from among them. And Allah said: I am with you; if you establish prayer, give zakâh, believe in My Messengers and support them, and lend to Allah a goodly loan, I will surely expiate your bad deeds for you, and admit you to gardens through which rivers flow. But if any of you, after this, disbelieves, he will indeed have strayed from the right path.﴾ (*al-Mâ'idah* 5: 12)

Then He points out the reason that should compel them to fulfil His covenant, which is fear of Him alone; for anyone who fears Him, that fear will make him obey His commands and heed His prohibitions.

Then a specific instruction is issued to them, without which their faith is not complete or valid:

﴿And believe in what I have sent down﴾, namely the Qur'an which He sent down to His slave and Messenger Muhammad (ﷺ). Here He is commanding them to believe in it and follow it, which implies that they should also believe in the one to whom it was sent down. The motive for their belief in it is also mentioned:

﴿which confirms that which is [already] with you﴾ that is, it is in harmony with it and does not contradict it. As it is in harmony with the scriptures that you already have, and does not contradict them, then there is no reason why you should not believe in it, because it brings the same message as all the Messengers brought. So it is more appropriate that you should believe in it, because you are the people of scriptures and knowledge.

Moreover, the words ﴿which confirms that which is [already] with you﴾ indicate that if you do not believe in it, that will backfire on you and will imply that you have rejected the scriptures that you already have, because the message it brings is the same as that which was brought by Moosâ, 'Eesâ and other Prophets. So by rejecting it, you are also rejecting what you have with you.

Furthermore, in the scriptures that you have with you, there is a description and foretelling of this Prophet (ﷺ) who has brought this Qur'an. Hence if you do not believe in him, then you will have rejected some of that which was revealed to you, and the one who rejects some of that which has been revealed to him has in fact rejected all of it, just as the one who disbelieves in one message has in fact disbelieved in all of them.

When Allah commanded them to believe in the Qur'an, He also forbade and warned them against the opposite, which is disbelief in it, as He says: ﴿and do not be the first to disbelieve therein﴾ that is, in the Qur'an and the Messenger (ﷺ).

The phrase ﴿the first to disbelieve therein﴾ is more eloquent than telling them, do not disbelieve in it, because if they were the first to disbelieve in it, that would mean that they were hastening to disbelieve

in it, which is the opposite of what is expected from them; thus their sin and the sins of those who follow their example after them will be upon them.

Then Allah mentions that which is preventing them from believing, which is their preferring immediate worldly gains over eternal bliss. Allah says: ﴿do not...sell My revelations for a small price﴾. That price is what they gain of (worldly) status and accumulation which they think will cease if they believe in Allah and His Messenger (ﷺ), so they trade the verses of Allah for those things, preferring them and giving precedence to them.

﴿and fear Me, and Me alone﴾ that is, none other than Me. If you fear Allah alone, your fear of Him dictates that you should give precedence to belief in His revelations over that small gain, just as choosing the small gain (instead of faith) is indicative of the absence of fear of Allah in your hearts.

Then Allah says: ﴿And do not confuse﴾ that is, mix, ﴿truth with falsehood, nor conceal the truth knowingly﴾. Here Allah is forbidding two things to them: mixing truth with falsehood, and concealing the truth. That is because what is expected of the people of scriptures and knowledge is that they should distinguish between truth and falsehood and propagate the truth, so that people might be guided thereby, those who have gone astray might be brought back, and proof might be established against those who stubbornly reject faith, because Allah has made His revelations clear and has clarified His evidence, so as to distinguish truth from falsehood and to distinguish the path of those who are guided from the path of the evildoers. Any of the people of knowledge who acts upon that is one of the successors of the Messengers and is one of those who lead the people to guidance.

The one who confuses truth with falsehood, not distinguishing between them, and knowingly conceals the truth that he knows and is enjoined to disclose openly, is one of the callers to hell, because with

regard to matters of religion, the people only follow their scholars. So choose for yourself one of these two options.

Then He says «And establish prayer» that is, performing the physical movements properly, with focus and presence of mind «give zakāh» to those who are entitled to receive it «and bow [in worship] with those who bow» that is, pray with those who pray. If you do that, whilst believing in the Messengers and revelations of Allah, then you will have combined both visible and hidden actions, joining sincerity towards Allah with kindness towards His slaves, and combining acts of worship in the heart with physical and financial acts of worship.

«and bow [in worship] with those who bow» that is, pray with those who pray. This is a command which indicates that it is obligatory to pray in congregation and that bowing is one of the pillars or essential parts of the prayer. Here prayer is referred to as bowing; when an act of worship is referred to by one of its parts, this indicates that that part of the act of worship is obligatory.



﴿ أَتَأْمُرُونَ النَّاسَ بِالْبِرِّ وَتَنْسَوْنَ أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ نَتْلُونَ الْكِتَابَ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ ﴾

(سورة البقرة: ٤٤) ﴿ ٤٤ ﴾

- 2:44. Do you enjoin righteousness upon people while you ignore your own selves, even though you study the scripture? Will you not understand?

«Do you enjoin righteousness upon people» that is, do you tell them to believe and do good

«while you ignore your own selves» that is, you do not remind yourselves to do that, at the time when

﴿you study the scripture? Will you not understand?﴾. The root meaning of the word 'aql (reasoning or understanding) is to make a person understand that which will benefit him and restrain him from doing that which will harm him. Reason encourages the individual to be the first one to do what he tells others to do, and the first one to refrain from what he tells others not to do. If a person tells others to do good but does not do it himself, and he tells them not to commit evil but does not refrain from it himself, that indicates that he in fact has no understanding and is ignorant, especially if he does that knowingly. Thus proof is established against him.

Although this verse was revealed concerning the Children of Israel, it is general in meaning and applies to everyone, because Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿O you who believe, why do you say that which you do not do? It is most loathsome to Allah that you say that which you do not do.﴾
(*as-Saff* 61: 2-3)

There is nothing in the verse to indicate that if a person does not do what he is enjoining others to do, then he should give up enjoining what is good and forbidding what is evil, because it is well known that the individual has two duties: enjoining (what is good) and forbidding (what is evil) to others, and doing likewise for himself. The fact that he gives up doing one of them does not mean that he has a concession allowing him to give up the other. Perfection is attained when the individual does both duties, and the worst-case scenario is when he gives up both. As for doing one of them and not the other, it is not as good as the former, but it is not as bad as the latter. Moreover, it is human nature that people do not follow those whose deeds contradict their words; deeds are more likely to be heeded and emulated than mere words.



﴿وَأَسْتَعِينُوا بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلَاةِ وَإِنَّهَا لَكَبِيرَةٌ إِلَّا عَلَى الْخَاشِعِينَ ﴿٤٥﴾ الَّذِينَ يَظُنُّونَ أَنَّهُمْ مُلَاقُوا رَبِّهِمْ وَأَنَّهُمْ إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ ﴿٤٦﴾ يٰبَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ اذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتِيَ الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَأَنِّي فَضَّلْتُكُمْ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٤٧﴾ وَاتَّقُوا يَوْمًا لَا تَجْزِي نَفْسٌ عَنْ نَفْسٍ شَيْئًا وَلَا يُقْبَلُ مِنْهَا شَفَعَةٌ وَلَا يُؤْخَذُ مِنْهَا عَدْلٌ وَلَا هُمْ يُنصَرُونَ ﴿٤٨﴾﴾ (سورة البقرة: ٤٥-٤٨)

- 2:45. Seek help through patience and prayer. Indeed it is hard, except for the humble,
- 2:46. Who are certain that they are going to meet their Lord, and that to Him they will return.
- 2:47. O Children of Israel! Remember the blessings which I bestowed upon you and how I favoured you above all other people.
- 2:48. Then guard yourselves against a day when no soul shall avail another at all and neither intercession nor ransom will be accepted from it, nor will they be helped.

Here, Allah commands them to seek help in their affairs by being patient in all situations. That means being patient in obeying Allah so that one may fulfil one's obligations properly, and being patient in refraining from disobedience, so that one may be able to keep away from it altogether. It also includes patience in accepting the decree of Allah when it is painful, so as to avoid becoming angry or discontented with it. Having patience and compelling oneself to do what Allah has enjoined is a great help in all situations. As a person strives to be patient, Allah will grant him patience. That also applies to prayer, which is the foundation of faith and keeps one from committing shameful and evil deeds. By means of prayer, a person may seek help in all his affairs.

«Indeed it» that is, prayer «is hard» that is, difficult «except for the humble». It is easy and light for them, because humility, fear of

Allah and hope for that which is with Him makes them do it happily, because they have the hope of reward and the fear of punishment. This is unlike the one who is not like that, for he has no motivation to do it, and if he does do it, it is one of the most burdensome of things for him.

Humility means submission of the heart, being tranquil and turning to Allah (ﷻ), expressing one's utter need of Him, having faith in Him and believing in the meeting with Him.

Hence He says: ﴿Who are certain that they are going to meet their Lord﴾, and He will requite them for their deeds ﴿and that to Him they will return﴾. This belief is what makes acts of worship easier for them, gives them consolation at the time of calamity, raises their spirits at the time of crisis and deters them from doing bad deeds. They are the ones who will find eternal bliss in paradise. As for the one who does not believe in the meeting with his Lord, prayer and other acts of worship are among the most difficult things for him.

Then Allah again reminds the Children of Israel of His blessings, as an exhortation and warning, and He instils in them fear of the Day of Resurrection, ﴿when no soul﴾, even if it is one of the noble souls, such as the Prophets and the righteous, ﴿shall avail﴾ that is, be able to help ﴿another﴾, even if the latter is the closest of family members ﴿at all﴾ in any way, great or small; rather the only thing that will benefit an individual is righteous deeds that he sent on ahead.

﴿and neither intercession nor ransom will be accepted from it﴾ that is, that soul will not be able to intercede for anyone without the permission of Allah and His approval of the one for whom intercession is sought, for Allah does not accept any deed except that which is intended for His sake and is in accordance with the straight path and the Sunnah. And no ransom will be accepted either:

﴿If the wrongdoers had everything on earth, and as much again with it, they would offer it to ransom themselves from the terrible punishment on the Day of Resurrection...﴾ (az-Zumar 39: 47)

But that will not be accepted from them, ﴿nor will they be helped﴾ that is, no harm will be warded off from them. This highlights the fact that there will be no benefit from any created being in any way. The words ﴿no soul shall avail another at all﴾ have to do with obtaining benefits, and the words ﴿nor will they be helped﴾ have to do with warding off harm.

﴿neither intercession nor ransom will be accepted from it﴾ – there will be no benefit from anyone that a person could seek in return for something, such as a ransom or intercession. This makes a person cut off any attachment to created beings, because he knows that they cannot bring him the slightest benefit; and it makes him put all his trust in Allah, Who is the One Who brings benefits and wards off harm; so he should worship Him alone, with no partner or associate, and seek His help in worshipping Him.



﴿وَإِذْ نَجَّيْنَاكُمْ مِنْ آلِ فِرْعَوْنَ يَسُومُونَكُم سُوءَ الْعَذَابِ يُدَبِّحُونَ أَبْنَاءَكُمْ وَيَسْتَحْيُونَ نِسَاءَكُمْ وَفِي ذَلِكُمْ بَلَاءٌ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ عَظِيمٌ ﴿٤٦﴾ وَإِذْ فَرَقْنَا بِكُمْ الْبَحْرَ فَأَنْجَيْنَاكُمْ وَأَغْرَقْنَا آلَ فِرْعَوْنَ وَأَنْتُمْ نَنْظُرُونَ ﴿٤٧﴾ وَإِذْ وَعَدْنَا مُوسَىٰ أَرْبَعِينَ لَيْلَةً ثُمَّ اتَّخَذْتُمُ الْعِجْلَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ وَأَنْتُمْ ظَالِمُونَ ﴿٤٨﴾ ثُمَّ عَفَوْنَا عَنْكُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٤٩﴾ وَإِذْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَىٰ الْكِتَابَ وَالْفُرْقَانَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ ﴿٥٠﴾ وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسَىٰ لِقَوْمِهِ يَنْقُومِ إِلَهُكُمْ أَنْفُسَكُمْ يَأْتِيَخَذُكُمْ الْعِجْلَ فَاذْكُرُوا إِلَىٰ بَارِيكُمْ فَمَا قُلْتُمْ أَنْفُسَكُمْ ذَلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ عِنْدَ بَارِيكُمْ فَنَابَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِنَّهُ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿٥١﴾ وَإِذْ قُلْتُمْ يَا مُوسَىٰ لَنْ نُؤْمِنَ لَكَ حَتَّىٰ نَرَىٰ اللَّهَ جَهْرَةً فَأَخَذَتْكُمُ

الصَّعِقَةَ وَأَنْتُمْ تَنْظُرُونَ ﴿٥٥﴾ ثُمَّ بَعَثْنَاكَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَوْتِكَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ
 ﴿٥٦﴾ وَظَلَّلْنَا عَلَيْكُمُ الْغَمَامَ وَأَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَنَّاءَ وَالسَّلْوَىٰ كُلُوا مِنْ طَيِّبَاتِ مَا
 رَزَقْنَاكُمْ وَمَا ظَلَمُونَا وَلَكِنْ كَانُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ ﴿٥٧﴾ (سورة البقرة: ٤٩-٥٧)

- 2:49. And [remember] when We delivered you from the people of Pharaoh, who were subjecting you to grievous torment, slaughtering your sons and letting your womenfolk live; in that was a great trial from your Lord.
- 2:50. And [remember] when We parted the sea for you and saved you while We drowned Pharaoh's people while you were looking on.
- 2:51. And [remember] when We appointed for Moosâ forty nights, and in his absence you took the calf [for worship], and thus became transgressors.
- 2:52. Yet, even after that We forgave you, so that you might be grateful.
- 2:53. And [remember] when We gave Moosâ the scripture and the criterion [between right and wrong] so that you might be guided aright.
- 2:54. And [remember] when Moosâ said to his people: O my people! You have indeed wronged yourselves by taking the calf [for worship]. So repent to your Maker, and kill [the guilty ones among] you; that will be best for you with your Maker. Then He accepted your repentance, for He is the Acceptor of repentance, the Most Merciful.
- 2:55. And [remember] when you said: O Moosâ! We will never believe in you until we see Allah with our own eyes, but a thunderbolt struck you while you were looking on.
- 2:56. Then We brought you back to life after your death, so that you might be grateful.
- 2:57. And We shaded you with clouds and sent down to you manna and quails, saying: Eat of the good things We have provided for

you. Indeed, they did not wrong Us; rather they wronged their own souls.

This is the beginning of a detailed list of Allah's blessings to the Children of Israel:

﴿And [remember] when We delivered you from the people of Pharaoh﴾ that is, from Pharaoh and his people and troops, who prior to that had been ﴿subjecting you﴾ that is, they had been using and abusing them

﴿to grievous torment﴾ that is, the harshest possible torment
 ﴿slaughtering your sons﴾ for fear of your numbers increasing
 ﴿and letting your womenfolk live﴾ that is, not killing them; thus you were caught between being slain or being subject to hard labour, left alive as if a favour was being done to you by the people who looked down at you, which is the ultimate humiliation. But Allah blessed them by saving them completely and drowning their enemy while they were looking on, so that they might rejoice.

﴿in that﴾ that is, in saving you (from Pharaoh)
 ﴿was a great trial﴾ that is, a test
 ﴿from your Lord﴾. This is one of the things that require you to give thanks to Him and to obey His commands.

Then Allah mentions His blessing to them when He appointed for Moosâ forty nights in order to send down to him the Torah which was filled with great blessings and benefits, but they could not wait until the completion of that appointed time; rather they began worshipping the calf in his absence.

﴿and thus became transgressors﴾, fully aware of your transgression, as proof had already been established against you, which made it a greater offence and a more grievous sin. Then Allah commanded you on the lips of His Prophet Moosâ to repent, and to kill the guilty ones

among you, after which Allah forgave you because of that, ﴿so that you might be grateful﴾ to Allah.

﴿And [remember] when you said: O Moosâ! We will never believe in you until we see Allah with our own eyes﴾. This was the utmost transgression and audacity towards Allah and towards His Messenger (ﷺ).

﴿but a thunderbolt﴾ that is, either death or deep unconsciousness ﴿struck you while you were looking on﴾ – that happened when you were all looking at one another.

﴿Then We brought you back to life after your death, so that you might be grateful﴾.

Then Allah mentions His favours to you when you were wandering in the wilderness, as He bestowed upon you shade and ample provision: ﴿And We shaded you with clouds and sent down to you manna﴾. Manna is a generic word that applies to all kinds of provision that are acquired without effort, such as ginger, truffles and so on.

﴿and quails﴾. The quail is a small bird, the flesh of which is palatable. The manna and quails would come down to them in sufficient quantities to nourish them.

﴿Eat of the good things We have provided for you﴾ that is, provision the like of which even those who dwell in cities and live a life of luxury do not have. But they were not grateful for this blessing, and they continued to be hardhearted and to commit many sins.

﴿Indeed, they did not wrong Us﴾ by doing these deeds that were contrary to Our commands, for Allah is not harmed by the disobedience of those who disobey Him, just as He does not benefit from the obedience of those who obey Him.

﴿rather they wronged their own souls﴾ because the harm of those actions came back to them.



﴿وَإِذْ قُلْنَا ادْخُلُوا هَذِهِ الْقَرْيَةَ فَكُلُوا مِنْهَا حَيْثُ شِئْتُمْ رَغَدًا وَادْخُلُوا الْبَابَ
سُجَّدًا وَقُولُوا حِطَّةٌ نَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ خَطِيئَتِكُمْ وَسَيُزِيدُ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٥٨﴾ فَبَدَّلَ الَّذِينَ
ظَلَمُوا قَوْلًا غَيْرَ الَّذِي قِيلَ لَهُمْ فَأَنْزَلْنَا عَلَى الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا رِجْزًا مِنَ السَّمَاءِ بِمَا
كَانُوا يَفْسُقُونَ ﴿٥٩﴾﴾ (سورة البقرة: ٥٨-٥٩)

- 2:58. And [remember] when We said: Go into this town, and eat freely from it wherever you may wish; but enter the gate bowing down [with humility] and say: Relieve us [from the burden of our sins]. We will forgive you your sins and increase [the reward] of those who do good.
- 2:59. But the wrongdoers changed the word to something other than what they had been told; so We sent down upon the wrongdoers a plague from heaven, because of their defiant disobedience.

This is a further part of the blessings that Allah bestowed upon them after they had disobeyed Him. He commanded them to enter a town, which would become a place where they could settle and live a life of dignity, and in which they would have abundant provision. But they were to enter it showing humility towards Allah in their actions, by entering the gate ﴿bowing down [with humility]﴾, and in their words, by saying: ﴿Relieve us [from the burden of our sins]﴾, asking Allah to relieve them of their sins by virtue of their asking Him for His forgiveness.

﴿We will forgive you your sins﴾ by virtue of your asking for forgiveness
﴿and increase [the reward] of those who do good﴾ by virtue of their good deeds, by granting them reward in this world and in the hereafter

﴿But the wrongdoers changed the word﴾ that is, the wrongdoers among them. This means that not all of them did this, because not all of them changed the word.

﴿to something other than what they had been told﴾. So instead of saying *hiṭṭatun* ﴿Relieve us [from the burden of our sins]﴾, they said *habbah fee hīṭah* (a grain of wheat), making fun of and mocking the command of Allah. Since they changed the word, even though it was easy for them to say it, it is more likely that they changed the actions required of them. Hence they entered the gate shuffling on their bottoms. Furthermore, since this transgression was the greatest reason for the punishment that befell them, Allah said: ﴿so We sent down upon the wrongdoers﴾ among them ﴿a plague﴾ that is, a punishment ﴿from heaven, because of their defiant disobedience﴾ that is, because of their evildoing and transgression.



﴿ وَإِذْ أَسْتَسْقَىٰ مُوسَىٰ لِقَوْمِهِ فَقُلْنَا اضْرِبْ بِعَصَاكَ الْحَجَرَ فَانْفَجَرَتْ مِنْهُ اثْنَتَا عَشْرَةَ عَيْنًا قَدْ عَلِمَ كُلُّ أُنَاسٍ مَّشْرِبَهُمْ كُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا مِن رِّزْقِ اللَّهِ وَلَا تَعْتُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ مُفْسِدِينَ ﴿٦٠﴾ ﴾ (سورة البقرة: ٦٠)

2:60. And [remember] when Moosâ prayed for water for his people; We said: Strike the rock with your staff. Then twelve springs gushed forth from it and each tribe knew its own drinking place. So eat and drink of the sustenance provided by Allah, and do not strive to spread mischief in the land.

Moosâ prayed for water from which they could drink.

﴿We said: Strike the rock with your staff.﴾ This refers either to a specific rock that was known to him, or to any rock.

﴿Then twelve springs gushed forth from it﴾; the number of Israelite tribes was twelve.

﴿and each tribe﴾ among them ﴿knew its own drinking place﴾ among these springs, so that there would be no pushing and shoving; rather they would be able to drink easily, without any disturbance. Hence

Allah said: ﴿So eat and drink of the sustenance provided by Allah﴾, meaning that which comes to you without any effort on your part, ﴿and do not strive to spread mischief in the land﴾ that is, do not try to cause ruin and spread mischief.



﴿وَإِذْ قُلْتُمْ يَا مُوسَىٰ لَنْ نَصْبِرَ عَلَىٰ طَعَامٍ وَاجِدٍ فَادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ يُخْرِجْ لَنَا مِمَّا تُنْبِتُ
الْأَرْضُ مِنْ بَقْلِهَا وَقِثَآئِهَا وَفُومِهَا وَعَدَسِيهَا وَبَصَلِهَا ۗ قَالَ أَتَسْتَبْدِلُونَ الَّذِي
هُوَ أَذْيَبٌ بِالَّذِي هُوَ حَيْرٌ ۗ اهْبِطُوا مِصْرًا فَإِنَّ لَكُمْ مِمَّا سَأَلْتُمْ وَضُرِبَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ
الذِّلَّةُ وَالْمَسْكَنَةُ وَبَاءَ وَ يَغْضَبُ مِنَ اللَّهِ ذَلِكَ يَأْتِيهِمْ كَانُوا يَكْفُرُونَ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ
يَقْتُلُونَ النَّبِيِّنَ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ ذَلِكُمْ بِمَا عَصَوْا وَكَانُوا يَعْتَدُونَ ﴿٦١﴾ (سورة البقرة:

(61)

- 2:61. And [remember] when you said: O Moosâ! We cannot bear to eat only one kind of food; so pray to your Lord for us to bring forth for us of what the earth produces, its herbs, cucumbers, garlic, lentils and onions. He said: Would you exchange that which is better for that which is inferior? Go down to any town, and you will find what you want! They were struck with humiliation and wretchedness; they incurred the wrath of Allah. That was because they rejected the signs of Allah and killed the Prophets unjustly. That was because of their disobedience and transgression.

What is meant is: remember when you said to Moosâ, by way of expressing boredom with the blessings of Allah and scorning them: ﴿O Moosâ! We cannot bear to eat only one kind of food﴾. Although, as we stated above, there were different types of food, the variety was limited.

﴿so pray to your Lord for us to bring forth for us of what the earth produces, its herbs﴾ – the word translated here as ﴿herbs﴾ refers to plants other than trees – ﴿cucumbers, garlic, lentils and onions﴾. Moosâ said to them: ﴿Would you exchange that which is better﴾ namely the manna and quails ﴿for that which is inferior﴾ namely the foods mentioned; this is not befitting for you, because the foods you are asking for can be found in any town that you go down to. As for the food with which Allah has blessed you, it is the best and finest of food, so how can you ask for something else in its stead?

Since their behaviour was the greatest evidence of their lack of patience and their scorning the commands and blessings of Allah, He gave them an appropriate punishment, as He said: ﴿They were struck with humiliation﴾ that could be seen in their physical appearance, and ﴿wretchedness﴾ in their hearts, so that they had no self-respect or high ambitions; rather their souls were low and vile, and their aspirations were the worst of aspirations. ﴿they incurred the wrath of Allah﴾ that is, they did not gain anything but the wrath of Allah; what a bad return, and what a bad situation they found themselves in.

﴿That﴾ – the reason why they deserved His wrath – ﴿was because they rejected the signs of Allah﴾ that pointed to the truth. When they rejected His signs, He punished them by becoming angry with them. That was also because they ﴿killed the Prophets unjustly﴾.

Allah says ﴿unjustly﴾ to emphasise the abhorrent nature of the crime; otherwise it is well known that killing a Prophet can never be just or lawful. It also indicates that no one should think that they were ignorant or lacking in knowledge.

﴿That was because of their disobedience﴾ in committing sin ﴿and transgression﴾ against the slaves of Allah. One sin leads to another: negligence leads to minor sin, from which stems major sin, which in turn leads to various kinds of innovation, disbelief and so on. We ask Allah to keep us safe and sound from all trials.

These verses are addressed to the Israelite community that existed at the time when the Qur'an was revealed; the deeds referred to were committed by their forebears, but were attributed to them for several reasons, such as the following:

- They used to boast about and praise themselves, claiming that they were superior to Muhammad (ﷺ) and those who believed in him. By referring to the attitude of their predecessors, which was well known to them, Allah explained to each of them that they were not people of patience, high morals or good deeds. If this is how their ancestors were, when it is expected that the ancestors would be of a higher status and had a better attitude than those who came after them, then how about those who are addressed here?
- The blessings of Allah that were bestowed upon their predecessors also reached the later generations; a blessing for the fathers is also a blessing for the sons, which is why they are addressed here, because they were also included in the blessing.
- It is addressed to them as if they were the ones who did those deeds, which indicates that members of a community that follows one religion support one another and help one another with regard to that which serves the common interest, so that it is as if the earlier and later generations all lived at the same time. The action of one of them is like the action of all of them, because what some of them do of good deeds will benefit all of them, and what some of them do of evil deeds will bring harm to all of them.
- The latter generation did not denounce most of their predecessors' deeds, and the one who approves of sin is a partner in it.

And there are other reasons which are known only to Allah.

Then Allah (ﷻ) says, differentiating between various groups of the People of the Book:



﴿إِنَّ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَادُوا وَالصَّٰدِقِينَ وَالصَّٰبِقِينَ مَن ءَامَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ
الْآخِرِ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ﴾

(سورة البقرة: ٦٢) ﴿٦٢﴾

- 2:62. Those who believe [in the Prophet], and those who are Jews, and the Christians and the Sabians – whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, and does righteous deeds, will have their reward with their Lord; they will have no fear, nor will they grieve.

This ruling applies to the People of the Book only, because the Sabians, according to the correct view, are one of the Christian sects. Here Allah tells us that the believers of this Ummah, and those among the Jews, Christians and Sabians, who believe in Allah and the Last Day, and believe in their Messengers, will have a great reward and well-being; they will have no fear nor will they grieve. As for those among these communities who disbelieve in Allah, His Messengers and the Last Day, they will be in the opposite state, that of fear and grief.

The correct view is that this ruling applies to these groups as they were, and it does not refer to believing in Muhammad (ﷺ), as it speaks of them at a time before the mission of Muhammad (ﷺ) began, and this is how they were then. This is how it is with the Qur'an: if some people find that some verses are not clear to them, they have to look for others that will clarify the matter, because it is a Revelation from One Who knows all things before they happen, and Whose mercy encompasses all things. The way in which this may be clarified – and Allah knows best – is that when the Qur'an mentions the Children of Israel and criticises them for their sins and abhorrent deeds, that may give the impression that all of the Israelites are subject to this condemnation. Hence the Creator (ﷻ) highlighted those who

were not subject to this condemnation by referring to those others (who were not subject to it). As He mentioned the Children of Israel in particular, this may give the impression that this ruling applies to them only; hence Allah (ﷻ) mentioned the general ruling that applies to all these other groups, so as to clarify the truth and dispel confusion and doubt. Glory be to the One Who has included in His Book that which dazzles the minds of those who have knowledge.

Then Allah (ﷻ) goes back to rebuking the Children of Israel for what their predecessors did:



﴿وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَكُمْ وَرَفَعْنَا فَوْقَكُمُ الطُّورَ خُذُوا مَا آتَيْنَاكُمْ بِقُوَّةٍ وَاذْكُرُوا مَا فِيهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ ﴿٦٣﴾ ثُمَّ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ فَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ لَكُنْتُمْ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ ﴿٦٤﴾﴾ (سورة البقرة: ٦٣-٦٤)

- 2:63. And [remember] when We made a covenant with you and We raised the Mount above you, [saying]: Hold fast to what We have given you and bear in mind what is in it, so that you may become pious.
- 2:64. But after that you turned away, and were it not for the grace and mercy of Allah to you, you certainly would have been among the losers.

That is, remember ﴿when We made a covenant with you﴾. This refers to a solemn pledge, which is further emphasised by the fearful event of the raising of the Mount above them. It was said to them: ﴿Hold fast﴾ that is, with determination, effort and patience in obeying Allah ﴿to what We have given you﴾ of the Torah ﴿and bear in mind what is in it﴾ that is, what is in your Book, by reciting it and learning it, ﴿so that you may become pious﴾, fearing the punishment and wrath of Allah.

But after this emphasis on the pledge, ﴿you turned away﴾, which made it inevitable that the severest of penalties should befall you, ﴿and were it not for the grace and mercy of Allah to you, you certainly would have been among the losers﴾.



﴿وَلَقَدْ عَلِمْتُمُ الَّذِينَ اعْتَدَوْا مِنْكُمْ فِي السَّبْتِ فَقُلْنَا لَهُمْ كُونُوا قِرَدَةً خَاسِئِينَ ﴿٦٥﴾ فَجَعَلْنَاهَا نَكَالًا لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهَا وَمَا خَلْفَهَا وَمَوْعِظَةً لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿٦٦﴾﴾ (سورة

البقرة: ٦٥-٦٦)

- 2:65. And you certainly know those amongst you who broke the Sabbath, whereupon We said to them: Be apes, despised and rejected.
- 2:66. So We made their fate an example to their own generation and to those who came after them, and a lesson to those who fear Allah.

That is, the situation of ﴿those amongst you who broke the Sabbath﴾ is something with which you are very familiar. They are the ones whose story is told in detail in Soorat al-A'râf, where Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿Ask them about the town which was by the sea and how they broke the Sabbath...﴾ (al-A'râf 7: 163)

Because of this grave sin, they deserved the wrath of Allah and the punishment of being turned into ﴿apes, despised and rejected﴾ that is, disdained and humiliated.

Allah made this punishment ﴿an example to their own generation﴾ that is, the nations that witnessed it and those whom the news reached at that time

﴿and to those who came after them﴾. Thus proof was established against people; this story also serves to deter people from disobeying Allah. But it is not a beneficial lesson for anyone except those who fear Allah; others do not benefit from His signs.



﴿وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسَىٰ لِقَوْمِهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تَذْبَحُوا بَقْرَةً قَالُوا أَتَتَّخِذُنَا هُزُوًا قَالَ أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ أَنْ أَكُونَ مِنَ الْجَاهِلِينَ ﴿٦٧﴾ قَالُوا ادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ يُبَيِّنْ لَنَا مَا هِيَ قَالَ إِنَّهُ يَقُولُ إِنَّهَا بَقْرَةٌ لَا فَارِضٌ وَلَا يَكْرُ عَوَانٌ بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ فَأَفْعَلُوا مَا تَأْمُرُونَ ﴿٦٨﴾ قَالُوا ادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ يُبَيِّنْ لَنَا مَا لَوْثُهَا قَالَ إِنَّهُ يَقُولُ إِنَّهَا بَقْرَةٌ صَفْرَاءُ فَاقْع لَوْثُهَا تَسُرُّ النَّظِيرِينَ ﴿٦٩﴾ قَالُوا ادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ يُبَيِّنْ لَنَا مَا هِيَ إِنْ الْبَقْرَ تَشَبَهَ عَلَيْنَا وَإِنَّا إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَمُهْتَدُونَ ﴿٧٠﴾ قَالَ إِنَّهُ يَقُولُ إِنَّهَا بَقْرَةٌ لَا ذَلُولٌ تُثِيرُ الْأَرْضَ وَلَا تَسْفِي الْحَرْتَ مُسَلَّمَةٌ لَا شِيَةَ فِيهَا قَالُوا لَئِن جِئْتِ بِالْحَقِّ فَنَذِبُوهَا وَمَا كَادُوا يَفْعَلُونَ ﴿٧١﴾ وَإِذْ قُلْتُمْ نَفْسًا فَاذْرِيهَا فِيمَا شَاءَ اللَّهُ وَخَرُجْ مَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْفُرُونَ ﴿٧٢﴾ فَقُلْنَا أَصْرَبُوه بِبَعْضِهَا كَذَلِكَ يُخَيِّ اللَّهُ الْمَوْتَىٰ وَيُرِيكُمْ آيَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٧٣﴾ ثُمَّ قَسَتْ قُلُوبُكُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ فَهِيَ كَالْحِجَارَةِ أَوْ أَشَدُّ قَسْوَةً وَإِنَّ مِنَ الْحِجَارَةِ لَمَا يَتَفَجَّرُ مِنْهُ الْأَنْهَارُ وَإِنَّ مِنْهَا لَمَا يَشْفَقُ فَيَخْرُجُ مِنْهُ الْمَاءُ وَإِنَّ مِنْهَا لَمَا يَهْبِطُ مِنْ خَشْيَةٍ اللَّهِ وَمَا اللَّهُ بِغَفِيلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٧٤﴾﴾ (سورة البقرة: ٦٧-٧٤)

2:67. And [remember] when Moosâ said to his people: Allah commands you to sacrifice a cow. They said: Are you mocking us? He said: Allah forbid that I should be so ignorant!

2:68. They said: Pray to your Lord to make clear to us what [sort of cow] it should be. He said: He [Allah] says: The cow should be neither too old nor too young, but somewhere in between. Now do as you are commanded!

- 2:69. They said: Pray to your Lord to make clear to us what her colour should be. He said: He [Allah] says: A yellow cow, pure and rich in colour, pleasing to the beholder.
- 2:70. They said: Pray to your Lord to make clear to us [exactly] what she is, because to us all cows look alike. And surely, if Allah wills, we will be guided.
- 2:71. He said: He [Allah] says: A cow not broken in to till the earth or water the fields; sound and whole, without blemish. They said: Now you have brought the truth. Then they offered her in sacrifice, although they almost failed to do so.
- 2:72. And [remember] when you killed a man and disputed among yourselves concerning [the crime], but Allah brought forth that which you were concealing.
- 2:73. So We said: Strike the [body] with a piece of the [sacrificed cow]. Thus Allah brings the dead to life and shows you His signs, that you may understand.
- 2:74. Then after that, your hearts were hardened, and became like a rock or even harder. For among rocks there are some from which rivers spring forth; others which, when they cleave asunder, send forth water; and others which tumble down for fear of Allah. And Allah is not unaware of what you do.

That is, remember what happened to you with Moosâ, when you killed a man and disputed amongst yourselves concerning the crime. In other words, you argued as to who killed him, until the matter nearly got out of hand and almost – were it not for Allah guiding you – resulted in great turmoil amongst you. Then Moosâ told you how to find out about the murderer: Slaughter a cow. You should have hastened to obey his orders and should not have objected to them, but you insisted on objecting, and said: «Are you mocking us?». The Prophet of Allah said: «Allah forbid that I should be so ignorant!» The ignorant man is the one who speaks nonsense, in

which there is no benefit, and he is the one who mocks people. The wise man, on the other hand, thinks that one of the greatest shameful acts that undermine one's religious commitment and rational thinking is mocking a person who is a human being like him; even if he is superior to him, that superiority requires him to show gratitude to his Lord and compassion towards His slaves.

When Moosā said that to them, they realised that he was speaking the truth, and said: «Pray to your Lord to make clear to us what [sort of cow] it should be»; how old should it be? «He said: He [Allah] says: The cow should be neither too old nor too young, but somewhere in between. Now do as you are commanded!» – and stop confusing the matter with so many questions.

«They said: Pray to your Lord to make clear to us what her colour should be. He said: He [Allah] says: A yellow cow, pure and rich in colour» that is, of a deep colour «pleasing to the beholder» with its beauty.

«They said: Pray to your Lord to make clear to us [exactly] what she is, because to us all cows look alike», and we still do not know what you want. «And surely, if Allah wills, we will be guided».

«He said: He [Allah] says: A cow not broken in» that is, trained «to till the earth» by ploughing «or water the fields» that is, she is not used for the purpose of irrigation; «sound and whole» that is, free of defects and not having been used for work; «without blemish» that is, there are no patches of any colour other than what was mentioned above. «They said: Now you have brought the truth» that is, now you have brought us a clear explanation. They said this because of their ignorance, for the truth had come to them from the outset. If they had gone and fetched any cow, they would have done what they were meant to do, but they made it difficult for themselves by asking too many questions, so Allah made it difficult for them. If they had not said «if Allah wills», they would not have been guided concerning this matter. «Then they offered her» that is, the cow that

met that description ﴿in sacrifice, although they almost failed to do so﴾ because of their asking too many questions.

When they had slaughtered her, [Allah] said: ﴿Strike﴾ the slain man with part of her, either a specific part or any part of the cow's body. There is no benefit in specifying which part it was. So they struck him with part of the cow, and Allah brought him back to life and disclosed what they were concealing, as he identified his killer. His being brought back to life whilst they were watching was a sign that Allah can bring the dead back to life, ﴿that you may understand﴾ and be deterred from doing that which will cause you harm.

﴿Then after that, your hearts were hardened﴾ that is, they became harsh and rough, unable to benefit from any exhortation. ﴿Then after that﴾ means, after Allah bestowed upon you great blessings and showed you His signs, after which your hearts should not have become hard, because what you had seen should have softened your hearts and made them humble. Then Allah describes their hardheartedness as being ﴿like a rock﴾, which is harder than iron, because iron and lead melt when they are exposed to fire, but rocks do not melt.

﴿or even harder﴾ means, not less hard than rocks. Then Allah describes how rocks are better than their hearts, as He says: ﴿For among rocks there are some from which rivers spring forth; others which, when they cleave asunder, send forth water; and others which tumble down for fear of Allah﴾. In these ways rocks are superior to their hearts. Then He issues a sterner warning, and says: ﴿And Allah is not unaware of what you do﴾; rather He knows and keeps a record of all your deeds, great and small, and He will requite you for them in the fullest manner.

It should be noted that many of the commentators (may Allah have mercy on them) went to great lengths in filling their books with the stories taken from Jewish sources, and they tried to interpret the verses of the Qur'an in the light of these stories, making them like a

commentary for the Book of Allah. They gave as evidence for their action the hadith in which the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

«Narrate from the Children of Israel, and it does not matter.» (Bukhari)

What I think is that even if it is permissible to narrate their stories and reports, that is only to be done in isolation, not in the context of discussing the meanings of Qur'an or any issue of Sharia. It is not permissible to make them a means of interpreting the Book of Allah at all, unless it is proven to be soundly narrated from the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ). That is because the status of these stories and reports is reflected in the hadith:

«Do not believe the People of the Book and do not disbelieve them.» (Bukhari)

As their status is somewhat dubious, and it is well known in Islam that we must believe in the Qur'an and be certain about its wording and its meanings, it is not permissible for us to use these stories, which were transmitted by unknown narrators in reports that in most, if not all, cases are most likely to be lies, to explain the meanings of the Qur'an in a definitive manner and without doubting them. In fact it is because of heedlessness regarding this issue that what happened came to pass. And Allah is the source of strength.



﴿ أَفَنظَمُونَ أَنْ يُؤْمِنُوا لَكُمْ وَقَدْ كَانَ فَرِيقٌ مِنْهُمْ يَسْمَعُونَ كَلِمَ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ
يُحَرِّفُونَهُ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا عَقَلُوهُ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٧٥﴾ وَإِذَا لَقُوا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا
قَالُوا آمَنَّا وَإِذَا خَلَا بِبَعْضِهِمْ إِلَى بَعْضٍ قَالُوا أَتُحَدِّثُونَهُمْ بِمَا فَتَحَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكُمْ
لِيُحَاجُّوكُمْ بِهِ عِنْدَ رَبِّكُمْ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٧٦﴾ أَوْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا
يُسرُونَ وَمَا يُعْلِنُونَ ﴿٧٧﴾ وَمِنْهُمْ أُمِّيُونَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ الْكِتَابَ إِلَّا أَمَاثِي وَإِنْ
هُمْ إِلَّا يَظُنُّونَ ﴿٧٨﴾ ﴾ (سورة البقرة: ٧٥-٧٨)

- 2:75. Do you [O believers] then hope that they will respond to your call, when a party among them used to hear the word of Allah, and they distorted it knowingly after having understood it?
- 2:76. When they meet the believers, they say: We [too] believe: But when they meet one another in private, they say: Why are you telling them what Allah has disclosed to you [of the description of the Prophet in the Torah], that they may use it in argument against you before your Lord? Have you no sense?
- 2:77. Do they not realise that Allah knows what they conceal and what they disclose?
- 2:78. And there are among them unlettered people, who have no knowledge of the Book, except wishful thinking, and they have nothing but [mere] speculation.

These verses put an end to the believers' hopes that the People of the Book would believe. In other words, do not raise your hopes about them becoming believers, because the way they are does not give rise to any such hope. They used to distort the words of Allah after having learned and understood them; they interpreted them in a way different than what Allah intended, in order to give people the impression that it came from Allah, when it did not come from Allah. If this is how they are with regard to their own Book, which they regard as a source of great pride and honour, and as the basis of their religion, yet they took it as a means to turn people away from the path of Allah, then how can it be hoped that they would believe and respond to your call? That is highly unlikely.

Then Allah describes the condition of the hypocrites among the People of the Book:

﴿When they meet the believers, they say: We [too] believe﴾. They pretended to be believers and they paid lip service to a faith that was not in their hearts

﴿But when they meet one another in private﴾ and no one else is present other than their co-religionists, they say to one another:

﴿Why are you telling them what Allah has disclosed to you [of the description of the Prophet in the Torah]﴾ that is, why do you pretend to believe and tell them that you are like them, when that will be proof for them against you, because they will say: They affirmed that what we are following is truth and what they are following is falsehood.

Thus they (the believers) will use that against you before your Lord.

﴿Have you no sense?﴾ That is, do you not have the sense to stop doing that which may be used against you? This is what they say to one another.

﴿Do they not realise that Allah knows what they conceal and what they disclose?﴾ So even though they concealed what they believed and kept it to themselves, and thought that by being discreet they would be able to avoid giving the believers any argument to use against them, they were wrong and very ignorant, for Allah knew what they concealed and what they disclosed, so He exposed their true nature to His slaves.

﴿And there are among them﴾ that is, among the People of the Book ﴿unlettered people﴾ that is, common folk who are not knowledgeable ﴿who have no knowledge of the Book, except wishful thinking﴾ that is, they have no share of the Book of Allah except recitation that they hear; they know nothing about what the early generations had of true knowledge of it. All these people have is some speculative ideas and they blindly follow the scholars among them.

In these verses, Allah mentions their scholars, common folk, hypocrites and those among them who were not hypocrites. The scholars among them were adhering to their false and misguided religion, and the common folk were blindly following them, with no insight, so there was no hope that either of the two groups would believe in your message.



﴿قَوْلٌ لِلَّذِينَ يَكْتُوبُونَ الْكِتَابَ بِأَيْدِيهِمْ ثُمَّ يَقُولُونَ هَذَا مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ لِيَشْتَرُوا بِهِ ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا قَوْلٌ لَهُمْ وَمَا كُنْتُمْ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَوَيْلٌ لَهُمْ مِمَّا يَكْسِبُونَ﴾ ﴿٧٩﴾

(سورة البقرة: ٧٩)

2:79. Then woe to those who write the scripture with their own hands, and then say: This is from Allah, in order to trade it for a small price! Woe to them for what their hands have written, and woe to them for what they have earned thereby.

Here Allah (ﷻ) is warning that those who distort the scriptures and say of the distortion and what they write: «This is from Allah». In fact this is propagating falsehood and concealing truth. But they did that knowingly, «in order to trade it for a small price». All of this world, from beginning to end, is a small price. They made their falsehood a means of snatching what is in people's hands. Thus they wronged the people on two counts: they confused them with regard to their religion and they took their wealth unlawfully, by the worst of means, which is worse than those who take people's wealth by force or by stealing and so on. Hence Allah warned them about these two things and said: «Woe to them for what their hands have written» of distortion and falsehood «and woe to them for what they have earned thereby» of wealth. What is meant by woe is severe punishment and loss. This is a stern warning indeed.

Shaykh al-Islām (Ibn Taymiyah) said, when discussing this passage «Do you [O believers] then hope... for what they have earned thereby» (vv. 75-79):

Allah condemned those who distorted words, and this includes those who explain or teach the Qur'an and Sunnah on the basis of innovation [*bid'ah*].

He also condemned those who have no knowledge of the Book except wishful thinking. This applies to those who do not ponder the meanings of the Qur'an and know nothing of it except mere recitation of its letters. It also applies to those who write anything with their hands that is contrary to the Book of Allah for the purpose of worldly gain, such as saying that this is from Allah, or this is Islam, or this is what the Qur'an and Sunnah say, or this is the understanding of the early generations and leading scholars, or this is one of the basic matters of religion that every individual and the entire Ummah must believe. It also applies to those who conceal what they know of the Qur'an and Sunnah so that the one who differs from him concerning the truth will not use his words as evidence against him.

These are matters that are very common among the followers of whims and desires in general, such as the Râfiḍis⁹ and also among many of those who claim to be scholars.



﴿ وَقَالُوا لَنْ تَمَسَّنَا النَّارُ إِلَّا أَنْتَا مَا مَعْدُودَةٌ ۗ قُلْ أَنْتُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ عَهْدًا فَلَنْ يُخْلِفَ اللَّهُ عَهْدَهُ ۗ أَمْ نَقُولُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ مَا لَا نَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٨٠﴾ بَكَى مَنْ كَسَبَ سَيِّئَةً وَأَحَاطَتْ بِهِ خَطِيئَتُهُ فَأُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴾

⁹ Râfiḍis: The Râfiḍis are the extremist Shia who believe that 'Ali (raḍiya Allāhu 'anhu – may Allah be pleased with him) should have been the caliph after the Prophet (ﷺ) died, in accordance with his instructions (as they claim), and they believe that the Ṣahābah went against the Prophet's instructions by appointing Abu Bakr (رضي الله عنه) as caliph. For this reason the Râfiḍis bear resentment towards the Ṣahābah whilst, on the other hand, going to such extremes in their love for 'Ali (رضي الله عنه) and his descendants that some of them elevated them to the level of divinity. These Shia groups include the Ithnā' Asharis and the Isma'ilis

﴿أَلَمْ يَأْتِكُمْ رَسُولٌ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ مَا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ﴾ (سورة البقرة: ٨٠-٨٢)

- 2:80. And they say: The fire will only touch us for a few days. Say: Have you received a covenant from Allah, for Allah will never break His covenant? Or are you saying about Allah things of which you have no real knowledge?
- 2:81. Nay, those who do evil, and are encompassed by their sin will be the inhabitants of the fire; they will abide therein forever.
- 2:82. But those who believe and do righteous deeds will be the inhabitants of paradise; they will abide therein forever.

Allah mentions their abhorrent actions, then states that despite that they praise themselves and are certain that they will be saved from the punishment of Allah and will be granted His reward, and that the fire will only touch them for a few days, which are so few that they may be counted on the fingers. Thus they combined evildoing with the feeling that they would be safe from the consequences thereof.

Because this was no more than a mere claim, Allah (ﷻ) refuted them by saying:

«Say» to them, O Messenger: «Have you received a covenant from Allah» whereby you have pledged to believe in Him and in His Messengers, and to obey Him? This is the covenant that would lead to salvation, a covenant that cannot be changed or altered.

«Or are you saying about Allah things of which you have no real knowledge?». Here Allah (ﷻ) tells them that the truth of their claim is connected to one of these two matters, and there is no third option: either they have a covenant from Allah, in which case their claim is true, or they are saying something unfounded about Allah, in which case their claim is false. This exposes them to greater disgrace and a more severe punishment. It is known from their situation that they have no covenant from Allah, because they rejected many of the

Prophets, to the extent that they killed a number of them. Because of their refusal to obey Allah and their breaking of covenants, there is only one possibility, which is that they are fabricators and liars who say about Allah what they do not know, and speaking of Allah without knowledge is one of the gravest and most abhorrent of forbidden actions.

Then Allah (ﷻ) outlines a general ruling that is applicable to all, including the Children of Israel and others. This is the ruling and there is no other; there is no room for their wishful thinking and their claims as to who will be doomed and who will be saved. Allah says: ﴿Nay﴾, the matter is not as you say, for your claim is unfounded. Rather ﴿those who do evil﴾. This may include *shirk* (association of others with Allah) and lesser sins, but what is meant here is shirk, based on the fact that Allah then says ﴿and are encompassed by their sin﴾. What is meant is that it encompasses the one who does it, leaving no way out. This is only applicable in the case of shirk, because the one who believes cannot be encompassed by his sin. ﴿will be the inhabitants of the fire; they will abide therein forever﴾. The Kharijites¹⁰ quote this verse as evidence that anyone who commits sin becomes a disbeliever. But this is proof against them, as you may see, because it clearly refers to shirk. This is the case with every follower of falsehood who quotes a verse or *saheeh* hadith to support his false notion; what he quotes as evidence will inevitably contain evidence against him.

﴿But those who believe﴾ in Allah, His angels, His Books, His Messengers and the Last Day
 ﴿and do righteous deeds﴾ – deeds cannot be righteous unless they meet two conditions: they should be done sincerely for the sake of Allah and in accordance with the Sunnah of His Messenger (ﷺ).

¹⁰ Kharijite: The Kharijites are an extremist group who were former members of 'Ali's army who rebelled against 'Ali (ﷺ) after he accepted arbitration. They held extreme views that led them to regard the majority of Muslims as disbelievers.

To sum up the meaning of these two verses, those who will attain salvation and victory are those who believe and do righteous deeds; those who will be doomed to hell are those who associate others with Allah and disbelieve in Him.



﴿وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ لَا تَعْبُدُونَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ وَيَالِ الْوَالِدِينَ إِحْسَانًا وَذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالسَّكِينِ وَقُولُوا لِلنَّاسِ حُسْنًا وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ ثُمَّ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِّنْكُمْ وَأَنتُمْ مُّعْرِضُونَ﴾

(سورة البقرة: ٨٣)

- 2:83. And [remember] when We took a covenant from the Children of Israel [saying]: Do not worship anyone but Allah; show kindness to your parents and kindred, and to orphans and those in need; speak good words to people; establish prayer; and give zakâh. Then you turned away, except a few of you, and paid no heed.

These teachings are among the basic principles of faith, which Allah has enjoined upon all nations because they contain that which is in the public interest at all times and in all places. So they are not subject to abrogation, because they are fundamental to the religion. Hence Allah enjoined them upon us when He said:

﴿Worship Allah, and do not ascribe any partner to Him...﴾ (an-Nisâ' 4: 36)

﴿And [remember] when We took a covenant from the Children of Israel﴾. That was because of their hard-heartedness; whatever command was enjoined upon them, they were reluctant to obey and would not do it unless they were made to give a solemn covenant and binding promises.

﴿[saying]: Do not worship anyone but Allah﴾. This is a command to worship Allah alone and a prohibition on associating anything with Him. This is the fundamental basis of Islam and no deeds are acceptable if they are not based on that. This is the right that Allah (ﷻ) has over His slaves.

﴿show kindness to your parents﴾ – this includes all types of kindness in word and deed, and implicitly forbids mistreating parents. What is obligatory is treating them kindly, and a command to do something implies prohibition of the opposite.

There are two opposites to kind treatment: mistreatment, which is the greater offence, and failing to show kindness without mistreatment, which is haram but is not as bad as the former. The same may be said with regard to upholding ties of kinship with relatives, orphans and the needy. Kindness may be defined but not quantified, as we shall see below.

Then Allah enjoined kindness towards people in general: ﴿speak good words to people﴾. Speaking good words to people includes enjoining them to do good, forbidding them to do evil, teaching them (beneficial knowledge), greeting them with *salâm*, smiling at them and so on.

As it is not possible for an individual to be kind to all people by monetary means, Allah has enjoined kindness that one may do to all others, namely kindness in words. That also implies that it is prohibited to say bad words to people, even the disbelievers. Hence Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿Do not dispute with the People of the Book except in the most courteous manner...﴾ (*al-'Ankaboot 29: 46*)

Part of the discipline and good manners that Allah has enjoined upon His slaves is that the individual should be dignified in his words and deeds, and not behave or speak in an indecent, offensive, insulting or argumentative manner. Rather he should have a good attitude, and

be forbearing, easy-going with everyone, and patient in the face of any annoyance he encounters from people, in obedience to the command of Allah and in hope of attaining His reward.

Then Allah enjoined them to establish prayer and give zakâh, because of what has been discussed above, namely that prayer is indicative of sincere devotion to Allah and zakâh is indicative of kindness towards other people.

«Then» after these are good commands which, if one who has insight and wisdom ponders them, he will realise that Allah enjoined them upon His slaves out of kindness and mercy towards them, and He took a covenant from you, but «you turned away», not caring at all about the matter. It may be that the one who turns away does so with the intention of coming back, but these people had no desire to come back to these commands. We seek refuge with Allah from misguidance.

«except a few of you». This exception is noted, lest anyone think that all of them turned away; this tells us that Allah protected a few of them and made them steadfast.



﴿وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَكُمْ لَا تَسْفِكُونَ دِمَاءَكُمْ وَلَا تَخْرُجُونَ أَنْفُسَكُمْ مِنْ دِينِكُمْ ثُمَّ أَقْرَرْتُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ تَشْهَدُونَ ﴿٨٤﴾ ثُمَّ أَنْتُمْ هَؤُلَاءِ تَقْتُلُونَ أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَتَخْرُجُونَ قَرِيبًا مِّنْكُمْ مِنْ دِينِهِمْ تَظَاهِرُونَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِالْإِيمَانِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ وَإِنْ يَأْتُوكُمْ أُسْرَىٰ تَقْتُلُوهُمْ وَهُوَ مُحْرَمٌ عَلَيْكُمْ إِخْرَاجُهُمْ أَفْتَوِيْتُمْ بِبَعْضِ الْكِتَابِ وَتَكْفُرُونَ بِبَعْضٍ فَمَا جَزَاءُ مَنْ يَفْعَلْ ذَلِكَ مِنْكُمْ إِلَّا خِزْيٌ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَيَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ يُرَدُّونَ إِلَىٰ أَشَدِّ الْعَذَابِ وَمَا اللَّهُ بِغَفِيلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٨٥﴾ أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ اشْتَرُوا الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا بِالْآخِرَةِ فَلَا يَحْقُقُ عَنْهُمْ الْعَذَابُ وَلَا هُمْ

يُنصَرُونَ ﴿٨٦﴾ (سورة البقرة: ٨٤-٨٦)

- 2:84. And remember We took your covenant [saying]: Do not shed one another's blood or drive one another from your homes, and you confirmed it, and you bear witness to that.
- 2:85. Yet here you are, killing one another and driving a group of your own people out of their homes, helping their enemies against them, in sin and transgression; and if they come to you as captives, you ransom them, when it was forbidden for you to expel them in the first place! Do you believe only in part of the Book and deny another part of it? The punishment for those among you who do this will be nothing but disgrace in this world and on the Day of Resurrection they will be condemned to the harshest punishment. For Allah is not unaware of what you do.
- 2:86. These are the people who buy the life of this world at the cost of the hereafter; their penalty will not be reduced nor will they be helped.

The deeds referred to in these verses are the deeds of those who lived in Madinah at the time of the revelation. Before the Prophet's mission began, al-Aws and al-Khazraj – who became the *Anṣār* – were polytheists who used to fight one another according to the customs of the *jāhiliyah* (pre-Islamic period). Three Jewish tribes – Banu Quraydhah, Banu an-Naḍeer and Banu Qaynuqâ' – came and settled there, and each of these tribes became allies of a group of the people of Madinah.

When they fought, each Jew would help his ally against his opponents, who had the help of another Jewish group. So one Jew might kill another or expel him from his home, in the event of expulsion and plunder. Then, when the war ended and there were prisoners on both sides, they would ransom one another.

These three things were enjoined upon them: they were instructed not to shed one another's blood or expel one another, and if there were

prisoners from among them, it was an obligation upon them to ransom them. They did the latter, but did not fulfil the first two obligations.

Allah condemned them for that, and said: ﴿Do you believe only in part of the Book﴾ namely the ransom of prisoners ﴿and deny another part of it?﴾ namely (the prohibition on) killing and expelling one another.

This offers the strongest evidence that faith requires acting upon commands and heeding prohibitions, and that the deeds that are enjoined are part of faith. Allah (ﷻ) says: ﴿The punishment for those among you who do this will be nothing but disgrace in this world﴾, which indeed came to pass. Allah requited them and gave His Messenger (ﷺ) power over them; he executed some of them, captured others and expelled some.

﴿and on the Day of Resurrection they will be condemned to the harshest﴾ that is, the most severe ﴿punishment. For Allah is not unaware of what you do﴾.

Then Allah (ﷻ) tells us the reason why they disbelieved in part of the Book and believed in other parts: ﴿These are the people who buy the life of this world at the cost of the hereafter﴾. They thought that if they did not help their allies, that would be a source of shame. So they chose the flames over shame. Hence Allah says: ﴿their penalty will not be reduced﴾ rather it will remain severe and there will be no time of respite; ﴿nor will they be helped﴾ that is, no harm will be warded off from them.



﴿وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ وَقَفَّيْنَا مِنْ بَعْدِهِ بِالرُّسُلِ ۗ وَءَاتَيْنَا عِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ الْبَيِّنَاتِ وَأَيَّدْنَاهُ بِرُوحِ الْقُدُسِ ۗ أَفَكُلَّمَا جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولٌ بِمَا لَا تَهْوَى أَنْفُسَكُمْ اسْتَكْبَرْتُمْ فَفَرِيقًا كَذَّبْتُمْ وَفَرِيقًا تَقْتُلُونَ﴾ (سورة البقرة: ٨٧)

2:87. We gave Moosâ the Book and sent a succession of Messengers after him; We gave 'Eesâ the son of Maryam clear signs and supported him with the Pure Spirit. Is it that whenever there came to you a Messenger with something that was not in accordance with your desires, you became arrogant; some you disbelieved, and others you killed?

Here Allah reminds the Children of Israel that He sent Moosâ to them and gave him the Torah; after him, He sent Messengers who ruled in accordance with the Torah, until He sent their final Prophet, 'Eesâ ibn Maryam (ﷺ), and gave him clear signs that would be sufficient proof for any human to believe in him.

«supported him with the Pure Spirit» that is, Allah strengthened him with the Pure Spirit.

The majority of commentators stated that this refers to Jibreel (ﷺ); others suggested that it refers to faith by means of which Allah supports His slaves.

Yet, despite these blessings that cannot be quantified, when the Messengers came to you, «with something that was not in accordance with your desires, you became arrogant» that is, you were too arrogant to believe in them.

«some» of them «you disbelieved, and others you killed», so you gave precedence to your whims and desires over guidance, and to this world over the hereafter. This is an obvious rebuke.



﴿ وَقَالُوا أَأُفْلِحُونَ ۗ بَلْ لَعَنَهُمُ اللَّهُ بِكُفْرِهِمْ فَقَلِيلًا مَّا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴾ (سورة البقرة: ٨٨)

2:88. They say: Our hearts are impenetrably wrapped [against whatever you say]. Nay, Allah has cursed them for their disbelief; little is it they believe.

As their excuse for not believing that to which you, O Prophet, are calling them, they stated that their hearts are impenetrably wrapped. What is meant is that their hearts are covered over, so they do not understand what you say. In other words, they have an excuse – or so they say – for not understanding. But this is a lie on their part, hence Allah (ﷻ) said: ﴿Nay, Allah has cursed them for their disbelief﴾ that is, they are cast away and cursed because of their disbelief and the believers among them are few, or they have little faith and it is their disbelief that is prevalent.



﴿وَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ كِتَابٌ مِّنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ مُصَدِّقٌ لِّمَا مَعَهُمْ وَكَانُوا مِن قَبْلُ يَسْتَفْتِحُونَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ مَا عَرَفُوا كَفَرُوا بِهِ فَلَعْنَةُ اللَّهِ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٨٩﴾ يَتَسَاءَلُونَ أَنفُسَهُمْ أَن يَكْفُرُوا بِمَا أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ بَعِيًّا أَنْ يُنَزَّلَ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ عَلَى مَنْ يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ قَبَاءٌ وَيَعْضِبُ عَلَى غَضَبٍ وَلِلْكَافِرِينَ عَذَابٌ مُّهِينٌ ﴿٩٠﴾﴾ (سورة البقرة: ٨٩-٩٠)

2:89. And now that there has come to them a Book from Allah, confirming what is with them – although in the past they used to pray for victory against those who disbelieved – when there comes to them that which they recognise as truth, they disbelieve in it; the curse of Allah is upon the disbelievers.

2:90. How miserable is the price for which they have sold their souls, in that they reject that which Allah has sent down, out of resentment that Allah would send it down by His grace upon any of His slaves He chooses: Thus have they incurred wrath upon wrath. And for the disbelievers there will be a humiliating punishment.

That is, when a Book has come to them from Allah at the hands of the best of creation and the Seal of the Prophets, confirming that which is with them of the Torah, and they had prior knowledge of it and were certain of its coming – to the extent that if war broke out between them and the polytheists during the jāhiliyah, they would speak of the victory they would achieve when this Prophet (ﷺ) came, and warn them (the polytheists) about his imminent appearance and that they would fight the polytheists alongside him. But when this Book came to them, and the Prophet (ﷺ) whom they recognised, they rejected him out of resentment and envy that Allah would send it down, by His grace, upon whomever He willed among His slaves. So Allah cursed them and was angry with them, wrath upon wrath, because their disbelief was so great and because they kept doubting and associating others with Allah.

«And for the disbelievers there will be a humiliating» that is, painful «punishment», namely being thrown into hell and missing out on eternal bliss (in paradise). What a wretched situation they will be in, and what a bad deal they made when they gave up belief in Allah and in His Books and Messengers, and traded it for disbelief in Him and in His Books and Messengers, despite their knowledge and certainty. Thus their punishment will be more severe.



﴿وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ ءَامِنُوا بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ قَالُوا تَوْمِنُ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْنَا وَيَكْفُرُونَ
بِمَا وَرَاءَهُ. وَهُوَ الْحَقُّ مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا مَعَهُمْ ۗ قُلْ فَلِمَ تَقْتُلُونَ أَنْبِيَاءَ اللَّهِ مِنْ قَبْلُ إِنْ
كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٩١﴾ ۖ وَلَقَدْ جَاءَكُمْ مُوسَىٰ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ ثُمَّ اتَّخَذْتُمُ الْعِجْلَ
مِنْ بَعْدِهِ وَأَنْتُمْ ظَالِمُونَ ﴿٩٢﴾ وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَكُمْ وَرَفَعْنَا فَوْقَكُمُ
الطُّورَ خُذُوا مَا آتَيْنَاكُمْ بِقُوَّةٍ وَأَسْمِعُوا قَالُوا سَمِعْنَا وَعَصَيْنَا وَأَشْرَبُوا

فِي قُلُوبِهِمُ الْعِجْلَ بِكُفْرِهِمْ ۗ قُلْ بِئْسَمَا يَأْمُرُكُم بِهِ إِيمَانُكُمْ إِن
 كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٩٣﴾ (سورة البقرة: ٩١-٩٣)

- 2:91. When it is said to them: Believe in that which Allah has revealed, they say: We believe in that which was revealed to us; yet they disbelieve in that which came after it, even though it is truth confirming that which is with them. Say: Why then did you kill the Prophets of Allah in the past, if you were indeed believers?
- 2:92. Moosâ came to you with clear signs, yet in his absence you took the calf [for worship] and thus became transgressors.
- 2:93. And [remember] when We took a covenant from you and We raised the Mount above you, [saying]: Hold fast to that which We have given you and listen, they said: We hear and we disobey. And their hearts were filled with love of the calf, because of their disbelief. Say: How wretched is that which your faith commands you to do, if you are believers.

That is, when the Jews were commanded to believe in that which Allah had sent down to His Messenger (ﷺ), namely the Qur'an, they were arrogant and refused, saying: ﴿We believe in that which was revealed to us; yet they disbelieve in that which came after it﴾ of other Books, even though what they should have done was believe in everything that Allah revealed, whether it was revealed to them or to others. That is beneficial faith, belief in what Allah has revealed to all the Messengers of Allah.

As for differentiating between the Messengers and the Books, claiming to believe in some but not others, this is not faith; rather it is the essence of disbelief. Hence Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿Those who disbelieve in Allah and His Messengers, and want to make a distinction between [belief in] Allah and [belief in] His Messengers, and say: We believe in some and disbelieve in others

– and seek to adopt a way in between, it is they who are indeed disbelievers...» (*an-Nisā' 4: 150-151*)

Hence Allah (ﷻ) rebuked them emphatically here, with such a strong argument that they could not evade it. He responded to their disbelief in the Qur'an in two ways: He said «even though it is truth» – so if it is truth in all that it contains of stories, commands and prohibitions, and it is from their Lord, then disbelieving in it after that is disbelief in Allah and rejection of the truth that He sent down.

Then He said «confirming that which is with them» that is, in accordance with it in everything that is true and correct, and with final authority over them (previous scriptures). So why do you believe in that which was revealed to you, but you reject that which is equal to it? Can this be anything other than bias and following whims and desires instead of guidance? Moreover, if the Qur'an confirms that which is with them, this is proof for what they have of Books, and they have no way of proving (that their books were originally revealed from Allah) except through the Qur'an. So if they disbelieve in it and reject it, they become like one who made a claim on the basis of proof, and had no other basis for it; his claim cannot be accepted unless his proof is sound, then he examines his proof and argument, and finds them flawed so he rejects them. Is this not foolishness and insanity? Therefore their rejection of the Qur'an is akin to rejection of what they have in their own hands, and undermines it.

Then Allah demonstrated that the claim to believe in what was revealed to them was baseless, as He said:

«Say» to them «Why then did you kill the Prophets of Allah in the past, if you were indeed believers? Moosâ came to you with clear signs» that is, he brought clear evidence that pointed to the truth.

«yet in his absence» that is, after he had left, «you took the calf [for worship] and thus became transgressors», and you had no excuse for doing that.

«And [remember] when We took a covenant from you and We raised the Mount above you, [saying]: Hold fast to that which We have given you and listen» that is, listen to it, accept it, obey and respond «they said: We hear and we disobey» that is, this is how they were. «And their hearts were filled with love of the calf» that is, love of the calf and love of worshipping it was instilled in their hearts, because of their disbelief.

«Say: How wretched is that which your faith commands you to do, if you are believers» that is, you claim to believe and boast about having the true religion, yet you killed the Prophets of Allah and took the calf as a god instead of Allah, when your Prophet Moosâ was absent from you, and you did not accept his commands and prohibitions except after receiving threats and after the Mount was raised above you. Then you paid lip service to commitment, but your actions contradicted that. So what is this faith that you claim to have, and what is this religion?

If this is faith, as you claim, then how wretched is the faith that calls its followers to transgression, disbelief in the Messengers of Allah and great disobedience, when it is well known that true faith enjoins its followers to do all that is good and forbids them to do all that is evil. Thus their lies were highlighted and the contradiction (between their words and deeds) became evident.



﴿قُلْ إِنْ كَانَتْ لَكُمْ الدَّارُ الْآخِرَةُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ خَالِصَةً مِّنْ دُونِ النَّاسِ فَتَمَنَّوْا
 الْمَوْتَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿٩٤﴾ وَلَنْ يَتَمَنَّوْهُ أَبَدًا بِمَا قَدَّمْت أَيْدِيهِمْ وَاللَّهُ
 عَلِيمٌ بِالظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٩٥﴾ وَلَسَجَدَتْ لَهُمْ أَنْحَافُ النَّاسِ عَلَى حَيْوَةٍ وَمِنَ الَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا يَوَدُّ
 أَحَدُهُمْ لَوْ يُعَمَّرَ أَلْفَ سَنَةٍ وَمَا هُوَ بِمُرَحَّبٍ بِهِ مِنْ الْعَذَابِ أَنْ يُعَمَّرَ وَاللَّهُ بَصِيرٌ بِمَا
 يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٩٦﴾﴾ (سورة البقرة: ٩٤-٩٦)

- 2:94. Say: If the final abode with Allah is yours alone, to the exclusion of all others, then wish for death, if you are sincere.
- 2:95. But they will never wish for death, because of what their own hands have sent on before them, and Allah is fully aware of the transgressors.
- 2:96. You will surely find them, of all people, most greedy for life, even more than the polytheists. Each one of them wishes that he could be granted a life of a thousand years, but his being granted such a long life will not save him from punishment. For Allah sees well all that they do.

«Say» that is, tell them, by way of correcting their false claims «If the final abode with Allah» namely paradise «is yours alone, to the exclusion of all others», as you claim that no one will enter paradise except those who are Jews or Christians, and that the fire of hell will only touch them for a few days (2: 80), so if you are telling the truth, «then wish for death». This is a kind of challenge between them and the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ).

After having been cornered and pressured in response to their stubbornness, they are left with only one of two choices: either to believe in Allah and His Messenger (ﷺ), or to accept the challenge, which is to wish for death which will bring them to that abode that is exclusively theirs (according to their claim). But they refused to do that.

Thus it is established that they are in a state of extreme stubbornness and opposition to Allah and His Messenger (ﷺ), despite the fact that they are aware of what they are doing. Hence Allah (ﷻ) said: «But they will never wish for death, because of what their own hands have sent on before them» of disbelief and sin; they are well aware that this is a path that will lead them to the requital for their evil deeds. Hence death was the most hateful of things to them and they were

greedier for life than anyone else, even the polytheists who did not believe in any of the Messengers or Books.

Then Allah mentioned the intensity of their love for this world: «Each one of them wishes that he could be granted a life of a thousand years». This highlights how eager they were to live, as they wished for something that is impossible. However, even if they were to live for that number of years, it would not avail them anything or ward off any of the punishment.

«For Allah sees well all that they do» – this is a threat to them of punishment for their deeds.



﴿قُلْ مَنْ كَانَ عَدُوًّا لِجِبْرِيلَ فَإِنَّهُ نَزَّلَهُ، عَلَى قَلْبِكَ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَهُدًى وَبُشْرَىٰ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٩٧﴾ مَنْ كَانَ عَدُوًّا لِلَّهِ وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ، وَجِبْرِيلَ وَمِيكَالَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ عَدُوٌّ لِلْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٩٨﴾﴾ (سورة البقرة: ٩٧-٩٨)

2:97. Say: Whoever is an enemy to Jibreel – for he brings down the [revelation] to your heart by Allah's leave, a confirmation of what came before it, and guidance and glad tidings to the believers –

2:98. Whoever is an enemy to Allah and His angels and Messengers, to Jibreel and Meekâl [Meekâ'eel], then indeed, Allah is an enemy to the disbelievers.

That is, say to these Jews, who claim that what is preventing them from believing in you is the fact that your protector is Jibreel (جبريل), and if it were anyone else among the angels of Allah, they would have believed in you, that this claim of yours is flawed and self-contradictory, and it is arrogance towards Allah. That is because Jibreel (جبريل) is the one who brought down the Qur'an to your heart

from Allah, and he is the one who came down to the Prophets before you; he is the one whom Allah commanded and sent to do that. Hence he is primarily a Messenger. Furthermore, this Book that Jibreel brought down confirms the scriptures that came before it, and does not differ from them or contradict them; it contains complete guidance away from all types of misguidance, and glad tidings of good in this world and in the hereafter for those who believe in it. Hence enmity towards Jibreel, who is described thus, constitutes disbelief in Allah and His signs, and it is enmity towards Allah and towards His Messengers and angels. Their enmity towards Jibreel was not because of who he is; rather it was because of what he brought down of the truth from Allah to the Messengers of Allah. Hence that enmity implies disbelief in and enmity towards the One Who sent him, the message with which he was sent and the one to whom he was sent.



﴿وَلَقَدْ أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ آيَاتٍ بَيِّنَاتٍ وَمَا يَكْفُرُ بِهَا إِلَّا الْفَاسِقُونَ﴾ (سورة

البقرة: ٩٩)

2:99. We have sent down to you clear signs; and none reject them but the evildoers.

Here Allah says to His Prophet (ﷺ): ﴿We have sent down to you clear signs﴾, by means of which the one who seeks guidance will find it, and so as to establish proof against those who stubbornly refuse (to follow guidance). This is such clear guidance to the truth that no one could refuse to accept but an evildoer who rebels against the command of Allah, refuses to obey Him and is extremely arrogant.



﴿أَوْ كَلَّمَا عَاهَدُوا عَهْدًا بَدَّهٖ فَرِيقٌ مِّنْهُمْ ۚ بَلْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ﴾ (١٠٠)

(سورة البقرة: ١٠٠)

2:100. Is it not so that every time they make a covenant, some of them cast it aside? In fact, most of them do not believe.

This is an expression of astonishment at how often they made covenants but did not have the patience to fulfil them. The phrase ﴿every time﴾ is indicative of something that happened repeatedly. Every time they made a covenant, the outcome was that they broke it. What was the reason for that? The reason was that most of them did not believe, and it is their lack of faith that caused them to break the covenants. If they had been sincere in faith, they would have been like those of whom Allah says:

﴿Among the believers are men who have been true to their covenant with Allah...﴾ (al-Ahzab 33: 23)



﴿وَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ رَسُولٌ مِّنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ مُصَدِّقٌ لِّمَا مَعَهُمْ بَدَّ فَرِيقٌ مِّنَ الَّذِينَ
 أَوْتُوا الْكِتَابَ كَتَبَ اللَّهُ وِرَاءَ ظُهُورِهِمْ كَأَنَّهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ﴾ (١٦١) ﴿وَاتَّبَعُوا مَا
 تَتْلُوا الشَّيْطَانُ عَلَىٰ مُلْكِ سُلَيْمَانَ ۖ وَمَا كَفَرَ سُلَيْمَانُ وَلَكِنَّ الشَّيَاطِينَ
 كَفَرُوا يُعَلِّمُونَ النَّاسَ السِّحْرَ وَمَا أُنزِلَ عَلَى الْمَلَائِكَةِ بِبَابِلَ هَارُوتَ
 وَمَارُوتَ ۚ وَمَا يَعْلَمَانِ مِن أَحَدٍ حَتَّى يَقُولَا إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ فِتْنَةٌ فَلَا تَكْفُرْ ۚ فَيَتَعَلَّمُونَ
 مِنْهُمَا مَا يَقْرَءُونَ بِهِ ۚ بَيْنَ الْمَرَّةِ وَرَوْحِهِ ۚ وَمَا هُمْ بِضَارِينَ بِهِ ۚ مِنْ أَحَدٍ
 إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَيَتَعَلَّمُونَ مَا يَضُرُّهُمْ وَلَا يَنْفَعُهُمْ ۚ وَلَقَدْ عَلَّمُوا لَمَنِ اشْتَرَاهُ
 مَا لَهُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِن خَلْقٍ وَلَيْسَ مَا شَرَوْا بِهِ أَنفُسَهُمْ لَوْ كَانُوا

يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٠٢﴾ وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ ءَامَنُوا وَأَتَّقَوْا لَمَثُوبَةٌ مِّنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ خَيْرٌ لَّو كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٠٣﴾ (سورة البقرة: ١٠١-١٠٣)

- 2:101. And when there came to them a Messenger from Allah, confirming that which was with them, some of those who had been given the Book cast the Book of Allah behind their backs as if they had no knowledge.
- 2:102. They followed that which the devils used to read [of books of magic] during the reign of Sulaymân. It was not Sulaymân who disbelieved; rather the devils disbelieved and taught men magic, and such things as had come down at Babylon to the two angels Hâroot and Mâroot. But these two never taught anyone without [first] saying: We are but a trial, so do not disbelieve. They learned from them the means of sowing discord between a man and his wife, but they could not harm anyone thereby except by Allah's leave. They learned that which harmed them, and did not benefit them, knowing full well that whoever dealt in it [magic] would have no share in the hereafter. How wretched was the price for which they sold their souls, if only they knew.
- 2:103. If they had believed and feared Allah, the reward from Allah would have been better, if only they knew.

When this noble Messenger (ﷺ) brought to them this great Book that was based on truth and was in harmony with that which they had, that was at a time when they claimed to be adhering to their scripture. But when they disbelieved in this Messenger (ﷺ) and that which he brought, «some of those who had been given the Book cast the Book of Allah», which had been sent down to them, «behind their backs», and showed no interest in it. This description is more emphatic than saying that they turned away from it. By doing this, it was as if they were among the ignorant, when in fact they were well aware that it was true.

Thus it becomes clear that this group among the People of the Book were not adhering to anything, because they did not believe in this Messenger (ﷺ). Hence their disbelief in him was tantamount to disbelief in their own scriptures, but they did not realise that.

It is a regular part of Allah's decree, which is based on divine wisdom, that if a person forsakes that which might have benefitted him, and he was able to benefit from it but did not, then he will be caused to deal with that which is harmful to him. The one who fails to worship Allah will end up worshipping idols; the one who fails to love, fear and put his hope in Allah will end up loving, fearing and putting his hope in something other than Allah; the one who fails to spend his wealth in obedience to Allah will spend it in obedience to the Shayṭān; the one who fails to show humility towards his Lord will end up being humiliated by other people; the one who fails to follow the truth will end up following falsehood.

Thus these Jews followed what the devils used to read (of the books of magic) during the reign of Sulaymān. These devils brought magic to people and claimed that Sulaymān used to use it and achieved great power by means of it, but they were lying. Sulaymān did not use magic; rather Allah declared him to be innocent of that, as He said: ﴿It was not Sulaymān who disbelieved﴾ by learning magic, for he did not learn it.

﴿rather the devils disbelieved﴾ by doing that, ﴿and taught men magic﴾ so as to misguide them, and out of their eagerness to tempt the sons of Adam.

Similarly, the Jews practised that magic that had come down to the two angels who lived at Babylon, in the land of Iraq. Magic was sent down to them as a test and a trial from Allah to His slaves. So (these two angels) taught them magic, ﴿But these two never taught anyone without [first]﴾ advising him and ﴿saying: We are but a trial; so do not disbelieve﴾ that is, do not learn magic, for it is disbelief. So they would tell him not to learn magic, and they would inform

him of how bad it was. The devils' teaching of magic was aimed at confusing and misguiding people, and they attributed it to one whom Allah declared innocent of that, namely Sulaymân (ﷺ). In contrast, the angels' teaching of magic was as a test, after they offered advice, so as to leave no excuse.

These Jews practised the magic that had been taught by the devils and that which had been taught by the two angels; thus they ignored the knowledge brought by the Prophets and Messengers, turning instead to the knowledge of the devils. Every individual aspires to that which suits his nature.

Then Allah mentions the evil consequences of magic, as He says: ﴿They learned from them the means of sowing discord between a man and his wife﴾ even though the love between spouses cannot be compared to any other love, because Allah says concerning them: ﴿...and He has instilled love and compassion between you...﴾ (*ar-Room 30: 21*)

This indicates that magic is something real, and that it may cause harm by Allah's leave, if He wills it. Allah's leave is of two types: that which has to do with the divine decree, and is connected to the will of Allah, as in this verse; and that which has to do with the laws prescribed by Allah, as referred to in the previous verse: ﴿for he brings down the [revelation] to your heart by Allah's leave﴾ (2: 97).

In this and similar verses, it states that no matter how powerful the means may be, they are still subject to the divine will and decree, and are not independent in their effect. No one among the Ummah differed with regard to this principle apart from the Qadaris, who said that people's deeds are independent and are not subject to the divine will, and thus they excluded people's deeds from the divine decree, thereby going against the Book of Allah, the Sunnah of His Messenger (ﷺ) and the consensus of the Companions and *tâbi'een*.

Then Allah states that magic is purely harmful, with no benefits, either spiritual or worldly. There may be some worldly benefits in some sins, as Allah says with regard to alcohol and gambling: ﴿Say: In them is great sin, and some benefit for people; but the sin is greater than the benefit﴾ (2: 219).

But magic is purely harmful, so there is no need for it at all. All forbidden things are either completely harmful, or their evil consequences outweigh any benefit in them. By the same token, everything that is enjoined is either completely good, or its good consequences outweigh any bad.

﴿knowing full well﴾ that is, the Jews were well aware ﴿that whoever dealt in it [magic] would have no share in the hereafter﴾ that is, rather he would be subject to punishment. They did not do it out of ignorance; rather it was because they preferred the life of this world to the hereafter.

﴿How wretched was the price for which they sold their souls, if only they knew﴾ that is, if only they had had the kind of knowledge that would lead to righteous deeds, then they would not have done that.



﴿يَتَّيِبَهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَا تَقُولُوا رَاعِنَا وَقُولُوا انظُرْنَا وَاسْمَعُوا[ۙ]
وَاللَّكَفِرِينَ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿١٤٤﴾ مَا يَوَدُّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ أَهْلِ
الْكِتَابِ وَلَا الْمُشْرِكِينَ أَنْ يُنَزَّلَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ وَاللَّهُ يَخْتَصُّ
بِرَحْمَتِهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيمِ ﴿١٤٥﴾﴾ (سورة البقرة: ١٠٤-١٠٥)

2:104. O you who believe, do not say [to the Messenger]: *râ'inâ*; rather say: *undhurnâ*¹¹, and listen. For the disbelievers there will be a painful punishment.

¹¹ *Râ'inâ* means "Listen to us"; *undhurnâ* means "Look at us". Both words convey the meaning of "Pay attention to us", but with a slight twist in =

2:105. It is never the wish of the disbelievers among the People of the Book, or of the polytheists, that anything good should come down to you from your Lord. But Allah singles out for His mercy whomever He wills – for Allah is Possessor of abundant grace.

When the Muslims addressed the Messenger (ﷺ) as he was teaching them about their religion, they would say: *râ'inâ*, meaning pay attention to us, giving the word an acceptable meaning. The Jews, however, gave the same word an offensive meaning; they took advantage of this opportunity to address the Messenger (ﷺ) with this word, intending the offensive meaning. So Allah told the believers not to use this word, so as to put a stop to this problem. This shows us that something permissible may be disallowed, if it becomes a means that leads to something haram. It also shows us that we should adopt good manners and use words that can only be interpreted in a good way; we should also avoid foul speech and offensive words, or words that are ambiguous and may be interpreted in an inappropriate manner. So Allah instructed them to use words that could only be interpreted in a good way, as He said:

﴿rather say *undhurnâ*﴾, for this word is sufficient to convey the desired meaning without any reservations.

﴿and listen﴾. Who or what is to be listened to is not specified, so as to include everything that it is enjoined to listen to, such as the Qur'an and Sunnah. We should listen to them, understand them and respond to them. This is proper manners and obedience.

Then Allah warns the disbelievers of the painful punishment, and speaks of the enmity of the Jews and polytheists towards the believers, for they do not wish that ﴿anything good﴾ whether it be great or small ﴿should come down to you from your Lord﴾. This stems from envy

= pronunciation, the former had an offensive meaning in Hebrew, which the Jews took advantage of to mock the Prophet (ﷺ). Hence the believers were instructed to use a word that could not be twisted in this manner.

and resentment on their part because Allah has singled you out for His grace. For He is «Possessor of abundant grace»; by His grace towards you, He sent down the Book to your Messenger (ﷺ), in order to purify you, teach you the Book and wisdom, and teach you that which you did not know. To Him be all praise.



﴿ مَا نَنْسَخْ مِنْ آيَةٍ أَوْ نُنسِهَا نَأْتِ بِخَيْرٍ مِنْهَا أَوْ مِثْلَهَا أَلَمْ تَعْلَمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴾ ﴿١٠٦﴾ أَلَمْ تَعْلَمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا لَكُمْ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مِنْ وَلِيٍّ وَلَا نَصِيرٍ ﴿١٠٧﴾ (سورة البقرة: ١٠٦-١٠٧)

- 2:106. Whenever We abrogate a verse or cause it to be forgotten, We bring one better than it or one equal to it. Do you not know that Allah has power over all things?
- 2:107. Do you not know that to Allah belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth, and besides Him you have neither protector nor helper?

The Arabic word *naskh* (translated here as “abrogation”) means moving or shifting. What is meant by abrogation is shifting the accountable (that is, adults of sound mind) from one Islamic ruling to another, or cancelling the ruling altogether. The Jews do not accept the idea of abrogation, and they say that it is not permissible, even though it is mentioned in their Torah. The rejection of it constitutes disbelief, and is pure whims and desires.

Allah (ﷻ) tells us of His wisdom in ordaining abrogation, and that He does not abrogate any verse «(or cause it to be forgotten)», that is, cause people to forget it and remove it from their hearts, but He «(bring[s] one better than it)» and more beneficial, «(or one equal to it)».

This indicates that abrogation does not detract from what is in your best interests, because His grace and bounty always increases, especially for this Ummah, for which He has made its religion very easy.

He tells us that whoever objects to the concept of abrogation is underestimating His sovereignty and power, as He says:

﴿Do you not know that Allah has power over all things? Do you not know that to Allah belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth﴾?

If He is in control of you and of your affairs, and He directs your affairs on the basis of kindness and mercy when issuing His decrees, commands and prohibitions, then just as there is no restriction with regard to what He decrees for His slaves, by the same token no one should object to what He prescribes for His slaves of different kinds of rulings. The individual is under the control of his Lord, subject to His religious rulings and divine decrees. So how can he have any objections?

Moreover, He is also the protector and helper of His slaves; so He helps them to attain that which is in their best interests and supports them in warding off harm from them. One aspect of His being their protector is that He prescribes rulings for them as dictated by His wisdom and mercy towards them.

The one who ponders what happened of abrogation in the Qur'an and Sunnah will come to know thereby the wisdom of Allah and His mercy towards His slaves, for He helps them to attain that which is in their best interests in ways that they do not realise.



﴿أَمْ تُرِيدُونَ أَنْ تَسْأَلُوا رَسُولَكُمْ كَمَا سَأَلَ مُوسَىٰ مِنْ قَبْلُ ۗ وَمَنْ يَبَدِّلِ
الْكَفْرَ بِالْإِيمَانِ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ سَوَاءَ السَّبِيلِ ﴿١٨﴾ وَكَثِيرٌ مِّنْ أَهْلِ

الْكِتَابِ لَوْ يَرُدُّونَكُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ إِيمَانِكُمْ كَفَّارًا حَسَدًا مِنْ عِنْدِ أَنْفُسِهِمْ
 مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا بَيَّنَّ لَهُمُ الْحَقُّ فَاعْفُوا وَاصْفَحُوا حَتَّى يَأْتِيَ اللَّهُ بِأَمْرٍ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَى
 كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿١٠٩﴾ وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَمَا تُقَدِّمُوا لِأَنْفُسِكُمْ مِنْ
 خَيْرٍ نَجِدُوهُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ ﴿١١٠﴾ (سورة البقرة: ١٠٨-١١٠)

- 2:108. Do you want to question your Messenger just as Moosâ was questioned before? Whoever exchanges faith for disbelief has strayed from the right path.
- 2:109. Many among the People of the Book wish they could turn you back to disbelief after you have believed, out of the envy they have in their hearts, after the truth has become clear to them. But forgive and overlook until Allah gives His command; for Allah has power over all things.
- 2:110. And establish prayer and give zakâh, and whatever good you send forth for your souls, you will find it with Allah, for Allah sees well all that you do.

Here Allah forbids the believers, or the Jews, to question their Messenger «as Moosâ was questioned before». What is referred to here is questioning by way of causing annoyance or raising objections, as Allah (ﷻ) says elsewhere:

«The People of the Book ask you to bring down for them a book from heaven. Indeed, they asked Moosâ for something even greater than that, when they said: Let us see Allah with our own eyes...»
(an-Nisâ' 4: 153)

«O you who believe, do not ask questions about matters which, if they were made known to you, would only cause you hardship...»
(al-Mā'idah 5: 101)

This and similar matters are forbidden.

With regard to asking in order to learn and understand, this is something praiseworthy and was enjoined by Allah when He said:

﴿...So [O people] ask those who have knowledge, if you do not know.﴾ (an-Nahl 16: 43)

This is something of which He approves, as He says: ﴿They ask you about intoxicants and gambling﴾ (2: 219). And: ﴿They ask you concerning [the property of] orphans﴾ (2: 220). And so on.

Because the kind of asking that is forbidden is blameworthy, it may lead the one who asks to disbelief, as Allah says: ﴿Whoever exchanges faith for disbelief has strayed from the right path﴾.

Then He tells them about the envy of many of the People of the Book, which has reached such a point that they wished ﴿they could turn you back to disbelief after you have believed﴾, and they strove to achieve that, plotting and planning, but their plot backfired on them, as Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿A group among the People of the Book say: [Claim to] believe in the morning in what is revealed to the believers, but reject it at the end of the day; perhaps they may turn back [from Islam].﴾ (Āl 'Imrān 3: 72)

That was because of the envy they had in their hearts.

Hence Allah enjoined the believers to respond to their extreme mistreatment with forgiveness and to overlook it until He gave His command.

Then after that, Allah gave His command to them to fight in jihad. Thus Allah gave the believers the satisfaction of settling the score with them. So they killed some, took some prisoner and expelled others. ﴿for Allah has power over all things﴾.

Then Allah commanded them to make the most of the present time by establishing the prayer, giving zakāh and doing all kinds of acts of worship. He promised them that whatever they did of good would never be lost with Allah; rather they would find it with Him in abundance, as He would preserve it.

﴿for Allah sees well all that you do﴾.



﴿وَقَالُوا لَنْ يَدْخُلَ الْجَنَّةَ إِلَّا مَنْ كَانَ هُودًا أَوْ نَصْرَىٰ تِلْكَ أَمَانِيُّهُمْ قُلْ هَاتُوا بُرْهَانَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿١١١﴾ بَلَىٰ مَنْ أَسْلَمَ وَجْهَهُ لِلَّهِ وَهُوَ مُحْسِنٌ فَلَهُ أَجْرُهُ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ﴿١١٢﴾﴾ (سورة

البقرة: ١١١-١١٢)

- 2:111. And they say: No one will enter paradise unless he is a Jew or a Christian. That is their own wishful thinking. Say: Produce your evidence if you are telling the truth.
- 2:112. Nay, whoever submits himself [completely] to Allah and is a doer of good will have his reward with his Lord; they will have no fear, nor will they grieve.

That is, the Jews said: No one will ever enter paradise except one who is a Jew. The Christians said: No one will ever enter paradise except one who is a Christian. Thus they ruled that paradise was for them alone. But this was just wishful thinking that cannot be accepted unless it is accompanied by proof and evidence. So ﴿Produce your evidence if you are telling the truth﴾.

The same applies to anyone who makes a claim; he must supply proof to the validity of his claim, otherwise if it was met by an opposing claim from someone else, and he had no proof either, then there would be no difference between the two. Evidence is that which proves or disproves a claim; as they have no proof, it is known that this claim of theirs is false.

Then Allah describes the ruling that is based on clear proof, which is general in application, as He says: ﴿Nay﴾, the matter is not as you wish or claim. Rather ﴿whoever submits himself [completely] to Allah﴾ that is, is sincere to Allah alone in his deeds and turns to Him with all his heart

﴿and﴾ in addition to his sincerity ﴿is a doer of good﴾ with regard to worshipping his Lord, in that he worships Him as He has prescribed – these are the only ones who are the people of paradise.

﴿[he] will have his reward with his Lord﴾ which is paradise, with all that it contains of delights

﴿they will have no fear, nor will they grieve﴾, for they will have attained that which they seek and will have been saved from that which they fear.

From this we may understand that whoever is not like that is one of the people of hell who are doomed, for there is no salvation except for those who are sincere towards Allah and follow the Messenger (ﷺ).



﴿وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُودُ لَيْسَتِ النَّصْرَىٰ عَلَىٰ شَيْءٍ وَقَالَتِ النَّصْرَىٰ لَيْسَتِ الْيَهُودُ عَلَىٰ شَيْءٍ وَهُمْ يَتْلُونَ الْكِتَابَ ۚ كَذَلِكَ قَالَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ مِثْلَ قَوْلِهِمْ ۚ قَالَ اللَّهُ يُحْكُمُ بَيْنَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ فِيمَا كَانُوا فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ ﴿١١٣﴾﴾ (سورة البقرة: ١١٣)

2:113. The Jews say: The Christians have nothing to stand on, and the Christians say: The Jews have nothing to stand on, although they both read the scripture, and those who have no knowledge say something similar; but on the Day of Resurrection Allah will judge between them concerning that wherein they differ.

Whims and desires and envy among the People of the Book reached such a degree that they regarded one another as misguided disbelievers, as the unlettered among the polytheist Arabs also did.

Other groups also made similar claims, so each group regarded others as misguided, but in the hereafter Allah will judge between those who differed on the basis of the fair principle mentioned above (2: 112), as He has told His slaves. Therefore there will be no success

or salvation on the Day of Resurrection except for those who believed in all the Prophets and Messengers, and obeyed the commands of their Lord and heeded His prohibitions. Anyone other than these is doomed.



﴿وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّن مَّنَعَ مَسْجِدَ اللَّهِ أَنْ يُذَكَرَ فِيهَا اسْمُهُ وَسَعَىٰ فِي خَرَابِهَا أُولَٰئِكَ مَا كَانَ لَهُمْ أَنْ يَدْخُلُوهَا إِلَّا خَافِيَةً لَهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا خِزْيٌ وَلَهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ﴾ (سورة البقرة: ١١٤)

2:114. And who does greater wrong than one who prevents Allah's name from being mentioned in His places of worship and strives to bring about their ruin? Such people do not deserve to enter them except in fear. For them there is disgrace in this world and grievous punishment in the hereafter.

That is, there is no one who does greater wrong or commits a greater offence than one who prevents mention of Allah, establishment of prayer and other acts of devotion in His places of worship.

﴿and strives﴾ that is, tries hard and does his utmost ﴿to bring about their ruin﴾ in both a physical and metaphorical sense. Physical ruin means destroying and demolishing them, and making them dirty by throwing rubbish into them. Metaphorical ruin means preventing people from mentioning Allah's name therein. This is general in meaning, and applies to everyone who meets this description. That includes the people of the elephant, and Quraysh when they prevented the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) from reaching the Kaaba in the year of al-Hudaybiyah. It also includes the Christians when they destroyed Bayt al-Maqdis, and other evildoers who strive to destroy places of worship, in opposition to Allah and by way of challenging Him. Hence Allah requited them by preventing them from entering it, as prescribed in Sharia and as He decrees, except in

a state of fear and humiliation. Because they terrorised the slaves of Allah, Allah cast fear in their hearts. When the polytheists prevented the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) from reaching Makkah, it was not long before Allah gave permission to His Messenger (ﷺ) to conquer Makkah and prevent the polytheists from coming near His House, as He said:

﴿O you who believe, truly the polytheists are impure, so do not let them come near the Sacred Mosque after this [final] year...﴾
(at-Tawbah 9: 28)

As for the people of the elephant, Allah told us what happened to them; with regard to the Christians, Allah gave the believers power over them and they took Bayt al-Maqdis away from them.

This applies to everyone who meets this description; Allah's justice will inevitably overtake him. This is one of the great signs of which the Creator spoke before it happened, and it happened as foretold. The scholars quoted this verse as evidence that it is not permissible to permit the disbelievers to enter the mosques.

﴿For them there is disgrace﴾ that is, shame and scandal, as mentioned above, ﴿in this world and grievous punishment in the hereafter﴾.

As there is no one who does greater evil than those who prevent the name of Allah from being mentioned in His mosques, then there is no one who has greater faith than the one who strives to tend the mosques in both a physical and metaphorical sense, as Allah (ﷻ) says: ﴿The mosques of Allah are only to be visited and tended by those who believe in Allah and the Last Day...﴾ (at-Tawbah 9: 18)

Indeed, Allah (ﷻ) enjoined that His houses should be venerated and honoured, as He says:

﴿[Such lamps are lit] in houses [mosques] which Allah has ordained to be built so that His name may be remembered therein...﴾ (an-Noor 24: 36)

There are many rules that apply to mosques, all of which are based on these verses.



﴿وَلِلَّهِ الْمَشْرِقُ وَالْمَغْرِبُ فَأَيْنَمَا تُولُوْا فَوَجْهُ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ﴾

(سورة البقرة: ١١٥)

2:115. To Allah belong the east and the west, so wherever you turn, there is the Countenance of Allah. For Allah is All-Encompassing, All-Knowing.

The east and the west are singled out for mention here because they are the focal point of great signs, at which lights rise and set. So if Allah is in control of them, then He is in control of all directions.

﴿so wherever you turn﴾ that is, whatever direction you face, if your taking of that particular direction is based on His command, then one of the following scenarios must apply:

Either He instructed you to face towards the Kaaba after you had been enjoined to face towards Bayt al-Maqdis;

or you are enjoined to pray whilst travelling on your mounts and the like, in which case the qibla is whatever direction a person is facing;

or an individual was confused about the qibla, and tried his best to work it out and pray in that direction, then he found out that he had got it wrong;

or he is excused because he is being subjected to corporal punishment or he is sick and the like.

In all of these cases, the individual is either excused or is given particular instructions.

Whatever the case, whatever direction he takes cannot be beyond the dominion of his Lord.

«there is the Countenance of Allah. For Allah is All-Encompassing, All-Knowing»). This is affirmation that Allah (ﷻ) does indeed have a Countenance or Face, in a manner that is befitting to Him, and that Allah has a Face that is not like the faces of His creation. Allah (ﷻ) is All-Encompassing in His grace and to Him belong all sublime attributes, and He knows what is in your hearts and your intentions.

Because He is All-Encompassing, All-Knowing, He has made things easy for you. To Him be all praise and thanks.



﴿وَقَالُوا أَخَذَ اللَّهُ وَلَدًا سُبْحٰنَهُۥٓ ۗ بَلْ لَّهُ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ كُلٌّ لَّهُ قٰنِیْنُوْنَ ﴿۱۱۶﴾ ۝۱۱۷ ۚ ۝۱۱۶﴾

(سورة البقرة: ۱۱۶-۱۱۷) ﴿۱۱۷﴾

- 2:116. They say: Allah has taken unto Himself a son. Glory be to Him. Nay, to Him belongs all that is in the heavens and on earth; everything is subservient unto Him.
- 2:117. [He is] the Originator of the heavens and the earth: When He decrees a matter, He merely says to it, 'Be!' and it is.

«They» that is, the Jews, Christians and polytheists, and those who hold similar views

«say: Allah has taken unto Himself a son»). They attributed to Him that which is not befitting to His Majesty, thus committing a grievous offence and wronging themselves. But Allah (ﷻ) responds to them with patience and forbearance, and grants them well-being and provision even though they say such terrible things that are contrary to His glory.

«Glory be to Him» – this is declaring Him to be holy and far above everything that the polytheists and transgressors attribute to Him that

is not befitting to His Majesty. Glory be to the One Who is possessed of absolute perfection in all aspects and is not lacking in any way.

As well as refuting what they say, Allah establishes proof that He is far above that, as He says: ﴿Nay, to Him belongs all that is in the heavens and on earth﴾ that is, all of them are His possessions and slaves, and He disposes of their affairs in the manner of a master with his slaves; they are subservient to Him and subject to His control. As they are all His slaves and in need of Him, whereas He has no need of them, how can any of them be His son, when a son is inevitably of the same type as his father, because he is part of him?

Allah (ﷻ) is the Subduer and the Sovereign, and you are subservient slaves; He is Independent of means and you are in need of Him. So how, despite all this, can He have a son? This is the most abominable falsehood.

Being subservient to Allah is of two types: in a general sense, it means that all of creation is under His control; in a specific sense, it means worshipping Him alone.

Then He says: ﴿[He is] the Originator of the heavens and the earth﴾ that is, He is their Creator Who created them in a perfect manner without any precedent.

﴿When He decrees a matter, He merely says to it, 'Be!' and it is﴾; nothing can be too difficult for Him or be beyond His capability.



﴿وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ لَوْلَا يُكَلِّمُنَا اللَّهُ أَوْ تَأْتِينَا آيَةٌ كَذَلِكَ قَالَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ مِثْلَ قَوْلِهِمْ تَشَبَهَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ قَدْ بَيَّنَّا الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يُوقِنُونَ ﴿١١٨﴾ إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ بِالْحَقِّ بَشِيرًا وَنَذِيرًا وَلَا تُسْتَلْ عَنْ أَصْحَابِ الْجَحِيمِ ﴿١١٩﴾﴾ (سورة البقرة: ١١٨-١١٩)

- 2:118. Those who have no knowledge say: If only Allah would speak to us or some sign would come to us. The people who came before them said something similar; their hearts are all much the same. We have made the signs clear to those who have certain faith.
- 2:119. Verily We have sent you with the truth as a bearer of glad tidings and a warner, but you will not be asked about the inhabitants of the blazing fire.

That is, the ignorant among the People of the Book and others say: Why does Allah not speak to us as He spoke to the Messengers? ﴿or some sign would come to us﴾ referring to signs that they suggest or demand on the basis of their corrupt thinking and worthless ideas, by means of which they showed audacity towards the Creator and arrogance towards His Messengers. This is like when they said:

﴿...We will never believe in you until we see Allah with our own eyes...﴾ (*al-Baqarah* 2: 55)

﴿The People of the Book ask you to bring down for them a book from heaven. Indeed, they asked Moosâ for something even greater than that...﴾ (*an-Nisâ'* 4: 153)

﴿...Why has an angel not been sent down to him, to be a warner with him? Or why is not some treasure thrown down to him, or why does he not have a garden from which to eat?...﴾ (*al-Furqân* 25: 7-8)

﴿They say: We will never believe in you until you cause a spring to gush forth from the earth for us.﴾ (*al-Isrâ'* 17: 90)

This is how they were with their Messengers: they would ask for signs by way of causing annoyance and out of stubbornness, not by way of seeking signs so that they might be guided. Their aim was not to clarify the truth, because the Messengers had already brought such signs that lead people to believe. Hence Allah (ﷻ) says: ﴿We have made the signs clear to those who have certain faith﴾. Everyone

who had certain faith had already come to know, from the clear signs and proof of Allah, that by means of which he developed certainty and warded off doubts.

This is followed by some concise, brief verses that prove the truthfulness of the Prophet (ﷺ) and the soundness of his message: ﴿Verily We have sent you with the truth as a bearer of glad tidings and a warner﴾. This includes the signs that he brought, which may be summed up in three things: the message itself; his attitude and conduct; and that which he brought of the Qur'an and Sunnah.

The first and second are included in the words ﴿Verily We have sent you﴾ and the third is included in the words ﴿with the truth﴾.

With regard to the first, which is the message itself, the state of the earth's population before the Prophet (ﷺ) came is well established: they used to worship idols, fire and the cross, and they had altered their religions until they were sinking in the darkness of disbelief, which had encompassed and overwhelmed them, apart from some remnants of the People of the Book who had vanished shortly before the Prophet's mission began.

It is known that Allah (ﷻ) did not create humanity in vain and He did not neglect or forsake them, because He is Most Wise, All-Knowing, Mighty and Most Merciful. By His wisdom and His mercy towards His slaves, He sent this great Messenger (ﷺ) to them, to enjoin worship of the Most Gracious alone, with no partner or associate. Hence by examining his message, the wise person will realise that it is a message of truth, as well as a tremendous sign that he is indeed the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ).

With regard to the second matter, anyone who comes to know the Prophet (ﷺ) properly and learns of his character and teachings before his mission began, how he grew up with the best of characteristics, which only increased in nobility and greatness, will realise that this can be nothing other than the character of the perfect Prophets,

because Allah (ﷻ) has made the individual's attitude and character the foremost means of knowing that person and the greatest proof of whether he is sincere or lying.

With regard to the third matter, which is knowing what the Prophet (ﷺ) brought of laws and the Holy Qur'an, which contains true stories and enjoins good and forbids all kinds of evil, as well as astonishing miracles, all the signs that indicate that he truly is a Prophet of Allah are included in these three categories.

«a bearer of glad tidings» that is, glad tidings of blessings and happiness in this world and in the hereafter, to those who obey you «and a warner» of misery and doom in this world and in the hereafter, to those who disobey you.

«but you will not be asked about the inhabitants of the blazing fire» that is, you are not responsible for them; your duty is only to convey the message, and the reckoning is for Us.



﴿وَلَنْ رَضَىٰ عَنْكَ الْيَهُودُ وَلَا النَّصْرَىٰ حَتَّىٰ تَتَّبِعَ مِلَّتَهُمْ ۗ قُلْ إِنَّ هُدَىٰ اللَّهِ هُوَ الْهُدَىٰ
وَلَكِنْ اتَّبَعَتِ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ بَعْدَ الَّذِي جَاءَكَ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ ۗ مَا لَكَ مِنَ اللَّهِ مِن وَلِيٍّ وَلَا نَصِيرٍ﴾

(سورة البقرة: ١٢٠)

2:120. The Jews and the Christians will never be pleased with you until you follow their religion. Say: Verily the guidance of Allah is the [only] guidance. If you were to follow their desires after the knowledge that has come to you, then you would have neither protector nor helper against Allah.

Here Allah tells His Messenger (ﷺ) that the Jews and Christians will never be pleased with him unless he follows their religion, because they call people to the religion which they themselves are following,

claiming that it is truth. So say to them: ﴿Verily the guidance of Allah﴾ with which I have been sent ﴿is the [only] guidance﴾.

With regard to what they are following, it is whims and desires, based on the fact that Allah then says: ﴿If you were to follow their desires after the knowledge that has come to you, then you would have neither protector nor helper against Allah﴾.

This represents stern instructions not to follow the whims and desires of the Jews and Christians, or to imitate them in that which is exclusive to their religions. Although this is addressed to the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ), his Ummah is also included in that, because what matters is the general application of the verse, regardless of whom it specifically addresses, just as what matters is the general meaning of the text, not the specific reason for which it is given.



﴿الَّذِينَ آتَيْنَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ يَتْلُونَهُ حَقَّ تِلَاوَتِهِ أُولَٰئِكَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ ۖ وَمَن يَكْفُرْ بِهِ ۖ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ ﴿١٢١﴾﴾
 ﴿يَبْنَیْ إِسْرَءِیْلَ اذْکُرُوا نِعْمَتِی الَّتِیْ اَنْعَمْتُ عَلَیْکُمْ وَاَنْیْ فَضَلْتُکُمْ عَلَی الْعَالَمِیْنَ ﴿١٢٢﴾﴾
 ﴿وَاتَّقُوا یَوْمًا لَا تَجْزِی نَفْسٌ عَنْ نَفْسٍ شَیْئًا وَلَا یُقْبَلُ مِنْهَا عَدْلٌ وَلَا تَنْفَعُهَا شَفَعَةٌ وَلَا هُمْ یُنصَرُونَ ﴿١٢٣﴾﴾ (سورة البقرة: ١٢١-١٢٣)

- 2:121. Those to whom We have sent the Book read it as it should be read; they are the ones who [truly] believe in it. And those who disbelieve in it, they are the losers.
- 2:122. O Children of Israel, remember the blessing I bestowed upon you, and that I favoured you over all other nations.
- 2:123. Then fear a day when no soul will avail another, no compensation will be accepted from it, no intercession will benefit it nor will they be helped.

Here Allah (ﷻ) tells us that those to whom He sent the Book and on whom He bestowed His great favour, ﴿read it as it should be read﴾ that is, they follow it as it should be followed. Reading (*tilâwah*, *lit.* recitation) may mean following. So they regard as permissible that which it permits, they regard as forbidden that which it forbids, they act upon its clear and unambiguous verses, and they believe in its ambiguous verses. These are the ones among the People of the Book who are blessed, those who acknowledge the blessings of Allah and give thanks for them; they believe in all the Messengers and do not differentiate between any of them.

These are the true believers, not those among them who said: ﴿We believe in that which was revealed to us; yet they disbelieve in that which came after it﴾ (2: 91). Hence, Allah warned them by saying: ﴿And those who disbelieve in it, they are the losers.﴾ (2: 121).

We have discussed previously the commentary on the following verse.



﴿ وَإِذْ ابْتَلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ رَبُّهُ بِكَلِمَاتٍ فَأَتَمَّهُنَّ قَالَ إِنِّي جَاعِلُكَ لِلنَّاسِ إِمَامًا قَالَ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِي ۗ قَالَ لَا يَنَالُ عَهْدِي الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١٢٤﴾ وَإِذْ جَعَلْنَا الْبَيْتَ مَثَابَةً لِّلنَّاسِ وَأَمْنَاً وَاتَّخِذُوا مِن مَّقَامِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ مُصَلًّى ۖ وَعَهِدْنَا إِلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ أَن طَهِّرَا بَيْتِيَ لِلطَّائِفِينَ وَالْمُكَافِرِينَ وَالرُّكَّعِ السُّجُودِ ﴿١٢٥﴾ ﴾ (سورة البقرة: ١٢٤-١٢٥)

2:124. And [remember] when Ibrâheem was tested by his Lord with certain commands, which he fulfilled. He [Allah] said: I will make you a leader of people. He said: And also from among my progeny? He said: My covenant does not extend to the transgressors.

2:125. And [remember] when We made the House a focal point for the people, and a sanctuary [and said]: Take the Station of Ibrâheem

as a place of prayer. We commanded Ibrâheem and Ismâ'eel, that they should purify My House for those who circumambulate it or stay there [for worship], or bow or prostrate there.

Here Allah tells us about His slave and close friend Ibrâheem (ﷺ), whose leadership and virtue are universally acknowledged and whom all the groups of the People of the Book, and even the polytheists, claim as a leader. Allah tells us that He tried and tested him with certain commands and prohibitions, which is how Allah usually tests His slaves, to highlight those who are insincere and cannot be steadfast at the time of trial, and to demonstrate those who are sincere and will be elevated in status by means of the test, their deeds will be purified and they will be cleansed of sin. One of the greatest of them in this regard is Ibrâheem (ﷺ).

He did what Allah commanded him to do, properly and perfectly. Allah appreciated that and He still appreciates it, as He said: ﴿I will make you a leader of people﴾ that is, they will follow your example and your guidance, and will walk behind you to their eternal bliss; you will be highly thought of forever, you will attain a great reward and you will be venerated by everyone.

This, surely, is the highest status for which people may compete and strive hard, the greatest achievement of the Messengers of firm resolve and each sincere follower of theirs who is calling to Allah and to His way.

When Ibrâheem attained that high status, he sought that for his descendants too, so that his status and that of his descendants would become even higher. This is also a reflection of his leadership, his sincerity towards the slaves of Allah and his desire to increase the numbers of those who lead others on the straight path; how great was his ambition and status.

Allah answered his prayer and told him of the reason why some may be prevented from attaining this status, as He said: ﴿My covenant

does not extend to the transgressors». What is meant is: leadership in religion cannot be attained by one who wrongs and harms himself and brings himself down, because transgression is contrary to this status, which can only be attained by means of patience and strong faith. In other words, those who will be qualified to attain this status will be those who have a high level of faith, do a great deal of righteous deeds and are possessed of good characteristics, a good attitude, and complete love of Allah, fearing Him and turning to Him. How could a transgressor attain such a status? The implicit meaning of this verse is that anyone other than the transgressor may attain a position of leadership, but only after meeting its conditions.

Then Allah (ﷻ) refers to a lasting sign that is indicative of Ibrâheem's leadership, which is this sacred House, pilgrimage to which is one of the five pillars of Islam, a means of erasing sin.

In that House we see the legacy of Ibrâheem and his descendants, which offers proof of his leadership and reminds us of how he was. Allah (ﷻ) says: «And [remember] when We made the House a focal point for the people» that is, a place to which they return to attain religious and worldly benefits; it is a place that they frequent and never tire of it.

«and a sanctuary» that is, it is a place where everyone feels safe, even wild animals and inanimate things such as trees.

Hence during the *jâhiliyah*, despite their polytheism, the people venerated it immensely, to such a degree that if a man found his father's killer in the sanctuary, he would not disturb him. When Islam came, it further emphasised the sanctity, veneration and honour of the House.

«Take the Station of Ibrâheem as a place of prayer». It may be that what is meant here is the well-known *Maqâm* (Station), the position of which now is in front of the door of the Kaaba, where two *raka'ât* are prayed following *tawâf* (circumambulation of the Kaaba), which it is recommended to offer behind the Station of Ibrâheem. This is

the view of the majority of commentators. It may also be understood as referring to all the places where Ibrâheem stood or halted during Hajj, which refers to all the rituals, namely ṭawâf (circumambulation of the Kaaba), *sa'iy* (going between Şafâ and Marwah), standing in 'Arafâh and Muzdalifah, stoning the *jamarât* (stone pillars), offering the sacrifice, and other actions that are done during Hajj.

Hence what is meant by the words «a place of prayer» is a place of worship; in other words, follow his example in the rituals of Hajj. It may be that this is a more appropriate meaning, because that would also include the first meaning (the two raka'ât following ṭawâf), and the wording may indicate that.

«We commanded Ibrâheem and Ismâ'eel, that they should purify My House» that is, We revealed to them and instructed them to purify the House of Allah, ridding it of all traces of polytheism, disbelief, sin, abomination, impurities and filth, so that it might be «for those who circumambulate it» and «stay there [for worship], or bow or prostrate there» that is, those who pray there. Ṭawâf is mentioned first, because it is unique to al-Masjid al-Ḥarâm; that is followed by mention of staying there (for worship), which is known as *i'tikâf* (devotional retreat), one of the conditions of which is that it should be done in a mosque. Prayer is mentioned last, although it is a superior act, because it is not specific to the mosque and may be offered anywhere.

Allah attributed the House to Himself for several reasons, such as the following:

- So that Ibrâheem and Ismâ'eel would pay extra attention to purifying it, because it is the House of Allah, so they would strive hard and do their utmost.
- The fact that it is described as Allah's House is a sign of honour; this is an implicit instruction to His slaves to venerate and honour it.
- The fact that it is connected to Allah is what makes people's hearts attached to it.



﴿وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ رَبِّ اجْعَلْ هَذَا بَلَدًا آمِنًا وَارْزُقْ أَهْلَهُ مِنَ الثَّمَرَاتِ مَنْ آمَنَ مِنْهُمْ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ قَالَ وَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَأُمَتِّعُهُ قَلِيلًا ثُمَّ أَضْطَرُّهُ إِلَىٰ عَذَابِ النَّارِ وَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيرُ ﴿١٢٦﴾﴾

(سورة البقرة: ١٢٦)

2:126. And [remember] when Ibrâheem said: My Lord, make this a city of peace, and provide its people with fruits, those among them who believe in Allah and the Last Day. [Allah] said: As for those who disbelieve, I will grant them enjoyment for a short while, but then I will drive them towards the punishment of the fire; what a hapless journey's end.

That is, remember when Ibrâheem prayed for this House and its environs, that Allah should make it a city of peace and provide its people with various kinds of fruits, then he limited this supplication to the believers, out of appropriate manners before Allah, because his first request concerning leadership had been general (in the sense that he prayed for all of his offspring) and the response had been limited to those other than the transgressors among them.

Hence when he prayed for provision for them, he limited it to the believers, although the provision of Allah encompasses believers and disbelievers, disobedient and obedient. Allah said: ﴿As for those who disbelieve﴾ that is, I shall grant provision to all of them, Muslims and disbelievers alike; as for the Muslims, they will use that provision to help them in worshipping Allah, then they will move from that to the delights of paradise; as for the disbelievers, they will enjoy it for a short while

﴿but then I will drive them﴾ that is, force them and bring them reluctantly

﴿towards the punishment of the fire; what a hapless journey's end﴾.



﴿وَإِذْ يَرْفَعُ إِبْرَاهِيمُ الْقَوَاعِدَ مِنَ الْبَيْتِ وَإِسْمَاعِيلُ رَبَّنَا تَقَبَّلْ مِنَّا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ ﴿١٢٧﴾ رَبَّنَا وَاجْعَلْنَا مُسْلِمِينَ لَكَ وَمِن ذُرِّيَّتِنَا أُمَّةً مُّسْلِمَةً لَّكَ وَأَرِنَا مَنَاسِكَنَا وَتُبْ عَلَيْنَا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿١٢٨﴾ رَبَّنَا وَابْعَثْ فِيهِمْ رَسُولًا مِنْهُمْ يَتْلُوا عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِكَ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ ۗ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿١٢٩﴾﴾

(سورة البقرة: ١٢٧-١٢٩)

- 2:127. And [remember] when Ibrâheem and Ismâ'eel raised the walls of the House [saying]: Our Lord! Accept [this] from us, for You are the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing.
- 2:128. Our Lord! Make us both Muslims submitting to You, and of our descendants a nation that is Muslim, submitting to You; and teach us our rituals [of pilgrimage]; and accept our repentance, for You are the Acceptor of repentance, the Most Merciful.
- 2:129. Our Lord, send to them a Messenger from among them, who will recite Your revelations to them, teach them the Book and wisdom, and purify them; for You are the Almighty, the Most Wise.

That is, remember Ibrâheem and Ismâ'eel, when they were building the walls of the House from the foundation upwards, and how they persisted in this great task with an attitude of both fear and hope. Whilst they were striving to complete this task, they prayed to Allah to accept their deeds from them, so that it might be a blessing for all.

They prayed for themselves, and for their offspring to be Muslim; what this signifies is humility in the heart and submission to Allah, which is reflected in outward behaviour.

﴿and teach us our rituals [of pilgrimage]﴾ that is, show us, demonstrate them before us so that we may see them, because seeing is more effective for the purpose of learning. It may be that what is

meant by rituals (*manâsik*) is all the actions of Hajj, as indicated by the context and story, or it may be that the meaning is more general than that, and refers to all of Islam and all acts of worship, as indicated by the general meaning; the word *nusuk* (rituals, from the same root as *manâsik*) originally means worship, but came to be used primarily in reference to the acts of worship performed during Hajj. Thus what they meant by their supplication was to be guided and enabled to acquire beneficial knowledge and to do righteous deeds. As it is the case that human beings – no matter how hard they try – will always fall short and need to repent, they (Ibrâheem and Ismâ'eel) said: «and accept our repentance, for You are the Acceptor of repentance, the Most Merciful».

«Our Lord, send to them a Messenger from among them» that is, to all our descendants, so as to increase them in status and so that they will know him properly and follow him.

«who will recite Your revelations to them» and teach them the words «teach them the Book and wisdom» and teach them the meanings.

«and purify them» by guiding them to do righteous deeds and to rid themselves of evil deeds because of which the soul cannot be purified unless one rids oneself of them.

«for You are the Almighty» that is, the Subduer of all things, Whose power none can resist

«the Most Wise» Who puts things in the right place. I implore You by Your glory, might and wisdom, to send among them this Messenger. Allah answered their prayer and sent this noble Messenger, by means of whom Allah had mercy on his descendants in particular, and on all of humankind in general. Hence the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

«I am the answer to the prayer of my father Ibrâheem.» (Recorded and authenticated by Ibn Katheer)

Because Allah showed this great respect to Ibrâheem and told us of his perfect qualities, He said:



﴿وَمَنْ يَرْعُبْ عَنْ مِلَّةِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ إِلَّا مَنْ سَفِهَ نَفْسَهُ وَلَقَدِ اصْطَفَيْنَاهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَإِنَّهُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ لَمِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ﴾ (١٣٠) إِذْ قَالَ لَهُ رَبُّهُ أَسْلِمْ قَالَ أَسْلَمْتُ لِرَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٣١﴾ وَوَضَىٰ بِهَا إِبْرَاهِيمُ بَنِيهِ وَيَعْقُوبُ يَنْبِيَّ إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَىٰ لَكُمْ الدِّينَ فَلَا تَمُوتُنَّ إِلَّا وَأَنْتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ ﴿١٣٢﴾ أَمْ كُنْتُمْ شُهَدَاءَ إِذْ حَضَرَ يَعْقُوبَ الْمَوْتَ إِذْ قَالَ لِبَنِيهِ مَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِن بَعْدِي قَالُوا نَعْبُدُ إِلَهَكَ وَإِلَهَ آبَائِكَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ إِلَهًا وَاحِدًا وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ ﴿١٣٣﴾ تِلْكَ أُمَّةٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ لَهَا مَا كَسَبَتْ وَلكُمْ مَا كَسَبْتُمْ وَلَا تُسْأَلُونَ عَمَّا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٣٤﴾ (سورة البقرة: ١٣٠-١٣٤)

- 2:130. And who turns away from the religion of Ibrâheem but one who debases himself with folly? We chose him in this world, and in the hereafter he will be among the righteous.
- 2:131. [Remember] when his Lord said to him: Submit [to Me], he said: I submit to the Lord of the worlds.
- 2:132. And Ibrâheem enjoined his sons to do the same, as did Ya'qoob [saying]: O my sons, Allah has chosen this religion for you; so do not die except as Muslims.
- 2:133. Or were you present when death came to Ya'qoob? He said to his sons: What will you worship after I am gone? They said: We will worship your God and the God of your fathers, of Ibrâheem, Ismâ'eel and Is-hâq, One God, and To Him we submit [as Muslims].
- 2:134. That is a nation which has [already] passed away; they will have what they earned and you will have what you earn, and you will not be questioned about what they used to do.

That is, no one turns away ﴿from the religion of Ibrâheem﴾ after coming to know of his virtues ﴿but one who debases himself with folly﴾ that is, he transgresses against himself and humiliates himself, accepting for himself that

which is inferior, and he sold his soul for a cheap price. By the same token, there is no one who is wiser or more mature than one who follows the religion of Ibrâheem. Then Allah tells us of Ibrâheem's status in this world and the hereafter:

«We chose him in this world» that is, We selected him and guided him to do good deeds, by virtue of which he became one of the chosen and truly good (*cf.* 38: 47).

«and in the hereafter he will be among the righteous» who will have the highest status.

«[Remember] when his Lord said to him: Submit [to Me], he said» in obedience to his Lord: «I submit to the Lord of the worlds» with sincerity, affirming His oneness, out of love for Him and turning to Him. So tawḥeed (affirming the oneness of Allah) became his defining characteristic.

Then he passed down that legacy of tawḥeed (pure monotheism) to his descendants, enjoining it upon them and leaving it as a word to endure among those who came after him, that they might turn back (to Allah) (*cf.* 43: 28). Thus it was handed down from one to another, until it reached Ya'qoob, who enjoined it upon his sons.

So you – O sons of Ya'qoob – see that your father enjoined it upon you in particular, so you are obliged to submit completely and follow the Seal of the Prophets, as Ya'qoob said:

«O my sons, Allah has chosen this religion for you» that is, He selected it for you, out of mercy and kindness towards you, so adhere to it, follow it and mould your character in accordance with its teachings, so that you may persist in that; and do not let death come to you except when you are adhering to that, because whoever lives his life following something will die in that state, and whoever dies following something will be resurrected in the same state.

As the Jews claimed to be following the religion of Ibrâheem, and of Ya'qoob after him, Allah said, denouncing them:

﴿Or were you present when death came to Ya'qoob?﴾ And he said to his sons, by way of testing them and so as to have the joy of certainty whilst he was still alive that they would adhere to what he enjoined upon them:

﴿What will you worship after I am gone?﴾ They answered him in a way that brought him joy, as they said:

﴿We will worship your God and the God of your fathers, of Ibrâheem, Ismâ'eel and Is-hâq, One God﴾ and we will not associate anything with Him or regard anyone as equal to Him

﴿and to Him we submit [as Muslims]﴾. Thus they combined monotheism with righteous deeds.

It is well known that they (the Jews of Madinah) were not present when Ya'qoob died, because they did not yet exist. As they were not present, Allah tells us that he (Ya'qoob) enjoined his sons to follow the path of monotheism, not Judaism.

Then Allah (ﷻ) says:

﴿That is a nation which has [already] passed away﴾ and no longer exists

﴿they will have what they earned and you will have what you earn﴾ that is, each person has his own deeds and will be requited according to what he did; no one will be brought to account for the sin of another and no one will benefit except from his own faith and piety. So your preoccupation with them and your claims that you are following their religion, and your being content with mere words are matters that do not make sense, because there is no reality to them. Rather what you must do is examine your own situation and see whether it will help you to attain salvation or not.



﴿وَقَالُوا كُونُوا هُودًا أَوْ نَصَارَى تَهْتَدُوا قُلْ بَلْ مِلَّةَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَنِيفًا وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ

الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴿١٣٥﴾ (سورة البقرة: ١٣٥)

- 2:135. They say: Become Jews or Christians, then you will be rightly guided. Say: Rather the religion of Ibrâheem the monotheist, and he was not one of those who ascribe partners to Allah.

That is, both the Jews and the Christians called upon the Muslims to enter their religion, claiming that they were the ones who were truly guided and others were misguided. So say to him, answering in a clear way so as to settle the matter: «(Rather) we follow «(the religion of Ibrâheem the monotheist)» that is, turning to Allah alone and turning away from everything other than Him, on the basis of adhering to monotheistic belief and shunning polytheism. This is the one in following whom there is guidance, and turning away from his religion constitutes disbelief and misguidance.



﴿قُولُوا ءَامَنَّا بِاللَّهِ وَمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْنَا وَمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ
وَالْأَسْبَاطِ وَمَا أُوتِيَ مُوسَىٰ وَعِيسَىٰ وَمَا أُوتِيَ النَّبِيُّونَ مِن رَّبِّهِمْ لَا نُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ
مِّنْهُمْ وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ﴾ (سورة البقرة: ١٣٦)

- 2:136. Say: We believe in Allah, and that which has been sent down to us, and that which was sent down to Ibrâheem, Ismâ'eel, Is-hâq, Ya'qoob, and the tribes, and that which was given to Moosâ and 'Eesâ, and that which was given to [all] Prophets from their Lord. We make no distinction between one and another of them, and to Him we have submitted [in Islam].

This verse includes everything that one must believe in. It should be noted that *eamân* (faith or belief) refers to complete affirmation in the heart of these principles, an affirmation that includes both deeds of the heart (that is, beliefs and emotions) and physical actions. In that sense *eamân* includes Islam and it includes all righteous deeds,

which are part of and a reflection of eemân. Whenever the word 'eemân' is mentioned on its own, it includes everything mentioned above. Similarly, when the word 'Islam' appears on its own, it includes eemân. When the two words are mentioned together, eemân refers to what is in the heart of belief and affirmation, and Islam refers to outward physical deeds. The same applies when eemân and righteous deeds are mentioned together.

The word ﴿Say﴾ means speak verbally that which is in accordance with what is in your hearts. This is what brings reward, because just as uttering words without belief in the heart is hypocrisy and disbelief, by the same token, mere words that have no basis in belief have no impact and are of little benefit. Even though the individual will still be rewarded for saying good words, if they are good and he basically believes, there is still a difference between mere words and that which is based on deeds of the heart (strong faith and good intentions).

The word ﴿Say﴾ refers to announcing one's belief openly and calling people to it, because this is the foundation of religion.

﴿We believe﴾ – here the action is attributed to the entire Ummah (as it appears in the plural form), which indicates that it is obligatory for the Ummah to hold fast, all together, to the rope of Allah, and encourages them to be united so that their call will be one and their efforts will be united. This implies that the Ummah should not be divided and that the believers are like a single body.

﴿Say: We believe in Allah...﴾. These words indicate that it is permissible for a person to attribute faith to himself in a specific manner (namely, belief in Allah); rather it is obligatory to do so, which is different than saying "I am a believer" and the like, because no one should say any such thing without adding the words *in shâ' Allâh* (if Allah wills), because otherwise it may come under the heading of praising oneself and testifying that one has faith.

«We believe in Allah» means we believe that He exists, is One, has all the attributes of perfection, is above all shortcomings and defects, is the only One Who is deserving of all worship and no partners are to be ascribed to Him in any way whatsoever.

«and that which has been sent down to us» – this includes the Qur’an and the Sunnah, because Allah (ﷻ) says:

«...For Allah has sent down to you the Book and wisdom...» (*an-Nisā’ 4: 113*)

Thus it includes belief in what the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His Messenger (ﷺ) tell us about the attributes of Allah, the attributes of His Messengers, the Last Day, and the unseen, both past and future, and what they (the Qur’an and Sunnah) include of Islamic rulings, *ḥadd*¹² punishments and so on.

«and that which was sent down to Ibrâheem...». This points to belief in all the Books that were sent down to all the Prophets, as well as belief in the Prophets in general and those whose names are mentioned in this verse in particular, because of their high status and the fact that they received major laws. What is required with regard to belief in the Prophets and Books is that we should believe in them in general terms, and with regard to those about whom one learns more details, we must believe in them in detail.

«We make no distinction between one and another of them» that is, we believe in all of them. This is something that is unique to the Muslims, who alone have this belief, as opposed to those who claim to be followers of other religions. Even though the Jews, Christians, Sabians and others claim to believe in some of the Messengers and Books, they disbelieve in others and make distinctions between the Messengers and Books, believing in some and not in others. This proves that their belief is invalid, because the Messenger in whom

¹² ḥadd (pl. *ḥudood*): Specific punishments prescribed in Sharia for specific offences such as theft and fornication.

they claim to believe affirmed all of the Messengers, especially Muhammad (ﷺ). So if they disbelieve in Muhammad (ﷺ), then they have disbelieved and rejected what their Messenger told them, so they have rejected their Messenger.

﴿and that which was given to [all] Prophets from their Lord﴾. This indicates that the gift of religious commitment is the true gift that is connected to happiness in this world and in the hereafter. Allah did not instruct us to believe in what was given to the Prophets of authority, wealth and the like; rather He commanded us to believe in what they were given of scriptures and laws.

This verse also teaches us that the Prophets conveyed the message from Allah and were intermediaries between Allah and His creation in conveying His religion; they had nothing else to do with it.

The phrase ﴿from their Lord﴾ indicates that as part of His perfect Lordship and care towards His slaves, He sent the Books down to them and sent the Messengers to them. His Lordship dictates that He should not neglect or ignore them.

If what was given to the Prophets only came to them from their Lord, then this shows the difference between true Prophets and imposters; we can tell the difference simply by knowing what they call people to, for the Messengers only call people to good and they only forbid everything that is evil. Moreover, each of them confirms the others, testifying that they told the truth, with no contradiction because it is all from their Lord.

﴿...If it [the Qur'an] had been from anyone other than Allah, they would surely have found therein many contradictions.﴾ (*an-Nisā' 4: 82*)

This is in contrast to those who falsely claim to be prophets; there will inevitably be contradictions in the stories they tell and in what they enjoin and forbid; this will be quite clear to anyone who examines their cases and finds out what they advocated.

As Allah has explained everything that is to be believed in, in general and specific terms, and as mere words are not sufficient unless accompanied by actions, He said: ﴿and to Him we have submitted [in Islam]﴾ that is, we have submitted to His greatness and we worship Him alone, both inwardly and outwardly, sincere to Him in worship.

This verse, although it is very brief and concise, refers to the three types of tawḥeed: tawḥeed ar-ruboobiyah (affirmation of the oneness of the divine Lordship), tawḥeed al-uloohiyah (affirmation of the oneness of divinity), and tawḥeed al-asmâ' wa-ṣifât (affirmation of the oneness of the divine names and attributes). It also includes belief in all the Messengers and all the Books. After mentioning the Prophets in general, then mentioning some by name, it points to the superiority of those who are named. It also refers to belief in the heart that is reflected in words and deeds; sincerity to Allah alone; the difference between true Messengers and impostors who claim to be prophets; how Allah teaches His slaves what to say; His mercy and kindness towards them by bestowing all kinds of religious blessings upon them that are connected to their happiness in this world and the hereafter. Glory be to the One Who made His Book explain all things, and made it a guidance and mercy to the believers.



﴿فَإِنْ ءَامَنُوا بِمِثْلِ مَا ءَامَنْتُمْ بِهِ فَقَدْ ءَاهْتَدَوْا ۗ وَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَإِنَّمَا هُمْ فِي شِقَاقِ ۚ فَسَيَكْفِيكَهُمُ ٱللَّهُ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ ٱلْعَلِيمُ ﴿١٣٧﴾﴾ (سورة البقرة: ١٣٧)

2:137. So if they believe as you believe, then they are rightly guided; but if they turn away, then it is they who are entrenched in opposition; but Allah will suffice you against them, and He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing.

That is, if the People of the Book ﴿believe as you believe﴾, O believers, in all the Messengers and all the Books, foremost among whom, and the final and the best of them, is Muhammad (ﷺ) and the Qur'an, and they submit to Allah alone and do not differentiate between any of the Messengers of Allah, ﴿then they are rightly guided﴾ to the straight path which leads to paradise. In other words, there is no other way for them to be guided except by means of this faith; it is not as they claim: ﴿Become Jews or Christians, then you will be rightly guided﴾ (2: 135). They claim that guidance is only to be found in their religion, but guidance means knowing the truth and acting upon it, the opposite of which is misguidance by failing to acquire knowledge and misguidance by failing to act upon the knowledge acquired. This is the opposition in which they were entrenched, as they turned away. The one who is entrenched in opposition is the one who is on one side whilst Allah and His Messenger are on the other side; this opposition in which they are entrenched means hostility and extreme enmity, which in turn dictates that they would strive their utmost to harm the Messenger. Hence Allah promised His Messenger that He would suffice him against them, because He is All-Hearing Who hears all voices, despite their different languages and the varying needs of people; and He is All-Knowing, Who knows what is before them and what is behind them, He knows the unseen and the seen, He knows what is apparent and what is hidden. As this is the case, then Allah will suffice you against their evil. And Allah did indeed fulfil His promise to His Messenger and gave him power over them, so that he killed some of them, took some of them captive and expelled others, banishing them in all directions.

This is one of the miracles of the Qur'an, which was foretelling an event before it happened, which then unfolded as foretold.



﴿صِبْغَةَ اللَّهِ وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ مِنَ اللَّهِ صِبْغَةً وَنَحْنُ لَهُ عَابِدُونَ﴾ (سورة البقرة: ١٣٨)

(١٣٨)

2:138. [Our religion] takes its colour from Allah, and who can give a better colour than Allah? And it is He Whom we worship.

That is, adhere to the colour given by Allah, which is His religion, and follow it completely, both inwardly and outwardly, with all of its beliefs, at all times, so that it will become like a colour for you, one of your characteristics. Once it becomes one of your characteristics, then you will follow its instructions willingly and lovingly, and religious commitment will become second nature to you, like the colour of a garment which has become an integral part of it. Thus you will attain happiness in this world and the hereafter, because Islam encourages good characteristics, good deeds and sublime aims. Hence Allah says, by way of making people think: ﴿and who can give a better colour than Allah?﴾ that is, there is no better colour than that which He gives.

If you want to know some examples that highlight the difference between the colour given by Allah and others, then compare a thing with its opposite. What do you think of a person who has a sound belief in his Lord, which has an impact on his attitude and behaviour, so that he continues to acquire all good characteristics and do all good deeds, conducting himself in the best manner and abandoning all bad characteristics, immoral deeds and shameful actions, so that he has the character of sincerity in word and deed and is patient, forbearing, dignified, courageous, kind in word and deed, loving Allah, fearing His punishment and hoping for His reward? Such a one has the attitude of sincerity towards Allah and kindness towards his slaves.

Then compare him to a person who disbelieves in his Lord, turns away from Him and turns instead to other, created beings. Thus he

acquires bad characteristics, such as disbelief, polytheism, lying, treachery, deceit, cheating, lack of dignity and mistreating people in word and deed. Such a one has no sincerity towards Allah and shows no kindness to His slaves.

Thus it will become clear to you that there is a great difference between the two, and you will clearly see that there is no colour better than that given by Allah. This in turn implies that there is no colour that is worse or uglier than that of the one who colours himself with something other than the colour given by Allah and follows a religion other than His.

﴿And it is He Whom we worship﴾. This further explains that colour, which is adhering to these two principles, namely sincerity towards Allah and following (the Qur'an and Sunnah), because worship is a word that includes everything that Allah loves and is pleased with of actions, words, attitudes and beliefs, and it cannot be pleasing to Him unless it was prescribed by Allah on the lips of His Messenger (ﷺ). Sincerity means doing these actions for the sake of Allah alone. The structure of this sentence in Arabic indicates that worship is exclusively for Allah alone, and that this worship is to be done persistently and on an ongoing basis, to indicate that this is a characteristic that is like a colour that remains with them all the time.



﴿قُلْ أَتَحَاجُّونَنَا فِي اللَّهِ وَهُوَ رَبُّنَا وَرَبُّكُمْ وَلِنَا أَعْمَلْنَا وَلَكُمْ أَعْمَلْتُمْ وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُخْلِصُونَ﴾ (سورة البقرة: ١٣٩)

2:139. Say: Would you dispute with us about Allah, when He is our Lord and your Lord? We have our deeds and you have your deeds, and we are sincerely devoted to Him.

What is meant by dispute is an argument between two or more people having to do with a controversial matter, in which each disputant is trying to support his own view and nullify that of his opponent, each of them striving to establish proof to that effect. What is required when engaging in dispute is to do it in the best manner, by keeping it brief in a way that could bring the misguided back to the right path, establish proof against the stubborn, clarify the truth and shed light on falsehood. If the argument develops and goes beyond these bounds, then it becomes pointless, an argument that does not lead to anything good, and it may in fact lead to some negative consequences.

The People of the Book claimed that they were closer to Allah than the Muslims, but this was a mere claim that required proof and evidence. If the Lord of all is One and He is not your Lord alone to the exclusion of us, and both we and you have our deeds, then we and you are equal in that regard. This means that neither of the two parties is closer to Allah than the other, because differentiating when you are equal in a particular matter, without there being anything to differentiate between you, is a false claim; differentiating between two who are equal is obviously stubborn and arrogant. Rather what makes one superior to the other is sincerity towards Allah alone in righteous deeds, and this is something that is a characteristic of the believers only. Therefore they are closer to Allah than others, because sincerity is the way to salvation. This is the difference between the close friends of Allah and the close friends of the Shayṭān, on the basis of the characteristics that truly matter and are recognised by people of reason, and are only disputed by those who are arrogant and ignorant. In this verse, we see a subtle hint which guides us to the best way to present our case in an argument; it also tells us that matters are based on noticing the similarities and differences between two things.



﴿ أَمْ نَقُولُونَ إِنَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَالْأَسْبَاطَ كَانُوا
هُودًا أَوْ نَصَارَى قُلْ أَعْلَمُ أَمِ اللَّهُ وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ كَتَمَ شَهَادَةً عِنْدَهُ مِنَ
اللَّهِ وَمَا اللَّهُ بِغَفِيلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴾ (سورة البقرة: ١٤٠)

- 2:140. Or would you say that Ibrâheem, Ismâ'eel, Is-hâq, Ya'qoob and the Tribes were Jews or Christians? Say: Do you know better, or does Allah? And who does greater wrong than those who conceal a testimony they have received from Allah? But Allah is not unaware of what you do.

This refers to another claim on their part and another argument about the Messengers of Allah. They claimed that they were closer to the Messengers than the Muslims were.

But Allah refuted that by saying ﴿Do you know better, or does Allah?﴾ Elsewhere, Allah says:

﴿Ibrâheem was neither a Jew nor a Christian, but he was a monotheist, a Muslim, and he was not one of those who ascribe partners to Allah.﴾
(*Âl 'Imrân* 3: 67)

But they said that he was a Jew or a Christian.

Either they are the ones who are telling the truth and have knowledge of that, or Allah (ﷻ) is the One Who is telling the truth and has knowledge of that. One of the two must inevitably be true; the answer is not stated explicitly but it is absolutely clear and so obvious that there is no need to say that it is Allah Who knows best and is most truthful, and the like. The answer is obvious to everyone; this is like saying: is the night more illuminating, or the day? Is the fire hotter, or water? Is polytheism better, or monotheism (tawhêd)? And so on.

Anyone with the slightest common sense will know this; indeed even the Jews and Christians themselves know it. They know that

Ibrâheem and other Prophets were neither Jews nor Christians, but they concealed this knowledge and testimony, hence their wrongdoing is the worst. Hence Allah (ﷻ) says: «And who does greater wrong than those who conceal a testimony they have received from Allah?» This is testimony that they have; it was entrusted to them by Allah and not by any created being, so they should have paid attention to it by declaring it, but they concealed it and showed the opposite. Thus they combined the sin of concealing the truth and not speaking it with the propagation of falsehood. Is this not the greatest wrongdoing? Indeed it is, and they will receive the harshest punishment. Hence Allah says: «But Allah is not unaware of what you do». Rather He has recorded and listed their deeds and has stored up the punishment for them. What a bad punishment theirs will be, and what a bad final abode the fire will be. This is the Qur'anic style, to mention the knowledge and power of Allah after verses that refer to the deeds that He will punish.

Then Allah (ﷻ) says:



﴿تِلْكَ أُمَّةٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ لَهَا مَا كَسَبَتْ وَلَكُمْ مَا كَسَبْتُمْ وَلَا تُسْأَلُونَ عَمَّا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ﴾ (سورة البقرة: ١٤١)

2:141. That is a nation which has [already] passed away; they will have what they earned and you will have what you earn, and you will not be questioned about what they used to do.

The meaning of this verse has been discussed above. It is repeated in order to put an end to anyone pinning his hopes on any created being; what matters is the attributes that a person acquires, not the deeds of his forefathers. What really benefits the individual is his deeds and not his lineage.