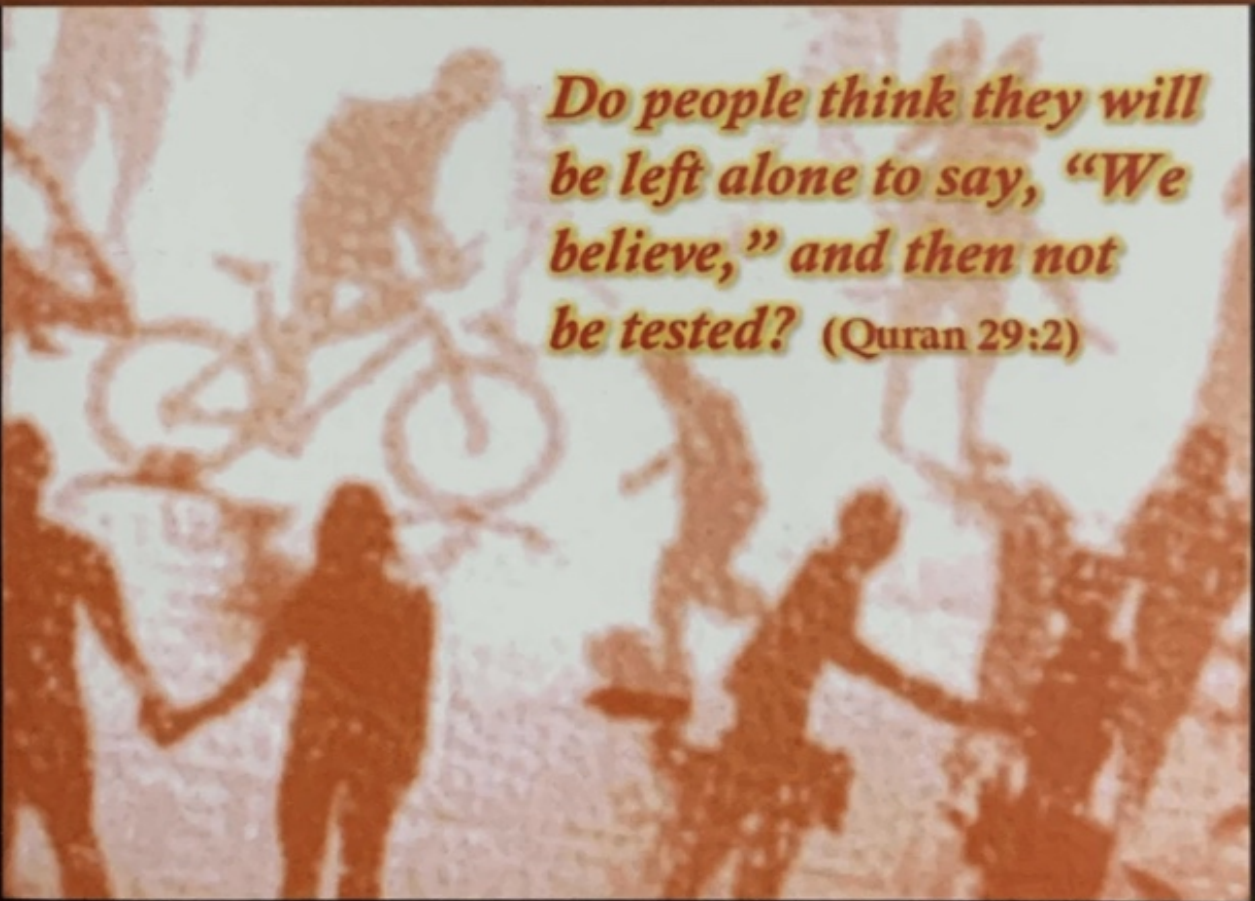


**THE NEVER-ENDING TRIALS OF**

# **LIFE**

**SHAYKH SAALIH AAL SHAYKH**

**Amazing Points of Islamic Guidance Derived From  
A Brief Thematic Study of Soorah al-'Ankaboot**

The background of the lower section features a light-colored, textured illustration in shades of brown and tan. It depicts various human figures engaged in different activities: some are walking, some are riding bicycles, and others appear to be in conversation or working together. The style is somewhat abstract and artistic, with a focus on human movement and interaction.

*Do people think they will  
be left alone to say, "We  
believe," and then not  
be tested? (Quran 29:2)*

THE NEVER-ENDING TRIALS OF

# LIFE

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ISLAMIC GUIDANCE DERIVED  
FROM A BRIEF THEMATIC STUDY  
OF SOORAH AL-'ANKABOOT

**Shaykh Saalih ibn 'Abdil-'Azeez Aal Shaykh**  
*Translation & Commentary: Moosaa Richardson*

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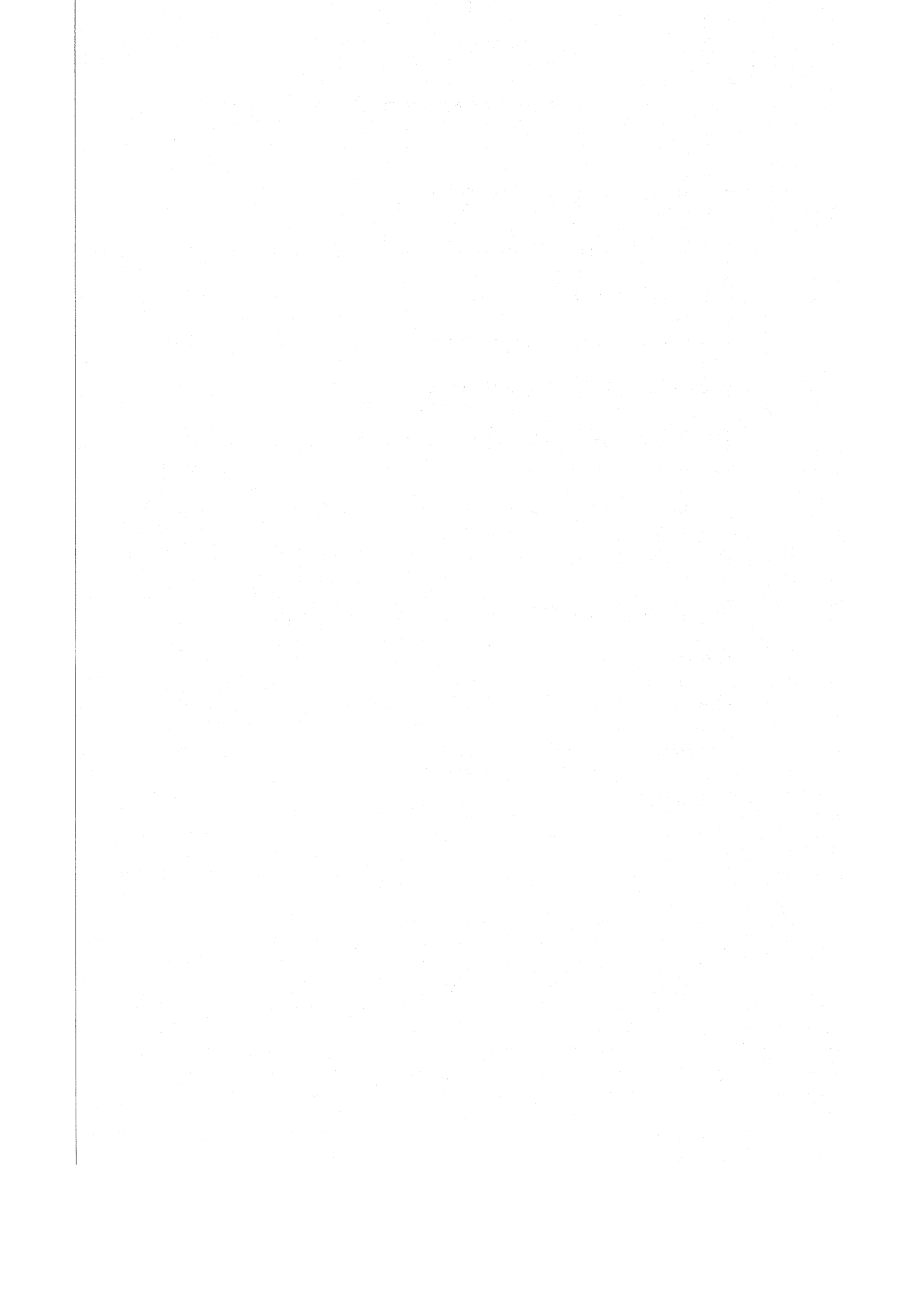
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## Translator's Foreword

In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Ever Merciful...

All praise is due to Allah, the Lord and Creator of all things. May He raise the rank of His noble Messenger and that of his upright Companions, and may He grant them all peace.

Muslims are truly blessed people, as we understand the nature of life and why we are all here. We are not here to play about and enjoy whatever our desires crave. We are here to find our path to servitude of our Creator, and to single Him out in worship. Our Lord, the Wise and Majestic Creator, has stated:

**And I have not created the Jinn nor Mankind except for them to worship Me [alone]. (51:56)**

Our worship of Allah includes submission to His Religious Legislation, as well as confronting the everyday trials of life, remaining firm upon devout servitude to Him, fulfilling His Commands for righteousness in speech and action. He has said (what means):

**Blessed is He in whose Hand is the Dominion, and He is over all things, All-Capable. [He is] the One who created dying and living, in order to test you: Which of you are best in deeds? And He is the All-Mighty, the Oft-Forgiving. (67:1-2)**

Allah, the Lofty and Exalted, has detailed some of the varieties of trials He puts His servants through, saying (what means):

**And We shall certainly test you with matters of fear, hunger, and losses of property, lives, and harvests. (2:155)**

Each and every one of us will be put to the specific test(s) which our All-Wise Creator has decreed for us. He has warned us that these tests we face will be hardships, difficulties, and losses, just as they come in the form of blessings and favorable things!

**And We shall test you with trials of both bad and good things. (21:35)**

Just as the calamities and disasters we face are serious tests of our faith, sincerity, and integrity, so are the enjoyable blessings we are favored with! Our children, wealth, health, comfort and overall prosperity can distract us from our true purpose in life and prove to be more harmful as trials than the greatest of losses.

The test of our integrity as Muslims and the genuineness of our servitude then, quite simply put, is two-fold:

1. Receive the blessings from our Lord, and be grateful to Him in word and deed. Recognize the true source of the blessings and praise Him. Use the blessings to fulfill servitude and obedience to Him. Continue to worship Him alone, without partners.
2. Endure the trials from our Lord with patience and obedience. Realize that our All-Powerful Creator made us in order to test us. Affirm that the trial could never have been avoided. Keep in mind that all our statements and actions are being recorded. Plead to Allah for the relief of burdens and recovery from losses. Continue to worship Him alone, without partners.

This has been summarized so eloquently for us by the Messenger of Allah (may Allah raise his rank and grant him peace), when he said (what means):

**Amazing in the affair of the believer. His situation is always good, and this is for none but a [true]**

**believer: Whenever favorable things reach him, he is grateful. That [gratitude] is better for him [than the actual blessing itself]. Whenever an unfavorable thing reaches him, he is patient. That [patience] is better for him [than whatever he lost].<sup>1</sup>**

We certainly need reminded of these basic things from time to time. The reminder in front of us now comes from one of the best of today's Islamic scholars, Shaykh Saalih ibn 'Abdil-'Azeez Aal Shaykh (may Allah preserve him). What you are about to read is taken from a lecture he delivered on the topic of thematic *Tafseer*, or "*Tafseer Mowdhoo'ee*."

Thematic *Tafseer* is when the main theme of one or more Quranic Chapters is the focus of the explanation. Individual Verses and Quranic Passages are explained in light of how they connect to the overall theme and context of their Chapter(s). In this case, the theme is: *Fitnah* (trials and tribulations) as found throughout *Soorah al-'Ankaboot*, the 29<sup>th</sup> Chapter of the Quran.

I originally found this highly beneficial discussion on an audio recording I purchased in the city of Makkah, Saudi Arabia in the year 1423 when I was a student at the Faculty of *Da'wah* of Umm al-Qura University. I had been studying the Science of Thematic *Tafseer*, and this recording was one of the best modern applications of the science I had come across. By the Permission of Allah, I then translated it and published it on the website, Bakkah.net, in order to share the benefit with my English-speaking brothers and sisters.

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<sup>1</sup> *Saheeh Muslim* (no.2999)



For those who would like to listen to the original Arabic recording or read a transcript of it, it can be found online by searching for the following title:<sup>2</sup>

### مقاصد السور وأثر ذلك في فهم التفسير

The content of this publication is from the second half of the aforementioned lecture. The footnotes are from the translator, as are the section headers and translation fillers [found between brackets].

May Allah, the Exalted and Most Deserving of Praise, grant us all success in passing our tests in this life, with the upright belief, character, and behavior He is pleased with. May He forgive us and guide us to what He loves. May He raise the rank of His Messenger Muhammad and that of his family and Companions, and grant them all an abundance of peace and safety.

**Moosaa Richardson** (1439.04.25)

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<sup>2</sup> The translator highly recommends listening to the original lecture during or after one's study of this book. That is because listening to lectures from Islam's recognized scholars, especially those who speak clear, proper academic Arabic, like Shaykh Saalih Aal Shaykh, is from the best ways an Arabic Language learner develops his/her fluency, by Allah's Permission. Listening to Arabic lectures, especially when one is (at least somewhat) familiar with the topic, aids tremendously in the acquisition of the language. Many people in the West tend to study Arabic with a primary or even complete focus on reading and writing skills. Heavy focus on listening and speaking skills removes a lot of the frustration faced when learning a second language. And Allah knows best.

## [The Overall Theme of Soorah al-'Ankaboot]

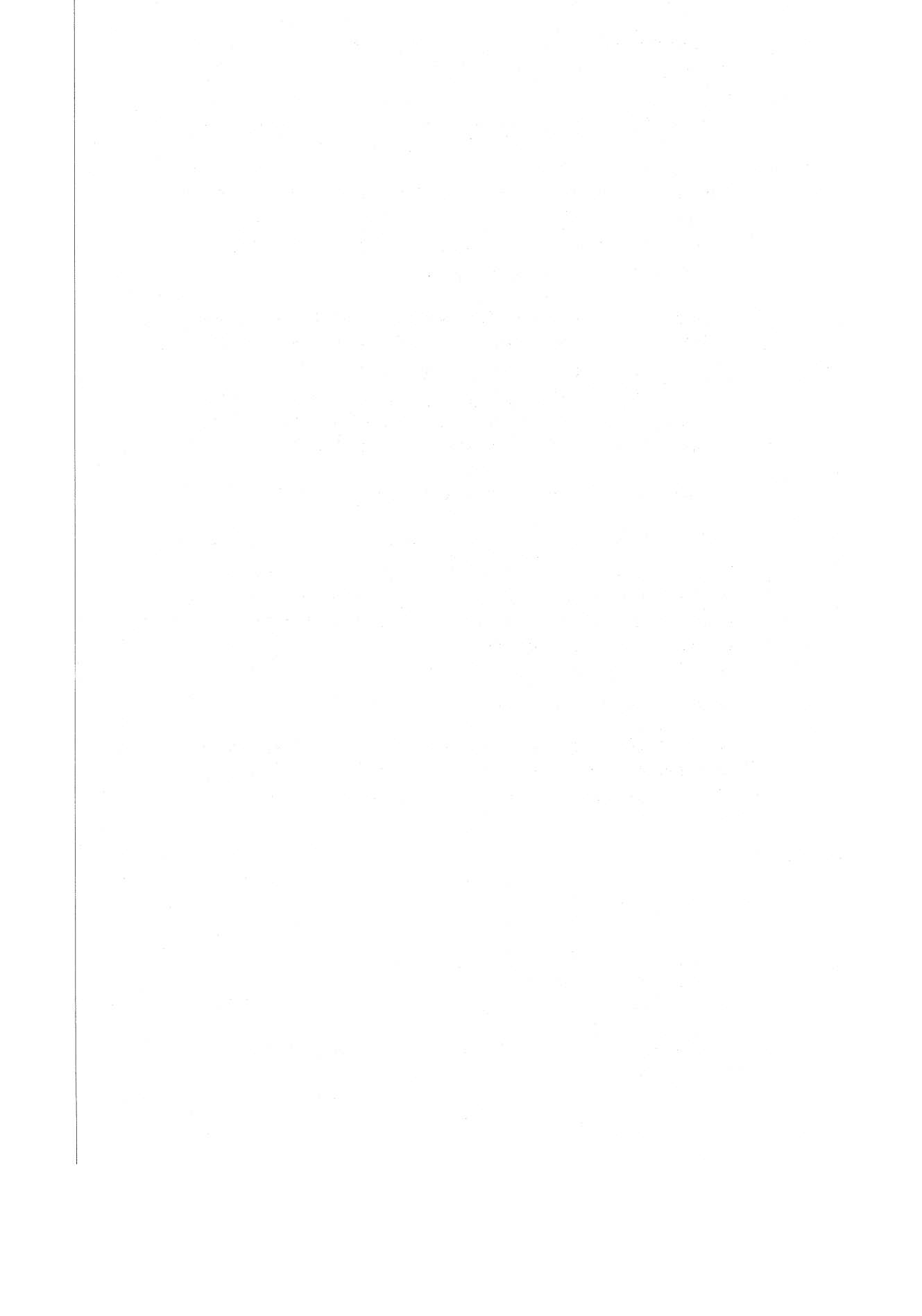
The overall theme of *Soorah Al-'Ankaboot*, as some of the scholars have mentioned, is *fitnah* (trials and tribulations). *Fitnah* is mentioned right from the very beginning of the *Soorah* where Allah says (what means):

***Alif – Laam – Meem. Do people think they will be left alone to say, “We believe,” and then not be subjected to fitnah? Verily we put those who came before them to trials, so that Allah would make known those who are truthful, and so that Allah would make known the liars. (29:1-3)***

So *fitnah* is mentioned specifically in the beginning of the *Soorah*.

What kind of *fitnah* are people tried with? A man may be put to trial due to his intellect, or by worldly [materialistic] things. He may be tested through his parents or family. He may be put to *fitnah* by way of a long lifespan. His *fitnah* may be that he faces no hardships at all in life! A man may be tested by a variety of trials which prevent him from seeing things as they are. Such trials are all mentioned right here in this *Soorah*.

So in this *Soorah*, *Soorah Al-'Ankaboot*, Allah mentions the varieties and the foundations that all trials are built upon. He also mentions how a man may be saved from these kinds of trials.



## [Life is But a Series of Trials]

This worldly life, in reality, is merely a test and a trial. The Prophet (may Allah raise his rank and grant him peace) said, as 'Eyaadh ibn Himaar narrated, as collected by Imam Muslim in his *Saheeh* (what means):

**Allah, the Most High, has said, 'O Muhammad!  
Verily I have only sent you to put you to trials and  
to put others to trial by way of you.'**<sup>3</sup>

So life, in reality, is just a *fitnah*. And this *fitnah* - Is it by way of evil things or good things? It is by way of evil and good things alike! [Allah says (what means)]:

**And We shall test you with trials of both bad and  
good things. Unto Us you shall be returned.  
(21:35)**

Look to what Allah mentions in the beginning of this *Soorah*:

**Do people think...?**

Who is included in the [generality of the] word "**people**"? It includes both the believer and the disbeliever. It includes both the old and young. It includes all categories of people as they interact with all other categories.

**Do people think they will be left alone to say,  
"We believe," and then not be subjected to  
*fitnah*? (29:2)**

You say you are a believer, so when can your faith be considered true *eemaan*? It is only once trials have been placed

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<sup>3</sup> *Saheeh Muslim* (no.2865)

in front of you, and you have passed them successfully, remaining dutiful to Allah's Order.

You might even be tried by your own self! There are people who are put to *fitnah* because of their beauty and good qualities. A woman may be tested by her own possessions, and a man may also be tested by his own wealth. One may be tested by his parents as well. So you will find in this *Soorah* mention of all these kinds of *fitnah*, their origins, and solutions to them.

## [The *Fitnah* of Disbelieving Parents]

Take this example: In the first part of the *Soorah*, Allah says (what means):

**And we have commanded the people to be good to their parents. But if they strive to make you join partners with Me, those that you have no knowledge of, do not obey them! To Me is your return. (29:8)**

Note here that some parents cause *fitnah* and strive to make a person commit *shirk* (polytheism). Isn't this a *fitnah*? Indeed it is a tremendous *fitnah*!

The scholars of *Tafseer* have mentioned that this Verse was revealed about the events involving Sa'd ibn Abee Waqqaas,<sup>4</sup> when his mother tried to turn him back to disbelief and polytheism. Even with this kind of situation, Allah ordered him to keep the company of his parents with kindness,<sup>5</sup> but no to obey them. He said (what means):

**But if they strive to make you join partners with Me, those that you have no knowledge of, do not obey them! To Me is your return. (29:8)**

And He said in the beginning of the Verse:

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<sup>4</sup> He was Aboo Ishaq Sa'd ibn Maalik (Aboo Waqqaas) ibn Wuhayb az-Zuhree, one of the ten promised Paradise in their lifetimes. He was the first one to shoot an arrow in an Islamic military confrontation. He died in the year 55, may Allah be pleased with him.

<sup>5</sup> Allah says (what means), "**And if they strive to make you set up partners with Me in worship, those you have no knowledge of, then do not obey them [in that], but keep their company in this life in a good way...**" (31:15).

**And we have commanded the people to be good to their parents... (29:8)**

This is a tremendous *fitnah*! So then what is the way out of it? The answer is, with the proper understanding of Allah's Legislation, that you do not obey them when they command you with disbelief, polytheism, or disobedience to Allah, but you must still bear their company with kindness.

There are some people who are tried by this *fitnah*, and they accompany their parents, not in kindness, but with harshness, and have thus fallen into the prohibition to some degree. The one who can be patient with such a difficult affair, bearing their companionship with kindness yet not obeying them [when they order him with disobedience to Allah] is the one who is successful in dealing with the *fitnah* of such a situation.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> What a relevant example this is for Western Muslims! Many of us accept Islam from non-Muslim families and face this exact situation. Often, a new Muslim who does not understand this principle may shun his own parents and family, or even cut off ties with them altogether, thinking it to be a display of loyalty to Islam and the Muslims. With a proper understanding of Islam, we remain by our parents' side, showing them our best and most humble behavior, while we do not obey them in disobedience to Allah. We do not accompany them to church services or exchange holiday greetings with them (Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter, etc.), nor do we bring them impermissible items they may request, like: lottery tickets, pork, alcohol, or cigarettes. While we do our best to serve and obey them, we cannot seek to please them at the expense of displeasing Allah.

## [The *Fitnah* of Being in the Minority]

Another kind of *fitnah* is when a person sees a great number of people disbelieving in Allah, the Mighty and Majestic. They do not believe, and so along comes a man and feels that he and the people of faith are very few, and that the disbelievers, the hypocrites, criminals, or disobedient ones are the majority. How can he remain upright himself? This is a kind of *fitnah* that attacks the heart.

Very few of the people in this kind of situation stay firm. Most of them look to the people – The majority are into evil, so they fall into it. In this *Soorah*, there is mention of this issue, along with the solution! So read the *Soorah* and contemplate over that.<sup>7</sup>

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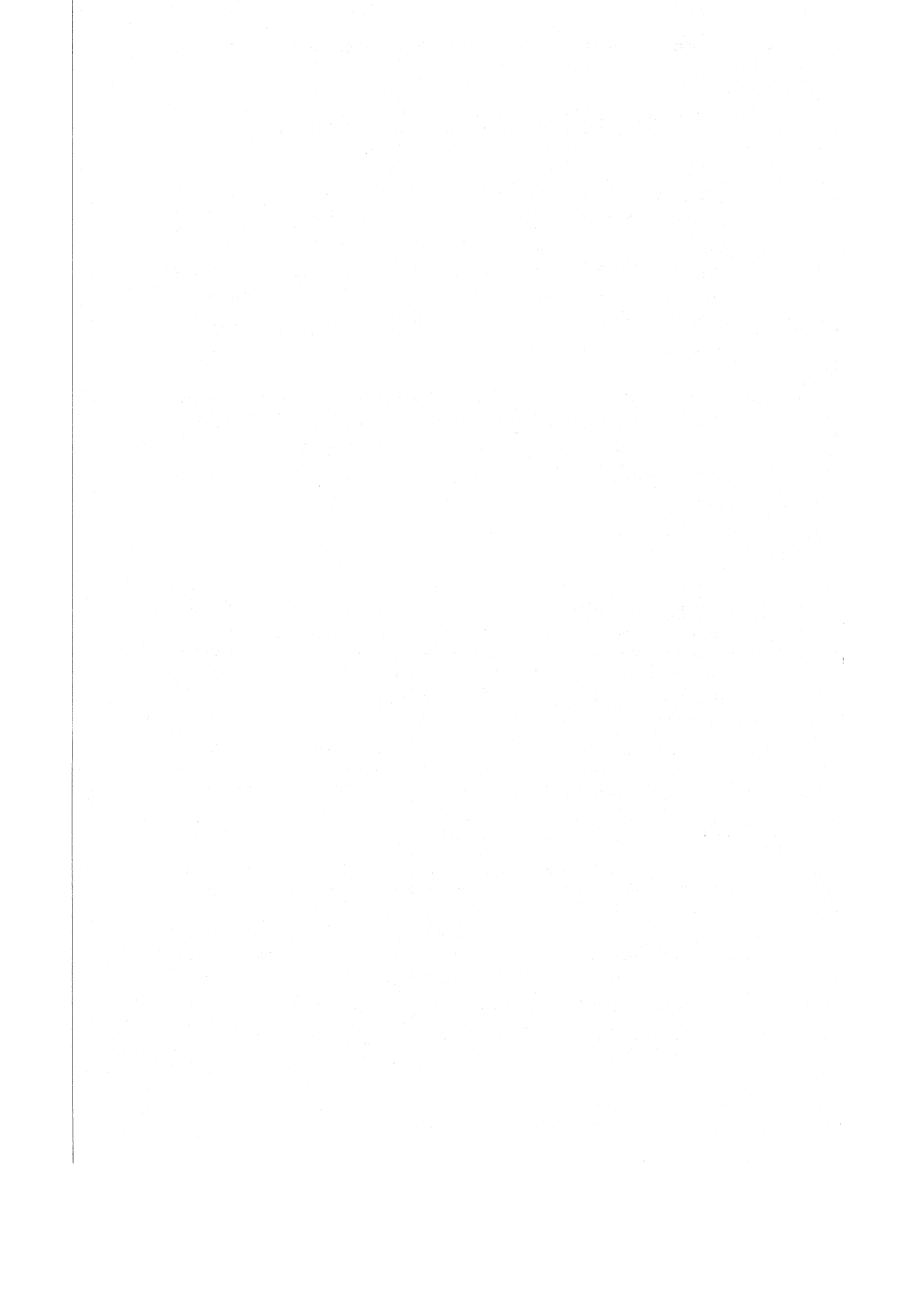
<sup>7</sup> For example: Allah mentions in the 15<sup>th</sup> Verse that Nooh (Noah) called his people to worship Allah for 950 years, yet they were overtaken by the flood and destroyed. Also, in the 18<sup>th</sup> Verse, Ibraaheem (Abraham) reminded his people, as they rejected him, that many nations of the past were also disbelievers. In the 34<sup>th</sup> Verse as well, the destruction of the entire civilization of Loot (Lot) is mentioned.

This is a very important point to reflect over for Muslims living in the West. The large numbers of disbelieving and disobedient people around us can create doubts in the heart of the weaker believers. Some of the *Salaf* used to say, "Do not be beguiled by the large numbers of those who are destroyed. Also, do not be beguiled by the small numbers of the followers of the Truth."

Muslims living in the West, those following the way of the righteous *Salaf*, face the *fitnah* of a double layer of strangeness: [1] They are within a minority of Muslims among the masses of disbelievers. [2] They are within a minority of *Ahlu-Sunnah* among masses of misguided followers of deviant sects. Yet this strangeness has been foretold by the Messenger of Allah (may Allah raise his rank and grant him peace), who said (what means):

**Islam began as something strange, and it shall return to being strange as it began. So glad tidings to the strangers!**  
(*Saheeh Muslim*)





## **[The *Fitnah* of Seeing Disbelievers Live Long, Prosperous Lives]**

Another kind of *fitnah* that is mentioned in this *Soorah* is that a man sees the enemies of Allah and His Messenger (may Allah raise his rank and grant him peace) living long, secure lives. He sees that they enjoy long lives on earth, enjoying their strength and oppressing others, whilst they are enemies of Allah, polytheists!

This may lead him to start following after the pleasures of this worldly life and to join them in obstructing others from the Path of Allah.

**This worldly life has been decorated for those who have disbelieved. They mock the people who believe, but the people of piety will be above them on the Day of Judgment. (2:212)**

That is from *Soorah Al-Baqarah*. In this *Soorah*, *Soorah Al-'Ankaboot*, Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, mentions the story of Nooh (peace be upon him) in only two Verses. What is the relationship of this story to the theme of the *Soorah*, *fitnah*?

Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, says (what means):

**And verily we sent Nooh (Noah) to his people, and He stayed amongst them [calling them to Allah] for all of 1000 years, save 50. Then the great flood overtook them while they were oppressive. So we saved him and those on the ark, and we made it a sign for all the creation. (29:14-15)**

The story of Nooh is found here in only two Verses. What is the reason for that? This entire time, 950 years, he was giving

*da'wah* to them, while the believers were very few, as is understood from another *Soorah*:

**And no one believed along with him, except very few. (11:40)**

Some of the scholars explained that the number of believers had only reached thirteen individuals. Others said that seventy-some men and women had believed.

He stayed amongst them a thousand years while polytheism was rampant, the worship of idols: Wadd, Suwaa', Yaghooth, Ya'ooq, and Nasr. He advised them and invited them day and night, secretly and openly,<sup>8</sup> and no one responded except this small number. Wouldn't the hearts be facing a *fitnah*?

Indeed this is a *fitnah*. It was not just 10, 20, or 50 years, or even 100 years. 200 years went by, 300, 400, 500, to a complete 1000 years, save 50. Then, finally came the way out from Allah, the Mighty and Majestic.

Therefore, a man may be put to trial by seeing the long lives of the enemies. So this *Soorah* causes the true believer to take heed and realize that this is all for a reason:

**So that Allah would make known those who are truthful, and so that Allah would make known the liars. (29:3)**

When will this be made known? When the *fitnah* is encountered, and it is dealt with successfully. So the theme of the *Soorah*, as we are noting, is *fitnah*, even with the story of the Prophet (Nooh). The lesson here is *fitnah*, and what will save you from *fitnah* that remains for a long time.

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<sup>8</sup> Review: *Soorah Nooh* (71:1-28)

Some people mistakenly think that Allah's Affair will reach them however they want. No, rather the Wisdom of Allah has already preceded us. He will test people, as He tested Nooh (peace be upon him) and his people, as they lived amongst their people [calling them to Allah] for 950 years, and after that only a small group of people responded.

So one way to succeed in the face of trials is mentioned here in the *Soorah*, and that is by way of patience:

**So we saved him and those on the ark, and we made it a sign for all the creation. (29:14)**



## [The *Fitnah* of Argumentation] [1]

Then we see in the story of Ibraaheem (Abraham) another kind of *fitnah*: Opponents who argue and fight against the invitation. They do not submit, rather they only plot and plan. Certain materialistic things that they love are made very dear to them, as Allah says (what means):

**And he (Ibraaheem) said, “You have taken idols as objects of worship instead of Allah, out of mutual love, in this worldly life. On the Day of Judgment you shall disown each other...” (29:25)**

So in argumentation there is a kind of *fitnah*. Few people have patience upon the Truth and remain upon it, without becoming affected by this kind of *fitnah*, the doubts that the polytheists and disbelievers may instill in one's mind. These doubts are renewed from time to time.



## [The *Fitnah* of Passions and Desires]

After this, Allah mentions the story of Loot (Lot, peace be upon him). In it is mention of the *fitnah* of the desires of men which go against man's very nature. This was along with a number of other passions and their outward declarations of them. They claimed that there was no harm in them. They would refute anyone who prohibited them from their actions.

He still prohibited them:

**You are practicing [all kinds of] evil in your gatherings! (29:29)**

But all they said to him in response was:

**Bring us Allah's Punishment if you are indeed from the truthful! (29:29)**

It was great *fitnah* for Loot that his wife, from his own household, had given into their evil and become like them, encouraging the men to have intercourse with the men who would come to visit Loot, and similar crimes.

**So we saved him and his family, except his wife, as she was from those who stayed behind. (7:83)**

Desires are indeed a form of *fitnah*. How can one escape his desires and passions? He escapes them by recognizing that they are a source of *fitnah*.

Allah intended for the passions of the flesh to be something that leads to the preservation of lineage (by having children), and to test the servant as well: Does he have perseverance or not? Does he push forward, firm upon what Allah wants from him, or does he turn to his desires and lose hold of his grasp over them, going after anything he wants?



So in this story, the *fitnah* was something that led to the release of Allah's Punishment upon those who did not cease doing things He, the Mighty and Majestic, had forbidden.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Muslims in the West must reflect seriously over the story of Loot and his trials, especially in an era when the homosexual agenda is being repackaged to the world as personal freedom and even heroism. A Muslim living in the West may be affected by the homosexual agenda, or perhaps a spouse or a child may be affected. Muslims should reflect about how two Prophets from Allah, Loot and Nooh, lost their wives to disbelief, and their two wives were made timeless examples of opposition to the Orders of Allah. Allah has said (what means):

**And Allah has set forth a parable for the disbelievers: The wife of Nooh and the wife of Loot. They were under the charge of two of our righteous servants, yet they betrayed them. They (Nooh and Loot) could do nothing to save them from [the Punishment of] Allah. Thus it was said to them: "Enter the Hellfire along with all those who enter it." (66:10)**

For those struggling with family members who have left Islam or refuse to embrace it, contemplate over the stories of Nooh and Loot, as well as the story of Aasiyah, the righteous, believing wife of the evil tyrant, Pharaoh. Reflect over the story of Ibraaheem as well, whose own father rejected his call, and study the life of our Prophet Muhammad (may Allah raise his and all their ranks, and grant them all peace), who lost his beloved uncle to the Hellfire. Indeed, there is great comfort and guidance for the believers in the Book of Allah!

## [The *Fitnah* of Disobedience Upon Knowledge]

Another kind of *fitnah* is when the people have knowledge and the society knows what is correct, but they do not act according to their knowledge. An ignorant man can be taught. Yet, when knowledge has spread in a society and people know the legislated limits [of Allah] and they have some insight, and yet they still contradict what they know, is that not a *fitnah*!?

Knowledge has not been a blessing for them, rather it has only been a *fitnah*. Allah, the Mighty and Exalted, mentions that the tribes of 'Aad and Thamood were people of knowledge. They knew and had insight. Yet, with all of that, they rebelled and disobeyed. Allah, the Exalted, has said:

**And [remember the destruction of] 'Aad and Thamood! That has been made clear to you, from [consideration of] their [ruined] places of residence [how they were destroyed]. The Devil beautified their actions for them and kept them away from the Path, whilst they were people of insight. (29:38)**

The Devil beautified their actions for them, and then kept them away from the Path, **whilst they were people of insight!** Were they ignorant? No! Were they deficient in some of their knowledge? No! They had knowledge, but the Devil beautified their actions for them, and thus he kept them away from the Path! All of this while they had good insight and clear vision.

This is a tremendous *fitnah*, that a man has knowledge but he obeys the Devil instead, leaving behind the knowledge that he

has received from his Lord, the Mighty and Majestic, and from His Messenger (may Allah raise his rank and grant him peace).<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> We suffer from this greatly in the West, and to Allah is our complaint and our plea for help against our own selves! Often, the real problem a person struggles with is not his ignorance of correct Islamic beliefs and practice. The problem is so commonly his lack of application of what he knows. It is perhaps the result of information overload, when knowledge is available in abundance, so much that it overwhelms a person, and then he spends his life collecting and passing on knowledge without practicing it! We need to be reminded that knowledge without practice is like a tree without fruits. It was the way of those who have earned Allah's Anger, and we seek refuge with Allah from this evil path every time we read *Soorah al-Faatihah!*

We need to be reminded that the Quran will be a proof for or against us on the Day of Judgment. (*Saheeh Muslim*, no.223) It is a proof in our favor when we learn and implement it, yet a proof against us if we contradict what we know of it!

We need to be reminded that our feet will remain in their places on the Day of Judgment, and we shall not budge, until we are asked a number of questions. We will be asked about our knowledge and what we have done with it! (*Jaami' at-Tirmidhee*, no.2417)

We need to be reminded that our Prophet (may Allah raise his rank and grant him peace) used to seek refuge with Allah from knowledge without benefit! (*Saheeh Muslim*, no.2722)

## [The *Fitnah* of Argumentation] [II]

Strength can also be a *fitnah*, just as dialogues and debates are *fitnah* in many situations. Today, dialogues are commonly being promoted: debating with Christians, debating between people, debating between the religions, between *madh-habs*, between sects, etc. This debating is a kind of *fitnah*!

Programs with these debates are airing on television stations now. This has an effect on those with weak hearts. You see the different religions and sects: This one is worshipping something, and that one is worshipping something else. A person could become confused and be put to trial. But the true believer knows that these various religions and assorted beliefs and pathways are just another proof that the Truth is only one singular way, and that those other people are as Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, says (what means):

**Laboring hard and weary, they enter a blazing hot Fire. (88:3-4)**

They wanted to follow the path to Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, but they were mistaken.

As for the subject of debates: Should a person debate or not? Does he engage in discussion or not? This is indeed a *fitnah*. And who is the one who should debate them? The one who has knowledge, not just anyone!

It should be mentioned here that, as some of you know, some people enter debates with either the corrupt Muslims, the Christians, the Jews, or people of some other religion or deviant ideology. They are occasionally defeated, or the opponent is stronger. So people are really being put to trial through this!

Allah, the Mighty and Exalted, has clarified in this *Soorah* that *fitnah* will spread if the dialogue is not conducted by a person of knowledge engaging people with what is better.

Allah, the Mighty and Exalted, says (what means):

**And do not debate the People of the Book (the Jews and the Christians) except in a way that is better, except the oppressors from them. And say: "I believe in what was revealed to us and in what was revealed to you, and our God and your God is One, and we are submitting as Muslims to Him." And thus we sent down the Book to you... (29:46-47)**

Until He, the Mighty and Exalted, said (what means):

**...They are but clear Verses in the chests of those who have been given knowledge. (29:49)**

Allah has prohibited us from debating the People of the Book, except with what is better. But who is it that should debate? The one who debates is the one who knows the Quran, as Allah says (what means):

**They are but clear Verses in the chests of those who have been given knowledge. (29:49)**

So based on this, whoever does not know the Quran, the proofs found in the Quran, the clear examples of the Quran, the evidences in the Quran, the examples of dialogue provided in the Quran, the examples of debating the wicked sinners, the people of arrogance, those who transgress all limits, and all categories of people... Whoever does not know these things is not fit for debating!

It is not for each and every individual to enter debates using his own opinions and thoughts. Rather, this debating is to be done by the scholars. *Hiwaar* (debating), or *mujadalah*, as it

has been named in the Quran, is only for the people of knowledge, those who know the limits that Allah sent down to his Messenger (may Allah raise his rank and grant him peace).

Therefore, *fitnah* could very well take place within debates. A man comes and says, "Debate with me! Why won't you debate me!?" So he begins looking for a subject to debate about! What issue can he argue over? This is a way that common people are ruined!

So a man must look to his Religion in a situation like this, and uphold and display the honor of his Religion. He must know that the Quran is the Truth, and whoever has it in his chest is upon the Truth, since the Quran is the decisive evidence against everything!

It could be that a man does not know some of the proofs needed. If that is the case, then verily he must say, as Allah, the Mighty and Exalted, has said (what means):

**And say: "I believe in what was revealed to us and in what was revealed to you, and our God and your God is One, and we are submitting as Muslims to Him." (29:46-47)**

This is the general approach to basic dialogue, while the specific and more comprehensive details are known to those who know the Quran and Islamic Law.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> In the West, we have seen every type of self-appointed debate hero challenging people, Muslims and non-Muslims alike. Western educational culture actually fosters the concept of arguing for the sake of developing one's argumentation skills. Children in Western schools may be encouraged to join debate clubs.

Students of Islamic knowledge, fresh out of the halls of universities, still in their 20's, see themselves as ready for debates with Jews and Christians. Years of study become squandered in interfaith dialogue events in churches and temples, where these misguided, lost souls stand shoulder to shoulder

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with polytheists chanting hymns from the Bible! Disgraceful pageantry, without any substance! Are they calling the non-Muslims to Islam, according to the guidance of Muhammad (may Allah raise his rank and grant him peace)? Or are they just uniting with polytheists, not clarifying *towheed* (Allah's exclusive Right to be worshipped alone)?

**And do not mix the Truth with falsehood, hiding the Truth, while you have knowledge! (2:42)**

Regarding debates with the people of innovation: The *imams* of the *Salaf* were very clear in their staple texts of basic Creed that the people of *Sunnah* do not enter into Religious debates with innovators, as a base rule. They would instead shun the people of innovation, refusing to share gatherings with them or hear them reciting even half a Verse of Quran! Sufyaan ath-Thowree said, for example, "Whoever listens to an innovator exits the protective care of Allah and is left to himself." (Ibn Battah's *al-Ebaanah al-Kubraa*)

## [The *Fitnah* of Materialism]

Another *fitnah* from those mentioned in this *Soorah* is that Allah had made this worldly life beautiful, with all of its vain pleasures and playing about, and all the enjoyable things within it. A person may indulge in these things and forget about the Next Life.

Allah, the Mighty and Exalted, says near the end of the *Soorah* (what means):

**And this worldly life is nothing but vain pleasures and playing about. (29:64)**

So many of the people are put to *fitnah* because of this worldly life, with its vain pleasures and amusement, thinking these things will last. Yet, they do not know the reality of life! Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, says after that (what means):

**And indeed the Next Abode is truly the *Hayawaan*, if they only but knew! (29:64)**

The word "**Hayawaan**" is a more emphatic expression of the word "*hayaat*" (life). The reference in the Verse to the Next Abode means: Paradise and the Hellfire. The Hereafter is the truly complete and everlasting life. So whoever wants true delight and complete enjoyment and satisfaction, then it is in Paradise in the Next Life. Whoever wants to be free from harmful things, then all of the harmful things are in the Hellfire. So whoever wants to flee from them must flee from the Hellfire.

A number of scholars, including Ibn Al-Jowzee, have explained that whatever Allah mentions in the Quran about the delights of this worldly life is only for you to contemplate over them in comparison to the delights of the Next Life. Every example of an enjoyable thing, something the people indulge in, is merely



a proof against you, unless you have reflected over the relative delights of Paradise. On the other hand, every kind of harmful thing in this worldly life, even a tiny insect or a moment of hot weather, is something that Allah is using to remind you about the punishments, torture, and deprivation of the Next Life! Whoever seeks the real, true life and happiness, then let him look for the everlasting happiness of the Hereafter.

This worldly life, with its amusement and play, is only just that – Vain amusement and playing about. Thus, it is the cause of *fitnah*. Look at the people today and how they are being tried by the amusement and play of this worldly life! Why have the hearts become hardened and unreceptive? Because the people have turned to amusement and play!

Why have they turned away from the Next Life? Because they have turned to amusement and play!

Why don't they have hardly anything memorized from the Quran? Because they have turned to amusement and play!

The earnest, intelligent man is the one who carefully considers His Statement (which means):

**And indeed the Next Abode is truly the  
Hayawaan, if they only but knew! (29:64)**

## [The *Fitnah* of Safety and Security]

Another kind of *fitnah* mentioned here in this *Soorah*, and the way out from it is also mentioned therein, is the *fitnah* of safety and security.

Look at the security of the *Haram*,<sup>12</sup> the security of the places surrounding it, after years and years of security, the people begin to believe that what befalls the other people will not befall them. Earthquakes happen in other places, yet the people who live near the *Haram*, it does not happen to them.

Calamities, difficult living conditions, things that befall the others... The people who live in the *Haram* [mistakenly] say [as the Jews and Christians have said]:

**We are the children of Allah and his beloved ones! (5:18)**

Or they say, "We are His favored ones," or other similar things.

Allah, the Mighty and Exalted, has said, clarifying this kind of *fitnah* near the end of the *Soorah*:

**Have they not seen how We have made the *Haram* secure, while people are being overtaken all around them? (29:67)**

We must think carefully about this kind of *fitnah*, a true blessing from Allah. This blessing of Allah should not be a source of *fitnah* for the people, it should not be that Allah's blessing becomes a *fitnah*. Allah granted the people safety and security

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<sup>12</sup> Shaykh Saalih is referring here to the residents of Makkah and Madeenah. The *Haram* is the central mosque in each of those cities, the Ka'bah in Makkah and the Prophet's Masjid in Madeenah.

during the time of one of the previous Prophets, and well into the time after him, however much Allah so willed. Allah says (what means):

**Have they not seen how We have made the Haram secure, while people are being overtaken all around them? (29:67)**

What is the intent here? [He then says (what means)]:

**Will they then believe in falsehood and become ungrateful for the blessings of Allah? (29:67)**

Are they going to believe in falsehood after Allah has blessed them so much!? Are they going to engage in polytheism, disbelief, and the rejection of the message of Muhammad (may Allah raise his rank and grant him peace), pledging obedience to the devils? Or are they going to fall into other things like disobedience, sinning, and transgression?

**...And become ungrateful for the blessings of Allah? (29:67)**

Who is it that gave them such blessings? Allah, the Mighty and Exalted!

**And whatever blessings you have are only from Allah! Then when some harm reaches you, to Him you cry for help. (16:53)**

From the many kinds of *fitnah* that Allah may allow to befall some of His servants is what has been mentioned in this *Soorah*: That a servant feels that trials and tribulations are only for other people, and that he is not going to be tried or tested with difficulties.

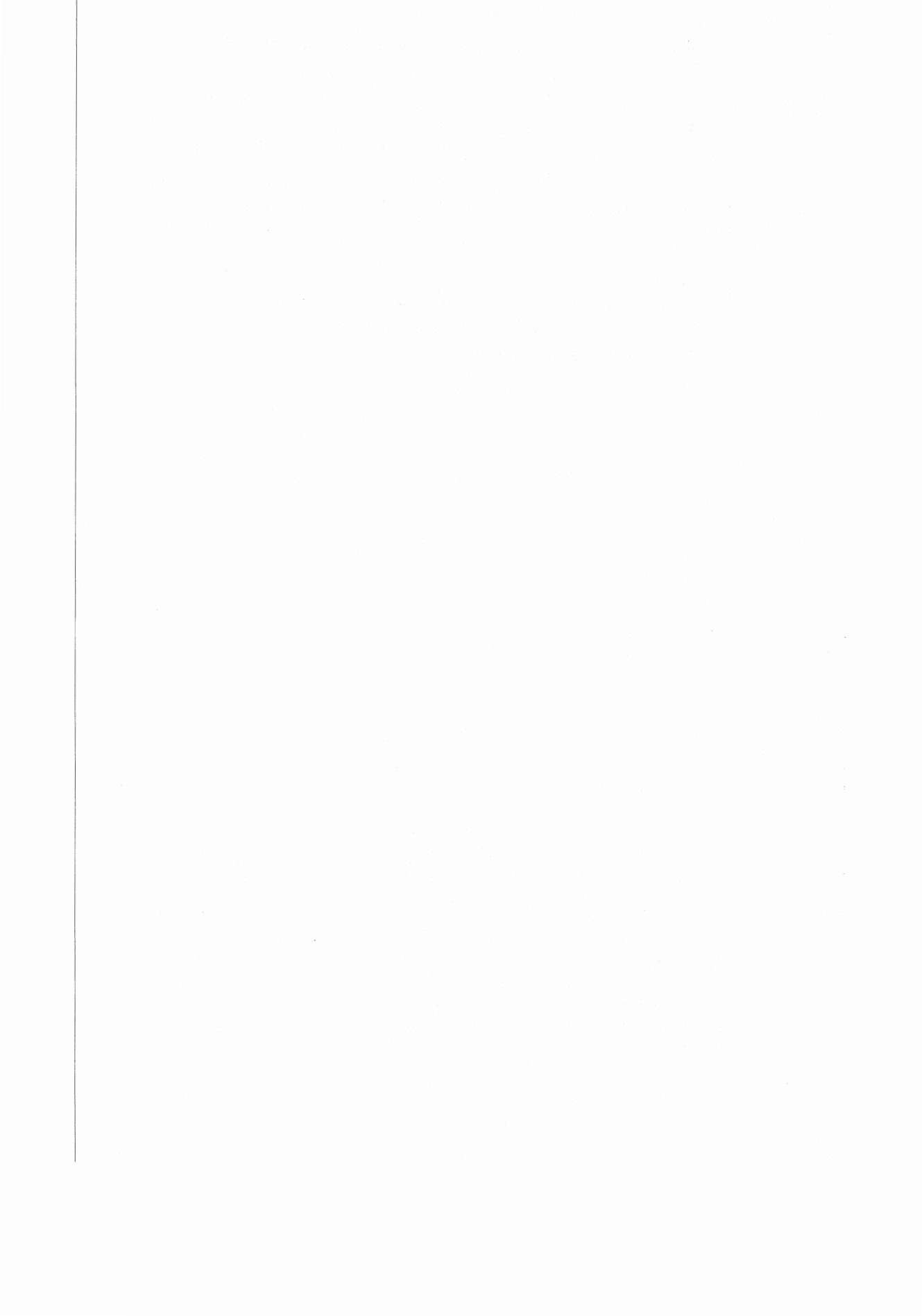
So the loss of provisions, as one may assume, is specifically for others, not for him. Sickness is for So-and-So, while he does not get sick. Severe illnesses overtake people, and may Allah

give us security from them. A person may feel that those things only befall others, and he feels they will not touch him. Strokes and things like that are for other people, and he feels that he will not have to face them, and he does not contemplate. Allah, the Mighty and Exalted, says, explaining this example (what means):

**Have they not seen how We have made the *Haram* secure, while people are being overtaken all around them? Will they then believe in falsehood and become ungrateful for the blessings of Allah? (29:67)<sup>13</sup>**

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<sup>13</sup> Muslims in the West have a great need to ponder over this point carefully. In general, we enjoy safety and security, access to health care and medicine, education, employment, housing, nutrition, and many other comforts. We may feel that poverty, droughts, and disasters are specific to other regions. We are surrounded by ingrates who live in luxury, not praising or worshipping their Ever Merciful Benefactor! We may be living among people who are about to face terrible punishment for their disbelief and neglect, yet we feel safe and secure from the Decree of Allah. We beg Allah for safety, and that He make us grateful and deserving of having our blessings preserved for us.



## [Conclusion]

These are examples from the many kinds of *fitnah* and trials, matters that connect to the main theme of the *Soorah*. The beginning and the end of this *Soorah* meet each other upon the same subject, providing proof for those of the scholars who say, "The main theme of a *Soorah* can be found in the meanings shared by its beginning and end."

Allah, the Mighty and Exalted, says in the beginning of the *Soorah* (what means):

**Do people think they will be left alone to say,  
"We believe," and then not be subjected to  
*fitnah*? (29:2)**

What is the solution to all of these situations? The answer is found in the end of the *Soorah*, in the very last Verse (which means):

**Those who strive hard in Our Way, We shall  
certainly guide them to Our Paths [of  
righteousness]. And verily Allah is with those who  
do good. (29:69)**

I ask Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, to bless us all in what we have heard, and that He make us from the people of the Quran, those who are His special and favored people. I also ask that He increase us in knowledge and that He remind us of what we forget.

I also ask that He make us from those who make *halaal* (permissible) what is *halaal* in His Book, from those who consider what has been prohibited in His Book as *haraam*, and from those who firmly believe in what is reported in His Book about the unseen affairs. Verily He, Most High, is the Bestower of Good, the Generous One.

NOTES: