

Selections from the
Tadabbur-i-Qur'an

Amin Ahsan Islahi

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Translator's Note

The *Tadabbur-i-Qur'an* is a monumental commentary of the *Qur'an* written by *Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī* (d: 1997). Extending over nine volumes of six thousand pages, this masterful work was completed in a span of twenty two years. It is a unique commentary by a person no less unique. 'Abide by the truth even if your shadow deserts you', was his life-long motto and anyone who has had a chance to carefully read this commentary will testify that *Iṣlāḥī* has tried his utmost to live up to this motto. He has tried to delve deep to ascertain the meaning and purport of the *Qur'ānic* verses and has openly confessed where he has been unable to do justice with understanding some verse.

If *Iṣlāḥī's* mentor, the phenomenal *Qur'ānic* scholar, *Ḥamīd Uddīn Farāḥī* (d: 1930) founded the view that the *Qur'an* possessed structural and thematic *naẓm* (coherence; meaningful arrangement), it is *Iṣlāḥī* who established in his commentary that this was actually correct.

The main features of the *naẓm* elaborated by *Iṣlāḥī* in this commentary may be summarized thus:

1. The surahs of the *Qur'an* are divided into seven discrete groups. Each group has a distinct theme. Every group begins with one or more *Makkan Sūrah* and ends with one or more *Madīnan Sūrah*. In each group, the *Makkan Sūrah*s always precede the *Madīnan* ones. The relationship between the *Makkan Sūrah*s and *Madīnan Sūrah*s of each group is that of the root of a tree and its branches.

2. In every group, the various phases of the Prophet Muhammad's mission are depicted.

3. Two *sūrahs* of each group form a pair such that each member of the pair complements the other in various ways. *Sūrah Fātihah*, however, is an exception to this pattern: it is an introduction to the whole of the *Qurʾān* as well as to the first group which begins with it. There are also some *sūrahs* which have a specific purpose and fall in this paired-*sūrah* scheme in a particular way.

4. Each *sūrah* has specific addressees and a central theme around which the contents of the *sūrah* revolve. Every *sūrah* has distinct subsections to mark thematic shifts, and every subsection is paragraphed to mark smaller shifts.

Following is a brief description of the seven *Qurʾānic* groups:

Group I {*Sūrah Fātihah* (1) - *Sūrah Māidah* (5)}
Central Theme: Islamic Law.

Group II {*Sūrah Anʿām* (6) - *Sūrah Tawbah* (9)}
Central Theme: The consequences of denying the Prophet (sws) for the *Mushrikīn* of *Makkah*.

Group III {*Sūrah Yūnus* (10) - *Sūrah Nūr* (24)}
Central Theme: Glad tidings of the Prophet Muhammad's domination in Arabia.

Group IV {*Sūrah Furqān* (25) - *Sūrah Aḥzāb* (33)}
Central Theme: Arguments that substantiate the prophethood of Muhammad (sws) and the requirements of faith in him.

Group V {*Sūrah Sabā* (34) - *Sūrah Ḥujrāt* (49)}
Central Theme: Arguments that substantiate the belief of *Tawḥīd* and the requirements of faith in this belief.

Group VI {*Sūrah Qāf* (50) - *Sūrah Taḥrīm* (66)}
Central Theme: Arguments that substantiate the belief of *Ākhirah* and the requirements of faith in this belief.

Group VII {*Sūrah Mulk* (67) - *Sūrah Nās* (114)}
Central Theme: Admonition (*indhār*) to the *Quraysh* about

their fate in the Herein and the Hereafter if they deny the Prophet (sws).

This is just a brief introduction of the thematic and structural coherence in the *Qur'ān* as presented by *Iṣlāḥī* in his *Tadabbur-i-Qur'ān*. The masterpiece needs to be studied by every person who wants to understand the *Qur'ān* so that he may have an idea of the giant leap forward it has brought about in the field of *Qur'ānic* Exegesis.

O

Over a decade ago, I translated some of the shorter surahs (14 in all) of this commentary along with the portion on the *Bismillāh* verse. I also translated the contextual analysis of the surahs of Group Six ((*Sūrah Qāf* (50) - *Sūrah Tahṛīm* (66)). I never had in mind the task of translating the whole work – a task that required more commitment and devotion than I could muster. To pay my humble tribute to the man* and to the masterpiece he has produced, I have now decided to publish the portions translated.

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2004

* Also appears in this booklet, a short biographical sketch of *Iṣlāḥī* that I have compiled for the benefit of the readers who want to have an idea of his life and times.

A Brief Biographical Sketch of *Iṣlāḥī*

Iṣlāḥī was born in 1904 at *Bamhūr*, a small village in Azamgarh (U.P.), India. He received his early education in two local schools of the village. His father *Hāfiẓ Muḥammad Murtaḍā* was a small landlord of the area. *Iṣlāḥī* was admitted to *Madrasah Al-Iṣlāḥ* in 1915 in grade three. This *Madrasah* is located in *Sarāʿi-Mīr*, a small village near *Bamhūr*. It was while addressing the convocation ceremony of the first batch of the *Madrasah* that he first came in the notice of the great *Hamīd Uddīn Farāḥī*, the person who was destined to become his mentor and guide.

The teacher which influenced him the most during his student life at the *Madrasah* was *Mawlānā ‘Abdu’l-Rahmān Nigrāmī*, himself a versatile genius. *Mawlānā Nigrāmī*’s attention helped him in developing a profound inclination towards Arabic literature. After graduating from the *Madrasah* in 1922, he entered the field of journalism. For a while, he edited a newspaper *Maḍīnah* at *Bijnawr* and also remained associated with *Sach*, a newspaper edited by *Mawlānā ‘Abdu’l-Mājid Daryābādī*.

It was sometime in 1925 when *Farāḥī* offered *Iṣlāḥī* to come and study the *Qur’ān* with him. *Iṣlāḥī* abandoned his journalistic career with no hesitation at all to benefit from this glorious opportunity. He knew he had stumbled upon the ‘famous tide’: – ‘the tide in the affairs of men which when taken at the flood leads on to good fortune’. For the next five years till *Farāḥī*’s death in 1930, he remained with him like his shadow. It was in this forming period of his life in which he developed a deep understanding of the *Qur’ān* and learnt from *Farāḥī* the principles of direct deliberation on the Book of Allah. During

this time, he also taught the *Qur'ān* and Arabic literature at the *Madrasah*.

After *Farāhī*'s death, *Iṣlāḥī* studied *Ḥadīth* from a celebrated scholar of this discipline, 'Abdu'l-Raḥmān Muḥaddith Mubārakpurī. In 1936, he founded the *Dā'irah-i-Ḥamīdiyyah*, a small institute to disseminate the *Qur'ānic* thought of *Farāhī*. Under the auspices of this institute, he brought out a monthly journal, *Al-Iṣlāḥ*, in which he translated many portions of *Farāhī*'s treatises written in Arabic. The journal was published till 1939, after which it was discontinued.

Iṣlāḥī was among the founder members of the *Jamā'at-i-Islāmī*, a religious party founded by the eminent Islamic scholar, *Mawdūdī*, in 1941. During his seventeen year stay in the *Jamā'at*, he represented the intellectual element of this party and remained a member of the central governing body (*Majlis-i-Shūrā*). During this period, he did the groundwork needed to write a commentary of the *Qur'ān* – an objective which he had set before him early in life. In 1958, he abandoned the *Jamā'at*, after serious differences arose between him and *Mawdūdī* on the nature of the constitution of the *Jamā'at*.

After leaving the *Jamā'at*, he finally got the chance to fulfil his cherished goal of writing a commentary of the *Qur'ān*. He also launched a monthly journal *Mithāq* in which portions of this commentary, *Tadabbur-i-Qur'ān*, were published. In 1961, he established a small study circle *Ḥalqa-i-Tadabbur-i-Qur'ān* for college students to whom he taught Arabic language and literature, the Holy *Qur'ān* and the *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*. In 1965, a tragic incident brought an end to the journal as well as to the study circle: *Iṣlāḥī*'s eldest son *Abū Ṣāliḥ* died in a plane crash. However, work on the commentary continued. In 1970, *Iṣlāḥī* fell severely ill and had to discontinue all his intellectual pursuits. Subsequently, he recovered quite miraculously. In 1972, he shifted to a countryside village near Sheikhpura, where he continued to work on the commentary till 1979, when he shifted back to Lahore. It was on the 29th of *Ramaḍān* 1400/ 12th August 1980 when the great day arrived – the day when a monumental effort reached its culmination: the *Tadabbur-i-Qur'ān* had taken twenty-two long years to complete.

In 1981, Iṣlāhī founded the *Idāra-i-Tadabbur-i-Qur'ān-u-Ḥadīth*, which remained until his death (15th December 1997) the centre of most of his intellectual activities. A quarterly journal *Tadabbur* was taken out in 1981 as its organ. He gave weekly lectures on the text of the *Qur'ān*. Later, he took up deep study on the principles of *Ḥadīth* and began teaching the *Mu'aṭṭā* of *Imām Mālik* in weekly sittings to a close circle of students and associates. After completing the *Mu'aṭṭā*, he also taught some portions of *Imām Bukhārī's Ṣaḥīḥ*. Many of these lectures have been transcribed and published in the *Tadabbur*.

Besides writing the *Tadabbur-i-Qur'ān*, Iṣlāhī has authored a number of books in Urdu on various topics of Islam. They include:

1. ' ' (Tazkiyah-i-Nafs: Purification of the Soul)
2. ' ' (Ḥaqīqat-i-Shirk-u-Tawḥīd: The Essence of Polytheism and Monotheism)
3. ' ' (Da'wat-i-Dīn awr us kā Ṭarīqah-i-Kār: Islamic Message and the Mode of its Preaching)
4. ' ' (Islāmī Qānūn kī Tadwīn: Codification of Islamic Law)
5. ' ' (Islāmī Riyāsat: The Islamic State)
6. ' ' (Islāmī Mu'āsharay mayn 'Awrat kā Muqām: The Status of Women in an Islamic Society)
7. ' ' (Ḥaqīqat-i-Namāz: The Essence of the Prayer)
8. ' ' (Ḥaqīqat-i-Taqwāh: The Essence of Godliness)
9. ' ' (Islāmī Riyāsat mayn Fiqḥī Ikhtilāfāt kā Ḥal: Solution of Juristic Differences in an Islamic State)
10. ' ' (Mabāḍī Tadabbur-i-Qur'ān: Principles of Understanding the *Qur'ān*)
11. ' ' (Mabāḍī Tadabbur-i-Ḥadīth: Principles of Understanding the *Ḥadīth*)
12. ' ' (Tanqīdāt: A collection of critical essays)
13. ' ' (Tawḏīḥāt: A collection of general explanatory essays)
14. ' ' (Maqālāt-i-Iṣlāhī: A miscellaneous collection)

The *Bismillāh* Verse

Text and Translation

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

Historical Status of the Verse

A study of the *Qur'ān* reveals that since ancient times there has always been a mention of the meanings encompassed by this verse in revealed scriptures in one form or another. It may be the first time that these meanings are framed in such a sublime diction in the *Qur'ān*, yet what they convey is so close to human nature that one strongly feels that the Almighty must also have revealed them in the very beginning. The Prophet Noah (sws), when his followers were boarding the ark, said something quite similar, as is mentioned in the *Qur'ān*:

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And he said: Embark therein! In the name of Allah will it sail and cast anchor. Indeed, my Lord is Forgiving and Merciful. (11:41)

Similarly, the Prophet Solomon (sws) began his letter, addressed to the Queen of Sheeba, with these blessed words, as is quoted by the *Qur'ān*:

(:)

It is from Solomon and it [begins] in the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Ever Merciful. (27:30)

Prayer Nature of the Verse

The verse is not an informative statement, and, like *Sūrah Fātiḥah*, is actually a prayer. It is a voice which emanates from the heart of every upright person. A more beautiful expression of emotions in words so akin to human nature could not have been imagined. If a person consciously utters this prayer before any piece of work or routine, it makes him aware that what he is about to undertake must not be against the Almighty's liking; on the contrary, it must be in accordance with the way of life prescribed by Him. Also, by virtue of this prayer, he seeks help from two great attributes of God – ' (Raḥmān) and ' (Raḥīm). Both these attributes secure him the blessings and help of the Almighty: he is protected from the ill-effects of his undertaking and receives strength and courage to carry out his task to completion; he is shielded from the onslaughts of Satan, and his work becomes beneficial for him in this world and a means to please the Almighty in the Hereafter. Anything done without this prayer certainly fails to reap all these blessings, as the Prophet (sww) himself is reported to have said.

These blessings of the verse manifest themselves for every routine that is initiated with it. However, reading it before reciting the *Qur'ān* has certain other aspects also, which should remain in mind.

Firstly, when a person says ' before reciting the *Qur'ān*, he actually obeys the directive revealed in the first revelation in the words:

(:)

Read in the name of your Lord. (96:1)

Secondly, these blessed words remind man of the reality that the greatest favour of the Almighty on human beings is that He has blessed them with the faculty of speech because of which they became the recipients of this Book. The attribute *Raḥmān* mentioned in the verse alludes to this fact. At another place in the *Qur'ān*, it is specified that it is this attribute of the Almighty which made Him create man, grant him the ability to speak and, as a result, teach him the *Qur'ān*:

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It is the Most Gracious who has taught the *Qur'an* [because] He created man and taught him speech. (55:1-4)

Thirdly, this verse testifies to the veracity of a prediction that was made about the Prophet Muhammad (sws) found in previous scriptures. According to this prediction, he would teach and instruct people in the name of Allah:

I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put My words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him. If anyone does not listen to My words that the prophet speaks in My name, I myself will call him to account. (Deuteronomy, 18:18)

Fourthly, just as the *Qur'an* is the manifestation of the attribute *Rahmān* of the Almighty, it is this very attribute which helps a person in understanding it. Difficult verses and passages unfold their meaning to a reciter if he seeks help from this attribute. Also, he would be protected through these words from the incursions of Satan while deciphering the meanings of the *Qur'ānic* verses and be shielded from various evil suggestions of his own soul.

Attributes of the Almighty in the Verse

Three attributes of the Almighty are mentioned in the verse: ' ' (*Allāh*), ' ' (*Rahmān*) and ' ' (*Rahīm*). I shall briefly explain them.

' ' (*Allāh*): The word Allah is made by prefixing the article *alif-lām* to the word ' ' (*Ilāh*). From the earliest times, this name has always been used for the Almighty specifically as the Creator of the Universe and of every living being. This connotation of the word also existed in pre-Islamic times in Arabia. The people of Arabia practiced polytheism, yet they never equated any of their deities with the Almighty. They always acknowledged Him as the sole Creator of this world. They worshipped other deities only because they wrongly believed that these deities were close to God and could intercede

for them. Their views are stated in detail in the *Qur'ān*:

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We worship them only that they may bring us nearer to God. (39:3)

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And if you ask them: Who has created the heavens and the earth and subjected the sun and the moon [to His law]? They will reply: Allah. How are they then deluded away [from the truth]. It is Allah who gives abundantly to whom He pleases and gives sparingly [to whom He pleases]. Allah has knowledge of all things. If you ask them: Who is it that sent down-rain from the clouds and therewith revived the earth after it became dead. They will say: Allah. (29:61-3)

(:)

Ask them: Who is it that sustains you from the sky and the earth, or who is it that has power over your hearing and sight and who brings forth the living from the dead and the dead from the living and who directs all affairs? They will say: Allah. Then ask: Are you not afraid of Him? (10:31)

‘ رَحْمَانٌ ’ (*Raḥmān*) and ‘ رَحِيمٌ ’ (*Raḥīm*): The noun ‘ رَحْمَانٌ ’ (*Raḥmān*) is in the intensive form of ‘ فَالَانٌ ’ (*fa'lān*), (eg: ‘ سَكْرَانٌ ’ (*Sakrān*) and ‘ غَافِبَانٌ ’ (*Gaḍbān*)), while the noun ‘ رَحِيمٌ ’ (*Raḥīm*): is an adjective of the form ‘ فَآئِلٌ ’ (*fa'īl*) (eg: ‘ أَلِيمٌ ’ (*ʿAlīm*) and ‘ كَرِيمٌ ’ (*karīm*)). A look at the usage of the Arabic language shows

that the form ‘ *fa’lān* ’ expresses great fervency and enthusiasm, while the form ‘ *fa’īl* ’ expresses steadiness and perpetuity. In other words, the first depicts vigour and the second constancy in God’s mercy. A little deliberation shows that the Almighty’s mercy on His creation possesses both these characteristics. The enthusiasm and warmth is complemented by permanence. It is not that His attribute of ‘ *Raḥmān* ’ induced Him to create, and He later forgot to foster and sustain His creation. Indeed, He is nourishing and taking proper care of them because He is ‘ *Raḥīm* ’ as well. Whenever a person invokes His help, He hears his calls and accepts his prayers. Also, His blessings are not confined to this world only. Those who lead their lives according to the path prescribed by Him, shall be blessed with eternal life and joy. It must be conceded that all these aspects cannot be comprehended without an integrated understanding of these attributes.

Placement of this Verse in the *Qur’ān*

An important question which arises regarding this verse is its real place in the *Qur’ān*. This question arises because of the fact that though it is written in the beginning of every *sūrah* (except *Sūrah Tawbah*) as an independent verse, yet apparently in none of the *sūrahs* except *Sūrah Naml* is it included in the text of the *sūrah*. For this very reason, there is a difference of opinion among scholars on whether it is part of some particular *sūrah* or whether it is written at the beginning of a *sūrah* merely to invoke the blessings of the Almighty. The opinion of the readers (*Qurrā’*) and jurists of *Madīnah*, *Baṣrah* and *Damascus* is that it is not part of any *sūrah* including *Sūrah Fātiḥah* and it is merely a means to obtain the blessings of Allah and serves to separate the various *sūrahs* of the *Qur’ān*. As such, it differentiates between various *sūrahs* of the *Qur’ān* and a reciter earns the favours and blessings of Allah by reading it before reciting a particular *sūrah*. Imam *Abū Ḥanīfah* also holds this view.

On the other hand, the *Makkan* and *Kufan* jurists believe that it is part of every *sūrah* of the *Qur’ān* including *Sūrah Fātiḥah*. Imam *Shāfi’ī* also subscribes to this view.

In the opinion of my mentor, Imam *Farāhī*, this verse is part

of *Sūrah Fātiḥah* and a preamble to the other *sūrahs* of the *Qur'ān*. As for myself, I prefer the view of the *Madīnan* reciters. The reason for my preference is that it is the Prophet (sws) himself who has arranged the *Qur'ān* in the light of the guidance provided by the Almighty. As such, this verse has also been divinely placed. In the arranged sequence of the *Qur'ān*, no difference has been made in writing this verse whether it is the case of *Sūrah Fātiḥah* or any other *sūrah*. In every case, it stands apart in each *sūrah* as an independent verse.

Sūrah Alam Nashrah (94)

Central Theme and Relation with the Previous *Sūrah*

This *sūrah* along with *Sūrah Duḥā*, the previous *sūrah*, form a pair. It begins after *Sūrah Duḥā* without any prior introduction, and the subject discussed in the verse: ‘Did We not find you an orphan and gave you shelter’ (93:6), and in the subsequent verses of the previous *sūrah* is brought to a completion in this *sūrah*. The only difference it seems is that in *Sūrah Duḥā* the bounties and blessings of the Almighty, cited in order to comfort and assure the Prophet (sws), belonged to the period prior to his Prophethood as well as extending a little after it, whereas, in this *sūrah*, the favours which were showered by the gracious Lord on him when the message of Islam had spread in other parts of the Arabian peninsula are pointed out.

In the previous *sūrah*, the Prophet (sws) is given the glad tidings of a bright future as far as the extent of the propagation of the Islamic thought was concerned. This would overshadow the bleak present. The difficulties and hardships which he was facing were, according to the law of providence, only meant to train and discipline him. He would soon be relieved of them. In this *sūrah*, by making a reference to some such predictions which by then had shown clear signs to materialize, an emphatic assurance is given to the Prophet (sws). He is comforted that all his troubles and grievances will continue to give way to the happiness of success if he faces them with courage and determination.

Analysis of the Meanings

There is no ambiguity in the meanings of the *sūrah*. Initially, a reference is made to the gift of *Sharḥ-i-Ṣadr* (inner satisfaction) which the Almighty had blessed the Prophet (sws) with in order

to alleviate his mental worries. The Prophet (sws) is then consoled and solaced that just as in earlier times, every hardship had succeeded by ease and comfort, likewise, in the subsequent stages of this mission the same pattern would continue. After this, an indication is made to the final phase of the completion of this mission with a mention of the method to benefit from its successes and triumphs.

Text and Translation

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Have We not opened your heart, and relieved you of the burden which weighed down heavily on your back, and raised your word? (1-4)

So, with every difficulty there is relief; indeed, with every difficulty there is relief. (5-6)

Therefore, when your task is over, prepare yourself and seek your Lord with all fervour. (7-8)

Explanation

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(Have We not opened your heart and relieved you of the burden?) (1-2)

In the explanation of the previous *sūrah*, a detailed account of the mental worries and anxieties which the Prophet (sws) had been facing in the early period has been given. In the period just before Prophethood, these worries were a result of his wanderings in quest for the truth while in the early period of Prophethood they were caused by a scarcity of followers and supporters of the religion he had set out to preach. However, a bright future, better than the past and present, with regard to the acceptance of his message had been predicted with the assurance that the difficulties he had been encountering were only transient in nature and the Almighty would soon relieve him of their

burden. Later on, when divine revelations had appeased his apprehensions and the truth was exposed, to educate and further encourage him the Almighty revealed His unchanging law of trial which every inviter towards virtue faces if he is to succeed in his mission. The law is in fact the real subject of the *sūrah* and is stated near its end in verses five and six: ‘With every difficulty there is relief’.

To open someone’s heart means to create in him a correct comprehension of the truth, which is the outcome of true belief. This is also a means to develop in a person trust and faith in God which is the fountainhead of resolve and determination. With such a strong faith no impediment, however great it may be, can waver his stand and without it not even an impediment is needed to defeat his will.

The sentence ‘وَلَا يُؤْتِي كُمُ الْحِكْمَ وَلَا يُخَفِّضُ عَنَّا الْوِزْرَ’ (*wa waḍa ‘nā ‘anka wizrak:* and have We not relieved you of your burden?) is co-ordinated in meaning with the first, and hence it is translated keeping in view that the interrogative particle ‘أَلَمْ’ (*alam:* Is it not that...?) of the first verse governs this second verse also. In *Sūrah Nabā* also, this style is adopted.

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(*Which weighed down heavily on your back?*) (3)

This verse qualifies the word ‘وِزْرًا’ (*wizr:* burden) stated in the previous one. By ‘وَلَا يُخَفِّضُ عَنَّا الْوِزْرَ’ (*wizr*) is implied the severe perplexity the Prophet (sws) was in when, prior to his prophethood, he was seeking the truth but to no avail. Later, when the Almighty revealed it to him, his troubles merely changed shape as all his people turned against him.

There is no overstatement in the fact that the Prophet’s troubles were breaking his back. The way the Almighty had provided him with guidance quite naturally induced him to think that if one soul was able to appreciate and understand it why was it that others were finding it difficult to accept it. Moreover, he saw that the more effort he made to calling them towards it, the more they evaded his calls. As a result, he was driven into thinking that probably his efforts were lacking both in approach and intensity since the desired results were not being produced. This led him to double his efforts, but when even after that the

situation did not change his worries increased twofold. Furthermore, if in these circumstances a delay occurred in between revelations then, again such a deference multiplied his worries making him think that the delay's real cause might be the Almighty's displeasure. To remove all these fears and to comfort and encourage the Prophet (sws), this *sūrah* was revealed. In *Sūrah Ṭāhā* also, the Prophet (sws) is assured in a similar manner:

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This is *Sūrah Ṭāhā*. We have not revealed the *Qur'ān* upon you to distress you. It is only an admonition for the God fearing. (20:1-3)

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(*And raised your word?*) (4)

This simply comforts the Prophet (sws) by asserting that his once feeble voice has now become a reverberating roar. The word ' ' (*laka: for you [only]*), as in the first verse, expresses the exclusive nature of help provided by the Almighty to the Prophet (sws).

The verse also helps us in ascertaining the time of revelation of the *sūrah*: when the message of Islam had penetrated in the surrounding areas of Arabia. It should be borne in mind that the leaders of the *Quraysh*, who were the foremost addressees of the Prophet (sws), persisted to oppose it. However, during *Hajj*, the pilgrims who came to *Ka'bah* became a constant source of spreading its teachings in the whereabouts of *Makkah*, particularly among the *Anṣār* of *Maḍīnah*. Subsequently, it reached the far flung areas of Arabia and then infiltrated into other countries. Such was the extent of its tide that it was not difficult for someone to imagine that this voice was not to be silenced and soon a hitherto feeble call would become a deafening uproar, and that before long every nook and corner of Arabia would resound with the cries of *Allāhu Akbar*.

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(*So, with every difficulty there is relief. Indeed, with every*

difficulty there is relief.) (5-6)

This is the real lesson which is meant to be given in the light of the above mentioned references, and which actually is the central theme of the *sūrah*. The Prophet (sws) is addressed and asked to ponder over the persistent help of the Almighty during the course of his mission. When he is witnessing that every hardship is being followed by relief, he should bear all afflictions with patience, for only after passing through such trying circumstances would he taste the fruits of success. In the previous *sūrah*, the consistency in application of this law of trial is proven by citing examples both from natural surroundings and from some experiences from the Prophet's life, while in this *sūrah*, only some experiences of the Prophet's life are included to demonstrate the law and make the matter more effective.

An important aspect that should be kept in mind is that the verses have not been repeated merely to emphasize the point, as most commentators contend. The repetition only stresses that difficulty and ease co-exist and follow each other in an eternally periodic sequence. After surmounting one peak no one should rest assured that his remaining life would be spent on a smooth terrain. In fact, a series of such peaks might have to be overcome if he has to succeed in life. He should always be prepared to scale every summit that comes his way – for life is the name of a relentless struggle. Every trekker of this journey must brave the storm of its vicissitudes if he is to reach his destination. The Almighty has decreed the same law for those who tread the path of truth. Those who intend to trudge through it will have to make their own way and struggle through every inch they trek. But the Almighty has guaranteed one thing: If in spite of all these obstacles and hindrances they remain steadfast, muster all their strength to combat every test they are put through and hold on to the slogan 'to seek, to strive, to fight and never yield', He shall bring ease after every difficulty, and reinvigorate them to continue this remorseless journey till the ultimate destination is reached.

The philosophy behind this test has at many instances been stated in the *Qur'ān*. By its means, the Almighty discriminates between the righteous and the hypocrites and differentiates the believers from the disbelievers so that everyone can be rewarded or punished according to his deeds, and that no one should be

able to complain that he has been the victim of injustice. Without this test, the good could not have been distinguished from the evil to the extent that no one would be able to refute the fate he deserves.

(-)

(So, when your task is over, prepare yourself and seek your Lord with all fervour.) (7-8)

This verse directs the Prophet (sws) to prepare for the ultimate destination. The verb ‘*naṣaba*’ means ‘to prepare’ and ‘to work hard’. The Prophet (sws) is told that after successfully overcoming the obstacles which come in way of his mission, when the Almighty showers His help, and *Makkah* is conquered and the enemies are humbled once and for all and the people embrace Islam in large numbers, he should totally converge all his efforts and turn all his attentions to earnestly seek the Almighty. In other words, two aspects are being highlighted in these verses: First, they bring glad tidings to the Prophet (sws) that he shall soon successfully complete his mission. Second, they assert that even after accomplishing the mission, he should continue with even more fervour and direct all his energies and efforts in seeking the Almighty and in preparing for the final journey which will confront him with the Creator of the heavens and the earth.

In complying with this final directive, the Prophet (sws) began to spend more and more time in worship. Such was the extent of his involvement that some people even inquired from him the reason for taking so much pain in worship when all his sins had been forgiven. The Prophet (sws) is said to have replied: ‘Should not I become a grateful servant of my Lord’. In *Sūrah Naṣr*, an elaborate treatment has been given to this topic which is just touched upon here:

(- :)

When comes the help of God and victory and you see men embrace the religion of God in multitudes, celebrate the

praises of your Lord and seek His forgiveness. He is ever disposed to mercy. (110: 1-3)

Lahore,
15th February, 1980 AD
27th *Rabi' u' l-Awwal*, 1400 AH

Sūrah Qadr (97)

Central Theme

In the preceding *sūrah*, it is pointed out that the revelation of the *Qur'ān* was a great blessing and favour of the Almighty¹. The fact that it was safeguarded in written form to provide mankind with Divine Guidance, is also referred to. Now, this *sūrah* deals with the topic of the revelation of the *Qur'ān* itself. A special reference is made to the night in which the *Qur'ān* was revealed together with a mention of its greatness and importance in relation to other nights. Although these matters pertain to the unknown and a complete understanding of their nature is not possible, yet any disclosed portion is always beneficial to the seekers of the truth.

The purpose of this delineation is to inform the people addressed that whatever the attitude they adopt about this Book, they must first seriously contemplate a few realities:

Firstly, this Book is not the result of some human whim; it is part of a Divine Scheme and has been revealed under the direct surveillance of the Almighty Himself.

Secondly, this event is not temporary or transient in nature. Everyone should be aware that it has taken place in a night in which important decisions are taken and executed. This night is superior to a thousand nights. Matters of paramount importance are settled and decided during it. Those who deprive themselves

1. The following verse is referred to:

(- :)

Recite [O Prophet!] Your Lord is the most Bounteous. He, who by the pen taught man what he did not know. (96:3-5)

of its blessings cannot gain them in any other way.

Thirdly, the Book is totally free from any sort of evil interference from Satan as the night in which it was revealed is specially protected from his intrusions and interventions.

Text and Translation

(-)

Indeed, We sent it down in the Night of Destiny. And what do you imagine what the Night of Destiny is? Better is the Night of Destiny than a thousand months. The angels and the Spirit descend therein [with decrees] about all matters by the permission of their Lord.

The night is peace in its entirety. It remains until the rise of dawn.

Explanation

()

(*Indeed, We sent it down in the Night of Destiny.*) (1)

In the previous *sūrah*, God's great blessing of providing guidance to His creation by revealing the *Qur'ān* is mentioned. Now, in this *sūrah*, without any prior introduction, it is stated that the Almighty had revealed it in the Night of Destiny. Though at first it seems that the accusative pronoun (*ḍamīr-i-maf'ūl*) in the word ' ' (*anzalnāhu*) does not have an antecedent, the placement of this *sūrah* after the previous one clearly indicates the antecedent. In fact, a little deliberation shows that this strongly supports the argument that every preceding *sūrah* has a deep coherent relationship, intrinsic as well as extrinsic, with the succeeding one.

The stress in the word ' ' (*innā: Indeed We*) has a very special purpose. It is meant to dispel the doubt that the *Qur'ān* is the result of a human endeavour. It emphasizes that the *Qur'ān* is totally free from the evil inspiration and influences of Satan, as its opponents had contended. On the contrary, it has been solely revealed by the Almighty Himself to provide guidance and

direction to mankind. ‘ (laylatu’l-qadr) means the night in which matters are decided and their enforcement entrusted to the angels. It is the same night referred to in the following verses of *Sūrah Dukhān*:

(- :)

We have revealed this [*Qur’ān*] in a blessed night. Verily, by its means, We are going to warn mankind. During this night, all decrees of wisdom are assigned [to the angels], by Our special command. Indeed, We were to send a Prophet. (44:2-4)

If we reflect upon these verses, two of their implications become very clear:

Firstly, the Almighty has fixed a glorious night to specially hand over His decrees to the angels which are to be enforced by them in this world.

Secondly, the commissioning of the Prophet Muhammad (sws), his *Indhār*² to the *Quraysh* and the revelation of the *Qur’ān* are among the Divine Decrees entrusted to the angels, which is a clear proof of the extraordinary significance of these events. They are a part of an important plan devised by the Almighty which must reach completion.

The verse does not mean that the whole of the *Qur’ān* was revealed in a single night. All that it necessitates is that after a decision was made and the matter handed over to Gabriel, its first revelation took place during this night. Subsequently, the *Qur’ān* was revealed in sections over a period of twenty three years, which in no way contradicts the actual meaning of this verse.

()

(*And what do you imagine what the Night of Destiny is?*) (2)

The verse tells us that the greatness and splendour of the Night of Destiny is beyond the realms of imagination. The

2. To warn people of their fate in this world as well as in the next one.

reason behind its majesty and grandeur is that important decisions about this world are made in it. When the days on which the petty administrations of this world chalk out their countries' future year projects have great importance, the significance of the night in which Divine Directives are issued forth to decide the fate of the whole universe can only be imagined.

These decisions are both positive and negative in their nature: As a result, at one place destruction might take place while at another something might be created. At some other place the pangs of punishment might be at work, while an adjacent place might witness God's blessings. But since these diverse manifestations emanate from the Almighty whose justice, wisdom and mercy are beyond question and whose schemes are based upon the collective good of man, all decisions are beneficial to him in their overall capacity and augur well for the future. This is precisely the reason why this night is termed as the Night of Blessing in *Sūrah Dukhān* as quoted earlier, and why it is called better than a thousand months. These attributes and characteristics of the night, as is pointed out before, indicate to the adversaries of the *Qur'ān* that they are thoroughly mistaken if they consider a Book revealed in an exalted night to be the product of fantasy or sorcery. They have failed to distinguish a gem from a pebble. There is no possibility that an evil inspiration can penetrate during this majestic night, because as long as darkness prevails, priceless pearls of revelation are showered by the Creator of the Heavens.

()

(Better is the Night of Destiny than a thousand months.) (3)

This is an expression of the exaltedness of the Night. The relative state of being 'better' is because it is favourable for the achievement of certain objectives. Just as in this material world there is a certain climate in a certain part of the year in which the seeds of a particular crop must be sown if they are to sprout, and any negligence to these factors will not yield the required produce even in some other periods of time however much one tries; likewise, in the spiritual world also there are special days and times of the year which are set aside for special acts of

worship. If they are offered during them, only then the required results are obtained, and any ignorance in this regard cannot be compensated for in other periods of time even if their span is extended. A few examples will make this matter more clear: to offer the Friday prayers, a certain day has been set aside; similarly, a particular month has been fixed for fasting; for the offering of *Hajj* and its rites too certain days have been appointed by the Almighty. All these acts of worship have been made conditional to certain periods of time, during which their performance yields a reward that cannot be estimated.

The Night of Destiny also is no exception to this rule. A person who prostrates himself before the Almighty during this night might attain His nearness to an extent which he may never be able to emulate in a thousand other nights. The words ‘thousand nights’ can be an expression of abundance as well as that of a relative significance over other nights, but there is no big difference between the meanings both imply. The purpose is to only point out that a lot of spiritual wealth is hidden beneath the veils of this night. Lucky are the ones who strive and reap its bounties.

There is a consensus among the Muslims that the revelation of the *Qur’ān* began in this night, and that this night occurred during the month of *Ramaḍān*, as mentioned in the following verses of *Sūrah Baqarah*:

(:)

It is the month of *Ramaḍān* during which the *Qur’ān* was revealed. (2:185)

As far as the question about the exact date is concerned, it is difficult to answer it due to a disparity between the *Aḥādīth*. The only thing which can be said is that it occurred most probably during the last ten days of the month.

Due to the discrepancies in the *Aḥādīth* which relate to this matter, some people have raised the question whether the night can occur in months other than *Ramaḍān*. Another question raised is whether this night comes in every *Ramaḍān*, or whether it has a different span. A satisfactory answer to these queries can only be given if the concerned *Aḥādīth* are critically analyzed

and examined, which is beyond the scope of this exegesis. I have indicated these difficulties so that our learned scholars can deliberate over them. If the Almighty provides this writer with an opportunity to write his proposed treatise upon *Ḥadīth*, these questions may be tackled therein.

()

(The angels and the Spirit descend therein [with decrees] about all matters, by the permission of their Lord.) (4)

It has been mentioned before that during this night matters are decided and assigned to the angels for their enforcement. The verse at hand is an explanation of this fact. In this night, Archangel Gabriel and other angels descend upon the earth to carry out the tasks allocated to them by the Almighty, as is also mentioned in the following verses:

(- :)

During this night all decrees of wisdom are assigned [to the angels] by Our special commandment. (44:4-5)

The word ‘ ’ (*al-rūḥ*: the Spirit), as is evident from the context is used for Gabriel. His name is specially mentioned here because he occupies a very high rank among the angels.

()

(The night is peace in its entirety. It remains until the rise of dawn.) (5)

This verse explains why the Night of Destiny is superior to a thousand months.

In the opinion of this writer, ‘ ’ (*salām*) is the enunciative (*khabr*) of a suppressed inchoative (*mubtadā*). The complete sentence can be unfolded thus: ‘ ’ (*hiya salām*: It is peace in its entirety). An inchoative is usually suppressed to emphasize the enunciative. Just as in the sentence ‘ ’ (*Zayduṅ ‘adluṅ*: Zayd is justice), an exaggeration is implied by the word ‘ ’ (*‘adluṅ*: justice), likewise, the word ‘ ’ (*salām*: peace in entirety) also has a strong element of hyperbole in it.

The word ‘ ’ (*salām*) signifies safety and protection from

every sort of risk and danger in general and from any satanic interference in particular. Just as during the time of revelation of the *Qur'ān* all passages into the world beyond space and time were sealed to block the penetrations of Satan and his army, as is mentioned at various places in the *Qur'ān*, it looks as if during this night also these evil creatures are under Divine Detention till the rise of dawn. Hence, they are unable to acquire the secrets of this night and are unable to cause disruptions in the blessings of this night.

Lahore,
13th March, 1980 AD
25th *Rabi' u' -Thānī*, 1400 AH

Sūrah Zilzāl (99)

Structure and Theme

In this *Sūrah*, it is depicted that a day will definitely come when every deed done by man would be brought to light. All his labours would be exposed and nothing would remain hidden. Whatever good or evil he had done even where no one could have seen him would be placed in front of him, and he would be rewarded or punished accordingly. On that day, each man alone would stand answerable for his own deeds. No other person would in any way be able to help or support him nor would anyone be present to intercede for him.

To elucidate this fact, a graphic picture of the tremendous cataclysm which would take place on that day is drawn. As a result of this devastation, everything buried in the earth would be cast out. The earth would then narrate its story at the intimation of the Almighty, enabling its inhabitants to have a clear idea of all what they had said or done upon its surface or had hidden beneath it. After this, each person would see the smallest good he had done as well as all his evils, however imperceptible they might have been.

During the time of the Prophet (sws), those who used to deny the Day of Judgement had basically three misconceptions. Firstly, they had extreme doubts about the destruction of this world. Secondly, they reckoned that it was not possible to keep an account of all the deeds of each and every person. Thirdly, they were of the opinion that even if the above two were true, there was no need for them to be fearful because the deities they had associated with God would intercede for them and would save them from any punishment. They went so far as to believe that these intercessors would even win for them a high rank and status in the Hereafter. All these three misconceptions are dealt

with in this *sūrah*, and their hollowness is categorically pointed out.

Text and Translation

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(-)

When the earth is shaken the way it ought to be shaken, and the earth casts forth its burdens and man cries out: 'What is the matter with her?!' On that Day, she will narrate her story at the intimation of your Lord. (1-5)

On that Day, men will appear alone so that their deeds can be shown to them. Then whoever has done the smallest bit of good will see it, and whoever has done the smallest bit of evil will [also] see it. (6-8)

Explanation

()

(*When the earth is shaken the way it ought to be shaken.*) (1)

If the various usages of the Arabic language are kept in consideration, the word ' ' (*idhā*: when) used in this manner serves as a reminder of what comes after it. One can unfold this meaning as: 'Keep that time in mind' or 'Beware when such and such a thing will happen'.

The word ' ' (*zilzāl*) is grammatically an absolute object (*maf'ūl-i-muṭliq*) which stresses the verb ' ' (*zulzilāt*). However, its annexation (*Iḍāfat*) to the word ' ' (*al-Ard*: earth) by means of a pronoun is adding a special meaning in the stress which must be borne in mind, otherwise the emphasis in the verse cannot be properly appreciated. Keeping in mind this technical delicacy, the correct meaning is 'When the earth shall be shaken the way it ought to be shaken' or 'When the earth shall be shaken the way it is destined to be shaken'. In other words, what is implied here is that the extent to which it will be shaken cannot be imagined today. The actual way in which it

will reel, totter and stagger as pre-ordained by the Almighty is an event beyond imagination. But one thing which is absolutely certain is that all this is bound to happen. Therefore, it is in the well being of a person to remain alert about its arrival and not spend his life remaining unmindful of it.

()

(And the earth shall cast forth its burdens.) (2)

The word ‘*ثِقَلٌ*’ (*thiqal*) is the singular of ‘*أَثْقَالٌ*’ (*athqāl*) and means ‘weight’ or ‘burden’. Here, its foremost connotation is the dead who have been buried in the earth and who will be thrown overboard by it on the Day of Judgement. But, since the word is also used in the general sense, it can also imply the buried riches and treasures as well as any traces of the hidden offences perpetrated by criminals. The following *Qur’ānic* verses also have a similar meaning:

(:)

It will cast out whatever is inside and become empty. (84:4)

and:

(:)

When the graves are spewed out. (100:9)

()

(And man cries out: ‘What is the matter with her?!’) (3)

This is a description of how the terrible situation will affect men’s senses. Struck with consternation, they will cry out: ‘What is happening to the earth, why is its wobbling about not coming to an end and why is it throwing out everything within it?’ This tension will also grip the evil doers when they will observe the record of their deeds. In the words of the *Qur’ān*, they will exclaim:

(:)

What a strange register! No small or big deed has been left out from its grasp. (18:49)

(-)

(On that Day, she will narrate her story at the intimation of your Lord.) (4-5)

When the Day comes, the earth will narrate an account of all the good and evil deeds done upon it. It is indicated at other places of the *Qur'ān* that the limbs of criminals will be given the power of speech by the Almighty on the Day of Judgement. Their own limbs will testify against them, and even their skin and the hair upon them will bear witness against them. In the words of the *Qur'ān*, the criminals will inquire from their skins:

(:)

Why did you testify against us? They will reply that the God who has given speech to everyone today has given it to us as well. (41:21)

Whatever a person does in this world is either done upon or beneath the earth. As such, it must be regarded as the greatest witness to all his deeds. Just as the Almighty will endow man's limbs and organs with the faculty of speech to narrate his life's record and to witness against him, the earth also will be made vocal by Him that it may also recount his history.

The word *wahī* used in these verses means 'intimation' or 'indication'. It is used in this meaning in other verses of the *Qur'ān* as well. The implied meaning is that the earth would narrate events that transpired on it at the behest and intimation of the Almighty. It can be seen that what is stated in the above cited verse (41:21) is asserted here in a slightly different manner. In other words, what will happen on that day will happen because of God's will and everyone will be compelled to obey him. In *Sūrah Inshiqāq*, it is regarding the earth that it is said:

(:)

It will obey her God's directive, and only this is befitting for her. (84:5)

()

(On that day, men will appear alone so that their deeds can be shown to them.) (6)

The word ‘*ashātun*’ means ‘in a separate or solitary manner’. In other words, on the Day of Judgement, people will emerge from their graves without having their family about them. None of their tribesmen or relatives, comrades or supporters will be present with them. Also, they would be without the pomp and show and the worldly riches they had amassed. Even the deities they had associated with God would not be present to intercede for them. Everyone will stand alone to reckon with the results of his own deeds. This particular aspect is highlighted in other places of the *Qur’ān* as well:

(:)

And everyone will appear alone before his Lord. (19:95)

(:)

And you came to Us alone, the way We created you the first time. (6:94)

The words ‘so that their deeds could be shown to them’ express the reason why people will be brought before the Almighty. They will observe and experience the results of their labours done in the previous world. Linguistically, the verb ‘shown’ here is used to denote the outcome of the deeds.

(-)

(Then whoever has done the smallest bit of good will see it, and whoever has done the smallest bit of evil will [also] see it.) (7-8)

These are the details which relate to the last part of the previous verse. No doubt, every person will see both his evil and good deeds but this will be according to the principle mentioned elsewhere in the *Qur’ān*: A believer may not see some of his evil deeds because some of the good ones will have compensated for them. Similarly, a disbeliever will not find all his good deeds in

his record because some of his misdeeds and heretical beliefs will have rendered them null and void, eluding him of their reward.

After being adjudged according to this principle, people would attain eternal salvation or would be doomed forever on the basis of the following *Qur'ānic* verse:

(- :)

Hence, whose scales are heavy will dwell in bliss, and whose scales are light, the abyss of Hell will be his abode.
(101:6-9)

Lahore,

31st March, 1980 AD

13th *Jamādiu 'l-Awwal*, 1400 AH

Sūrah Qāri‘ah (101)

Central Theme

The basic teaching of this *sūrah* is that the Day of Judgement about which man has been forewarned is destined to come. No one has any prior knowledge about its arrival, which will be as sudden as an unexpected rap at the door. One should always remain mindful of it and be wise enough to always be in a position to anticipate its arrival. On that day, people will emerge from their graves as scattered moths appear in the rainy season; everyone will be too busy in contemplating the fate which awaits him than to think about his family. No one will be in a position to help anyone else. The tremendous convulsion will render the mountains into tufts of carded wool let alone small fortifications or entrenchments. On that day, man will only benefit from his good deeds. God will set up the Balance of Justice in which all of man’s deeds will be weighed. If the good deeds outweigh the evil ones, he will dwell in eternal bliss and if the evil deeds tilt the scales, the scorching pit of Hell will be his eternal abode.

Text and Translation

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(-)

The Pounding One!

What is the Pounding One!?

And what do you imagine what the Pounding one is? (1-3)

On that Day, people will be like scattered moths and mountains like tufts of carded wool. (4-5)

Then whose scales are heavy shall dwell in bliss and whose scales are light, the abyss shall be their abode. And what do you imagine what that is!? Raging Fire!! (6-11)

Explanation

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(The Pounding One!) (1)

Among other names, this is one of the names of the Day of Judgement. It means ‘the pounding one’ or the ‘the rapping one’. The Arabic phrase ‘*qar‘a‘l-bāb*’, means ‘he pounded or rapped at the door’. This name indicates a special feature of the Day of Judgement: it will come as abruptly and as suddenly as an unexpected bang at the front door of a house at night which strikes panic among the dwellers inside. Like a bolt from the blue it will alight and catch everyone unaware. It will create a tremendous cataclysm in this universe and everything will be annihilated. Hidden in this name also is a warning that since no one has any foreknowledge about the time of its arrival and since it will be the biggest upheaval in the universe, it is in the well being of everyone to always remain fearful of it. The particular style adopted here has a ring of an alarm about it in order to caution everyone to be on their vigil and to anticipate the arrival of this disaster. It can be said that the immense turbulence which will be created at the advent of that Day is somewhat being created before its arrival by the very clamour of its name.

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(What is the Pounding One!?) (2)

This question serves to magnify the severity of the alarm, warning those who regard the Day of Judgement as an ordinary affair and have become indifferent to its implications. It cautions and urges them to seriously think about something which is bound to happen and to prepare themselves to negotiate its

aftermath.

()

(What do you imagine what the pounding one is!?) (3)

This special *Qur’ānic* style, often used elsewhere, is meant to lament and deplore the foolishness of the addressees about such a significant event. It is in the form of an inquiry about their estimation of the severity of a calamity which will suddenly waylay them. It urges them to reflect on the dreadful fate of those who are ridiculing it even after being warned about it time and again.

()

(On that Day, people will be like scattered moths.) (4)

This is a graphic description of the situation which will arise on that day, when people will emerge from their graves like scattered moths. Each person will stand alone to reckon with the results of his deeds. No one will have his family or clan about him nor any of his tribesmen or comrades to defend him. Even other deities he associated with God and other intercessors on whom he was depending upon will not be present to lessen his burdens. The *Qur’ān* explicitly says:

(:)

On that day, men will emerge from their graves alone so that their deeds can be shown to them. (99:6)

(- :)

So when the trumpet is sounded, the blood relations between them will be no more on that day, nor will they be able to ask for each other’s help. And only those whose scales of good deeds are heavy shall attain salvation and whose scales are light shall be the ones who have incurred a loss and shall forever abide in Hell. (23:101-3)

(- :)

On that day, no friend will inquire about his friend though they will be shown to each other. The sinner will wish to give away his children, his wife, his brother and his kinsfolk who gave him shelter, and all the people of the earth, as ransom if this could deliver him. (70:10-14)

()

(And the mountains will be like tufts of carded wool.) (5)

This verse means that on that day like tribal and family support and backing, the refuge and shelter provided by buildings, forts, citadels and other similar structures will be no more. Mountains will be rendered into tufts of carded wool. This simile vividly portrays the fact that just as in the case of carded wool each fibre is completely set asunder, so shall be each particle of a mountain. The Arabic word ‘ ’ (*ihn*) is used for that wool which after having being carded and given colour has become ready for weaving.

Mountains are specially mentioned here because at that time those who were denying the Day of Reckoning regarded them as eternally indestructable. They used to mockingly ask the Prophet (sws) whether such huge structures would be destroyed on that Day. This question has been quoted elsewhere in the *Qur‘ān* and is answered here in this verse.

(-)

(Then whose scales are heavy shall dwell in bliss.) (6-7)

The only things considered worthwhile on that day will be a man’s good deeds. Only those whose good deeds outnumber their evil ones will attain salvation and all others will be doomed forever. A special Balance of Justice meant only to weigh the deeds of men will be erected on that day, as mentioned in the *Qur‘ān*:

(:)

And for the Day of Judgement, We will set up a Balance of Justice. (21:47)

A special characteristic of this Balance as mentioned in *Sūrah A‘rāf* is that only truth (good deeds) will be able to tilt it. Evil (bad deeds) will have no weight in its scales:

(- :)

On that day, the truth only will have weight. So those whose scales are heavy shall attain salvation, and those whose scales are light shall be the ones who have incurred a loss because they wronged their souls by denying Our revelations. (7:8-9)

The relative singular pronoun ‘ ’ (*man*), as used in the verse, above denotes plurality.

By saying that such people shall dwell in bliss, it is meant that not only will they be granted whatever they wish for but also what they cannot even imagine.

(-)

(*And those whose scales are light, the abyss shall be their abode. And what do you imagine what that is!? Raging Fire!!*) (8-11)

This is a description of the fate of those whose evil deeds have no weight in the Balance of Justice. Whatever good deeds they may have brought with them will be rendered useless due to their ill-intentions and heretical beliefs. The scorching pit of Hell will be their eternal abode.

The Arabic word ‘ ’ (*umm*) means ‘mother’ but here it very aptly denotes a resort or a dwelling.

The ‘ ’ (*hay*) at the end of the word (*māhiyah*) is to maintain the rhyme of the verses by taking into consideration the

conventional pause at the end of a verse.

Lahore,
10th April, 1980 AD
23rd *Jamādiu ‘l-Thānī*, 1400 AH

Sūrah Takāthur(102)

Central Theme

Sūrah Takāthur forms a pair with *Sūrah Qāri'ah*, the preceding *sūrah*. There is no essential difference between the topics discussed in the two. In *Sūrah Qāri'ah*, it is pointed out that only the good deeds done in this world will be of any use to a person in the Hereafter; they only will have weight in the Balance of Justice. A person whose good deeds abound will attain salvation, while a person whose evil deeds outnumber the good ones, however much a treasure he might have amassed, will be doomed forever. Grief and regret will be his only companions.

In this *sūrah*, people who have confined all their efforts to achieve worldly gains, and whose aim in life has remained nothing but to outdo one another in the acquisition of wealth, are warned of the dreadful fate which awaits them. They are the ones who spent their lives in the lust and greed for money, and always remained possessed with an insatiable desire to accumulate the luxuries and riches of this world. Throughout their lives, they remained so occupied with this dash for wealth that they forgot the Day when they would be held accountable for all their deeds – a day wherein they would be flung into the raging fire of Hell, if they would fail to justify their deeds. They would be inquired about everything they had acquired, the manner in which it was acquired, and the way it was expended and consumed. They would be questioned about how they used their abilities, skills and other blessings given to them by the Almighty; whether they used them to please Him or employed them to satisfy their own lusts and to gratify Satan.

Text and Translation

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The desire to surpass one another in the acquisition of wealth has allured you until you reached the graves. By no means! You will soon come to know! Yes, by no means! You will soon come to know! (1-4)

By no means! If you knew with certainty that you would surely come across Hell, and you would observe it by your very eyes, and you would be questioned about these favours, then ...(5-8)

Explanation

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(The desire to surpass one other in the acquisition of wealth has allured you.) (1)

‘ ’ (*alhā*) means ‘to allure’ and ‘to deceive’.

‘ ’ (*takāthur*) means ‘abundance in wealth and children’.

According to the custom in the pre-Islamic Arab society, a family was responsible for the defence and security of a tribe. Due to this reason, the family which had the largest number of individuals was entrusted with this task. This naturally resulted in a race to outdo one another not only in the accretion of wealth, but also in the size of a family. Anyone who has studied their customs and traditions knows that they used to take a lot of pride in not only outdoing another in wealth but also in having a large family. In present times, with the change in the social set up, this situation has also changed. Specially, due to the widely acclaimed concept of family-planning, the general trend is to raise the standard of living by having as small a family as possible. Almost all people seem to be afflicted with this malady, and one seldom comes across anyone who has not been a prey to this contagious disease. Also, since no upper limit is fixed in the standard of living, their thirst for wealth never quenches, and in fact every bit gathered makes them yearn for more. They have been caught in a vicious circle, and there seems to be no end to

this race for material gains. As no limit has been set for the standard of living, the rate at which their greed is continuing to increase, is much more than the rate at which the standard of living itself is increasing. It is this avarice which the *Qur'ān* terms as ' (takāthur), and asserts that it effectively allures a person to the extent that he becomes unmindful to the other important realities of life. He is so overcome by the desire to acquire worldly riches that he becomes totally indifferent to the life that awaits him in the Hereafter.

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(Until you reached the graves.) (2)

This means that their whole life is spent in the acquisition of wealth and material benefits, till the final resting place is encountered. In Arabic, the verbal noun, ' (ziyārat), from which the word ' (zurtum) is derived, simply means 'to see', contrary to its connotation in Urdu, where a certain amount of holiness and sanctity is also attached to this meaning. Hence, ' (zurtum) means: 'you saw the graves' that is 'you were consigned to the graves'. To quote a *Ḥamāsī* poet:

*Idhā zurtu arḍaḥ ba'da ʔūl ijtinābihā
Faqadtu ṣaḍīqī wa'l-bilādu kamā hiya*

(When I see my place years after remaining away from it, it seems as if I have lost all my friends, but the place is the same as it was before.)

Although there was an Arabic tradition, according to which the Arabs used to keep an account of the graves of their people and proudly mentioned them in their gatherings, but this is not implied here in this verse. But, indeed one wonders why is the expression ' (zurtumu'l-maqābir) used by the *Qur'ān*, instead of simply saying 'until death overtook you'. In my opinion, the reason for adopting this particular style is firstly, to maintain the rhyme of the verses and secondly, to express regret and pity over the unfortunate people who have deprived

themselves of the reward in the Hereafter by indulging in a relentless race for wealth.

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(By no means! you will soon come to know. Yes, by no means! You will soon come to know.) (3-4)

This serves as a forceful intimation to those who consider material success in life to be all that one must strive for. It sounds a warning to those who after being explained everything, are not willing to open their eyes to the actual reality. It cautions them that this life whose charms have allured them so much is not the end. In fact, the life in the Hereafter which at the moment is invisible to them is the life for which they must really strive for, which very soon they will behold with their own eyes.

The double stress in these verses is to make this warning more efficacious as well as to express the fact that a nation which rejects and denies the message of a Prophet directly assigned towards them faces severe punishment not only in this world, but also in the next. In other words, it admonishes them to either mend their ways or get ready to face this double humiliation – for a decision about their fate is about to be made.

The threat hidden beneath the word ‘’ (*ta’lamūn*: you will come to know) is too evident to be described in words.

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(By no means! If you knew definitely that you would surely come across Hell, and you would observe it by your very eyes, and you would be questioned about these blessings, then...) (5-8)

These verses unveil the real reason behind the carefree attitude of such people. It is attributed to their lack of belief in the Day of Judgement, a day in which they will observe the abyss of Hell from their very eyes. A day when they will be held answerable for all the favours and blessings the Almighty had showered upon them, and which they had squandered against His liking. If they had a true belief in the Day of Judgement, they would never have indulged in these material pursuits, and would have spent all their time and energies in preparing themselves for it.

It would be appropriate here to analyze the grammatical structure and construction of these verses. The apodosis of the particle ‘ ’ (*jawāb-i-law*) is omitted here. Though almost all the exegetes agree to this, they do not consider the subsequent verses as subordinate to this conditional clause of the foremost verse. However, in my opinion, the subsequent verses are also subordinate to the particle ‘ ’ (*law*) of the first verse, and they are not separate or independent sentences. The over all apodosis of ‘ ’ (*law*) is omitted because the context readily suggests it. We can unfold the whole sentence as thus: ‘If you knew all these aspects, you would never have adopted this attitude’. In grammatical terminology, the verse ‘ ’ (*latarawunna’l-jaḥīm*) is in place of the object of the verse ‘ ’ (*law ta’alamūna ‘ilama’l-yaqīn*). The asseverative particle ‘ ’ (*lām*), appended to the intensive verb ‘ ’ (*tarawunna*) is meant to emphasize this certainty.

It follows from this that the ‘*ilmu’l-yaqīn*’ or certain knowledge needed to have faith in the Day of Judgement is already present in the manifest verses of the *Qur’ān*, in our own intuition, as well as in every phenomenon of nature. As such, every person must accept and acclaim this reality. Anyone who evades it by paying no heed to these strong testimonies present inside and outside him, can have no excuse for this attitude, and strictly deserves to be punished.

Another evident conclusion is that though certain knowledge about realities which in this world have been concealed from our eyes can be obtained from the *Qur’ān*, and from the testimonies of the human instinct and the cosmic order, yet ‘*aynu’l-yaqīn*’ or the certainty obtained by actually beholding a reality can only be possible in the Hereafter because this type of knowledge solely relates to the observation of the concealed realities. On these grounds, I consider as baseless, the claim of some people that ‘*aynu’l-yaqīn*’ can be obtained in this world as well. Only ‘*ilmu’l-yaqīn*’ about a reality on the basis of external evidences can be obtained in this world, and which, of course, one day will be observed directly.

The last verse ‘ ’ (*thummah latus’alunna yawma izīn ‘an al-na’im*) also has a subordinate relation with the verse ‘ ’ (*law ta’almūna ‘ilma’l-yaqīn*). The

correct translation reads thus: ‘If you knew that on that day you would be questioned about every favour and blessing’. By this ‘questioning’, is actually meant that they would be punished for misusing these blessings, and for being ungrateful to the Almighty.

The word ‘*naʿīm*’ encompasses all the skills and capabilities, as well as all means and resources God has blessed us with. All these privileges and favours necessitate that we should be grateful to God, and expend them in the way He has prescribed for us and within the limits set by Him. If these blessings are wasted or misused, then this negligence must necessarily be punished by the wrath of God. A person’s eyes, ears, heart, brain, and indeed all his organs and limbs are a blessing of God. Similarly, all the latent and apparent skills and abilities that he has been blessed with, as well as all his means and resources are a gift of God. It is the natural right of these blessings that God should be thanked for this bestowal, and that they should be used within the limits prescribed by Him. At the same time, one must not become so possessed with them that he actually starts worshipping them, forgetting the real Creator. Those who commit such excesses will be severely dealt with on the Day of Judgement.

Since in this *sūrah*, the evils of the acquisition of wealth are highlighted, wealth, which is one of the connotations of the word ‘*naʿīm*’ is specially discussed here. Every person will be held accountable for the manner in which he had acquired his wealth, and the ways in which he had spent it. Those who had spent it against the liking of the Almighty and did not care to acquire it by legitimate means, worshipping it by spending all their lives accumulating it will be confronted by the fate mentioned in *Sūrah Humaza*:

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Perdition for every [evil] gesticulator, faultfinder who amassed wealth, and greedily hoarded it thinking that his

wealth will render him immortal. By no means! He will be flung into that which smashes to pieces. And what do you imagine what that which smashes to pieces is? A fire kindled by God, which will rise up to their hearts. They will be enshrouded in it, fastened to columns very high. (104:1-9)

At the end, the overall apodosis of the particle ‘ ’ (*law*) is omitted, as is indicated before. There are many places in the *Qur’ān* where this style is adopted because the omission is so obvious that it needs no words for its expression. This style very effectively conveys the intended meaning, which is in fact very comprehensive and whose expression might otherwise be against the norms of brevity, a distinctive feature of the *Qur’ān*.

In this case, the omitted part which is left to the imagination of the reader is actually a final warning for these people. It is a means of urging them to calmly review all their hitherto policies. It cautions them to seriously analyze their attitude about some undeniable and inescapable realities of life. It exhorts them to deeply contemplate over the pattern of their lives and assess how far from reality they had always remained; how incorrect and unrealistic their attitude was about it. If they had earnestly thought about them, they would not have wasted their lives in oblivion. But then, all is not lost. They are being offered a final chance to mend their ways, and change their lifestyle. They should now confine all their efforts and undertakings to earn the eternal happiness of the Hereafter instead of wasting them in material pursuits.

This whole meaning is being suggested by this omission – a perfect example of how effectively the *Qur’ān* uses brevity to conceal profound meanings in a minimum number of words.

Lahore,
10th April, 1980 AD
13th *Jamādi ‘u’l-Awwal*, 1400 AH

Sūrah Humazah (104)

Central Theme

This *sūrah* is the counterpart of *Sūrah ‘Aşr*, the preceding *sūrah*. Even a cursory look at both the *sūrahs* reveals a clear similarity in their themes. In *Sūrah ‘Aşr*, the character of persons who will be salvaged in the Hereafter is depicted. They are those who exhort one another to the right path and remain steadfast on this attitude. In this *sūrah*, people of the opposite character are referred to: They are miserly by nature and greedily accumulate wealth. Instead of urging one another to fulfil the rights of Allah and their own fellow beings, if they see someone doing so, they make his life miserable by hurling taunts and jeers at him. They try their utmost to discourage and demoralize him so much that he may surrender to their reproaches and adopt their evil ways. This attitude conceals their own miserliness and saves them from being conscience-stricken when others call them to the right path.

The *Qur’ān*, at many instances, has made references to this miserly character of people who greedily hoard money. To quote *Sūrah Tawbah*:

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Those who censure the believers that give freely and who scoff at the poor that give according to their means, Allah will scoff at them, and theirs shall be a torment afflictive. (9:79)

While explaining the above verse, this writer has written:

The words ‘ ’ (*mutaṭawwi‘uṅ*) and ‘ ’ (*muṭṭawi‘uṅ*)

are the same words. ‘مُتَّوِّعٌ’ (*muṭṭawī‘un*) is a person who not only fulfils his obligations but also enjoys doing what is optional and over and above them with great enthusiasm and fervour.

‘لَامِزٌ’ (*lamz*) means ‘to censure, to slander, to speak ill of’.

In the above quoted verses, it is stated that the *Munāfiqūn* (Hypocrites) do not spend in the cause of Allah and also cannot bear to see others doing so. Whenever they see someone spending in such a cause, they start reproaching and ridiculing him. When they see the affluent among the Muslims spending generously and sincerely, they regard it as a pretentious display put up to bluff others and to give others a false impression of piety. If they see the poor who have barely saved something to spend in this cause, they scorn and sneer at them to discourage them.

It is the psychology of misers to try to entice others to miserliness in order to hide their own, just as a person with an ugly nose wishes others to be like him so that no one remains to call him ugly. The Hypocrites also would satisfy their emotions of rivalry with Islam by doing the same. They did not want to spend a penny for its cause nor did they want others to do so. They could not bear people spending generously on the poor. So, when they would see an ordinary labourer happily giving whatever dates he had saved, sacrificing the needs of his wife and children and buying the wealth of the two worlds in their place, they would writhe and twist with venom and would satisfy their anger by scorning and taunting him.¹

This character of the misers actually portrays their helplessness. Neither do they have the courage and spirit to outdo others in fulfilling the rights of their fellow beings nor can they stop others who call upon them to do so. The only course left for them to defend themselves is to gibe and mock at those

1. *Iṣlālī, Tadabbur-i-Qur‘ān*, 5th ed., vol, 3, (Lahore:Faran Foundation, 1997), pp. 202-3.

who are actually exposing their weaknesses. Because they were trying to conceal their inner self, the *sūrah* has brought to light every aspect of both their inner and outer selves.

It should be clear that though in this *sūrah* the character of the stingy is actually depicted, yet the character of those having other moral weaknesses is no different. They also try to defend themselves by making fun of those having high moral character. The people of Lot (sws) too had adopted a similar attitude. When they observed that it was becoming difficult for them to counter the reformatory movement launched by the Prophet Lot (sws) and his companions, they, instead of mending their ways, started scoffing and leering at the Prophet Lot (sws) and his companions by saying: 'These are noble people', (27:56). They even started exhorting their nation to banish 'these nobles' from the country, lest they disgrace the whole nation.

Text and Translation

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Devastation to every slanderer, every person who makes evil gestures at others, and who amassed wealth and [remained busy] counting it, thinking that his wealth had rendered him immortal. (1-3)

By no means! He shall be flung into that which crushes. And what do you imagine that which crushes is? A fire kindled by Allah which will rise up to their hearts. Verily, they will be enshrouded in it, fastened to columns very high. (4-9)

Explanation of the Sūrah

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(Devastation to every slanderer, every person who makes evil gestures at others.) (1)

The word ' ' (*hamz*) means 'to make evil gestures at others', and ' ' (*lamz*) means 'to malign and slander someone'. ' ' (*humazah*) and ' ' (*lumazah*) are intensive forms, as is ' ' (*huṭamah*) mentioned later in the *sūrah*. ' ' (*humazah*) means 'someone who makes evil gestures at others', while ' ' (*lumazah*) means 'one who finds faults in others'. Making evil

gestures and slandering others are the two aspects of the same character. The first relates to behavioural expressions, and the second pertains to verbal expressions. Both are employed to degrade and ridicule others. At times, the first can prove the sharper of the two, and perhaps this is the reason for placing ‘*humazah*’ before ‘*lumazah*’.

In every civilised society, ‘*hamz*’ and ‘*lamz*’ are always considered to be mean habits. All divine religions forbid them. The *Qur’ān* also clearly prohibits a person to do so:

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And do not defame one another nor revile each other by evil names. (49:11)

This ‘art’ was patronized and promoted not only in ancient uncultured societies but is also in vogue in the ‘modern’ uncultured societies. Today, humourous columns and cartoons published in newspapers and magazines do the job which was done by the mimics, imitators and jesters of yester years. In *Sūrah Qalam*, a comprehensive analysis of the leaders of *Quraysh* as well as their cohorts is made. It shows that they also wanted to thwart the attempts of the Muslims in spreading the Islamic Message by adopting tactics similar to those employed by the professional leaders of today to get the better of their opponents. The Prophet (sws), therefore, was advised to remain aware of this foul play in the following words by the *Qur’ān*:

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Pay no heed to any ignominious oath-monger, who makes evil gestures and who sows seeds of dissension, forbiddor of good, transgressor and usurper of rights, cruel and moreover a flatterer – only because he has been blessed with wealth and children. (68:10-14)

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(Who greedily amassed wealth and [remained busy] counting it.) (2)

The verse vividly portrays the life of stingy people. On the one hand, they do all what they can to silence those who call upon them

to fulfil the rights of Allah and their own fellow beings, and on the other are busy amassing riches and greedily hoarding them. They remain deeply engrossed in computing and calculating their wealth. Speculating about the prospects of success in business is their only food for thought. Issues like the profit that can be obtained from various business undertakings, the money they can gain from their investments, the measures needed to compensate for the loss in a particular economic enterprise and the grand total of their money next year possess their minds. If it is mentioned before them that a person has spent his money on orphans and poor, they make fun of him by saying that he is only showing off his wealth and would go on to assert: 'Look at us, we have spent thousands and no one has the slightest knowledge of it'.

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(Thinking that his wealth has rendered him immortal.) (3)

This verse highlights the inner character of the Hypocrites. They reckon that their wealth will also buy for them eternal life. Their complete involvement with wealth shows that they seek all pleasures of life in wealth. If they knew that both their wealth and life were ephemeral, they would have expended them in a way which would be profitable for them in the Hereafter. In fact, they would have tried to outdo one another in this dash.

In *Sūrah Shu'arā*, this mentality is depicted in the following words:

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Will you build monuments of no use on every high place
and build grand palaces as if you have to live here
forever? (26:128-9)

It is a person's attitude towards life and not what he says which gives an indication of his inner self. The life of a person who considers this world as his final destination is totally different from that of a person for whom the next world is the ultimate destination towards which this life leads. It is not possible that a person who believes in the Hereafter would greedily hoard his wealth. Such a person, as the Prophet Jesus (sws) said, keeps his account with Allah:

Keep your wealth with God because your heart is wherever your wealth is. (Matt, 6:21-2)

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(By no means, he shall be flung into that which crushes.) (4)

The word ‘ ’ (*kallā*: By no means) is meant to negate the false notion of a miser stated in the previous verse: ‘thinking that his wealth has rendered him immortal’. The *Qur’ān* says that such a person and whatever he has gathered will be hurled into the raging fire of Hell which shall crush them to pieces.

The word ‘ ’ (*ḥuṭamah*) is from the root ‘ ’ (*ḥṭm*) which means ‘to crush to pieces’. Like ‘ ’ (*humazah*) and ‘ ’ (*lumazah*), it is also an intensive form.

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(And what do you imagine that which crushes to pieces is?) (5)

The question in this verse is meant to express the dreadfulness of Hell; a fire kindled by the Almighty should not be considered something ordinary.

‘ ’ (*ḥuṭamah*) (that which crushes to pieces) seems a very apt word to depict the total annihilation of wealth amassed in the form of bricks of gold and silver, jewellery, and valuable utensils. This is precisely how the rich of that period used to accumulate their wealth. All such people would witness a similar fate of their wealth, which they reckoned would render them immortal.

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(A fire kindled by Allah, which will rise up to their hearts.) (6-7)

This verse explains the word ‘ ’ (*ḥuṭamah*) stated in the previous one. The characteristic of this fire is that it will first of all seek those hearts which had remained so possessed by the love of wealth that the remembrance of Allah and the Final Day could find no space in them. We all know of certain devices which have been invented to track down specific targets. As soon as they sense their prey, they automatically follow and destroy it. The fire of Allah mentioned in this verse, it seems, will behave similarly and will grip all those hearts which were

absorbed with the love of wealth and had remained indifferent to the needs of the poor.

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(*Verily, they shall be enshrouded in it.*) (8)

The fire shall completely enwrap them so that no part of its heat is wasted. The phrase ‘*awṣada’l-bāb*’ means ‘he closed the door’. The fire will close over them as in a brick kiln, destroying them with all its force.

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(*Fastened to columns very high.*) (9)

This verse depicts the helplessness of these criminals. Even within the fire they will be fastened to high columns with heavy chains. Here only columns are mentioned; *Sūrah Ḥāqqah* mentions the chaining of such criminals as well:

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Seize him, and chain him with an iron collar and cast him into Hell, and then fasten him with a chain seventy cubits long. Verily, he did not believe in Allah, most High nor did he urge others to feed the poor. (69:30-4)

Lahore,

16th April, 1980 AD

13th *Jamādi’u’l-Awwal*, 1400 AH

Sūrah Fīl (105)

Relationship with the Preceding and Succeeding *Sūrahs*

From *Sūrahs Qāri'ah* (No. 101) to *Humazah* (No. 104), it is pointed to the *Quraysh* that they have remained so possessed with the love of wealth and children that they have grossly failed to fulfil the rights of Allah as well as their own fellow beings. In spite of this, they still claim to be the heirs of Abraham (sws) and Ismael (sws) and the custodians of the *Baytullāh* built by them. In this particular *sūrah* and its dual counterpart, *Sūrah Quraysh*, which succeeds it, they are cautioned that they have been blessed with peace and sustenance not because of their own efforts or because they were entitled to them, but because of the Prophet Abraham's invocation and the blessings of the House which he built. Therefore, instead of showing vanity, it is their obligation to worship the Lord of this House who fed them in hunger and secured them against every kind of danger, as is indicated in *Sūrah Quraysh* in the following words:

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Hence, they should worship the Lord of the House, who fed them in hunger and provided them with peace in fear.
(106:3-4)

Central Theme

The only difference between the two *sūrahs* is that in *Sūrah Fīl* an event bears witness to the Power and Might of Allah which saved the *Baytullāh* from a great enemy, while in *Sūrah Quraysh*, the *Quraysh* are reminded of the fact that it is their association with the *Baytullāh* which accounts for the favours of peace and sustenance.

At the time when Abraham (sws) had settled his son Ismael (sws) in *Makkah*, the land was not only scarce in food resources but was in a constant state of strife as well. Abraham (sws) had earnestly prayed to the Almighty to bless the land with peace and sustenance and the Almighty had granted his wish. The progeny of Abraham (sws) benefitted from both these favours because of the *Baytullāh* only, but later on pride and vanity made them indifferent to these blessings. They are warned against their ingratitude at many instances (as in this *sūrah*) in the *Qur'ān*. In the *sūrahs* of this last group, *Sūrah Balad* also discusses some important aspects of this attitude and can be consulted for details.

Sequence

In this *sūrah*, the *Quraysh* are reminded of a significant event of their history. The Almighty had helped them decidedly in combating the forces of *Abrahah* who attacked the *Baytullāh* with a sixty thousand strong army to demolish it. It was not easy for the *Quraysh* to face such a big army in the open whose vanguard consisted of elephants. They had therefore sought refuge in the nearby mountains and had defended the holy land by hurling stones at the advancing enemy. This defence was indeed very frail and feeble, but the Almighty transformed it into a powerful outburst which totally destroyed the enemy and their dead bodies were feasted upon by kites, vultures and crows.

Text and Translation

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Have you not seen how your Lord dealt with the People of the Elephant? Did He not foil their treacherous plan? And sent down upon them swarms of birds? (1-3)

You pelted them with clay stones. And Allah made them like straw eaten away. (4-5)

Explanation

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(Have you not seen how your Lord dealt with the People of the Elephant?) (1)

The addressed words ‘أَلَمْ تَرَ’ (*alam tara*: have you not seen?) are grammatically singular but they are mostly used in the *Qur’ān* to address plural entities, as if directed to every person individually in a group of people. Here the addressees are the *Quraysh*. They are reminded about their recent past and asked whether they had forgotten how their Lord had dealt with the People of the Elephant. It should be kept in mind that the event which is being referred to had taken place the same year the Prophet (sws) was born. Therefore, there must have been people at the time of revelation of this *sūrah* who had witnessed it or had at least heard so much about it by so many people that it had become for them no less than a directly observed reality. The words ‘أَلَمْ تَرَ’ (*alam tara*), therefore, seem very appropriate.

The *Qur’ān* has not mentioned any details regarding the People of the Elephant, such as their description, their origin and the purpose of their march. The reason for this brevity is that the addressed people knew these details very well. Only their introduction by the words ‘أَشْهُبُ الْفِيلِ’ (*ashḥabu’l-fīl*) was enough to indicate that *Abraha*, the Abyssinian ruler of Yemen, whose troops also consisted of elephants was being referred to. It was the first time that the Arabs had encountered elephants in a war and to express the grimness of the event they remembered it by this name.

Whether there was only a single elephant or several, is a question in relation to which both meanings can be construed from the words of the *Qur’ān*. But since the word ‘*Ashḥāb*’ (plural) is used and not *Sāhib*, which is a singular word, it is more likely that there was more than one elephant. *Āḥādīth* also re-inforce the fact that there was a whole battery of elephants with the army which tremendously increased its strength and awesomeness.

Though some historians have regarded *Abraha* as a tolerant ruler, yet he does not deserve such a high opinion if his life is studied. He seems to be an opportunist, a traitor and a highly prejudiced Christian. He had betrayed the ruler of Abyssinia and had actually used the latter’s army to bring Yemen under his own control. History bears witness to his traitorship: it is not

possible to enlist all the details, yet it is a historical fact that after assuming control of Yemen, he not only killed its Jewish king but also ruthlessly exterminated Judaism from the land.

His prejudice for Christianity made him obsessed with the idea of converting the Arabs to Christianity. To execute his scheme, he built a grand cathedral in *Ṣan'ā*, the capital of Yemen. He wrote to king Negus of Abyssinia, for whom he was deputising in ruling Yemen that he had built a unique cathedral towards which he intended to divert the Arabs to offer their pilgrimage and to demolish the *Baytullāh*. He then made up a story that an Arab had violated the sanctity of the cathedral by relieving himself in it, only to justify an attack on the *Baytullāh*. Considering the traditional bravery and courage of the Arabs, it is very unlikely that something like this might have happened. Even if the episode is assumed to be true, a person's individual misdeed is not enough to justify the exaction of revenge from a whole nation and to go as far as razing down the *Baytullāh*. It is quite evident that only to inflame the Arabs and to gain the support of king Negus was this lie given a lot of air. He finally launched an attack on *Makkah* with a sixty thousand army supported by nine or ten elephants.

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(*Did He not foil their treacherous plan.*) (2)

The Almighty aborted the scheme of *Abraham* which is termed ' ' (*kayd*: a plot) by the *Qur'ān* because to justify a vicious move a ridiculous allegation was invented, as has been indicated before. However, there are also some other reasons for calling this scheme an intrigue. Imam *Farāhī* (d: 1930) mentions them in his exegesis in the following words:

1. He (*Abraham*) had attacked the *Baytullāh* during the forbidden months because he believed that in these months the Arabs refrained from war and bloodshed.
2. He had tried to enter *Makkah* when its inhabitants and other Arabs were performing the rites of *Ḥajj*.
3. He had specially intended to launch his offensive during

the stay of *Minā* when the Arabs would either be busy in offering sacrifice or would be returning home totally exhausted.¹

To foil this evil contrivance, what the Almighty did is deduced thus by Imam *Farāhī*:

1. He did not let them penetrate beyond the valley of *Muḥassar*.
2. The Arabs used the stones of this valley to bombard their enemy, as shall be described later.
3. He let loose on the enemy a ‘ ’ (*ḥāṣib*) which is a stone hurling wind; it totally destroyed them.²

Many eye witnesses have reported this ‘ ’ (*ḥāṣib*) and historians like *Ibn Hashām* have recorded their observations. Imam *Farāhī* has also discussed these testimonies in detail. I shall restrict myself to two examples only. The famous poet *Abū Qays* while mentioning the power and glory of the Almighty refers to this ‘ ’ (*ḥāṣib*) in the following way.

*Fa ursila min rabbihim ḥāṣibun
Yaluffuhum mithla laffi 'l-qazam*

(Then the Almighty unleashed a ‘ ’ (*ḥāṣib*) on them which enwrapped them like rubbish.)

Similarly *Ṣayfī Ibn 'Āmir* has referred to a ‘ ’ (*ḥāṣib*) and a ‘ ’ (*sāff*), which is also similar to a ‘ ’ (*ḥāṣib*), differing only in intensity):

1. *Farāhī*, *Majmū'ah-i-Taḥāṣīr*, 1st ed., (Lahore: Faran Foundation, 1991), p. 386

2. *Ibid*, p. 387

*Falammā ajāzū baṭna nu 'māna ruddahum
Junūdu 'l-ilāhi bayna ṣāffin wa hāṣibī*

(As soon as they advanced beyond the valley of *Nu 'mān*, the forces of the Almighty alighted among the ‘ ’ (*hāṣib*) and ‘ ’ (*Sāff*) and destroyed them)

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(*And sent down against them swarms of birds?*) (3)

This is a metaphorical description of the final state of devastation and helplessness of *Abrahah's* army. The Almighty totally ravaged them and not a single one survived to gather the dead; they remained scattered in the battlefield. The Almighty sent forth on them carnivorous birds, which tore and ate their flesh and cleansed *Makkah* from the stink of their remains. ‘Sending forth birds on the enemies’, is a commonly found metaphorical depiction of the state of utter decimation of the enemy in the odes and laudatory compositions of the Arab poets. They often extol their armies by saying that when they attack the enemy, meat eating birds fly with them as if they knew that after the enemy is completely destroyed they would get a chance to satisfy their hunger. In the old Testament, the tale of *Dā'ūd* (David) and *Jālūt* (Goliath) is narrated. It says that when the two faced each other in combat and David effectively answered all the conceited remarks of Goliath, Goliath, replied irritably: ‘I shall feed the kites and crows with your meat today’. But David by the Almighty’s help turned the tables on Goliath.

The word ‘ ’ (*abābīl*) does not mean the swallows (the birds called *Abābīl*). It means a pack of horses and also implies a swarm of birds. Grammarians differ whether the word is singular or plural. Some say that it is a plural word which has no singular, and some hold that it is the plural of ‘ ’ (*ibbālatun*). In the opinion of this writer, it is used here for the birds who had gathered to feed on the slain army of *Abrahah*.

‘ ’ (*arsala 'alayhim*) refers to the utter state of helplessness of the People of the Elephant that no one even

remained to bury the dead: the birds feasted on the dead bodies with complete freedom.

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(*You pelted them with stones of clay. And Allah made them like straw eaten away.*) (4-5)

In the end, it is indicated how the Almighty's help had aided the believers in destroying their foes. The *Quraysh* are addressed and told that while they were hurling stones on the enemy, the Almighty transformed this weak defence into a strong one and it became so effective that it virtually made their enemies like straw devoured away.

Our commentators generally maintain that the *Quraysh* did not face the attacking enemy and their leader 'Abdu'l-Muṭṭalib took them away to seek refuge in the nearby mountains. They left the *Baytullāh* in the custody of the Almighty, believing that He who is the Lord of the House shall Himself protect it. In their consideration, the subject (*Fā'il*) of the verb 'تارمى' (*tarmī*) is 'تارمى' (*tayraṇ abābīl*), ie the birds had destroyed *Abraham's* army by flinging stones on them. There is a general consensus on this view, but owing to various reasons it seems absolutely incorrect. Some of them are:

(1) There is no doubt that the *Quraysh* had gone off in the mountains but this does not imply at all that they had completely withdrawn themselves from its defence. They had adopted a special war strategy owing to their own weak position. Instead of facing a huge army in an open battle field, they took refuge in the mountains and tried to impede the enemy attack by adopting the tactics of guerrilla warfare. A similar strategy was adopted by the Muslims in the battle of *Aḥzāb* (trench) when they defended the Holy land of *Maḍīnah* by digging a trench around it.

It would have been disastrous for them to engage the enemy in open warfare, for even if they had tried their best, they could not have raised an army beyond twenty thousand, which was totally insufficient to fight a sixty thousand strong army aided with a battery of elephants. The Almighty helped them according to His principle that when a believer does his utmost in discharging his duty, he is aided by Divine Help.

(2) The claim that the *Quraysh* offered no resistance is not

only against historical facts, but also against the sense of honour and pride of the *Quraysh*. All historians agree that whichever routes the army of *Abraha* traversed, the respective Arab tribe did not let them through without offering some opposition. They tolerated the humiliation of defeat than letting the enemy through easily with such an evil motive. The only exception was the *Banū Thaḳīf*, who did not display the sense of honour shown by all the other tribes. *Abū Righāl* a tribesman of the *Banū Thaḳīf* revealed to the advancing army the way to *Makkah*. As a result, for being dishonourable, the *Banū Thaḳīf* were completely disgraced in the eyes of the Arabs and lost their respect. *Abū Righāl* met an equally dreadful fate: for a number of years, the Arabs pelted stones at his grave. It should be realised that when small tribes fought so gallantly, how could have the *Quraysh* acted in such a dishonourable way by letting the opponents achieve their goal unchecked? If they did what is generally maintained, why was only *Abū Righāl* condemned for a similar crime? The *Quraysh* have always been famous for their sense of honour, as has been mentioned before. Even in trivial affairs they had never shown any weakness which could stain their honour; how could they disgrace and dishonour themselves in an affair upon which depended their religious as well as their political supremacy? After loosing the *Baytullāh*, what else did they have to live for? This view, therefore, cannot be accepted.

(3) Those who hold this view – and actually diparage the *Quraysh* by doing so – maintain that the *sūrah* conveys somewhat the following message: ‘The Almighty Himself is the Guardian of His House. Even if its custodians run away He Himself shall protect it. So when the *Quraysh* retreated to the mountains, the Almighty employed the *abābīl* to defend His House. The *abābīl* destroyed the enemy by hurling stones at them.’ If this is the lesson the *sūrah* conveys, then it is totally against the laws of the Almighty. It is against His principle that His people should sit in their houses, whilst He alone should win the battle for them. If this were true, then why were the Children of Israel punished for a similar attitude when they were left to wander for forty years in a desert. They had only said:

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Go there, you [O Moses!] and your Lord, we will sit here.
(5:24)

According to the law of the Almighty which is clear from the *Qur'ān*, He helps only those who set out to fulfil their obligations, however small in number they may be and however limited their resources may be. Consequently, the responsibilities the *Qur'ān* has imposed on us Muslims in *Sūrahs Baqarah, Tawbah* and *Hajj* as regards the protection and liberation of *Baytullāh* are that we should first do all we can and then the Almighty will help us. It is not that He will send his help if we do not strive our utmost. The *Quraysh* procured the Almighty's help because they did all they could. The Almighty reinforced their weak defence by unleashing on the enemy a raging stone hurling wind which reduced them to nothingness. In the battle of *Badr* too, the Almighty lent His invisible hand of help when circumstances were no different as far as the defence of the Muslim army was concerned. The Almighty had transformed a handful of dust thrown at the enemy by the Prophet (sws) into a storm. The Almighty Himself explained the nature of this event in the *Qur'ān* in the following words:

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And when you hurled [the stones on the enemy], you did not [actually] hurl them, but it was Allah who had hurled them. (8:17)

(4) A look at the invocation '*Abdu'l-Muṭṭalib*' had uttered while he was invoking the Almighty's help shows that its words are overflowing with faith in the Almighty. They are the words of a person who is very disturbed and worried over a situation, yet he is very hopeful of the Almighty's help. There is not the slightest indication that these words were uttered by someone who had run away from the battlefield. Those who have derived this meaning from this invocation can only be lauded for their 'subtle' sense of appreciation. If '*Abdu'l-Muṭṭalib*' had retreated in the mountains and prayed to the Almighty, it does not mean that he had withdrawn from the defence of the *Baytullāh*. A little deliberation shows that some of his words have the same grace of confidence in the Almighty as the prayer the Prophet (sws) had uttered amidst

the battle of *Badr*. 'Abdu'l-Muṭṭalib's prayer is like a glorious martial song which has the scent of faith and trust in it. Consider how effectively it invokes the Almighty's help:

*lāhumma inna 'l-mar'a yam
na 'u ahlahu famna 'riḥālak*

*lā yaḡhlibanna ṣalībuhum
wa muḥāluhum 'adwaṅ muḥālak*

*in kunta tārikahum wa qib
latanā fa 'mur mā bada 'a lak*

(O Lord! A man protects his family, so protect Your people. Let not their cross and their strength overpower You in the coming days. If You want to leave our *Qiblah* at their mercy, then do as You please.)

After such a display of honour and integrity, can someone be regarded as a deserter?

Therefore, in the consideration of this writer, the view that the *Quraysh* had not faced the enemy, and that the birds had destroyed the enemy by flinging stones at them is totally baseless. The subject (*fā'il*) of the verb 'تارمى' (*tarmī*), in this writer's opinion, is the tribe of *Quraysh* who are addressed by the words 'الامتارة' (*alam tara*) at the beginning of the *sūrah*. This verb is not at all appropriate for birds. The birds can drop stones held in their beaks and claws, but this cannot be termed 'رأى' (*ramī*). This verb can only be used when 'the drop' has the power of an arm, a string or

a wind behind it. Even the commentators who hold the general view have also felt its inaptness. They had to ‘make up’ the interpretation that the birds dropped stones of the size of peas, which passed through the bodies of the elephants. By this interpretation, they were able to demonstrate the effectiveness of the process, but in reality this cannot be termed ‘ramī’.

The word ‘sijjīl’ (*sijjīl*) is the Arabicized form of the Persian word *sang-i-gil*. Its English equivalent in the opinion of this writer is ‘pebble’. It has been indicated before that the Arabs had a weak defence. The battle could have been termed hotly contested if it was fought by swords and spears and the two armies were arrayed in a battle field, and if the enemy had elephants, the *Quraysh* at least had horses. This, as pointed out before, was not possible; so they opted to retreat in the mountains and impede the enemy advance by hurling stones at them. Obviously, this was a weak defence and just to show the weak nature of defense, the words ‘biḥijāratin min sijjīl’ are used by the *Qur’ān*.

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(*And Allah made them like straw eaten away*) (5)

This verse expresses how the Might and Power of the Almighty turned the tables on *Abrahah’s* army. Since His people had striven to their utmost, He according to His law helped them, and made their enemy like straw eaten away. To call something by the fate it shall finally meet is a common linguistic style of Arabic: ‘

’ (*ka ‘aṣḥīn ma ‘kūl*) being an example.

It should be noted here that the act of ‘ramī: throwing) is attributed to the people addressed, but rendering the enemy into ‘straw eaten away’ is attributed to the Almighty’s power. The reason is that it was not possible for the Arabs alone to destroy their enemy. The Almighty helped them by unleashing a ravaging stone hurling wind on the enemy, after the *Quraysh* themselves had started flinging stones on them in the valley of *Maḥassar*. This ‘ḥāṣīb), as is indicated before, was reported by many eye witnesses. It has also been mentioned earlier that the *Quraysh* had adopted similar tactics in the battle of *Aḥzāb* and then too ‘a wind’ was sent to help them.

And *Nūh* said: O Lord! Leave not a single disbeliever in the earth. If you spare them, they will mislead thy servants and beget none but wicked and ungrateful ones. (71:21-7)

If one reflects on the above verses, it becomes clear that just after the Prophet *Noah* (sws) had uttered the first sentence of his prayer, the fate of his nation is depicted while the remaining prayer is deferred, though obviously they would have met this fate after the whole prayer. The reason for this is that only to show the speediness in the acceptance of the prayer a certain sentence is placed earlier. Likewise, in the present *sūrah*, just to depict the dreadful fate of the foes of *Abraham*, the mention of sending down birds against them is made before the mention of their destruction. Since the central theme of the *sūrah* revolves around recounting the favours of the Almighty on the *Quraysh*, rhetorical principles dictate that the dreadful fate of the enemies be portrayed first.

My mentor, *Ḥamīdu'l-Dīn Farāhī*, has dealt at length with the various aspects of this *sūrah*. Brevity has restricted me to omit many of his views which are very important as regards the explanation of the *sūrah*. Among other details which offer a fresh insight into the *sūrah*, he considers the *Ḥajj* ritual of *ramī-i-jamarāt* as a symbolic representation of the *ramī* 'done' by the *Quraysh* on *Abraham's* forces. I advise the readers to go through his interpretation of the *sūrah* as well, which will also bring out the very subtle difference between his views and the ones held by his humble pupil.

Lahore,
15th May 1980 AD
29th *Jamādi 'u'l-Thāni*, 1400 AH

Sūrah Quraysh (106)

Central Theme

This *sūrah* is the counterpart of the previous *sūrah –Fīl*. A comprehensive treatment of the central theme of both these *sūrahs* is given in the exegetical explanation of the preceding *sūrah*. Briefly, it can be restated as: the *Quraysh* are asked to fulfil the obligation of their association with the *Baytullāh*, after a thorough indication is made to them about the nature of this association.

Relationship with the Previous *Sūrah*

In the previous *sūrah*, it is pointed out that the *Quraysh* are living peacefully and securely in this land because of their affiliation with the *Baytullāh*. In this *sūrah*, it is asserted that it is this affiliation which also accounts for their provisions of livelihood and sustenance. Both these favours entail the worship of the Lord of this House, instead of associating others with Him without any rational basis.

The foremost things which a good state provides its citizens with are peace and sustenance. In the holy land of *Makkah*, the *Quraysh* had been the beneficiaries of these blessings because of the Prophet Abraham (sws) through the *Baytullāh*. As a natural right of these blessings, the *Quraysh* should have been grateful to the Lord of this House, but instead they became involved in outrageous forms of polytheism, inducting within its precincts fictitious gods and goddesses. With this background, they are admonished in this *sūrah* to remain deeply conscious of their relation with the *Baytullāh* – which the Almighty Himself had given in their trusteeship. It was because of the *Baytullāh* that the whole atmosphere had become peaceful and secure for them; this

special status had also been instrumental in securing for them lavish resources of sustenance and livelihood. If they now show ingratitude to the Lord of the House, then they deserve to be deposed from this prestigious position and be divested from all the benefits, both spiritual and material, they possess on account of it.

Analysis of the Meanings

First of all, a reference is made to the special affiliation of the *Quraysh* with the *Baytullāh* and the holy Land of *Makkah*. Next, an indication is made to the trade excursions they regularly undertook in winters and summers, upon which depended their financial prosperity. Their economic well-being heavily relied on these tours and being the custodians of the *Baytullāh*, success in these tours was virtually guaranteed. Once ousted from this position, they could never achieve the privilege of being guided through these routes unscathed, where danger openly lurked for all other tribes.

Text and Translation

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Owing to the association the *Quraysh* have – the association they have with the winter and summer journeyings. So, they should worship the Lord of this House who fed them in hunger and provided them with peace in fear. (1-4)

Explanation of the Sūrah

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(Owing to the association the *Quraysh* have.) (1)

‘ (Alifa’l-makāna wa ālafahū ilāfan) means ‘ (ta’awwāḍahū wa ista’nasa bihi), ie ‘he is used to this place and is familiar with it.’

‘ (ālaftuhū makāna kadhā ilāfan) means ‘ (ja’altuhū ya’lafahu) ie ‘I made him familiar with this place.’

‘ (ālafahū mu’ālafatan wa ilāfan) means ‘ (ānasahu wa ‘āsharahu), ie ‘he became accustomed to him,

he resided with him.’

This explanation clearly shows that there is no essential difference between ‘ ’ and ‘ ’. Both mean ‘attachment’, ‘association’, and ‘affiliation’. Although it is not clear from this first verse with whom the association is implied, yet the subsequent verses qualify the association as the one the *Quraysh* had with the *Baytullāh* as its custodians and overseers, as a result of which they had been reaping many benefits.

In other words, the *Quraysh* are reminded here in this verse that the honour and prestige they had attained in *Makkah* in particular and in Arabia in general because of which they had gained extraordinary material benefits, were not because of their own ability and planning but because of their association with the House of their Lord. They must always remain aware about the nature of this relationship not only with this sacred House but also with its Lord. They should not become inebriated with these worldly successes and thereby forget the rights and obligations imposed on them about this House and its Lord.

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(– the association they have with the winter and summer journeyings.) (2)

‘ ’ (*Īlāf*) is the permutative (*Badal*) of ‘ ’ (*Īlāf*) of the first verse. Initially, the subject was just brought up and left incomplete to raise a question among the addressed people about the nature of the association of the *Quraysh*. This style is also adopted elsewhere in the *Qur’ān*. The style is useful, first of all, to direct the attention of those addressed, and secondly to firmly establish something in their minds by repeating it in two different ways.

This verse explains that the association under discussion is the one the *Quraysh* have with their trade journeyings of summers and winters. It should be kept in mind that during the winter season the *Quraysh* used to travel to Yemen, while their summers were spent journeying towards Syria and Palestine. With these caravans travelled the wealth of the whole nation. The reason was that there were many traders and businessmen who acted as agents of those who could invest money, and, hence, people who did not go along with these caravans were

also able to benefit from this profitable business. It was these tours which were the real source of wealth for the *Makkan* people. By this means, merchandise reached other markets and at the same time their own consumers were able to buy goods from other markets. Thus, these trade routes were the real source of sustenance for the *Quraysh*. Although these were international trade routes, they were safe in the true sense of the word for the *Quraysh* only. The extent of protection provided to them was not provided to any other tribe. Other tribes were robbed in broad daylight, and had to seek permission by paying huge amounts to the tribe whose territory they had to pass, but the *Quraysh* enjoyed unlimited freedom and liberty. They were even provided with people who acted as guides and no one could even think of tampering with them, for they were given special respect as the custodians of the *Baytullāh* and caretakers of the pilgrims. It is with all this background that the *Qur'ān* admonishes them not to become inebriated with these worldly successes and forget the Lord of this House. All these successes are due to the *Baytullāh*, and they shall only remain their beneficiaries if they remain sincere with the causes of the exalted House.

It should be borne in mind, that it was no stroke of luck through which the *Quraysh* had become the custodians of the *Baytullāh*. It was not just by chance that they had come from somewhere and settled in its whereabouts, and later became its custodians; in fact, it was the Prophet Abraham (sws) who had purposefully established the abode of his son Ismael (sws) and his progeny in the vicinity of the *Baytullāh* to achieve a certain mission associated with it. He had made a special invocation to the Almighty to bless them with peace and sustenance. In other words, the *Quraysh* are reminded of their past that they had been settled here for a special purpose. They must fulfil their covenant with all sincerity, otherwise they would be doomed not only in this world but in the Hereafter as well. The *Qur'ān* says:

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And remember when Abraham prayed: O Lord! make this land one of peace and security. Preserve me and my sons from worshipping idols. Lord, they have led many men astray. Those then who follow my [ways] are of me but for those who disobey me, You are surely Forgiving and Merciful. O our Lord! I have settled some of my offspring in a barren valley near Your sacred House that they may establish regular prayers; so incline people's hearts towards them and provide them with fruits in order that they may be thankful. (14:35-7)

It is evident from these verses, as mentioned earlier, that Abraham (sws) had settled his children near the *Baytullāh* with a special purpose for which it was built. He had prayed to the Almighty to bless them with peace and sustenance and make them a people towards whom everyone would turn in all the affairs of life. The Almighty accepted this prayer, and the *Quraysh* remained the beneficiaries of these favours in every period. The *Quraysh* are reminded in this *sūrah* of this very association with the *Baytullāh*. It would be gross ingratitude on their part to relish all the material benefits from this association, but become indifferent to its rights and their obligations. The House was built to worship the One and Alone God and prevent people from worshipping idols, and it was precisely for this reason that Abraham (sws) had established the abode of his children in a barren stretch of land. Instead of fulfilling this purpose they had stuffed it with all kinds of idols who reigned supreme in it in place of the Creator of the heavens and the earth.

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(Hence, they should worship the Lord of this House who fed them in hunger and provided them with peace in fear.) (3-4)

The verse states the rights of the blessings of peace and sustenance bestowed on the *Quraysh* by the Almighty. They should be grateful to Him and worship Him with all sincerity. It should be kept in mind, that in spite of being implicated in

horrible forms of polytheism, they had never disassociated themselves with the concept of God in their religious beliefs. Not for a moment did they consider any of the idols placed in the *Baytullāh* as its real Lord. Even a cursory glance at ‘*Abdu’l-Muṭṭalib’s* prayer¹ at the time *Abraham* attacked the *Baytullāh* shows the essence of *Tawḥīd* (monotheism) abounding in it; there is not the slightest indication of invoking help from any other deity, save the real Lord of the House. In fact, the *Quraysh* only regarded their idols a means to procure the nearness of God – whom they always considered their real Creator and Sustainer, and there never ever came a change in this stance.

’ (*alladhī aṭ’amahum min jū’ wa āmanahum min khawf*) In this verse, ‘ ’ (*min*) is that of causation (*sababiyyah*) and the words ‘ ’ (*jū’*) and ‘ ’ (*khawf*) have special connotations. By ‘ ’ (*jū’*) is meant the specific condition of an area which arises owing to a scarcity of edibles, and by ‘ ’ (*khawf*) is meant the state of an area which arises owing to a lack of security and creates a constant danger to life and wealth. Both these words are used in these meanings in other places of the *Qur’ān* as well:

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We shall test you with something of *al-kawf* [fear] and *al-jū’* [famine] with loss of life, wealth and crops. (2:155)

The Ḥaram, (land around the *Baytullāh*) before the advent of Abraham (sws) had always remained scarce in food resources and was also in a constant state of strife and unrest. It was because of the *Baytullāh* that the Almighty blessed the area with peace and ample sources of sustenance. At many instances these favours are recounted in the *Qur’ān*:

(:)

1. O Lord! a man protects his family, so You protect your people. Their cross and their strength should never overpower You. If you want to leave our *Qiblah* (the *Baytullāh*) at their mercy, then do as you please.

Have We not established for them a secure sanctuary towards which all kinds of produce are being drawn? (28:57)

(:)

Have they not seen that We have made a sanctuary secure while people are being snatched away from all around them? (29:67)

This *sūrah* is another instance where the same subject is brought up. Both peace and sustenance are special blessings of the Almighty. The *Quraysh* are admonished here to be grateful to the Almighty and remain aware that this gratitude entails His worship, not revolt, vanity or disobedience.

Lahore,
21st May, 1980 AD
6th *Rajab*, 1400 AH

Sūrah Mā'ūn (107)

Relationship with Preceding and Succeeding Sūrahs

In the previous pair of *sūrahs* – *Fil* and *Quraysh* – it is explained that the tribe of *Quraysh* has been blessed with the favours of peace and sustenance because of the *Baytullāh* (the House of God). These blessings required that they should have worshipped the Lord of this Sacred House with all sincerity and should have striven to fulfil the objective for which it was built and given in their custody. In the succeeding pair of *sūrahs*, – *Mā'ūn* and *Kawthar* – the characters of the *Quraysh* chiefs is initially depicted who at the time of revelation of these *sūrahs* were the overseers and custodians of *Baytullāh*. It is subsequently asserted that they are no longer fit to be the trustees of this exalted House. They have grossly failed to carry out the assignment and deserve to be deposed from this prestigious position, which will now be handed over to those worthy of it.

In this particular *sūrah*, the petty character of a leader of the *Quraysh* is portrayed. The portrayal includes a strong element of amazement, in fact, hate and disgust, at his attitude of callously driving away orphans. This attitude clearly reflects his disbelief in the Day of Judgement. Although the person is not addressed by name, it is quite evident that *Abū Lahab's* character is under discussion. It was he who at the time of revelation of the *sūrah* had all the financial resources of the *Baytullāh* under his sole control. A depiction of the characters of other people then follows who, though, apparently offer their prayers in the *Baytullāh*, yet their prayers lack spirit and devotion and are in fact a show of pretense on their part. A person who is not sincere in his relationship with his Creator can never be a well-wisher of

his fellow beings. He will always be a miser in his dealings and will never have the heart to even lend small items of general use, not to speak of spending in the way of Allah.

It should be kept in mind that the *Baytullāh* had been built for two reasons: Firstly, to be the centre of worship of the one and only God; and secondly, to cater for the needs, physical as well as emotional, of the orphans and the poor. It was the duty of its custodians to carry out these tasks. But since the individuals whose unworthy characters are depicted cannot be expected to fulfil the duty, the next *sūrah* – *Kawthar* – decides their fate once and for all.

Text and Translation

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Have you seen the one who belies reward and punishment?! He it is who drives away the orphan, and urges not the feeding of the poor. (1-3)

So devastation to these who pray, who are indifferent to their prayer; who put on a pretentious display, and are stingy even in ordinary items of common use. (4-7)

Explanation

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(*Have you seen the one who belies reward and punishment?!*) (1)

The word ‘ ’ (*ara'ayta*: have you not?) is used to engage the attention of a reader by expressing surprise and dislike at the attitude of a person or a group of persons. The word ‘ ’ (*al-dīn*) here means ‘reward and punishment’ as in ‘ ’, (*māliki yawmi 'l-dīn*: Master of the Day of Judgement.)

The antecedent of the conjunctive pronoun ‘ ’ (*alladhī*: he who) is not stated, but the context readily indicates that *Abū Lahab*'s character is being symbolized. He was an extremely rich yet stingy person, who was in charge of the *Rifādah* or the treasury of the *Baytullāh* at the time of revelation of this *sūrah*.

His mean personality and his ultimate destruction are depicted in a complete *sūrah* – *Lahab*. It will become evident from a study of that *sūrah* that he considered the *Rifādah* as his own property and consumed its funds for personal purposes, and had thereby become the *Qārūn* of *Makkah*. Here, the purport is to point out his hard-heartedness that no good can be expected from such a ruthless person who drives away orphans in spite of being assigned to their welfare, but the style adopted is such that it unfolds his internal nature that is actually the cause of this callousness.

The adjective ‘كافراً’ (*yukadhdhibu bi'l-dīn*: denier of reward and punishment) highlights his inner self. A person who denies the Day of Judgement cannot have any motivation to expend his wealth in the way of God to please Him as well as to secure the welfare and well-being of his fellow brethren. Such a person can only ‘drain his wealth’ for his own self or to put up a false show of concern for the poor. Only a true belief in the Final Day can induce a person to spend on the deprived without having a vested self-interest. This fact has also been highlighted in *Sūrah Layl*:

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As for him who gives and fears [the Lord] and testifies to a good fate, We shall smooth out an easy way for him. But he who is a greedy miser and is heedless [to the Day of Judgement] and testifies to a bad fate, We shall indeed smooth out for him the path of hardships. (92:5-10)

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(*He it is who drives away the orphan.*) (2)

‘دفعاً’ (*Da‘‘uṅ*) means ‘to push and shove’, as is used in *Sūrah Ṭūr*:

(:)

On that Day, they shall be sternly shoved in the fire of Hell. (52:13)

According to the *Qur'ān*, orphans should be treated with regard and respect. It rebukes those who disregard them:

(:)

Nay, you honour not the orphans. (89:17)

In an Islamic society, as the Caliph *Abū Bakr* once said, the weak are the strongest and the most influential unless they are given their rights. Hence, every person of a society is required to deeply respect the people who are yet to receive their rights. Every Muslim who has a sense of honour in him should uphold their cause and strive to obtain their rights for them.

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(*And urges not the feeding of the poor.*) (3)

This verse restates in a negative sense what is said above. It says that a person who maltreats orphans is the last one who would urge others to sympathize with them. Psychologically, every miser wishes to hide his miserliness by desiring his fellow-beings to follow in his footsteps so that there is no one who can call him a miser. Consequently, any person who, contrary to his wishes, spends on the poor becomes a target of his jeers and taunts which are meant to discourage him from indulging in this 'wasteful activity' in the very beginning, as is pointed out in *Sūrah Humazah*.

It should be kept in mind that, as indicated before, the character of the person who controlled and directed the welfare department of the *Baytullāh* for the poor is portrayed here. In other words, it is implied that when a thief assumes the seat of a judge, the result is not difficult to predict.

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(*So, devastation be to these who pray, who are indifferent to their prayer.*) (4-5)

The verse points out the lack of purity and devotion in the prayer of the religious pundits of the *Baytullāh*. Since they have to maintain their religious and social standings as the custodians

of the *Baytullāh*, they put up a false show of worship in front of the general masses. Such a show certainly cannot instil in them the real spirit of worship, which becomes nothing but a matter of fooling the public.

It should be borne in mind that the real purpose for which the *Baytullāh* was built was the establishment of the prayer. Abraham (sws) settled his son Ismael (sws) in its vicinity to enable himself and his progeny to establish this institution of worship. For this very purpose, he had also prayed to the Almighty to grant them peace and sustenance in that land. His humble invocation to the Almighty is cited in the *Qur'ān* as follows:

(:)

O our Lord! I have settled some of my offspring in a barren valley near your Sacred House; in order, our Lord! that they may establish regular prayer. (14:37)

How Ismael (sws) fulfilled this obligation, the *Qur'ān* itself testifies:

(:)

He used to enjoin the prayer and *Zakāh* on his people. (19:55)

Even in later times, when innovators and dishonest people became dominant in the land, the institutions of prayer and *Zakāh* continued, though they became completely distorted and disfigured. How the directive of *Zakāh* had been mutilated is pointed out above. What fate the prayer reached is mentioned in *Sūrah Anfāl* as follows:

(:)

Their prayer at the *Baytullāh* is nothing but whistling and clapping of hands. (8:35)

Even in this distorted shape, these rituals continued to exist, and just as the leaders of every period put up a display of religiosity to feign austerity, the leaders of the *Quraysh* too on special occasions upheld these practices. This verse actually upbraids such unworthy persons as are unaware of the real essence of the prayer by sounding a severe warning to them.

(-)

(Those who put on a pretentious display, and are stingy even in ordinary items of common use.) (6-7)

This verse further delineates their show of false pretense. In fact, it asserts two reasons behind the lack of purity and devotion in their prayers: pretentiousness and miserliness.

Purity and sincerity of intention is the essence of prayers: they should be offered just to please the Almighty and to win His favour and affection. If they are offered for any other motive, they lose their purpose, and in fact become detrimental to their very cause. The prayer of the custodians of the *Baytullāh* had become adulterated not only with their ill-beliefs but also, as indicated before, with their false intentions. Quite evidently, such a prayer is nothing more than a theatrical enactment. Just as impersonating a character in a drama does not actually make a person one of them, likewise people who feign the articles of prayer do not become true worshippers.

Moreover, their miserliness too is an ample proof of the perfunctory nature of their prayer. The real spirit behind the prayer is a feeling of gratitude to the Almighty. A person who is grateful to his Creator can never be a miser or a skinflint. Instead, he is bound to be unselfish and magnanimous. He spends on the deprived and needy, not as a favour to them but because they have a rightful claim on his own wealth. In fact, he is so overwhelmed with this sense of gratitude that fulfilling others' needs even at his own expense is a source of tremendous satisfaction to him. From the point of view of the philosophy of religion also, the prayer and spending in the way of God have a deep relationship; for the prayer is the foremost manifestation of the feeling of gratitude, and such a prayer subsequently motivates a person to spend on the needy. It can be safely said that the whole edifice of the *Sharī'ah* is based on these two

pillars of faith.

‘ (yamna'ūna'l-mā'ūn): ‘ (mā'ūn) means items of common use. It is perfectly in accordance with the norms of social relationships to borrow such items from a neighbour. Many a time such needs arise and it is but natural to ask for such things in close associations. Borrowing and lending such items is in fact a sign of a healthy social set-up and promotes ties of friendship and fraternity between people. Every decent person should be happy to help out his neighbour if at any time he needs for example a knife, a cooking pot, bedding items or even a matchbox. Only mean people can refuse help on such occasions. Also, whenever such mean and niggardly people pray, they do only to impress others because they have no inner motivation for it. Neither does such a prayer influence their hearts. In fact, ostentation in such a sacred affair increases their callousness.

Some people, because of the words ‘ (fa wayluḡ li'l muṣallin: so devastation be to these who pray ...) maintain that the sūrah was revealed in *Madīnah*. They contend that such people who used to pretend righteousness could not have existed in *Makkah*, and must be regarded as a product of the later *Madīnan* period. The reason for this misconception is that they consider the prayer mentioned here as the one obligated by Islam, whereas it implies, as this writer has explained above, the prayer whose establishment had been ordained by the Almighty to the prophet Ismael (sws) and his progeny along with the directive of building the *Baytullāh*. This prayer was adopted and offered in later times, though it lost its original form and shape because of innovations, which over the years gained a stronghold in the religious thought of the Arabs.

Lahore,
26th May, 1980 AD
11th Rajab, 1400 AH

Sūrah Kawthar (108)

Central Theme

In the previous *sūrah* – *Mā'ūn* – it is explained to the leaders of the *Quraysh* that they had totally disregarded the purpose for which Abraham (sws) had settled his children in the whereabouts of the *Baytullāh*, and for which he had prayed to the Almighty to bless them with peace and sustenance. It is also pointed out that the *Baytullāh* had been built for the worship of the One and Alone Allah and to safeguard the rights of the poor and the orphans, but the people who were at that time in charge of it were showing utter disregard to its objectives. Obviously, this mention is directed at the false claim of the *Quraysh*, which they proudly cherished that being the custodians of the *Baytullāh* they would be given special treatment by the Almighty and no one would depose them. However, in the previous *sūrah* they were only presented a charge sheet of all their misdeeds; the punishment which they deserved had not been stated. It is in this *sūrah* that their fate is separately depicted. The Prophet (sws) is addressed directly and given the glad tidings that the *Baytullāh* has been taken away from these unscrupulous people and consigned to his custody; he should therefore solely pray for the Almighty and offer sacrifice for Him only and light the candle of monotheism in the *Baytullāh*. A warning is also sounded to the disbelievers that after being dislodged from the *Baytullāh* they will also be deprived of all the favours they enjoyed on account of it and that finally they will be uprooted from the land. The Almighty shall now shower these favours on those who will assume its responsibility and fulfill its rights. They are the ones who after rising to political ascendancy in the land will

befittingly fulfil the objectives for which it was built.

This *sūrah*, as is indicated above, gives glad tidings to the Prophet (sws). The particle of stress ‘*innā*’ (indeed We) and the use of the past tense in ‘*a’taynāka*’ (We have bestowed to you) is to express the certainty of the promise. There are many examples of the use of this linguistic device in the *Qur’ān*. Whatever has been decided by the Almighty is ultimate and no one can alter it. Therefore, even if these decisions pertain to the future, they are mentioned in the past tense to express the certainty of their occurrence particularly when some good news about the future is to be conveyed.

At the end of the *Makkan* period, when the oppressive attitude of the disbelievers was reaching its peak, many verses were revealed at various times in which the Prophet (sws) and the Muslims were addressed and given glad tidings of victory and domination. This *sūrah* is one example. However, precisely because of this prediction, many commentators including my teacher Imam *Hamīdu’l-Dīn Farāhī* hold that it was revealed during the truce of *Hudaybiyyah*. But in my humble opinion, the *sūrah* was revealed just before the Prophet’s migration to *Madīnah*. The glad tidings of a grand victory have been given in many *sūrahs* of the pre-migration period to the Muslims to comfort and assure them, as can be seen in the last *Makkan Sūrahs* of each group; needless to cite any example.

The *Quraysh*, right from the beginning, very well knew that their real point of difference with the Prophet (sws) was the question that who among them was following the creed of Abraham (sws). As a natural corollary of this difference, they maintained that only those who were the heirs to Abraham’s true creed have the right to be the custodians of the *Baytullāh*. Their arrogance in this regard had reached such an extent that they could not even tolerate the Prophet (sws) and his Companions praying in the *Baytullāh*. On the other hand, the Muslims through the Prophet’s mission and the message he was propagating were well aware that the *Quraysh*’s hold on the *Baytullāh* was against all principles and to liberate the *Baytullāh* from their hold was the real purpose of the Prophet’s mission.

The two parties also knew that whichever of the two would be dissociated from the *Baytullāh* would be left all by itself in Arabia and would have no place to go. Therefore, to comfort and solace

the Prophet (sws) and the Muslims at the time of the migration to *Madīnah*, it was necessary to convey to them that they would definitely displace the *Quraysh* from the *Baytullāh* and take over its guardianship; that the tussle which was going on with the *Quraysh* would culminate in their success and that the Prophet of Allah would not be extirpated from the land as the *Quraysh* contended; rather the enemies of the Prophet (sws) are the ones who would totally be humbled. In fact, it was the glad tidings about His Divine Help in the future which made the grim and exacting task of migration an easy undertaking for the Muslims and which otherwise, as everyone knows, was an extremely difficult affair.

Text and Transaltion

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Upon you have We bestowed *Kawthar*, so pray only for your Almighty and offer sacrifice only for Him. Indeed, it is your enemy who shall be exterminated. (1-3)

Explanation

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(*Upon you have We bestowed Kawthar.*) (1)

‘ ’ (*kawthar*) is the intensive form of ‘ ’ (*kuthr*). ‘ ’ (*kuthr* means ‘wealth and affluence’. Therefore, ‘ ’ (*kawthar*) would mean ‘a lot of abundance’ or ‘somebody having a lot abundance and affluence’. It is a noun and is used as an adjective also.

According to linguistic principles, the word ‘ ’ (*kawthar*) can have the following three meanings:

1. As a word which, in the course of its usage, has been transformed into a noun specifying something named by the Almighty as ‘ ’ (*kawthar*).

2. As an adjective of a qualified noun which has been suppressed because, as an adjective, it specifies a particular noun so clearly that only its mention brings to mind the noun it qualifies, or there exists a definite indication of this noun from within the context. For example, it is said ‘ ’ (*mardun*) ‘*alā jurdiḥ* which is actually ‘ ’ (*rijālun*)

marduḥ ‘alā khayliḥ jurdiḥ: young men on purely bred horses). Similarly, consider the first verse of *Sūrah Dhāriyāt*: ‘
(*wa’l-dhāriyāt*) which is actually ‘
(*wa’l-riyāḥ al-dhāriyāt*) (By the winds who scatter dust).

3. As a simple adjective having the general meaning it connotes. In such a case, everything having immense good can be considered as its connotation. Although, because of certain clear indications, it could be appropriate to imply certain objects.

Consider next, the meanings of the word attributed to it by our worthy commentators of the past. *Ibn Jarīr* has mentioned three of them:

(i) *Kawthar* is a water channel in heaven. This is the opinion of ‘*Āishah* (rta), *Ibn Abbās* (rta), *Ibn Umar* (rta), *Anas* (rta), *Mujāhid* and *Abu’l-‘Āliyah*.

(ii) *Kawthar* means ‘immense good’. This is held by *Ibn Abbās* (rta), *Sa’id Ibn Jubayr* (rta), ‘*Ikramah*, *Qatādah* and *Mujāhid*.

(iii) *Kawthar* is a pond in heaven. This view is maintained by ‘*Aṭā*.

There is not much difference between the first and third meanings cited above. The pond may be of the water channel mentioned foremost. Only two possibilities now remain: either to regard it as a word which denotes a specific thing, for example ‘a pond of paradise’ or ‘a water channel in heaven’, or to regard it as connoting everything which has unbounded good in it.

My mentor, Imam *Farāhī*, has aptly related the two meanings with each other making them one. By taking into consideration the context of the *sūrah* in the *Qur’ān* as well as certain inherent testimonies, he opines that *Kawthar* means the *Baytullāh*, which due to various reasons is a treasure of immense good and is a symbol of the pond of Paradise in this world. This pond shall be given to the Prophet (sws) in the next.

Imam *Farāhī*’s arguments can be seen from the following extract from his exegesis:

It has been stated in the previous sections that our worthy commentators of the past do not differ on the fact that *Kawthar* means a pond of Paradise. In fact, they have even gone on to include in its meaning all possible things that can come within the sphere of ‘immense good’, keeping in

view the general meaning of the word and the past tense of the verse in which it occurs. This would render diversity in its meaning and make it stand for something that actually possesses the attribute implicitly in its name. Precisely for this reason, the later commentators consider research in its meaning perfectly allowable¹. If it were some sort of an innovation they would never have indulged in it nor would the early commentators have differed in it. Therefore, if I interpret the word in a sense which unifies ‘the *Kawthar* of the heaven’ and ‘the *Kawthar* of this world’, I would not differ from these commentators just as they do not actually differ from one another in its interpretation. The only difference would be that they have generalized its meaning by including the water channel or the fountain of Paradise as well as everything which can be termed as ‘immense good’ like ‘the *Qur’ān*’, ‘wisdom’, ‘Islam’, and ‘prophethood’ in its connotations, which actually have no similarity with the water channel or the pond of Paradise. I would only include those things in ‘the *Kawthar* of this world’ which are similar in appearance to a water channel or a pond, whose reality and spiritual aspects were revealed to the Prophet (sws) during the holy ascension.²

After this introduction, Imam *Farāhī* elaborates on the points which support his deduction. He says:

(1) It is an acknowledged fact that there is a natural desire and inclination in our souls to seek the Almighty. Without this, the human soul cannot receive comfort and assurance. It is this very aspect of human nature which is the cause of various religions ... Consider then what else can be a better symbol for this natural yearning and eagerness than thirst? In the Psalms of David (sws), this symbolic expression is repeatedly used. If this is correct,

1. This refers to the interpretation of *Imām Rāzī* and that of some others which Imam *Farāhī* has cited in his exegesis.

2. *Farāhī, Majmū‘ah Tafāsīr*, 1st ed., (Lahore: Faran Foundation, 1991), p. 418

then think about the devotees who gather round the *Baytullāh* during the days of *Ḥajj*, overwhelmed with the feelings of fondness and desire. Don't they seem like people who have an intense craving for thirst and have assembled around a pond to satisfy this longing? If this similarity is evident, then, it would mean that the *Baytullāh* actually stands for them as the pond of *Kawthar* where they will gather on the Day of Judgement.

(2) The Prophet (sww) has compared our mosques to water channels. According to the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of *Bukhārī*:

Consider if someone among you has a water channel at his door in which he has a bath five times everyday; will he remain dirty? (*Kitābu 'l-Mawāqīt*)

The basic constituent of this parable also is water. It not only quenches our thirst but also cleanses us spiritually as well as physically. It is well known that the *Baytullāh* is the fountainhead of all our prayers. On this basis, our mosques are indeed like the water canals of this pond, through which we cleanse ourselves spiritually.

(3) Just as the congregation of *Ḥajj* depicts the abundance of the Muslim *Ummah* in relation to people of other religions, likewise, their assembly at the pond of *Kawthar* also will stand for their multitude, as is evident from certain *Aḥādīth*. The best possible way in which this great number could have been depicted was to hold their congregation at a specific place. By this gathering, other nations of the world estimate that what is present at the *Baytullāh* is only a meagre yet vibrant drop of the boundless expanse of water spread all over the earth. So just as the gathering of the Muslim *Ummah* at the pond of *Kawthar* will depict their abundance in relation to the people of other prophets, likewise their assembly at the *Baytullah* during *Ḥajj* portrays their abundance. Consider how aptly the word *Kawthar* relates the two congregations.

(4) The Prophet (sws) is reported to have said that he would recognize his people at the pond of *Kawthar* through the traces of water by which they performed ablutions. It is an allusion to the fact that only those who pay visit to the *Baytullāh* with a pure and sincere heart would be present in the next world around this pond, which is actually the reality of this House.

(5) The Almighty made the conquest of *Makkah* the cause for the increase in magnitude of the Muslim *Ummah*; therefore, after the Prophet's *Hajj* people accepted faith in large numbers.

(6) Like the fountain of *Kawthar*, the Almighty has also called the *Baytullāh* a blessed place. The *Qur'ān* says :

Indeed, the first house ever built for men in which they could worship was that at *Bakkah*, a blessed place, a beacon for the nations. (3:96)³

I have just briefly referred to Imam *Farāhī's* views. For details, a study of his exegesis is necessary. He goes on to explain that the channel of *Kawthar* is the true essence and spiritual reality of the *Baytullāh*:

If anyone reflects on the features and characteristics of the channel of *Kawthar* which was shown to the Prophet (sws) during the holy ascension, he will become aware of the fact that the channel of *Kawthar* is the spiritual manifestation of the *Baytullāh* and its surrounding atmosphere. The common element in the various *Āḥādīth* which describe *Kawthar* is that it is a water channel on whose sides are built palaces of hollow pearls. Its floor is of topazes, corals and rubies. The utensils in it are like stars of the heavens, its water is whiter than milk, sweeter than honey and cooler than ice. Its mud is more fragrant than musk. Birds whose necks are like those of the animals of sacrifice descend on it.⁴

3. Ibid., pp. 419-20

4. Ibid., pp. 421-2

As we move further in his exegesis, *Imām Farāhī*, invites us to contemplate on these observations and explains the similarity between the two ‘Ponds of *Kawthar*’. He says:

Stop for a moment and think of the fact when from all over the world caravans of devotees and zealots gather around this blessed House to quench their fondness for the Almighty? In their spiritual consciousness, do not the pebbles of this holy valley seem more magnificent than rubies and emeralds, its mud more fragrant than musk and the camps of the pilgrims around it more beautiful than domes of pearls? Then just take a look at the pilgrims and at the lines of the camels which are to be sacrificed. Are these not the swarms of the long necked birds near the fountain?⁵

It is evident from these details that the *Baytullāh* is a figurative manifestation of the pond of *Kawthar*. The *Baytullāh* will be granted to the believers in heaven in the form of the pond of *Kawthar* – believers who performed its pilgrimage in the desire to reach this blessed pond. Since, at the time of revelation of the *sūrah* the situation was not clear, only a reference is made here. The real purpose was to give glad tidings to the Prophet (sws) that though his enemies are trying to dislodge him from the *Baytullāh*, the Almighty has decided to grant this House to him, which not only will be a source of immense good for him in this world but will also be a surety for the pond of *Kawthar* in the next.

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(*So pray only for your Almighty.*) (2)

The verse states that the grant of the Almighty mentioned in the previous verse is subject to a condition. Every right imposes an obligation and it only remains in force if this obligation is fulfilled. It has already been indicated before that the Almighty had consigned the *Baytullāh* to the *Quraysh* imposing a lot of responsibilities on them. Among them the prayer and *Infāq* (which is a specific form of sacrifice) occupy special importance. But the *Quraysh* had distorted and disfigured both of them. They

5. Ibid., p. 422

had corrupted sacrifice by associating other deities with Allah and offering sacrifice for them as well. So here, where the Prophet (sws) is declared as the new guardian of the *Baytullāh*, a reference is also made to the two responsibilities his predecessors had grossly failed to carry out and because of which they had actually been ousted from its guardianship.

The word ‘ ’ (*nahr*) used in the verse signifies camel sacrifice. However, its general connotation includes the sacrifice of other animals as well. Here this particular word is specifically used to point out that camel sacrifice was regarded very highly among the followers of Abraham’s creed, which the Jews, due to their innovations had pronounced as forbidden. Some people regard ‘ ’ (*nahr*) to imply the holding of hands at one’s chest during the prayer. However, the context, which is a major factor in deciding the meaning of a word having various connotations, does not at all support this view. The prayer and sacrifice are aptly mentioned here because the word ‘ ’ (*kawthar*) is figuratively used for the *Baytullāh*.

At most places in the *Qur’ān*, *Zakah* or *Infāq* is mentioned adjacent to *Ṣalāh* (the prayer), but in this verse sacrifice is grouped with *Ṣalāh*. The reason obviously is that just like that of *Ṣalāh*, the *Baytullāh* is also the centre of sacrifice. A special aspect of this sacrifice is that not only the poor and needy but the pilgrims as well are provided with food. In other words, besides fulfilling other spiritual objectives, this sacrifice is also a form of *Infāq*.

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(*Indeed, your enemy shall be exterminated.*) (3)

This verse is an answer to the jeering predictions of the *Quraysh* chiefs about the Prophet’s future. After giving him the glad tidings of being blessed with the ‘ ’ (*kawthar*) of the two worlds and after stating the responsibilities these privileges impose, the Almighty has reassured the Prophet (sws) about the bright future of his message in this world as well as his success in the Hereafter. The *Qur’ān* says that the Prophet’s enemies themselves shall be uprooted from the land – something they intended to do with the Prophet (sws) and his Companions (rta).

‘شَانِيَةٌ’ (*shāniyūn*) means ‘enemy’ while ‘أَبْتَارٌ’ (*abtar*) implies a person who is lost to posterity after death and leaves behind no one to even take his name.

The *Quraysh* were opposing and obstructing the Prophet’s mission with all their might in *Makkah*, but in its whereabouts, particularly, *Madīnah* this mission was gaining momentum and spreading rapidly. The *Quraysh* chiefs, quite naturally, felt that their masses would be influenced by this swift penetration and might seriously believe in the severe warnings sounded by the *Qur’ān* to the leaders of the *Quraysh*, particularly the *Baytullāh*’s custodians. They feared that this might shatter their public’s confidence in their leadership; their sympathies might tilt in the Prophet’s favour and not only strengthen his mission but also make them accept him as their new leader. In order to avert this situation, they began predicting a disappointing and bleak future for the Prophet (sws) so that their people would not be awed by the fact that the Islamic movement was gaining force day by day. They made up different stories in this regard. Seeing the inclinations of the *Anṣār* towards him, they propagated in the masses the view that owing to his new religion this person has been detached from his nation and the centre of his old religion (the *Baytullāh*), and that if he now takes refuge in *Madīnah* with the *Anṣār*, cutting off himself from the *Quraysh*, he would be like a severed branch of a tree which is bound to wither away. In the time before the *Hijrah*, it was generally held by the people of Arabia that if the Prophet (sws) would leave *Makkah* and his people, he would go to the *Anṣār* because only they were in a position to help and support him. On this very pretext, the *Quraysh* had even warned certain tribes of the *Anṣār*, who had come to *Makkah* to pledge their allegiance, that their oath would definitely entail war with the whole world. But these threats had had no effect on the *Anṣār* and their devotion and respect for Islam and the Prophet (sws) only augmented day by day. Seeing this state of affairs, the *Quraysh* were left with no hope of success in the propaganda they had started – but then what else could they do except sowing seeds of dissension. Both, before and after the migration, they tried to dupe their public that it would prove disastrous for the Prophet (sws) and his mission would fade away. However, it was the prediction of the *Qur’ān*

which ultimately came true and the enemies of the Prophet (sww) were totally routed. He reaped the blessings of the *Kawthar* of this world, and he will certainly be the foremost to reach the *Kawthar* of heaven to behold the abundance of his *Ummah*.

Lahore,
8th June, 1980 AD
22nd *Rajab*, 1400 AH

Sūrah Ikh̄lās (112)

Central Theme

This *sūrah* is among those *sūrahs* of the *Qur'ān* the very name of which reveals its central theme. It is called *Ikh̄lās* which is precisely what the *sūrah* is all about. *Ikh̄lās* means to have faith in God's being and His attributes or in the essential requisites of His attributes in a way that eliminates any trace of associating others with Him. As far as accepting God is concerned, the world has always acknowledged the existence of a superior being. In fact, this acceptance must be regarded as a self-evident requirement of human nature. An equally stark reality is that Satan has always remained an eternal enemy of *Tawh̄id* (monotheism). He has persisted in trying to deceive man in this matter by contaminating this concept such that believing Allah at times became tantamount to not believing Him. To illuminate the essentials of *Tawh̄id*, God sent forth a long series of Prophets. Unfortunately, time and again, man continued to squander this reality every time he acquired it. It was for the sake of *Tawh̄id* that the Prophet Abraham (sws) migrated from his people and established the abode of his children in a barren stretch of land – where they could truly worship God and also remain shielded from the onslaughts of an idolatrous environment. Quite ironically, his own progeny gradually converted the centre of *Tawh̄id* (the *Ka'bah*) built by himself into a temple of idols, as is mentioned in the *Qur'ān*. The prejudice of their self-carved idols became so intense that they vehemently argued with God and His last Prophet (sws) that until and unless the status of their idols is accepted, they would not acknowledge the rights of God. It was as a result of this

outrageous attitude that the Prophet (sws) proclaimed his acquittal from them as is mentioned in *Sūrah Kāfirūn*.

Period of Revelation

The proclamation of acquittal was solely meant for the *Quraysh* and the Idolaters of *Makkah*. Various tribes of the People of the Book also existed in Arab. Although they were the recipients of holy books, Satan had inveigled them too into horrible forms of polytheism. They had considerable influence in *Madīnah* and its whereabouts, and the Arabs had always openly acclaimed their superiority in religious affairs.

As long as the Prophet (sws) was in *Makkah*, their opposition remained clandestine, but it turned into open hostility after he migrated to *Madīnah*. The People of the Book vainly reckoned that since they were the recipients of Holy Books, the *Qur'ān* would definitely regard their beliefs and deeds as superior to those of the Idolaters. But the *Qur'ān* made it very clear to them that as far as their beliefs and deeds were concerned, they were a disgrace to mankind. The Christians, particularly, were impelled into open antagonism like the Jews by the criticism of the *Qur'ān* on their forms of polytheism. A united opposition front was thereby created as the Jews, the Christians and the Idolaters became allies against Islam. The situation called for a comprehensive explication of the meaning of *Ikh̄lās* that would completely eliminate any shred of polytheism, and as a result of which the People of the Book and the Idolaters could have no doubt about the actual truth. It was in these circumstances that this *sūrah* was revealed in *Madīnah*. Although a group of scholars believes that its revelation took place in *Makkah*, the comprehensive nature of the *sūrah*, as will be explained later, testifies that it was revealed in *Madīnah*, when the enmity of the People of the Book, especially, the Christians had become evident.

Placement in the Qur'ān

This *sūrah* is placed after *Sūrah Lahab*. This is an indication of the fact that after the destruction of the biggest foe of Islam (as depicted in *Sūrah Lahab*), time is ripe for the proclamation of the essence of *Tawhīd* once again in this land, for which Abraham (sws) had built the House of God. Hence, in this *sūrah*,

the basic Islamic teaching of *Tawhīd* is forcefully asserted. Prior to *Sūrah Lahab*, the glad tidings of victory of the Islamic forces are already given in *Sūrah Naṣr*.

The Prophet's struggle against his enemies, as we all very well know, had nothing to do with worldly gains; rather it had the purpose before it of establishing the Kingdom of God in the pagan Arabian society, and in banishing all forms of polytheism from there. Consequently, every aspect of *Tawhīd* is highlighted in this *sūrah*. The *Qur'ān* actually ends with it because the last pair of *sūrahs* which succeed it are in fact more like two sentinels guarding this treasure of *Tawhīd* from Satan's tampering.

Relation to the Overall Arrangement

The overall arrangement of the *Qur'ān* is such that the beginning and the end are very similar. The end of the *Qur'ān* converges to the topic with which it commences – *Tawhīd* and *Ikh̄lās*. *Sūrah Fātiḥah* and *Sūrah Ikh̄lās*, the beginning and the end of the *Qur'ān* distinctly bring out the reality that the concept of *Tawhīd* encompasses all our beliefs. It is mentioned in *Sūrah Fātiḥah* that God is the sole Cherisher and Sustainer of the worlds and Master of the Day of Judgement, and as such we all must always express our gratitude to Him. Here, in this *sūrah*, the attributes that wipe out any trace of polytheism are explained positively as well as negatively, which actually forms the basis of the study of *Tawhīd*. Moreover, it should also be kept in mind that the *sūrahs* which constitute this last group are fundamental to the study of Islam.

Text and Translation

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Say: *That* God is alone. He is with every one. He is neither anyone's father nor anyone's son; and there is none like Him. (1-4)

Explanation

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(Say: *That God is alone.*) (1)

The word ' ' (*qul*) is a command that means 'to proclaim', 'to declare', 'to openly announce something' so that every person

becomes fully aware of it and there remains no ambiguity about it, leaving no room for further arguments. The word is used in this very sense in the opening verse of *Sūrah Kāfirūn* as well.

The need for such a declaration only arises when after a long period of dialogue and debate, it becomes clear that the truth has been fully disclosed, and people are now indulging in debate only to prolong and complicate matters. In such cases, it is better to say whatever one has to in a stern and decisive manner so that the addressees become aware that everything about the subject has been said; no more time will now be wasted upon the issue and it is equally unlikely that any change in stance shall occur.

The word ‘ ’ (*huwa*) in the opinion of this writer is the pronoun of the fact (*ḍamīr al-shān*), which is used when the implied meaning or situation is so clearly understood between the speaker and to whom it is addressed that the mind instinctively jumps to it.

After the advent of Islam, the concepts of God’s being and His attributes were hot subjects of debate. Such was the dominance of these issues that the other Islamic beliefs of Prophethood and Life in the Hereafter were only partially discussed. The question of *Tawḥīd* was the most important. The *Quraysh* had made it their own as well as their forefathers’ point of prestige and were in no way willing to bear the defamation of their own deities or that of their forefathers’ who had worshiped them. The *Qur’ān*, at many places, has cited instances when they would fume with rage and would get ready to pounce upon the preachers of this doctrine whenever the concept of *Tawḥīd* was brought up in front of them. On the one hand was this vanity and ego of the *Quraysh*, and on the other was the resoluteness of the *Qur’ān* and the Prophet (sws) that there shall be no compromise whatsoever between monotheism and polytheism.

As long as this debate continued with the *Quraysh*, no confusion arose about God’s being or His attributes. They had adopted idolatry because it was their ancestral religion. They did not indulge in the ‘holy’ art of fabricating excessively needless distinctions in reasoning to support their beliefs simply because they were illiterate. In *Madīnah*, however, as soon as the people of the Book became involved in this debate, a new dimension was added to the affair. In spite of being the recipients of Holy

Books, they had become incriminated with outrageous forms of polytheism. The only difference was that they had invented a set system to support their beliefs. In this regard, the weird Christian mythology, in particular, was a fantastic production, unrivalled as far as the complications and confusions it had created. The *Qur'ān* challenged all of them and exposed their heresies upon them. Some among them accepted faith while others who did not were intellectually defeated by the *Qur'ān* to the extent that the Arabs were no longer overawed by their religious superiority.

The new situation called for the revelation of a *sūrah* that would root out all traces of polytheism of both the Idolaters and the People of the Book, and would also put a complete halt to Satan's incursions in the concept of *Tawhīd*. Needless to say that it had to be both concise and comprehensive to enable everyone to learn and memorize its contents. As a result, this *sūrah* comprising four very short verses was revealed. The profound meanings it encompasses prompted many scholars to regard it as being a third of the *Qur'ān*. A little contemplation shows that there is no exaggeration in this fact. The message of the *Qur'ān* can be divided into three distinct topics: *Tawhīd* (Monotheism), *Risālat* (Prophethood) and *Ma'ād* (The Hereafter) – which means that *Tawhīd* occupies one third of the *Qur'ānic* content that is scattered in various *sūrahs*. Its core is epitomized in this comprehensive *sūrah*. In other words, the gist of the *Qur'ānic* arguments by which it refutes polytheism is concisely stated here.

One thing that should be kept in mind is that this *sūrah* was not necessarily revealed because someone had inquired from the Prophet (sws) about the attributes of God, but as is indicated earlier, the very circumstances in which the question of *Tawhīd* had become a burning topic were enough to cause its revelation. ‘*huwallāh*’ means ‘the God about whom you are debating and arguing has these attributes; hear them from me ...’, after which these attributes are stated. Suffice it to say that to reform heretical beliefs, only a correct knowledge of these attributes is all that is required after which the path to the appreciation of other attributes of God is opened.

The word *Allah* is a noun used for the personal name of God, and the Idolaters of Arabia always regarded it so. The *Qur'ān* ascribes all virtuous and gracious attributes of God to this noun.

The verse says that God is ‘ ’ (*Aḥad*). Linguists clearly differentiate between ‘ ’ (*Aḥad*) and ‘ ’ (*Wāḥid*). ‘ ’ (*Aḥad*) means someone in whose being none can be associated, and ‘ ’ (*Wāḥid*) means someone in whose attributes none can be associated. Probably this is the reason why the word ‘ ’ (*Aḥad*) has never been used as an attribute other than that of God. This attribute also necessitates that He have no kin or relations, and at the same time it warrants that He be unique and peerless in every sense. It also follows from this that God is uncreated and has always existed, and that everything else has been created and brought into existence. Naturally, someone who is foremost out of His own accord should always exist because if at one time He never was, then it cannot be said of Him that He always existed. Summing up the discussion, two things must necessarily be accepted: firstly, God has always existed, and secondly, everything except Him is His creation. These are the two necessary outcomes of His uniqueness and to deny both of these would be against sense and reason.

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(*He is with everyone.*) (2)

By the word ‘ ’ (*Ṣamad*) is actually meant a large rock behind which refuge is sought from an enemy attack. It is because of this root meaning that it is also used for the leader of a nation, who is a resort and a refuge for his people. In many Holy Scriptures, particularly in the Psalms of David, God is called a rock, and is also addressed as the Rock of Help¹.

The attribute ‘ ’ (*Ṣamad*) is mentioned after ‘ ’ (*Aḥad*) to explain and qualify the meanings of ‘ ’ (*Aḥad*), just as the attribute ‘ ’ (*Ḥamīd*: worthy of all praise) is always mentioned immediately after the attribute, ‘ ’ (*Ghanī*: free of all needs) in the *Qur’ān*. The attribute ‘ ’ (*Ghanī*) might create a misconception that since God is free of all needs and is above His creation, no relationship can be established with Him. This may cause people to worship other deities as a means to obtain

1. ‘The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer.’
(Psalms:18)

His nearness. The attribute ‘*Ḥamīd*’ (*Ḥamīd*) is stated immediately afterwards for the reason that this misconception should not even originate. It clarifies that though He does not need any one and is above and beyond His creation, yet He should be the recipient of all praises and thanksgiving. As such everyone should turn to Him and directly seek Him, and never turn to others in despair.

Owing to exactly the same reasons, the attribute ‘*Ṣamad*’ (*Ṣamad*) here is mentioned immediately after the attribute ‘*Aḥad*’ (*Aḥad*). It serves to caution and prod someone who might become overwhelmed with the concept of God’s uniqueness and aloofness from all, and regard Him as a detached and an unconcerned Creator. This might subsequently lead him to worship other beings as a means to procure His nearness. This can never happen if the implications of ‘*Ṣamad*’ (*Ṣamad*) are properly understood. There is no doubt that God is free of all needs and above and beyond His creation, yet at the same time He provides and sustains them, hears and answers their calls of distress and fulfills their physical and spiritual needs. He is a rock behind which refuge can be sought – a haven and sanctuary for all.

It would be appropriate to mention here the cause which has so often led a people astray as regards its religious beliefs and opened for them the way to polytheism. This is invariably due to the fact that they did not maintain a balance between certain complementary pairs of attributes of God. An acute bias towards one of them often made them completely overlook the qualifications and stipulations warranted by its counterpart. The Jews and the Christians, in particular, can be cited as examples in this regard.

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(*He is neither anyone’s father nor anyone’s son.*) (3)

The attribute ‘*Aḥad*’ (*Aḥad*) also implies this meaning as pointed out before. Matters which may cause gross misconceptions are stressed more than once in the *Qur’ān* in various styles so that the true concept becomes so evident that no one may have an excuse to deny it. So, the whole issue is restated here in this verse in another way. We must bear in mind that the Arabs also had a mythology of their own which was very similar in detail to the Greek and Hindu mythologies. The

Idolaters regarded the angels to be the daughters of God. Although the Jews were the recipients of Torah, yet they regarded 'Uzayr (sws) as the son of God. The Christians had established the trinity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. Their prejudice for trinity took them so far that at one time their priests, at whose hands people accepted Christianity, made their converts curse the God whose attributes are spelled out in this *sūrah*. Indeed, the anger and the venom they had for this *sūrah* was because the concept of *Tawhīd* expressed in it had made a direct hit upon their beliefs. Considering it, God could be regarded neither as a father nor a son, nor could anyone be regarded as His mother.

Historically, the *Qur'ān* was the first to kindle the light of *Tawhīd* in this world in such a profound manner. This fact is now being acknowledged even by people who at one time were confined in the shackles of national and religious prejudices, and were in no way willing to come out and face reality. Christians, who once cursed the God Whose attributes are mentioned in this *sūrah*, have now people among them who openly acclaim that the *Qur'ān* was the foremost in enlightening the world with the true concept of *Tawhīd* in such a profound manner.

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(*And there is none like Him.*) (4)

‘ ’ (*Kufuwān*) means ‘equal’, ‘like’, ‘peer’, ‘match’, ‘similar’. This verse means that Allah has no parallel or equal. He is the Creator and all other things are His creation. Everyone has needs while He has none. All need Him while He needs none. Everyone is mortal while He is the only immortal.

Summary

Summing up, the message of the *sūrah* lies in the concept of *Tawhīd* it brings out by the mention of certain complementary pairs of attributes of God. The essence of this message is that God has always existed and shall always exist; He was when there was nothing and shall remain when everything ceases to be; He is complete and entire in His being and is above all needs; everyone needs Him while He needs none; He is a refuge for all and on Him everyone depends; He brings everything into

existence, and by His orders everything is destroyed; He is father to none nor has He a father; He is the Creator and the Cherisher of all and fashions and sustains everything; nothing is from His substance and being; He has no peer or equal and indeed all are His servants and slaves.

Lahore,
25th July, 1980 AD
11th *Ramaḏān*, 1400 AH

Sūrah Nās (114)

Central Theme

This *sūrah* is the dual counterpart of *Sūrah Falaq*, the *sūrah* which precedes it and there is no essential difference between the central themes of the two. Both are a means through which a person seeks the Almighty's protection from various evils. However, there are certain aspects which distinguish this *sūrah* from the previous one:

Firstly, in this *sūrah*, refuge is sought with Allah through His attributes which are directly related to man. As a result, the appeal of the *sūrah* is more effective. The previous *sūrah* also carries an effective appeal, yet it is more argumentative in style. In this *sūrah*, on the other hand, this style, though present, is overshadowed by repeated earnest calls which invoke Allah's mercy.

Secondly, in the previous *sūrah*, refuge is sought from various evils, while this *sūrah* seeks protection against Satan, the root of all evils and, as indicated in the previous *sūrah*, the eternal enemy of *Tawhīd*.

Thirdly, in the previous *sūrah*, Satan is referred to with regard to one of his characteristics – jealousy. In this *sūrah*, his method and technique, his clan and accomplices, the sphere of his incursions and onslaughts, all are brought to light so that people have a clear perception of their shrewd enemy and are in a position to defend themselves.

Text and Translation

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Say: I seek refuge with the Cherisher of mankind, the Emperor of mankind, the God of mankind from the mischief of the prompter [of evil] who withdraws [after his prompts], who implants evil suggestions in the hearts of men, [and is] from among the jinn and men. (1-6)

Explanation

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(Say: I seek refuge with the Cherisher of mankind, the Emperor of mankind, the God of mankind.) (1-3)

These opening verses seek refuge with Allah through three attributes, which, in fact, also determine the basic rights of Allah imposed on man. Moreover, they guide us that help should only be solicited from someone who possesses such attributes.

How the attributes stated above ascertain these basic rights can be understood if one appreciates that it is only befitting for someone who is the Cherisher of mankind to be their real Emperor, and it is only befitting for someone who is the real Emperor of mankind to have the right to be worshipped. It is certainly against all norms of sense and reason to worship and regard someone who is not the real cherisher of mankind as their real emperor and, therefore, such practice has been totally forbidden.

In *Sūrah Fātiḥah*, it is stated that since it is the Almighty Who is the Cherisher of His creation, all thanksgivings must return to Him, and He alone should be worshipped and sought help from. What the opening three verses of this *sūrah* imply is no different.

An acceptance of the above three attributes closes all doors which lead to polytheism, and an acknowledgement of one of them necessitates the acknowledgement of the others.

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(From the mischief of the prompter [of evil] who withdraws [after his prompts].) (4)

This verse states the real entity from which refuge is sought in the above verses. Though it is not stated in words, yet it is

quite evident from the attributes mentioned and the specification made later that it is Satan who is referred to.

The verse describes Satan's technique and his line of attack: he allures people through propaganda and deceptive promises and by initiating wicked suggestions in their minds. After entrapping them, he acquits himself of all the consequences and enjoys watching the ill-fated foolish who get caught by his sinister schemes.

There is no conjunction between ' ' (*al-waswās*: prompter of evil) and ' ' (*al-khannās*: one who withdraws) which means that these two characteristics exist simultaneously in the noun they qualify.

It is quite evident from this verse that Satan's only weapon is prompting evil suggestions. Apart from this, he has no other powers through which he may necessarily lead a person astray. He tries to frighten as well as to cajole people through threatening admonitions and sugar-coated promises, but he cannot harm people who are not over-awed by him. Therefore, when he had threatened the Almighty that he would lead mankind astray, the Almighty had clearly replied:

(:)

[Do whatever you can,] You will have no power over my people. (17:65)

He also assured His creation that He would certainly help those who would repose all their confidence in Him and counteract the assaults of Satan:

(:)

Your Lord suffices as [your] Guardian. (17:65)

The adjective ' ' (*khannās*) delineates another aspect of Satan's character. Commentators have generally regarded it to mean someone who prompts evil suggestions while remaining hidden from people. This meaning can only be accepted if Satan and his allies are regarded as jinn, but the last verse clearly points out that these evil creatures exist both in men and in the jinn-folk. Some other commentators have understood it to mean

‘someone who comes again and again’, which has no basis in the Arabic language.

In the opinion of this writer, it means ‘someone who withdraws and retreats’. This actually brings out a typical feature of Satan’s mode of attack. Initially, he comes out and entices his prey, and when a person succumbs to his wicked suggestions, he acquits himself of all the consequences. This very character of Satan is also depicted at various instances in the *Qur’ān*. In *Sūrah Furqān*, he is called ‘*khadhūl*’, that is ‘one who deceives his followers’:

(:)

And Satan is the deceiver of men. (25:29)

To quote *Sūrah Bañi Isrā’īl*:

(:)

All of Satan’s promises are mere deception. (17:64)

Sūrah Ḥashr portrays this aspect of Satan’s character even more clearly:

(:)

They are like Satan, when he says to man: disbelieve. When he disbelieves, he says to him: I here and now disown you, I fear Allah, the Lord of the Worlds. (59:16)

The Jews had demonstrated this satanic character at the time of the battle of *Badr*. They had induced the *Quraysh* to attack *Madīnah* by giving them the assurance that the Muslims would not be able to face them, and if need be, they themselves would come forward and assist them. However, as history bears witness, they never turned up in the battlefield. The *Qur’ān* has depicted this character as follows:

(:)

And when Satan [Jews] made their [- the *Quraysh's* -] deeds seem fair to them and said: 'Today no man shall overcome you, and I shall be with you'. But when the two forces faced each other, he took to his heels saying: 'I am done with you; I see what you do not'. (8:48)

Not only Satan and his followers exhibit this very character in this world, they will also do so in the next. The *Qur'an*, on a number of occasions, has drawn a picture of the dialogue that will take place in Hell between evil leaders and their followers. These adherents will ask the leaders, whom they had so diligently followed, to come forward and help them. The leaders will reply that it was their fault that they had followed them, for they had never forced them to do so; therefore, they should now face the punishment themselves.

The word ' ' (*khannās*) is meant to express the above mentioned feature of Satan's character and actually sounds a warning to everyone: People should not be overwhelmed by his sweet talk; rather they should always keep in mind his disloyalty and betrayals when a person falls prey to his 'word of honour'.

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(*Who implants evil suggestions in the hearts of men, [and is] from among the jinn and the men.*) (5-6)

The above stated verses indicate Satan's mission as well as that of his brethren so that people can have a clear perception of their enemy. His modus operandi is to prompt evil suggestions in a person's bosom. Here, the word ' ' (*ṣudūr*: chests) actually implies a person's heart which is contained in his chest. These evil suggestions are of course meant to divert a man from the right path. Satan himself has stated this to be his mission as specified by the *Qur'an* at various places. He has no other authority or hold on man and cannot forcibly lead him astray, as mentioned earlier.

The words ‘*’ (mina’l-jinnati wa al-nās: [and is]* from among the jinn and men) specify Satan’s brethren, indicating that he is not an independent creation of Allah, but every one among the jinn and men who induces evil suggestions in others’ hearts is, in fact, Satan. The *Qur’ān* has specified that the Satan who had inveigled Adam was from among the jinn. It is incorrect to regard this particular Satan as an independent or eternal creation. However, his mission will be carried on till the Day of Judgement through his disciples and followers who are from both men and the jinn folk.

With these words the exegesis of this *sūrah* ends, which ends ‘*Tadabbur-i-Qur’ān*’ as well. I, as a humble servant, am extremely grateful to the Almighty for being able to be of some service to the cause of truth. I pray to Him to make this work a means of my salvation in the Hereafter, to make every rightly interpreted verse a source of benefit for others, and to protect everyone from the evils of an erroneous inference.

O Allah! Show us the right path the way it is and make us follow it, and O Allah! Show us the wrong path the way it is and keep us away from it. (Amen)

Lahore,
12th August, 1980 AD
29th *Ramaḍān*, 1400 AH

Contextual Analysis of the Surahs of Group Six [Sūrahs *Qāf* (50)-*Tahrīm* (66)]

With *Sūrah Qāf* begins the sixth group of the *Qur'ān*. The central theme of this group is the Hereafter.

***Sūrah Qāf* (50)**

In this particular *sūrah*, various arguments are cited to prove that the Day of Judgement is certain to come. The *sūrah* can be distinctly divided into the following seven sections:

Verses (1-5)

The grandeur and magnificence of the *Qur'ān* bear witness that it is the word of Allah. Those who are regarding it as the work of a poet or a soothsayer are merely doing so as an excuse to deny the Day of Judgement. They are actually confounded by the fact that someone from amongst themselves is warning them that after they die and become dust they will be returned to life again. This according to them is very unlikely. Actually, pride and vanity have led them to reject the *Qur'ān* and owing to this reason they are calling it a work of poetry and soothsaying. Their denial is baseless and since they have denied the truth, they are in an acute state of mental confusion and obvious contradiction. They should be aware that even what the earth consumes of their bodies is in the knowledge of Allah and with Him is a register which records all what they say and do.

Verses (6-11)

A reference is made to the signs of the heavens and the earth that bear evidence to the belief of *Tawhīd* (monotheism), the Day of Judgement and the reward and punishment that will be given to men on that Day. These signs testify to the Power, Providence and Wisdom of the Almighty. These signs are meant to remind and caution people who fear the Almighty and turn to Him whenever they commit a sin.

Verses (12-14)

The *Quraysh* are warned that they should not deny the truth because of pride and prejudice. Many nations before them who were guilty of this crime were totally destroyed, and if they continue with this attitude, their fate would be no different.

Verses (15-18)

The Almighty's attributes of Knowledge and Creativity which prove the certainty of the Day of Judgement are alluded to and a reference is also made to the arrangement He has made for the security and protection of the records of all the deeds and utterances of mankind.

Verses (19-35)

A vivid description of the Day of Judgement is drawn: The details of the dreadful fate the disbelievers will encounter and the good fate the believers will meet are highlighted.

Verses (36-37)

The *Quraysh* are warned that they must not be overcome by the pride of the power they possess and must not vainly reckon that their glory and grandeur are eternal: Many other nations, who had much more power and splendour were destroyed at the very height of their dominance and authority; they could not even find any room in the vastness of the earth to hide from the ruthless law of retribution. Indeed, in the account of these nations is a lesson for people who are sensitive and who earnestly give ear.

Verses (38-45)

The Prophet (sws) is urged to persevere and to persist in the cause of truth, and seek perseverance from Allah with the help of prayers. He is told to defer the matter of the disbelievers to the Day of Judgement, which is certain to come when the Almighty Himself will take account of their deeds. Furthermore, he is assured that his only responsibility is to warn them of this Day; to make them accept faith is not his responsibility. He should only admonish those who fear Allah through this *Qur'ān*, and to leave the matter of those who make fun of it to the Almighty.

Sūrah Dhāriyāt (51)

This *sūrah* is the dual counterpart of the previous *sūrah*: *Qāf*. It can be distinctly divided into the following six sections:

Verses (1-14)

By referring to the diverse manifestations of the winds and the clouds, people who make fun of the Day of Reward and Punishment by mockingly questioning about its time of arrival are severely reprimanded for their behaviour. They are warned that the doom that will descend upon them if they deny the Prophet (sws) as well as the Day of Reckoning about which they are being warned; both are certain to come. Only those who have lost senses are daring to doubt their certainty. Those who are seeking to hasten them will be told that those were precisely what they had sought to hasten.

Verses (15-19)

In contrast to the disbelievers, a mention is made of the reward the righteous will receive who had spent their lives while remaining fearful of the Day, who slept but little at night and in the early hours of dawn sought their Lord's forgiveness and in whose wealth the deprived had a share.

Verses (20-23)

The signs in the heavens and the earth as well as in the human soul which testify to the Day of Judgement are alluded to. It is then claimed that creating mankind a second time is as easy for the Almighty as is for a person to utter a word.

Verses (24-37)

Evidence from history which further substantiates the imminence of the Day of Judgement is presented by referring to the tales of Abraham (sws) and Lot (sws). The same angels who had brought glad tidings to Abraham (sws) about being blessed with a son had unleashed a storming wind and showered stones on the people who had denied the Prophet Lot (sws), and had saved those who had professed faith in him. These events bear witness historically that the Creator of this Universe takes account of what nations do: the people of Lot (sws) were punished in retribution of their own misdeeds. There is a lesson in this episode for those who are fearful of the Almighty– for the remains of their cities have been preserved by Him.

Verses (38-46)

A brief mention is made of the tales of the Pharaoh and the people of ‘*Ād* and *Thamūd*, and those of Noah (sws) who were caught in the ruthless law of retribution of nations when they rejected the message of their respective prophets. They were totally destroyed by the Almighty who just ordered the winds and the clouds to unleash their terror on them.

Verses (47-60)

In this concluding section, the whole theme of the *sūrah* is summed up: It is not difficult for the Almighty who is the Creator of the heavens and the earth and who has created everything in pairs to create this world a second time. If the Day of Reckoning is certain to come, then people should turn to the Almighty and seek His nearness. The Prophet (sws) is assured that all the other prophets before him received no different a treatment at the hands of their people. He is advised to leave these rebellious people to themselves and to remind only those who are paying heed to the Message of Allah. He is further consoled by the Almighty that men and jinn folk have been created by Him only to worship Him. He has not imposed any responsibility on them to feed others nor does He Himself seek sustenance from them. Indeed, He Himself is the Provider of all, Lord of Might and Power. He will sustain and provide all those who, irrespective of the circumstances, set out to befittingly

worship Him. He will help them in their endeavours as well and no one will be able to harm them. As far as the wrongdoers are concerned, they will get in this world what has been ordained for them. In spite of all their outcries to the Almighty to hasten the Day of Judgement, they will be given the respite needed so that the truth is unveiled to them in its ultimate form after which they can have no excuse to deny. Finally, when this period is over, as deemed by the Almighty, they will encounter the Day about which they are being warned.

Sūrah Tūr (52)

The *sūrah* can be divided into the following three sections:

Verses (1-16)

This section forms the introductory part of the *sūrah*. The headstrong and obstinate people of *Quraysh* are severely warned through certain historical and universal facts as evidence that the punishment about which they have been informed is certain to come. They should not hasten it and if they will not change their attitude, it will definitely alight and no one will be able to avert it. The next few verses draw a vivid picture of the Day of Judgement, with a brief description of the dreadful fate of those who had denied it.

Verses (17-28)

A portrayal of the favours of the life of bliss the believers will be blessed with in contrast with that of the unbelievers is made. A special favour which is highlighted here is that the Almighty will unite those who brought up their children according to the teachings of Islam even if these children are not entitled to this high level as regards their own deeds. For this union, those who deserve a high rank and level will not be demoted; instead people deserving a lower rank will be promoted to higher ones. Basically, the fate of a person will be decided according to his deeds; therefore, neither a reduction will take place in a person's deeds nor a faithless person will be able to enter Paradise; indeed, the Almighty's blessings will be for the believers.

Verses (29-49)

In the concluding part of the *sūrah*, the Prophet (sws) is comforted that he should not pay any heed to the excuse the disbelievers are ‘inventing’ to deny his Prophethood. Ignoring their attitude, he should keep on discharging his duty of reminding people of the truth so that those who are mindful are able to adopt the right path and those who insist on remaining on the wrong path have no excuse but defiance to remain so.

In the twelfth verse, the attitude of the adversaries of indulging in pleasantries and toying with the truth was referred to. Here they are dealt with in detail and silenced on this behaviour.

Rebellious people are warned that very soon the time will come when all their schemes will be shattered, and before the torment of the Final Day, they will encounter another torment in this world also.

The Prophet (sws) is comforted that he should patiently await his Lord’s decision, and should be aware that he is under His direct protection.

He should augment this patience through prayers, especially the night and early morning ones.

Sūrah Najm (53)

Sūrah Najm is the dual counterpart of *Sūrah Tūr*, the previous *sūrah*. It can be divided into the following five sections:

Verses (1-18)

In this introductory part, it is elaborated that the *Qur’ān* is not the work of a soothsayer or a fortune-teller, as its disbelievers allege; the Almighty Himself has revealed it to the Prophet (sws) through his most trusted and dependable angel. All its verses are based on truth and what is stated in them is inevitable; there is not the slightest element of falsehood in them. No one should have the misconception that the observations and experiences the Prophet (sws) is presenting about revelation and Gabriel are mere illusions or hallucinations. These observations are absolutely true and it is in the well-being of its opponents to

profess faith in the Prophet (sws) instead of showing malice and hostility.

Verses (19-28)

The Idolaters of *Makkah* are warned that their idols are nothing but a creation of their fancy and have no reality. They are but names which they have invented; neither has the Almighty ever sanctioned their existence nor can sense and reason, instinct and intellect accept them. These are merely vain conjectures that they follow, even though there has come to them a manifest guidance from their Lord; they must bear in mind that conjectures and suppositions cannot take the place of truth, and false wishes and desires have no basis. They will not encounter what they desire and will only encounter the facts about which they are being warned. Hence, they must prepare themselves to face them. They must remember that all the matters of this world and the Hereafter are under the control of the Almighty and no one can interfere in them. There are many angels in the heavens but none whosoever can benefit from their intercession. The Almighty alone will give permission to intercede to whom He wants and for whom He chooses. Therefore, the myth of regarding the angels as the daughters of Allah and seeking refuge from the law of retribution and accountability in the Hereafter by baselessly supposing that they will intercede for them is mere fanciful thinking on their part and will certainly not be of any benefit to them.

Verses (29-32)

The Prophet (sws) is solaced that he should turn away from those who are showing indifference to the Message of Allah and that he should leave them to themselves. This is the farthest limit of their knowledge and they have no awareness of the Hereafter. He best knows those who have strayed from His path and those who are rightly guided and He will give each person his due. Whatever is in the heavens and the earth is under the sole jurisdiction of Allah and no one whosoever can save the evildoers from His punishment nor deprive the righteous of their reward. Only those will be rewarded who abstained from heinous sins and open indecencies save those occasional but minor sins to which they were induced, but they never became brave on them –

because indeed the Almighty is vast in mercy; He will forgive them. As far as those proud and rebellious people are concerned who on the basis of their race and creed and on the false pretext of intercession reckon that they will be granted a high place in the Hereafter, they must not be misled; the Almighty has knowledge of all their stages of creation and is also aware of their deeds.

Verses (33-55)

People who do not even have the spirit to spend in the way of the Almighty or make sacrifices and who vainly reckon that since they are the progeny of two great prophets – Abraham (sws) and Moses (sws) – they are by birth entitled to Paradise are severely condemned on this attitude. Their attention is directed to the teachings and sacrifices of these Prophets that their high rank and status are because of the unprecedented sacrifices they gave in the way of Allah and not because of their race or creed. A person's own deeds only will benefit him and they will be of no use to others.

In this regard, it is also emphatically explained that Allah alone gives comfort and pain, life and death, daughter and son, wealth and opulence; therefore, a person should always attach himself to the Almighty. Nations who remain indifferent to the Message of Allah and get deeply involved in worldly pleasures, in spite of their wealth and grandeur, meet the fate similar to the one met by the *'Ād* and the *Thamūd*. Their remains still exist and everyone should learn a lesson from them.

Verses (56-62)

This concluding section of the *sūrah* refers to what is stated in the beginning: the *Qur'ān* is not the work of fortune-tellers or soothsayers but like previous heavenly scriptures is another Reminder. Now the threatened hour is nigh and it is giving its opponents a timely warning. If they still do not take heed, no one will be able to save them from Allah. They should not express surprise and wonder at the reality about which this Reminder is warning them. They should not laugh at it; in fact, its consequences are so grave that they should take it very seriously. They must pay heed and prostrate themselves in front of the Almighty.

Sūrah Qamar (54)

The *sūrah* can be divided into the following three sections:

Verses (1-8)

The Prophet (sws) is comforted that he should not pay any heed to the stubborn and obstinate people who are demanding to see the doom they have been promised. The greatest of signs will not induce them to accept faith because they do not follow the norms of sense and reason; instead they are the followers of their whims and desires. The tales of various nations should be a big lesson for them, but alas! they do not have the ability to learn from history. The Prophet (sws) is further consoled that they will not pay heed to his Message; he should leave their matter to the summoner who, on the Day of Judgement will be summoning them not to the *Qur'ān* but to Hell. They will respond to his call, emerging from their graves like locusts scattered about.

Verses (9-42)

The *Quraysh* are directed to learn a lesson from the fate of the people of Noah (sws), *'Ād*, *Thamūd*, Lot (sws) and Pharaoh. These people, like the *Quraysh*, rejected their respective prophets, and if the *Quraysh* also follow their footsteps, they will meet a similar fate. They must bear in mind that the Almighty has revealed the *Qur'ān* to warn them of this danger beforehand by making it very appropriate for admonition. Instead of acknowledging this favour of the Almighty and benefiting from it, alas! it is their extreme misfortune that they are asking for punishment.

Verses (43-55)

The *Quraysh* are cautioned that when in the past the Almighty has never spared the unbelievers, they should not consider themselves an exception to this rule. Do they reckon that the Almighty has written a directive of acquittal for them in the Hereafter in the heavenly scriptures, and do they think that they will be able to defend themselves against Allah in the Hereafter? If they have such foolish ideas, they must remember that the Almighty will never treat the unbelievers and the righteous

equally. The unbelievers will encounter the raging fire of Hell and the righteous will dwell in the eternal bliss of Paradise.

Sūrah Raḥmān (55)

The *naẓm* (coherence) of this *sūrah* is very evident. It begins with the declaration that the *Qur'ān* is a manifestation of the Graciousness of the Almighty. The Almighty created man and specially blessed him with the power of speech and comprehension. These abilities require that man should be taught and educated with the grandest divine work – the *Qur'ān* – and not through torment and punishment. It is the extreme misfortune of the disbelievers who instead of seeking guidance from it are demanding to see the promised doom.

After this, various signs in the heavens and in the earth and in the universal norms of human intellect are pointed to and two of the Almighty's creations – men and jinn-folk – are urged and exhorted to reflect on them and rebuked upon denying so many signs.

These signs are mentioned in the following sequence:

First and foremost are mentioned those signs and manifestations which point to the fact that the Almighty greatly cherishes justice and does not approve anything contrary to justice and equity at all in the world He has created.

These are followed by those which indicate that the tremendous and extremely vast system of sustenance which the Almighty has established on the earth strongly indicates that man will not be left unaccountable; in fact, one day, he will definitely be held accountable for the profound blessings he has been given. Those who deserve to be rewarded will be rewarded by Allah and those who deserve to be punished will be punished by Him.

A reference is then made to the fact that it is the Almighty who has created men and jinn-folk from clay and fire and He can easily create them a second time. There is no difficulty for Him in this regard. This whole Universe is under His control; He is the Lord of the East and the West. Whatever rises, rises with His permission and whatever sets, sets with His permission.

After this, it is asserted that the conflicting elements in the

Universe are in harmony with one another to fulfil a greater purpose which is over and above their creation. This bears witness to the fact that a sovereign will is dominant over these elements which creates harmony between them and uses them for the collective welfare of the universe. If this were not so, the universe would have been destroyed by a clash between its conflicting elements. That it is surviving is an ample testimony to the fact that a single supreme and omnipotent power controls it.

A mention is then made of the fact that Allah alone is immortal and all the rest are mortal.

Next it is expressed that all except the Almighty are needy and He is the only one who fulfils their needs. The foolish who ask from others actually receive from Him alone.

An affirmation is then made of the fact that the Day wherein accountability of deeds takes place is certain to come and on that Day no one – men as well as the jinn-folk – will be able to run away from the Almighty's grasp. On that Day, no evidence will be needed to convict a criminal as his forehead will bear witness to his sins. He will then be grabbed by his forehead and feet and flung into Hell.

At the end, features and characteristics of the Paradise which the ' (muqarrabīn: the near ones) will receive are delineated, followed by the features and characteristics of the Paradise which the ' (aṣḥābu'l-yamīn: Companions of the Right Hand) will be blessed with.

Sūrah Wāqi'ah (56)

The *sūrah* can be divided into the following six sections:

Verses (1-10)

The *sūrah* begins with the assertion that the Day of Judgement is certain to come. The Day will evaluate a person according to his faith and deeds; it will upgrade many a people and downgrade many of them. As a result of this assessment, people will be divided into three categories: the ' (aṣḥābu'l-yamīn), the ' (aṣḥābu'l-shimāl) and the ' (sābiqūnu'l-awwalūn).

Verses (11-26)

Those nearest to the Almighty will be the ‘
(*sābiqūnu’l-awwalūn*). The details of the gifts and favours of their Lord which they will receive in Paradise are recounted together with the qualities of the ‘
(*sābiqūnu’l-awwalūn*) which actually entitled them to these favours.

Verses (27-40)

The second place will be occupied by the the ‘
(*aṣḥābu’l-yamīn*). A delineation is made of the bounties and rewards which they will be blessed with in Paradise and of their personal high character which made them worthy of this life of bliss.

Verses (41-48)

The horrible fate of the ‘
(*aṣḥābu’l-shimāl*) is depicted and a reference is made to a few of their grave sins which led them to this terrible punishment.

Verses (49-74)

The *Quraysh* are directly addressed and warned that they would end up with the same fate as that of the ‘
(*aṣḥābu’l-shimāl*) if they persist in their attitude of denying the Prophet (sws). In this regard, a reference is made to certain self-evident arguments which bear evidence to the Day of Reward and Punishment. Such is the nature of these arguments that no excuse but stubbornness on their part can deny them.

Verses (75-96)

An indication is made to the exalted status of the *Qur’ān* and the fact that it is above and beyond the reach of Satan and his agents. The *Quraysh* are again cautioned not to turn a deaf ear towards this sublime message and thus invite their doom. The fate which this Book is informing them about is a reality. Fortunate are the ones who today strive to attain a place among the ‘
(*aṣḥābu’l-yamīn*), and the ‘
(*sābiqūnu’l-awwalūn*); those who will not do so, will end up among the ‘
(*aṣḥābu’l-shimāl*) and will face a grievous penalty.

Sūrah Ḥaḍīd (57)

The *sūrah* can be divided into the following nine sections:

Verses (1-6)

In the introductory part of the *sūrah*, a reference is made to the attributes of Wisdom, Power, Knowledge, Authority, Origination and Planning of the Almighty in order to highlight that someone possessing these attributes is the one towards whom everyone will turn on the Day of Judgement; therefore, it is befitting that only He should be thanked and glorified. Everything within this Universe is glorifying Him and this act of theirs invites men to worship Him only and not associate others with Him.

Verses (7-10)

A warning is sounded to the Muslims in general and those among them having a weak faith in particular that they should fulfill the requisites of the covenant of 'to listen and obey' they had pledged at the hands of the Prophet (sws) with all the spirit and determination they could muster. It is the requirement of their faith to respond positively to the *Jihād* and *Infāq* the Prophet (sws) is today calling them to. It is this attitude which will bring them towards light from darkness. Those who spend and fight in the way of Allah will have a higher status than those who will do so after the conquest of *Makkah*, though they too will be rewarded by the Almighty.

Verses (11-15)

Those who spend in the way of Allah with purity of purpose will find that their spending has manifested itself into a radiant light which guides them to Paradise. Those who do not spend in the way of Allah because of hypocrisy will be deprived of this light. These people will ask the believers to let them also benefit from its radiance. The believers will reply that they have lost the opportunity to do so by their behaviour in the previous world and they will not receive it now whatsoever. After this exchange of dialogue, a wall will be erected between the two, on one side of which will be the blessings of Allah and on the other side will be

His torment.

Verses (16-17)

The Hypocrites are warned that even after seeing such manifest signs of the supremacy of Islam, if they show hesitation and refrain from spending in the way of Allah, they will become hardhearted like the Jews before them and meet a similar fate. They are reminded that the Day of Reckoning is certain to come; neither should they become indifferent to its reward nor unafraid of its punishment.

Verses (18-19)

Those who spend in the way of Allah and fight for His cause should rest assured that the Almighty will honour their sacrifices; in fact, they will be rewarded many times for each sacrifice they make. It is *Infāq* and *Jihād* which entitle them to become ‘*shuhadā*’ and ‘*ṣiddiqīn*’ and they will also be rewarded the radiant light of which the Hypocrites will remain deprived.

Verses (20-21)

Sorrow is expressed over the timid and unenterprising attitude of the people who have given their hearts to the transitory pleasures of this world and have forgotten the Mercy of their Lord as well as the Paradise which is as vast as the vastness of the heavens and the earth.

Verses (22-24)

A reminder is sounded that a person’s opulence or poverty does not depend on his own schemes and plans but on the fate which has been divinely ordained for him. The correct attitude, therefore, is that a person whether he is in ease or in difficulty, should surrender to the will of the Almighty. If he is blessed with wealth, he should not hesitate to spend it in the way of Allah. He should be aware that just as the Almighty can bless a person with something, He can also deprive him of it whenever He wants.

Verses (25-27)

A refutation is made of the claim of the people who on the basis of the concept of ‘*rahbāniyyah*’ (ascetism) regard

Jihād and *Infāq* as mundane activities and condemn the spirit of *Jihād* of the Muslims. By referring to history, it is shown that *Jihād* has remained the *Sunnah* of the Prophets and ‘*rahbāniyyah*’ (*rahbāniyyah*) is a religious innovation of the Christians; it is the result of their transgressing the bounds of their religion. The Prophet Jesus (sws) never taught it.

Verses (28-29)

Muslims are urged to selflessly answer the call of *Jihād* made by the Prophet (sws) and spend magnanimously for this cause. They are told not to pay heed to the evil suggestions of the wicked among the People of the Book who regard *Jihād* as a mundane undertaking. The Prophets have always undertaken *Jihād* to establish justice and equity and the Muslims must follow the path of the Prophets. The *Rahbāniyyah* invented by the Christians is something which the Prophet Jesus (sws) never preached. They are just showing their malice towards the Muslims -- but against their wishes, the Almighty will reward the Muslims according to the fate He has destined for them.

Sūrah Mujādalah (58)

The *sūrah* can be divided into the following six sections:

Verses (1-4)

A reference is made to an incident in which a pious woman had to face severe difficulty regarding a religious issue; instead of becoming frustrated and showing distrust in the Almighty, she presented her case before Him and His Prophet (sws) with all the confidence and purity of intention she could muster. The Almighty resolved her difficulty and set her forth as an example in the *Qur’ān*: the example of a person who adopted the correct attitude when troubles came her way. This was in sharp contrast with the attitude of the hypocrites who would show hostility and raise propaganda against the Almighty and His Prophet (sws) when a particular directive of the *Sharī’ah* proved adverse to their desires and wishes.

Verses (5-8)

Disgust is expressed at the attitude of the people who instead of showing trust in the Almighty and His Prophet (sws) were busy whispering evil suggestions to others and maligning the cause of Islam. They were showing disrespect to the Prophet (sws) and were presenting the lenience the Almighty was showing them by not punishing them as proof of their correct attitude. They are warned that they would not only be humiliated in this world as history testifies, but would also face a grievous torment in the Hereafter.

Verses (9-10)

Muslims are forbidden from whispering evil suggestions and directed that their secret conversations should not be against the Prophet (sws); their intimate discourses should be clean and pious. They should ignore the assault of 'evil-whispering' which the Hypocrites have launched against them, for such whispering cannot harm anyone unless the Almighty wants. It is befitting for them to trust their Lord and to rest assured instead of worrying and being aggrieved by such insinuations. The Almighty will protect them from the evil of the evil-doers.

Verses (11-12)

The believers are directed to follow certain manners when they are in the company of the Prophet (sws), and forbidden to carry out clandestine conversation when they are gathered around him. Certain emergency directives are given to impede the campaign of evil-whispering launched by the Hypocrites.

Verse (13)

After the achievement of the desired results, the emergency directives are repealed and the believers are directed to establish those forms of worship which will put an end to this malady of evil-whispering; these forms are spelled out for them.

Verses (14-22)

An indication is made of the fact that the Hypocrites are actually the agents of the Jews who have incurred the wrath of the Almighty; their real allegiance rests with them. Their glibness and their trait of swearing during conversation effectively conceals their reality and they are able to outwardly

show themselves as Muslims. Their allegiance is actually with the enemies of Islam; they are overwhelmed by the love of wealth. Satan has made them unmindful of Allah and they have joined his party to impair and obstruct the Prophet's mission; ultimately their efforts will fizzle out, for it is the absolute judgement of the Almighty that only He and His Prophets shall always prevail. True believers are those who sever their ties of relationship from the enemies of Allah and the Prophet (sws) even if they are their fathers, sons, brothers or tribesmen. The Almighty will only be happy with such people; they are the people of His party and only they shall attain salvation.

Sūrah Ḥashr (59)

The *sūrah* can be divided into the following four sections:

Verses (1-4)

A reference is made to the exile of the Jewish tribe of *Banū Naḍīr*. They had been ordered to vacate their territory because they had broken their covenant and had plotted to kill the Prophet (sws). At first, they agreed to this punishment, but later on when some of their allies offered them assistance, they changed their minds. Ultimately, the Prophet (sws) had to launch an attack on them in the 4th year of *Hijrah*, after which they were forced to go to the land of *Khaybar*. They were given the permission to take as much as they could upon their camels. Consequently, they took away what they could and whatever remained came into the possession of the Muslims. By citing their example, the Hypocrites are admonished to seek a lesson from this event. It is pointed out to them that they had wrongly thought that the *Banū Naḍīr* could not be banished from their land, whereas, as time proved, they had to leave their land and that too in a manner in which they had to ruin and ravage the houses they had built by their own hands; the foes of the Prophet (sws) always meet this fate; if they seek the support of these Jews, they too will meet a similar fate.

Verses (5-10)

In a parenthetical sentence, certain objections raised by the

Jews and the Hypocrites are answered. These objections pertained to the ruining of the orchards of *Banū Naḍīr* by the Muslims and to the distribution of ‘ ‘ (Fay). The attitude of contentment shown on this distribution by the *Anṣār* and the *Muhājirūn*, in sharp contrast with that of the Hypocrites, is praised.

Verses (11-17)

An indication is made to another mischievous deed of the Hypocrites. After the exile of the *Banū Naḍīr*, they had started inducing the tribe of *Banū Qurayzah* to break their covenant as well; they told them that they would also fight by their side if they were attacked and if they were exiled, they would also accompany them. It is pointed out to them that they are saying something which they can never do; neither will they offer their support nor will they accompany them. They are only doing what Satan does: after a person commits a sin on his incitement, he withdraws by proclaiming acquittal from him. The *Banū Qurayzah* are warned that if they also break the covenant due to the backing of the Hypocrites, their fate will be no different from that of the *Banū Naḍīr*.

Verses (18-24)

In this concluding section of the *sūrah*, the believers in general and the Hypocrites in particular are warned to always keep in mind the Day of Judgement. They should not become like those who had forgotten the Almighty and as a result forgot their purpose of existence and the fate they would come across; there is a great difference between those who will dwell in Paradise and those who will abide in Hell; this difference should not be ignored by belittling it; only the dwellers of Paradise will attain real success. It should be kept in consideration that they have been revealed the truth in its ultimate form after which no excuse but stubbornness on their part can deny it. Had the *Qur’ān* been revealed on a mountain, it would have been shattered to pieces due to the dread and awe of Allah. If their hearts are not being influenced by its message, then it is not the fault of the *Qur’ān*; rather it is due to their own hardheartedness which is alienating them from this Divine Call.

In the end, a reference is made to certain attributes of the

Almighty to inculcate the qualities of submission and trust in the believers who have a strong faith and to cultivate the qualities of determination and confidence in those among them who have a weak faith, while in the Hypocrites they are meant to create a fear of the Almighty. The *sūrah* finally ends on the note with which it began.

Sūrah Mumtahinah (60)

The *sūrah* can be divided into the following six sections:

Verses (1-3)

The *sūrah* begins with a warning sounded to the weak Muslims who had secret ties of friendship with the Idolaters of *Makkah* even after they had expelled the Prophet (sws) and the Muslims from their land – their only fault being that they had accepted faith. It is pointed out that these people are not worthy of such ties as they will try all they can to make the Muslims reject faith; furthermore, if family ties at the expense of sincerity with Allah and the Prophet (sws) are established, then such relationships will never be of any use to them in the Hereafter: they will stand severed in the next world.

Verses (4-7)

A few glimpses of the episode of the Prophet Abraham (sws) are depicted and the addressees are directed to learn a lesson from it. He had proclaimed total acquittal from his nation unless they professed faith in the One and Only Allah. In this regard, they are told to hold steadfast to Abraham's invocation (*du'ā*) which he had often said to persevere in the difficulties of his own *Hijrah*. Moreover, glad tidings are given to them that it is quite possible that these people from whom they are directed to break their ties may accept Islam in the near future.

Verses (8-9)

An explanation of the fact that what has been asked is dissociation with those who had waged war against the Muslims and compelled them and the Prophet (sws) to leave their homes; those who have not done so should be dealt with befittingly.

Verses (10-11)

Certain directives relating to the women who had migrated from *Makkah* are given: they should only be accepted after they have been examined as regards their faith. If it is proven that they have migrated only for the cause of Islam, only then should they be included in the ranks of the Muslims. It is not lawful for the Muslims to keep idolatrous women in marriage. They should liberate them and mutually exchange the dowers.

Verse (12)

The Prophet (sws) is directed to take a covenant from women who come to him for the cause of Islam and intend to lead their lives according to its directives.

Verse (13)

At the very end of the *sūrah*, Muslims are warned not to establish friendship with the Jews and the disbelievers. Both will meet the same fate: they have been shaken from their very roots.

Sūrah Şaff (61)

The *sūrah* can be divided into the following four sections:

Verses (1-4)

In the introductory part of the *sūrah*, a warning is sounded to those who after pledging a covenant of *‘sam‘u ĩā‘at:* (to listen and obey) at the hands of the Prophet (sws) are abstaining from fighting in the way of Allah. They are informed that this attitude of breaking the covenant after pledging it is something which has always invoked the wrath of the Almighty. He is pleased by only those who, in accordance with the requisites of the covenant pledged, gather all their energy whenever the need arises to fight and fight like a solid mass of rock.

Verses (5-9)

Those who desist from fighting in the cause of Allah after they have accepted faith and pledged their obedience are similar to the Jews and they will meet a similar fate as well. They too

had adopted a similar attitude with their own Prophet (sws) as well: they would fervently pledge obedience but whenever they were tested by an occasion, they would prove worthless. The Prophet Moses (sws) often sorrowfully complained about this behaviour but they never mended their ways. The Almighty, according to His laws, therefore, took away from them the ability to understand and remain on the right path because of their own wrong attitudes. They had adopted this improper behaviour with the Prophet Jesus (sws) as well. He had shown them some striking miracles and in very clear words gave glad tidings of the last of the Prophets. The Jews, however, as a result of their unbecoming attitude, dismissed these miracles as acts of magic and rejected his Prophethood. They persisted with this attitude and today are showing hostility to Islam on the basis of their falsehood; all their effort, of course, is in vain. Islam is the glowing light of the Almighty which they can never blow to extinction. Contrary to their wishes and those of the Idolaters', it will attain its supremacy over other religions of Arabia.

Verses (10-13)

The weaker Muslims are urged to adopt the right path and refrain from their attitude of distrust and hypocrisy. They should truly profess faith in Allah and the Prophet (sws) and fight for the cause of Islam by spending as much as they can for this cause and by presenting their lives for it. This is the true path to success if they would only try to understand. If they adopt this attitude, they will attain salvation in the Hereafter and in this world also, the Almighty through His well-earned help will bless them with the conquest of *Makkah* which they desire so much.

Verse (14)

The addressees of the *sūrah* are exhorted to follow the footsteps of the disciples of Jesus (sws). In the beginning of the *sūrah*, Muslims were advised not to follow the Jews. Here, at the end, they are urged to follow a group among them who had remained on the right path whose correct attitude of anticipating the truth was ultimately responsible for the supremacy of the believers.

Sūrah Jumu‘ah (62)

The *sūrah* can be divided into the following three sections:

Verses (1-4)

The Ismaelites are reminded of the fact that the sending of a Prophet towards them is the result of the invocation (*du‘ā*) of their great ancestor, the Prophet Abraham (sws). This is a great favour the Almighty has done to them to liberate them from the darkness of ignorance. Hence, they should try to value and honour this favour and not become a prey to the malicious conspiracies of the Jews.

Verses (5-8)

A refutation of the claim of the Jews that they are the chosen *Ummah* and no one except them can be blessed with the favour of Prophethood. A reference is made to their unworthy attitudes which had deprived them of the Almighty’s Guidance and also stripped them of the position of leadership they formerly held.

Verses (9-11)

Muslims are rebuked on a certain wrong attitude they had adopted when once the Prophet (sws) was delivering the Friday address. Apparently, this may appear as a minor fault to them, but it points to a profound weakness in them: a group among them had not understood the basic reality that once a person professes Islam, he barter his life and wealth for the Almighty’s Forgiveness and Mercy. It is against the requisites of his faith that business and trade activities should make him indifferent to Allah and His Prophet (sws). This is like following the footsteps of the Jews – something which had been forbidden in the previous *sūrah*. The Jews had erred similarly in the matter of *sabt* and the Almighty had severely condemned them.

Sūrah Munāfiqūn (63)

This *sūrah* is a supplement to *Sūrah Jumu‘ah*, the previous *sūrah*. It can be divided into two sections. The first one consists

of eight verses, while the last three verses constitute the second section.

In the first section, the character of the Hypocrites is evaluated and shown that their real ailment is their lust for worldly riches.

In the second section, Muslims are warned that the love of wealth and children should not make them indifferent to the remembrance of the Almighty. If today they do not truly benefit from their wealth by not spending in the way of Allah, they will feel sorry, once their life ends and at that moment their regret will be of no use to them.

In other words, in the first section the illness of hypocrisy is elaborated upon, while in the second section, Muslims are asked to guard themselves against it.

Sūrah Taghābun (64)

The *sūrah* can be divided into the following six sections:

Verses I (1-4)

The *sūrah* begins with the assertion that this world has not been created without a purpose. The effort undertaken by the Almighty in the creation of man to sustain and nourish him bears witness to the fact that the Day of Reckoning is certain to come. Allah, the Lord and Creator of this world is well aware of every person's deeds. He will treat each person accordingly.

Verses (5-7)

By citing historical evidence, it is shown that nations which denied their Prophets and vainly rejected their sound arguments on the pretext that accepting a human being as a Prophet (sws) is an insult to them were all destroyed by Allah. They met a dreadful fate in this world and in the Hereafter too they will encounter a grave punishment.

Verses (8-10)

The disbelievers are invited to profess faith in Allah, His Prophet (sws) and the *Qur'ān*. They are urged to prepare for the Day which will decide the victor and the vanquished. On that

Day, the righteous will receive the eternal reward of Paradise, while the disbelievers will have to reckon with the eternal torment of Hell.

Verses (11-13)

It is asserted that troubles and hardships which a person has to face in his life come from Allah. It is not befitting for the believers to get apprehensive about them and turn away from the obedience of Allah and His Prophet (sws). It is the requirement of their faith that they should have trust in the Almighty: He will certainly help them. If they ignore Allah and the Prophet (sws) by being overawed by their hardships, they will bear its dire consequences. The responsibility of the Prophet (sws) was only to communicate the truth; it is now their responsibility to abide by it.

Verses (14-15)

Muslims are warned that at times one's family becomes a great test for his faith. Their love sometimes negatively affects his determination to fulfill his religious obligations. A person should always remain careful in this matter. However, he should adopt the attitude of 'to forgo and forget' in their regard.

Verses (16-18)

People are invited to obey Allah and His Prophet (sws) as much as they can and urged to generously spend in the way of Allah. Glad tidings of eternal success are given to those who protect themselves from the malady of miserliness. Allah will greatly honour those who will lend Him their wealth. It will be returned to them multiplied many times; He will also forgive them. He has knowledge of both the seen and the unseen: He is fully aware of all virtuous deeds however secretly they might have been done.

Sūrah Ṭalāq (65)

The *sūrah* can be divided into the following two sections:

Verses (1-7)

An explanation of the fact that in cases of divorce it is not lawful to expel one's wife from the house by uttering the divorce sentence; it is necessary that the proper way pointed out by the *Qur'ān* be adopted. People who, in spite of their financial difficulties, set out to observe the limits set by Allah with a view to please Him will receive His special help and assistance. Those who do not observe the limits set by Him because of their lust for wealth only wrong their own souls.

Verses (8-12)

Muslims are warned that it is a historically proven reality that all those who had disobeyed Allah and His Prophets have always been severely punished by Him. He has done a great favour to the Muslims by sending towards them a Prophet who has led them to the light of guidance from the darkness of ignorance. If they give due regard to this favour of the Almighty, He will bless them with the eternal bliss of Paradise – otherwise they should remember that to Him belongs the Kingdom of the heavens and the earth and He can certainly do what He intends.

Sūrah Tahrīm (66)

The *sūrah* can be divided into the following three sections:

Verses (1-5)

The Prophet (sws) is checked in a particular matter in which the motivating force was fairly admirable, yet since he was to become an example for the whole *Ummah*, any virtuous deed which crosses the limits set by Allah is not permissible. The Prophet (sws) might be doing something to console and please his wives and he might be showing sympathy to their perfectly human weaknesses, yet owing to his position as a Prophet (sws) he must remain within the bounds set by Allah even in the smallest of affairs.

Similarly, the pious wives are checked in a matter in which something said by the Prophet (sws) to a particular wife was disclosed by her to another wife, though in an atmosphere of mutual trust. However, since they too are to become an example for all women of the *Ummah*, even a small instance which

crosses the limits set by Allah cannot be tolerated from them. Higher the position and status of a person, higher the extent of his accountability.

Verses (6-8)

After checking the Prophet (sws) and his wives, the general Muslims are urged to check and restrain their near ones. Everyone should remember that the angels who guard Hell are strict and stern. They will show no lenience to anyone. On the Day of Judgement, no excuse of a person will be acceptable, for he will be facing only what he deserves and no one will be punished for more than what he has done. Only they will triumph on that Day whose pure repentance makes them eligible for the Almighty's blessings. It will be a Day of success for the Prophet (sws) and his Companions (rta). The Almighty will perfect their light which will lead them to Paradise. Everyone else will be doomed forever.

Verses (9-12)

The Prophet (sws) is emphatically directed to tell the disbelievers and the Hypocrites sternly to change their attitude lest they should end up in the raging fire of Hell which, of course, is the worst abode. At the end, examples of the wives of the Prophet Noah (sws) and the Prophet Lot (sws) are cited to the disbelievers and those of the wife of the Pharaoh and Maryam (rta) to the Muslims; the object being to prove that only a person's deeds will be of any benefit to him in the Hereafter. If a woman has not done righteous deeds, she cannot benefit in the Hereafter even if she is the wife of a Prophet. Similarly, if a woman has lived a pious life, she will be rewarded in the Hereafter even though she is the wife of a person as rebellious as the Pharaoh.

