

(And when it is said to them: "Do not make mischief on the earth," they say: "We are only peacemakers.") means, "We seek to make amends between the believers and the People of the Book. " Allah said,

(أَلَا إِنَّهُمْ هُمُ الْمُفْسِدُونَ وَلَكِن لَّا يَشْعُرُونَ)

(Verily, they are the ones who make mischief, but they perceive not.). This Ayah means that the hypocrites' behavior, and their claim that it is for peace, is itself mischief, although in their ignorance, they do not see it to be mischief.

(وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ ءَامِنُوا كَمَا ءَامَنَ النَّاسُ قَالُوا أَنُؤْمِنُ كَمَا آمَنَ السُّفَهَاءُ أَلَا إِنَّهُمْ هُمُ السُّفَهَاءُ وَلَكِن لَّا يَعْلَمُونَ)

(13. And when it is said to them: Believe as the people believe," They say: "Shall we believe as the fools have believed" Verily, they are the fools, but they do not know.)

Allah said that if the hypocrites are told,

(ءَامِنُوا كَمَا ءَامَنَ النَّاسُ)

("Believe as the people believe,"), meaning, `Believe just as the believers believe in Allah, His angels, His Books, His Messengers, Resurrection after death, Paradise and Hellfire, etc. And obey Allah and His Messenger by heeding the commandments and avoiding the prohibitions.' Yet the hypocrites answer by saying,

(قَالُوا أَنُؤْمِنُ كَمَا آمَنَ السُّفَهَاءُ)

("Shall we believe as the fools have believed") they meant (may Allah curse the hypocrites) the Companions of the Messenger of Allah . This is the same Tafsir given by Abu Al-`Aliyah and As-Suddi in his Tafsir, with a chain of narration to Ibn `Abbas, Ibn Mas`ud and other Companions. This is also the Tafsir of Ar-Rabi` bin Anas and `Abdur-Rahman bin Zayd bin Aslam. The hypocrites said, "Us and them having the same status, following the same path, while they are fools!" `The fool' is the ignorant, simple-minded person who has little knowledge in areas of benefit and harm. This is why, according to the majority of the scholars, Allah used the term foolish to include children, when He said,

(وَلَا تُؤْتُوا السُّفَهَاءَ أَمْوَالَكُمُ الَّتِي جَعَلَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ قِيَمًا)

(And do not give your property, which Allah has made a means of support for you, to the foolish) (4:5).

Allah answered the hypocrites in all of these instances. For instance, Allah said here,

(أَلَا إِنَّهُمْ هُمُ السُّفَهَاءُ)

(Verily, they are the fools). Allah thus affirmed that the hypocrites are indeed the fools, yet,

(وَلَكِنْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ)

(But they know not). Since they are so thoroughly ignorant, the hypocrites are unaware of their degree of deviation and ignorance, and such situation is more dangerous, a severer case of blindness, and further from the truth than one who is aware.

(وَإِذَا لَقُوا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا قَالُوا ءَامَنَّا وَإِذَا خَلَوْا إِلَىٰ شَيَاطِينِهِمْ قَالُوا إِنَّا مَعَكُمْ إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ مُسْتَهْزَءُونَ - اللَّهُ يَسْتَهْزِئُ بِهِمْ وَيَمُدِّهُمْ فِي طُغْيَانِهِمْ يَعْمَهُونَ)

(14. And when they meet those who believe, they say: "We believe," but when they are alone with their Shayatin (devils), they say: "Truly, we are with you; verily, we were but mocking.")

(15. Allah mocks at them and leaves them increasing in their deviation to wander blindly.)

The Hypocrites' Cunning and Deceit

Allah said that when the hypocrites meet the believers, they proclaim their faith and pretend to be believers, loyalists and friends. They do this to misdirect, mislead and deceive the believers. The hypocrites also want to have a share of the benefits and gains that the believers might possibly acquire. Yet,

(وَإِذَا خَلَوْا إِلَىٰ شَيَاطِينِهِمْ)

(But when they are alone with their Shayatin), meaning, if they are alone with their devils, such as their leaders and masters among the rabbis of the Jews, hypocrites and idolators.

Human and Jinn Devils

Ibn Jarir said, "The devils of every creation are the mischievous among them. There are both human devils and Jinn devils. Allah said,

(وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَا لِكُلِّ نَبِيٍّ عَدُوًّا شَيَاطِينَ الْإِنْسِ وَالْجِنِّ يُوحِي بَعْضُهُمْ إِلَى بَعْضٍ زُخْرُفَ الْقَوْلِ غُرُورًا)

(And so We have appointed for every Prophet enemies Shayatin (devils) among mankind and Jinn, inspiring one another with adorned speech as a delusion (or by way of deception)) (6:112).

The Meaning of ` Mocking

Allah said,

(قَالُوا إِنَّا مَعَكُمْ)

(They say: "Truly, we are with you"). Muhammad bin Ishaq reported that Ibn ` Abbas said that the Ayah means, "We are with you,

(إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ مُسْتَهْزَءُونَ)

(Verily, we were but mocking), meaning, we only mock people (the believers) and deceive them." Ad-Dahhak said that Ibn ` Abbas said that the Ayah,

(إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ مُسْتَهْزَءُونَ)

(Verily, we were but mocking), means, "We (meaning the hypocrites) were mocking the Companions of Muhammad." Also, Ar-Rabi` bin Anas and Qatadah said similarly. Allah's statement,

(اللَّهُ يَسْتَهْزِئُ بِهِمْ وَيَمُدُّهُمْ فِي طُغْيَانِهِمْ يَعْمَهُونَ)

(Allah mocks at them and leaves them increasing in their deviation to wander blindly) answers the hypocrites and punishes them for their behavior. Ibn Jarir commented, "Allah mentioned what He will do to them on the Day of Resurrection, when He said,

(يَوْمَ يَقُولُ الْمُنْفِقُونَ وَالْمُنَفِقَاتُ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا انظُرُونَا نَقْتَبِسْ مِنْ نُورِكُمْ قِيلَ ارْجِعُوا وَرَاءَكُمْ فَالْتَمِسُوا نُورًا فَضُرِبَ بَيْنَهُم بِسُورٍ لَهُ بَابٌ بَاطِنُهُ فِيهِ الرَّحْمَةُ وَظَاهِرُهُ مِنْ قِبَلِهِ الْعَذَابُ)

(On the Day when the hypocrites men and women will say to the believers: "Wait for us! Let us get something from your light!" It will be said: "Go back to your rear! Then seek a light!" So a wall will be put up between them, with a gate therein. Inside it will be mercy, and outside it will be torment.) (57:13), and,

(وَلَا يَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَنَّمَا أُمْلِيَ لَهُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّأَنفُسِهِمْ إِنَّمَا أُمْلِيَ لَهُمْ لِيَزْدَادُوا إِثْمًا)

(And let not the disbelievers think that Our postponing of their punishment is good for them. We postpone the punishment only so that they may increase in sinfulness.) (3:178)."

He then said, "This, and its like, is Allah's mockery of the hypocrites and the people of Shirk."

The Hypocrites suffering for their Plots

Allah stated that He will punish the hypocrites for their mockery, using the same terms to describe both the deed and its punishment, although the meaning is different. Similarly, Allah said,

(وَجَزَاءُ سَيِّئَةٍ سَيِّئَةٌ مِّثْلُهَا فَمَنْ عَفَا وَأَصْلَحَ فَأَجْرُهُ عَلَى اللَّهِ)

(The recompense for an offense is equal to it; but whoever forgives and makes reconciliation, his reward is with Allah) (42:40), and,

(فَمَنْ اعْتَدَىٰ عَلَيْكُمْ فَاعْتَدُوا عَلَيْهِ)

(Then whoever transgresses (the prohibition) against you, transgress likewise against him) (2:194).

The first act is an act of injustice, while the second act is an act of justice. So both actions carry the same name, while being different in reality. This is how the scholars explain deceit, cunning and mocking when attributed to Allah in the Qur'an. Surely, Allah exacts revenge for certain evil acts with a punishment that is similar in nature to the act itself. We should affirm here that Allah does not do these things out of joyful play, according to the consensus of the scholars, but as a just form of punishment for certain evil acts.

Meaning of ` Leaves them increasing in their deviation to wander blindly

Allah said,

(وَيَمْدُهُمْ فِي طُعْيَانِهِمْ يَعْمَهُونَ)

(Allah mocks at them and leaves them increasing in their deviation to wander blindly). As-Suddi reported that Ibn `Abbas, Ibn Mas'ud and several other Companions of the Messenger of Allah said that,

(وَيَمْدُهُمْ)

(and leaves them increasing) means, He gives them respite. Also, Mujahid said, "He (causes their deviation) to increase." Allah said;

(أَيَحْسَبُونَ أَنَّمَا نُؤْمِدُّهُمْ بِهِ مِنْ مَّالٍ وَبَنِينَ -
نُسَارِعُ لَهُمْ فِي الْخَيْرَاتِ بَلْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ)

(Do they think that by the wealth and the children with which We augment them. (That) We hasten to give them with good things. Nay, but they perceive not.) (23:55-56).

Ibn Jarir commented, "The correct meaning of this Ayah is `We give them increase from the view of giving them respite and leaving them in their deviation and rebellion.' Similarly, Allah said,

(وَنُقَلِّبُ أَفْئِدَتَهُمْ وَأَبْصَارَهُمْ كَمَا لَمْ يُؤْمِنُوا بِهِ
أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ وَنَذَرُهُمْ فِي طُغْيَانِهِمْ يَعْمَهُونَ)

(And We shall turn their hearts and their eyes away (from guidance), as they refused to believe in it the first time, and We shall leave them in their trespass to wander blindly). " (6:110).

Tughyan used in this Ayah means to transgress the limits, just as Allah said in another Ayah,

(إِنَّا لَمَّا طَغَا الْمَاءُ حَمَلْنَاكُمْ فِي الْجَارِيَةِ)

(Verily, when the water Tagha (rose) beyond its limits, We carried you in the ship) (69:11).

Also, Ibn Jarir said that the term `Amah, in the Ayah means, `deviation'. He also said about Allah's statement,

(فِي طُغْيَانِهِمْ يَعْمَهُونَ)

(in their deviation to wander), "In the misguidance and disbelief that has encompassed them, causing them to be confused and unable to find a way out of it. This is because Allah has stamped their hearts, sealed them, and blinded their vision. Therefore, they do not recognize guidance or find the way out of their deviation."

(أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ اشْتَرَوُا الضَّلَالَةَ بِالْهُدَىٰ فَمَا
رَبِحَتْ تُجَرَّتُهُمْ وَمَا كَانُوا مُهْتَدِينَ)

(16. These are they who have purchased error with guidance, so their commerce was profitless. And they were not guided.)

In his Tafsir, As-Suddi reported that Ibn `Abbas and Ibn Mas`ud commented on;

(أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ اشْتَرَوُا الضَّلَالَةَ بِالْهُدَىٰ)

(These are they who have purchased error with guidance) saying it means, "They pursued misguidance and abandoned guidance. " Mujahid said, "They believed and then disbelieved," while Qatadah said, "They preferred deviation to guidance." Qatadah's statement is similar in meaning to Allah's statement about Thamud,

(وَأَمَّا ثَمُودُ فَهَدَيْنَاهُمْ فَاسْتَحَبُّوا الْعَمَىٰ عَلَى الْهُدَىٰ)

(And as for Thamud, We granted them guidance, but they preferred blindness to guidance) (41:17).

In summary, the statements that we have mentioned from the scholars of Tafsir indicate that the hypocrites deviate from the true guidance and prefer misguidance, substituting wickedness in place of righteousness. This meaning explains Allah's statement,

(أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ اشْتَرَوُا الضَّلَالَةَ بِالْهُدَىٰ)

(These are they who have purchased error with guidance), meaning, they exchanged guidance to buy misguidance. This meaning includes those who first believed, then later disbelieved, whom Allah described,

(ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ ءَامَنُوا ثُمَّ كَفَرُوا فَطُبِعَ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِمْ)

(That is because they believed, and then disbelieved; therefore their hearts are sealed) (63:3).

The Ayah also includes those who preferred deviation over guidance. The hypocrites fall into several categories. This is why Allah said,

(فَمَا رِيحَت تُّجَرَتُهُمْ وَمَا كَانُوا مُهْتَدِينَ)

(So their commerce was profitless. And they were not guided), meaning their trade did not succeed nor were they righteous or rightly guided throughout all this. In addition, Ibn Jarir narrated that Qatadah commented on the Ayah,

(فَمَا رِيحَت تُّجَرَتُهُمْ وَمَا كَانُوا مُهْتَدِينَ)

(So their commerce was profitless. And they were not guided), "By Allah! I have seen them leaving guidance for deviation, leaving the Jama`ah (the community of the believers) for the sects, leaving safety for fear, and the Sunnah for innovation." Ibn Abi Hatim also reported other similar statements.

(مَتْلُهُمْ كَمَتْلِ الَّذِي اسْتَوْقَدَ نَارًا فَلَمَّا أَضَاءَتْ مَا حَوْلَهُ ذَهَبَ اللَّهُ بِنُورِهِمْ وَتَرَكَهُمْ فِي ظُلُمَاتٍ لَا يُبْصِرُونَ - صُمُّكُمْ عُمًى فَهُمْ لَا يَرْجِعُونَ)

(17. Their likeness is as the likeness of one who kindled a fire; then, when it illuminated all around him, Allah removed their light and left them in darkness. (So) they could not see). (18. They are deaf, dumb, and blind, so they return not (to the right path).)

The Example of the Hypocrites

Allah likened the hypocrites when they bought deviation with guidance, thus acquiring utter blindness, to the example of a person who started a fire. When the fire was lit, and illuminated the surrounding area, the person benefited from it and felt safe. Then the fire was suddenly extinguished. Therefore, total darkness covered this person, and he became unable to see anything or find his way out of it. Further, this person could not hear or speak and became so blind that even if there were light, he would not be able to see. This is why he cannot return to the state that he was in before this happened to him. Such is the case with the hypocrites who preferred misguidance over guidance, deviation over righteousness. This parable indicates that the hypocrites first believed, then disbelieved, just as Allah stated in other parts of the Qur'an.

Allah's statement,

(ذَهَبَ اللَّهُ بِنُورِهِمْ)

(Allah removed their light) means, Allah removed what benefits them, and this is the light, and He left them with what harms them, that is, the darkness and smoke. Allah said,

(وَتَرَكَهُمْ فِي ظُلُمَاتٍ)

(And left them in darkness), that is their doubts, disbelief and hypocrisy.

(لَا يُبْصِرُونَ)

((So) they could not see) meaning, they are unable to find the correct path or find its direction. In addition, they are,

(صُمُّ)

(deaf) and thus cannot hear the guidance,

(يَكْمُ)

(dumb) and cannot utter the words that might benefit them,

(عَمَى)

(and blind) in total darkness and deviation. Similarly, Allah said,

(فَإِنَّهَا لَا تَعْمَى الْأَبْصَارُ وَلَكِنْ تَعْمَى الْقُلُوبُ
الَّتِي فِي الصُّدُورِ)

(Verily, it is not the eyes that grow blind, but it is the hearts which are in the breasts that grow blind) (22:46) and this why they cannot get back to the state of guidance that they were in, since they sold it for misguidance.

(أَوْ كَصَيِّبٍ مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ فِيهِ ظُلُمَاتٌ وَرَعْدٌ وَبَرْقٌ
يَجْعَلُونَ أَصْبِعَهُمْ فِي آذَانِهِمْ مِّنَ الصَّوَاعِقِ
حَذَرَ الْمَوْتِ وَاللَّهُ مُحِيطٌ بِالْكَافِرِينَ - يَكَادُ الْبَرْقُ
يَخْطِفُ أَبْصَرَهُمْ كُلَّمَا أَضَاءَ لَهُمْ مَّشَوْا فِيهِ وَإِذَا
أَظْلَمَ عَلَيْهِمْ قَامُوا وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَذَهَبَ بِسَمْعِهِمْ
وَأَبْصَرِهِمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ)

(19. Or like a rainstorm in the sky, bringing darkness, thunder, and lightning. They thrust their fingers in their ears to keep out the stunning thunderclap for fear of death. But Allah ever encompasses the disbelievers.) (20. The lightning almost snatches away their sight, whenever it flashes for them, they walk therein, and when darkness covers them, they stand still. And if Allah willed, He could have taken away their hearing and their sight. Certainly, Allah has power over all things.)

Another Parable of the Hypocrites

This is another parable which Allah gave about the hypocrites who sometimes know the truth and doubt it at other times. When they suffer from doubt, confusion and disbelief, their hearts are,

(كَصِيبٍ)

(Like a Sayyib), meaning, "The rain", as Ibn Mas'ud, Ibn 'Abbas, and several other Companions have confirmed as well as Abu Al-'Aliyah, Mujahid, Sa'id bin Jubayr, 'Ata', Al-Hasan Al-Basri, Qatadah, 'Atiyah Al-'Awfi, 'Ata' Al-Khurasani, As-Suddi and Ar-Rabi' bin Anas. Ad-Dahhak said "It is the clouds." However, the most accepted opinion is that it means the rain that comes down during,

(ظُلُمَاتٍ)

(darkness), meaning, here, the doubts, disbelief and hypocrisy.

(وَرَعْدٍ)

(thunder) that shocks the hearts with fear. The hypocrites are usually full of fear and anxiety, just as Allah described them,

(يَحْسَبُونَ كُلَّ صَيْحَةٍ عَلَيْهِمْ)

(They think that every cry is against them) (63: 4), and,

(وَيَحْلِفُونَ بِاللَّهِ إِنَّهُمْ لَمِنْكُمْ وَمَا هُمْ مِنْكُمْ وَلَكِنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ يَفْرَقُونَ - لَوْ يَجِدُونَ مَلْجَأً أَوْ مَغْرَاتٍ أَوْ مَدْخَلًا لَوَلَّوْا إِلَيْهِ وَهُمْ يَجْمَحُونَ)

(They swear by Allah that they are truly of you while they are not of you, but they are a people who are afraid. Should they find refuge, or caves, or a place of concealment, they would turn straightway thereto in a swift rush) (9:56-57).

(الْبَرْقِ)

(The lightning), is in reference to the light of faith that is sometimes felt in the hearts of the hypocrites,

(يَجْعَلُونَ أَصْبِعَهُمْ فِيْ ءَاذَانِهِمْ مِّنَ الصَّوَءِقِ
حَذَرِ الْمَوْتِ وَاللّٰهُ مُحِيطٌ بِالْكَافِرِينَ)

(They thrust their fingers in their ears to keep out the stunning thunderclap for fear of death. But Allah ever encompasses the disbelievers), meaning, their cautiousness does not benefit them because they are bound by Allah's all-encompassing will and decision. Similarly, Allah said,

(هَلْ أَتَاكَ حَدِيثُ الْجُنُودِ - فِرْعَوْنَ وَثَمُودَ - بَلِ
الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فِي تَكْذِيبٍ - وَاللّٰهُ مِنْ وَرَائِهِمْ
مُّحِيطٌ)

(Has the story reached you of two hosts. Of Fir`awn (Pharaoh) and Thamud Nay! The disbelievers (persisted) in denying. And Allah encompasses them from behind!) (85:17-20).

Allah then said,

(يَكَادُ الْبَرْقُ يَخْطَفُ أَبْصَرَہُمْ)

F(The lightning almost snatches away their sight) meaning, because the lightning is strong itself, and because their comprehension is weak and does not allow them to embrace the faith. Also, `Ali bin Abi Talhah reported that Ibn `Abbas commented on the Ayah,

(يَكَادُ الْبَرْقُ يَخْطَفُ أَبْصَرَہُمْ)

(The lightning almost snatches away their sight), "The Qur'an mentioned almost all of the secrets of the hypocrites." `Ali bin Abi Talhah also narrated that Ibn `Abbas said,

(كُلَّمَا أَضَاءَ لَهُمْ مَّشَوْا فِيهِ)

(Whenever it flashes for them, they walk therein), "Whenever the hypocrites acquire a share in the victories of Islam, they are content with this share. Whenever Islam suffers a calamity, they are ready to revert to disbelief.". Similarly, Allah said,

(وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَعْبُدُ اللَّهَ عَلَى حَرْفٍ فَإِنْ أَصَابَهُ خَيْرٌ اطْمَأَنَّ بِهِ)

(And among mankind is he who worships Allah on the edge: If good befalls him, he is content with that.) (22:11). Also, Muhammad bin Ishaq reported that Ibn ` Abbas said,

(كُلَّمَا أَضَاءَ لَهُمْ مَشَوْا فِيهِ وَإِذَا أَظْلَمَ عَلَيْهِمْ قَامُوا)

(Whenever it flashes for them, they walk therein, and when darkness covers them, they stand still), "They recognize the truth and speak about it. So their speech is upright, but when they revert to disbelief, they again fall into confusion." This was also said by Abu Al-`Aliyah, Al-Hasan Al-Basri, Qatadah, Ar-Rabi` bin Anas and As-Suddi, who narrated it from the Companions, and it is the most obvious and most correct view, and Allah knows best.

Consequently, on the Day of Judgment, the believers will be given a light according to the degree of their faith. Some of them will gain light that illuminates over a distance of several miles, some more, some less. Some people's light will glow sometimes and be extinguished at other times. They will, therefore, walk on the Srat (the bridge over the Fire) in the light, stopping when it is extinguished. Some people will have no light at all, these are the hypocrites whom Allah described when He said,

(يَوْمَ يَقُولُ الْمُنْفِقُونَ وَالْمُنَفِقَاتُ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا انظُرُونَا نَقْتَسِسْ مِنْ نُورِكُمْ قِيلَ ارْجِعُوا وَرَاءَكُمْ فَالْتَمِسُوا نُورًا)

(On the Day when the hypocrites men and women will say to the believers: "Wait for us! Let us get something from your light!" It will be said to them; "Go back to you rear! Then seek a light!") (57:13).

Allah described the believers,

(يَوْمَ تَرَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ يَسْعَى نُورُهُمْ
بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَبِأَيْمَانِهِمْ بُشْرَاكُمُ الْيَوْمَ جَنَّتْ تَجْرَى
مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ)

(On the Day you shall see the believing men and the believing women their light running forward before them and by their right hands. Glad tidings for you this Day! Gardens under which rivers flow (Paradise)) (57:12), and,

(يَوْمَ لَا يُخْزَى اللَّهُ النَّبِيَّ وَالَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا مَعَهُ
نُورُهُمْ يَسْعَى بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَبِأَيْمَانِهِمْ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا
أَتْمِمْ لَنَا نُورَنَا وَاغْفِرْ لَنَا إِنَّكَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ
قَدِيرٌ)

(The Day that Allah will not disgrace the Prophet (Muhammad) and those who believe with him. Their Light will run forward before them and (with their Records Books of deeds) in their right hands. They will say: "Our Lord! Keep perfect our Light for us and do not put it off till we cross over the Srat (a slippery bridge over the Hell) safely and grant us forgiveness. Verily, You are Able to do all things") (66:8).

Ibn Abi Hatim narrated that `Abdullah bin Mas`ud commented on,

(نُورُهُمْ يَسْعَى بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ)

(Their Light will run forward before them), "They will pass on the Srat. according to their deeds. The light that some people have will be as big as a mountain, while the light of others will be as big as a date tree. The people who will have the least light are those whose index fingers will sometimes be lit and extinguished at other times." Ibn Abi Hatim also reported that Ibn `Abbas said, "Every person among the people of Tawhid (Islamic Monotheism) will gain a light on the Day of Resurrection. As for the hypocrite, his light will be extinguished. When the believers witness the hypocrite's light being extinguished, they will feel anxious. Hence, they will supplicate,

(رَبَّنَا أَتْمِمْ لَنَا نُورَنَا)

(Our Lord! Keep perfect our Light for us)." Ad-Dahhak bin Muzahim said, "On the Day of Resurrection, everyone who has embraced the faith will be given a light. When they arrive at

the Strat, the light of the hypocrites will be extinguished. When the believers see this, they will feel anxious and supplicate,

(رَبَّنَا أَثْمِمْ لَنَا نُورَنَا)

(Our Lord! Keep perfect our Light for us)."

Types of Believers and Types of Disbelievers

Consequently, there are several types of people. There are the believers whom the first four Ayat (2:2-5) in Surat Al-Baqarah describe. There are the disbelievers who were described in the next two Ayat. And there are two categories of hypocrites: the complete hypocrites who were mentioned in the parable of the fire, and the hesitant hypocrites, whose light of faith is sometimes lit and sometimes extinguished. The parable of the rain was revealed about this category, which is not as evil as the first category.

This is similar to the parables that were given in Surat An-Nur (chapter 24). Like the example of the believer and the faith that Allah put in his heart, compared to a brightly illuminated lamp, just like a rising star. This is the believer, whose heart is built on faith and receiving its support from the divine legislation that was revealed to it, without any impurities or imperfections, as we will come to know, Allah willing.

Allah gave a parable of the disbelievers who think that they have something, while in reality they have nothing; such people are those who have compounded ignorance. Allah said,

(وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَعْمَلُهُمْ كَسَرَابٍ بِقِيعَةٍ يَحْسَبُهُ
الظَّمَانُ مَاءً حَتَّى إِذَا جَاءَهُ لَمْ يَجِدْهُ شَيْئًا)

(As for those who disbelieved, their deeds are like a mirage in a desert. The thirsty one thinks it to be water, until he comes up to it, he finds it to be nothing) (24:39).

Allah then gave the example of ignorant disbelievers, simple in their ignorance. He said;

(أَوْ كَظُلُمَاتٍ فِي بَحْرٍ لُّجِّيٍّ يَغْشَاهُ مَوْجٌ مِّنْ فَوْقِهِ
مَوْجٌ مِّنْ فَوْقِهِ سَحَابٌ ظُلُمَاتٌ بَعْضُهَا فَوْقَ
بَعْضٍ إِذَا أَخْرَجَ يَدَهُ لَمْ يَكْذِبْ رَأَاهَا وَمَنْ لَمْ يَجْعَلِ
اللَّهُ لَهُ نُورًا فَمَا لَهُ مِن نُّورٍ)

(Or (the state of a disbeliever) is like the darkness in a vast deep sea, overwhelmed by waves, topped by dark clouds, (layers of) darkness upon darkness: if a man stretches out his hand, he can hardly see it! And he for whom Allah has not appointed light, for him there is no light) (24:40).

Therefore, Allah divided the camp of the disbelievers into two groups, advocates and followers. Allah mentioned these two groups in the beginning of Surat Al-Hajj,

(وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يُجَادِلُ فِي اللَّهِ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ وَيَتَّبِعُ كُلَّ شَيْطَانٍ مَّرِيدٍ)

(And among mankind is he who disputes about Allah, without knowledge, and follows every rebellious (disobedient to Allah) Shaytan (devil) (devoid of every kind of good)) (22:3), and,

(وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يُجَادِلُ فِي اللَّهِ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ وَلَا هُدًى وَلَا كِتَابٍ مُنِيرٍ)

(And among men is he who disputes about Allah, without knowledge or guidance, or a Book giving light (from Allah)) (22:8).

Furthermore, Allah has divided the group of the believers in the beginning of Surat Al-Waqi`ah (56) and at the end. He also divided them in Surat Al-Insan (76) into two groups, the Sabiqun (those who preceded), they are the "near ones" (Muqaribun) and Ashab Al-Yamin (the companions of the right), and they are righteous (Abrar).

In summary, these Ayat divide the believers into two categories, the near ones and righteous. Also, the disbelievers are of two types, advocates and followers. In addition, the hypocrites are divided into two types, pure hypocrites and those who have some hypocrisy in them. The Two Sahihs record that `Abdullah bin `Amr said that the Prophet said,

«ثَلَاثٌ مَنْ كُنَّ فِيهِ كَانَ مُنَافِقًا خَالِصًا، وَمَنْ كَانَتْ فِيهِ وَاحِدَةٌ مِنْهُنَّ كَانَتْ فِيهِ خَصْلَةٌ مِنَ النِّفَاقِ حَتَّى يَدْعَاهَا: مَنْ إِذَا حَدَّثَ كَذَبَ، وَإِذَا وَعَدَ أَخْلَفَ، وَإِذَا اتُّمِّنَ خَانَ»

(Whoever has the following three (characteristics) will be a pure hypocrite, and whoever has one of the following three characteristics will have one characteristic of hypocrisy, unless and

until he gives it up. Whenever he speaks, he tells a lie. Whenever he makes a covenant, he proves treacherous. Whenever he is entrusted, he breaches the trust)

Hence, man might have both a part of faith and a part of hypocrisy, whether in deed, as this Hadith stipulates, or in the creed, as the Ayah (2:20) stipulates.

Types of Hearts

Imam Ahmad recorded Abu Sa`id saying that the Messenger of Allah said

«الْقُلُوبُ أَرْبَعَةٌ: قَلْبٌ أَجْرَدٌ فِيهِ مِثْلُ السَّرَاجِ يَزْهَرُ وَقَلْبٌ أَغْلَفٌ مَرْبُوطٌ عَلَى غِلَافِهِ وَقَلْبٌ مَنكُوسٌ وَقَلْبٌ مُصَفَّحٌ، فَأَمَّا الْقَلْبُ الْأَجْرَدُ فَقَلْبُ الْمُؤْمِنِ فَسِرَاجُهُ فِيهِ نُورُهُ، وَأَمَّا الْقَلْبُ الْأَغْلَفُ فَقَلْبُ الْكَافِرِ، وَأَمَّا الْقَلْبُ الْمَنكُوسُ فَقَلْبُ الْمُنَافِقِ الْخَالِصِ عَرَفَ ثُمَّ أَنْكَرَ وَأَمَّا الْقَلْبُ الْمُصَفَّحُ فَقَلْبٌ فِيهِ إِيْمَانٌ وَنِفَاقٌ وَمِثْلُ الْإِيْمَانِ فِيهِ كَمَثَلِ الْبَقْلَةِ يَمُدُّهَا الْمَاءُ الطَّيِّبُ وَمِثْلُ النِّفَاقِ فِيهِ كَمَثَلِ الْفَرْحَةِ يَمُدُّهَا الْقَيْحُ وَالْدَّمُ فَأَيُّ الْمَادَّتَيْنِ غَلَبَتْ عَلَى الْأُخْرَى غَلَبَتْ عَلَيْهِ»

(The hearts are four (types): polished as shiny as the radiating lamp, a sealed heart with a knot tied around its seal, a heart that is turned upside down and a wrapped heart. As for the polished heart, it is the heart of the believer and the lamp is the light of faith. The sealed heart is the heart of the disbeliever. The heart that is turned upside down is the heart of the pure hypocrite, because he had knowledge but denied it. As for the wrapped heart, it is a heart that contains belief and hypocrisy. The example of faith in this heart, is the example of the herb that is sustained by pure water. The example of hypocrisy in it, is the example of an ulcer that thrives on puss and blood. Whichever of the two substances has the upper hand, it will have the upper hand on that heart). This Hadith has a Jayid Hasan (good) chain of narration.

Allah said,

(وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَذَهَبَ بِسَمْعِهِمْ وَأَبْصَرِهِمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ)

(And if Allah willed, He would have taken away their hearing and their sight. Certainly, Allah has power over all things). Muhammad bin Ishaq reported that Ibn `Abbas commented on Allah's statement,

(وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَذَهَبَ بِسَمْعِهِمْ وَأَبْصَرِهِمْ)

(And if Allah willed, He would have taken away their hearing and their sight), "Because they abandoned the truth after they had knowledge in it."

(إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ)

(Certainly, Allah has power over all things). Ibn `Abbas said, "Allah is able to punish or pardon His servants as He wills." Ibn Jarir commented, "Allah only described Himself with the ability to do everything in this Ayah as a warning to the hypocrites of His control over everything, and to inform them that His ability completely encompasses them and that He is able to take away their hearing and sight."

Ibn Jarir and several other scholars of Tafsir stated that these two parables are about the same kind of hypocrite. So the `or' mentioned in,

(أَوْ كَصَيْبٍ مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ)

(Or like a rainstorm from the sky) means `and', just as the Ayah,

(وَلَا تُطِعْ مِنْهُمْ ءَاثِمًا أَوْ كَفُورًا)

(And obey neither a sinner or a disbeliever among them). Therefore, `or' in the Ayah includes a choice of using either example for the hypocrites. Also, Al-Qurtubi said that `or' means, "To show compatibility of the two choices, just as when one says, 'Sit with Al-Hasan or Ibn `Umar.' According to the view of Az-Zamakhshari, `so it means each of these persons is the same as the other, so you may sit with either one of them.' The meaning of `or' thus becomes `either.' Allah gave these two examples of the hypocrites, because they both perfectly describe them."

I (Ibn Kathir) say, these descriptions are related to the type of hypocrite, because there is a difference between them as we stated. For instance, Allah mentioned these types in Surat Bara'ah (chapter 9) when He repeated the statement, "And among them" three times, describing their types, characteristics, statements and deeds. So the two examples mentioned here describe two types of hypocrites whose characteristics are similar. For instance, Allah

gave two examples in Surat An-Nur, one for the advocates of disbelief and one for the followers of disbelief, He said,

(وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَعْمَلُهُمْ كَسَرَابٍ بِقِيعَةٍ)

(As for those who disbelieved, their deeds are like a mirage in a desert) (24:39), until,

(أَوْ كَظُلُمَاتٍ فِي بَحْرٍ لُّجِّيٍّ)

(Or (the state of a disbeliever) is like the darkness in a vast deep sea) (24:40).

The first example is of the advocates of disbelief who have complex ignorance, while the second is about the followers who have simple ignorance. Allah knows best.

(يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اعْبُدُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ
مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ - الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْأَرْضَ
فِرَاشًا وَالسَّمَاءَ بِنَاءً وَأَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً
فَأَخْرَجَ بِهِ مِنَ الثَّمَرَاتِ رِزْقًا لَّكُمْ فَلَا تَجْعَلُوا لِلَّهِ
أَنْدَادًا وَأَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ)

(21. O mankind! Worship your Lord (Allah), Who created you and those who were before you so that you may acquire Taqwa.) (22. Who has made the earth a resting place for you, and the sky as a canopy, and sent down water (rain) from the sky and brought forth therewith fruits as a provision for you. Then do not set up rivals unto Allah (in worship) while you know (that He alone has the right to be worshipped).)

Tawhid Al-Uluhiyyah

Allah next mentioned His Oneness in divinity and stated that He has favored His servants by bringing them to life after they did not exist. He also surrounded them with blessings, both hidden and apparent. He made the earth a resting place for them, just like the bed, stable with the firm mountains.

(وَالسَّمَاءَ بِنَاءً)

(And the sky as a canopy) meaning, `a ceiling'. Similarly, Allah said in another Ayah,

(وَجَعَلْنَا السَّمَاءَ سَقْفًا مَّحْفُوظًا وَهُمْ عَنْ آيَاتِهَا مُعْرِضُونَ)

(And We have made the heaven a roof, safe and well-guarded. Yet they turn away from its signs (i.e. sun, moon, winds, clouds)) (21:32).

(وَأَنْزَلَ لَكُمْ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً)

(And sends down for you water (rain) from the sky) meaning, through the clouds, when they need the rain. Hence, Allah caused the various types of vegetation and fruits to grow as a means of sustenance for people and their cattle. Allah reiterated this bounty in various parts of the Qur'an.

There is another Ayah that is similar to this Ayah (2:22), that is, Allah's statement,

(الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْأَرْضَ قَرَارًا وَالسَّمَاءَ بِنَاءً
وَصَوَّرَكُمُ فَأَحْسَنَ صُورَكُمْ وَرَزَقَكُمُ مِنَ
الطَّيِّبَاتِ ذَلِكُمُ اللَّهُ رَبُّكُمْ فَتَبَرَكَ اللَّهُ رَبُّ
الْعَالَمِينَ)

(It is He Who has made for you the earth as a dwelling place and the sky as a canopy, and has given you shape and made your shapes good (looking) and has provided you with good things. That is Allah, your Lord, so Blessed be Allah, the Lord of all that exists) (40:64).

The meaning that is reiterated here is that Allah is the Creator, the Sustainer, the Owner and Provider of this life, all that is in and on it. Hence, He alone deserves to be worshipped, and no one and nothing is to be associated with Him. This is why Allah said next,

(فَلَا تَجْعَلُوا لِلَّهِ أَنْدَادًا وَأَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ)

(Then do not set up rivals unto Allah (in worship) while you know (that He alone has the right to be worshipped)) (2:22).

The Two Sahihs record that Ibn Mas'ud said, "I said to the Messenger of Allah , `Which evil deed is the worst with Allah' He said,

«أَنْ تَجْعَلَ لِلَّهِ نِدًّا وَهُوَ خَلَقَكَ»

(To take an equal with Allah, while He alone created you.)"

Also, Mu` adh narrated the Prophet's statement,

«أَتَدْرِي مَا حَقُّ اللَّهِ عَلَى عِبَادِهِ؟ أَنْ يَعْبُدُوهُ وَلَا يُشْرِكُوا بِهِ شَيْئًا»

(Do you know Allah's right on His servants They must worship Him alone and refrain from associating anything with Him in worship.) Another Hadith states,

«لَا يَقُولَنَّ أَحَدُكُمْ مَا شَاءَ اللَّهُ وَشَاءَ فُلَانٌ، وَلَكِنْ لِيَقُلْ: مَا شَاءَ اللَّهُ ثُمَّ شَاءَ فُلَانٌ»

(None of you should say, `What Allah and so-and-so person wills. Rather, let him say, `What Allah wills, and then what so-and-so person wills.)

Hadith with the same Meaning Imam Ahmad narrated that Al-Harith Al-Ash`ari said that the Prophet of Allah said,

«إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزَّوَجَلَّ أَمَرَ يَحْيَى بْنَ زَكَرِيَّا عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ بِخَمْسِ كَلِمَاتٍ أَنْ يَعْمَلَ بِهِنَّ، وَأَنْ يَأْمُرَ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ أَنْ يَعْمَلُوا بِهِنَّ وَأَنَّهُ كَادَ أَنْ يُبْطِئَ بِهَا، فَقَالَ لَهُ عِيسَى عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ: إِنَّكَ قَدْ أَمَرْتَ بِخَمْسِ كَلِمَاتٍ أَنْ تَعْمَلَ بِهِنَّ وَتَأْمُرَ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ أَنْ يَعْمَلُوا بِهِنَّ فِيمَا أَنْ تُبَلِّغَهُمْ وَإِمَّا أَنْ تُبَلِّغَهُنَّ، فَقَالَ: يَا أَخِي إِنِّي أَخَشَى أَنْ سَبَقْتَنِي أَنْ

أَعَذَّبَ أَوْ يُخَسِّفَ بِي قَالَ: فَجَمَعَ يَحْيَى بْنُ
زَكَرِيَّا بَنِي إِسْرَآئِيلَ فِي بَيْتِ الْمَقْدِسِ حَتَّى امْتَلَأَ
الْمَسْجِدُ، فَقَعَدَ عَلَى الشَّرَفِ فَحَمِدَ اللَّهَ وَأَثْنَى
عَلَيْهِ ثُمَّ قَالَ: إِنَّ اللَّهَ أَمَرَنِي بِخَمْسِ كَلِمَاتٍ أَنْ
أَعْمَلَ بِهِنَّ وَأَمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تَعْمَلُوا بِهِنَّ أَوَّلَهُنَّ: أَنْ
تَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَلَا تُشْرِكُوا بِهِ شَيْئًا، فَإِنَّ مَثَلَ ذَلِكَ
كَمَثَلِ رَجُلٍ اشْتَرَى عَبْدًا مِنْ خَالِصِ مَالِهِ يورق
أَوْ ذَهَبٍ فَجَعَلَ يَعْمَلُ وَيُؤَدِّي غَلَّتَهُ إِلَى غَيْرِ
سَيِّدِهِ، فَأَيُّكُمْ يَسْرُهُ أَنْ يَكُونَ عَبْدُهُ كَذَلِكَ، وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ
خَلَقَكُمْ وَرَزَقَكُمْ فَأَعْبُدُوهُ وَلَا تُشْرِكُوا بِهِ شَيْئًا.
وَأَمُرُكُمْ بِالصَّلَاةِ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ يَنْصِبُ وَجْهَهُ لَوَجْهِ
عَبْدِهِ مَا لَمْ يَلْتَفِتْ فَإِذَا صَلَّيْتُمْ فَلَا تَلْتَفِتُوا. وَأَمُرُكُمْ
بِالصِّيَامِ فَإِنَّ مَثَلَ ذَلِكَ كَمَثَلِ رَجُلٍ مَعَهُ صُرَّةٌ
مِنْ مِسْكِ فِي عِصَابَةٍ كُلُّهُمْ يَحْدُ رِيحَ الْمِسْكِ وَإِنْ
خَلُوفَ فَمِ الصَّائِمِ أَطْيَبُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ مِنْ رِيحِ
الْمِسْكِ. وَأَمُرُكُمْ بِالصَّدَقَةِ فَإِنَّ مَثَلَ ذَلِكَ كَمَثَلِ
رَجُلٍ أَسْرَهُ الْعَدُوَّ فَشَدُّوا يَدَيْهِ إِلَى عُنُقِهِ وَقَدَّمُوهُ
لِيَضْرِبُوا عُنُقَهُ فَقَالَ لَهُمْ: هَلْ لَكُمْ أَنْ أَقْتَدِيَ

نَفْسِي مِنْكُمْ فَجَعَلَ يَقْتَدِي نَفْسَهُ مِنْهُمْ بِالْقَلِيلِ
وَالكَثِيرِ حَتَّى فَلَكَ نَفْسَهُ. وَأَمْرُكُمْ بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ كَثِيرًا
وَإِنَّ مَثَلَ ذَلِكَ كَمَثَلِ رَجُلٍ طَلَبَهُ الْعَدُوُّ سِرَاعًا فِي
أَثَرِهِ فَأَتَى حِصْنًا حَصِينًا فَتَحَصَّنَ فِيهِ وَإِنَّ
الْعَبْدَ أَحْصَنَ مَا يَكُونُ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ إِذَا كَانَ فِي
ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ»

(Allah commanded Yahya bin Zakariya to implement five commands and to order the Children of Israel to implement them, but Yahya was slow in carrying out these commands. `Isa said to Yahya, `You were ordered to implement five commands and to order the Children of Israel to implement them. So either order, or I will do it.' Yahya said, 'My brother! I fear that if you do it before me, I will be punished or the earth will be shaken under my feet.' Hence, Yahya bin Zakariya called the Children of Israel to Bayt Al-Maqdis (Jerusalem), until they filled the Masjid. He sat on the balcony, thanked Allah and praised him and then said, `Allah ordered me to implement five commandments and that I should order you to adhere to them. The first is that you worship Allah alone and not associate any with Him. The example of this command is the example of a man who bought a servant from his money with paper or gold. The servant started to work for the master, but was paying the profits to another person. Who among you would like his servant to do that Allah created you and sustains you. Therefore, worship Him alone and do not associate anything with Him. I also command you to pray, for Allah directs His Face towards His servant's face, as long as the servant does not turn away. So when you pray, do not turn your heads to and fro. I also command you to fast. The example of it is the example of a man in a group of men and he has some musk wrapped in a piece of cloth, and consequently, all of the group smells the scent of the wrapped musk. Verily, the odor of the mouth of a fasting person is better before Allah than the scent of musk. I also command you to give charity. The example of this is the example of a man who was captured by the enemy. They tied his hands to his neck and brought him forth to cut off his neck. He said to them, 'Can I pay a ransom for myself' He kept ransoming himself with small and large amounts until he liberated himself. I also command you to always remember Allah. The example of this deed is that of a man who the enemy is tirelessly pursuing. He takes refuge in a fortified fort. When the servant remembers Allah, he will be resorting to the best refuge from Satan.)

Al-Harith then narrated that the Messenger of Allah said,

«وَأَنَا أَمْرُكُمْ بِخَمْسٍ اللَّهُ أَمَرَنِي بِهِنَّ: الْجَمَاعَةَ
وَالسَّمْعَ وَالطَّاعَةَ وَالْهَجْرَةَ وَالْجِهَادَ فِي سَبِيلِ
اللَّهِ. فَإِنَّهُ مَنْ خَرَجَ مِنَ الْجَمَاعَةِ قِيدَ شِبْرٍ فَقَدْ

خَلَعَ رِبْقَةَ الْإِسْلَامِ مِنْ عُنُقِهِ إِلَّا أَنْ يُرَاجِعَ وَمَنْ
دَعَا بِدَعْوَى جَاهِلِيَّةٍ فَهُوَ مِنْ جُتَى جَهَنَّمَ»

«وَإِنْ صَلَّى وَصَامَ وَزَعَمَ أَنَّهُ مُسْلِمٌ، فَأَدْعُوا
الْمُسْلِمِينَ بِأَسْمَائِهِمْ عَلَى مَا سَمَّاهُمُ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ
الْمُسْلِمِينَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ عِبَادَ اللَّهِ»

(And I order you with five commandments that Allah has ordered me. Stick to the Jama`ah (community of the faithful), listen and obey (your leaders) and perform Hijrah (migration) and Jihad for the sake of Allah. Whoever abandons the Jama`ah, even the distance of a hand span, will have removed the tie of Islam from his neck, unless he returns. Whoever uses the slogans of Jahiliyah (the pre-Islamic period of ignorance) he will be among those kneeling in Jahannam (Hellfire).) They said, "O Messenger of Allah! Even if he prays and fasts" He said, (Even if he prays, fasts and claims to be Muslim. So call the Muslims with their names that Allah has called them: `The Muslims, the believing servants of Allah.")

This is a Hasan Hadith, and it contains the statement, "Allah has created and sustains you, so worship Him and do not associate anything with Him in worship." This statement is relevant in the Ayat (2:21-22) we are discussing here and supports singling Allah in worship, without partners.

Several scholars of Tafsir, like Ar-Razi and others, used these Ayat as an argument for the existence of the Creator, and it is a most worthy method of argument. Indeed, whoever ponders over the things that exist, the higher and lower creatures, their various shapes, colors, behavior, benefits and ecological roles, then he will realize the ability, wisdom, knowledge, perfection and majesty of their Creator. Once a bedouin was asked about the evidence to Allah's existence, he responded, "All praise is due to Allah! The camel's dung testifies to the existence of the camel, and the track testifies to the fact that someone was walking. A sky that holds the giant stars, a land that has fairways and a sea that has waves, does not all of this testify that the Most Kind, Most Knowledgeable exists"

Hence, whoever gazes at the sky in its immensity, its expanse, and the various kinds of planets in it, some of which appear stationary in the sky - whoever gazes at the seas that surround the land from all sides, and the mountains that were placed on the earth to stabilize it, so that

whoever lives on land, whatever their shape and color, are able to live and thrive - whoever reads Allah's statement,

(وَمِنَ الْجِبَالِ جُدَدٌ بَيَضٌ وَحُمْرٌ مُّخْتَلِفٌ أَلْوَنُهَا
وَعَرَايِبُ سُودٌ وَمِنَ النَّاسِ وَالْدَّوَابِّ وَالْأَنْعَمِ
مُخْتَلِفٌ أَلْوَنُهُ كَذَلِكَ إِنَّمَا يَخْشَى اللَّهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ
الْعُلَمَاءُ)

(And among the mountains are streaks white and red, of varying colours and (others) very black. And likewise, men and Ad-Dawabb (moving (living) creatures, beasts) and cattle are of various colours. It is only those who have knowledge among His servants that fear Allah) (35: 27-28).

Whoever thinks about the running rivers that travel from area to area bringing benefit, whoever ponders over what Allah has created on earth; various animals and plants of different tastes, scents, shapes and colors that are a result of unity between land and water, whoever thinks about all of this then he will realize that these facts testify to the existence of the Creator, His perfect ability, wisdom, mercy, kindness, generosity and His overall compassion for His creation. There is no deity worthy of worship except Allah, nor is there a Lord besides Him, upon Him we rely and to Him we turn in repentance. There are numerous Ayat in the Qur'an on this subject.

(وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِي رَيْبٍ مِّمَّا نَزَّلْنَا عَلَىٰ عَبْدِنَا فَأْتُوا
بِسُورَةٍ مِّن مِّثْلِهِ وَادْعُوا شُهَدَاءَكُمْ مِّن دُونِ اللَّهِ
إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ - فَإِنْ لَّمْ تَفْعَلُوا وَلَنْ تَفْعَلُوا
فَاتَّقُوا النَّارَ الَّتِي وَقُودُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ أُعِدَّتْ
لِلْكَافِرِينَ)

(23. And if you (Arab pagans, Jews, and Christians) are in doubt concerning that which We have sent down (i.e. the Qur'an) to Our servant (Muhammad), then produce a Surah (chapter) of the like thereof and call your witnesses (supporters and helpers) besides Allah, if you are truthful).
(24. But if you do it not, and you can never do it, then fear the Fire (Hell) whose fuel is men and stones, prepared for the disbelievers.)

The Message of Messenger of Allah is True

Allah begins to prove the truth of prophethood after He stated that there is no deity worthy of worship except Him. Allah said to the disbelievers,

(وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِي رَيْبٍ مِّمَّا نَزَّلْنَا عَلَىٰ عَبْدِنَا)

(And if you (Arab pagans, Jews, and Christians) are in doubt concerning that which We have sent down (i.e. the Qur'an) to Our servant) meaning, Muhammad ,

(فَأْتُوا بِسُورَةٍ)

(then produce a Surah (chapter)) meaning, similar to what he brought to you. Hence, if you claim that what he was sent with did not come from Allah, then produce something similar to what he has brought to you, using the help of anyone you wish instead of Allah. However, you will not be able to succeed in this quest. Ibn ` Abbas said that,

(شُهَدَاءَكُمْ)

(your witnesses) means "Aids." Also, As-Suddi reported that Abu Malik said the Ayah means, "Your partners, meaning, some other people to help you in that. Meaning then go and seek the help of your deities to support and aid you." Also, Mujahid said that,

(وَادْعُوا شُهَدَاءَكُمْ)

(and call your witnesses) means, "People, meaning, wise and eloquent men who will provide the testimony that you seek."

The Challenge

Allah challenged the disbelievers in various parts of the Qur'an. For instance, Allah said in Surat Al-Qasas (28:49),

(قُلْ فَأْتُوا بِكِتَابٍ مِّنْ عِندِ اللَّهِ هُوَ أَهْدَىٰ مِنْهُمَا
أَتَّبِعُهُ إِن كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ)

(Say (to them, O Muhammad): "Then bring a Book from Allah, which is a better guide than these two (the Tawrah (Torah) and the Qur'an), that I may follow it, if you are truthful"). Also, Allah said in Surat Al-Isra' (17:88),

(قُلْ لِّئِنْ اجْتَمَعَتِ الْإِنْسُ وَالْجِنُّ عَلَى أَنْ يَأْتُوا
بِمِثْلِ هَذَا الْقُرْآنِ لَا يَأْتُونَ بِمِثْلِهِ وَلَوْ كَانَ
بَعْضُهُمْ لِبَعْضٍ ظَهِيرًا)

(Say: "If mankind and the Jinn were together to produce the like of this Qur'an, they could not produce the like thereof, even if they helped one another.") Allah said in Surat Hud (11:13),

(أَمْ يَقُولُونَ افْتَرَاهُ قُلْ فَأْتُوا بِعَشْرِ سُوْرٍ مِّثْلِهِ
مُفْتَرِيَاتٍ وَاذْعُوا مَنْ اسْتَطَعْتُمْ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنْ
كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ)

(Or they say, "He (Prophet Muhammad) forged it (the Qur'an)." Say: "Bring you then ten forged Surahs (chapters) like it, and call whomsoever you can, other than Allah (to your help), if you speak the truth!"), and in Surat Yunus (10:37-38),

(وَمَا كَانَ هَذَا الْقُرْآنُ أَنْ يُفْتَرَى مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ
وَلَكِنْ تَصْدِيقَ الَّذِي بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَتَفْصِيلَ الْكِتَابِ
لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ مِنْ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ - أَمْ يَقُولُونَ افْتَرَاهُ
قُلْ فَأْتُوا بِسُورَةٍ مِّثْلِهِ وَاذْعُوا مَنْ اسْتَطَعْتُمْ مِنْ
دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ)

(And this Qur'an is not such as could ever be produced by other than Allah (Lord of the heavens and the earth), but it is a confirmation of (the revelation) which was before it (i.e. the Tawrah, and the Injil), and a full explanation of the Book (i.e. Laws decreed for mankind) wherein there is no doubt from the Lord of all that exists.) (Or do they say: "He (Muhammad) has forged it" Say: "Bring then a Surah (chapter) like it, and call upon whomsoever you can besides Allah, if you are truthful!"). All of these Ayat were revealed in Makkah.

Allah also challenged the disbelievers in the Ayat that were revealed in Al-Madinah. In this Ayah, Allah said,

(وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِي رَيْبٍ)

(And if you (Arab pagans, Jews, and Christians) are in Rayb) meaning, doubt.

(مَّمَّا نَزَّلْنَا عَلَىٰ عَبْدِنَا)

(Concerning that which We have sent down (i.e. the Qur'an) to Our servant) meaning, Muhammad ,

(فَأْتُوا بِسُورَةٍ مِّثْلِهِ)

(then produce a Surah (chapter) the like thereof) meaning, similar to the Qur'an. This is the Tafsir of Mujahid, Qatadah, Ibn Jarir At-Tabari, Az-Zamakhshari and Ar-Razi. Ar-Razi said that this is the Tafsir of `Umar, Ibn Mas`ud, Ibn `Abbas, Al-Hasan Al-Basri and the majority of the scholars. And he gave preference to this view and mentioned the fact that Allah has challenged the disbelievers as individuals and as groups, whether literate or illiterate, thus making the challenge truly complete. This type of challenge is more daring than simply challenging the disbelievers who might not be literate or knowledgeable. This is why Allah said,

(فَأْتُوا بِعَشْرِ سُورٍ مِّثْلِهِ)

(Bring you then ten forged Surahs (chapters) like it) (11:13), and,

(لَا يَأْتُونَ بِمِثْلِهِ)

(They could not produce the like thereof) (17:88).

Therefore, this is a general challenge to the Arab disbelievers, the most eloquent among all nations. Allah challenged the Arab disbelievers both in Makkah and Al-Madinah several times, especially since they had tremendous hatred and enmity for the Prophet and his religion. Yet, they were unable to succeed in answering the challenge, and this is why Allah said,

(فَإِنْ لَّمْ تَفْعَلُوا وَلَنْ تَفْعَلُوا)

(But if you do it not, and you can never do it), indicating that they will never be able to answer the challenge. This is another miracle, in that, Allah clearly stated without doubt that the Qur'an will never be opposed or challenged by anything similar to it, for eternity. This is a true statement that has not been changed until the present and shall never change. How can anyone be able to produce something like the Qur'an, when the Qur'an is the Word of Allah Who created everything How can the words of the created ever be similar to the Words of the Creator

Examples of the Miracle of the Qur'an

Whoever reads through the Qur'an will realize that it contains various levels of superiority through both the apparent and hidden meanings that it mentions. Allah said,

(الرَّكْتَٰبَ أَحْكَمَتْ ءَايَتُهُ ثُمَّ فُصِّلَتْ مِنْ لَدُنْ حَكِيمٍ خَبِيرٍ)

(Alif Lam Ra. (This is) a Book, the verses whereof are perfect (in every sphere of knowledge, etc.), and then explained in detail from One (Allah), Who is Wise and well-acquainted (with all things)) (11:1)

So the expressions in the Qur'an are perfect and its meanings are explained. Further, every word and meaning in the Qur'an is eloquent and cannot be surpassed. The Qur'an also mentioned the stories of the people of the past; and these accounts and stories occurred exactly as the Qur'an stated. Also, the Qur'an commanded every type of righteousness and forbade every type of evil, just as Allah stated,

(وَتَمَّتْ كَلِمَةُ رَبِّكَ صِدْقًا وَعَدْلًا)

(And the Word of your Lord has been fulfilled in truth and in justice) (6:115). meaning, true in the stories it narrates and just in its Laws. The Qur'an is true, just and full of guidance. It does not contain exaggerations, lies or falsehood, unlike Arabic and other types of poems that contained lies. These poems, conform with the popular statement, "The most eloquent speech is the one that contains the most lies!" Sometimes, one would find a long poem that mainly contains descriptions of women, horses or alcohol. Or, the poem might contain praise or the description of a certain person, horse, camel, war, incident, fear, lion, or other types of items and objects. Such praise or descriptions do not bring any benefit, except shed light on the poet's ability to clearly and eloquently describe such items. Yet, one will only be able to find one or two sentences in many long poems that elaborate on the main theme of the poem, while the rest of the poem contains insignificant descriptions and repetitions.

As for the Qur'an, it is entirely eloquent in the most perfect manner, as those who have knowledge in such matters and understand Arabic methods of speech and expressions concur. When one reads through the stories in the Qur'an, he will find them fruitful, whether they were in extended or short forms, repeated or not. The more these stories are repeated, the more fruitful and beautiful they become. The Qur'an does not become old when one repeats reciting it, nor do the scholars ever get bored with it. When the Qur'an mentions the subject of warning and promises, it presents truths that would make solid, firm mountains shake, so what about the comprehending, understanding hearts. When the Qur'an promises, it opens the hearts and the ears, making them eager to attain the abode of peace - Paradise - and to be the neighbors of the Throne of the Most Beneficent. For instance, on the subject of promises and encouragement, the Qur'an said,

(فَلَا تَعْلَمُ نَفْسٌ مَّا أُخْفِيَ لَهُم مِّن قُرَّةِ أَعْيُنٍ جَزَاءً
بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ)

(No person knows what is kept hidden for them of joy as a reward for what they used to do) (32:17), and,

(وَفِيهَا مَا تَشْتَهِيهِ الْأَنفُسُ وَتَلَذُّ الْأَعْيُنُ وَأَنتُمْ فِيهَا
خَالِدُونَ)

((There will be) therein all that inner selves could desire, and all that eyes could delight in and you will abide therein forever) (43:71).

On the subject of warning and discouragement;

(أَفَأَمِنْتُمْ أَن يَخْسِفَ بِكُمْ جَانِبَ الْبَرِّ)

(Do you then feel secure that He will not cause a side of the land to swallow you up) (17:68), and,

(أَعَمِنْتُمْ مِّن فِي السَّمَاءِ أَن يَخْسِفَ بِكُمْ الْأَرْضَ
فَإِذَا هِيَ تَمُورُ - أَمْ أَمِنْتُمْ مِّن فِي السَّمَاءِ أَن
يُرْسِلَ عَلَيْكُمْ حَاصِبًا فَسَتَعْلَمُونَ كَيْفَ نَذِيرِ)

(Do you feel secure that He, Who is over the heaven (Allah), will not cause the earth to sink with you, and then it should quake Or do you feel secure that He, Who is over the heaven (Allah), will not send against you a violent whirlwind Then you shall know how (terrible) has been My warning) (67:16-17).

On the subject of threats, the Qur'an said,

(فَكُلًّا أَخَذْنَا بِذَنْبِهِ)

(So We punished each (of them) for his sins) (29:40). Also, on the subject of soft advice, the Qur'an said,

(أَفَرَأَيْتَ إِنْ مَتَّعْنَاهُمْ سِنِينَ - ثُمَّ جَاءَهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يُوعَدُونَ - مَا أَغْنَىٰ عَنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يُمَتَّعُونَ)

(Tell Me, (even) if We do let them enjoy for years. And afterwards comes to them that (punishment) which they had been promised. All that with which they used to enjoy shall not avail them) (26:205-207).

There are many other examples of the eloquence, beauty, and benefits of the Qur'an.

When the Qur'an is discussing Laws, commandments and prohibitions, it commands every type of righteous, good, pleasing and beneficial act. It also forbids every type of evil, disliked and amoral act. Ibn Mas'ud and other scholars of the Salaf said, "When you hear what Allah said in the Qur'an, such as,

(يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا)

(O you who believe!), then listen with full attention, for it either contains a type of righteousness that Allah is enjoining, or an evil that He is forbidding." For instance, Allah said,

(يَأْمُرُهُم بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَاهُمْ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَيُحِلُّ لَهُمُ الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَيُحَرِّمُ عَلَيْهِمُ الْخَبَائِثَ وَيَضَعُ عَنْهُمْ إِصْرَهُمْ وَالْأَغْلَالَ الَّتِي كَانَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ)

(He (Muhammad) commands them for Al-Ma`ruf (i.e. Islamic Monotheism and all that Islam has ordained); and forbids them from Al-Munkar (i.e. disbelief, polytheism of all kinds, and all that Islam has forbidden); he allows them as lawful At-Tayyibat (i.e. all good and lawful things), and prohibits them as unlawful Al-Khaba'ith (i.e. all evil and unlawful things), he releases them from their heavy burdens and from the fetters (bindings) that were upon them) (7:157).

When the Ayat mention Resurrection and the horrors that will occur on that Day, and Paradise and the Fire and the joys and safe refuge that Allah prepared for His loyal friends, or torment and Hell for His enemies, these Ayat contain glad tidings or warnings. The Ayat then call to perform good deeds and avoid evil deeds, making the life of this world less favorable and the Hereafter more favorable. They also establish the correct methods and guide to Allah's straight path and just legislation, all the while ridding the hearts of the evil of the cursed devil.

The Qur'an is the Greatest Miracle given to the Prophet

The Two Sahihs record that Abu Hurayrah said that the Prophet said,

«مَا مِنْ نَبِيٍّ مِنَ الْأَنْبِيَاءِ إِلَّا قَدْ أُعْطِيَ مِنَ الْآيَاتِ مَا آمَنَ عَلَى مِثْلِهِ الْبَشَرُ، وَإِنَّمَا كَانَ الَّذِي أُوتِيَهُ وَحْيًا أَوْحَاهُ اللَّهُ إِلَيَّ فَأَرْجُو أَنْ أَكُونَ أَكْثَرَهُمْ تَابِعًا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ»

(Every Prophet was given a miracle, the type of which brings mankind to faith. What I was given is a revelation that Allah sent down to me. Yet, I hope that I will have the most following on the Day of Resurrection.)

This is the wording narrated by Muslim. The Prophet stated that among the Prophets he was given a revelation, meaning, he was especially entrusted with the miraculous Qur'an that challenged mankind to produce something similar to it. As for the rest of the divinely revealed Books, they were not miraculous according to many scholars. Allah knows best. The Prophet was also aided with innumerable signs and indications that testify to the truth of his prophethood and what he was sent with, all thanks and praise is due to Allah.

Meaning of ` Stones

Allah said,

(فَاتَّقُوا النَّارَ الَّتِي وَقُودُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ أُعِدَّتْ لِلْكَافِرِينَ)

(Then fear the Fire (Hell) whose fuel is men and stones, prepared for the disbelievers) (2:24).

`Fuel' is wood, or similar substances, used to start and feed a fire. Similarly, Allah said,

(وَأَمَّا الْقَاسِطُونَ فَكَانُوا لِجَهَنَّمَ حَطَبًا)

(And as for the Qasitun (disbelievers who deviated from the right path), they shall be firewood for Hell) (72:15), and,

(إِنَّكُمْ وَمَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ حَصَبُ جَهَنَّمَ أَنْتُمْ لَهَا وَارِدُونَ)

(لَوْ كَانَ هَؤُلَاءِ ءَالِهَةً مَا وَرَدُّوَهَا وَكُلُّ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ)

(Certainly you (disbelievers) and that which you are worshipping now besides Allah, are (but) fuel for Hell! (Surely) you enter it. Had these (idols) been alihah (gods), they would not have entered there (Hell), and all of them will abide therein) (21:98-99).

The stones mentioned here are the giant, rotten, black, sulfuric stones that become the hottest when heated, may Allah save us from this evil end. It was also reported that the stones mentioned here are the idols and rivals that were worshipped instead of Allah, just as Allah said,

(إِنَّكُمْ وَمَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ حَصَبُ جَهَنَّمَ)

(Certainly you (disbelievers) and that which you are worshipping now besides Allah, are (but) fuel for Hell!) (21:28).

Allah's statement ,

(أُعِدَّتْ لِلْكَافِرِينَ)

(prepared for the disbelievers)

It appears most obvious that it refers to the Fire that is fueled by men and stones, and it also may refer to the stones themselves. There is no contradiction between these two views, because they are dependent upon each other. `Prepared' means, it is `kept' and will surely touch those who disbelieve in Allah and His Messenger . Ibn Ishaq narrated that Muhammad said that `Ikrimah or Sa`id bin Jubayr said that Ibn `Abbas said,

(أُعِدَّتْ لِلْكَافِرِينَ)

(prepared for the disbelievers),

"For those who embrace the disbelief that you (disbelievers) have embraced."

Jahannam (Hellfire) exists now

Many of the Imams of the Sunnah used this Ayah to prove that the Fire exists now. This is because Allah said,

(أُعِدَّتْ)

(prepared) meaning, prepared and kept. There are many Hadiths on this subject. For instance, the Prophet said,

«تَحَاجَّتِ الْجَنَّةُ وَالنَّارُ»

(Paradise and the Fire had an argument..)

Also, the Prophet said,

«اسْتَأْذَنَتِ النَّارُ رَبَّهَا فَقَالَتْ: رَبِّ أَكُلَ بَعْضِي بَعْضًا فَأَذِنَ لَهَا بِنَفْسَيْنِ: نَفْسٍ فِي الشِّتَاءِ وَنَفْسٍ فِي الصَّيْفِ»

(The Fire sought the permission of her Lord. She said, 'O my Lord! Some parts of me consumed the other parts.' And Allah allowed her two periods to exhale, one in winter and one in summer.)

Also, there is a Hadith recorded from Ibn Mas'ud that the Companions heard the sound of a falling object. When they asked about it, the Messenger of Allah said,

«هَذَا حَجَرٌ أُلْقِيَ بِهِ مِنْ شَفِيرِ جَهَنَّمَ مُنْذُ سَبْعِينَ سَنَةً، الْآنَ وَصَلَ إِلَى قَعْرِهَا»

(This is a stone that was thrown from the top of Jahannam seventy years ago, but only now reached its bottom.) This Hadith is in Sahih Muslim.

There are many Hadiths that are Mutawatir (narrated by many different chains of narrations) on this subject, such as the Hadiths about the eclipse prayer, the night of Isra' etc.

Allah's statements,

(فَأْتُوا بِسُورَةٍ مِّثْلِهِ)

(Then produce a Surah (chapter) of the like thereof) (2:23), and,

(بِسُورَةٍ مِّثْلِهِ)

(A Surah (chapter) like it) (10:38) this includes the short and long Surahs of the Qur'an. Therefore, the challenge to creation stands with regards to both the long and short Surahs, and there is no disagreement that I know of on this fact between the scholars of old and new. Before he became Muslim, `Amr bin Al-`As met Musaylimah the Liar who asked him, "What has recently been revealed to your fellow (meaning Muhammad) in Makkah" `Amr said, "A short, yet eloquent Surah." He asked, "What is it" He said,

(وَالْعَصْرِ - إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لَفِي خُسْرٍ)

(By Al-`Asr (the time). Verily, man is in loss,) (103:1-2)

Musaylimah thought for a while and said, "A similar Surah was also revealed to me." `Amr asked, "What is it" He said, "O Wabr, O Wabr (i.e. a wild cat), you are but two ears and a chest, and the rest of you is unworthy and thin." `Amr said, "By Allah! You know that I know that you are lying."

(وَبَشِّرِ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ أَنَّ لَهُمْ
جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرَى مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ كُلَّمَا رُزِقُوا مِنْهَا
مِنْ ثَمَرَةٍ رَزَقًا قَالُوا هَذَا الَّذِي رُزِقْنَا مِنْ قَبْلُ
وَأَنُوتُوا بِهِ مُتَشَابِهًا وَلَهُمْ فِيهَا أَزْوَاجٌ مُطَهَّرَةٌ وَهُمْ
فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ)

(25. And give glad tidings to those who believe and do righteous good deeds, that for them will be Gardens under which rivers flow (Paradise). Every time they will be provided with a fruit therefrom, they will say: "This is what we were provided with before," and they will be given things in resemblance (i.e. in the same form but different in taste) and they shall have therein Azwajun Mutahharatun (purified mates or wives), and they will abide therein forever.)

Rewards of Righteous Believers

After mentioning the torment that Allah has prepared for His miserable enemies who disbelieve in Him and in His Messengers, He mentions the condition of His happy, loyal friends who believe in Him and in His Messengers, adhere to the faith and perform the good deeds. This is the reason why the Qur'an was called Mathani, based on the correct opinion of the scholars. We will elaborate upon this subject later. Mathani means to mention faith and then disbelief, or vice versa. Or, Allah mentions the miserable and then the happy, or vice versa. As for mentioning similar things, it is called Tashabbuh, as we will come to know, Allah willing. Allah said,

(وَبَشِّرِ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ أَنَّ لَهُمْ
جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرَى مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ)

(And give glad tidings to those who believe and do righteous good deeds, that for them will be Gardens under which rivers flow (Paradise)). Consequently, Allah stated that Paradise has rivers that run beneath it, meaning, underneath its trees and rooms. From Hadiths it is learned that the rivers of Paradise do not run in valleys, and that the banks of Al-Kawthar (the Prophet's lake in Paradise) are made of domes of hollow pearls, the sand of Paradise is made of scented musk while its stones are made from pearls and jewels. We ask Allah to grant Paradise to us, for verily, He is the Most Beneficent, Most Gracious.

Ibn Abi Hatim reported that Abu Hurayrah said that the Messenger of Allah said,

«أَنْهَارُ الْجَنَّةِ تَفَجَّرُ تَحْتَ تِلَالٍ أَوْ مِنْ تَحْتِ جِبَالِ
الْمِسْكِ»

(The rivers of Paradise spring from beneath hills, or mountains of musk.)

He also reported from Masruq that `Abdullah said, "The rivers of Paradise spring from beneath mountains of musk."

The similarity between the Fruits of Paradise

Allah said next,

(كُلَّمَا رُزِقُوا مِنْهَا مِنْ ثَمَرَةٍ رِزْقًا قَالُوا هَذَا
الَّذِي رُزِقْنَا مِنْ قَبْلُ)

(Every time they will be provided with a fruit therefrom, they will say: "This is what we were provided with before").

Ibn Abi Hatim reported that Yahya bin Abi Kathir said, "The grass of Paradise is made of saffron, its hills from musk and the boys of everlasting youth will serve the believers with fruits which they will eat. They will then be brought similar fruits, and the people of Paradise will comment, 'This is the same as what you have just brought us.' The boys will say to them, 'Eat, for the color is the same, but the taste is different. Hence Allah's statement,

(وَأَتُوا بِهِ مُتَشَبِهًا)

(and they will be given things in resemblance). Abu Ja`far Ar-Razi narrated that Ar-Rabi` bin Anas said that Abu Al-`Aliyah said that,

(وَأَتُوا بِهِ مُتَشَبِهًا)

(and they will be given things in resemblance) means, "They look like each other, but the taste is different." Also, `Ikrimah said,

(وَأَتُوا بِهِ مُتَشَبِهًا)

(and they will be given things in resemblance) "They are similar to the fruits of this life, but the fruits of Paradise taste better. " Sufyan Ath-Thawri reported from Al-A`mash, from Abu Thubyan, that Ibn `Abbas said, "Nothing in Paradise resembles anything in the life of this world, except in name." In another narration, Ibn `Abbas said, "Only the names are similar between what is in this life and what is in Paradise."

The Wives of the People of Paradise are Pure

Allah said,

(وَلَهُمْ فِيهَا أَزْوَاجٌ مُّطَهَّرَةٌ)

(and they shall have therein Azwajun Mutahharatun). Ibn Abi Talhah reported that Ibn `Abbas said, "Purified from filth and impurity." Also, Mujahid said, "From menstruation, relieving the call of nature, urine, spit, semen and pregnancies." Also, Qatadah said, "Purified from impurity and sin." In another narration, he said, "From menstruation and pregnancies." Further, `Ata', Al-Hasan, Ad-Dahhak, Abu Salih, `Atiyah and As-Suddi were reported to have said similarly.

Allah's statement,

(وَهُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ)

(and they will abide therein forever) meaning ultimate happiness, for the believers will enjoy everlasting delight, safe from death and disruption of their bliss, for it never ends or ceases.

We ask Allah to make us among these believers, for He is the Most Generous, Most Kind and Most merciful.

(إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَسْتَحْي أَن يَضْرِبَ مَثَلًا مَّا بَعُوضَةٌ
فَمَا فَوْقَهَا فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا فَيَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ
مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَيَقُولُونَ مَاذَا أَرَادَ
اللَّهُ بِهَذَا مَثَلًا يُضِلُّ بِهِ كَثِيرًا وَيَهْدِي بِهِ كَثِيرًا
وَمَا يُضِلُّ بِهِ إِلَّا الْفَاسِقِينَ - الَّذِينَ يَنفُضُونَ عَهْدَ
اللَّهِ مِن بَعْدِ مِيثَاقِهِ وَيَقْطَعُونَ مَا أَمَرَ اللَّهُ بِهِ أَن
يُوصَلَ وَيُفْسِدُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ
الْخَاسِرُونَ)

(26. Verily, Allah is not ashamed to set forth a parable even of a mosquito or so much more when it is bigger (or less when it is smaller) than it. And as for those who believe, they know that it is the truth from their Lord, but as for those who disbelieve, they say: "What did Allah intend by this parable" By it He misleads many, and many He guides thereby. And He misleads thereby only the Fasiqin (the rebellious, disobedient to Allah). (27. Those who break Allah's covenant after ratifying it, and sever what Allah has ordered to be joined and do mischief on earth, it is they who are the losers.)

In his Tafsir, As-Suddi reported that Ibn ` Abbas, Ibn Mas` ud, and some Companions said; "When Allah gave these two examples of the hypocrites" meaning Allah's statements,

(مَثَلُهُمْ كَمَثَلِ الَّذِي اسْتَوْقَدَ نَارًا)

(Their likeness is as the likeness of one who kindled a fire), and,

(أَوْ كَصَيِّبٍ مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ)

(Or like a rainstorm from the sky), "The hypocrites said, `Allah's far more exalted than for Him to make such examples.' So Allah revealed these Ayat (2:26-27) up to:

(هُمُ الْخَسِرُونَ)

(Who are the losers)". Sa`id said that Qatadah said, "Allah does not shy away from the truth when He mentions a matter as a parable, whether this matter is significant or not. When Allah mentioned the flies and the spider in His Book, the people of misguidance said, 'Why did Allah mention these things.' So Allah revealed;

(إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَسْتَحْي أَن يَضْرِبَ مَثَلًا مَّا بَعُوضَةٌ
فَمَا فَوْقَهَا)

(Verily, Allah is not ashamed to set forth a parable even of a mosquito or so much more when it is bigger (or less when it is smaller) than it)."

A Parable about the Life of This World

Abu Ja`far Ar-Razi reported that Ar-Rabi` bin Anas commented on this Ayah (2:26); "This is an example that Allah has given for the life of this world. The mosquito lives as long as it needs food, but when it gets fat, it dies. This is also the example of people whom Allah mentioned in the Qur'an: when they acquire (and collect the delights of) the life of this world, Allah then takes them away." Afterwards, he recited,

(فَلَمَّا نَسُوا مَا ذُكِّرُوا بِهِ فَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِمُ أَبْوَابَ كُلِّ
شَيْءٍ)

(So, when they forgot (the warning) with which they had been reminded, We opened for them the gates of every (pleasant) thing) (6:44)

In this Ayah (2:26) Allah stated that He does not shy away or hesitate in making an example or parable of anything, whether the example involves a significant or an insignificant matter.

Allah's statement,

(فَمَا فَوْقَهَا)

(Or so much more when it is bigger than it) Fama fawqaha means, something bigger than the mosquito, which is one of the most insignificant and tiniest of creatures. Muslim narrated that Aishah said that the Messenger of Allah said,

«مَا مِنْ مُسْلِمٍ يُشَاكُّ شَوْكَةً فَمَا فَوْقَهَا إِلَّا كُتِبَتْ لَهُ بِهَا دَرَجَةٌ، وَمُحِيتَ عَنْهُ بِهَا خَطِيئَةٌ»

(No Muslim is harmed by a thorn, Fama fawqaha (or something larger), but a good deed will be written for him and an evil deed will be erased from his record.)

So Allah has informed us that there is no matter that is too small that is exempt from being used as an example, even if it was as insignificant as a mosquito or a spider. Allah said,

(يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ ضَرْبَ مَثَلٍ فَاسْتَمِعُوا لَهُ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ لَنْ يَخْلُقُوا ذُبَابًا وَلَوْ اجْتَمَعُوا لَهُ وَإِنْ يَسْلُبْهُمُ الذُّبَابُ شَيْئًا لَا يَسْتَنْقِذُوهُ مِنْهُ ضَعُفَ الطَّالِبُ وَالْمَطْلُوبُ)

(O mankind! A similitude has been coined, so listen to it (carefully): Verily, those on whom you call besides Allah, cannot create (even) a fly, even though they combine together for the purpose. And if the fly snatches away a thing from them, they will have no power to release it from the fly. So weak are (both) the seeker and the sought.) (22:73),

(مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ أَوْلِيَاءَ كَمَثَلِ الْعَنْكَبُوتِ اتَّخَذَتْ بَيْتًا وَإِنَّ أَوْهَنَ الْبُيُوتِ لَبَيْتُ الْعَنْكَبُوتِ لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ)

(The likeness of those who take (false deities as) Awliya' (protectors, helpers) other than Allah is the likeness of a spider who builds (for itself) a house; but verily, the frailest (weakest) of houses is the spider's house if they but knew.) (29:41), and,

(أَلَمْ تَرَ كَيْفَ ضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا كَلِمَةً طَيِّبَةً كَشَجَرَةٍ طَيِّبَةٍ أَصْلُهَا ثَابِتٌ وَفَرْعُهَا فِي السَّمَاءِ - تُؤْتِي أُكْلَهَا كُلَّ حِينٍ بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهَا وَيَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ

الْأَمْثَالَ لِلنَّاسِ لَعْلَهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ - وَمَثَلُ كَلِمَةٍ
خَبِيثَةٍ كَشَجَرَةٍ خَبِيثَةٍ اجْتُثَّتْ مِنْ فَوْقِ الْأَرْضِ مَا
لَهَا مِنْ قَرَارٍ - يُثَبِّتُ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا بِالْقَوْلِ
الَّذِي فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ وَيُضِلُّ اللَّهُ
الظَّالِمِينَ وَيَفْعَلُ اللَّهُ مَا يَشَاءُ)

(See you not how Allah sets forth a parable A goodly word as a goodly tree, whose root is firmly fixed, and its branches (reach) to the sky (i.e. very high). Giving its fruit at all times, by the leave of its Lord, and Allah sets forth parables for mankind in order that they may remember. And the parable of an evil word is that of an evil tree uprooted from the surface of earth, having no stability. Allah will keep firm those who believe, with the word that stands firm in life of this world (i.e. they will keep on worshipping Allah alone and none else), and in the Hereafter. And Allah will cause the Zalimin (polytheists and wrongdoers) to go astray those and Allah does what He wills.) (14:24-27). Allah said,

(ضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا عَبْدًا مَمْلُوكًا لَا يَقْدِرُ عَلَى
شَيْءٍ)

(Allah puts forward the example of (two men a believer and a disbeliever); a servant under the possession of another, he has no power of any sort) (16:75). He then said,

(وَضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا رَجُلَيْنِ أَحَدُهُمَا أَبْكَمُ لَا يَقْدِرُ
عَلَى شَيْءٍ وَهُوَ كَلٌّ عَلَى مَوْلَاهُ أَيْنَمَا يُوَجِّههُ لَا
يَأْتِ بِخَيْرٍ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي هُوَ وَمَنْ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ)

(And Allah puts forward (another) example of two men, one of them dumb, who has no power over anything, and he is a burden on his master; whichever way he directs him, he brings no good. Is such a man equal to one who commands justice) (16:76). Also, Allah said,

(ضَرْبَ لَكُمْ مَثَلًا مِّنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ هَلْ لَّكُمْ مِّنْ مَّا
مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ مِّنْ شُرَكَاءَ فِي مَّا رَزَقْنَكُمْ)

(He sets forth for you a parable from your own selves: Do you have partners among those whom your right hands possess (i.e. your servants) to share as equals in the wealth we have bestowed on you) (30:28).

Mujahid commented on Allah's statement,

(إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَسْتَحْي أَن يَضْرِبَ مَثَلًا مَّا بَعُوضَةٌ
فَمَا فَوْقَهَا)

(Verily, Allah is not ashamed to set forth a parable even of a mosquito or so much more when it is bigger than it.) "The believers believe in these parables, whether they involve large matters or small, because they know that they are the truth from their Lord, and Allah guides the believers by these parables."

In his Tafsir, As-Suddi reported that Ibn `Abbas, Ibn Mas`ud and other people among the Companions said,

(يُضِلُّ بِهِ كَثِيرًا)

(By it He misleads many), "Meaning the hypocrites. Allah guides the believers with these parables, and the straying of the hypocrites increases when they reject the parables that Allah mentioned for them which they know are true. This is how Allah misleads them."

(وَيَهْدِي بِهِ)

(And He guides thereby) meaning, with the parables,

(كَثِيرًا)

(many) from among the people of faith and conviction. Allah adds guidance to their guidance, and faith to their faith, because they firmly believe in what they know to be true, that is, the parables that Allah has mentioned. This is guidance that Allah grants them;

(وَمَا يُضِلُّ بِهِ إِلَّا الْفَاسِقِينَ)

(And He misleads thereby only the Fasiqin (the rebellious, disobedient to Allah)), meaning, the hypocrites. The Arabs say that the date has Fasaqat, when it comes out of its skin, and they call the mouse a Fuwaysiqah, because it leaves its den to cause mischief. The Two Sahih recorded `A'ishah saying that the Messenger of Allah said,

«خَمْسٌ فَوَاسِقٌ يُقْتَلْنَ فِي الْحِلِّ وَالْحَرَمِ: الْعُرَابُ
وَالْحِدَاةُ وَالْعَقْرَبُ وَالْفَأْرَةُ وَالْكَلْبُ الْعَقُورُ»

(Five animals are Fawasiq, and they must be killed during Ihram and otherwise: the crow, the kite, the scorpion, the mouse and the rabid dog.) eFasiq, includes the disbeliever and the disobedient. However, the Fisq of the disbeliever is worse, and this is the type of Fasiq that the Ayah is describing here, because Allah described them as,

(الَّذِينَ يَنْقُضُونَ عَهْدَ اللَّهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مِيثَاقِهِ
وَيَقْطَعُونَ مَا أَمَرَ اللَّهُ بِهِ أَنْ يُوصَلَ وَيُفْسِدُونَ
فِي الْأَرْضِ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْخَسِرُونَ)

(Those who break Allah's covenant after ratifying it, and sever what Allah has ordered to be joined and do mischief on earth, it is they who are the losers.)

These are the characteristics of the disbelievers and they contradict the qualities of the believers. Similarly, Allah said in Surat Ar-Ra`d,

(أَفَمَنْ يَعْلَمُ أَنَّ مَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ الْحَقُّ كَمَنْ
هُوَ أَعْمَى إِنَّمَا يَتَذَكَّرُ أُولَؤُا الْأَلْبَابِ - الَّذِينَ
يُوفُونَ بِعَهْدِ اللَّهِ وَلَا يَنْقُضُونَ الْمِيثَاقَ - وَالَّذِينَ
يَصِلُونَ مَا أَمَرَ اللَّهُ بِهِ أَنْ يُوصَلَ وَيَخْشَوْنَ
رَبَّهُمْ وَيَخَافُونَ سُوءَ الْحِسَابِ)

(Shall he then, who knows that what has been revealed unto you (O Muhammad) from your Lord is the truth, be like him who is blind But it is only the men of understanding that pay heed. Those who fulfill the covenant of Allah and break not the Mithaq (bond, treaty, covenant). And those who join that which Allah has commanded to be joined (i.e. they are

good to their relatives, and do not sever the bond of kinship), and fear their Lord, and dread the terrible reckoning.) (13:19-21)) until,

(وَالَّذِينَ يَنْقُضُونَ عَهْدَ اللَّهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مِيثَاقِهِ
وَيَقْطَعُونَ مَا أَمَرَ اللَّهُ بِهِ أَنْ يُوصَلَ وَيُفْسِدُونَ
فِي الْأَرْضِ أُولَئِكَ لَهُمُ اللَّعْنَةُ وَلَهُمْ سُوءُ الدَّارِ)

(And those who break the covenant of Allah, after its ratification, and sever that which Allah has commanded to be joined (i.e. they sever the bond of kinship and are not good to their relatives), and work mischief in the land, on them is the curse (i.e. they will be far away from Allah's mercy), and for them is the unhappy (evil) home (i.e. Hell).) (13:25)

The covenant that these deviant people broke is Allah's covenant with His creation, that is, to obey Him and avoid the sins that He prohibited. This covenant was reiterated in Allah's Books and by the words of His Messengers. Ignoring this covenant constitutes breaking it. It was said that the Ayah (2:27) is about the disbelievers and the hypocrites among the People of the Book. In this case, the covenant that they broke is the pledge that Allah took from them in the Tawrah to follow Muhammad when he is sent as a Prophet, and to believe in him, and in what he was sent with. Breaking Allah's covenant in this case occurred when the People of the Book rejected the Prophet after they knew the truth about him, and they hid this truth from people, even though they swore to Allah that they would do otherwise. Allah informed us that they threw the covenant behind their backs and sold it for a miserable price.

It was also reported that the Ayah (2:27) refers to all disbelievers, idol worshippers and hypocrites. Allah took their pledge to believe in His Oneness, showing them the signs that testify to His Lordship. He also took a covenant from them to obey His commands and refrain from His prohibitions, knowing that His Messengers would bring proofs and miracles that none among the creation could ever produce. These miracles testified to the truth of Allah's Messengers. The covenant was broken when the disbelievers denied what was proven to them to be authentic and rejected Allah's Prophets and Books, although they knew that they were the truth. This Tafsir was reported from Muqatil bin Hayyan, and it is very good. It is also the view that Az-Zamakhshari held.

Allah's statement next,

(وَيَقْطَعُونَ مَا أَمَرَ اللَّهُ بِهِ أَنْ يُوصَلَ)

(And sever what Allah has ordered to be joined) is in reference to keeping the relations with the relatives, as Qatadah asserted. This Ayah is similar to Allah's statement,

(فَهَلْ عَسَيْتُمْ إِنْ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ أَنْ تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ
وَتَقَطَّعُوا أَرْحَامَكُمْ)

(Would you then, if you were given the authority, do mischief in the land, and sever your ties of kinship) (47:22)

Ibn Jarir At-Tabari preferred this opinion. However, it has been said that the meaning of the Ayah (2:27) here is more general. Hence, everything that Allah has commanded to nurture, and the people severed, is included in its meaning.

The Meaning of ` Loss

Muqatil bin Hayyan commented on Allah's statement,

(أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْخَسِرُونَ)

(It is they who are the losers) "In the Hereafter." Similarly, Allah said,

(أُولَئِكَ لَهُمُ اللَّعْنَةُ وَلَهُمْ سُوءُ الدَّارِ)

(On them is the curse (i.e. they will be far away from Allah's mercy), and for them is the unhappy (evil) home (i.e. Hell)) (13:25).

Also, Ad-Dahhak said that Ibn ` Abbas said, "Every characteristic that Allah describes those other than the people of Islam - such as being losers - then it refers to disbelief. However, when they are attributed to the people of Islam, then these terms refer to sin." Ibn Jarir commented on Allah's statement,

(أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْخَسِرُونَ)

(It is they who are the losers.) "Losers is plural for loser, this word refers to whoever decreased his own share of Allah's mercy by disobeying Him, just as the merchant loses in his trade by sustaining capital loss. Such is the case with the hypocrite and the disbeliever who lose their share of the mercy that Allah has in store for His servants on the Day of Resurrection. And that is when the disbeliever and the hypocrite most desperately need Allah's mercy."

(كَيْفَ تَكْفُرُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَكُنْتُمْ أَمْوَاتًا فَأَحْيَاكُمْ ثُمَّ يُمِيتُكُمْ ثُمَّ يُحْيِيكُمْ ثُمَّ إِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ)

(28. How can you disbelieve in Allah seeing that you were dead and He gave you life Then He will give you death, then again will bring you to life (on the Day of Resurrection) and then unto Him you will return.)

Allah testifies to the fact that He exists and that He is the Creator and the Sustainer Who has full authority over His servants,

(كَيْفَ تَكْفُرُونَ بِاللَّهِ)

(How can you disbelieve in Allah)

How can anyone deny Allah's existence or worship others with Him while;

(وَكُنْتُمْ أَمْوَاتًا فَأَحْيَاكُمْ)

(You were dead and He gave you life) meaning, He brought them from the state of non-existence to life. Similarly, Allah said,

(أَمْ خُلِقُوا مِنْ غَيْرِ شَيْءٍ أَمْ هُمُ الْخَالِقُونَ - أَمْ خَلَقُوا السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ بَلْ لَا يُوقِنُونَ)

(Were they created by nothing Or were they themselves the creators Or did they create the heavens and the earth Nay, but they have no firm belief) (52:35-36) and,

(هَلْ أَتَى عَلَى الْإِنْسَانِ حِينٌ مِّنَ الدَّهْرِ لَمْ يَكُن شَيْئًا مَّذْكُورًا)

(Has there not been over man a period of time, when he was not a thing worth mentioning) (76:1).

There are many other Ayat on this subject. Ibn Jarir reported from `Ata' that Ibn `Abbas said that,

(وَكُنْتُمْ أَمْوَاتًا فَأَحْيَاكُمْ)

(Seeing that you were dead and He gave you life) means, "You did not exist beforehand. You were nothing until Allah created you; He will bring death to you and then bring you back to life during Resurrection." Ibn `Abbas then said, "This is similar to Allah's statement;

(قَالُوا رَبَّنَا أَمَنَّاتُنَا وَإِحْيَيْتَنَا ائْتِنَا)

(They will say: "Our Lord! You have made us to die twice and You have given us life twice.") (40:11)"

(هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مَا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعاً ثُمَّ
اسْتَوَىٰ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ فَسَوَّاهُنَّ سَبْعَ سَمَوَاتٍ وَهُوَ
بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ)

(29. He it is Who created for you all that is on earth. Then He Istawa ila the heaven and made them seven heavens and He is the Knower of everything.)

Evidence of Allah's Ability

After Allah mentioned the proofs of His creating them, and what they can witness in themselves as proof of that, He mentioned another proof that they can witness, that is, the creation of the heavens and earth. Allah said,

(هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مَا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعاً ثُمَّ
اسْتَوَىٰ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ فَسَوَّاهُنَّ سَبْعَ سَمَوَاتٍ)

(He it is Who created for you all that is on earth. Then He Istawa ila the heaven and made them seven heavens) meaning, He turned towards the heaven,

(فَسَوَّاهُنَّ)

(And made them) meaning, that He made the heaven, seven heavens. Allah said,

(فَسَوَّاهُنَّ سَبْعَ سَمَوَاتٍ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ)

(And made them seven heavens and He is the Knower of everything) meaning, His knowledge encompasses all His creation, just as He said in another Ayah,

(أَلَا يَعْلَمُ مَنْ خَلَقَ)

(Should not He Who has created know) (67:14).

The Beginning of the Creation

This Ayah (2:29) is explained in detail in Surat As-Sajdah where Allah said;

(قُلْ أَءَنتُمْ لَتَكْفُرُونَ بِالَّذِي خَلَقَ الْأَرْضَ فِي يَوْمَيْنِ وَتَجْعَلُونَ لَهُ أَندَادًا ذَلِكَ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ - وَجَعَلَ فِيهَا رَوَاسِيَ مِنْ فَوْقِهَا وَبَارَكَ فِيهَا وَقَدَّرَ فِيهَا أَقْوَتَهَا فِي أَرْبَعَةِ أَيَّامٍ سَوَاءً لِّلسَّائِلِينَ - ثُمَّ اسْتَوَى إِلَى السَّمَاءِ وَهِيَ دُخَانٌ فَقَالَ لَهَا وَلِلْأَرْضِ ائْتِيَا طَوْعًا أَوْ كَرْهًا قَالَتَا أَتَيْنَا طَائِعِينَ - فَقَضَاهُنَّ سَبْعَ سَمَوَاتٍ فِي يَوْمَيْنِ وَأَوْحَى فِي كُلِّ سَمَاءٍ أَمْرَهَا وَزَيَّنَّا السَّمَاءَ الدُّنْيَا بِمَصَابِيحَ وَحِفْظًا ذَلِكَ تَقْدِيرُ الْعَزِيزِ الْعَلِيمِ)

(Say (O Muhammad): "Do you verily disbelieve in Him Who created the earth in two Days And you set up rivals (in worship) with Him That is the Lord of all that exists. He placed therein (i.e. the earth) firm mountains from above it, and He blessed it, and measured therein its sustenance (for its dwellers) in four Days equal (i.e. all these four `days' were equal in the length of time) for all those who ask (about its creation). Then He Istawa ila the heaven when it was smoke, and said to it and to the earth: "Come both of you willingly or unwillingly." They both said: "We come willingly." Then He finished them (as) seven heavens in two Days and He made in each heaven its affair. And We adorned the nearest (lowest) heaven with lamps (stars) to be an adornment as well as to guard (from the devils by using them as missiles against the devils). Such is the decree of the Almighty, the Knower) (41:9-12).

These Ayat indicate that Allah started creation by creating earth, then He made heaven into seven heavens. This is how building usually starts, with the lower floors first and then the top floors, as the scholars of Tafsir reiterated, as we will come to know, Allah willing. Allah also said,

(أَءَنتُمْ أَشَدُّ خَلْقًا أَمْ السَّمَاءُ بَنَاهَا - رَفَعَ سَمَكَهَا فَسَوَّاهَا - وَأَغْطَشَ لَيْلَهَا وَأَخْرَجَ ضُحَاهَا - وَالْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ دَحَاهَا - أَخْرَجَ مِنْهَا مَاءَهَا

وَمَرَعَهَا - وَالْجِبَالَ أَرْسَاهَا - مَتَعًا لَكُمْ
وَلَا نُعَمِّكُمْ)

(Are you more difficult to create or is the heaven that He constructed He raised its height, and has perfected it. Its night He covers with darkness and its forenoon He brings out (with light). And the earth, after that, He spread it out. And brought forth therefrom its water and its pasture. And the mountains He has fixed firmly. (To be) a provision and benefit for you and your cattle) (79:27-33).

It is said that "Then" in the Ayah (2:29) relates only to the order of reciting the information being given, it does not relate to the order that the events being mentioned took place, this was reported from Ibn ` Abbas by ` Ali bin Abi Talhah.

The Earth was created before Heaven

Mujahid commented on Allah's statement,

(هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مَّا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا)

(He it is Who created for you all that is on earth) "Allah created the earth before heaven, and when He created the earth, smoke burst out of it. This is why Allah said,

(ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ وَهِيَ دُخَانٌ)

(Then He Istawa ila (turned towards) the heaven when it was smoke.) (41:11)

(فَسَوَّاهُنَّ سَبْعَ سَمَوَاتٍ)

(And made them seven heavens) means, one above the other, while the `seven earths' means, one below the other."

This Ayah testifies to the fact that the earth was created before heaven, as Allah has indicated in the Ayat in Surat As-Sajdah.

Spreading the Earth out after the Heavens were created

Sahih Al-Bukhari records that when Ibn ` Abbas was question about this matter, he said that the earth was created before heaven, and the earth was spread out only after the creation of the heaven. Several Tafsir scholars of old and recent times also said similarly, as we have elaborated on in the Tafsir of Surat An-Nazi`at (chapter 79). The result of that discussion is

that the word Daha (translated above as "spread") is mentioned and explained in Allah's statement,

(وَالْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ دَحَاهَا - أَخْرَجَ مِنْهَا مَاءَهَا
وَمَرْعَاهَا - وَالْجِبَالَ أَرْسَاهَا)

(And the earth, after that, He spread it out. And brought forth therefrom its water and its pasture. And the mountains He has fixed firmly.) (79:30-32)

Therefore, Daha means that the earth's treasures were brought to its surface after finishing the job of creating whatever will reside on earth and heaven. When the earth became Daha, the water burst out to its surface and the various types, colors, shapes and kinds of plants grew. The stars started rotating along with the planets that rotate around them. And Allah knows best.

(وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلِكَةِ إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ
خَلِيفَةً قَالُوا أَتَجْعَلُ فِيهَا مَنْ يُفْسِدُ فِيهَا وَيَسْفِكُ
الدِّمَاءَ وَنَحْنُ نُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِكَ وَنُقَدِّسُ لَكَ قَالَ إِنِّي
أَعْلَمُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ)

(30. And (remember) when your Lord said to the angels: "Verily, I am going to place (mankind) generations after generations on earth." They said: "Will You place therein those who will make mischief therein and shed blood, while we glorify You with praises and thanks and sanctify You." He (Allah) said: "I know that which you do not know.")

Adam and His Children inhabited the Earth, Generation after Generation

Allah reiterated His favor on the Children of Adam when He stated that He mentioned them in the highest of heights before He created them. Allah said,

(وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلِكَةِ)

(And (remember) when your Lord said to the angels.)

This Ayah means, "O Muhammad ! Mention to your people what Allah said to the angels,

(إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً)

(Verily, I am going to place a Khalifah on earth).

Meaning people reproducing generation after generation, century after century, just as Allah said,

(وَهُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَكُمْ خَلَائِفَ الْأَرْضِ)

(And it is He Who has made you (Khalaf) generations coming after generations, replacing each other on the earth) (6:165),

(وَيَجْعَلُكُمْ خُلَفَاءَ الْأَرْضِ)

(And makes you (Khulafa') inheritors of the earth) (27:62),

(وَلَوْ نَشَاءُ لَجَعَلْنَا مِنْكُمْ مَلَائِكَةً فِي الْأَرْضِ يَخْلُفُونَ)

(And if it were Our will, We would have (destroyed you (mankind all, and) made angels to replace you (Yakhlufun) on the earth.) (43: 60) and,

(فَخَلَفَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ خَلْفٌ)

(Then after them succeeded an (evil) generation (Khalif)) (7:169). It appears that Allah was not referring to Adam specifically as Khalifah, otherwise he would not have allowed the angels' statement,

(أَتَجْعَلُ فِيهَا مَنْ يُفْسِدُ فِيهَا وَيَسْفِكُ الدِّمَاءَ)

(Will You place therein those who will make mischief therein and shed blood).

The angels meant that this type of creature usually commits the atrocities they mentioned. The angels knew of this fact, according to their understanding of human nature, for Allah stated that He would create man from clay. Or, the angels understood this fact from the word Khalifah, which also means the person who judges disputes that occur between people, forbidding them from injustice and sin, as Al-Qurtubi said.

The statement the angels uttered was not a form of disputing with Allah's, nor out of envy for the Children of Adam, as some mistakenly thought. Allah has described them as those who do not precede Him in speaking, meaning that they do not ask Allah anything without His permission. When Allah informed them that He was going to create a creation on the earth, and they had knowledge that this creation would commit mischief on it, as Qatadah mentioned, they said,

(أَتَجْعَلُ فِيهَا مَن يُفْسِدُ فِيهَا وَيَسْفِكُ الدِّمَاءَ)

(Will You place therein those who will make mischief therein and shed blood)

This is only a question for the sake of learning about the wisdom of that, as if they said, Our Lord! What is the wisdom of creating such creatures since they will cause trouble in the earth and spill blood "If the wisdom behind this action is that You be worshipped, we praise and glorify You (meaning we pray to You) we never indulge in mischief, so why create other creatures"

Allah said to the angels in answer to their inquiry,

(إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ)

(I know that which you do not know.) meaning, "I know that the benefit of creating this type of creature outweighs the harm that you mentioned, that which you have no knowledge of. I will create among them Prophets and send Messengers. I will also create among them truthful, martyrs, righteous believers, worshippers, the modest, the pious, the scholars who implement their knowledge, humble people and those who love Allah and follow His Messengers."

The Sahih recorded that when the angels ascend to Allah with the records of the servant's deeds, Allah asks them, while having better knowledge, "How did you leave My servants" They will say, "We came to them while they were praying and left them while they were praying." This is because the angels work in shifts with mankind, and they change shifts during the Fajr and `Asr prayers. The angels who descended will remain with us, while the angels who have remained with us ascend with our deeds. The Messenger of Allah said,

«يُرْفَعُ إِلَيْهِ عَمَلُ اللَّيْلِ قَبْلَ النَّهَارِ وَعَمَلُ النَّهَارِ قَبْلَ اللَّيْلِ»

(The deeds of the night are elevated to Allah before the morning, and the deeds of the morning before the night falls.)

Hence, the angels' statement, "We came to them while they were praying and left them while they were praying," explains Allah's statement,

(إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ)

(I know that which you do not know.)

It was said that the meaning of Allah's statement,

(إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ)

(I know that which you do not know.) is, "I have a specific wisdom in creating them, which you do not have knowledge of." It was also said that it is in answer to,

(وَنَحْنُ نُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِكَ وَنُقَدِّسُ لَكَ)

(While we glorify You with praises and thanks and sanctify You) after which Allah said,

(إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ)

(I know that which you do not know). Meaning, "I know that Iblis is not as you are, although he is among you." Others said,

(أَتَجْعَلُ فِيهَا مَن يُفْسِدُ فِيهَا وَيَسْفِكُ الدِّمَاءَ وَنَحْنُ
نُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِكَ وَنُقَدِّسُ لَكَ)

"(Will You place therein those who will make mischief therein and shed blood, while we glorify you with praises and thanks and sanctify You.) is their request that they should be allowed to inhabit the earth, instead of the Children of Adam. So Allah said to them,

(إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ)

(I know that which you do not know) if your inhabiting the heavens is better, or worse for you." Ar-Razi as well as others said this. Allah knows best.

The Obligation of appointing a Khalifah and some related Issues

Al-Qurtubi, as well as other scholars, said that this Ayah (2:30) proves the obligation of appointing a Khalifah to pass judgements on matters of dispute between people, to aid the oppressed against the oppressor, to implement the Islamic penal code and to forbid evil. There are many other tasks that can only be fulfilled by appointing the Imam, and what is necessary

in performing an obligation, is an obligation itself. We should state here that Imamah occurs by either naming a successor, as a group among Ahl As-Sunnah scholars said occurred - by the Prophet - in the case of Abu Bakr, or hinting to a successor. Or, the current Khalifah names a certain person as Khalifah after him, as Abu Bakr did with `Umar. Or, the Khalifah might leave the matter in the hands of the Muslim consultative council, or a group of righteous men, just as `Umar did. Or, the people of authority could gather around a certain person to whom they give the pledge of allegiance, or they could select one among them to choose the candidate, according to the majority of the scholars.

The Khalifah must be a responsible adult Muslim male, able to perform Ijtihad (independent legal judgments), bodily able, righteous, with knowledge of warfare, politics. He also must be from the tribe of Quraysh, according to the correct view, but it is not necessary that he be from the tribe of Bani Hashim, or that he be immune from error, as the Rafidah (Shiites) falsely claim.

When the Khalifah becomes an immoral person (Fasiq), should he be impeached There is disagreement over this matter, but the correct view is that he is not to be removed, because the Messenger of Allah said,

«إِلَّا أَنْ تَرَوْا كُفْرًا بَوَاحًا عِنْدَكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ فِيهِ بُرْهَانٌ»

(Unless you witness a clear Kufr regarding which you have clear proof from Allah.)

Does the Khalifah have the right to resign from his post There is a difference on this issue. It is a fact that Al-Hasan bin `Ali removed himself from the position of Khalifah and surrendered it to Mu`awiyah. However, this occurred because of a necessity, and Al-Hasan was praised for this action.

It is not permissible to appoint two Imams for the world or more at the same time. This is not allowed because the Messenger of Allah said,

«مَنْ جَاءَكُمْ وَأَمْرُكُمْ جَمِيعٌ يُرِيدُ أَنْ يُفَرِّقَ بَيْنَكُمْ فَاقْتُلُوهُ كَأَنَّا مَنْ كَانَ»

(Whoever came to you while you are united and tried to divide you, then execute him, no matter who he is.)

This is the view of the majority of scholars. Imam Al-Haramayn stated that Abu Ishaq allowed the appointment of two or more Imams when the various provinces are far away from each other. However, Imam Al-Haramayn himself was indecisive about this view.

(وَعَلَّمَ ءَادَمَ الْأَسْمَاءَ كُلَّهَا ثُمَّ عَرَضَهُمْ عَلَى الْمَلَائِكَةِ فَقَالَ أَنْبِئُونِي بِأَسْمَاءِ هَؤُلَاءِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ - قَالُوا سُبْحَانَكَ لَا عِلْمَ لَنَا إِلَّا مَا عَلَّمْتَنَا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ - قَالَ يَاءَادَمُ أَنْبِئِهِمْ بِأَسْمَائِهِمْ فَلَمَّا أَنْبَأَهُمْ بِأَسْمَائِهِمْ قَالَ أَلَمْ أَقُلْ لَكُمْ إِنَّي أَعْلَمُ غَيْبَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَأَعْلَمُ مَا تُبْدُونَ وَمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْتُمُونَ)

(31. And He taught Adam all the names (of everything), then He showed them to the angels and said, "Tell Me the names of these if you are truthful.") (32. They (angels) said: "Glory is to You, we have no knowledge except what you have taught us. Verily, You are the Knower, the Wise.") (33. He said: "O Adam! Inform them of their names," and when he had informed them of their names, He said: "Did I not tell you that I know the Ghayb (unseen) in the heavens and the earth, and I know what you reveal and what you have been concealing")

The Virtue of Adam over the Angels

Allah stated the virtue of Adam above the angels, because He taught Adam, rather than them, the names of everything. This occurred after they prostrated to him. This discussion precedes that event here, only to show the importance of his position, and the absence of the angels' knowledge about creating the Khalifah when they asked about it. So Allah informed the angels that He knows what they do not know, and then He mentioned this to show them Adam's superiority over them in knowledge. Allah said,

(وَعَلَّمَ ءَادَمَ الْأَسْمَاءَ كُلَّهَا)

(And He taught Adam all the names (of everything)).

Ad-Dahhak said that Ibn ` Abbas commented on the Ayah;

(وَعَلَّمَ ءَادَمَ الْأَسْمَاءَ كُلَّهَا)

(And He taught Adam all the names (of everything)) "Meaning, the names that people use, such as human, animal, sky, earth, land, sea, horse, donkey, and so forth, including the names of the other species." Ibn Abi Hatim and Ibn Jarir reported that `Asim bin Kulayb narrated from Sa`id bin Ma`bad that Ibn `Abbas was questioned,

(وَعَلَّمَ ءَادَمَ الْأَسْمَاءَ كُلَّهَا)

(And He taught Adam all the names (of everything)) "Did Allah teach him the names of the plate and the pot" He said, "Yes, and even the terms for breaking wind!"

Allah taught Adam the names of everything, their proper names, the names of their characteristics, and what they do, just as Ibn `Abbas stated about the terms for passing gas.

In his Sahih, Al-Bukhari explained this Ayah in the Book of Tafsir with a report from Anas bin Malik who said that the Messenger of Allah said,

«يَجْتَمِعُ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ فَيَقُولُونَ: لَوْ
اسْتَشْفَعْنَا إِلَى رَبِّنَا فَيَأْتُونَ آدَمَ فَيَقُولُونَ: أَنْتَ أَبُو
النَّاسِ خَلَقَكَ اللَّهُ بِيَدِهِ وَأَسْجَدَ لَكَ مَلَائِكَتُهُ وَعَلَّمَكَ
أَسْمَاءَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ، فَاشْفَعْ لَنَا عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ حَتَّى
يُرِيحَنَا مِنْ مَكَانِنَا هَذَا، فَيَقُولُ: لَسْتُ هُنَاكُمْ
وَيَذْكُرُ ذَنْبَهُ فَيَسْتَحْيِي انْتُوا نُوحًا فَإِنَّهُ أَوَّلُ
رَسُولٍ بَعَثَهُ اللَّهُ إِلَى أَهْلِ الْأَرْضِ، فَيَأْتُونَهُ،
فَيَقُولُ: لَسْتُ هُنَاكُمْ وَيَذْكُرُ سُؤَالَ رَبِّهِ مَا لَيْسَ لَهُ
بِهِ عِلْمٌ فَيَسْتَحْيِي فَيَقُولُ: انْتُوا خَلِيلَ الرَّحْمَنِ
فَيَأْتُونَهُ فَيَقُولُ: لَسْتُ هُنَاكُمْ فَيَقُولُ: انْتُوا مُوسَى
عَبْدًا كَلَّمَهُ اللَّهُ وَأَعْطَاهُ التَّوْرَةَ، فَيَقُولُ: لَسْتُ
هُنَاكُمْ فَيَذْكُرُ قَتْلَ النَّفْسِ بِغَيْرِ نَفْسٍ فَيَسْتَحْيِي مِنْ

رَبِّهِ فَيَقُولُ: ائْتُوا عِيسَى عَبْدَ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولَهُ وَكَلِمَةَ
اللَّهِ وَرُوحَهُ، فَيَأْتُونَهُ فَيَقُولُ: لَسْتُ هُنَاكُمْ ائْتُوا
مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدًا غُفِرَ لَهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِنْ ذَنْبِهِ وَمَا تَأَخَّرَ،
فَيَأْتُونِي فَأَنْطَلِقُ حَتَّى أَسْتَأْذِنَ عَلَى رَبِّي فَيَأْذِنُ
لِي، فَإِذَا رَأَيْتُ رَبِّي وَقَعْتُ سَاجِدًا فَيَدْعُنِي مَا
شَاءَ اللَّهُ ثُمَّ يُقَالُ: اِرْفَعْ رَأْسَكَ وَسَلْ تُعْطَهُ وَقُلْ
يُسْمِعْ وَاشْفَعْ تُشَفِّعْ، فَأَرْفَعُ رَأْسِي فَأُحْمَدُهُ بِتَحْمِيدِ
يُعْلَمُنِيهِ ثُمَّ أَشْفَعُ فَيَحْدُ لِي حَدًّا فَأَدْخِلُهُمُ الْجَنَّةَ ثُمَّ
أَعُودُ إِلَيْهِ فَإِذَا رَأَيْتُ رَبِّي مِثْلَهُ ثُمَّ أَشْفَعُ فَيَحْدُ لِي
حَدًّا فَأَدْخِلُهُمُ الْجَنَّةَ ثُمَّ أَعُودُ الثَّالِثَةَ ثُمَّ أَعُودُ
الرَّابِعَةَ فَأَقُولُ: مَا بَقِيَ فِي النَّارِ إِلَّا مَنْ حَبَسَهُ
الْقُرْآنُ وَوَجَبَ عَلَيْهِ الْخُلُودُ»

(The believers will gather on the Day of Resurrection and will say, 'We should seek a means of intercession with our Lord' They will go to Adam and say, 'O Adam! You are the father of all mankind, Allah created you with His Own Hand, ordered the angels to prostrate for you and taught you the names of everything. Will you not intercede for us with your Lord, so that he relieve us from this gathering place' On that Adam will reply, 'I cannot do what you have asked'. He will have remembered his error and will be embarrassed, saying, 'Go to Nuh, for he is the first of Allah's Messengers whom Allah sent to the people of the earth.' They will go to Nuh and ask him. He will say, 'I cannot do what you have asked.' He will recall asking Allah what he was not to know, and will also be embarrassed. He will say, 'Go to Khalil Ar-Rahman.' They will go to Ibrahim and he will also say, 'I cannot do what you have asked.' He will say, 'Go to Musa, a servant to whom Allah spoke directly and gave the Tawrah.' Musa will say, 'I cannot do what you have asked.' He will remember that he killed a person without justification and will be embarrassed before his Lord. He will say, 'Go to `Isa, Allah's servant and Messenger and His Word and a spirit of His.' They will go to `Isa and he will say, 'I will not do what you asked. Go to Muhammad, a servant whose previous and latter errors were forgiven.' They will come to me, and I will go to Allah and seek His permission and He will give me His permission. When I gaze at my Lord, I will prostrate myself and Allah will allow me to remain like that as much as He will. Then I will be addressed, 'O Muhammad! Raise your head; ask, for you will be

given what you ask, and intercede, for your intercession will be accepted.' I will raise my head and thank and praise Allah with such praise as He will inspire me. I will intercede and He will grant me a quantity of people that He will admit into Paradise. I will go back to Him, and when I see my Lord, I will intercede and He will allow me a quantity that He will admit into Paradise. I will do that for a third and then a fourth time. I will say, 'There are no more people left in Hell except those whom the Qur'an has incarcerated and have thus acquired eternity in Hell.' This Hadith was collected by Muslim, An-Nasa'i and Ibn Majah. fThe reason why we mentioned this Hadith here is the Prophet's statement,

«فَيَأْتُونَ آدَمَ فَيَقُولُونَ: أَنْتَ أَبُو النَّاسِ خَلَقَكَ اللَّهُ
بِيَدِهِ وَأَسْجَدَ لَكَ مَلَائِكَتُهُ وَعَلَّمَكَ أَسْمَاءَ كُلِّ
شَيْءٍ»

(They will go to Adam and say, 'O Adam! You are the father of all mankind, and Allah created you with His Own Hand, ordered the angels to prostrate for you, and taught you the names of everything). This part of the Hadith testifies to the fact that Allah taught Adam the names of all creatures.

This is why Allah said,

(ثُمَّ عَرَضَهُمْ عَلَى الْمَلَائِكَةِ)

(Then He showed them to the angels) meaning, the objects or creations. `Abdur-Razzaq narrated that Ma` mar said that Qatadah said, "Allah paraded the objects before the angels,

(فَقَالَ أَنْبِئُونِي بِأَسْمَاءِ هَؤُلَاءِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ)

(And said, "Tell Me the names of these if you are truthful")."

Allah's statement means, "Tell Me the names of what I paraded before you, O angels who said,

(أَتَجْعَلُ فِيهَا مَنْ يُفْسِدُ فِيهَا وَيَسْفِكُ الدِّمَاءَ)

(Will You place therein those who will make mischief therein and shed blood).

You asked, 'Are You appointing a Khalifah from us or from other creations We praise and glorify You.

Therefore, Allah said, "If you say the truth, that if I appoint a non-angel Khalifah on the earth, he and his offspring will disobey Me, commit mischief and shed blood, but if I designate you the Khalifahs you will obey Me, follow My command and honor and glorify Me. However, since you

do not know the names of the objects I paraded before you, then you have even less knowledge of what will occur on the earth that does not exist yet."

(قَالُوا سُبْحَانَكَ لَا عِلْمَ لَنَا إِلَّا مَا عَلَّمْتَنَا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ
الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ)

(They (angels) said: "Glory is to You, we have no knowledge except what you have taught us. Verily, it is You, the Knower, the Wise.").

Here the angels are praising Allah's holiness, and perfection above every kind of deficiency, affirming that no creature could ever acquire any part of Allah's knowledge, except by His permission, nor could anyone know anything except what Allah teaches them. This is why they said,

(سُبْحَانَكَ لَا عِلْمَ لَنَا إِلَّا مَا عَلَّمْتَنَا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَلِيمُ
الْحَكِيمُ)

("Glory is to You, we have no knowledge except what you have taught us. Verily You are the Knower, the Wise) meaning, Allah is knowledgeable of everything, Most Wise about His creation, and He makes the wisest decisions, and He teaches and deprives whom He wills from knowledge. Verily, Allah's wisdom and justice in all matters is perfect.

Adam's Virtue of Knowledge is demonstrated

Allah said,

(قَالَ يَا آدَمُ أَنْبِئْهُمْ بِأَسْمَائِهِمْ فَلَمَّا أَنْبَأَهُمْ
بِأَسْمَائِهِمْ قَالَ أَلَمْ أَقُلْ لَكُمْ إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ الْغَيْبَ
السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَأَعْلَمُ مَا تُبْدُونَ وَمَا كُنْتُمْ
تَكْتُمُونَ)

(He said: "O Adam! Inform them of their names," and when he had informed them of their names, He said: "Did I not tell you that I know the Ghayb (unseen) in the heavens and the earth, and I know what you reveal and what you have been concealing")

Zayd bin Aslam said, "You are Jibril, you are Mika'il, you are Israfil, until he mentioned the name of the crow." Mujahid said that Allah's statement,

(قَالَ يَا آدَمُ أَنْبِئْهُمْ بِأَسْمَائِهِمْ)

(He said: "O Adam! Inform them of their names,") "The name of the pigeon, the crow and everything." Statements of a similar meaning were reported from Sa' id bin Jubayr, Al-Hasan, and Qatadah. When Adam's virtue over the angels became apparent, as he mentioned the names that Allah taught him, Allah said to the angels,

(أَلَمْ أَقُلْ لَكُمْ إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ غَيْبَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ
وَأَعْلَمُ مَا تُبْدُونَ وَمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْتُمُونَ)

(Did I not tell you that I know the Ghayb (unseen) in the heavens and the earth, and I know what you reveal and what you have been concealing)

This means, "Did I not state that I know the seen and unseen matters. " Similarly, Allah said,

(وَإِنْ تَجَهَّرَ بِالْقَوْلِ فَإِنَّهُ يَعْلَمُ السِّرَّ وَأَخْفَى)

(And if you (O Muhammad) speak (the invocation) aloud, then verily, He knows the secret and that which is yet more hidden) (20:7).

Also, Allah said about the hoopoe, that it said to Sulayman;

(أَلَا يَسْجُدُوا لِلَّهِ الَّذِي يُخْرِجُ الْخَبَاءَ فِي
السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا تُخْفُونَ وَمَا تُعْلِنُونَ
- اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ رَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ)

(As Shaytan (Satan) has barred them from Allah's way so they do not prostrate before Allah, Who brings to light what is hidden in the heavens and the earth, and knows what you conceal and what you reveal. Allah, La ilaha illa Huwa (none has the right to be worshipped but He), the Lord of the Supreme Throne!) (27:25-26).

They also have comments other than what we have said about the meaning of Allah's statement,

(وَأَعْلَمُ مَا تُبْدُونَ وَمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْتُمُونَ)

(And I know what you reveal and what you have been concealing).

It is reported from Ad-Dahhak that Ibn ` Abbas said that,

(وَأَعْلَمُ مَا يُبْدُونَ وَمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْتُمُونَ)

(And I know what you reveal and what you have been concealing) means, "I know the secrets, just as I know the apparent things, such as, what Iblis concealed in his heart of arrogance and pride." Abu Ja`far Ar-Razi narrated that Ar-Rabi` bin Anas said that,

(وَأَعْلَمُ مَا يُبْدُونَ وَمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْتُمُونَ)

(And I know what you reveal and what you have been concealing) means, "The apparent part of what they said was: `Do you create in it that which would commit mischief and shed blood' The hidden meaning was: `We have more knowledge and honor than any creation our Lord would create.' But they came to know that Allah favored Adam above them regarding knowledge and honor."

(وَإِذْ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ اسْجُدُوا لِآدَمَ فَسَجَدُوا إِلَّا إِبْلِيسَ أَبَىٰ وَاسْتَكْبَرَ وَكَانَ مِنَ الْكَافِرِينَ)

(34. And (remember) when We said to the angels: "Prostrate yourselves before Adam." And they prostrated except Iblis (Shaytan), he refused and was proud and was one of the disbelievers (disobedient to Allah).)

Honoring Adam when the Angels prostrated before Him

This Ayah mentions the great honor that Allah granted Adam, and Allah reminded Adam's offspring of this fact. Allah commanded the angels to prostrate before Adam, as this Ayah and many Hadiths testify, such as the Hadith about the intercession that we discussed. There is a Hadith about the supplication of Musa, "O my Lord! Show me Adam who caused us and himself to be thrown out of Paradise." When Musa met Adam, he said to him, "Are you Adam whom Allah created with His Own Hands, blew life into and commanded the angels to prostrate before" Iblis was among Those ordered to prostrate before Adam, although He was not an Angel

When Allah commanded the angels to prostrate before Adam, Iblis was included in this command. Although Iblis was not an angel, he was trying - and pretending - to imitate the angels' behavior and deeds, and this is why he was also included in the command to the angels to prostrate before Adam. Satan was criticized for defying that command, as we will explain with detail, Allah willing, when we mention the Tafsir of Allah's statement,

(إِلَّا إِبْلِيسَ كَانَ مِنَ الْجِنِّ فَفَسَقَ عَنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّهِ)

(Except Iblis (Satan). He was one of the Jinn; he disobeyed the command of his Lord.) (18:50)

Similarly, Muhammad bin Ishaq reported that Ibn ` Abbas said, "Before he undertook the path of sin, Iblis was with the angels and was called `Azazil.' He was among the residents of the earth and was one of the most active worshippers and knowledgeable persons among the angels. This fact caused him to be arrogant. Iblis was from a genus called Jinn."

The Prostration was before Adam but the Obedience was to Allah

Qatadah commented on Allah's statement,

(وَإِذْ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ اسْجُدُوا لِآدَمَ)

(And (remember) when We said to the angels: "Prostrate yourselves before Adam.")

"The obedience was for Allah and the prostration was before Adam. Allah honored Adam and commanded the angels to prostrate before him." Some people said that this prostration was just a prostration of greeting, peace and honor, hence Allah's statement,

(وَرَفَعَ أَبَوَيْهِ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ وَخَرُّوا لَهُ سُجَّدًا وَقَالَ
يَأْتِبِ هَذَا تَأْوِيلُ رُؤْيَى مِنْ قَبْلُ قَدْ جَعَلَهَا رَبِّي
حَقًّا)

(And he (Prophet Yusuf) raised his parents to the throne and they fell down before him prostrate. And he said: "O my father! This is the interpretation of my dream aforetime! My Lord has made it come true!") (12:100)

The practice of prostrating was allowed for previous nations, but was repealed for ours. Mu` adh said to the Prophet , "I visited Ash-Sham and found that they used to prostrate before their priests and scholars. You, O Messenger of Allah, are more deserving of prostration." The Prophet said,

«لَا لَوْ كُنْتُ أَمِيرًا بَشَرًا أَنْ يَسْجُدَ لِبَشَرٍ لَأَمَرْتُ
الْمَرْأَةَ أَنْ تَسْجُدَ لِزَوْجِهَا مِنْ عِظَمِ حَقِّهِ عَلَيْهَا»

(No. If I was to command any human to prostrate before another human, I would command the wife to prostrate before her husband because of the enormity of his right on her.)

Ar-Razi agreed with this view. Also, Qatadah said about Allah's statement,

(فَسَجَدُوا إِلَّا إِبْلِيسَ أَبَى وَاسْتَكْبَرَ وَكَانَ مِنَ
الْكَافِرِينَ)

(And they prostrated except Iblis (Shaytan), he refused and was proud and was one of the disbelievers (disobedient to Allah).)

"Iblis, the enemy of Allah, envied Adam because Allah honored Adam. He said, 'I was created from fire, and he was created from clay.' Therefore, the first error ever committed was arrogance, for the enemy of Allah was too arrogant to prostrate before Adam." I - Ibn Kathir - say, the following is recorded in the Sahih,

«لَا يَدْخُلُ الْجَنَّةَ مَنْ كَانَ فِي قَلْبِهِ مِثْقَالُ حَبَّةٍ مِنْ
خَرْدَلٍ مِنْ كِبَرٍ»

(No person who has the weight of a mustard seed of arrogance in his heart shall enter Paradise.)

Iblis had disbelief, arrogance, and rebellion, all of which caused him to be expelled from the holy presence of Allah, and His mercy.

(وَقُلْنَا يَا آدَمُ اسْكُنْ أَنْتَ وَزَوْجُكَ الْجَنَّةَ وَكُلَا
مِنْهَا رَغَدًا حَيْثُ شِئْتُمَا وَلَا تَقْرَبَا هَذِهِ الشَّجَرَةَ
فَتَكُونَا مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ - فَأَزَلَّهُمَا الشَّيْطَانُ عَنْهَا
فَأَخْرَجَهُمَا مِمَّا كَانَا فِيهِ وَقُلْنَا اهْبِطُوا بَعْضُكُمْ
لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ وَلَكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ مُسْتَقَرٌّ وَمَتَعٌ إِلَى
حِينٍ)

(35. And We said: "O Adam! Dwell you and your wife in the Paradise and eat both of you freely with pleasure and delight, of things therein wherever you will, but come not near this tree or you both will be of the Zalimin (wrongdoers). ") (36. Then the Shaytan made them slip therefrom (the Paradise), and got them out from that in which they were. We said: "Get you down, all, with enmity between yourselves. On earth will be a dwelling place for you and an enjoyment for a time.")

Adam was honored again

Allah honored Adam by commanding the angels to prostrate before him, so they all complied except for Iblis. Allah then allowed Adam to live and eat wherever and whatever he wished in Paradise. Al-Hafiz Abu Bakr bin Marduwyah reported Abu Dharr saying, "I said, `O Messenger of Allah! Was Adam a Prophet' He said,

«نَعَمْ نَبِيًّا رَسُولًا كَلَّمَهُ اللَّهُ قُبُلًا»

(Yes. He was a Prophet and a Messenger to whom Allah spoke directly), meaning

(اسْكُنْ أَنْتَ وَزَوْجُكَ الْجَنَّةَ)

((O Adam!) Dwell you and your wife in the Paradise.)"

Hawwa' was created before Adam entered Paradise

The Ayah (2:35) indicates that Hawwa' was created before Adam entered Paradise, as Muhammad bin Ishaq stated. Ibn Ishaq said, "After Allah finished criticizing Iblis, and after teaching Adam the names of everything, He said,

(يَا آدَمُ أَنْبِئْهُمْ بِأَسْمَائِهِمْ)

(O Adam! Inform them of their names) until,

(إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ)

(Verily, You are the Knower, the Wise.)

Then Adam fell asleep, as the People of the Book and other scholars such as Ibn `Abbas have stated, Allah took one of Adam's left ribs and made flesh grow in its place, while Adam was asleep and unaware. Allah then created Adam's wife, Hawwa', from his rib and made her a woman, so that she could be a comfort for him. When Adam woke up and saw Hawwa' next to him, it was claimed, he said, `My flesh and blood, my wife.' Hence, Adam reclined with Hawwa'. When Allah married Adam to Hawwa' and gave him comfort, Allah said to him directly,

(يَا آدَمُ اسْكُنْ أَنْتَ وَزَوْجُكَ الْجَنَّةَ وَكُلَا مِنْهَا
رَغَدًا حَيْثُ شِئْتُمَا وَلَا تَقْرَبَا هَذِهِ الشَّجَرَةَ فَتَكُونَا
مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ)

("O Adam! Dwell you and your wife in the Paradise and eat both of you freely with pleasure and delight, of things therein wherever you will, but come not near this tree or you both will be of the Zalimin (wrongdoers).")."

Allah tests Adam

Allah's statement to Adam,

(وَلَا تَقْرَبَا هَذِهِ الشَّجَرَةَ)

(but come not near this tree) is a test for Adam. There are conflicting opinions over the nature of the tree mentioned here. Some said that it was the grape tree, barley, date tree, fig tree, and so forth. Some said that it was a certain tree, and whoever eats from it will be relieved of the call of nature. It was also said that it was a tree from which the angels eat so that they live for eternity. Imam Abu Ja'far bin Jarir said, "The correct opinion is that Allah forbade Adam and his wife from eating from a certain tree in Paradise, but they ate from it. We do not know which tree that was, because Allah has not mentioned anything in the Qur'an or the authentic Sunnah about the nature of this tree. It was said that it was barley, grape, or a fig tree. It is possible that it was one of those trees. Yet, this is knowledge that does not bring any benefit, just as being ignorant in its nature does no harm. Allah knows best." This is similar to what Ar-Razi stated in his Tafsir, and this is the correct opinion. Allah's statement,

(فَأَزَلَّهُمَا الشَّيْطَانُ عَنْهَا)

(Then the Shaytan made them slip therefrom) either refers to Paradise, and in this case, it means that Shaytan led Adam and Hawwa' away from it, as `Asim bin Abi An-Najud recited it. It is also possible that this Ayah refers to the forbidden tree. In this case, the Ayah would mean, as Al-Hasan and Qatadah stated, "He tripped them." In this case,

(فَأَزَلَّهُمَا الشَّيْطَانُ عَنْهَا)

(Then the Shaytan made them slip therefrom)

means, "Because of the tree", just as Allah said,

(يُؤْفِكُ عَنْهُ مَنْ أَفِكَ)

(Turned aside therefrom (i.e. from Muhammad and the Qur'an) is he who is turned aside (by the decree and preordainment of Allah)) (51:9) meaning, the deviant person becomes turned aside - or slips - from the truth because of so and so reason. This is why then Allah said,

(فَأَخْرَجَهُمَا مِمَّا كَانَا فِيهِ)

(And got them out from that in which they were) meaning, the clothes, spacious dwelling and comfortable sustenance.

(وَقُلْنَا اهْبِطُوا بَعْضُكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ وَلَكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ مُسْتَقَرٌّ وَمَتَعٌ إِلَىٰ حِينٍ)

(We said: "Get you down, all, with enmity between yourselves. On earth will be a dwelling place for you and an enjoyment for a time.") meaning, dwelling, sustenance and limited life, until the commencement of the Day of Resurrection

Adam was very Tall

Ibn Abi Hatim narrated that Ubayy bin Ka`b said that the Messenger of Allah said,

«إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَلَقَ آدَمَ رَجُلًا طَوَالًا كَثِيرَ شَعْرِ الرَّأْسِ كَأَنَّهُ نَخْلَةٌ سَحُوقٌ، فَلَمَّا ذَاقَ الشَّجَرَةَ سَقَطَ عَنْهُ لِبَاسُهُ فَأَوَّلُ مَا بَدَأَ مِنْهُ عَوْرَتُهُ، فَلَمَّا نَظَرَ إِلَىٰ عَوْرَتِهِ جَعَلَ يَشْتَدُّ فِي الْجَبَّةِ فَأَخَذَتْ شَعْرَهُ شَجَرَةٌ فَنَازَعَهَا، فَنَادَاهُ الرَّحْمَنُ: يَا آدَمُ مِئِي تَفْرُ؟ فَلَمَّا سَمِعَ كَلَامَ الرَّحْمَنِ قَالَ: يَا رَبِّ لَا وَلَكِنْ اسْتَحْيَاءُ»

(Allah created Adam tall, with thick hair, just as a date tree with full branches. When Adam ate from the forbidden tree, his cover fell off, and the first thing that appeared was his private area. When he saw his private area, he ran away in Paradise and his hair got caught in a tree. He tried to free himself and Ar-Rahman called him, 'O Adam! Are you running away from Me?' When Adam heard the words of Ar-Rahman (Allah), he said, 'No, O my Lord! But I am shy.')

Adam remained in Paradise for an Hour

Al-Hakim recorded that Ibn `Abbas said, "Adam was allowed to reside in Paradise during the time period between the `Asr (Afternoon) prayer, until sunset." Al-Hakim then commented this is "Sahih according to the Two Shaykhs (Al-Bukhari and Muslim), but they did not include it in their collections." Also, Ibn Abi Hatim recorded Ibn `Abbas saying, "Allah sent Adam to earth to an area called, Dahna, between Makkah and At-Ta'if." Al-Hasan Al-Basri said that Adam was sent down to India, while Hawwa' was sent to Jeddah. Iblis was sent down to Dustumaysan, several miles from Basra. Further, the snake was sent down to Asbahan. This was reported by Ibn Abi Hatim. Also, Muslim and An-Nasa'i recorded that Abu Hurayrah said that the Messenger of Allah said,

«خَيْرُ يَوْمٍ طَلَعَتْ فِيهِ الشَّمْسُ يَوْمُ الْجُمُعَةِ فِيهِ خُلِقَ آدَمُ وَفِيهِ أُدْخِلَ الْجَنَّةَ وَفِيهِ أُخْرِجَ مِنْهَا»

(Friday is the best day on which the sun has risen. On Friday, Allah created Adam, admitted him into Paradise, and expelled him from it.)

A Doubt and a Rebuttal

If one asks, "If the Paradise that Adam was thrown out of was in heaven, as the majority of the scholars assert, then is it possible for Iblis to enter Paradise, although he was expelled from it by Allah's decision (when he refused to prostrate before Adam)?"

Basically, the response to this would be that the Paradise which Adam was in, was in the heavens, not on the earth, as we explained in the beginning of our book Al-Bidayah wan-Nihayah.

The majority of scholars said that Shaytan was originally prohibited from entering Paradise, but there were times when he sneaked into it in secret. For instance, the Tawrah stated that Iblis hid inside the snake's mouth and entered Paradise. Some scholars said that it is possible that Shaytan led Adam and Hawwa' astray on his way out of Paradise. Some scholars said that he led Adam and Hawwa' astray when he was on earth, while they were still in heaven, as stated by Az-Zamakhshari. Al-Qurtubi mentioned several beneficial Hadiths here about snakes and the ruling on killing them.

(فَتَلَقَّى ءَادَمُ مِنْ رَبِّهِ كَلِمَاتٍ فَتَابَ عَلَيْهِ إِنَّهُ هُوَ
التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ)

(37. Then Adam repented from his Lord Words. And his Lord pardoned him (accepted his repentance). Verily, He is the One Who forgives (accepts repentance), the Most Merciful.)

Adam repents and supplicates to Allah

It was reported that the above Ayah is explained by Allah's statement,

(قَالَا رَبَّنَا ظَلَمْنَا أَنْفُسَنَا وَإِنْ لَمْ تَغْفِرْ لَنَا وَتَرْحَمْنَا لَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ)

(37. They said: "Our Lord! We have wronged ourselves. If You forgive us not, and bestow not upon us Your mercy, we shall certainly be of the losers.") (7:23) as Mujahid, Sa'id bin Jubayr, Abu Al-'Aliyah, Ar-Rabi' bin Anas, Al-Hasan, Qatadah, Muhammad bin Ka'b Al-Qurazi, Khalid bin Ma'dan, 'Ata' Al-Khurasani and 'Abdur-Rahman bin Zayd bin Aslam have stated. As-Suddi said that Ibn 'Abbas commented on,

(فَتَلَقَىٰ آدَمُ مِنْ رَبِّهِ كَلِمَاتٍ)

(Then Adam received from his Lord Words) "Adam said, 'O Lord! Did You not created me with Your Own Hands' He said, 'Yes.' He said, 'And blow life into me' He said, 'Yes.' He said, 'And when I sneezed, You said, 'May Allah grant you His mercy.' Does not Your mercy precede Your anger' He was told, 'Yes.' Adam said, 'And You destined me to commit this evil act' He was told, 'Yes.' He said, 'If I repent, will You send me back to Paradise' Allah said, 'Yes.'" Similar is reported from Al-'Awfi, Sa'id bin Jubayr, Sa'id bin Ma'bad, and Ibn 'Abbas. Al-Hakim recorded this Hadith in his Mustadrak from Ibn Jubayr, who narrated it from Ibn 'Abbas. Al-Hakim said, "Its chain is Sahih and they (Al-Bukhari and Muslim) did not record it."

Allah's statement,

(إِنَّهُ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ)

(Verily, He is the One Who forgives (accepts repentance), the Most Merciful) (2:37) means that Allah forgives whoever regrets his error and returns to Him in repentance. This meaning is similar to Allah's statements,

(أَلَمْ يَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ يَقْبَلُ التَّوْبَةَ عَنْ عِبَادِهِ)

(Know they not that Allah accepts repentance from His servants) (9:104),

(وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ سُوءًا أَوْ يَظْلِمْ نَفْسَهُ)

(And whoever does evil or wrongs himself) (4:110) and

(وَمَنْ تَابَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا)

(And whosoever repents and does righteous good deeds) (25:71).

The Ayat mentioned above, testify to the fact that Allah forgives the sins of whoever repents, demonstrating His kindness and mercy towards His creation and servants. There is no deity worthy of worship except Allah, the Most Forgiving, the Most Merciful.

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

(38. We said: "Get down all of you from this place (the Paradise), then whenever there comes to you Hudan (guidance) from Me, and whoever follows My guidance, there shall be no fear on them, nor shall they grieve.) (39. But those who disbelieve and belie Our Ayat (proofs, evidences, verses, lessons, signs, revelations, etc.) such are the dwellers of the Fire. They shall abide therein forever.")

Allah stated that when He sent Adam, Hawwa', and Shaytan to earth from Paradise, He warned them that He will reveal Books and send Prophets and Messengers to them, i.e., to their offspring. Abu Al-'Aliyah said, "Al-Huda, refers to the Prophets, Messengers, the clear signs and plain explanation."

(فَمَنْ تَبِعَ هُدَايَ)

(And whoever follows My guidance) meaning, whoever accepts what is contained in My Books and what I send the Messengers with,

(فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ)

(There shall be no fear on them) regarding the Hereafter,

(وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ)

(nor shall they grieve) regarding the life of this world. Similarly, in Surat Ta Ha, Allah said,

(قَالَ اهْبِطَا مِنْهَا جَمِيعًا بَعْضُكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ
فَإِمَّا يَأْتِيَنَّكُمْ مِنِّي هُدًى فَمَنِ اتَّبَعَ هُدَايَ فَلَا يَضِلُّ
وَلَا يَشْقَى)

(He (Allah) said: "Get you down (from the Paradise to the earth), both of you, together, some of you are an enemy to some others. Then if there comes to you guidance from Me, then whoever follows My guidance, he shall neither go astray, nor shall he be distressed.) (20:123)

Ibn `Abbas commented, "He will not be misguided in this life or miserable in the Hereafter." The Ayah,

(وَمَنْ أَعْرَضَ عَنْ ذِكْرِي فَإِنَّ لَهُ مَعِيشَةً ضَنْكًا
وَنَحْشُرُهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ أَعْمَى)

(But whosoever turns away from My Reminder (i.e. neither believes in this Qur'an nor acts on its teachings) verily, for him is a life of hardship, and We shall raise him up blind on the Day of Resurrection.) (20:124) is similar to what Allah stated here,

(وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَكَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ
النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ)

(But those who disbelieve and belie Our Ayat such are the dwellers of the Fire. They shall abide therein forever), meaning, they will remain in Hell for eternity and will not find a way out of it.

(يَبْنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ اذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتِيَ الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتُ
عَلَيْكُمْ وَأَوْفُوا بِعَهْدِي أَوْفِ بِعَهْدِكُمْ وَإِيَّيَ
فَارْهَبُونَ - وَعَامِنُوا بِمَا أَنْزَلْتُ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا مَعَكُمْ

وَلَا تَكُونُوا أَوَّلَ كَافِرٍ بِهِ وَلَا تَشْتَرُوا بِآيَاتِي ثَمَنًا
قَلِيلًا وَإِنِّي فَاتَّقُونَ)

(40. O Children of Israel! Remember My favor which I bestowed upon you, and fulfill (your obligations to) My covenant (with you) so that I fulfill (My obligations to) your covenant (with Me), and fear none but Me.) (41. And believe in what I have sent down (this Qur'an), confirming that which is with you (the Tawrah and the Injil), and be not the first to disbelieve therein, and buy not with My verses (the Tawrah and the Injil) a small price (i.e. getting a small gain by selling My verses), and fear Me and Me alone.)

Encouraging the Children of Israel to embrace Islam

Allah commanded the Children of Israel to embrace Islam and to follow Muhammad . He also reminded them with the example of their father Israel, Allah's Prophet Ya`qub, as if saying, "O children of the pious, righteous servant of Allah who obeyed Allah! Be like your father, following the truth." This statement is similar to one's saying, "O you son of that generous man! Do this or that" or, "O son of the brave man, engage the strong fighters," or "O son of the scholar, seek the knowledge," and so forth. Similarly, Allah said,

(دُرِّيَّةٌ مِّنْ حَمَلْنَا مَعَ نُوحٍ إِنَّهُ كَانَ عَبْدًا شَكُورًا)

(O offspring of those whom We carried (in the ship) with Nuh (Noah)! Verily, he was a grateful servant) (17:3).

Israel is Prophet Ya`qub (Jacob)

Israel is Prophet Ya`qub, for Abu Dawud At-Tayalisi recorded that `Abdullah Ibn `Abbas said, "A group of Jews came to the Prophet and he said to them,

«هَلْ تَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّ إِسْرَائِيلَ يَعْقُوبُ؟»

(Do you know that Israel is Jacob) They said, "Yes, by Allah." He said,

«اللَّهُمَّ اشْهَدْ»

(O Allah! Be witness.)"

At-Tabari recorded that `Abdullah Ibn `Abbas said that `Israel' means, `the servant of Allah.'

Allah's Blessings for the Children of Israel

Allah said,

(اذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتِيَ الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ)

(Remember My favor which I bestowed upon you).

Mujahid commented, "Allah's favor that He granted the Jews is that He made water gush from stones, sent down manna and quails for them, and saved them from being enslaved by Pharaoh." Abu Al-`Aliyah also said, "Allah's favor mentioned here is His sending Prophets and Messengers among them, and revealing Books to them." I - Ibn Kathir - say that this Ayah is similar to what Musa said to the Children of Israel,

(يَقَوْمُ اذْكُرُوا نِعْمَةَ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْكُمْ اِذْ جَعَلَ فِيْكُمْ اَنْبِيَاءَ وَجَعَلَكُمْ مُّلُوكًا وَءَاْتَكُمْ مَّا لَمْ يُوْتِ اَحَدًا مِّنَ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ)

(O my people! Remember the favor of Allah to you: when He made Prophets among you, made you kings, and gave you what He had not given to any other among the nations (of their time) (5:20) meaning, during their time. Also, Muhammad bin Ishaq said that Ibn `Abbas said,

(اذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتِيَ الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ)

(Remember My favor which I bestowed upon you,) means, "My support for you and your fathers," that is saving them from Pharaoh and his people.

Reminding the Children of Israel of Allah's Covenant with Them

Allah's statement,

(وَأَوْفُوا بِعَهْدِيْ أُوفِ بِعَهْدِكُمْ)

(And fulfill (your obligations to) My covenant (with you) so that I fulfill (My obligations to) your covenant (with Me),) means, `My covenant that I took from you concerning Prophet Muhammad , when he is sent to you, so that I grant you what I promised you if you believe in him and follow him. I will then remove the chains and restrictions that were placed around your necks, because of the errors that you committed.' Also, Al-Hasan Al-Basri said, "The `covenant' is in reference to Allah's statement, i

(وَلَقَدْ أَخَذَ اللَّهُ مِيثَاقَ بَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ وَبَعَثْنَا مِنْهُمُ اثْنَيْ عَشَرَ نَقِيبًا وَقَالَ اللَّهُ إِنِّي مَعَكُمْ لَئِنْ أَقَمْتُمُ الصَّلَاةَ وَءَاتَيْتُمُ الزَّكَاةَ وَءَامَنْتُمْ بِرُسُلِي وَعَزَّرْتُمُوهُمْ وَأَقْرَضْتُمُ اللَّهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا لَأُكَفِّرَنَّ عَنْكُمْ سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ وَلَأُدْخِلَنَّكُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ)

(Indeed, Allah took the covenant from the Children of Israel (Jews), and We appointed twelve leaders among them. And Allah said: "I am with you if you perform As-Salah and give Zakah and believe in My Messengers; honor and assist them, and lend a good loan to Allah, verily, I will expiate your sins and admit you to Gardens under which rivers flow (in Paradise)) (5:12)."

Other scholars said, "The covenant is what Allah took from them in the Tawrah, in that, He will send a great Prophet - meaning Muhammad - from among the offspring of Isma'il, who will be obeyed by all peoples. Therefore, whoever obeys him, then Allah will forgive his sins, enter him into Paradise and award him two rewards." We should mention here that Ar-Razi mentioned several cases of information brought by the earlier Prophets regarding the coming of Muhammad . Further, Abu Al-` Aliyah said that,

(وَأَوْفُوا بِعَهْدِي)

(And fulfill (your obligations to) My covenant (with you)) means, "His covenant with His servants is to embrace Islam and to adhere to it." Ad-Dahhak said that Ibn `Abbas said, "'I fulfill My obligations to you' means, 'I (Allah) will be pleased with you and admit you into Paradise.'" As-Suddi, Ad-Dahhak, Abu Al-` Aliyah and Ar-Rabi` bin Anas said similarly.

Ibn `Abbas said that Allah's statement,

(وَإِيَّائِي فَارْهَبُونَ)

(And fear Me and Me alone.) means, "Fear the torment that I might exert on you, just as I did with your fathers, like the mutation, etc." This Ayah contains encouragement, followed by warning. Allah first called the Children of Israel, using encouragement, then He warned them, so that they might return to the Truth, follow the Messenger , heed the Qur'an's prohibitions and commands and believe in its content. Surely, Allah guides whom He wills to the straight path.

Allah said next,

(وَعَامِنُوا بِمَا أُنزِلَتْ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا مَعَكُمْ)

(And believe in what I have sent down, confirming that which is with you (the Tawrah and the Injil)) meaning, the Qur'an that Allah sent down to Muhammad , the unlettered Arab Prophet, as bringer of glad tidings, a warner and a light. The Qur'an contains the Truth from Allah and affirms what was revealed beforehand in the Tawrah and the Injil (the Gospel). Abu Al-`Aliyah said that Allah's statement,

(وَعَامِنُوا بِمَا أُنزِلَتْ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا مَعَكُمْ)

(And believe in what I have sent down (this Qur'an), confirming that which is with you (the Tawrah and the Injil)) "means, `O People of the Book! Believe in what I sent down that conforms to what you have.' This is because they find the description of Muhammad recorded in the Tawrah and the Injil." Similar statements were attributed to Mujahid, Ar-Rabi` bin Anas and Qatadah.

Allah said,

(وَلَا تَكُونُوا أَوَّلَ كَافِرٍ بِهِ)

(and be not the first to disbelieve therein).

Ibn `Abbas commented, "Do not become the first to disbelieve in the Qur'an (or Muhammad ), while you have more knowledge in it than other people." Abu Al-`Aliyah commented, "' Do not become the first to disbelieve in Muhammad, ' meaning from among the People of the Book, `after you hear that he was sent as a Prophet.'" Similar statements were attributed to Al-Hasan, As-Suddi and Ar-Rabi` bin Anas. Ibn Jarir stated that the Ayah (disbelieve therein 2:41) refers to the Qur'an, mentioned earlier in the Ayah,

(بِمَا أُنزِلَتْ)

(in what I have sent down (this Qur'an).)

Both statements are correct because they are inter-related. For instance, whoever disbelieves in the Qur'an will have disbelieved in Muhammad , and whoever disbelieves in Muhammad will have disbelieved in the Qur'an. Allah's statement,

(أَوَّلَ كَافِرٍ بِهِ)

(the first to disbelieve therein) means, do not become the first among the Children of Israel to disbelieve in it, for there were people from Quraysh and the Arabs in general who rejected Muhammad before the People of the Book disbelieved in him. We should state here that the Ayah is talking about the Children of Israel in specific, because the Jews in Al-Madinah were

the first among the Children of Israel to be addressed by the Qur'an. Hence, their disbelief in the Qur'an means that they were the first among the People of the Book to disbelieve in it.

Allah's statement,

(وَلَا تَشْتَرُوا بِآيَاتِي ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا)

(and buy not with My verses a small price,) means, "Do not substitute faith in My Ayat and belief in My Prophet with the life of this world and its lusts which are minute and bound to end." Allah said,

(وَإِيَّاهُ فَاتَّقُوا)

(and have Taqwa of Me and Me alone).

Ibn Abi Hatim reported that Talq bin Habib said, "Taqwa is to work in Allah's obedience, on a light from Allah, hoping in Allah's mercy, and to avoid Allah's disobedience, on a light from Allah, fearing Allah's punishment." Allah's statement,

(وَإِيَّاهُ فَاتَّقُوا)

(and fear Me and Me alone) means, that Allah warns the People of the Book against intentionally hiding the truth and spreading the opposite of it, as well as, against defying the Messenger.

(وَلَا تَلْبِسُوا الْحَقَّ بِالْبَاطِلِ وَتَكْتُمُوا الْحَقَّ وَأَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ - وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَارْكَعُوا مَعَ الرَّاكِعِينَ)

(42. And mix not truth with falsehood, nor conceal the truth while you know (the truth).) (43. And perform As-Salah, and give Zakah, and bow down along with Ar-Raki`in.)

The Prohibition of hiding the Truth and distorting It with Falsehood

Allah forbade the Jews from intentionally distorting the truth with falsehood and from hiding the truth and spreading falsehood,

(وَلَا تَلْبِسُوا الْحَقَّ بِالْبَاطِلِ وَتَكْتُمُوا الْحَقَّ وَأَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ)

(And mix not truth with falsehood, nor conceal the truth while you know (the truth)).

So Allah forbade them from two things; He ordered them to make the truth known, as well as explaining it. Ad-Dahhak said that Ibn ` Abbas mentioned the Ayah,

(وَلَا تَلْبِسُوا الْحَقَّ بِالْبَاطِلِ)

(And mix not truth with falsehood) and said; "Do not mix the truth with falsehood and the facts with lies." Qatadah said that,

(وَلَا تَلْبِسُوا الْحَقَّ بِالْبَاطِلِ)

(And mix not truth with falsehood) means, "Do not mix Judaism and Christianity with Islam,

(وَأَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ)

(while you know (the truth).) that the religion of Allah is Islam, and that Judaism and Christianity are innovations that did not come from Allah." It was reported that Al-Hasan Al-Basri said similarly.

Also, Muhammad bin Ishaq narrated that Ibn ` Abbas said that,

(وَتَكْتُمُوا الْحَقَّ وَأَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ)

(nor conceal the truth while you know (the truth).) means, "Do not hide the knowledge that you have of My Messenger and what he was sent with. His description, which you know about, can be found written in the Books that you have."

It is possible that it means, "...although you know the tremendous harm that this evil will cause people, misguiding them and leading them to the Fire, because they will follow the falsehood that you mixed with the truth in your claims."

(وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَارْكَعُوا مَعَ الرَّاكِعِينَ)

(And perform As-Salat and give Zakah, and bow down along with Ar-Raki`in.)

Muqatil said, "Allah's statement to the People of the Book,

(وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ)

(And perform As-Salah) commands them to perform the prayer behind the Prophet ,

(وَأَتُوا الزَّكَاةَ)

(and give Zakah) commands them to pay the Zakah to the Prophet , and

(وَارْكَعُوا مَعَ الرَّاكِعِينَ)

(and bow down along with Ar-Raki`in) commands them to bow down with those who bow down among the Ummah of Muhammad . Allah therefore commands the People of the Book to be with, and among the Ummah of Muhammad . In addition, Allah's statement,

(وَارْكَعُوا مَعَ الرَّاكِعِينَ)

(And bow down along with Ar-Raki`in) means, "And be among the believers performing the best deeds they perform, such as, and foremost, the prayer." Many scholars said that this Ayah (2:43) is proof for the obligation of performing the prayer in congregation (for men only). I will explain this ruling in detail in Kitab Al-Ahkam Al-Kabir, Allah willing.

(أَتَأْمُرُونَ النَّاسَ بِالْبِرِّ وَتَنْسَوْنَ أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ
تَتْلُونَ الْكِتَابَ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ)

(44. Enjoin you Al-Birr (piety and righteousness and every act of obedience to Allah) on the people and you forget (to practise it) yourselves, while you recite the Scripture (Tawrah))! Have you then no sense)

The Condemnation of commanding Others to observe Righteousness while ignoring Righteousness

Allah said, "How is it, O People of the Book, that you command people to perform Al-Birr, which encompasses all types of righteousness, yet forget yourselves and do not heed what you call others to And you read Allah's Book (the Tawrah) and know what it promises to those who do not fulfill Allah's commandments.

(أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ)

(Have you then no sense) of what you are doing to yourselves, so that you might become aware of your slumber and restore your sight from blindness" `Abdur-Razzaq said that Ma` mar stated that Qatadah commented on Allah's statement,

(أَتَأْمُرُونَ النَّاسَ بِالْبِرِّ وَتَنْسَوْنَ أَنْفُسَكُمْ)

(Enjoin you Al-Birr (piety and righteousness and every act of obedience to Allah) on the people and you forget (to practise it) yourselves,) "The Children of Israel used to command people to obey Allah, fear Him and perform Al-Birr. Yet, they contradicted these orders, so Allah reminded them of this fact." As-Suddi said similarly. Ibn Jurayj said that the Ayah:

(أَتَأْمُرُونَ النَّاسَ بِالْبِرِّ)

(Enjoin you Al-Birr on the people) "Is about the People of the Book and the hypocrites. They used to command people to pray and fast. However, they did not practice what they commanded others. Allah reminded them of this behavior. So whoever commands people to do righteousness, let him be among the first of them to implement that command." Also, Muhammad bin Ishaq narrated that Ibn ` Abbas said that,

(وَتَنْسَوْنَ أَنْفُسَكُمْ)

(And you forget yourselves,) means, "You forget to practice it yourselves,

(وَأَنْتُمْ تَتْلُونَ الْكِتَابَ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ)

(While you recite the Scripture (Tawrah)! Have you then no sense) You forbid the people from rejecting the prophethood and the covenant that you have mentioned with you in the Tawrah, while you yourselves have forgotten it, meaning that `you have forgotten the covenant that I made with you that you will accept My Messenger. You have breached My covenant, and rejected what you know is in My Book.' "

Therefore, Allah admonished the Jews for this behavior and alerted them to the wrongs that they were perpetrating against themselves by ordering righteousness, yet refraining themselves from righteousness. We should state that Allah is not criticizing the People of the Book for ordering righteousness, because enjoining good is a part of righteousness and is an obligation for the scholars. However, the scholar is himself required to heed, and adhere to, what he invites others to. For instance, Prophet Shu` ayb said,

(وَمَا أُرِيدُ أَنْ أُخَالِفَكُمْ إِلَىٰ مَا أَنهَكُم عَنْهُ إِن
أُرِيدُ إِلَّا الْإِصْلَاحَ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُ وَمَا تَوْفِيقِي إِلَّا
بِاللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ وَإِلَيْهِ أُنِيبُ)

(I wish not, in contradiction to you, to do that which I forbid you. I only desire reform to the best of my power. And my guidance cannot come except from Allah, in Him I trust and unto Him I repent) (11:88).

Therefore, enjoining righteousness and performing righteousness are both required. Neither category is rendered not necessary by the practice of the other, according to the most correct view of the scholars among the Salaf (predecessors) and the Khalaf.

Imam Ahmad reported that Abu Wa'il said, "While I was riding behind Usamah, he was asked, 'Why not advise `Uthman?' He said, 'Do you think that if I advise him I should allow you to hear it I advise him in secret, and I will not start something that I would hate to be the first to start. I will not say to a man, 'You are the best man,' even if he was my leader, after what I heard from the Messenger of Allah.' They said, 'What did he say?' He said, 'I heard him say,

«يُجَاءُ بِالرَّجُلِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ فَيُلْقَىٰ فِي النَّارِ
فَتَنَدَلِقُ بِهِ أَقْتَابُهُ فَيَدُورُ بِهَا فِي النَّارِ كَمَا يَدُورُ
الْحِمَارُ بِرَحَاهُ فَيُطِيفُ بِهِ أَهْلُ النَّارِ فَيَقُولُونَ: يَا
فُلَانُ مَا أَصَابَكَ؟ أَلَمْ تَكُنْ تَأْمُرُنَا بِالْمَعْرُوفِ
وَتَنْهَانَا عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ؟ فَيَقُولُ: كُنْتُ أَمْرُكُمْ
بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَلَا آتِيهِ وَأَنْهَاكُمْ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَآتِيهِ»

(A man will be brought on the Day of Resurrection and thrown in the Fire. His intestines will fall out and he will continue circling pulling them behind him, just as the donkey goes around the pole. The people of the Fire will go to that man and ask him, 'What happened to you Did you not used to command us to do righteous acts and forbid us from committing evil?' He will say, 'Yes. I used to enjoin righteousness, but refrained from performing righteousness, and I used to forbid you to perform from evil while I myself did it.')"

This Hadith was also recorded by Al-Bukhari and Muslim. eAlso, Ibrahim An-Nakha'i said, "I hesitate in advising people because of three Ayat:

(أَتَأْمُرُونَ النَّاسَ بِالْبِرِّ وَتَنْسَوْنَ أَنْفُسَكُمْ)

(Enjoin you Al-Birr on the people and you forget (to practise it) yourselves).

(يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لِمَ تَقُولُونَ مَا لَا تَفْعَلُونَ -
كَبُرَ مَقْتًا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَنْ تَقُولُوا مَا لَا تَفْعَلُونَ)

(O you who believe! Why do you say that which you do not do Most hateful it is to Allah that you say that which you do not do) (61:2-3)."

And Allah informed us that the Prophet Shu`ayb said,

(وَمَا أُرِيدُ أَنْ أَخَالِفَكُمْ إِلَى مَا أَنهَكُم عَنْهُ إِنْ
أُرِيدُ إِلَّا الْإِصْلَاحَ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُ وَمَا تَوْفِيقِي إِلَّا
بِاللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ وَإِلَيْهِ أُنِيبُ)

(I wish not, in contradiction to you, to do that which I forbid you. I only desire reform to the best of my power. And my guidance cannot come except from Allah, in Him I trust and unto Him I repent) (11:88).

(وَاسْتَعِينُوا بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلَاةِ وَإِنَّهَا لَكَبِيرَةٌ إِلَّا
عَلَى الْخَاشِعِينَ - الَّذِينَ يَظُنُّونَ أَنَّهُمْ مُلْقُوا رَبَّهُمْ
وَأَنَّهُمْ إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ)

(45. And seek help in patience and As-Salat (the prayer) and truly, it is extremely heavy and hard except for Al-Khashi`in.) (46 (They are those) who are certain that they are going to meet their Lord, and that unto Him they are going to return.)

The Support that comes with Patience and Prayer

Allah commanded His servants to use patience and prayer to acquire the good of this life and the Hereafter. Muqatil bin Hayan said that this Ayah means, "Utilize patience and the obligatory prayer in seeking the Hereafter. As for patience (here), they say that it means

fasting." There are similar texts reported from Mujahid. Al-Qurtubi and other scholars commented, "This is why Ramadan is called the month of patience," as is mentioned in the Hadith literature. It was also said that `patience' in the Ayah means, refraining from evil, and this is why `patience' was mentioned along with practicing acts of worship, especially and foremost, the prayer. Also, Ibn Abi Hatim narrated that `Umar bin Al-Khattab said, "There are two types of patience: good patience when the disaster strikes, and a better patience while avoiding the prohibitions of Allah." Ibn Abi Hatim said that Al-Hasan Al-Basri was reported to have said similarly.

Allah then said,

(وَالصَّلَاةُ)

(And As-Salah (the prayer).)

The prayer is one of the best means of assistance for firmly adhering to Allah's orders, just as Allah said;

(اِنَّ مَا اُوْحِيَ اِلَيْكَ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَاَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ اِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ تَنْهٰى عَنِ الْفَحْشَآءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ وَلَذِكْرُ اللّٰهِ اَكْبَرُ)

(Recite (O Muhammad) what has been revealed to you of the Book (the Qur'an), and perform As-Salah. Verily, As-Salah (the prayer) prevents from Al-Fahsha' (i.e. great sins of every kind), and Al-Munkar and the remembrance of (praising) of (you by) Allah is greater indeed) (29:45).

The personal pronoun in the Ayah,

(وَإِنَّهَا لَكَبِيرَةٌ)

(And truly, it is extremely heavy and hard) refers to prayer, as Mujahid is reported to have said, and it was also the choice of Ibn Jarir. It is possible that the pronoun might be referring to the advice - to observe patience and the prayer - mentioned in the same Ayah. Similarly, Allah said about Qarun (Korah),

(وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ وَيَلَكُمْ ثَوَابُ اللَّهِ خَيْرٌ
لِّمَنِ ءَامَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا وَلَا يُلَاقَاهَا إِلَّا
الصَّابِرُونَ)

(But those who had been given (religious) knowledge said: "Woe to you! The reward of Allah (in the Hereafter) is better for those who believe and do righteous good deeds, and this, none shall attain except As-Sabirun (the patient).") (28:80).

Also, Allah said,

(وَلَا تَسْتَوِي الْحَسَنَةُ وَلَا السَّيِّئَةُ ادْفَعْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ
أَحْسَنُ فَإِذَا الَّذِي بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَهُ عَدَاوَةٌ كَأَنَّهُ وَلِيٌّ
حَمِيمٌ - وَمَا يُلَاقَاهَا إِلَّا الَّذِينَ صَبَرُوا وَمَا يُلَاقَاهَا
إِلَّا دُو حَظٌّ عَظِيمٌ)

(The good deed and the evil deed cannot be equal. Repel (the evil) with one which is better then verily he, between whom and you there was enmity, (will become) as though he was a close friend. But none is granted it (the above quality) except those who are patient and none is granted it except the owner of the great portion (of happiness in the Hereafter and) in this world.) (41:34-35) meaning, this advice is only implemented by those who are patient and the fortunate. In any case, Allah's statement here means, prayer is `heavy and burdensome',

(إِلَّا عَلَى الْخَاشِعِينَ)

(except for Al-Khashi`in.)

Ibn Abi Talhah reported that Ibn `Abbas commented on this Ayah, "They (Al-Khashi`in) are those who believe in what Allah has revealed."

Allah's statement,

(الَّذِينَ يَظُنُّونَ أَنَّهُمْ مُلْقُوا رَبَّهُمْ وَأَنَّهُمْ إِلَيْهِ
رَاجِعُونَ)

(They are those who are certain that they are going to meet their Lord, and that unto Him they are going to return.) continues the subject that was started in the previous Ayah. Therefore, the prayer, or the advice to observe it is heavy,

(إِلَّا عَلَى الْخَاشِعِينَ الَّذِينَ يَظُنُّونَ أَنَّهُمْ مُلْقُوا رَبَّهُمْ)

(except for Al-Khashi'in. (They are those) who are certain (Yazunnuna) that they are going to meet their Lord,) meaning, they know that they will be gathered and face their Lord on the Day of Resurrection,

(وَأَنَّهُمْ إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ)

(and that unto Him they are going to return.) meaning, their affairs are all subject to His will and He justly decides what He wills. Since they are certain that they will be returned to Allah and be reckoned, it is easy for them to perform the acts of obedience and refrain from the prohibitions. Ibn Jarir commented on Allah's statement;

(يَظُنُّونَ أَنَّهُمْ مُلْقُوا رَبَّهُمْ)

(Yazunnuna that they are going to meet their Lord)

Ibn Jarir said; "The Arabs call certainty as well as doubt, Zann. There are similar instances in the Arabic language where a subject as well as its opposite share the same name. For instance, Allah said,

(وَرَأَى الْمُجْرِمُونَ النَّارَ فَظَنُّوا أَنَّهُمْ مُوَاقِعُوهَا)

(And the Mujrimun (criminals, polytheists, sinners), shall see the Fire and Zannu (apprehend) that they have to fall therein)"(18:53).

It is recorded in the Sahih that on the Day of Resurrection, Allah will say to a servant, "Have I not allowed you to marry, honored you, made the horses and camels subservient to you and allowed you to become a chief and a master" He will say, "Yes." Allah will say, "Did you have Zann (think) that you will meet Me" He will say, "No." Allah will say, "This Day, I will forget you, just as you forgot Me." If Allah wills, we will further elaborate on this subject when we explain Allah's statement,

(نَسُوا اللَّهَ فَنَسِيَهُمْ)

(They have forgotten Allah, so He has forgotten them) (9:67).

(يَبْنَى إِسْرَءِيلَ اذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتِيَ الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَأَنِّي فَضَّلْتُكُمْ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ)

(47. O Children of Israel! Remember My favor which I bestowed upon you and that I preferred you over the `Alamin (nations))

Reminding the Children of Israel that They were preferred above the Other Nations

Allah reminds the Children of Israel of the favors that He granted their fathers and grandfathers, how He showed preference to them by sending them Messengers from among them and revealing Books to them, more so than any of the other previous nations. Similarly, Allah said,

(وَلَقَدْ اخْتَرْنَاهُمْ عَلَىٰ عِلْمٍ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ)

(And We chose them (the Children of Israel) over the `Alamin, (nations) with knowledge.) (44:32) and,

(وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسَىٰ لِقَوْمِهِ لِقَوْمِ اذْكُرُوا نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذْ جَعَلَ فِيكُمْ أَنْبِيَاءَ وَجَعَلَكُمْ مُلُوكًا وَءَاتَكُمْ مَا لَمْ يُؤْتِ أَحَدًا مِّنَ الْعَالَمِينَ)

(And (remember) when Musa (Moses) said to his people: "O my people! Remember the favor of Allah to you: when He made Prophets among you, made you kings, honored you above the `Alamin (nations).") (5:20).

Abu Ja`far Ar-Razi reported that Ar-Rabi` bin Anas said that Abu Al-`Aliyah said that Allah's statement,

(وَأَنِّي فَضَّلْتُكُمْ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ)

(and that I preferred you over the `Alamin) means, "The kingship, Messengers and Books that were granted to them, instead of granting such to the other kingdoms that existed during their time, for every period there is a nation." It was also reported that Mujahid, Ar-Rabi` bin Anas, Qatadah and Isma`il bin Abi Khalid said similarly.

The Ummah of Muhammad is Better than the Children of Israel

This is the only way the Ayah can be understood, because this Ummah is better than theirs, as Allah said;

(كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ تَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَتَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَلَوْ ءَامَنَ أَهْلُ الْكِتَابِ لَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَهُمْ)

(You are the best of people ever raised up for mankind; you enjoin good and forbid evil, and you believe in Allah. And had the People of the Book (Jews and Christians) believed, it would have been better for them) (3:110).

Also, the Musnad and Sunan Collections of Hadith recorded that Mu`awiyah bin Haydah Al-Qushayri said that the Messenger of Allah said,

«أَنْتُمْ ثَوَقُونَ سَبْعِينَ أُمَّةً أَنْتُمْ خَيْرُهَا وَأَكْرَمُهَا عَلَى اللَّهِ»

(You (Muslims) are the seventieth nation, but you are the best and most honored of them according to Allah.)

There are many Hadiths on this subject, and they will be mentioned when we discuss Allah's statement,

(كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ)

(You are the best of peoples ever raised up for mankind) (3:110).

(وَاتَّقُوا يَوْمًا لَا تَجْزِي نَفْسٌ عَنْ نَفْسٍ شَيْئًا وَلَا يُقْبَلُ مِنْهَا شَفَعَةٌ وَلَا يُؤْخَذُ مِنْهَا عَدْلٌ وَلَا هُمْ يُنصَرُونَ)

(48. And fear a Day (of Judgement) when a person shall not avail another, nor will intercession be accepted from him, nor will compensation be taken from him, nor will they be helped.)

After Allah reminded the Children of Israel of the favors that He has granted them, He warned them about the duration of the torment which He will punish them with on the Day of Resurrection. He said,

(وَاتَّقُوا يَوْمًا)

(And fear a Day) meaning, the Day of Resurrection,

(لَا تَجْزِي نَفْسٌ عَنْ نَفْسٍ شَيْئًا)

(When a person shall not avail another) meaning, on that Day, no person shall be of any help to another. Similarly, Allah said,

(وَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ أُخْرَى)

(And no bearer of burdens shall bear another's burden) (35:18)

(لِكُلِّ امْرِيٍّ مِّنْهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ شَأْنٌ يُغْنِيهِ)

(Every man that Day will have enough to make him careless of others.) (80:37) and,

(يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ وَآخِشُوا يَوْمًا لَا يَجْزِي
وَالِدٌ عَنْ وَلَدِهِ وَلَا مَوْلُودٌ هُوَ جَارٍ عَنْ وَالِدِهِ
شَيْئًا)

(O mankind! Have Taqwa of your Lord (by keeping your duty to Him and avoiding all evil), and fear a Day when no father can avail aught for his son, nor a son avail aught for his father) (31:33).

This indeed should serve as a great warning that both the father and the son will not be of help to each other on that Day.

Neither Intercession, Ransom, or Assistance will be accepted on behalf of the Disbelievers

Allah said,

(وَلَا يُقْبَلُ مِنْهَا شَفَعَةٌ)

(nor will intercession be accepted from him)

meaning, from the disbelievers. Similarly, Allah said,

(فَمَا تَنْفَعُهُمْ شَفَعَةُ الشَّافِعِينَ)

(So no intercession of intercessors will be of any use to them) (74:48) and described the people of the Fire saying,

(فَمَا لَنَا مِنْ شَافِعِينَ - وَلَا صَدِيقٍ حَمِيمٍ)

(Now we have no intercessors. Nor a close friend (to help us)) (26:100-101).

Allah's statement here (2:48)

(وَلَا يُؤْخَذُ مِنْهَا عَدْلٌ)

(nor will compensation be taken from him) means, that Allah does not accept the disbelievers to ransom themselves. Similarly, Allah said,

(إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَمَاتُوا وَهُمْ كُفَّارٌ فَلَنْ يُقْبَلَ مِنْ أَحَدِهِمْ مِلَّةٌ الْأَرْضُ ذَهَبًا وَلَوْ افْتَدَى بِهِ)

(Verily, those who disbelieved, and died while they were disbelievers, the (whole) earth full of gold will not be accepted from anyone of them even if they offered it as a ransom) (3:91)

(إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَوْ أَنَّ لَهُمْ مَّا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا وَمِثْلَهُ مَعَهُ لَيَفْتَدُوا بِهِ مِنْ عَذَابِ يَوْمِ الْقِيَمَةِ مَا تُقْبَلُ مِنْهُمْ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ)

(Verily, those who disbelieve, if they had all that is in the earth, and as much again therewith to ransom themselves from the torment on the Day of Resurrection, it would never be accepted of them, and theirs would be a painful torment) (5:36)

(وَإِنْ تَعْدِلْ كُلَّ عَدْلٍ لَّا يُؤْخَذُ مِنْهَا)

(And even if he offers every ransom, it will not be accepted from him) (6:70) and,

(فَالْيَوْمَ لَّا يُؤْخَذُ مِنْكُمْ فِدْيَةٌ وَلَا مِنَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا
مَأْوَاكُمُ النَّارُ هِيَ مَوْلَاكُمْ)

(So this Day no ransom shall be taken from you (hypocrites), nor of those who disbelieved. Your abode is the Fire. That is your Mawla (friend proper place)) (57:15).

Allah stated that if the people do not believe in His Messenger and follow what He sent him with, then when they meet Him on the Day of Resurrection, after remaining on the path of disbelief, their family lineage and/or the intercession of their masters will not help them at all. It will not be accepted of them, even if they paid the earth's fill of gold as ransom. Similarly, Allah said,

(مِّنْ قَبْلُ أَن يَأْتِيَ يَوْمٌ لَّا بَيْعٌ فِيهِ وَلَا خُلَّةٌ وَلَا
شَفَعَةٌ)

(Before a Day comes when there will be no bargaining, nor friendship, nor intercession) (2:254) and,

(لَّا بَيْعٌ فِيهِ وَلَا خِلٌّ)

(On which there will be neither mutual bargaining nor befriending) (19:31). Allah's statement next,

(وَلَا هُمْ يُنصَرُونَ)

(nor will they be helped.) means, "no person shall get angry - or anxious - on their behalf and offer them any help, or try to save them from Allah's punishment." As stated earlier on that Day, neither the relative, nor persons of authority will feel pity for the disbelievers, nor will any ransom be accepted for them. Consequently, they will receive no help from others and they will be helpless themselves. Allah said,

(وَهُوَ يُجِيرُ وَلَا يُجَارُ عَلَيْهِ)

(While He (Allah) grants refuge (or protection), but none grants refuge from Him) (23:88)

(فَيَوْمَئِذٍ لَا يُعَذِّبُ عَذَابَهُ أَحَدٌ - وَلَا يُوثِقُ وِتَاقَهُ أَحَدٌ)

(So on that Day none will punish as He will punish. And none will bind (the wicked, disbelievers and polytheists) as He will bind) (89:25-26)

(مَا لَكُمْ لَا تَنْصُرُونَ - بَلْ هُمْ مُسْتَسْلِمُونَ)

("What is the matter with you Why do you not help one another (as you used to do in the world)" Nay, but that Day they shall surrender) (37:25-26) and,

(فَلَوْلَا نَصَرَہُمْ الذِّینَ اتَّخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِ اللّٰهِ قُرْبَانًا ؕ اِلٰهَةً بَلْ ضَلُّوا عَنْہُمْ)

(Then why did those whom they had taken for alihah (gods) besides Allah, as a way of approach (to Allah) not help them Nay, but they vanished completely from them) (46:28).

Also, Ad-Dahhak said that Ibn `Abbas said that Allah's statement,

(مَا لَكُمْ لَا تَنْصُرُونَ)

("What is the matter with you Why do you not help one another") (37:25) means, "This Day, you shall not have a refuge from Us. Not this Day." Ibn Jarir said that Allah's statement,

(وَلَا هُمْ يُنصَرُونَ)

(nor will they be helped.) meaning, on that Day, they shall neither be helped by any helper, nor shall anyone intercede on their behalf. No repeal or ransom will be accepted for them, all courtesy towards them will have ceased, along with any helpful intercession. No type of help or cooperation will be available for them on that Day. The judgment will, on that Day, be up to the Most Great, the Most Just, against whom no intercessor or helper can ever assist. He will then award the evil deed its kind and will multiply the good deeds. This is similar to Allah's statement,

(وَقِفُّهُمْ إِنَّهُمْ مَسْئُولُونَ - مَا لَكُمْ لَا تَنْصَرُونَ -
بَلْ هُمْ الْيَوْمَ مُسْتَسْلِمُونَ)

(But stop them, verily, they are to be questioned. "What is the matter with you Why do you not help one another" Nay, but that Day they shall surrender) (37:24-26).

(وَإِذْ نَجَّيْنَكُمْ مِنْ آلِ فِرْعَوْنَ يَسُومُونَكُمْ سُوءَ
الْعَذَابِ يُدَبِّحُونَ أَبْنَاءَكُمْ وَيَسْتَحْيُونَ نِسَاءَكُمْ وَفِي
ذَلِكَ بَلَاءٌ مِّنْ رَبِّكُمْ عَظِيمٌ - وَإِذْ فَرَقْنَا بَيْنَ الْبَحْرِ
فَأَنْجَيْنَاكُمْ وَأَغْرَقْنَا آلَ فِرْعَوْنَ وَأَنْتُمْ تَنْظُرُونَ)

(49. And (remember) when We delivered you from Fir`awn's (Pharaoh) people, who were afflicting you with a horrible torment, killing your sons and sparing your women, and therein was a mighty trial from your Lord.) (50. And (remember) when We separated the sea for you and saved you and drowned Fir`awn's (Pharaoh) people while you were watching.)

The Children of Israel were saved from Pharaoh and His Army Who drowned

Allah said to the Children of Israel, "Remember My favor on you

(وَإِذْ نَجَّيْنَكُمْ مِنْ آلِ فِرْعَوْنَ يَسُومُونَكُمْ سُوءَ
الْعَذَابِ)

(And (remember) when We delivered you from Fir`awn's (Pharaoh) people, who were afflicting you with a horrible torment,) meaning, 'I - Allah - saved you from them and delivered you from their hands in the company of Musa, after they subjected you to horrible torture.' This favor came after the cursed Pharaoh had a dream in which he saw a fire emerge from Bayt Al-Maqdis (Jerusalem), and then the fire entered the houses of the Copts in Egypt, with the exception of the Children of Israel. Its purport was that his kingship would be toppled by a man among the Children of Israel. It was also said that some of Pharaoh's entourage said that the Children of Israel were expecting a man among them to arise who would establish a state for them. We will mention the Hadith on this subject when we explain Surat Ta Ha (20), Allah willing. After the dream, Pharaoh ordered that every newborn male among the Children of Israel be killed

and that the girls be left alone. He also commanded the Children of Israel be given tasks of hard labor and assigned the most humiliating jobs.

The torment here refers to killing the male infants. In Surat Ibrahim (14) this meaning is clearly mentioned,

(يَسُومُونَكُمْ سُوءَ الْعَذَابِ وَيُذَبِّحُونَ أَبْنَاءَكُمْ وَيَسْتَحْيُونَ نِسَاءَكُمْ)

(Who were afflicting you with horrible torment, and were slaughtering your sons and letting your women live.) (14:6).

We will explain this Ayah in the beginning of Surat Al-Qasas (28), Allah willing, and our reliance and trust are with Him.

The meaning of,

(يَسُومُونَكُمْ)

(who were afflicting you) is, "They humiliated you," as Abu `Ubaydah stated. It was also said that it means, "They used to exaggerate in tormenting you" according to Al-Qurtubi. As for Allah saying,

(يُذَبِّحُونَ أَبْنَاءَكُمْ وَيَسْتَحْيُونَ نِسَاءَكُمْ)

(killing your sons and sparing your women) that explains His statement,

(يَسُومُونَكُمْ سُوءَ الْعَذَابِ)

(who were afflicting you with horrible torment) then it explains the meaning of the favor He gave them, as mentioned in His statement,

(اذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتِيَ الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ)

(Remember My favor which I bestowed upon you). As for what Allah said in Surat Ibrahim,

(وَذَكَرَهُمْ بِآيَامِ اللَّهِ)

(And remind them of the annals of Allah) (14:5) meaning, the favors and blessing He granted them, He then said,

(يَسْؤُمُونَكُمْ سُوءَ الْعَذَابِ وَيَذْبَحُونَ أَبْنَاءَكُمْ وَيَسْتَحْيُونَ نِسَاءَكُمْ)

(Who were afflicting you with horrible torment, and were slaughtering your sons and letting your women live.) (14:6)

So Allah mentioned saving their children from being slaughtered in order to remind them of the many favors that He granted them.

We should state here that `Pharaoh' (Fir`awn) is a title that was given to every disbelieving king who ruled Egypt, whether from the `Amaliq (Canaanites) or otherwise, just as Caesar (Qaysar) is the title of the disbelieving kings who ruled Rome and Damascus. Also, Khosrau (Kisra) is the title of the kings who ruled Persia, while Tubb`a is the title of the kings of Yemen, and the kings of Abyssinia (Ethiopia) were called Negus (An-Najashi).

Allah said,

(وَفِي دَلِكُمْ بَلَاءٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ عَظِيمٌ)

(And therein was a mighty trial from your Lord.)

Ibn Jarir commented that this part of the Ayah means, "Our saving your fathers from the torment that they suffered by the hand of Pharaoh, is a great blessing from your Lord." We should mention that in the blessing there a is test, the same as with hardship, for Allah said,

(وَنَبْلُوكُم بِالشَّرِّ وَالْخَيْرِ فِتْنَةً)

(And We shall make a trial of you with evil and with good) (21:35) and,

(وَبَلَوْنَهُمْ بِالْحَسَنَاتِ وَالسَّيِّئَاتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ)

(And We tried them with good (blessings) and evil (calamities) in order that they might turn (to obey Allah.)) (7:168).

Allah's statement next,

(وَإِذْ فَرَقْنَا بِكُمُ الْبَحْرَ فَأَنْجَيْنَاكُمْ وَأَغْرَقْنَا آلَ
فِرْعَوْنَ وَأَنْتُمْ تَنْظُرُونَ)

(And (remember) when We separated the sea for you and saved you and drowned Fir`awn's (Pharaoh) people while you were watching) means, 'After We saved you from Fir`awn and you escaped with Musa; Fir`awn went out in your pursuit and We parted the sea for you.' Allah mentioned this story in detail, as we will come to know, Allah willing. One of the shortest references to this story is Allah's statement,

(فَأَنْجَيْنَاكُمْ)

(And saved you) meaning, "We saved you from them, drowning them while you watched, bringing relief to your hearts and humiliation to your enemy."

Fasting the Day of `Ashura

It was reported that the day the Children of Israel were saved from Fir`awn was called the day of `Ashura'. Imam Ahmad reported that Ibn `Abbas said that the Messenger of Allah came to Al-Madinah and found that the Jews were fasting the day of `Ashura'. He asked them, "What is this day that you fast" They said, "This is a good day during which Allah saved the Children of Israel from their enemy, and Musa used to fast this day." The Messenger of Allah said,

«أَنَا أَحَقُّ بِمُوسَى مِنْكُمْ»

(I have more right to Musa than you have.)

So the Messenger of Allah fasted that day and ordered that it be fasted. This Hadith was collected by Al-Bukhari, Muslim, An-Nasa'i and Ibn Majah.

(وَإِذْ وَعَدْنَا مُوسَى أَرْبَعِينَ لَيْلَةً ثُمَّ اتَّخَذْتُمُ الْعِجْلَ
مِنْ بَعْدِهِ وَأَنْتُمْ ظَالِمُونَ - ثُمَّ عَفَوْنَا عَنْكُمْ مِّنْ بَعْدِ
ذَلِكَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ - وَإِذْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ
وَالْفُرْقَانَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ)

(51. And (remember) when We appointed for Musa (Moses) forty nights, and (in his absence) you took the calf (for worship), and you were Zalimun (polytheists and wrongdoers).) (52. Then after that We forgave you so that you might be grateful.) (53. And (remember) when We gave

Musa the Scripture (the Tawrah)) and the criterion (of right and wrong) so that you may be guided aright.)

The Children of Israel worshipped the Calf

Allah then said, "Remember My favor on you when I forgave you for worshipping the calf." This happened after Musa went to the meeting place with his Lord at the end of that period which was forty days. These forty days were mentioned in Surat Al-A`raf, when Allah said,

(وَوَعَدْنَا مُوسَىٰ ثَلَاثِينَ لَيْلَةً وَأُتِمَمْنَاهَا بِعَشْرِ)

(And We appointed for Musa thirty nights and added (to the period) ten (more)) (7:142).

It was said that these days were during the month of Dhul-Qa`dah plus the first ten days in Dhul-Hijjah, after the Children of Israel were delivered from Fir`awn and they safely crossed the sea. Allah's statement,

(وَإِذْ ءَاتَيْنَا مُوسَىٰ الْكِتَابَ)

(And (remember) when We gave Musa the Scripture) means, the Tawrah,

(وَالْفُرْقَانَ)

(And the criterion) that is that which differentiates between truth and falsehood, guidance and deviation.

(لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ)

(So that you may be guided aright), after escaping the sea, as another Ayah in Surat Al-A`raf clearly stated,

(وَلَقَدْ ءَاتَيْنَا مُوسَىٰ الْكِتَابَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا أَهْلَكْنَا
الْقُرُونَ الْأُولَىٰ بِصَآئِرَ لِلنَّاسِ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةً
لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ)

(And indeed We gave Musa after We had destroyed the generations of old the Scripture (the Tawrah) as an enlightenment for mankind, and a guidance and a mercy, that they might remember (or receive admonition)) (28:43).

(وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسَىٰ لِقَوْمِهِ يَقَوْمَ إِنَّكُمْ ظَلَمْتُمْ أَنْفُسَكُمْ
بِاتِّخَاذِكُمُ الْعِجْلَ فَتُوبُوا إِلَىٰ بَارِئِكُمْ فَاقْتُلُوا)

(54. And (remember) when Musa said to his people: "O my people! Verily, you have wronged yourselves by worshipping the calf. So turn in repentance to your Creator and kill yourselves (the innocent kill the wrongdoers among you), that will be better for you with your Creator." Then He accepted your repentance. Truly, He is the One Who accepts repentance, the Most Merciful.)

The Children of Israel kill each other in Repentance

This was the repentance required from the Children of Israel for worshipping the calf. Commenting on Allah's statement;

(وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسَىٰ لِقَوْمِهِ يَقَوْمَ إِنَّكُمْ ظَلَمْتُمْ أَنْفُسَكُمْ
بِاتِّخَاذِكُمُ الْعِجْلَ)

(And (remember) when Musa said to his people: "O my people! Verily, you have wronged yourselves by worshipping the calf...), Al-Hasan Al-Basri said, "When their hearts thought of worshipping the calf,

(وَلَمَّا سَقَطَ فِي أَيْدِيهِمْ وَرَأَوْا أَنَّهُمْ قَدْ ضَلُّوا قَالُوا
لَئِنْ لَمْ يَرْحَمْنَا رَبُّنَا وَيَغْفِرْ لَنَا)

(And when they regretted and saw that they had gone astray, they (repented and) said: "If our Lord does not have mercy upon us and forgive us") (7:149). This is when Musa said to them,

(يَقَوْمَ إِنَّكُمْ ظَلَمْتُمْ أَنْفُسَكُمْ بِاتِّخَاذِكُمُ الْعِجْلَ)

(O my people! Verily, you have wronged yourselves by worshipping the calf...)." Abu `Al-`Aliyah, Sa`id bin Jubayr and Ar-Rabi` bin Anas commented on,

(فَتُوبُوا إِلَىٰ بَارِئِكُمْ)

(So turn in repentance to your Bari') that it means, "To your Creator." Allah's statement,

(إِلَى بَارِئِكُمْ)

(to your Bari' (Creator)) alerts the Children of Israel to the enormity of their error and means, "Repent to He Who created you after you associated others with Him in worship."

An-Nasa'i, Ibn Jarir and Ibn Abi Hatim recorded Ibn `Abbas saying, "Allah told the Children of Israel that their repentance would be to slay by the sword every person they meet, be he father or son. They should not care whom they kill. Those were guilty whom Musa and Harun were not aware of their guilt, they admitted their sin and did as they were ordered. So Allah forgave both the killer and the one killed." This is part of the Hadith about the trials that we will mention in Surat Ta Ha, (20) Allah willing.

Ibn Jarir narrated that Ibn `Abbas said, "Musa said to his people,

(فَقُتُّوْا إِلَى بَارِئِكُمْ فَاقْتُلُوْا أَنْفُسَكُمْ ذَلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ عِنْدَ بَارِئِكُمْ فَتَابَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِنَّهُ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ)

("So turn in repentance to your Creator and kill each other (the innocent kill the wrongdoers among you), that will be better for you with your Creator." Then He accepted your repentance. Truly, He is the One Who accepts repentance, the Most Merciful.)

Allah ordered Musa to command his people to kill each other. He ordered those who worshipped the calf to sit down and those who did not worship the calf to stand holding knives in their hands. When they started killing them, a great darkness suddenly overcame them. After the darkness lifted, they had killed seventy thousand of them. Those who were killed among them were forgiven, and those who remained alive were also forgiven." p

(وَإِذْ قُلْتُمْ يَمُوسَىٰ لَنْ نُؤْمِنَ لَكَ حَتَّىٰ نَرَىٰ اللَّهَ جَهْرَةً فَأَخَذَتْكُمُ الصَّعِقَةُ وَأَنْتُمْ تَنْظُرُونَ - ثُمَّ بَعَثْنَاكُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَوْتِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ)

(55. And (remember) when you said: "O Musa! We shall never believe in you until we see Allah plainly." But you were seized with a bolt of lightning while you were looking). (56. Then We raised you up after your death, so that you might be grateful.)

The Best among the Children of Israel ask to see Allah; their subsequent Death and Resurrection

Allah said, `Remember My favor on you for resurrecting you after you were seized with lightning when you asked to see Me directly, which neither you nor anyone else can bear or attain.' This was said by Ibn Jurayj. Ibn `Abbas said that the Ayah

(وَإِذْ قُلْتُمْ يَمُوسَىٰ لَن نُّؤْمِنَ لَكَ حَتَّىٰ نَرَى اللَّهَ جَهْرَةً)

(And (remember) when you said: "O Musa ! We shall never believe in you until we see Allah plainly.") means, "Publicly", "So that we gaze at Allah." Also, `Urwah bin Ruwaym said that Allah's statement,

(وَأَنْتُمْ تَنْظُرُونَ)

(While you were looking) means, "Some of them were struck with lightning while others were watching." Allah resurrected those, and struck the others with lightning. As-Suddi commented on,

(فَأَخَذَتْكُمُ الصَّعِقَةُ)

(But you were seized with a bolt of lightning) saying; "They died, and Musa stood up crying and supplicating to Allah, `O Lord! What should I say to the Children of Israel when I go back to them after You destroyed the best of them,

(لَوْ شِئْتَ أَهْلَكْتَهُم مِّن قَبْلُ وَإِيَّيَ أَهْلَكْنَا بِمَا فَعَلَ السُّفَهَاءُ مِنَّا)

(If it had been Your will, You could have destroyed them and me before; would You destroy us for the deeds of the foolish ones among us)' Allah revealed to Musa that these seventy men were among those who worshipped the calf. Afterwards, Allah brought them back to life one man at a time, while the rest of them were watching how Allah was bringing them back to life. That is why Allah's said,

(ثُمَّ بَعَثْنَاكُم مِّن بَعْدِ مَوْتِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ)

(Then We raised you up after your death, so that you might be grateful.)"

Ar-Rabi` bin Anas said, "Death was their punishment, and they were resurrected after they died so they could finish out their lives." Qatadah said similarly.

Abdur-Rahman bin Zayd bin Aslam commented on this Ayah, "Musa returned from meeting with his Lord carrying the Tablets on which He wrote the Tawrah. He found that they had worshipped the calf in his absence. Consequently, he commanded them to kill themselves, and they complied, and Allah forgave them. He said to them, 'These Tablets have Allah's Book, containing what He commanded you and what He forbade for you.' They said, 'Should we believe this statement because you said it By Allah, we will not believe until we see Allah in the open, until He shows us Himself and says: This is My Book, therefore, adhere to it. Why does He not talk to us as He talked to you, O, Musa'" Then he (` Abdur-Rahman bin Zayd) recited Allah's statement,

(لَنْ تُؤْمِنَ لَكَ حَتَّى نَرَى اللَّهَ جَهْرَةً)

(We shall never believe in you until we see Allah plainly) and said, "So Allah's wrath fell upon them, a thunderbolt struck them, and they all died. Then Allah brought them back to life after He killed them." Then he (` Abdur-Rahman) recited Allah's statement,

(ثُمَّ بَعَثْنَاكُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَوْتِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ)

(Then We raised you up after your death, so that you might be grateful), and said, "Musa said to them, 'Take the Book of Allah.' They said, 'No.' He said, 'What is the matter with you' They said, 'The problem is that we died and came back to life.' He said, 'Take the Book of Allah.' They said, 'No.' So Allah sent some angels who made the mountain topple over them."

This shows that the Children of Israel were required to fulfill the commandments after they were brought back to life. However, Al-Mawardi said that there are two opinions about this matter. The first opinion is that since the Children of Israel witnessed these miracles, they were compelled to believe, so they did not have to fulfill the commandments. The second opinion states that they were required to adhere to the commandments, so that no responsible adult is free of such responsibilities. Al-Qurtubi said that this is what is correct, because, he said, although the Children of Israel witnessed these tremendous calamities and incidents, that did not mean that they were not responsible for fulfilling the commandments any more. Rather they are responsible for that, and this is clear. Allah knows best.

(وَوَضَعْنَا عَلَىٰ كُفْرِهِمُ الْغَمَامَ وَأَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَنَّاءَ وَالسَّلَوى كُلُوا مِنْ طَيِّبَاتِ مَا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ وَمَا ظَلَمُونَا وَلَكِنْ كَانُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ)

(57. And We shaded you with clouds and sent down on you Al-Manna and the quail, (saying): "Eat of the good lawful things We have provided for you," (but they rebelled). And they did not wrong Us but they wronged themselves.)

After Allah mentioned the calamities that He saved the Children of Israel from, He mentioned the favors that He granted them, saying,

(وَضَلَّلْنَا عَلَيْكُمُ الْغَمَامَ)

And We shaded you with clouds. This Ayah mentions the white clouds that provided shade for the Children of Israel, protecting them from the sun's heat during their years of wandering. In the Hadith about the trials, An-Nasa'i recorded Ibn Abba's saying, Allah shaded the Children of Israel with clouds during the years of wandering. Ibn Abi Hatim said, Narrations similar to that of Ibn Abba's were reported from Ibn Umar, Ar-Rabi bin Anas, Abu Mujaz, Ad-Dahhak, and As-Suddi. Al-Hasan and Qatadah said that,

(وَضَلَّلْنَا عَلَيْكُمُ الْغَمَامَ)

(And We shaded you with clouds) "This happened when they were in the desert and the clouds shielded them from the sun." Ibn Jarir said that several scholars said that the type of cloud the Ayah mentioned, "was cooler and better than the type we know."

Ali bin Abi Talhah reported that Ibn Abbas commented on Allah's statement,

(وَأَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَنَّاءَ)

And sent down on you Al-Manna, The manna used to descend to them to the trees, and they used to eat whatever they wished of it. Also, Qatadah said, The manna, which was whiter than milk and sweeter than honey, used to rain down on the Children of Israel, just as the snow falls, from dawn until sunrise. One of them would collect enough for that particular day, for if it remained more than that, it would spoil. On the sixth day, Friday, one would collect enough for the sixth and the seventh day, which was the Sabbath during which one would not leave home to seek his livelihood, or for anything else. All this occurred in the wilderness. The type of manna that we know provides sufficient food when eaten alone, because it is nutritious and sweet. When manna is mixed with water, it becomes a sweet drink. It also changes composition when mixed with other types of food. However, this is not the only type. The evidence to this fact is that Al-Bukhari narrated, that Sa'ad bin Zayd said that the Messenger of Allah said,

«الْكَمَاهُ مِنَ الْمَنَّاءِ وَمَاؤها شِفَاءٌ لِلْعَيْنِ»

(Kam'ah (truffles) is a type of manna, and its liquid is a remedy for the eyes.)

This Hadith was also collected by Imam Ahmad. The group of Hadith compilers, with the exception of Abu Dawud, also collected it, and At-Tirmidhi graded it Hasan Sahih. At-Tirmidhi recorded Abu Hurayrah saying that the Messenger of Allah said,

«الْعَجْوَةُ مِنَ الْجَنَّةِ وَفِيهَا شِفَاءٌ مِنَ السَّمِّ وَالْكَمَأَةُ
مِنَ الْمَنِّ وَمَاؤُهَا شِفَاءٌ لِلْعَيْنِ»

(The `Ajwah (pressed, dried date) is from Paradise and it cures poison, Al-Kam'ah (truffles) is a form of manna, and its liquid heals the eye.") At-Tirmidhi is the only one of them who recorded this Hadith.

As for the quail (Salwa) in question, `Ali bin Abi Talhah reported that Ibn `Abbas said, "The (Salwa) is a bird that looks like the quail." This is the same opinion reported from Mujahid, Ash-Sha`bi, Ad-Dahhak, Al-Hasan, `Ikrimah and Ar-Rabi` bin Anas, may Allah have mercy upon them. Also, `Ikrimah said that the Salwa is a bird in Paradise about the size of a sparrow. Qatadah said "The Salwa is a bird that is similar to a sparrow. During that time, an Israelite could catch as many quails as was sufficient for that particular day, otherwise the meat would spoil. On the sixth day, Friday, he would collect what is enough for the sixth and the seventh day, the Sabbath, during which one was not allowed to depart his home to seek anything."

Allah said,

(كُلُوا مِنْ طَيِّبَاتِ مَا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ)

(Eat of the good lawful things We have provided for you,) (7:160) this form of command is a simple order of allowance, guiding to what is good. Allah said,

(وَمَا ظَلَمُونَا وَلَكِنْ كَانُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ)

(And they did not wrong Us but they wronged themselves) means, `We commanded them to eat from what We gave them, and to perform the acts of worship (but they rebelled).' This Ayah is similar to Allah's statement,

(كُلُوا مِنْ رِزْقِ رَبِّكُمْ وَاشْكُرُوا لَهُ)

(Eat of the provision of your Lord, and be grateful to Him) (34:15).

Yet, the Children of Israel rebelled, disbelieved and committed injustice against themselves, even though they saw the clear signs, tremendous miracles and extraordinary events.

The Virtue of Muhammad's Companions over the Companions of all Other Prophets

Here it is important to point out the virtue of Muhammad's Companions over the companions of the other Prophets. This includes firmness in the religion, patience and the lack of arrogance, may Allah be pleased with them. Although the Companions accompanied the Prophet in his

travels and battles, such as during the battle of Tabuk, in intense heat and hardship, they did not ask for a miracle, though this was easy for the Prophet by Allah's leave. And when the Companions became hungry, they merely asked the Prophet - to invoke Allah - for an increase in the amount of food. They collected whatever food they had and brought it to the Prophet, and he asked Allah to bless it, told each of them to take some food, and they filled every pot they had. Also, when they needed rain, the Prophet asked Allah to send down rain, and a rain cloud came. They drank, gave water to their camels and filled their water skins. When they looked around, they found that the cloud had only rained on their camp. This is the best example of those who were willing to accept Allah's decision and follow the Messenger of Allah

(وَإِذْ قُلْنَا ادْخُلُوا هَذِهِ الْقَرْيَةَ فَكُلُوا مِنْهَا حَيْثُ شِئْتُمْ رَغَدًا وَادْخُلُوا الْبَابَ سُجَّدًا وَقُولُوا حِطَّةٌ نَّغْفِرْ لَكُمْ خَطِيئَتَكُمْ وَسَنَزِيدُ الْمُحْسِنِينَ - فَبَدَّلَ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا قَوْلًا غَيْرَ الَّذِي قِيلَ لَهُمْ فَأَنْزَلْنَا عَلَى الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا رَجْزًا مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ بِمَا كَانُوا يَفْسُقُونَ)

(58. And (remember) when We said: "Enter this town (Jerusalem) and eat bountifully therein with pleasure and delight wherever you wish, and enter the gate in prostration (or bowing with humility) and say: 'Forgive us,' and We shall forgive you your sins and shall increase (reward) for the good-doers.") (59. But those who did wrong changed the word from that which had been told to them for another, so We sent upon the wrongdoers Rijz (a punishment) from the heaven because of their rebellion.)

The Jews were Rebellious instead of Appreciative when They gained Victory

Allah admonished the Jews for avoiding Jihad and not entering the holy land as they had been ordered to do when they came from Egypt with Musa. They were also commanded to fight the disbelieving `Amaliq (Canaanites) dwelling in the holy land at that time. But they did not want to fight, because they were weak and exhausted. Allah punished them by causing them to become lost, and to continue wandering, as Allah has stated in Surat Al-Ma'idah (5). The correct opinion about the meaning of, 'the holy land' mentioned here is that it was Bayt Al-Maqdis (Jerusalem), as As-Suddi, Ar-Rabi` bin Anas, Qatadah and Abu Muslim Al-Asfahani, as well as others have stated. Musa said,