



XI

HŪD

هود

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

XI

HŪD

هُود

INTRODUCTION

Name

This Sūrah has been named after Prophet Hūd whose story has been related in vv. 50-60.

Period of Revelation

If we consider its theme deeply, we come to the conclusion that it was revealed during the same period as Sūrah Yūnus and most probably followed it immediately.

Subject

The Sūrah deals with the same subject as Sūrah Yūnus, that is, invitation to the Message, admonition and warning, with this difference that the warning is sterner. This is also supported by a Tradition:

It is related that after its revelation, once Hadrat Abū Bakr said to the Holy Prophet, "Of late I have been noticing that you are growing older and older. What is the cause of it?" The Holy Prophet replied, "Sūrāh Hūd and the like Sūrahs have made me old." This shows that it was a very hard time for the Holy Prophet and these stern warnings added greatly to his anxieties that were caused by the persecution from the Quraish, who were doing their worst to crush down the Message of Islam. For it was obvious to the Holy Prophet that the last limit of the respite given by Allah was approaching nearer and nearer, and he was afraid lest the term of the respite should expire and his people be seized by the torment.

The invitation is this: Obey the Messenger of Allah; discard *shirk*, and worship Allah and Allah alone: establish the entire system of your life on the belief that you shall be called to account in the Hereafter.

The admonition is this: Remember that those people who put their faith in the outward appearance of this worldly life and rejected the Message of the Prophets met with dire consequences. Therefore you should consider it seriously whether you should follow the same way that history has proved to be the path to ruin.

The warning is this: You should not be deluded by the delay in the coming of the punishment: it is because of the respite that Allah has granted you by His grace so that you might mend your ways: if you do not make use of this opportunity, you shall be inflicted with an inevitable punishment that will destroy you all except the Believers.

Instead of addressing the people directly, the Qur'ān has used the stories of the people of Noah, Hūd, Sālih, Lot, Shu'aib and Moses to achieve the above-mentioned objects. What is most prominent in their stories is that when Allah passes His judgement on the people, He does not spare anyone whatsoever, even if he be the nearest relative of the Prophet of the time. Only that one is rescued who had believed in the Prophet, and none else, not even his own son or wife. More than that: the Faith demands from each and every Believer that he should totally forget his relationships when that judgement comes and remember only the relationship of the Faith. For it is against the spirit of Islam to show any regard whatsoever for the relationships of blood and race. And the Muslims demonstrated these teachings practically in the Battle of Badr, four years after the revelation of this Sūrah.



الَّذِي كَتَبَ أَحْكِمَتِ إِلَهُهُ شَوْ فُصِّلَتْ مِنْ لَدُنِّ حَكِيمٍ خَيْرٍ ۗ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا
 إِلَّا اللَّهَ ۗ إِنِّي لَكُمْ مِنْهُ نَذِيرٌ وَبَشِيرٌ ۗ وَإِنْ اسْتَغْفِرُوا رَبَّكُمْ ثُمَّ تُوبُوا
 إِلَيْهِ يُمَتِّعْكُمْ مَتَاعًا حَسَنًا إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ مُسَمًّى وَيُؤْتِ كُلَّ ذِي فَضْلٍ
 فَضْلَهُ ۗ وَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَإِنِّي أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ كَبِيرٍ ۗ إِلَىٰ اللَّهِ
 مَرْجِعُكُمْ وَهُوَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ۗ أَلَّا إِنَّهُمْ يَأْتُونَ صُدُورَهُمْ
 لِيَسْخَفُوا مِنْهُ ۗ أَلَّا جِئِن يَسْتَغْشُونَ شَيْأَهُمْ لَيَعْلَمَنَّ مَا يُسِرُّونَ وَمَا
 يُعْلِنُونَ ۗ إِنَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ ۗ

الجزء ١٢

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ ۗ وَكَانَ عَلَى اللَّهِ رِزْقَهَا وَيَعَادُ مِسْقَرَهَا ۗ

مُتَوَدِّعَهَا ۗ كُلُّ فِي كِتَابٍ مُبِينٍ ۗ وَهُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ وَكَانَ عَرْشُهُ عَلَى الْمَاءِ لِيَبْلُوكُمْ ۗ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا ۗ وَلَئِنْ قُلْتُمْ إِنَّا لَمُبْعُوثُونَ مِنْ بَعْدِ الْمَوْتِ لَيَقُولَنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِنْ هَذَا إِلَّا سِحْرٌ مُبِينٌ ۗ وَلَئِنْ أَخْرْنَا عَنْهُمُ الْعَذَابَ إِلَىٰ أُمَّةٍ مَعْدُودَةٍ لَيَقُولُنَّ مَا يَحْبِسُهُ ۗ أَلَّا يَوْمَ يَأْتِيهِمْ لَيْسَ مَصْرُوفًا عَنْهُمْ وَحَاقَ بِهِمْ مَا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِئُونَ ۗ وَلَئِنْ أَدْخْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ مِنَّا رَحْمَةً ثُمَّ نَزَعْنَاهَا مِنْهُ ۗ إِنَّهُ لَكَيْفُوسٌ كَفُورٌ ۗ وَلَئِنْ أَدْخَلْنَاهُ نِعْمًا بَعْدَ خِرَابٍ مَسْتَهْزِئَةٍ لَيَقُولَنَّ ذَهَبَ السَّيِّئَاتُ عَنِّي ۗ إِنَّهُ لَفَرِحٌ فَخُورٌ ۗ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ صَبَرُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ ۗ أُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةٌ وَأَجْرٌ كَبِيرٌ ۗ فَلَعَلَّكَ تَارِكٌ

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XI HŪD

هود

Verses: 123

Revealed at Makkah

In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful.

Alif Lām Rā. It is an Edict¹ whose contents have been made firm and issued in detail² by the All-Wise and All-Aware: (it is this): "You should worship none but Allah—I am indeed a warner and also a bearer of good news from Him to you—And you should ask forgiveness of your Lord: then return to Him and He will provide you with good provisions of life till an appointed term.³ And He will bestow His favours on everyone who deserves His favours.⁴ But if you turn away I am afraid you shall meet with the torment of a dreadful day. To Allah you shall all return and He has power over everything." 1-4

Behold! They turn aside their chests in order to hide themselves from him.⁵ Beware! Even when they cover themselves with clothes Allah knows alike what they conceal and what they show; indeed He knows even the secrets they conceal in their breasts. There is no moving creature on the earth whose sustenance does not depend on Allah: He knows its dwelling place and its repository.⁶ Everything has been recorded in an open register. 5-6

And it is He Who created the heavens and the earth in six days—whereas before this His Throne rested upon water⁷ so that He may test which of you does the best deeds.⁸ Now O Muhammad, if you tell them "You will, O people, be raised again after death," those who disbelieve promptly exclaim, "This is plain sorcery!"⁹ And if We defer their punishment to some definite and reckoned time, they say, "Well, what is it that is delaying this?" Listen! When the day of that punishment comes, no one shall be able to avert it from them, and that very thing which they are ridiculing shall encircle them on all sides. 7-8

If We show man Our mercy and then deprive him of it, he is filled with despair and shows ingratitude. And if after the adversity that had visited him, We bestow favours upon him, he says, "All my 9-11

sorrows have gone from me," and grows over-jubilant and arrogant.¹⁰ Only those are free from this, who are steadfast¹¹ and do good deeds: they are the ones who will have forgiveness and a rich reward.¹²

1. The Arabic word *كِتَاب* (*kitāb*) has been translated into "Edict" because of the context. For its meaning is not confined to "book" or "something written" but it includes "command" and "sovereign decree" as well and has been used in several places in the Qur'ān in the same sense.

2. The contents of this "Edict" are firm, strong, and unchangeable: they are well-balanced and measured: there is no tinge of verbosity, pedantry, volubility, poetic fancy and rhetorical exaggeration. The truth has been stated accurately, and there is nothing more and nothing less than the truth. Moreover, the contents have been given in detail and everything has been made so clear and plain that there is neither confusion nor complication nor ambiguity in it.

3. The assurance that "He will provide you with good provisions of life..." has been given to remove the misunderstanding which Satan has imbued in the heart of every foolish worshipper of the world that piety ruins one's worldly life, though it might lead to one's success in the Hereafter. Allah has re-assured the true believers that He will shower His blessings on God-fearing people and they will live happy and peaceful lives and will be honoured and respected everywhere. The same thing has been stated in a different manner in XVI: 97: "Whoso will do good deeds, whether a man or a woman, provided the one is a believer, We will surely make such a one lead a pure and clean life in this world." Allah has refuted this theory of Satan and his disciples that piety inevitably brings poverty, distress and affliction and ignominy to the person who adopts truth, righteousness and virtue. He has assured that He will make the life of the one who will believe in Him and adopt a righteous life truly successful both in this world and in the Hereafter. And it is common experience that only those people enjoy real peace of mind and are honoured and respected who are God-fearing and possess a pure character; who are fair and generous in all their affairs and dealings and who are free from evil. For they are trusted by all and none fears any wrong or wickedness from them.

According to the Qur'ān, the provisions of life are either "good provisions" (مَنَاعِجَ حَسَنٍ) or "deceptive provisions" (مَنَاعِجَ غَوْرٍ). Here those, who return to Allah, have been assured that they will be given "good provisions" of life and not "deceptive ones". The provisions are "good" if their recipient becomes even more grateful to Allah than before and uses these for fulfilling His rights and the rights of mankind and of his own self. Such "good provisions" make his life truly successful in this world and also in the Next World. On the

contrary, the provisions are "deceptive", if they become a temptation for the recipient, and get him involved in the worship of the things of this world more than before. Though "the deceptive provisions" might appear to be a blessing and a "favour", these are, in fact, a curse and means of some future torment.

4. This verse enunciates a fundamental Divine Principle. The higher a person rises in character and conduct, the higher is the rank he obtains in the sight of Allah. That is to say that Allah does not let go waste the good deed of anyone. He does neither appreciate any evil deed, nor detracts from any good deed. Everyone will be given the honour which he deserves for his deeds.

5. They were those people of Makkah, who though not very active in their antagonism against the Message of the Holy Prophet, nevertheless were very averse to it. Therefore they did not like to hear it nor come face to face with him, and did their very best to avoid him. If, by chance, they found him sitting somewhere and talking to the people, they would at once turn back on their heels. Or if they saw him coming towards themselves they would slink away or hide their faces with cloth for fear that he might address them and convey his Message to them. As they did not have the courage to face the Truth, they would bury their heads ostrich-like and make believe that the Reality from which they were hiding had disappeared, whereas it was all along there and watching their ridiculous attempts to hide from it.

6. That is, "It is foolish on your part to deceive yourselves that you can escape punishment by hiding yourselves from Allah Who has full and perfect knowledge of everything: Who knows the nest where the tiniest sparrow lives and the hole where the smallest insect resides, and provides their sustenance to them wherever they be: Who knows the dwelling place and the final resting place of every creature and gives life and death to them at the appointed time. Do you think that by hiding yourselves from His Messenger, you can also hide yourselves from the All-Knowing Sovereign Who has sent him? Do you think that Allah does not see His Messenger doing his very best to convey His Message to you and you are trying to turn a deaf ear to it?"

7. This is a parenthetical clause that has probably been inserted in answer to a question, which has not been cited: if the heavens and the earth were created afterwards in six days, what was there before their creation? The answer is: then there was water. It is not possible for us to say what exactly was the nature of that water. It might have been the common liquid known by that name. Or perhaps, the word "water" has been used as a symbol for the fluid state of the matter before it was changed to its present form. As regards "His Throne rested on water", I am of the opinion that it means: "His Kingdom was over water."

بَعْضَ مَا يُوحَىٰ إِلَيْكَ وَصَاحِبًا بِهٖ صَدْرُكَ أَنْ يَقُولُوا كَوْلَا أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْهِ
كَتْرًا أَوْ جَاءَ مَعَهُ مَلَكَ ۚ إِنَّمَا آتَيْتَ نَذِيرًا ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَكِيلٌ ۝¹² أَمْ
يَقُولُونَ افْتَرَاهُ ۗ قُلْ فَأْتُوا بِعَشْرِ سُوْرٍ مِّثْلِهِ مُفْتَرِي ۖ وَادْعُوا مَنِ
اسْتَطَعْتُمْ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ۝¹³ قَالُوا يَسْتَجِيبُوا لَكُمْ
فَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا أَنْزَلَ بِعِلْمِ اللَّهِ ۚ وَإِنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ فَهَلْ أَنْتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ ۝¹⁴ مَنْ
كَانَ يُرِيدِ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا وَرَبِّتَهَا نُوفِيَ إِلَيْهِمْ أَعْمَالَهُمْ فِيهَا ۚ وَهُمْ فِيهَا لَا
يُبْخَسُونَ ۝¹⁵ أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ لَيْسَ لَهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ إِلَّا النَّارُ ۚ وَحَبِطَ مَا صَنَعُوا
فِيهَا وَبِطُلَّ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ۝¹⁶ أَفَمَنْ كَانَ عَلَىٰ بَيْنَتٍ مِّنْ رَبِّهِ ۖ وَيَتْلُوهُ شَاهِدًا
مِّنْهُ ۖ وَمِنْ قَبْلِهِ كِتَابُ مُوسَىٰ إِمَامًا وَرَحْمَةً ۚ أُولَٰئِكَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ ۚ وَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ
بِهِ مِنَ الْأَحْزَابِ ۖ فَالنَّارُ موعِدُهُ ۚ فَلَا تَكُ فِي مِرْيَةٍ مِّنْهُ ۚ إِنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكَ ۚ وَ
لَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ۝¹⁷ وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرَىٰ عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا ۚ أُولَٰئِكَ
يُعْرَضُونَ عَلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ وَيَقُولُ الْأَشْهَادُ هَٰؤُلَاءِ الَّذِينَ كَذَبُوا عَلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ ۚ أَلَا لَعْنَةُ
اللَّهِ عَلَى الظَّالِمِينَ ۝¹⁸ الَّذِينَ يَصُدُّونَ عَنِ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَيَبْغُونَهَا عِوَجًا ۚ وَهُمْ
بِالْآخِرَةِ هُمْ كَافِرُونَ ۝¹⁹ أُولَٰئِكَ لَمْ يَكُونُوا مُعْجِزِينَ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا كَانَ لَهُمْ مِنْ
دُونِ اللَّهِ مِنْ أَوْلِيَاءَ ۚ يُضَعَّفُ لَهُمُ الْعَذَابُ ۚ مَا كَانُوا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ السَّمْعَ وَمَا
كَانُوا يُبْصِرُونَ ۝²⁰ أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ خَسِرُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ وَرَضُوا عَنْهُمْ ۚ مَا كَانُوا يَفْقَهُونَ ۝²¹
لَا جَرَمَ لَهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ هُمْ الْآخِرُونَ ۝²² إِنْ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَ
أَخْبَتُوا إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ ۚ أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ ۚ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ۝²³ مَثَلُ الْفَرِيقَيْنِ
كَالْأَعْمَىٰ وَالْأَبْصِرِ ۚ وَالْبَصِيرُ وَالسَّمِيعُ ۚ هَلْ يَسْتَوِينَ مَثَلًا ۚ أَفَلَا تَتَذَكَّرُونَ ۝²⁴

So O Prophet, be on your guard lest you should omit (to recite) 12
 some of the things which are being revealed to you and be not distressed
 at heart that they would say "Why has no treasure been sent down to
 him?" Or "Why has no angel come with him?" You are only a warner
 and Allah has everything in His power and charge.¹³

Do they say, "He has invented the Book himself?" Say to them 13-14
 "Very well, if it is so, bring ten fabricated Surāhs like this: and you may
 call to your assistance whomsoever (of your deities) you can except
 Allah. if you be right (in considering them your deities). Now if they
 (your deities) do not come to your help you should know that this Book
 has been revealed with Allah's knowledge and that there is no true deity
 other than Allah. Do you then surrender to this (which is the very
 Truth)?"¹⁴

Those who desire this worldly life and its splendours¹⁵ are given 15-16
 the full reward of their works here and nothing is detracted from it. But
 there is nothing except the Fire¹⁶ for them in the Next World. (There
 they shall come to know) that all that they did in this world had come to
 nought and whatever they did was useless and worthless.

In contrast (to the worshippers of the world) there was one who 17
 had a clear evidence from his Lord;¹⁷ then came a witness from Him
 (testifying that evidence¹⁸) and there existed before him the Book of
 Moses as a Guidance and a blessing: (can such a one also reject the
 Message? Nay.) such people will believe in it.¹⁹ And whosoever of the
 peoples will reject it he shall have that promised abode which is Hell. So
 O Prophet have no doubt at all about this; for this is indeed the Truth
 from your Lord though most people do not believe in it.

And who can be more unjust than the one who ascribes false 18-24
 things to Allah?²⁰ Such persons shall be brought before their Lord and
 the witnesses will say "These are the people who ascribed false things to
 their Lord." Beware! Allah's curse rests upon the unjust people²¹—on
 those unjust people²² who debar others from Allah's Way and seek to
 make it crooked;²³ and who disbelieve in the Hereafter. They were
 unable to frustrate Allah on the earth,²⁴ nor had they protectors to
 defend them against Allah. Now they shall be given double
 chastisement:²⁵ for they would neither listen to others nor see the Truth
 for themselves. These are the people who brought about their own loss

and all that they had invented vanished from them.²⁶ No doubt they shall be the greatest losers in the Hereafter. As regards those who believed and did righteous works and dedicated themselves exclusively to their Lord most surely they shall be the dwellers of Paradise and shall abide there for ever.²⁷ These two groups may be likened to two men, one of whom is blind and deaf, and the other can see and hear. Can they be alike and equal?²⁸ Do you not learn a lesson (from this example)?

Contd from p.327]

8. This enunciates the purpose of the Creation: Allah created the heavens and the earth for the sake of the creation of mankind and He created mankind to test human beings by delegating to them the powers of vicegerency and making them morally responsible for using or abusing them, just as they liked. Thus it has been emphasized that the sole purpose of the Creation is the moral trial of man and his consequent accountability to the Creator for the use or abuse of the delegated powers, and the award of rewards and punishments. For without this basic purpose, the whole work of Creation would have become meaningless and useless.

9. That is, "The disbelievers very foolishly considered the purpose of the Creation to be no more than a pastime in which they themselves were mere playthings. They were so absorbed in their foolish conception that when the Holy Prophet told them what the real purpose of Creation was and what part they were required to play in it, they would scoff at him, saying, "Your Message is like a piece of sorcery and beyond our understanding."

10. This disgraceful characteristic of man has been mentioned here because the disbelievers were exhibiting it at that time. When the Holy Prophet warned them of the consequences of their disobedience to Allah, they would scoff at him as if to say, "Are you mad? Can't you see our prosperity and power? We are enjoying all the good things of life and dominating over everything and everyone all around us. How is it that you are prophesying torment for us?"

The above-mentioned arrogant behaviour was due to the disgraceful human characteristic which has been mentioned in this verse. It is this: Man is, by nature, shallow and superficial and lacks the depth of thought. Therefore, when he enjoys prosperity and power he becomes joyous, arrogant and boastful; so much so that he never even dreams of any possibility that his happy condition would ever come to an end. And if and when adversity befalls him, he becomes an embodiment of despair and begins to complain of his misfortune here, there, and everywhere; so much so that he does not hesitate even to abuse God and taunt at His Godhead. But whenever there is a change for the better in his fortune, he

again begins to brag of his foresight, wisdom and success. That is why the disbelievers were exhibiting such a shallow and superficial characteristic in answer to the warning of the Holy Prophet. They forgot that Allah was deferring their punishment because of His mercy to give them sufficient time to consider well their absurd attitude and mend their ways during the respite given to them, and not to delude themselves by imagining that their prosperity had very deep foundations and would last for ever.

11. Here *صَبْرٌ* (*sabr*) (fortitude) implies another meaning also, that is, "steadfastness" the antonym of shallowness etc. etc., that has been mentioned in the preceding verse. Those "who are steadfast" remain firm and unwavering in their purpose in spite of the vicissitudes of life. They are not influenced by the changes of circumstances, but stick to the right, reasonable and correct attitudes they have adopted. They do not give themselves airs nor become intoxicated nor over-jubilant and boastful, if they win power, prosperity and name. On the contrary, they are neither subdued nor depressed if they are visited by adversity. In short, they come out successful in their trial by Allah, whether it be in the shape of favour or adversity and remain steadfast in both the cases.

12. This is the favour that Allah shows to such people; He forgives their shortcomings and gives them rich rewards for their good deeds.

13. In this verse, Allah has comforted and urged His Messenger to propagate the Message without the least hesitation and not to waver in his determination for fear of ridicule or for lack of response from his people. He should convey the Message in its entirety and leave the result to Allah for He has full power over everything. In order to grasp its full significance, we should keep in view the circumstances that necessitated it.

At the time of this Revelation, the Quraish were the most powerful and influential of all the clans. As they were the guardians of the Ka'abah (Makkah), the religious centre of the Arabs, they enjoyed religious, economic, and political superiority over the whole of Arabia. Thus it was quite natural that they should resent and oppose that Message which proclaimed, "The religion of which you are the leaders is absolutely false, and the system of life you are following is rotten to the core. As you are rejecting the Message, torment of Allah is threatening you. The only way of escape from it is that you should accept the Right Way and the righteous system of life I have brought from Allah." Obviously this Message struck a hard blow at their "superiority" and therefore they were averse to it from the very beginning.

The second reason why they did not accept it was that the Messenger possessed nothing extraordinary to convince the people of his Prophethood except

his pure character and his rational, and understandable Message. Then for the Quraish, there was nothing to warrant a torment from Allah except the rotten condition of their religion, morality and culture. On the contrary, there was "prosperity" to delude them that that was a sure sign of the favours of Allah and of their "gods" and "goddesses", which was a clear proof that the ways they were following were the "right" ways. The inevitable result was that only a small minority of those people, who had sound minds and hearts, accepted the Message and the remaining large majority became hostile to it. Then some of them tried to suppress the Message by persecutions and some did their worst to defame it by false accusations and frivolous objections and others resorted to calculated indifference to discourage it. There were still others who adopted an attitude of ridicule, derision, taunt and mockery in order to make light of it.

The above condition went on for many years and was liable to fill one with despair and discouragement. Therefore the Sovereign reassured His Messenger, as if to say, "We disapprove of these shallow, superficial and mean people, who are trying to make your mission a failure by their prejudice, indifference, ridicule, mockery and frivolous objections. You should go on following the Right Way with perseverance and courage; you should go on proclaiming the Truth that has been revealed to you without the least hesitation; you should never be afraid of propagating the Message for fear of ridicule or indifference; you should go on inculcating the Truth in its entirety whether anyone accepts it or rejects it for it is Allah Who has everything in His power and charge and He alone affords guidance to everyone He considers fit for it."

14. Here one and the same argument has been advanced to prove two things. First, the Qur'an has been revealed by Allah. Secondly, it proves the truth of the doctrine of *Tauhid*. The argument is this:

- (1) "You say that the Qur'an has not been revealed by Allah but has been devised and invented by myself and ascribed to Him. If your claim had been genuine you would have been able to invent a book like this in answer to the challenge I have given you over and over again. As you have failed to do so even with your combined resources and forces, my claim that it has been revealed with Allah's knowledge has been proved absolutely, fully and completely."
- (2) "Then there was a two-fold challenge from the Qur'an to your deities but they utterly failed to meet it. They were challenged to come to your aid and help produce a book like the Qur'an. As they have not helped you, it is a clear proof that they are absolutely powerless and have no share at all in Godhead. You have seen that they have not only failed in this decisive test, but have also proved to be impotent to defend themselves against the open attacks made on them in this Book, which asks the people not to

worship them for they have no share in the powers of Godhead. These things have proved that there is nothing Divine in them and you have made them your deities without rhyme or reason".

Incidentally, this verse shows that chronologically this Sūrah was revealed earlier than Sūrah Yūnus. For at first they were challenged in this Sūrah to bring ten Sūrahs like the Sūrahs of the Qur'ān, but they failed to do so. Then in Sūrah Yūnus they were challenged (v. 38) to bring even one Sūrah like this. (X: 38 and E.N. 46).

15. This general statement has been made in continuation of the theme of the preceding verses, to refute the false excuses of the disbelievers mentioned therein for rejecting the Message of the Qur'ān. This verse says that in general those people who rejected the Qur'ān then (and are rejecting it now) were the worshippers of this world and its pleasures. As the root cause of their rejection was (and is) this false creed that there is nothing more valuable than the pleasures of this world and its material gains, there should be no restrictions (like the ones imposed in the Qur'ān) on their acquisition. They first made this choice, and afterwards invented arguments (like the ones mentioned in the Qur'ān) to deceive their own minds and those of others.

16. This is a clear and stern warning to the worshippers of the world. They should know that they will get the full reward for the exertions (whatever they be) they put forth in order to acquire the worldly gains but they should note it well that they would get nothing in the Next World. As they confined their efforts to the benefits of this world, and did nothing to earn the benefits of the Next World, they should expect nothing for the deeds they have done for the material gains of this world. In order to illustrate this, let us take the case of a person who desires to build a palace for himself in this world and adopts all those devices, measures and means which help build such a palace. Most surely, he will succeed in building a grand palace, for no brick will refuse to stick to its place simply because he was an unbeliever. But it is equally obvious that he shall have to leave behind in this world that grand palace along with all its furnishings as soon as he breathes his last breath. For there is no reason why the palace he had built (or done anything else) for this world, should be credited to him in the Next World, if he had done nothing to provide himself with a palace in the Next World. For only those who provide for themselves with the necessary material for a palace in the Next World in accordance with the Divine Law, deserve to get a palace there.

Now a question arises in regard to the logical conclusion of this argument, according to which he should not get a palace in the Next World. It is this: "Well, he may not get a palace, but why should he be thrown into the Fire of Hell? The

لَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا نُوحًا إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِ إِنِّي لَكُمْ نَذِيرٌ مُّبِينٌ ²⁶ إِنَّ لَنَا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا اللَّهَ إِنِّي
أَعْلَمُ بِمَا تَعْبُدُونَ عَذَابَ يَوْمِ الْبُرْجِ ²⁶ فَقَالَ الْمَلَأُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ قَوْمِهِ مَا تَرْبِكَ إِلَّا
بَشَرًا مِثْلَنَا وَمَا تَرْبِكَ إِلَّا الضُّعْفُ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ هُمْ أَرَادُوا بُادِيَا الرَّأْيِ وَمَا نَرَىٰ
لَكُمْ عَلَيْنَا مِنْ فَضْلٍ بَلْ نَنْظُرُكُمْ كَذِبِينَ ²⁷ قَالَ يَقَوْمِ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُ عَلَىٰ بَيْتِنَا
مِنْ رَبِّي وَارْتَبَيْتُمْ رَحْمَةً مِنْ رَبِّي فَعَبَّيْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ أَنْزِلُكُمْ مَوْجًا وَانْتُمْ كَمَا
كِرْهُونَ ²⁸ وَيَقَوْمِ لَا تَسْأَلُونِي عَنْ شَيْءٍ مَالًا إِنْ أَجَبْتُ إِلَّا عَلَىٰ اللَّهِ وَمَا أَنَا بِطَارِدٍ
الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّهُمْ نُلَقُوا بِرَبِّهِمْ وَلَكِنِّي أَرَىٰ قَوْمًا تَجْهَلُونَ ²⁹ وَيَقَوْمِ مَنْ
يَنْصُرُنِي مِنَ اللَّهِ إِنْ طَرَدْتُهُمْ أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ ³⁰ وَلَا أَقُولُ لَكُمْ عِنْدِي
خِزْيَانٌ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَلَا أَعْلَمُ الْغَيْبَ وَلَا أَقُولُ إِنِّي مَلَكٌ وَلَا أَقُولُ لِلَّذِينَ تَشُدُّونَ
أَعْيُنَكُمْ لَنْ يُؤْتِيَهُمُ اللَّهُ خَيْرًا مِنَ اللَّهِ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا فِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ ³¹ إِنِّي إِذَا لَسِنَ
الظَّالِمِينَ ³¹ قَالُوا يَنْتَوِرُ قَدْ جَدَلْنَا مَا كُنَّا نَدْعُو فَاتَيْنَا بِمَا نَدْعُو وَإِنْ
كُنْتَ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ ³² قَالَ إِنَّمَا يَأْتِيَكُمْ بِهِ اللَّهُ إِنْ شَاءَ وَمَا أَنْتُمْ
بِمُعْجِزِينَ ³³ وَلَا يَنْفَعُكُمْ نُصْحِي إِنْ أَرَدْتُ أَنْ أَنْصَحَ لَكُمْ إِنْ كَانَ اللَّهُ
يُرِيدُ أَنْ يُعَذِّبَكُمْ مَوْجِبًا ³⁴ وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ ³⁴ أَمْ يَقُولُونَ افْتَرَاهُ قُلْ
إِنْ افْتَرَيْتُهُ فَعَلَّاجٌ إِنجْرَامِي وَأَنَا بَشَرٌ مِثْلُكُمْ فَاجْعَلُوا لِي آيَةً إِنْ
لَنْ يُؤْتِيَ مِنْ قَوْمِكَ إِلَّا مَنْ قَدْ آمَنَ فَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا الْيَهُودَ وَلَا النَّصَارَىٰ لِيُفَعِّلُونَ ³⁵
وَاصْنَعِ الْفُلْكَ بِأَعْيُنِنَا وَوَحْيِنَا وَلَا تُخَاطِبُنِي فِي الْدِينِ ظَلِمُوا إِنَّهُمْ
مُخْرَقُونَ ³⁷ وَيَصْنَعِ الْفُلْكَ وَكَلَّمَا مَرَّ عَلَيْهِ مَلَأَ مِنْ قَوْمِهِ سَخِرُوا مِنْهُ
قَالَ إِنْ تَسْخَرُوا مِنِّي فَإِنِّي أَسْخَرُ مِنْكُمْ كَمَا تَسْخَرُونَ ³⁸ فَسَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ مَنْ

And (such was the state of affairs when) We had sent Noah to his people.²⁹ (He said,) "I warn you plainly not to worship anyone but Allah: otherwise I am afraid that a fearful torment shall visit you one day."³⁰ In answer to this, those chiefs of his people, who had rejected his Message, said, "We see that you are no more than a mere man like ourselves,³¹ and we also see that only the meanest from among us have become your followers without due consideration,³² and we find nothing in you that might give you superiority over us.³³ Nay, we consider you to be liars." He replied, "O my people, just consider it yourselves: If my Lord had sent a clear Sign to me and then bestowed His special blessing on me,³⁴ but you did not see it, how can we compel you to accept that, when you are averse to it? O my people, I do not ask of you any wealth for this work:³⁵ for I look only to Allah for its reward. And I am not going to drive away those who have believed in me. Indeed they are going to meet their Lord,³⁶ (Who knows their worth). But I see that you are adopting the attitude of ignorance. And, O my people, who will help save me from Allah, if I drive them away? Don't you understand this simple thing? And I do not say to you that I possess treasures from Allah: nor do I say that I have the knowledge of the unseen: nor do I claim to be an angel:³⁷ nor can I say about those whom you disdain, 'Allah has not bestowed on them any good'. Allah knows best what is in their minds: for I shall be unjust, if I utter anything like this."

At last those people said, "O Noah, you have already argued with us and argued too much. Now you bring down on us that scourge with which you threaten us, if what you say be true." Noah replied, "Allah will bring down that on you if He will and you have no power to frustrate it. Now, even if I wished to do you some good it cannot profit you even if I wanted to be your well wisher, when Allah has decided that you should go astray:³⁸ He is your Lord and to Him you shall return."

O Muhammadi do they say, "He himself has forged all this?" Say to them, "If I have forged this myself, I shall bear all its consequences, and I am clear of the crime you are committing."³⁹

And it was revealed to Noah: "No more of your people will believe in you now than those who have already believed. So do not

grieve at their misdeeds, but start to build an Ark under Our supervision in accordance with Our Revelation. And beware that you do not plead with Me for those who had been unjust; indeed now they shall all be drowned."⁴⁰ So he began to build the Ark. And whoso of the chiefs of his people passed by him, he jeered at him. Noah said, "Laugh at us, if you will; we, too, are laughing at you; for soon you shall come to know who is visited by the torment that will disgrace him, and who is afflicted with the inevitable and lasting calamity."⁴¹

Contd. from p. 333]

answer is this (and the Qur'ān itself has given this same answer in different places) that the one who exerts and works only for a palace in this world in utter disregard of the Hereafter, naturally and inevitably adopts such measures and means as help build a large Fire for himself in the Hell. (Please refer to E.N. 12 of YŪNUS.)

17. This was the one who believed in the open evidence he got from his own self, from the structure of the heavens and the earth, from the system of the Universe that there must be One, and only One Creator, Owner, Providence, Sovereign and Ruler of this world. Then these things which had already been confirmed by his heart, led him naturally to the belief that after this life of the world, there should be another life wherein man should render an account of this life to his Lord and be rewarded or punished according to what one did in this life.

18. That witness was the Qur'ān which testified to the natural and rational evidence one had received from one's inner self and surroundings.

19. The preceding verses (12-16) dealt with the worshippers of the world who rejected the Message of the Qur'ān on one pretext or the other. This verse contrasts them with the one who saw the clear evidence of One Allah and of the Hereafter in his own existence and in the whole system of the Universe and found that the same evidence was testified by the Qur'ān and by the Book of Moses that had been sent before him. That is why such people cannot shut their eyes and minds against the strong evidences they see all around them, and believe in the Message.

Incidentally, this verse makes it clear that before the revelation of the Holy Qur'ān, the Holy Prophet had gained the knowledge and belief of the "Unseen" like Prophet Abraham (v/ 75-79) by observation and deep contemplation of the phenomena of Nature. Then the Qur'ān not only confirmed and testified it, but also directly imparted the knowledge of the Reality to him.

20. The false things which unjust people ascribed to Allah were such as these: "There are other partners with Allah in His Godhead, rights and worship. Or He has nothing to do with the guidance or deviation of His servants, and has sent no Messenger, no Prophet and no Book for their guidance but has left people free to adopt any way of life they like. Or God has created mankind for mere fun and will not call them to account for what they did in this world. Or there is no reward or punishment in the Hereafter."

21. This will happen in the Next World.

22. This is a parenthetical clause that has been inserted to point out some of the characteristics of the unjust people that make them accursed.

23. That is, "They do not like to follow the Right Way and wish that it should become crooked so as to suit their desires, lusts, prejudices, superstitions and caprices." (See X: 15)

24. This declaration (vv. 20-23) will be made in the Hereafter.

25. They shall be given double chastisement, because they themselves deviated from the Way and made others deviate from it and left the heritage of deviation for the coming generations. (Please refer to E.N. 30 of *Al-A'arāf*.)

26. The things they have invented and which proved to be baseless were their theories about God, the Universe and their own life and the confidence, reliance and trust they had imposed in their deities, guardians, interceders and recommenders, and the conjectures they had made about the Life-after-death. All these things turned out to be absolutely false.

27. Here the declaration that began from v. 20 comes to an end.

28. The answer to this question is contained in the question itself. It is obvious that the one who does not see the way, nor listens to the one who is able to show him the way, will most surely stumble over a stone or obstacle and meet with a fearful accident. On the other hand, the one who himself sees the way and makes use of the guidance of the one who knows the way, will most surely reach his destination in perfect safety. This is exactly the difference between those who observe keenly the signs of the Reality in the Universe and listen to the Message of the Prophets appointed by Allah and those who neither observe the Signs of God nor listen to the Messengers. Obviously neither can their behaviours and conducts be alike here nor shall their ultimate ends be equal and the same.

29. E.N.'s 47-50 of *Al-A'arāf* should be kept in view.

30. This is the same thing that has been put into the mouth of Muhammad (God's peace be upon him) in vv. 2-3.

31. The same foolish objection was being raised by the people of Makkah against the Holy Prophet. They argued like this: "You are a man like ourselves: you eat and drink, walk and sleep and have a family like us, and there is nothing in you that might show that you have been sent by God." (See E.N. 11 of XXXVI).

32. The "big" people of Makkah passed the same remarks about those who followed the Holy Prophet. They taunted him with things like these: "Your followers consist of mere inexperienced boys or slaves or the lowest strata of society, in short, of such people as are credulous and lack commonsense and wisdom." (Please refer to E.N.'s 34-37 of *Al-An'ām* and E.N. 75 of *Yūnus*).

33. This is to say, "You claim that you are the favoured ones of God Whose blessings are on you, and that those who do not follow your way are under His wrath. But the reverse of this is true for it is we who have been favoured with wealth, servants and power and you possess nothing of the sort. Please point out anything in which you are superior to us."

34. This is the same thing that has been put into the mouth of the Holy Prophet in v. 17. That is, "At first I recognized the reality of *Tauhid* by observing keenly the Signs of God in the universe, and in my own self. Then the same was confirmed by Revelation to me". This shows that all the Prophets acquired the knowledge of the "Unseen" by observation and contemplation. Then Allah blessed them with the actual knowledge of the same at the time of their appointment as Prophets.

35. This was to bring home to them the fact that he had no selfish motive in the performance of his mission, as if to say, "I am conveying the admonition to you without any demand or hope or expectation of worldly gains. Nay, I am bearing all the sufferings in the hope that you may at last realize that I have no axe to grind. And you cannot point out anything to show that I have any personal or selfish interest before me in the mission of the Message". (See E.N. 70 of XXIII, E.N. 17 of XXXVI and E.N. 41 of XLII).

36. That is, "Their true worth will be known only when they shall meet their Lord. Therefore it is not proper for you to treat them with contempt here in this world. Maybe they are precious stones—their Lord alone knows—and you are treating them as mere worthless stones". (See VI: 52, XVIII: 28).

37. This is the answer to their objection that he was no more than a man like themselves. Prophet Noah admitted this: "In fact I am a man and I never claimed to be more than this. My only claim is that God has shown me the Right Way of knowledge and action and you are welcome to test this in any way you like. But instead of this, you are asking me questions about the "Unseen", though

I never claimed to have its knowledge. You ask me to produce such things as can be produced only by that person who possesses God's treasures and I never claimed to possess them. You object that my physical life is like that of other men, though I never claimed that I was an angel and not a man. The true test of my claim is that you should ask me about the true creeds, the principles of morality and culture and not about frivolous things about the future events for I never claimed to possess their knowledge."

38. That is, "All my efforts to do good to you cannot prove effective, if Allah has decided to withhold the right way from you because of your obduracy in evil and the lack of interest in good ways. For Allah lets people go astray on the way they choose for themselves."

39. The wording of the verse shows that during the recital of the story of Prophet Noah, the opponents of the Holy Prophet might have felt that he himself had invented that story in order to hit them hard indirectly. So they might have interrupted him, saying, "You are inventing such stories as these in order to apply these to us and hit us hard indirectly." That is why the narration of the story has been broken to answer their false accusation.

And the fact is that the mean people always behave like this: As they have no interest in goodness, they would turn to the dark side of everything. Even if one gives them wise counsel or teaches them a useful lesson or warns them of an error, they would never benefit from these nor mend their ways. Instead of this, they would search out for that aspect of the matter which will not only undo the wisdom and goodness of the counsel but also bring an accusation against the admonisher. It is obvious that in this way, even the best of counsels can be made void and ineffective, if the hearer dubs that as a "hit," and takes it ill as an affront. Moreover, their thinking is always based on suspicion and mistrust. Supposing there is a certain story which appears to be true. A wise man will take it as a fact and learn a lesson from it, even if it applies exactly to his own condition and points out his error. On the contrary, a suspicious and crooked man will at once jump to the conclusion without any proof at all that the story had been invented for the sole purpose of applying it to him in order to hit him hard.

The same was the condition of those who accused the Holy Prophet that he himself had forged the story and ascribed it to Allah to make it more effective. Allah has asked him to say to them, "If I have forged the story, I shall have to bear its consequences, but this cannot lessen the punishments of the crimes you are committing for which you alone will be held responsible."

40. This verse lays down the limits of the Divine Law of respite. When

وَيُحْيِي الْمَيِّتَ وَيُنزِلُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً لِيُخْرِجَ بِهِ أَشْجَارًا

يَأْتِيهِ عَذَابٌ يُخْزِيهِ وَيَحِلُّ عَلَيْهِ عَذَابٌ مُثِيمٌ ³⁹ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءَ أَمْرُنَا وَ
فَارَ التُّورَ قُلْنَا احْمِلْ فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ زَوْجَيْنِ اثْنَيْنِ وَأَمَّا كَ إِلَّا مَنْ سَبَقَ
عَلَيْهِ الْقَوْلُ وَمَنْ آمَنَ وَمَا آمَنَ مَعَهُ إِلَّا قَلِيلٌ ⁴⁰ وَقَالَ ارْكَبُوا فِيهَا
بِسْمِ اللَّهِ مَجْرِبَهَا وَمُرسِمَهَا إِنَّ رَبِّي لَغَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ⁴¹ وَهِيَ تَجْرِي بِهِمْ فِي
مَوْجٍ كَالْجِبَالِ ⁴² وَنَادَى نُوحٌ ابْنَهُ وَكَانَ فِي مَعْزِلٍ يَا بُنَيَّ ارْكَبْ مَعَنَا وَلَا
تَكُنْ مَعَ الْكَافِرِينَ ⁴³ قَالَ سَأُوْنِي إِلَىٰ جَبَلٍ يَخْعَعُنِي مِنَ الْمَاءِ قَالَ لَا عَاصِمَ
الْيَوْمَ مِنْ أَمْرِ اللَّهِ إِلَّا مَنْ رَجَعَهُ وَحَالَ بَيْنَهُمَا الْمَوْجُ فَكَانَ مِنَ الْمُغْرَقِينَ ⁴⁴
وَقِيلَ يَا أَرْضُ ابْلَعِي مَاءَكِ وَيَسَّكُ أَقْلِبِي وَغِيصِ الْمَاءِ وَقُضِيَ الْأَمْرُ وَ
اسْتَوَتْ عَلَىٰ الْجُودِيِّ وَقِيلَ بُعْدًا لِلْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ ⁴⁵ وَنَادَى نُوحٌ رَبَّهُ فَقَالَ
رَبِّ إِنَّ ابْنِي مِنْ أَهْلِي وَإِنَّ وَعْدَكَ الْحَقُّ وَأَنْتَ أَحْكَمُ الْحَاكِمِينَ ⁴⁶ قَالَ
يُنُوْحُ إِنَّكَ لَيْسَ مِنْ أَهْلِكَ إِنَّكَ عَمَلٌ غَيْرُ صَالِحٍ فَلَا تَسْأَلْنِي مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ
بِهِ عِلْمٌ إِنِّي أَعْطَكُ أَنْ تَكُونَ مِنَ الْجَاهِلِينَ ⁴⁷ قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِكَ أَنْ
أَسْأَلَكَ مَا لَيْسَ لِي بِهِ عِلْمٌ وَإِلَّا تَغْفِرْ لِي وَرَحْمَتِكَ أَكُنَّ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ ⁴⁸
قِيلَ يُنُوْحُ امْطِرْ سَلْوَ مِمَّنَّا وَبَرَكَتِكَ عَلَيْكَ وَعَلَىٰ أُمُورِنَا مَعَكَ وَأَمْرٌ
سَمِعْتَهُمْ ثُمَّ يَسْأَلُهُم مِمَّا عَدَاكَ ⁴⁹ تِلْكَ مِنْ أَنْبَاءِ الْغَيْبِ نُوحِيهَا إِلَيْكَ
مَا كُنْتَ تَعْلَمُهَا أَنْتَ وَلَا قَوْمُكَ مِنْ قَبْلِ هَذَا فَاصْبِرْ إِنَّ الْعَاقِبَةَ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ ⁵⁰
وَإِلَىٰ عَادِ اتَّعَاهُ هُودًا قَالَ يَقَوْمِ احْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِنْ إِلَهٍ غَيْرُهُ إِنْ أَنْتُمْ
إِلَّا مُفْتَرُونَ ⁵¹ يَقَوْمِ لَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ أَجْرًا إِنْ أَجْرِي إِلَّا عَلَىٰ الَّذِي فَطَرَنِي
أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ ⁵² وَيَقَوْمِ اسْتَغْفِرُوا رَبَّكُمْ ثُمَّ تُوبُوا إِلَيْهِ يُرْسِلِ السَّمَاءَ عَلَيْكُمْ

يُنَزِّلُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَيُخْرِجُ بِهِ أَشْجَارًا



مِنْ قَبْلِ هَذَا فَاصْبِرْ إِنَّ الْعَاقِبَةَ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ

Thus was it until Our Command came to pass and *At-Tannūr*⁴² 40-41
 began to boil up. Then We said, "Take into the Ark a pair from every
 species, and embark your own people — save those who have already
 been specifically marked⁴³ — and also those who have believed;⁴⁴ and
 those who had believed with Noah were only a few. Noah said,
 "Embark in the Ark: in the name of Allah will it move and cast anchor.
 Surely my Lord is very Forgiving and Compassionate."⁴⁵

As the Ark was moving on with them amid waves like 2-43
 mountains, Noah cried out to his son, who was at a distance, "My son!
 Embark with us and be not with the unbelievers." He answered, "I am
 going to climb up a mountain that will protect me from waters." Noah
 said, "Today there is nothing to protect from Allah's judgement except
 that He Himself should take pity on anyone." In the meantime a wave
 came between them and he was among the drowned.

It was commanded, "O Earth! Swallow up thy waters, and O 44
 Sky, cease thy rain!" Accordingly the waters sank into the Earth. The
 decree was carried out; and the Ark rested upon Mount *Jūdi*.⁴⁶ And it
 was proclaimed: "Gone are the workers of iniquity!"

Noah called out to his Lord, saying, "My Lord! My son is of 45-47
 my family, and Thy promise is surely true⁴⁷ and Thou art the greatest
 and the best of all rulers."⁴⁸ In answer it was said, "O Noah! He is not
 of your family; he has turned out to be a worthless act.⁴⁹ So do not ask
 Me anything of which you have no knowledge. I admonish you that you
 should not behave like ignorant people."⁵⁰ Noah meekly replied, "My
 Lord, I seek Thy protection lest I should ask of Thee anything of which
 I have no knowledge. For if Thou forgivest me not for my
 presumption, and hast not mercy on me, I shall be totally ruined."⁵¹

It was said, "O Noah, go down."⁵² Peace and blessings from Us 48
 are on you and on the communities that are with you. But there are
 other communities, whom We shall give the provisions of life for some
 time: then a painful torment from Us shall visit them."

O Muhammad! These are some of the tidings of the "Unseen" 49
 which We are revealing to you. You did not know these before this nor
 did your people. So practise fortitude, for ultimately, the God-fearing
 people shall come out successful.⁵³

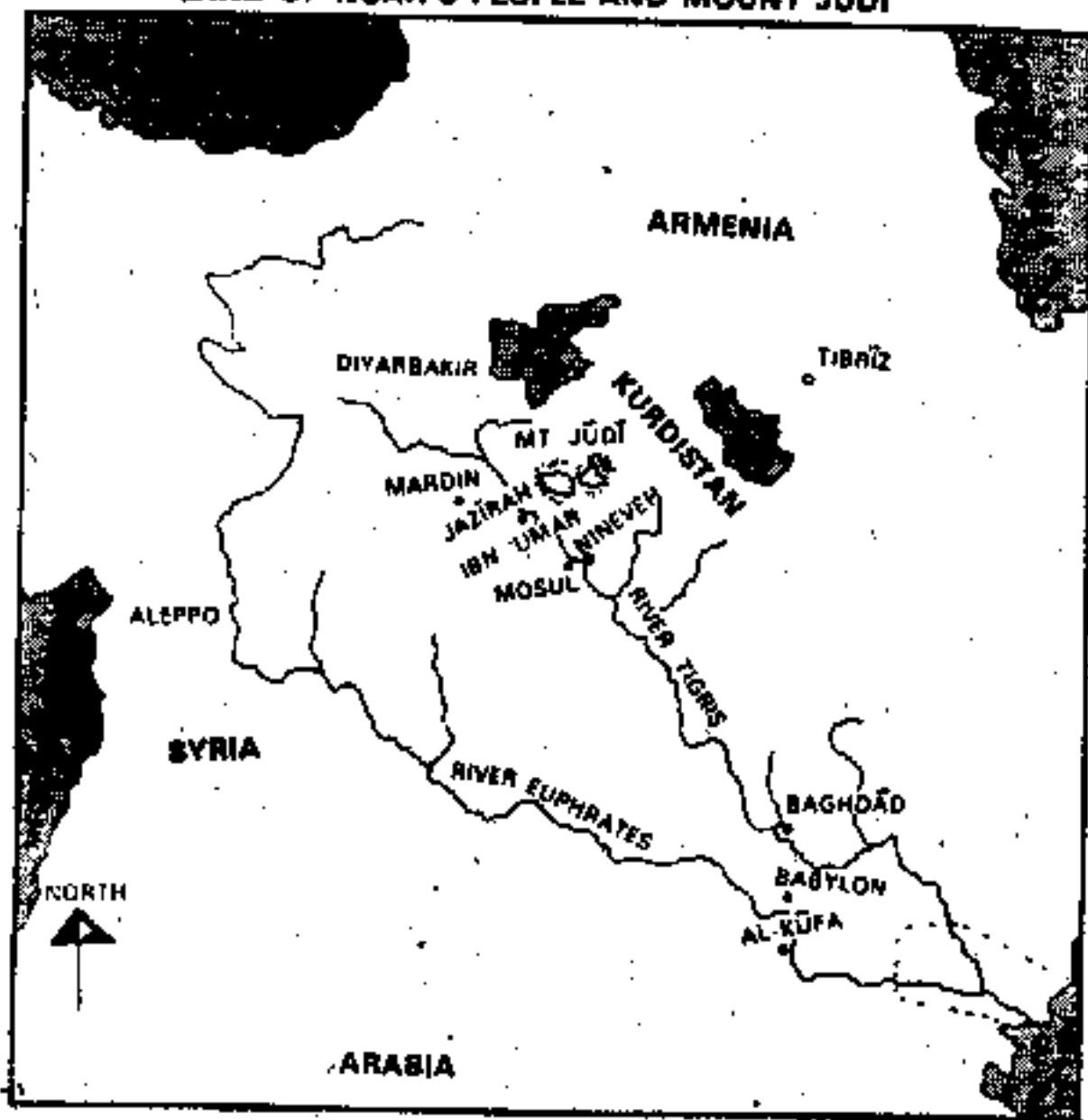
And to 'Ād We sent their brother Hūd;⁵⁴ he said, "O my people! Serve Allah: you have no god other than He: it is nothing but falsehood that you have forged.⁵⁵ O brethren! I do not ask of you any recompense for this service: my recompense is with Him who has created me. Do you not then use your common-sense?⁵⁶ And O my people, beg forgiveness of your Lord; then turn to him in repentance, and He will open the gates of the heavens for you and add more strength to your present strength.⁵⁷ Do not turn away as guilty people."

Contd. from p. 339]

the Message of a Prophet has been conveyed to a people and is rejected, they are granted respite from punishment only as long as there is the possibility that some of them might accept it. But when there remains no such possibility and there is left nothing but evil element among them, Allah does not grant them any further respite. And this is a manifestation of His mercy, just as for the safety of the good fruit the rotten ones should be thrown away and discarded. Conversely, it shall be an act of cruelty to the good people and the future generations, if pity is shown to those wicked people who are incorrigible.

41. This is a very appropriate example of the points of view of those who look merely at the surface of things and of others who know the reality about them. It appears that when Prophet Noah was building the Ark on the land, it looked to be a ridiculous act to those wicked people who did not believe in him. They jeered at him as if to say, "Just see the madness of the old man! He wishes to float a ship on the land!" For they could never imagine that after a few days, a ship would actually float there. Therefore naturally they regarded that act of Prophet Noah to be a clear proof of his madness. Probably they might be pointing their fingers at him and the Ark he was constructing, saying to one another, "Have you any doubt now, if you had any before, that he is really a mad man, who is constructing a ship to float on the waterless land?" But the one, who had the knowledge of the reality and who knew that a ship would actually be needed there in the near future, was laughing at their ignorance and lack of knowledge of the real matter and their arrogant self-satisfaction, as if to say, "How foolish these people are! The catastrophe is threatening them overhead but they are not only self-satisfied but also regard me mad, who has warned them of it and who is himself making preparations to meet it." And these are exactly the two ways, in general, of judging the wisdom or folly of things. One man judges an act to be wise by looking merely at the surface, while the other goes down deep into it and knows it to be foolish. Likewise the former considers an act to be foolish and mad while the latter who has the real knowledge of the matter, knows that it is based

LAND OF NOAH'S PEOPLE AND MOUNT JŪDĪ



on wisdom and foresight, and is the very same thing that was required under the circumstances.

42. Different interpretations have been given of this, but we are of the opinion that the correct one is the one that is based on the plain words of the Text. The Deluge started from *At-Tannūr*, a particular oven from under which water began to boil up. At the same time heavy rain began to fall and springs began to gush up water from many places in the earth. This is given in detail in vv. 11-12 of *Sūrah Al-Qamar*: "We opened the gates of the sky from which it began to rain heavily and constantly, and We tore open the earth and springs began to gush forth water from every side: Thus the two kinds of water gathered together to fulfil the destined doom."

In this connection, it should also be noted that the prefix *أل* (*al-*) (the) before *تَنْوُورٌ* (*tannūr*), oven, shows that a particular oven had been specifically marked by God for the purpose of starting the Deluge. This began to boil up water as soon as it was commanded to do so, and afterwards it began to be called *التَّنُورُ* (The Oven). It has been explicitly stated in v. 7 of XXIII that the said *Tannūr* was specified before hand.

43. That is, "Don't embark in the Ark those who had specifically been marked as unbelievers from your household, for they do not deserve to be shown Our Compassion. Most probably they were two persons. One was his son who was drowned (v. 43), and the other was his wife: (LXVI: 10). And if there were any others, they have not been mentioned in the *Qur'ān*.

44. Incidentally, this refutes the theory of the historians and genealogists who trace the genealogy of the whole human race to the three sons of Prophet Noah. This wrong theory became prevalent because of the stories in the Bible that none other than Prophet Noah, his three sons and his wife were rescued from the deluge. (Genesis 6: 18, 7: 7, 9, and 9: 19). But the *Qur'ān* contradicts this in many places, saying that besides the people of his own household, some other people of his community, though small in number, were also rescued along with him. Moreover, the *Qur'ān* declares that the generations which came after Prophet Noah were his descendants and of all those people who were rescued in the Ark: "You are the descendants of those whom We bore in the Ark with Noah— (XVII: 3) "...they were from the descendants of Adam, and from the seed of those whom we carried in the Ark with Noah...." (XIX: 58).

45. This humility shown by Prophet Noah that his delivery from the Deluge was not due to his own plans, measures and efforts but to the Mercy and Compassion of his Lord, who is most Forgiving, is the true characteristic of a Believer. The Servant of God adopts all necessary measures as a man of the world

does, but he does not put his trust in those measures alone. Along with these he puts his trust in his Lord for their success, because he knows well that no measure can be adopted without His sanction, nor can it be put into practice nor can it achieve the required object unless it is helped by the Compassion and Favour of Allah.

46. According to the Qur'ân, the Ark rested upon Mount *Jūdī*, which is situated to the North-east of Jazīrah Ibn 'Umar in Kurdistan. But according to the Bible its resting place was Mount Ararat in Armenia, which is one of the ranges of mountains of the same name that extends from Armenia to southern Kurdistan. Mount *Jūdī* is one of the mountains of the Ararat range, and is known by the same name even today. The ancient histories confirm that the resting place of the Ark was Mount *Jūdī*. For instance, Berasus, a religious leader of Babylonia, who lived about 250 years before Christ, says in his history of the Chaldeans that Noah's Ark rested upon Mount *Jūdī*. Abydenus, a pupil of Aristotle, not only confirms the same but also says that many people of 'Iraq of his time possessed pieces of the Ark, which they ground in water and gave to the sick as a medicine.

Now let us consider the question: Did the Deluge mentioned here cover the whole earth or was it confined to that particular region where Prophet Noah lived? This is a question which has not been finally settled up to this day. As far as the Bible and the Israelite traditions are concerned, this was universal. (Genesis 7: 18-24). But the Qur'ân is silent about it, though it does say things which show that the whole human race after the Deluge was the descendant of Prophet Noah and of those with him in the Ark, but this does not mean that the Deluge covered all the earth. It may be explained like this: at that time of the history the only region of the earth, which was inhabited by the human race, was the region in which Noah lived, and the generations which came after the Deluge, gradually spread over other parts of the earth. This theory is supported by two things. First, there is a conclusive proof that a great flood did come over the land of the Tigris and the Euphrates. This is confirmed by historical traditions, archaeological remains and geological evidence. But there are no such proofs in the other parts of the earth as might show that the Deluge was universal. Secondly, traditions have come down to almost all the peoples of the earth living even in distant places like America and Australia, that once a great flood had come all over the earth. The only conclusion which can be drawn from the above is that at one time the forefathers of all the people of the earth lived at one place. But, when afterwards they spread over different lands in the earth; they carried the traditions of the Deluge along with them. (Please refer to E.N. 47 of *Al-A'arāf*).

47. That is, "Thou promised that Thou wilt save the members of my family from this calamity; so save my son for he is also a member of my family."

48. That is, "Thou art the greatest of all rulers: therefore Thy decision is final and there can be no appeal against it." And "Thou art the best of all rulers: therefore all Thy decisions are based on perfect knowledge and absolute justice."

49. Allah has called the wicked son of Prophet Noah "a worthless act", for children are entrusted by the Creator to the care of parents so that they may bring them up and train them to become "good persons" and fulfil the purpose for which He created man. If a father does his very best to "process" and turn the child into a righteous person, but fails in his efforts, the child, who was a sort of raw material in his hands, would be likened to a "worthless act". It is obvious that the wicked son was a "worthless act", for he was not the sort of "good work" which his father had desired him to be. So in this sense he did not belong to the family of Prophet Noah, whom the Creator had sent to mould all his people into "Good acts", especially those who were of his own flesh and blood. Thus that unrighteous son had forfeited all the rights of blood he had with the Prophet as far as the torment of "the Deluge" was concerned.

Now let us consider the other question: Why was not the request of the Prophet regarding his own flesh and blood granted? The answer is this: If any part of the body of a man becomes so rotten that the surgeon is of the definite opinion that that part must be cut off for the sake of the safety of the rest of the body, the surgeon will not comply with the request of the man not to cut that part of his body, but will say, "It is not a part of your body because it is rotten." This will not, however, mean that it was never actually a part of the body but will imply only this: "As it has ceased to function rightly as a part of the body, it is no more a part of the body in the sense and for the purpose the healthy parts of the body are its parts". Likewise, when it was said to Prophet Noah, "He is not of your family," it did not negate the fact that he was from his loins but implied, "He does not deserve to be treated as a member of your righteous family because of his spoilt morals and conduct. As the torment of the Deluge has been brought about to punish those who had sided with the unbelievers in the conflict of *kuf*r and Faith, your son does not deserve to be rescued from it along with the believers. Had it been a conflict between your descendants and those of the unbelievers, the result would have been different, but this being a conflict between the righteous and the unrighteous, the former alone will be delivered from it."

The epithet, "a worthless act", has been purposely applied to the son of Noah, for it is very meaningful. It points to the two different objects that the parents have in view in bringing up their children. Those parents who look merely at the surface of things, bring up and love their children because they are from their loins or their wombs, irrespective of the fact whether they are righteous or unrighteous. But this epithet requires the believers to look upon their children as "pieces of work" entrusted to them in a natural way by their Creator, so that they

should prepare and mould them so as to fulfil the object for which Allah has created man. Therefore, if a certain parent fails in his efforts to mould his child in a way to fulfil the very object for which the child was entrusted to him and the latter becomes a servant of Satan instead of his Lord, the parent should regard all his efforts for the child to have gone utterly waste. In that case there is no reason why that parent should have any consideration for that "worthless act".

As a corollary to the above, the same rule will apply to the other relationships of a believer. As a believer is one who believes in certain creeds and behaviours, all his relationships with the other people will be determined by those creeds and behaviours. If his blood relations have the qualities of a believer, their relationship with him becomes doubly stronger. But if they are void of the qualities of a believer; the believer will confine his relationship with them only to the extent of blood relationships and will have no spiritual relationship with them. Consequently, if such a relative comes face to face with the believer in the conflict between *kuf'r* and the Faith, the believer should fight with him just as he would with any other unbeliever.

50. This warning from his Lord does not mean that Prophet Noah was suffering from the lack of "Faith" or that his Faith had any tinge of weakness or that he had beliefs like those of the ignorant people. His response to this is rather a proof of his high moral character. As Noah was like the other Prophets, a human being, he also suffered from the common human weakness, that is, natural parental love for children. So he begged his Lord to deliver his son from the Deluge. Allah admonished him because the high character of a Prophet demanded that he ought not to have made such a request even for his own flesh and blood. That is why no sooner was the warning administered to him than he realized that he had come down from the high position of a Prophet to the level of a mere father because of the critical psychological human weakness. Therefore immediately after the warning, he repented of his weakness, and behaved as if his own son had not been drowned in the Deluge a moment before this. This character shown by him is a clear proof that he was a true Prophet. He returned to the same height and meekly asked his Lord's forgiveness for showing any concern for his own son who had forsaken the Truth and sided with falsehood.

51. The Qur'an has cited the story of the drowning of the son of Prophet Noah to bring home to the people that Allah's decrees are absolutely just and final.

This also served as a warning to the Quraish who considered themselves to be immune from the torment of Allah simply because they were the descendants of Prophet Abraham, and had several gods and goddesses as their interceders. Likewise it was a warning to the Jews and the Christians who cherished, and still

cherish, such beliefs, nay, even to those Muslims, who foolishly believe that their saintly ancestors and holy people will guard them against the consequences of the justice of Allah. For the tragic scene depicted here categorically refutes such false expectations and beliefs, saying, "O foolish people! Why do you cherish such false hopes? When Our Prophet Noah could not save his son who was drowned before his very eyes, and his prayer for the son was not only rejected but he was rebuked for making such a prayer, how can you then expect that anyone much less than a Prophet can deliver you from the justice of Allah?"

52. That is, ".....go down from the Mountain on which the Ark is resting."

53. That is, "You and your companions will come out successful at the end of the conflict just as Prophet Noah and his companions did. For this is the Divine Law that those who exert for the right cause, avoiding erroneous ways for fear of Allah, should come out successful in the end, even though they should meet with failures in the beginning of the conflict at the hands of the enemies of the truth. Therefore you should patiently bear the afflictions which you are suffering and stand steadfast against the obstacles you are encountering in the way, and you should not be in the least disheartened by the painful and superficial successes of your enemies. If you practise fortitude, you will come out successful in the end like Noah and his companions."

54. Please keep in view E.N.'s 51-56 of *Al-A'arāf*.

55. That is, "You have forged falsehood about all the deities you worship beside Allah, for in fact they possess no powers and no qualities that might entitle them to Godhead. As they have absolutely nothing in them which might make them the objects of worship and service, you have put in them false hopes that they would fulfil your desires and needs."

56. This concise sentence contains a very strong argument: "The fact that you are taking a superficial view of my Message and rejecting it without paying due and deep consideration to it is a clear proof that you are not using your common-sense. Had you tried to understand the matter, you would have found much material for your consideration. You would have noticed that I have absolutely no personal interests: nay, I am suffering hardships in conveying the Message which cannot bring any benefit to me or to the members of my family. This is a conclusive proof that my Faith has very sound bases which are strong enough to enable me to forsake all the worldly joys and comforts and encounter the enmity of the whole world by waging a war against the centuries-old, established rites, customs and ways of life. Do these things not demand a deep and

They answered "O Hūd! You have not brought us any clear evidence,⁵⁸ and we are not going to give up our gods at your word, nor are we going to believe in you. We rather believe that some of our gods have smitten you with some evil."⁵⁹ Hūd replied, "I bring Allah's evidence.⁶⁰ And you should bear witness to it that I have nothing to do with the gods you have set up beside Allah in His Godhead.⁶¹ So all of you may do whatever you can against me and give me no respite;⁶² I have full trust in Allah Who is my Lord and your Lord as well. There is no living creature which He does not hold by its forelock. Indeed straight is the way of my Lord!⁶³ You may turn away, if you will; now that I have conveyed to you the Message with which I was sent to you, my Lord will raise up some other community in your place and you shall not be able to do Him any harm whatsoever.⁶⁴ Indeed my Lord keeps watch over everything."

And when Our Command came We delivered through Our Mercy Hūd and those who had believed with him and rescued them from a woeful scourge. 58

These are 'Ād! They rejected the Revelations of their Lord and disobeyed His Messengers⁶⁵ and followed every tyrannous enemy of the Truth; so they became accursed in this world and in the Next World as well. Listen! 'Ād disbelieved in their Lord! Listen! Cast away were 'Ād the people of Hūd ! 59-60

And to Thamūd We sent their brother Sālih.⁶⁶ He said "O my people! worship Allah: you have no other Deity than He. It is He Who has created you from the earth and made it a living place for you.⁶⁷ So ask His forgiveness⁶⁸ and turn to Him in repentance. Most surely my Lord is near at hand and answers prayers.⁶⁹ 61

They replied "O Sālih, till now you were such a person among us of whom we had great expectations.⁷⁰ What! do you forbid us to worship gods whom our forefathers worshipped?⁷¹ Indeed we have a strong doubt about the way to which you are calling us and this has caused a feeling of distraction in us."⁷² 62

Sālih said, "O my people! Just consider it yourselves: if my Lord had sent me with a clear Sign and bestowed His special blessings on me, who will help save me from Allah if, after this, I become 63-65

disobedient to Him? You cannot help me any way, but might hasten my ruin.⁷³ And O my people, behold: here is Allah's she-camel, a Sign for you. So let her graze at will in Allah's land, and do not touch her with evil intention, lest a scourge should seize you from your Lord in the near future."

But they killed the she-camel. At this Sālih warned them, "Well, you have only three more days to enjoy yourselves in your houses. This is a time limit that will not prove false."

Contd. from p.347]

serious consideration? Why don't you then use your common-sense before rejecting the Message out-right?"

57. It is the same thing that has been put into the mouth of the Holy Prophet in v. 3. This is a clear proof that moral values count not only in the life of the Hereafter but also determine the rise and fall of nations in this world. This is because Allah rules over the world in accordance with moral principles and not on the basis of His physical laws alone. That is why Allah has declared in many places in the Qur'an that the fate of a community hangs on the Message which He sends to it through His Prophet. If it accepts the Message, He opens the gates of His favours and blessings for it, but if it rejects the Message, then it is destroyed.

In short, this verse is an article of the moral Law in accordance with which Allah deals with man. Conversely, the other article of the same principle of the Law is that the community which, deluded by its worldly prosperity, begins to tread the paths of sin and iniquity is ultimately destroyed. But if, during its headlong race towards its doom, it realizes its erroneous behaviour and gives up its disobedience and turns in repentance towards Allah, its evil fate is changed and the impending scourge is averted and it is given a further term of respite along with blessings and favours.

58. That is, "You have not brought a clear Sign as evidence to prove conclusively to us that you have been sent by Allah and that the Message you are presenting before us is the Truth."

59. That is, "It appears that you had behaved rudely towards a god or goddess or saint: Consequently you have been smitten with madness and are being abused, dishonoured and pelted with stones in the same streets in which you were respected and honoured before this."

60. This was the refutation of their charge that he had not brought any clear evidence to them. It implied: "You say that I have brought no evidence to

prove that I have been sent by Allah Who is a standing witness everywhere in His universe and giving evidence with the phenomena of Nature to show that the truths I have stated before you are absolutely correct. These also prove conclusively that there is no sign of truth in what you falsely ascribe to your gods."

61. This is the answer of Prophet Hūd to their assertion, "We are not going to give up our gods at your word...." (V: 53). His reply implied, "Note it well that I, too, feel a strong disgust at the gods you have set up beside Allah...."

62. This is his answer to their threat: "..... some of our gods have smitten you with some evil" (compare this with X: 71).

63. That is, "Whatever my Lord does is always right and correct for all His ways are straight and just, and the judgements He passes are based entirely on truth and justice. Therefore you cannot come out successful in your conflict with me: for you have deviated from the Right Way and are committing wicked deeds, while I am on the Right Way."

64. This is his answer to their obdurate denial: "..... nor will we believe in you...."

65. Though only one Messenger had come to them, he had presented the same Message that had been presented by every Messenger in every age to every community. Therefore disobedience to one Messenger has been declared to be disobedience to all the Messengers.

66. Please keep in view E.N.'s 57-62 of *Al-A'arāf*.

67. This is the proof of the claim: ".... you have no other Deity than Allah". The argument is based on the fact which the *mushriks* themselves acknowledged that it is Allah Who is their Creator. Therefore Prophet Sālih argued like this: "You yourselves acknowledge that it is Allah Who has created your wonderful human body out of the life-less particles of the earth and that it is Allah Who has made the earth a suitable place for you to live. How can then there be any Deity other than Allah Who may be worthy of Godhead, service and worship?"

68. That is, "So ask His forgiveness for the sin you have been committing by worshipping others."

69. In this concise sentence, the Qur'ān has refuted a grave misunderstanding of the *mushriks*, which has in every age misled people into wrong creeds. They presumed that Allah lived far away from them and, therefore, was unapproachable like their own rulers on the earth. As the only way of approach to them was an intercessor who alone could receive and present their

صَالِحًا وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ بِرَحْمَةٍ مِنَّا وَمِن خِزْيِ يَوْمِئِذٍ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ
 الْقَوِيُّ الْعَزِيزُ ⁶⁶ وَأَخَذَ الَّذِينَ كَلَّمُوا الصَّيْحَةَ فَأَصْبَحُوا فِي وِجَاهِهِمْ جِبَابٌ ⁶⁷
 كَانُ لَمْ يَغْنَوْا فِيهَا إِلَّا إِنَّ شَوْدًا كَفَرُوا رَبَّهُمْ إِلَّا بَعْدَ الشُّمُودِ ⁶⁸ وَلَقَدْ جَاءَتْ
 رُسُلَنَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ بِالْبَشْرَى قَالُوا سَلَامًا قَالَ سَلَامٌ لِمَا لَيْتَ أَنْ جَاءَ بِعَجَلٍ حَيْنٍ ⁶⁹
 فَلَمَّا رَأَى أَيْدِيَهُمْ لَا تَصِلُ إِلَيْهِ نَكَرَهُمْ وَأَوَّجَسَ مِنْهُمْ خِيفَةً قَالُوا لَا تَخَفْ
 إِنَّا أُرْسِلْنَا إِلَى قَوْمِ لُوطٍ ⁷⁰ وَأَمْرَانَهُ قَائِمَةٌ فَضَحِكْتُمْ قَبَسْرُنَهَا بِإِسْحَاقَ
 مِنْ وَرَاءِ إِسْحَاقَ يَعْقُوبَ ⁷¹ قَالَتْ يَوْنِكُنِي ءَأَلِدُ وَأَنَا عَجُوزٌ وَهَذَا بَعْلِي
 شَيْخًا إِنَّ هَذَا لَشَيْءٌ عَجِيبٌ ⁷² قَالُوا أَتَعْبِدِينَ مِنْ أَمْرِ اللَّهِ رَحْمَتُ اللَّهِ وَ
 بَرَكَاتُهُ عَلَيْكُمْ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ إِنَّهُ حَمِيدٌ مَجِيدٌ ⁷³ فَلَمَّا ذَهَبَ عَنْ إِبْرَاهِيمَ
 الرَّوْعُ وَجَاءَتْهُ الْبَشْرَى يُجَادِلُنَا فِي قَوْمِ لُوطٍ ⁷⁴ إِنَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ لَحَلِيمٌ أَوَّاهٌ
 مُنِيبٌ ⁷⁵ يَا إِبْرَاهِيمُ أَعْرِضْ عَنْ هَذَا إِنَّهُ قَدْ جَاءَ أَمْرُ رَبِّكَ وَإِنَّهُمْ آتِيهِمْ
 عَذَابٌ غَيْرُ مَرْدُودٍ ⁷⁶ وَلَمَّا جَاءَتْ رُسُلُنَا لُوطًا سِيقًا بِهِمْ ذُرْعًا
 وَقَالَ هَذَا يَوْمٌ عَصِيبٌ ⁷⁷ وَجَاءَتْهُ قَوْمُهُ يُهْرَعُونَ إِلَيْهِ وَمِنْ قَبْلُ كَانُوا
 يَعْمَلُونَ السَّيِّئَاتِ قَالَ يَقَوْمِ هَؤُلَاءِ بَنَاتِي هُنَّ أَطْهَرُ لَكُمْ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَلَا تُخْزُونِ
 فِي ضَيْعِي أَلَيْسَ مِنْكُمْ رَجُلٌ رَشِيدٌ ⁷⁸ قَالُوا لَقَدْ عَلِمْتُمْ مَا لَنَا بِبَنَاتِكُمْ مِنْ
 حَقٍّ وَإِنَّكَ لَتَعَاكُم مَّا تُرِيدُونَ ⁷⁹ قَالَ لَوْ أَنَّ لِي بِكُمْ قُوَّةٌ أَوْ آوِي إِلَى رُكْنٍ
 شَدِيدٍ ⁸⁰ قَالُوا يَا لُوطُ إِنَّا رُسُلُ رَبِّكَ لَنْ يَصِلُوا إِلَيْكَ فَأَسْرِ بِأَهْلِكَ بِقِطْعٍ مِنَ
 اللَّيْلِ وَلَا يَلْتَفِتْ مِنْكُمْ أَحَدٌ إِلَّا امْرَأَتَكَ إِنَّهُ مُصِيبُهَا مَا أَصَابَهُمْ إِنَّ مَوْعِدَهُمُ
 الصُّبْحُ أَلَيْسَ الصُّبْحُ بِعَرِيبٍ ⁸¹ فَلَمَّا جَاءَ أَمْرُنَا جَعَلْنَا عَالِيَهَا سَافِكًا وَاطْرَاقًا

So when Our judgement came to pass, We delivered through 66-68
 Our mercy Sālih and those who had believed with him, and kept them
 safe from the ignominy of that Day.⁷⁴ Indeed your Lord is All-Mighty
 and All-Powerful. As regards those who were iniquitous, a dreadful
 shock overtook them and they lay lifeless and prostrate in their homes,
 as if they had never flourished there. Listen! Thamūd disbelieved their
 Lord: listen! cast away were Thamūd.

And lo, Our Messengers came to Abraham with good news., 69-73
 They said, "Peace be upon you." Abraham answered, "Peace be also
 upon you." And before long he brought a roasted calf for them.⁷⁵ But
 when he saw that they did not stretch out their hands towards it, he had
 a mistrust about them and felt a fear of them⁷⁶ in his heart. They said,
 "Don't have any fear: for we have been sent to the people of Lot."⁷⁷
 And his wife was standing by; hearing this, she laughed.⁷⁸ Then We
 gave her the good news of Isaac, and after Isaac of Jacob.⁷⁹ She said,
 "Woe is me!⁸⁰ shall I bear a child now when I have grown extremely
 old, and this husband of mine has also become old?⁸¹ This is indeed a
 strange thing." The angels said, "What! Are you surprised at Allah's
 decree?⁸² O people of Abraham's household! Allah's mercy and
 blessings are upon you. Indeed Allah is worthy of all praise and glory."

So when Abraham's fear was allayed and his heart was filled 74-76
 with joy (because of the good news of a child), he began to dispute⁸³
 with Us concerning the people of Lot, for Abraham was tender-hearted
 and merciful and always turned to Us. (At last Our angels said to him),
 "O Abraham, desist from this now that your Lord's decree has been
 issued and the scourge which cannot be averted by anyone shall
 overtake them."⁸⁴

And when Our Messengers came to Lot,⁸⁵ he was greatly 77-80
 perturbed and distressed in mind because of their visit and said, "This
 is a day of woe!"⁸⁶ (No sooner did the visitors come to him than) his
 people spontaneously rushed towards his house, for they had previously
 been addicted to wicked deeds. Lot said to them, "O my people, here
 are my daughters, who are purer for you.⁸⁷ So fear God and don't
 degrade me by committing evil to my guests. What! Is there not a
 single good man among you?" They replied, "You know it well that
 we have no need of your daughters,⁸⁸ and you also know what we

want." Lot cried, "I wish I had the power to set you right or I could find some strong support for refuge."

81

Then the angels said, "O Lot, We are messengers sent by your Lord. They shall not be able to do you any harm. So depart from here with the people of your household in the last hours of the night. And look here: none of you should turn round to look behind;⁸⁹ but your wife (who will not accompany you) shall meet with the same doom as they.⁹⁰ The morning has been appointed for their destruction—the morning has almost come."

Contd. from p. 351]

requests and applications to their rulers, and convey their answers to them, they presumed that there should be some intercessor to help approach Allah and bring to them the answers to their prayers. Obviously this is a false presumption, which has been endorsed and encouraged by clever people that Allah is out of the reach of common people and it is not possible for them to reach Him and present their prayers and get their answers. So they should search for such sacred beings as may have an approach to Him. Accordingly, they tried to secure the services of those who were well-versed in the art of conveying the requests with the necessary presents and gifts to the Highest Authority. This misunderstanding created hosts of intercessors, and the establishment of the system of priesthood, which has so incapacitated the followers of *mushrik* creeds of ignorance that they cannot perform by themselves any religious ceremony from birth to death.

Now let us consider the concise answer of Prophet Sālih, by which he broke asunder the false presumption of the *mushriks*. It is this: "Allah is near at hand: so you can invoke His help directly without the help of any interceder. He answers prayers: so you can yourselves receive the answer to your prayer. Though He is the Highest, each one of you will find Him so near yourself that you will be able to convey your request even in a whisper, nay, you are permitted to convey your requests openly or secretly to Him. Therefore give up the folly of seeking interceders and setting them up as His partners, and address your prayers to Him Who is near at hand and answers prayers." (Please refer also to E.N. 188 of *Al-Baqarah*.)

70. That is, "We had expected that by your wisdom, intelligence, foresight, serious behaviour and dignified personality, you would become a great and prosperous man. So we had looked forward to the great success you would achieve and to the manifold advantages we would gain over other clans and tribes because of you. But you have brought to nought all of our hopes by adopting the Way based on *Tauhid* and the Hereafter which is bound to lead us to utter ruin."

It may be noted here that the people of Muhammad (Allah's peace be upon him) have had the same great expectations of him. They, too, had a very high opinion of his abilities and capabilities before his appointment as a Prophet. For they expected that he would become a great leader, and his foresight would bring innumerable benefits to them also. But when, contrary to their expectations, he began to invite them to the doctrines of *Tauhid* and the Hereafter, and preach the principles of high morality, they lost not only all hope in him, but began to entertain and express quite the reverse views. They said, "What a pity! this man who was quite good till now has, under the influence of some charm, not only ruined his own career but has destroyed all of our hopes as well".

71. That was their argument for the worship of their gods. They said that they would worship them because their forefathers worshipped them. Prophet Sālih, argued like this: "Worship Allah... Who has created you from the earth, and Who made it a living place for you." In answer to this they argued, as if to say, "These deities are also worthy of worship, and we will not give them up, because our forefathers have been worshipping them since a long time." This is an apt example of the type of arguments employed by the supporters of Islam and "ignorance". The former base their arguments on sound reasoning, while the latter base them on blind imitation.

72. The Qur'an has not specified the nature of the doubts and "feelings of distraction". This is because, though all of them had these feelings, these were different in different persons. For it is one of the characteristics of the Message that it takes away the peace of mind of all these people to whom it is addressed. Though the feelings of distraction are of various kinds, everyone gets a portion of them. This is because it becomes simply impossible for anyone to continue treading the paths of deviation with that peace of mind which one had before the coming of the Message. For it impels everyone to think whether one is following the Right Way or any of the wrong ways of "ignorance". No one can shut one's ears and eyes against the penetrating and merciless criticism of the weaknesses of the ways of "ignorance"; and the strong and rational arguments for the Right Way. Then the high moral character of the Messenger, his perseverance, his nobility, his gentle conduct, his frank and righteous attitude and his dignity cannot fail to make their impressions even on the most obdurate, and prejudiced opponents. The Message by itself attracts the best elements from that society and brings about the most revolutionary changes in the characters of its followers so as to make them models of excellence. Naturally all these things combine to produce the feelings of distraction in the minds of those who desire to uphold the ways of "ignorance" even after the coming of the Truth.

73. This is the answer to the preceding question: "If I disobey Allah by discarding the Guidance I have received from Him in order to please you, you

cannot defend me against Him. You will rather add to the intensity of my guilt of disobedience to Him. Thus I shall incur additional punishment from Him for misleading you instead of showing the Right Way for which I had been sent to you."

74. According to the traditions that are current in the Sinai Peninsula, Allah delivered them from the Torment and led them there. There is a Mount near Jabal-i-Mūsa, known by the name of Prophet Sālih where, it is said, the Prophet took refuge after the destruction of his people.

75. This shows that the angels had come to Prophet Abraham in the shape of human beings and had not disclosed their identity. Therefore he took them for strangers and brought a roasted calf for their entertainment.

76. Some commentators are of the view that Prophet Abraham was afraid of them because, from their refusal to eat his meal, he had concluded that they had come to him with some evil intention. For, according to the Arab tradition, if some strangers refused hospitality, it meant that they had not come as guests but as enemies to plunder. But this view is not supported by the succeeding verse.

77. The wording of their answer shows that Prophet Abraham had understood from their refusal to eat that they were angels. But he was afraid of their visit because he knew that the coming of the angels in the human shape did not bode well. So he was fearful that they might have come to take them to task for some offence committed by the people of his household or of his habitation or by himself. Had it been the same thing that the commentators presumed, then their answer should have been, "Don't fear us for we are angels from your Lord." But the answer they gave to remove his fear, "Don't have any fear for we have been sent to the people of Lot (and not to you)," shows that Abraham knew that they were angels but was troubled in his mind as to the reason of their visit in the human shape. This was because the angels came in human shape when some one was either to be put to a hard trial or punished severely for some offence.

78. It appears from this that the news of the visit of the angels in the human shape had made the people of the house uneasy. So Prophet Abraham's wife had also come there to know what the matter was. She laughed with joy when she learnt that the angels were sent not to punish their people but the people of Lot.

79. The angels told the good news of a son to Hadrat Sārah instead of Prophet Abraham because he already had a son, Hadrat Ismāil, from Hadrat Hājirah but had no child from her. Therefore to remove her sorrow they told her the good news that a son, Isaac, will be born to her, who will have a son, Jacob, both of whom will be great Messengers of Allah.

80. These words were not used by her in their literal sense as an exclamation of grief and lamentation. She uttered these words merely to express surprise at the news.

81. According to the Bible, Prophet Abraham was 100 years old at the time and Hadrat Sārah was 90 years.

82. The question was posed to her to remind her, that, though people of old age, do not bear children, it is not beyond Allah's power to bring this about. Therefore a true believer like her should not show any surprise at the good news, when it is conveyed to her from Allah.

83. "...he began to dispute with Us" is the expression of affection and endearment, which manifests the nature of close relationship of Prophet Abraham with his Lord. This helps depict the picture of the argument that the Servant had with his Lord for pleading the case of the people of Lot. He pleaded persistently, "Lord avert the coming scourge from the people of Lot". The Lord replied, "These people have become so degraded that no good was left in them and their crimes have become so heinous that they deserve no leniency at all." But the Servant still persisted, "Lord, give them more respite, even if a little good yet remains in them; maybe it should bear some fruit." This dispute has been recorded in the Bible rather in detail, but the concise mention in the Qur'ān is more meaningful. (For comparison please refer to *Genesis* 18: 23-32).

84. A superficial view of this incident from the life of Prophet Abraham in the context it occurs might lead one to consider it to be irrelevant, especially as an introduction to the coming scourge on the people of Lot. But if one reviews this in the light of the object for which these historical events have been related here, one will come to the conclusion that its mention is most apt here. In order to understand its relevancy we should keep in view the following two things:

- (1) These historical events have been related here to warn the Quraish that they were absolutely wrong in their self-delusion that they were quite immune from the scourge with which the Qur'ān was threatening them because of their relationship with Prophet Abraham and their guardianship of the Ka'abah and their religious, economic and political leadership of Arabia. They thought that Prophet Abraham, whose descendants they were, was a beloved servant of Allah and, would, therefore, intercede for them and defend them against any scourge from Him. That is why the graphic picture of the death of Prophet Noah's son has been drawn to show that the prayer of a great Prophet like him could not save his own son from the scourge. Not only was his prayer rejected but he was also taken to task for making a request for his wicked son. Then this second incident from the life of Prophet Abraham has been *[Contd. on p.360]*

عَلَيْهَا حِجَارَةٌ مِّنْ سِجِّيلٍ ۖ مَّنْضُودٍ ﴿١٧٦﴾ تُسَوِّمُهُ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ ۖ وَمَا هِيَ مِنَ
 الظَّالِمِينَ بِبَعِيدٍ ﴿١٧٧﴾ وَإِلَىٰ مَدْيَنَ أَخَاهُمْ شُعَيْبًا ۚ قَالَ يَاقَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا
 لَكُمْ مِّنْ إِلَٰهٍ غَيْرُهُ ۚ وَلَا تَنْقُصُوا الْبِكْيَالَ وَالْمِيزَانَ إِنِّي أُرِيدُ بِخَيْرٍ وَإِلَىٰ
 أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ مُّجِيطٍ ﴿١٧٨﴾ وَيَقَوْمِ أَوْفُوا الْبِكْيَالَ وَالْمِيزَانَ بِالْقِسْطِ
 وَلَا تَبْخُسُوا النَّاسَ أَشْيَاءَهُمْ وَلَا تَعْتُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ مُفْسِدِينَ ۚ بَقِيَّتُ اللَّهِ خَيْرٌ
 لَّكُمْ إِن كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِينَ ۚ وَمَا أَنَا عَلَيْكُمْ بِحَفِيظٍ ﴿١٧٩﴾ قَالُوا يُشْعِبُكَ صَلَواتُكَ
 تَأْمُرُكَ أَنْ تَتَّوَكَّلَ مَا يَتَّوَكَّلُ الْبَاطِلُونَ ۚ وَإِنْ تَفَعَّلَ فِي أَمْوَالِنَا مَا نَشَاءُ إِنَّكَ لَأَنْتَ
 الْحَلِيمُ الرَّشِيدُ ﴿١٨٠﴾ قَالَ يَقَوْمِ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُ عَلَىٰ بَيْتِنَا مِّنْ رَبِّي وَرَزَقْنِي مِنْهُ
 رِزْقًا حَسَنًا وَمَا أُرِيدُ أَنْ أُخَالِفَكُمْ إِلَىٰ مَا أَنْهَكُمْ عَنْهُ إِنْ أُرِيدُ إِلَّا الْإِصْلَاحَ
 مَا اسْتَطَعْتُ وَمَا تَوْفِيقِي إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ وَإِلَيْهِ أُنِيبُ ﴿١٨١﴾ وَيَقَوْمِ لَا
 يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شِقَاقِي أَنْ يُصِيبَكُمْ مِثْلُ مَا أَصَابَ قَوْمَ نُوحٍ أَوْ قَوْمَ هُودٍ أَوْ
 قَوْمَ صَالِحٍ وَمَا قَوْمَ لُوطٍ مِّنْكُمْ بِبَعِيدٍ ﴿١٨٢﴾ وَاسْتَغْفِرُوا رَبَّكُمْ ثُمَّ تُوبُوا
 إِلَيْهِ ۚ إِنَّ رَبِّي رَحِيمٌ وَدُودٌ ﴿١٨٣﴾ قَالُوا يُشْعِبُكَ مَا نَفَقَهُ كَثِيرًا ۖ إِنَّمَا نَقُولُ وَ
 إِنَّا لَنُرِيدُكَ فِيمَا ضَعِفْنَا ۚ وَلَوْلَا رَهْمُكَ لَرَجَمْنَاكَ وَمَا أَنْتَ عَلَيْنَا بِعَزِيزٍ ﴿١٨٤﴾
 قَالَ يَقَوْمِ أَرَأَيْتُمْ أَهْرَءَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِّنَ اللَّهِ ۖ وَاتَّخَذَ صُورَةً وَّرَاءَكُمْ ظَهْرًا ۚ إِنَّ رَبِّي
 بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ مُّحِيطٌ ﴿١٨٥﴾ وَيَقَوْمِ اعْمَلُوا عَلَىٰ مَكَانَتِكُمْ إِنِّي عَامِلٌ ۚ سَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ
 مَن يَأْتِيهِ عَذَابٌ يُّخْزِيهِ وَمَن هُوَ كَاذِبٌ ۚ وَارْتَقِبُوا إِنِّي مَعَكُمْ رَبِّيبٌ ﴿١٨٦﴾ وَ
 لَمَّا جَاءَ أَمْرُنَا نَجَّيْنَا شُعَيْبًا مِّنَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ بِرَحْمَتِنَا ۚ وَآخَذَتِ الَّذِينَ
 ظَلَمُوا الصَّيْحَةَ فَأَصْبَحُوا فِي دِيَارِهِمْ جِثْمِينَ ﴿١٨٧﴾ كَانَ لَوْ يَعْتَمِدُونَ فِيهَا إِلَّا بُعْدًا

Accordingly, when the time of the execution of judgement came, We turned the habitation upside down and rained on it stones of baked clay,⁹¹ and each one of these stones had been specifically marked⁹² by your Lord. And such scourge is not far from the workers of iniquity.⁹³ 82-83

And to the people of Madian, We sent their brother Shu'aib.⁹⁴ He said, "O my people, serve Allah; you have no deity other than He. Do not give short measure and weight. Though I see you now in a state of prosperity, I fear for you the scourge of a day that will encircle you. And, O my people, give full measure and weight justly and do not defraud people of their goods, and do not spread mischief in the land. The residue (after giving full measure) left over by Allah is best for you, if you are believers. Anyhow I am not a guardian over you."⁹⁵ 84-86

They replied, "O Shu'aib! Does your *Salāt* teach you this⁹⁶ that we should give up all those deities whom our forefathers worshipped or that we should have no right on our goods to dispense with them as we please?⁹⁷ Indeed you are the only generous and righteous man (left in the land)!" 87

Shu'aib said, "O my people! Just consider it yourselves if I had a clear evidence from my Lord, and then had been bestowed good provisions⁹⁸ from Him, (how can I, then, be a party to your evil and unlawful practices?") And I do not want at all to commit those evil practices, which I forbid you.⁹⁹ I desire only to reform you as far as it lies in my power. And this work of mine depends entirely on Allah's help: and in Him I have put my trust and to Him I turn for everything. And O my people, let not your obduracy against me be conducive to bring upon you the doom that overtook the peoples of Noah, Hūd and Sālih. And the people of Lot are not far from you.¹⁰⁰ Listen! Ask forgiveness of your Lord and turn to Him in penitence. Indeed my Lord is Merciful and loves His Creation."¹⁰¹ 88-90

They answered "O Shu'aib! We do not understand much of what you say.¹⁰² Indeed we see that you are a powerless man among us. Had it not been for your family, we would have stoned you to death long before this, for you are not strong enough to prevail over us."¹⁰³ 91

Shu'aib said, "O my people! Do you regard my family to be 92-93

more powerful for you than Allah (that you are afraid of it) but have disregarded Him totally? Note it well that whatever you are doing is within Allah's grasp. O my people, you may go on following your way and I will follow my way. You will come to know in the near future who shall be visited by an ignominious scourge and who is the liar; wait if you will and I, too, shall wait with you."

94 And when Our decree came to pass, We delivered through Our mercy Shu'aib and those who had believed with him. As regards those who were iniquitous, a dreadful shock overtook them and they lay lifeless and prostrate in their homes as if they had never flourished in them.

95 Listen! Cast away were also the people of Madian as were Thamūd cast away

Contd. from p.357]

related to show that, though Allah was very kind to him, He rejected his appeal for the people of Lot because he had tried to intercede for the wicked people, which was against the requirements of justice.

(2) This incident from the life of Prophet Abraham has been related along with the destruction of the people of Lot for another object as well. The Quraish had forgotten that the Law of Divine Justice had always been operating continuously and regularly and there were open proofs of this all around them. On the one hand, there was the case of Prophet Abraham. He had to leave his home for the sake of the Truth and righteousness and to live in a foreign country where to all appearances, he had no outward power to support him. But Divine Justice rewarded him for his righteousness with a son like Isaac and a grandson like Jacob (Allah's peace be upon them) whose descendants, the Israelites, reigned supreme for centuries over the same Palestine where he had taken refuge as a stranger. On the other hand, there were the people of Lot who were living nearby in great prosperity, which had intoxicated them so much that they lived in open wickedness, totally forgetting that they would be overtaken by retribution from Allah. So much so that they scoffed at the admonition of Prophet Lot. But Divine Justice came into operation at the same time, when it was conveying the good news to Prophet Abraham and decreed that those wicked people should be annihilated from the face of the earth. As a result of this, no vestige of their habitations was left on the surface of the earth. This fact should serve as a lesson to the wicked people for all times.

85. Please keep in view E.N.'s 63-68 of *Al-A'arāf*.

86. From the tenor of the details of the story as given in the different parts of the Qur'ān, it becomes quite plain that the angels came to Prophet Lot in the shape of handsome boys and that he was unaware that they were angels. That is why he was troubled and distressed in his mind, for he knew how wicked and shameless were his people.

87. By "my daughters" Prophet Lot might have meant either of the two things. He might have referred to the daughters of the community as "my daughters" because the relationship of a Prophet to his people is as of a father to his children. But it is also possible that he might have meant by this his own daughters. Anyhow this could not have been an offer of adultery, for the succeeding sentence "...these are purer for you" leaves no room for such a misunderstanding. This makes it quite obvious that Prophet Lot admonished them in this way so as to turn them to the females for the lawful gratification of their sexual desires instead of seeking unnatural ways.

88. This answer of the people of Lot shows that they had gone to the lowest depth of depravity and openly and brazen-facedly declared that they did not want females but males. This was the proof that they had not only left the natural way of purity and strayed into the unnatural way of impurity but had also lost all interest in the natural way of gratification. Such a depraved condition is the worst form of moral degradation, for it shows that no good has been left at all. Supposing a person has fallen a victim to an unlawful and sinful behaviour but at the same time considers it to be a wrong behaviour which should be avoided. There is hope for the reform of such a person, and even if he does not mend his way the utmost that can be said about him is that 'he is a depraved person'. On the other hand, if a person gives himself wholly to the unlawful because he has no interest in the lawful, such a filthy person is not worthy of being considered a man at all, and therefore should be wiped out of the earth. That is why Allah decreed that the people of Lot should be completely annihilated from the face of the earth.

89. This meant to impress on them the urgency of the matter so that they should get out of the doomed place and should not even turn round to look behind to see what was happening there. They were warned lest they should be attracted by the loud noises caused by the explosions and by the wailing of the people and thus lag behind in the territory that had been marked for the scourge and was to be overtaken by it.

90. The doom of the wife of Prophet Lot is the third incident related in this Sūrah to serve as a lesson that no relationship can deliver a people from the horrible consequences of their sin.

91. Probably the scourge came in the form of a horrible earthquake which turned their habitations upside down and the explosion of a volcano which rained stones on them.

"Stones of baked clay" probably refers to the stones that are formed by the underground heat and lava in the volcanic regions. The signs of such a formation are found even today near the Lot Sea.

92. That is, "Every stone had been specified by Allah to do some particular work of destruction there, and to hit a particular offender".

93. This was meant to warn the workers of iniquity who were engaged in their evil work, as if to say, "You should not consider yourselves immune from scourge as though it were far from you. If it could visit the people of Lot, it could overpower you as well. Neither the people of Lot were able to defend themselves against Allah, nor can you frustrate Him now."

94. Please keep in view E.N.'s 69-76 of *Al-A'arāf*.

95. That is, "I have no power over you. The most I can do for you is to admonish you as a well-wisher, but it rests with you to accept my advice or reject it. As you are accountable to Allah and not to me for your deeds, therefore you should fear Him and desist from your mischievous deeds, if you sincerely believe in Him."

96. This taunting question was an expression of the feelings of hatred those un-godly people cherished against the religious observances of Prophet Shu'aib and other God-fearing, pious people. They selected *Salāt* as a target of their taunt because it is the first and foremost outwardly observance of true religion which naturally has always been strongly hated by all un-godly wicked people. This hatred may also be noticed today among those who deliberately intend to follow the wicked ways, for they consider religious observances to be the greatest threat to their evil ways. As they regard *Salāt* to be a symbol of the coming trouble, they begin to taunt the one who observes it. For they know that the victim of the "disease" of religiosity will not rest content with his own reformation but will exert his utmost to reform others as well. They fear that he will preach piety and righteous ways to them and criticise their ungodly and immoral ways. That is why *Salāt* becomes the target of the taunts of wicked people. And if the person who observes *Salāt* actually begins to preach the observance of virtues and criticise their evil ways just as they had feared, then they condemn it even more vehemently as though it were the cause of the whole trouble.

97. These two things clearly distinguish the theory of the way of "ignorance" from the theory of the way of "Islam". The way of "ignorance" is

based on the assumption that one should follow the way of one's forefathers: and for the mere reason that it has been inherited from one's forefathers. Its second assumption is that one's faith and religion are concerned only with worship, and these have nothing to do with the worldly affairs of life, in which one is absolutely free to do as one pleases. On the other hand, the basic theory of Islam is that every way that is not founded on the submission to Allah is wrong, and, therefore, should not be followed, for no other way has got any proof of its truth from reason, knowledge and revelation. Besides, Islam is not confined to the worship of Allah but it covers in its entirety all aspects of life—cultural, social, economic and political. This is because all that man possesses really belongs to Allah and, therefore, man has absolutely no right to do as he pleases with his possessions.

Incidentally, this demand of the people of Prophet Shua'ib that they had every right to do as they pleased with their goods and possessions shows that there is nothing new about the theory of the division of life into separate compartments, religious and mundane. Some three thousand years or so ago they insisted on this division just as Western and Westernised people insist on it today. And they are absolutely wrong to presume that their division is the result of the 'light' that had dawned upon humanity because of the "intellectual progress" that man has made as a result of the evolutionary process. Thus it is clear that it is not light but darkness which prevailed with the same intensity thousands of years ago as it is today and that the conflict of Islam against it is also as old as that.

98. Here رِزْقٌ (*rizq*) implies two things: provision of the knowledge of the Truth and provision of the necessities of life from Allah. In the first sense, it refers to the same thing that has been declared in this Sūrah by Prophets Muhammad, Noah and Salih (Allah's peace be upon them all), that is, "Allah bestowed on me by revelation that knowledge of the Truth, which I already had gained by making keen observations of my own self and of the phenomena of Nature. Therefore I cannot be a party to your evil creeds and unlawful practices." In the second sense, it is the answer to this taunt of theirs: "Indeed you are the only generous and righteous person left in the land!" It meant, so to say, this: "When my Lord has bestowed on me both the knowledge of the Truth and the good and lawful provisions of life, your taunts cannot turn this favour into disfavour. Therefore I cannot be so ungrateful to Him as to declare your deviations to be the truth and your unlawful practices lawful."

99. That is, "It is a proof of the truth of my claim that I myself practise what I preach to you. For instance, if I had forbidden you to visit the shrines of gods and goddesses but had myself become the guardian of some such shrine, you would have been justified in bringing this charge against me that I was preaching the Doctrine of *Tauhid* merely for the sake of ruining the "business" of others in

order to make room for my own trade. Likewise, if I had prohibited the use of unlawful means for you but had myself applied the same in my own trade, you would have been justified in charging me with preaching honesty merely for winning good reputation for the prosperity of my own trade; But you yourselves are a witness to this that I myself abstain from those evils which I forbid you to practise and I keep myself pure from those blemishes of which I desire to cleanse you and I follow the way to which I invite you. All this is a clear proof that I believe in the truth of the Message I am conveying to you."

100. That is, "Your land is not far from the land of the people of Lot, which has been totally destroyed. It is quite near and what happened did not take place long ago."

101. Prophet Shu'aib brought the attribute of love of Allah for His creation specially to the notice of his people in order to induce them to give up despair and turn to Allah for forgiveness for their evil deeds, so as to say, "Allah is not hard-hearted and cruel, and cherishes no feelings of enmity towards His creatures. He does not desire to punish them anyhow as if He were to derive pleasure from their torture. As a matter of fact, He inflicts punishment on you only when you transgress all limits and that, too, for the good of mankind. Therefore if you feel ashamed of your sins and repent of these, you will find Him Forbearing, for He loves His creation very much."

The Holy Prophet has explained the same thing by citing a parable. He said, "Suppose one of you was travelling in a waterless desert and lost his camel on whom he had laden all his provisions for the journey. He made a thorough search for the missing camel, but in vain. Then, in despair of his life, he lay down under a tree. When, lo, the camel with all the provisions intact on it appeared all of a sudden before him. Just imagine his happiness. Allah is more pleased than that man, when a sinful servant returns to Him in penitence." There is another incident even more effective than this related by Hadrat 'Umar: "Once some prisoners of war were brought before the Holy Prophet. One of them was a mother whose infant child had been lost. This had made her so restless and uneasy that she would hold any child she came across close to her breasts and suckle it. When the Holy Prophet saw this, he put this question to the bystanders: 'Can you imagine that this mother would ever throw her own child into the fire?' We replied, 'Never'; not to speak of throwing it into the fire, she would do her utmost in every possible way to prevent it from falling into the fire.'" Then the Holy Prophet said, "Allah is much more merciful to His servants than this mother is to her child."

Let us consider the same thing from another point of view. It is Allah Who has created love in the hearts of the mother and the father for their child, and

without this parental love, they would never have shown the care and the sacrifice they shower on their child; nay, they would have even become its enemies because of the trouble and inconvenience they have to bear for it. From this it is quite evident that the love of the Creator of this parental affection for His own Creation must be far greater than this parental love.

102. They did not understand what Prophet Shu'aib said to them not because he talked to them in some foreign language or because the theme was too difficult or complicated for them, for he talked to them in their own language and his theme was simple and clear. As a matter of fact, they did not understand because they would not. Their crooked thinking left neither any desire nor any aptitude for understanding his talk. And this is true of all those people who become such slaves of their prejudices and lusts as render them incapable of accepting anything against their preconceived notions. For they are neither inclined to listen to such things nor understand them as though these things were not for them nor were they for them.

103. While studying this part of the story of Prophet Shu'aib, it should be kept in view that similar conditions were prevalent at Makkah at the time of the revelation of this story. The Quraish were as blood thirsty to kill the Holy Prophet as were the people of Madian to take the life of Prophet Shu'aib. Just as the people of Prophet Shu'aib desisted from this evil design because they were afraid of his family, likewise the Quraish were afraid of Bani Hashim and refrained from executing their evil designs. So this story was being related to warn the Quraish that they should learn a lesson from the answer of Prophet Shu'aib (vv. 92-93), as if to say, "O people of Quraish ! This same is the answer to you from Muhammad (Allah's peace be upon him)".

لِمَدِينٍ كَمَا بَعَدَتْ شَمُودُ ⁹⁶ وَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا مُوسَى بِآيَاتِنَا وَسُلْطِينَ مُبِينِينَ ⁹⁶
 إِلَى فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَلَئِهِ فَاتَّبَعُوا أَمْرَ فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَا أَمْرُ فِرْعَوْنَ بِرَشِيدٍ ⁹⁷ يَقْدُمُ
 قَوْمَهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ فَأَوْرَدَهُمُ النَّارَ وَبِئْسَ الْوَرِيدُ السَّورُودُ ⁹⁸ وَاتَّبَعُوا فِي هَذِهِ
 لَعْنَةَ وَيَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ بِئْسَ الرَّقْدُ الْمَرْفُودُ ⁹⁹ ذَلِكَ مِنْ أَنْبَاءِ الْقُرَى نَقُصُّهُ
 عَلَيْكَ يَنْهَا قَائِمٌ وَحَصِيدٌ ¹⁰⁰ وَمَا ظَلَمْنَاهُمْ وَلَكِنْ ظَلَمُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ فَمَا أَغْنَتْ
 عَنْهُمْ آلِهَتُهُمُ الَّتِي يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ لَمَّا جَاءَ أَمْرُ رَبِّكَ
 وَمَا زَادُوهُمْ غَيْرَ تَتْبِيبٍ ¹⁰¹ وَكَذَلِكَ أَخَذُ رَبُّكَ إِذَا أَخَذَ الْقُرَى وَهِيَ ظَالِمَةٌ
 إِنْ أَخَذَ الْيَوْمَ شَدِيدٌ ¹⁰² إِنْ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةٌ لِمَنْ خَافَ عَذَابَ الْآخِرَةِ ذَلِكَ
 يَوْمٌ مَجْزُومٌ ¹⁰³ لَئِنَّ النَّاسَ وَ ذَلِكَ يَوْمٌ مَشْهُودٌ ¹⁰³ وَمَا نُوخِرُوا إِلَّا لِأَجَلٍ
 مَعْدُودٍ ¹⁰⁴ يَوْمَ يَأْتِ لَا تَكَلُمُ نَفْسٌ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ فَمِنْهُمْ سُوءٌ مُسْتَعْتَبٌ ¹⁰⁵
 فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ شَفَعُوا فِي النَّارِ لَهُمْ فِيهَا زَفِيرٌ وَشَهِيقٌ ¹⁰⁶ خَلِيدِينَ فِيهَا مَا
 دَامَتِ السَّمَوَاتُ وَالْأَرْضُ إِلَّا مَا شَاءَ رَبُّكَ إِنْ رَبُّكَ فَقَالَ لِمَا يُرِيدُ ¹⁰⁷ وَأَمَّا
 الَّذِينَ سُعِدُوا فِي الْجَنَّةِ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا مَا دَامَتِ السَّمَوَاتُ وَالْأَرْضُ إِلَّا مَا
 شَاءَ رَبُّكَ عَطَاءٌ غَيْرٌ مَجْدُوفٍ ¹⁰⁸ فَلَا تَكُ فِي مِرْيَةٍ مِمَّا يَحُدُّ هُوَ لَاءٌ مَا
 يَحُدُّونَ إِلَّا كَمَا يَعْْبُدُ آبَاؤُهُمْ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَإِنَّا لَمُوقِفُوهُمْ نَصِيبُهُمْ غَيْرُ
 مَنقُوصٍ ¹⁰⁹ وَقَدْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ فَاخْتَلَفَ فِيهِ وَلَوْ لَا كَلِمَةٌ سَبَقَتْ
 مِنْ رَبِّكَ لَقَطَعْنَا بَيْنَهُمْ ¹¹⁰ وَإِنْ كُنَّا لَمَّا
 لَيُوقِفَتُهُمْ رَبُّكَ أَعْمَالَهُمْ إِنَّهُ بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ ¹¹¹ فَاسْتَقْبَلُوا كَمَا أُمِرْتُ وَمَنْ
 تَابَ مَعَكَ وَلَا تَطْغَوْا إِنَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ ¹¹² وَلَا تَرْكَبُوا إِلَى الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا



And We sent Moses with Our Signs and a manifest authority of 96-99
 appointment to Pharaoh and the chiefs of his kingdom. But they
 followed the command of Pharaoh and unrighteous was Pharaoh's
 command. On the Day of Resurrection, he will head his people and
 lead them to Hell.¹⁰⁴ What a wretched goal for one to reach! Curse has
 fallen on them in this world and shall also fall on them on the Day of
 Resurrection. What an evil reward for one to receive !

This is the story of some of the habitations We are relating to 100-101
 you; some of these are still standing while the others have been mown
 down. We were not unjust to them but they were unjust to themselves.
 And when the judgement of your Lord came to pass, those deities of
 theirs, whom they worshipped instead of Allah, availed them not at all:
 they only hastened their ruin. They did them no good but caused their
 destruction and ruin.

And when your Lord seizes a sinful town, He seizes it like this: 102-108
 indeed His seizure is very terrible and painful. In fact, there is a Sign
 in this for everyone who dreads the Torment of the Hereafter:¹⁰⁵ that
 will be the Day when all the people shall gather together and will
 witness everything that will happen there. We are deferring that only
 for a fixed term. When that Day will come, no one shall dare speak a
 word except with Allah's permission.¹⁰⁶ Then some people shall be
 damned, while others blessed. Those who shall be damned shall go to
 Hell: here they will pant and hiss (because of thirst). Therein they shall
 abide for ever as long as the earth and the heavens shall last¹⁰⁷ unless
 your Lord ordains otherwise. Indeed your Lord has full powers to do as
 He will.¹⁰⁸ As for those who shall be blessed they will go to the Garden
 and dwell therein for ever as long as the earth and the heavens shall
 last, unless your Lord wills something else.¹⁰⁹ They will be blessed
 with a boon that will be imperishable.

So, O Prophet have no doubt concerning the deities they 109
 worship for they blindly imitate and worship what their forefathers
 worshipped before them.¹¹⁰ And We will give them the full measure of
 their share without detracting anything from it.

104. From this verse and some other narrations of the Qur'an it appears
 that the leaders of a community in this world will be its leaders also on the Day of
 Resurrection. If they guided and led the people towards virtue, righteousness and

truth in this world, their followers will gather together under their banner on the Day of Resurrection and march to the Garden under their leadership. On the other hand, if they called people to some deviation, immorality or unrighteous ways their followers will follow them there also, and march to the fire of Hell under their leadership. The Holy Prophet explained this thing in a Tradition: "On the Day of Resurrection, the banner of the poets of "ignorance" will be in the hands of Imra-ul-Quais, and all of them will march towards Hell under his leadership."

Now let us try to picture the march-past of these two processions. It is obvious that the first procession will march happily and joyously, praying for and praising their leaders whose guidance had led them to this happy state of marching to the blessed Paradise. On the other hand, when the followers of the leaders of errors will find themselves in the miserable plight, to which the leaders had brought them, naturally their anger against them will be beyond description. For the followers will march towards Hell, abusing and cursing their leaders, who had brought them to that horrible state of torture.

105. That is, "In these historical events there is a sign which will show conclusively to the one who considers this deeply that the torment of the Hereafter is inevitable, as warned by the Messengers. One can also judge from this how terrible it will be. This knowledge will fill one with such fear that will keep one on the Straight Way."

Now let us consider the question: How are these historical events a Sign of the Hereafter and the chastisement therein. Everyone who makes a critical study of history with this consideration that it is not merely a collection of events but also a means of drawing logical conclusions, will find that the rise and fall of communities and nations has been taking place in a regular succession. Moreover, one will find that this rise and fall takes place in accordance with some moral laws in an extraordinary way. This is a clear proof that man is subordinate to the Sovereign, Who is ruling over the universe in accordance with some rational moral laws. Accordingly, He raises up those who keep the moral limits above a certain minimum standard set for this purpose and degrades those who fall below it. Then He gives respite to the latter to mend their ways, but if they do not avail of it and continue their downward march and fall below the limit set for their complete degradation, He annihilates them in a way as to serve as a lesson for others. The fact that these events always take place in a regular cycle leaves no shadow of doubt that rewards and punishments are permanent parts of the law of His Kingdom.

A further consideration of the chastisements that were inflicted on different communities shows that, though these punishments fulfilled the demands of justice to some extent, there was still need of more to fulfil all the demands of

justice, for these criminals were punished only for those sins which they themselves committed but not for those committed by the succeeding communities, which followed the bad example left by them as their predecessors. It is obvious from the study of history that the law of retribution must take its course and justice demands that they should be punished for the evil legacy they left for others to follow after them. Commonsense and justice demand that life in this world should be reproduced in its entirety in order to fulfil all the demands of the law of retribution. The just Sovereign will, therefore, bring into existence all those people for this purpose and award them due punishments.

(Please see also E.N. 10 of *Yūnus*).

106. This is to warn these foolish people who depend on the promises of their intercessors that they would protect them from the torment of the Day. They have been warned to desist from the evil deeds they are committing in the hope that their intercessors would not rest content till they succeed in obtaining from Allah permits of forgiveness for their sinful followers. This is because they believe them to be the beloved favourites of Allah Who cannot afford to displease them at any cost. Then they have been told that, not to speak of wielding any such influence, they shall not dare utter a word except with His permission. No saint, no angel, howsoever high, is so powerful or influential as to speak a word or make any recommendation in the Court of the Highest Sovereign unless He Himself permits it. Therefore such people as make offerings to others than Allah will be utterly disillusioned and disappointed on that Day, for they will come to know that they were foolish in relying on their intercessors and committing evil deeds in the world in the hope that they would deliver them from the torment of the Day.

107. In vv. 105-106, the words "the earth and the heavens" might have been used idiomatically to denote the everlasting state of their torment or they might refer to the new earth and the heavens that will be made in the Next World. Any how these cannot be the earth and the heavens in the existing state for two reasons. First, according to the Qur'an, they shall be changed on the Day of Resurrection. Secondly, the events that are being related in these verses will happen in the Hereafter.

108. This is to emphasize that there is no power that can deliver them from that everlasting torment. Of course, Allah has full powers to forgive anyone He wills or to make a change in the term of the torment of anyone, for He Himself devises laws for Himself and there is no law higher than His Law so as to limit His powers.

فَتَمَسَّكُمْ النَّارُ وَمَا لَكُمْ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مِنْ أَوْلِيَاءَ ثُمَّ لَا تُنصَرُونَ ¹¹³ وَأَقِمِ
 الصَّلَاةَ طَرَفَى النَّهَارِ وَرُفْعًا مِنَ اللَّيْلِ إِنَّ الْحَسَنَاتِ يُذْهِبُنَ الشَّرَّاتِ ذَلِكَ
 ذِكْرَى لِلذَّكِرِينَ ¹¹⁴ وَأَصْبِرْ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُضِيعُ أَجْرَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ¹¹⁵ فَكَلِمَةً لَا كَانَ
 مِنَ النَّارُونَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ أُولُوا بَقِيَّتِهِمُ مِنَ النَّارِ فِي الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا
 مِمَّنْ أَنْجَيْنَا مِنْهُمْ ¹¹⁶ وَاتَّبَعِ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مَا أَتَوْا بِهِمْ وَكَانُوا مُجْرِمِينَ ¹¹⁶
 وَمَا كَانَ رَبُّكَ لِيُهْلِكَ الْقُرَى بِظُلْمٍ وَأَهْلُهَا مُصْلِحُونَ ¹¹⁷ وَلَوْ شَاءَ رَبُّكَ
 لَجَعَلَ النَّاسَ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَلَا يَزَالُونَ مُخْتَلِفِينَ ¹¹⁸ إِلَّا مَنْ رَجِعَ إِلَى رَبِّكَ
 لِذَلِكَ خَلَقَهُمْ وَتَنَزَّلَتْ عَلَيْكَ كَلِمَةٌ رَبِّكَ لَا تَلْمِزُكَ مِنَ الْجَنَّةِ وَالنَّاسِ
 أَجْمَعِينَ ¹¹⁹ وَكَلِمًا نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ مِنْ أَنْبَاءِ الرُّسُلِ مَا نُثَبِّتُ بِهِ فُؤَادَكَ وَ
 جَاءَكَ فِي هَذِهِ الْحَقُّ وَمَوْعِظَةٌ وَذِكْرَى لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ ¹²⁰ وَقُلْ لِلَّذِينَ لَا
 يُؤْمِنُونَ اعْمَلُوا عَلَى مَكَانَتِكُمْ إِنَّا عَسِينَا ¹²¹ وَانظُرُوا إِنَّا مُنظِرُونَ ¹²² وَ
 لِلَّهِ غَيْبُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَإِلَيْهِ يُرْجَعُ الْأُمُورُ كُلُّهَا فاعْبُدْهُ وَتَوَكَّلْ
 عَلَيْهِ وَمَا رَبُّكَ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ ¹²³



We gave the Book to Moses also before this and there arose differences regarding this (just as they are arising regarding the Book We have given to you.¹¹¹) If a decree had not been made beforehand by your Lord, a judgement would have been passed long before this on those who have created differences.¹¹² It is a fact that they are in doubt and uncertainty about this, and it is also a fact that your Lord will give them full measure for their deeds, for He is fully aware of what they are doing. So, O Muhammad, you and your companions, (who have turned back from unbelief and rebellion to Faith and obedience), should stick firmly to the Right Way, as you have been enjoined, and should not transgress the bounds of submission. Allah is watching over what you are doing. Do not incline even in the least towards the workers of iniquity lest you should come within the reach of the Fire. Then you will find no protector to defend you against Allah nor will you get any help from any quarter. And listen! Establish *Salāt* at the two ends of the day and in the early part of the night.¹¹³ Indeed virtues remove evils. This is a reminder for those who remember Allah.¹¹⁴ And practise fortitude, for Allah does not let go waste the reward of those who do good.

Then, why were there not among the communities before you such righteous persons who should have forbidden the people to make mischief in the land? If there were any, they were very few whom We saved from among those communities. The wrong-doers, however, pursued their worldly pleasures for which they had been abundantly provided, and became confirmed criminals. Your Lord is not such a One as to destroy the habitations without just cause, the while their inhabitants are doing right.¹¹⁵ Your Lord could have made mankind one community had He so willed, but now they will continue to follow different ways but only those on whom Allah has His mercy (escape wrong ways). It will be so because He has created them for this (very freedom of choice and action).¹¹⁶ And the word of your Lord, that He will fill the Hell with *jīnn*s and human beings, has been fulfilled.

And, O Muhammad, We relate the stories of the Messengers to you to strengthen your heart by these. And you have received the knowledge of the reality through these and the Believers have got an admonition and a reminder from them.

121-123

As regards those who do not believe, say to them, "You may go on following your way and We will follow our way. You may wait for its ultimate end, and we, too, will wait for it." Everything that is hidden in the heavens and the earth is in the power of Allah and everything shall return to Him. So, O Prophet, serve Him and put your trust in Him, for your Lord is not unaware of what you are doing.¹¹⁷

Contd. from p. 369]

109. That is, "They will not be sent to the Garden nor will dwell there in accordance with any extraneous law which might have forced Allah to let them dwell therein anyhow. They shall dwell there simply because of His favour. He has full powers to make any changes, if He will, about them."

110. It does not mean at all that the Holy Prophet had any doubts concerning their deities. Though these words have been addressed to the Holy Prophet, as a matter of fact they are meant for the common people. What they mean is this: "No reasonable person should entertain any presumption that the people who worship the deities must have been convinced of their miraculous powers, otherwise they would not have worshipped them nor offered gifts to them nor invoked their help". The fact of the matter is that their worship, their offerings and their prayers are not based on any knowledge nor any experience, nor any real observation, but are the result of blind imitation of their forefathers. The proof of their falsehood is that the deities could not save them, when Allah's scourge visited their worshippers who were completely annihilated in spite of them.

111. It means this: "There is nothing new in the different opinions expressed by different people regarding the Qur'an. They behaved in the same manner towards the Book that was given to Prophet Moses. Therefore, O Muhammad, do not be disheartened by their rejection of the Qur'an, though its teachings are simple and plain."

112. This is to reassure the Holy Prophet and the believers that they should patiently wait for the consequences of the misbehaviour of the unbelievers towards the Qur'an ways. But this will happen in due course as previously ordained by Allah for Allah does not make haste in passing judgement, though the people demand haste.

113. This was to urge *Salāt* at three times, that is, Morning, Evening and 'Isha. This shows that this was revealed before *Salāt* had been made obligatory for five times a day during the *Mī'rāj*. (For explanation, see E.N. 95 of XVII, E.N. 111 of XX, and E.N. 124 of XXX).

114. This is the remedy for eradicating evil from the world: "Do good deeds and defeat evil with them. The best way of making you virtuous is to establish *sajāt*, which will remind you of Allah over and over again; which will produce those good characteristics in you that shall help you fight successfully against the systematic and united front of evil that has been formed against the Mission of the Truth. This will also enable you to establish practically the system of virtue and reform." (For explanation see E.N.'s 77-79 of XXIX).

115. In this passage, the real cause of the fall of the communities mentioned in vv. 25-99 has been pointed out in a very instructive manner. In reviewing their history Allah declares that the cause of the downfall of not only these but of all the former communities was this: when Allah bestowed His favours on them, they abused these favours and were so intoxicated with their own prosperity that they began to make mischief in the land. By and by their collective conscience became so corrupt that no righteous persons were left among them to forbid evil, and, if a few were left, their voice was so weak that they could not prevent them from causing mischief. As a result of this, evil became so strong and prevalent among them as to warrant the scourge of Allah. Otherwise Allah bears no enmity against His servants that He should destroy them without any just cause, while they were performing righteous works. This has been mentioned here for impressing the following three things:

First, it is imperative that there should be some persons who should invite the people to virtue and forbid evil. For Allah approves virtue only and tolerates evil for its sake so long as there is any potential good left in them. But when a community has no righteous persons left in it and contains only wicked ones, or even if there be some such righteous persons in it as are so weak that nobody pays any heed to them, and the community as a whole rushes headlong towards moral degradation, then Allah's scourge becomes its inevitable doom.

Second, a community, which tolerates everything and everyone except those few who invite it to righteous deeds seals its own doom and invites its destruction.

Third, it is clear from this passage that the destiny of a community is determined by the influence the righteous people can wield in it. If it contains such a number of good persons as may be able to eradicate evil and mischief and establish virtue and righteousness, a general scourge is withheld from it so as to afford an opportunity to them for carrying on their work of reform. On the other hand, if the number of the righteous persons in it remains too small to carry on the reform work, and the community does not tolerate them at all and does not allow them to perform their reform work, then that community incurs its own

destruction, for thus it proves itself to be a worthless community which has no justification for its existence. (For further explanation, See E.N. 34 of LI).

116. This is the answer to the objection raised in the name of *تقدير* (*taqdîr*) (destiny) against the principle that has been laid down in the preceding verse for the destruction of the wicked communities. It is this: Why should these communities be punished for lack of a sufficient number of righteous persons in them? Why didn't Allah Himself will to produce that sufficient number of righteous persons in it? Allah has answered this objection, so as to say: "It is not the will of Allah to bind mankind inherently to a fixed course of life as He has bound the vegetable and animal life. Had it been so, there would have been no need of sending the Messengers and the Books for inviting mankind to the Faith. For in that case all human beings would have been born-Muslims and born-Believers and there would have been no unbelief and no disobedience. But it is the will of Allah to grant freedom of choice and action to man so that he may be free to choose and follow any way of life. That is why He has left open both the way to Paradise and the way to Hell for man and given every individual and every community the opportunity to choose and follow either of the two ways with full freedom and win any of the two abodes as a result of one's own efforts and exertions. It is obvious that this scheme of Allah demands that it should be based on the freedom of choice and the option to adopt Faith or unbelief. This is why Allah does not compel a community to the right way if it itself intends to follow the wrong way, and plans and works for it. Allah's scheme does not interfere with the plans and works of such a community. When it makes deliberate arrangements to mould the wicked, unjust, and sinful people, He does not supply it with righteous persons by birth to set it right. Every community is free to produce good or bad people as it wills. And if a community wills to follow a wrong way as a community, leaving little room for the production and the development of the righteous people in order to raise up the standard of virtue, God does not will to coerce it to follow the righteous way. He will let it follow the way it chooses for itself with its inevitable consequences. On the contrary, Allah shows His mercy to that community which produces a sufficiently large number of such people as accept the invitation to virtue, and leaves room in its collective system for such people to work for its reform and purification. (For further explanation, See E.N. 24 of VI).

117. At the end of the discourse, Allah has warned the champions of *kufîr*, and comforted the believers, so as to say, "Allah is closely watching the behaviours of both the parties in the conflict between *kufîr* and Islam, and the Sovereign is fully aware of all that is happening in His Kingdom. He is watching and controlling everything with perfect wisdom. He will reward richly the champions of the Truth and will not let go waste their efforts and exertions. And

though He is showing tolerance to the champions of *kufr*, and giving them respite, He will take them to task because they are unjustly persecuting the standard bearers of the Truth and are spreading chaos in the land, and exerting their utmost to put obstacles in the way of the work of reform. All these things are in the knowledge of Allah and the evil-doers shall have to bear the consequences of their misdeeds, and the true believers will ultimately come out successful."