



رَبِّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِكَ أَنْ أَسْأَلَكَ مَا لَيْسَ لِي بِهِ عِلْمٌ



"O my Lord! I do seek refuge with Thee, lest I ask Thee for that of which I have no knowledge.

Quran English Translation & Commentary

By

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Hud

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Introduction and Summary

For the chronological place of this Surah and the general argument of Surahs 10-15 see Introduction to Surah 10.

In subject matter this Surah supplements the preceding one. In the last Surah stress was laid on that side of Allah's dealings with man which leans to Mercy; here stress is laid on the side which deals with justice and the punishment of Sin when all Grace is resisted.

Summary: Allah's revelation of mercy, His dealing with man, and His long-suffering patience are contrasted with man's

ingratitude, his love of falsehood and vanity, and his crookedness (11:1-24, and C. 104).

Noah's unselfishness and humility in teaching his people the Truth of Allah were traduced by the ungodly, and his Message ridiculed and rejected. But he built his Ark under directions from Allah, and was saved, with peace and blessings, while his rejecters perished (11:25-49, and C. 105).

The prophet Hud preached to his people, the 'Ad, against false gods, and the prophet Salih to his people, the Thamud, against dishonouring the symbol of Allah's bounty. In both cases Allah's Signs were rejected, and the rejecters were blotted out (11:50-68, and C. 106).

Lut's people were given to abomination; Abraham pleaded for them, and Lut was sent out to them, but they went deeper and deeper into sin and suffered the Penalty. Shu'ayb's people the Midianites, were warned against fraud and mischief, but they reproached him with helplessness and were themselves destroyed (11:69-95, and C. 107).

It is arrogant leaders like Pharaoh who mislead men, and men bring ruin on themselves. But Allah is Just. The penalty for sin is real and abiding; therefore shun all wrongdoing, and serve Allah wholeheartedly (11:96-123, and C. 108).

C.104 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(11:1-24)

*Allah's Revelation teaches the Truth; it warns
Against wrong and gives glad tidings to the righteous;
Ungrateful man folds up his heart
And fails to see how all Nature points
To Allah and to the Hereafter: he but seeks
Petty issues, forgetting the Cause of Causes.
Not all the wisdom of man can produce
Aught like the Message which comes from Allah,*

*As the Light that leads and the Mercy
That forgives. Who then but will humble
Himself before Allah, seeking His light and His voice?*

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

الر...

1. Alif Lam Ra.

C1492. For these mystic letters, see Introduction to Surah 10.

...كِتَابٌ أَحْكَمَتْ آيَاتُهُ...

(This is) a Book, with verses basic or fundamental (of established meaning) --

C1493. See n. 347 to 3:7.

Every basic principle is included in Allah's Revelation, and it is further illustrated and explained in detail.

...ثُمَّ فَصَّلْتُ مِنْ لَدُنِّ حَكِيمٍ خَبِيرٍ (١)

further explained in detail -- from One Who is Wise and Well-Acquainted (with all things):

أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا اللَّهَ...

2. (It teacheth) that ye should worship none but Allah.

...إِنِّي لَكُمْ مِنْهُ نَذِيرٌ وَبَشِيرٌ (٢)

(Say:) "Verily I am (sent) unto you from Him to warn and to bring glad tidings:

C1494. Al-Mustafa's Message-as was the Message of all apostles-was to warn against evil, and to bring the glad tidings of Allah's Mercy and Grace to all who would receive it in Faith and trust in Allah.

This double Message is preached illustratively in this Surah.

وَأَنْ اسْتَغْفِرُوا رَبَّكُمْ ثُمَّ تُوبُوا إِلَيْهِ...

3. ("And to preach thus), 'Seek ye the forgiveness of your Lord, and turn to Him in repentance;

...يُمَتِّعُكُمْ مَتَاعًا حَسَنًا إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى...

that He may grant you enjoyment, good (and true), for a term appointed,

...وَيُؤْتِ كُلَّ ذِي فَضْلٍ فَضْلَهُ...

and bestow His abounding grace on all who abound in merit!

C1495. The enjoyment of all good and true things in life refers,

I think, to the present life with its limited term, and the abounding Grace refers to the higher reward, which begins here but is completed in the life to come.

...وَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَإِنِّي أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ كَبِيرٍ (٣)

But if ye turn away, then I fear for you the Penalty of a Great Day:

إِلَى اللَّهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ وَهُوَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ (٤)

4. "To Allah is your return, and He hath power over all things."

أَلَا إِنَّهُمْ يَنْتُونَ صُدُورَهُمْ لِيَسْتَخْفُوا مِنْهُ...

5. Behold! they fold up their hearts, that they may lie hid from Him!

C1496. The heart (literally breast in Arabic) is already well guarded in the body; and secrets are supposed to be hidden in the heart or breast.

Foolish persons might further cover up their hearts with cloaks, but even so, nothing can be hidden from Allah.

...أَلَا حِينَ يَسْتَغْشُونَ ثِيَابَهُمْ يَعْلَمُ مَا يُسِرُّونَ وَمَا يُعْلِنُونَ...

Ah! even when they cover themselves with their garments, He knoweth what they conceal, and what they reveal:

...إِنَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ (٥)

for He knoweth well the (inmost secrets) of the hearts.

C1497. Cf. 3:119.

وَمَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا عَلَى اللَّهِ رِزْقُهَا...

6. There is no moving creature on earth but its sustenance dependeth on Allah:

C1498. Cf. 6:59.

Nothing happens in Creation except by the Word of Allah and with the knowledge of Allah. Not a leaf stirs but by His Will, Its maintenance in every sense is dependent on His Will.

...وَيَعْلَمُ مُسْتَقَرَّهَا وَمُسْتَوْدَعَهَا...

He knoweth the time and place of its temporary deposit:

C1499. Mustaqarr: definite abode; where a thing stops or stays for some time, where it is established.

Mustauda: where a thing is laid up or deposited for a little while. Referring to animals,

- the former denotes its life on this earth;
- the latter its temporary pre-natal existence in the egg or the womb and its after-death existence in the tomb or whatever state it is in until its resurrection.

... كُلُّ فِي كِتَابٍ مُبِينٍ (٦)

all is in a clear Record.

C1500. Cf. 6:59 and n. 880, and 10:61 and n. 1450.

وَهُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ...

7. He it is Who created the heavens and the earth in six Days --

C1501. See n. 1031 to 7:54.

...وَكَانَ عَرْشُهُ عَلَى الْمَاءِ...

and His Throne was over the Waters --

C1502. It is scientifically correct to say that all life was evolved out of the waters, and this statement also occurs in the Quran, 21:30.

Some such meaning, I think, also attaches to the Gen. 1:2.

The past tense "was" refers to the time before life developed in solid forms, on land and in air. (R).

... لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا...

that He might try you, which of you is best in conduct.

C1503. The Creation we see around us is not idle sport or play (in Hindi, Lila) or whim on the part of Allah. It is the medium through which our spiritual life is to develop, with such free-will as we have.

This life is our testing time.

... وَلَئِن قُلْتَ إِنَّكُمْ مَبْعُوثُونَ مِّنْ بَعْدِ الْمَوْتِ...

But if thou wert to say to them, "Ye shall indeed be raised up after death,"

... لَيَقُولَنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِنْ هَذَا إِلَّا سِحْرٌ مُّبِينٌ (٧)

the Unbelievers would be sure to say, "This is nothing but obvious sorcery!"

C1504. The Unbelievers, who do not believe in a Future life, think all talk of it is like a sorcerer's talk, empty of reality. But in this they show their ignorance, and they are begging the question.

وَلَئِن أَخَّرْنَا عَنْهُمْ الْعَذَابَ إِلَىٰ أُمَّةٍ مَّعْدُودَةٍ لَّيَقُولَنَّ مَا يَحْبِسُهُ...

8. If We delay the Penalty for them for a definite term, they are sure to say, "What keeps it back?"

C1505. As much as to say: "Oh! all this talk of punishment is nonsense. There is no such thing!"

... أَلَا يَوْمَ يَأْتِيهِمْ لَيْسَ مَصْرُوقًا عَنْهُمْ وَحَاقَ بِهِمْ مَا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِئُونَ (٨)

Ah! on the day it (actually) reaches them, nothing will turn it away from them, and they will be completely encircled by that which they used to mock at!

Section 2

وَلَئِنْ أَدَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ مِنَّا رَحْمَةً ثُمَّ نَزَعْنَا مِنْهُ إِنَّهُ لَيَبُوسُ كُفُورًا (٩)

9. if We give man a taste of mercy from Ourselves, and then withdraw it from him, behold! he is in despair and (falls into) blasphemy.

C1506. He does not realise that some kinds of chastening are good for discipline and the training of our spiritual faculties.

وَلَئِنْ أَدَقْنَا نِعْمَاءَ بَعْدَ ضَرَاءٍ مَسَّهُ لَيَقُولُنَّ دَهَبَ السَّيِّئَاتُ عَنِّي...

10. But if We give him a taste of (Our) favors after adversity hath touched him, He is sure to say,
"All evil has departed from me;"

C1507. He takes it as a matter of course, or as due to his own merit or cleverness!

He does not realise that both in good and ill fortune there is a beneficent purpose in the Plan of Allah.

إِنَّهُ لَفَرِحَ فَخُورًا (١٠)

Behold! he falls into exultation and pride.

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ صَبَرُوا وَعَمَلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ ...

11. Not so do those who show patience and constancy, and work righteousness;

C1508. Their attitude is the right one: to take ill-fortune with fortitude and good fortune with humility, and in either case go on persevering in good deeds to their fellow-creatures.

... أُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةٌ وَأَجْرٌ كَبِيرٌ (١١)

for them is forgiveness (of sins) and a great reward.

فَلَعَلَّكَ تَارِكٌ بَعْضَ مَا يُوحَىٰ إِلَيْكَ...

12. Perchance thou mayest (feel the inclination) to give up a part of what is revealed unto thee,

C1509. Every Prophet of Allah, when he not only encounters opposition, but is actually accused of falsehood and those very evils which he is protesting against, may feel inclined, in his human weakness, to ask himself the question.

"Supposing I omit this little point, will Allah's Truth then be accepted more readily?

Or he may think to himself,

"If I had only more money to organize my campaign, or something which will draw people's attention, like the company of an angel, how much better can I push my Message?"

He is told that truth must be delivered as it is revealed, even though portions of it may be unpalatable, and that resources and other means to draw people to him are beside the point. He must use just such resources and opportunities as he has, and leave the rest to Allah.

...وَضَائِقٌ بِهِ صَدْرُكَ أَنْ يَقُولُوا لَوْلَا أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْهِ كَنْزٌ أَوْ جَاءَ مَعَهُ

مَلَكٌ...

and thy heart feeleth straitened lest they say,

"Why is not a treasure sent down unto him, or why does not an angel come down with him?"

...إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ نَذِيرٌ...

But thou art there only to warn!

...وَاللَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَكِيلٌ (١٢)

It is Allah that arrangeth all affairs!

أَمْ يَقُولُونَ افْتَرَاهُ...

13. Or they may say, "He forged it."

...قُلْ فَأَنزِلُوا عَشْرَ سُورٍ مِّثْلِهِ مُفْتَرِيَاتٍ...

Say, "Bring ye then ten Surahs forged, like unto it,

...وَادْعُوا مَنْ اسْتَطَعْتُمْ مِّنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ (١٣)

and call (to your aid) whomsoever ye can, other than Allah! -- if ye speak the truth!

C1510. Cf. 2:23 and 10:38.

فَالَّذِينَ يَسْتَجِيبُونَ لَكُمْ فَأَعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا أَنْزَلَ بِعِلْمِ اللَّهِ...

14. "If then they (your false gods) answer not your (call),
know ye that this Revelation is sent down (replete) with the
knowledge of Allah,

...وَأَنَّ لَّا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ فَهَلْ أَنْتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ (١٤)

and that there is no god but He!
Will ye even then submit (to Islam)?"

مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا وَزِينَتَهَا نُوفِّ إِلَيْهِمْ أَعْمَالَهُمْ فِيهَا...

15. Those who desire the life of the Present and its glitter -- to them
We shall pay (the price of) their deeds therein --

...وَهُمْ فِيهَا لَا يُبْخَسُونَ (١٥)

without diminution.

C1511. If worldly men desire the glitter of this world,
they shall have it in full measure, but it is false glitter,
and it involves the negation of that spiritual life which
comes from the guidance of the inner light and from the
revelation of Allah, as described in [verse 17 below](#).

أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ لَيْسَ لَهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ إِلَّا النَّارُ...

16. They are those for whom there is nothing in the Hereafter but the
Fire:

...وَحَبِطَ مَا صَنَعُوا فِيهَا وَبَاطِلٌ مَّا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ (١٦)

vain are the designs they frame therein,
and of no effect are the deeds that they do!

أَفَمَنْ كَانَ عَلَىٰ بَيِّنَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّهِ وَيَتْلُوهُ شَاهِدٌ مِّنْهُ...

17. Can they be (like) those who accept a Clear (Sign) from their
Lord, and whom a witness from Himself doth teach,

C1512. "A witness from Himself": i.e., the Book which was given to Al-Mustafa, the Holy Quran, which is compared to the original Revelation given to Moses. We make no difference between one true and genuine Message and another, nor between one apostle and another, for they all come from the One True God.

...وَمِن قَبْلِهِ كِتَابُ مُوسَى إِمَامًا وَرَحْمَةً...

as did the Book of Moses before it -- a guide and a mercy?

C1513. "Guide": the Arabic word here is **Imam**, a leader, a guide, one that directs to the true Path. Such a direction is an instance of the Mercy and Goodness of Allah to man.

The Quran and the Prophet Muhammad are also called, each, a Guide and a Mercy, and so are these epithets applicable to previous Books and Prophets.

...أُولَئِكَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ...

They believe therein;

...وَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِهِ مِنَ الْأَحْزَابِ قَالَ نَارُ مَوْعِدُهُ...

but those of the Sects that reject it -- the Fire will be their promised meeting place.

...فَلَا تَكُ فِي مِرْيَةٍ مِّنْهُ...

Be not then in doubt thereon:

...إِنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكَ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ (١٧)

for it is the Truth from thy Lord: yet many among men do not believe!

وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرَى عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا...

18. Who doth more wrong than those who invent a lie against Allah?

...أُولَئِكَ يُعْرَضُونَ عَلَى رَبِّهِمْ وَيَقُولُ الْأَشْهَادُ هَؤُلَاءِ الَّذِينَ كَذَبُوا عَلَى رَبِّهِمْ...

They will be turned back to the presence of their Lord, and the witnesses will say,

"These are the ones who lied against their Lord!

...أَلَا لَعْنَةُ اللَّهِ عَلَى الظَّالِمِينَ (١٨)

Behold! the Curse of Allah is on those who do wrong! --

الَّذِينَ يَصُدُّونَ عَنِ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَيَبْغُونَهَا عِوَجًا...

19. "Those who would hinder (men) from the path of Allah and would seek in it something crooked:

...وَهُمْ بِالْآخِرَةِ هُمْ كَافِرُونَ (١٩)

these were they who denied the Hereafter!

C1514. Cf. 7:45.

...أُولَئِكَ لَمْ يَكُونُوا مُعْجِزِينَ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا كَانَ لَهُمْ مِّنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مِنْ أَوْلِيَاءٍ...

20. They will in nowise frustrate (His design) on earth,
nor have they protectors besides Allah!

...يُضَاعَفُ لَهُمُ الْعَذَابُ...

Their Penalty will be doubled!

C1515. Cf. 7:38.

In this context, it is implied that they committed a two-fold wrong:

1. in inventing falsehoods against Allah, which deadened their own soul, and
2. in leading others astray or hindering them from Allah's path.

Thus they lost the faculty of hearing, which they might have used to hear the Word of Allah, and they blinded the faculty of sight by shutting out Allah's light.

...مَا كَانُوا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ السَّمْعَ وَمَا كَانُوا يُبْصِرُونَ (٢٠)

They lost the power to hear, and they did not see!

أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ خَسِرُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ وَضَلَّ عَنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يَفْتَرُونَ (٢١)

21. They are the ones who have lost their own souls:
and the (fancies) they invented have left them in the lurch!

لَا جَرَمَ أَنَّهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ هُمُ الْأَخْسَرُونَ (٢٢)

22. Without a doubt, these are the very ones who will lose most in the Hereafter!

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَأَخْبَتُوا إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ...

23. But those who believe and work righteousness, and humble themselves before their Lord --

C1516. Note that the humility is to be "before their Lord," i.e., in Allah's sight.

There is no virtue, quite the contrary, in rubbing our noses to the ground before men. We are not to be arrogant even before men because we are humble as in Allah's sight. Nor does true humility lose self-confidence; for that self-confidence arises from confidence in the support and help of Allah.

...أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ (٢٣)

they will be Companions of the Garden,
to dwell therein for aye!

مَثَلُ الْفَرِيقَيْنِ كَالْأَعْمَىٰ وَالْأَصْمَىٰ وَالْبَصِيرِ وَالسَّمِيعِ...

24. These two kinds (of men) may be compared to the blind and deaf, and those who can see and hear well.

...هَلْ يَسْتَوِيَانِ مَثَلًا...

Are they equal when compared?

...أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ (٢٤)

Will ye not then take heed?

C.105 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(11:25-49)

*Noah walked righteously and humbly
As in the sight of Allah. With unselfish
Love for his people he warned them*

*And taught them. But they did flout
 And reject his Message with scorn
 And insults. Allah gave him directions
 To built an ark against the impending
 Flood which was to purify the world
 From Sin and Unrighteousness. In it
 Were saved Noah and those who believed.
 So were promised salvation and Allah's Peace,
 And Blessings to the Righteous evermore.*

Section 3

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا نُوحًا إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِ إِنِّي لَكُمْ نَذِيرٌ مُّبِينٌ (٢٥)

25. We sent Noah to his people (with a mission):

"I have come to you with a Clear Warning:

أَنْ لَا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا اللَّهَ...

26. "That ye serve none but Allah:

...إِنِّي أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ أَلِيمٍ (٢٦)

verily I do fear for you the Penalty of a Grievous Day."

C1517. Noah's mission was to a wicked world, plunged in sin. The mission had a double character, as in the mission of all Prophets of Allah: it had to warn men against evil and call them to repentance, and it had to give them the glad tidings of Allah's Grace in case they turned back to Allah: it was a Guidance and Mercy.

فَقَالَ الْمَلَأُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ قَوْمِهِ...

27. But the Chiefs of the Unbelievers among his people said:

...مَا نَرَاكَ إِلَّا بَشَرًا مِثْلَنَا...

"We see (in) thee nothing but a man like ourselves:

...وَمَا نَرَاكَ اتَّبَعَكَ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ هُمْ أَرَادْنَا بِأَدْيِ الرَّأْيِ...

nor do we see that any follow thee but the meanest among us, in judgment immature:

...وَمَا نَرَى لَكُمْ عَلَيْنَا مِنْ فَضْلٍ بَلْ نَظُنُّكُمْ كَاذِبِينَ (٢٧)

nor do we see in you (all) any merit above us:

in fact we think ye are liars!

C1518. The Unbelievers were impelled by three powerful human motives of evil to resist Grace:

1. jealousy of other men; they said, "Why, you are no better than ourselves," half perceiving the Prophet's superiority, and half ignoring it;
2. contempt of the weak and lowly, who are often better intellectually, morally, and spiritually; they said, "We cannot believe or do what these fellows, our inferiors in social rank, believe or do!";
3. arrogance and self-sufficiency, which is a vice cognate to 2, looked at from a different angle; they said, "We are really better than the lot of you!"

Now the claim made on behalf of Allah's Message attacked all these three attitudes. And all they could say against it was to abuse it impatiently, and call it a lie.

قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُ عَلَىٰ بَيِّنَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّي...

28. He said: "O my people!

see ye if (it be that) I have a Clear Sign from my Lord,

...وَأَنَاي رَحْمَةً مِّنْ عِنْدِهِ فَعُمِّيَتْ عَلَيْكُمْ...

and that He hath sent Mercy unto me from His own Presence, but that the Mercy hath been obscured from your sight?

C1519. Noah's answer (like that of the Prophet of Allah who spoke in later ages in Makkah and Madinah is a pattern of humility, gentleness, firmness, persuasiveness, truth, and love for his own people.

- First, he meekly (not exultingly) informs them that he has got a Message from Allah.
- Secondly, he tells them that it is a Message of Mercy even in its warning, though in their arrogance the Mercy may be hidden from them.

- Thirdly, he tells them plainly that there can be no compulsion in Religion: but will they not accept with goodwill what is for their own benefit?

He pleads with them as one of their own.

...أُنزِلْكُمْ مَعَهَا وَأَنْتُمْ لَهَا كَارِهُونَ (٢٨)

Shall we compel you to accept it when ye are averse to it?

وَيَا قَوْمِ لَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مَالًا إِنْ أَجْرِيَ إِلَّا عَلَى اللَّهِ...

29. "And O my People! I ask you for no wealth in return: my reward is from none but Allah:

C1520. The fourth point in Noah's address meets their accusation that he was a liar, implying that he was serving some selfish end of his own: on the contrary, he says, he seeks no reward from them but will bear any insults they heap on him, for he looks to Allah rather men.

But, fifthly if they insult the poor and needy who come to him in Faith, and think that he would send them away in order to attract the great ones of the land, he tells them plainly that they are mistaken.

In fact, (sixthly), he has no hesitation in telling the blunt truth that they are the ignorant ones, and not the poor who came to seek Allah's Truth!

...وَمَا أَنَا بِطَارِدِ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا...

but I will not drive away (in contempt) those who believe:

...إِنَّهُمْ مُلَاؤُوا رَبِّهِمْ وَلَكِنِّي أَرَأَيْتُمْ قَوْمًا تَجْهَلُونَ (٢٩)

for verily they are to meet their Lord, and ye I see are the ignorant ones!

وَيَا قَوْمِ مَنْ يَنْصُرُنِي مِنَ اللَّهِ إِنْ طَرَدْتُهُمْ...

30. "And O my People! who would help me against Allah if I drove them away?

...أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ (٣٠)

Will ye not then take heed?

C1521. But (seventhly) again he pleads, with as much earnestness as ever, that he is one of themselves, and just doing his truest duty.

Would they have him do less?

Indeed, would they not themselves see the Truth and come into the goodly company of Believers?

وَلَا أَقُولُ لَكُمْ ...

31. "I tell you not that

C1522. The eighth point that Noah urges is that he is not a mere vulgar soothsayer pretending to reveal secrets not worth knowing, nor an angel living in another world, with no ties to them. He is their real well-wisher, delivering a true Message from Allah.

... عِنْدِي خَزَائِنُ اللَّهِ ...

with me are the Treasures of Allah,

... وَلَا أَعْلَمُ الْغَيْبَ ...

nor do I know what is hidden,

C1523. Cf. 6:50 and n. 867.

... وَلَا أَقُولُ إِنِّي مَلَكٌ ...

nor claim I to be an angel.

... وَلَا أَقُولُ لِلَّذِينَ تَزْدَرِي أَعْيُنُكُمْ لَنْ يُؤْتِيَهُمُ اللَّهُ خَيْرًا ...

Nor yet do I say, of those whom your eyes do despise that Allah will not grant them (all) that is good:

C1524. But Noah will not close his argument without defending the men of Faith, whom the Chiefs despise because they are lacking in worldly goods.

He tells them plainly that Allah perhaps sees in them something in which they, the arrogant Chiefs, are lacking. Their spiritual faculties can only be appreciated truly by Him to Whom all the secrets of the spirit are open. But he, Noah, must declare boldly his own Faith, and this is the ninth point in his argument.

...اللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا فِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ...

Allah knoweth best what is in their souls:

...إِنِّي إِذَا لَمِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ (٣١)

I should, if I did, indeed be a wrongdoer."

قَالُوا يَا نُوحُ قَدْ جَادَلْتَنَا فَأَكْثَرْتَ جِدَالَنَا...

32. They said:

"O Noah! thou hast disputed with us, and (much) hast thou prolonged the dispute with us:

...فَأْتِنَا بِمَا تَعِدُنَا إِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ (٣٢)

now bring upon us what thou threatenest us with, if thou speakest the truth!"

C1525. To Noah's address the worldly Chiefs give a characteristic reply.

In its aggressive spirit it is the very antithesis of the gentle remonstrance of Noah. Because he had gently and patiently argued with them, they impatiently accuse him of "disputing with them" and "prolonging the dispute".

They are unable to deal with his points. So they arrogantly throw out their challenge, which is a compound of hectoring insolence, unreasoning skepticism, and biting irony.

"You foretell disaster to us if we don't mend our ways! Let us see you bring it on! Now, if you please! Or shall we have to call you a liar?"

قَالَ إِنَّمَا يَأْتِيكُمْ بِهِ اللَّهُ إِنْ شَاءَ وَمَا أَنْتُمْ بِمُعْجِزِينَ (٣٣)

33. He said:

"Truly, Allah will bring it on you if He wills -- and then, ye will not be able to frustrate it!

C1526. To the blasphemous challenge addressed to Noah his only answer could be:

"I never claimed that I could punish you. All punishment is in the hands of Allah, and He knows best when His punishment will descend.

But this I can tell you! His punishment is sure if you do not repent, and when it comes, you will not be able to ward it off!"

وَلَا يَنْفَعُكُمْ نُصْحِي إِنْ أَرَدْتُ أَنْ أَنْصَحَ لَكُمْ إِنْ كَانَ اللَّهُ يُرِيدُ أَنْ يُغْوِيَكُمْ...

34. "Of no profit will be my counsel to you, much as I desire to give you (good) counsel, if it be that Allah willeth to leave you astray:

C1527. But Noah's heart bleeds for his people. They are preparing their own undoing! All his efforts are to be vain! Obstinate as they are, Allah's grace must be withdrawn, and then who can help them, and what use is any counsel?

But again he will try to remind them of their Lord, and turn their face to Him. For their ultimate return to His judgment-seat is certain, to answer for their conduct.

...هُوَ رَبُّكُمْ وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ (٣٤)

He is your Lord! and to Him will ye return!"

أَمْ يَقُولُونَ افْتَرَاهُ...

35. Or do they say, "He has forged it?"

...قُلْ إِنْ افْتَرَيْتُهُ فَعَلَيَّ إِجْرَامِي وَأَنَا بَرِيءٌ مِمَّا تُجْرَمُونَ (٣٥)

Say: "If I had forged it, on me were my sin!

And I am free of the sins of which ye are guilty!

C1528. The fine narrative of dramatic power is here interrupted by a verse which shows that the story of Noah is also a Parable for the time and the ministry of Muhammad the Prophet.

The wonderful force and aptness of the story cannot be denied. The enemy therefore turns and says, "Oh! but you invented it!"

The answer is, "No! but it is Allah's own truth! You may be accustomed to dealing in falsehoods, but I protest that I am free from such sins."

The place of this verse here corresponds to the place of verse 49 at the end of the next Section.

While understanding this verse to refer to Al-Mustafa, as most of the accepted Commentators understand it, it is possible also, I think, to read it into the story of Noah, for all Prophets have similar spiritual experiences.

Section 4

وَأَوْحِيَ إِلَى نُوحٍ أَنَّهُ لَنْ يُؤْمِنَ مِنْ قَوْمِكَ إِلَّا مَنْ قَدْ آمَنَ...

36. It was revealed to Noah:

"None of thy people will believe except those who have believed already!

C1529. The story of Noah is resumed.

A point was reached, when it was clear that there was no hope of saving the sinners, who were courting their own destruction. It was to be a great Flood. So Noah was ordered to construct a great Ark or Ship, a heavy vessel to remain afloat in the Flood, so that the righteous could be saved in it.

...فَلَا تَبْتَئِسْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَفْعَلُونَ (٣٦)

So grieve no longer over their (evil) deeds.

وَأَصْنَعُ الْفُلَکَ بِأَعْيُنِنَا وَوَحَيْنَا وَلَا تُخَاطِبُنِي فِي الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا...

37. "But construct an Ark under Our eyes and Our inspiration, and address Me no (further) on behalf of those who are in sin:

C1530. It was to be built under the special instructions of Allah, to serve the special purpose it was intended to serve.

...إِنَّهُمْ مُعْرِضُونَ (٣٧)

for they are about to be overwhelmed (in the Flood)."

وَيَصْنَعُ الْفُلَکَ وَكَلَّمَ مَرَّ عَلَيْهِ مَلَأَ مِنْ قَوْمِهِ سَخِرُوا مِنْهُ...

38. Forthwith he starts constructing the Ark:

every time that the Chiefs of his People passed by him they threw ridicule on him.

C1531. The ridicule of the sinners, from their own point of view, was natural. Here was a Prophet turned carpenter! Here was a plain in the higher reaches of the Mesopotamian basin, drained by the majestic Tigris, over 800 to 900 miles from the sea Arabian Gulf in a straight line! Yet he talks of a flood like the Sea!

All material civilisations pride themselves on their Public Works and their drainage schemes. And here was a fellow relying on Allah! But did not their narrow pride seem ridiculous also to the Prophet of Allah!

Here were men steeped in sin and insolence! And they pit themselves against the power and the promise of Allah! Truly a contemptible race is man!

...قَالَ إِن تَسْخَرُوا مِنَّا فَإِنَّا نَسْخَرُ مِنْكُمْ كَمَا تَسْخَرُونَ (٣٨)

He said: "If ye ridicule us now, we (in our turn) can look down on you with ridicule likewise!

C1532. The Arabic Aorist may be construed either by the present tense or the future tense, and both make good sense here.

Following Zamakhshari, I construe in the present tense, because the future is so tragic for the sinners.

For the time being the worldly ones looked down on the Believers as they always do: but the Believers relied on Allah, and pitied their critics for knowing no better!- for their arrogance was really ridiculous.

فَسَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ مَنْ يَأْتِيهِ عَذَابٌ يُخْزِيهِ وَيَحِلُّ عَلَيْهِ عَذَابٌ مُّهِمٌّ (٣٩)

39. "But soon will ye know who it is on whom will descend a Penalty that will cover them with shame -- will be unloosed a Penalty lasting."

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءَ أَمْرُنَا وَفَارَ التَّنُّورُ...

40. At length, behold! there came Our Command, and the fountains of the earth gushed forth!

C1533. Far at tannuru. Two interpretations have been given:

- the fountains or the springs on the surface of the earth bubbled over or gushed forth; or
- the oven boiled over.

The former has the weight of the best authority behind it and I prefer it.

Moreover, the same phrase occurs in [23:27](#), where it is a clause coordinated (as here) with the coming of Allah's Command.

These two passages may be compared with [54:11-12](#), where it is said that water poured forth from the skies and gushed forth from the springs.

This double action is familiar to any one who has seen floods on a large scale. The rain from above would saturate the great Ararat Plateau, and give great force to the springs and fountains in the valley of the Tigris below.

...فُلْنَا أَحْمِلُ فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ زَوْجَيْنِ اثْنَيْنِ...

We said:

"Embark therein, of each kind two, male and female,

C1534. Zaujaini: the dual number refers to the two individuals in each pair of opposite sexes.

Some of the most authoritative Commentators (e.g., Imam Razi) construe in this sense, though others construe it to mean two pairs of each species.

...وَأَهْلَكَ إِلَّا مَنْ سَبَقَ عَلَيْهِ الْقَوْلُ وَمَنْ آمَنَ...

and your family -- except those against whom the Word has already gone forth -- and the Believers."

C1535. A disobedient and recalcitrant son (or step-son or grandson) of Noah is mentioned below ([11:42-43](#), [45-56](#)).

A member of the family, who breaks away from the traditions of the family in things that matter, ceases to share in the privileges of the family.

...وَمَا آمَنَ مَعَهُ إِلَّا قَلِيلٌ (٤٠)

But only a few believed with him.

وَقَالَ ارْكَبُوا فِيهَا بِسْمِ اللَّهِ مَجْرَاهَا وَمُرْسَاهَا...

41. So he said:

"Embark ye on the Ark, in the name of Allah, whether it move or be at rest!

...إِنَّ رَبِّي لَعَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ (٤١)

For my Lord is, be sure, Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful!"

وَهِيَ تَجْرِي بِهِمْ فِي مَوْجٍ كَالْجِبَالِ...

42. So the Ark floated with them on the waves (towering) like mountains,

C1536. The simile of mountains applies to the waves, which were mountain high,- literally, for the peaks were being submerged.

...وَنَادَى نُوحٌ ابْنَهُ وَكَانَ فِي مَعْرَلٍ...

and Noah called out to his son, who had separated himself (from the rest):

...يَا بُنَيَّ ارْكَب مَعَنَا وَلَا تَكُن مَعَ الْكَافِرِينَ (٤٢)

"O my son! embark with us, and be not with the Unbelievers!"

قَالَ سَأُوِي إِلَى جَبَلٍ يَعْصِمُنِي مِنَ الْمَاءِ...

43. The son replied: "I will take myself to some mountain: it will save me from the water."

C1537. The Unbelievers refuse to believe in Allah, but have great faith in material things! This young man was going to save himself on mountain peaks, not knowing that the peaks were themselves being submerged.

...قَالَ لَا عَاصِمَ الْيَوْمَ مِنْ أَمْرِ اللَّهِ إِلَّا مَنْ رَحِمَ...

Noah said: "This day nothing can save, from the Command of Allah, any but those on whom He hath mercy!" --

...وَحَالَ بَيْنَهُمَا الْمَوْجُ فَكَانَ مِنَ الْمُغْرَقِينَ (٤٣)

and the waves came between them, and the son was among those over whelmed in the Flood.

... وَقِيلَ ...

44. When the word went forth:

C1538. A wonderful passage. The whole picture is painted in just a few words. The chain of material facts are linked together, not only in their relations to each other, but also in their relation to the spiritual forces that control them, and the spiritual consequences of Sin and wrong-doing.

The drowning in the material sense was the least part of the Penalty. A whole new world came into existence after the Deluge. (R).

... يَا أَرْضُ ابْلَعِي مَاءَكَ وَيَا سَّمَاءُ أَقْلِعِي وَغِيضَ الْمَاءِ ...

"O earth! swallow up thy water, and O sky! withhold (thy rain)!"
and the water abated,

... وَقُضِيَ الْأَمْرُ وَأَسْتَوَتْ عَلَى الْجُودِيِّ...

and the matter was ended. The Ark rested on Mount Judi

C1539. Let us get a little idea of the geography of the place. The letters J.B. and K are philologically interchangeable, and Judi, Gudi, Kudi are sounds that can pass into each other. There is no doubt that the name is connected with the name "Kurd", in which the letter r is a later interpolation, for the oldest Sumerian records name a people called Kuti or Gutu as holding the middle Tigris region not later than 2000 B.C. (see E.B., Kurdistan).

That region comprises the modern Turkish district of Bohtan, in which Jabal Judi is situated (near the frontiers of modern Turkey, modern Iraq, and modern Syria), and the town of Jazirat ibn 'Umar, (on the present Turco-Syrian frontier), and it extends into 'Iraq and Persia.

The great mountain mass of the Ararat plateau dominates this district. This mountain system "is unique

in the Old World in containing great sheets of water that are bitter lakes without outlets, Lake Van and Lake Urumiya being the chief' (E.B., Asia).

Such would be the very region for a stupendous Deluge if the usual scanty rainfall were to be changed into a very heavy downpour. A glacier damming of Lake Van in the Ice Age would have produced the same result. The region has many local traditions connected with Noah and the Flood.

The Biblical legend of Mount Ararat being the resting place of Noah's Ark is hardly plausible, seeing that the highest peak of Ararat is over 16,000 feet high. If it means one of the lower-peaks of the Ararat system, it agrees with the Muslim tradition about Mount Judi (or Gudi), and this is in accordance with the oldest and best local traditions. These traditions are accepted by Josephus, by the Nestorian Christians, and indeed by all the Eastern Christians and Jews, and they are the best in touch with local traditions. See (Viscount) J. Bryce, "Transcaucasia and Ararat," 4th ed., 1896. p. 216.

...وَقِيلَ بُعْدًا لِلْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ (٤٤)

and the word went forth:

"Away with those who do wrong!"

وَنَادَى نُوحٌ رَبَّهُ فَقَالَ رَبِّ إِنَّ ابْنِي مِنْ أَهْلِي...

45. And Noah called upon his Lord, and said:

"O my Lord! surely my son is of my family!

...وَأِنَّ وَعْدَكَ الْحَقُّ وَأَنْتَ أَحْكَمُ الْحَاكِمِينَ (٤٥)

and Thy promise is true, and Thou art the Justest of Judges!"

قَالَ يَا نُوحُ إِنَّهُ لَيْسَ مِنْ أَهْلِكَ...

46. He said: "O Noah! he is not of thy family:

C1540. See [n. 5135](#) above.

Like all Prophets of Allah, Noah was kind-hearted, but he is told that there can be no compromise with evil. And Noah acknowledges the reproof.

There was a wife of Noah, who was also an unbelieving woman (66:10), and she suffered the fate of Unbelievers.

...إِنَّهُ عَمَلٌ غَيْرُ صَالِحٍ...

for his conduct is unrighteous.

...فَلَا تَسْأَلْنِ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ...

So ask not of Me that of which thou hast no knowledge!

...إِنِّي أُعِطُّكَ أَنْ تَكُونَ مِنَ الْجَاهِلِينَ (٤٦)

I give thee counsel, lest thou act like the ignorant!"

قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِكَ أَنْ أَسْأَلَكَ مَا لَيْسَ لِي بِهِ عِلْمٌ...

47. Noah said:

"O my Lord! I do seek refuge with Thee, lest I ask Thee for that of which I have no knowledge.

...وَالْأَلَّا تَغْفِرَ لِي وَتَرْحَمَنِي أَكُنَ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ (٤٧)

And unless Thou forgive me and have Mercy on me, I should indeed be lost!"

C1541. Noah, in his natural affection and respect for ties of relationship, was overcome with human weakness in wishing to reverse the Decree of Allah.

It was not sin but ignorance. His ignorance was corrected by divine inspiration, and he immediately saw the full Truth, acknowledged his error, and asked for Allah's forgiveness and mercy. This is the standard set for us all.

قِيلَ يَا نُوحُ اهْبِطْ بِسَلَامٍ مِنَّا وَبَرَكَاتٍ عَلَيْكَ وَعَلَىٰ أُمَمٍ مِّمَّنْ مَعَكَ...

48. The word came:

"O Noah! come down (from the Ark) with Peace from Us, and Blessings on thee and on some of the Peoples (who will spring) from those with thee:

...وَأُمَّمٍ سَنُنْتَعِبُهُمْ...

but (there will be other) Peoples to whom We shall grant their pleasures (for a time),

C1542. Cf. 2:126.

... ثُمَّ يَمَسُّهُمْ مِنَّا عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ (٤٨)

but in the end will a grievous Penalty reach them from Us."

C1543. Those who truly seek Allah's light and guidance and sincerely bend their will to His Will are freely admitted to Allah's grace. Notwithstanding any human weaknesses in them, they are advanced higher in the stage on account of their Faith, Trust, and Striving after Right. They are given Allah's Peace, which gives the soul true calmness and strength, and all the blessings that flow from spiritual life.

This was given not only to Noah and his family but to all the righteous people who were saved with him. And their descendants were also promised those blessings on condition of righteousness. But some of them fell from grace, as we know in history. Allah's grace is not a social or family privilege. Each people and each individual must earnestly strive for it and earn it.

تِلْكَ مِنْ أَنْبَاءِ الْعَالَمِ الْغَيْبِ نُوحِيهَا إِلَيْكَ...

49. Such are some of the stories of the Unseen, which We have revealed unto thee:

... مَا كُنْتَ تَعْلَمُهَا أَنْتَ وَلَا قَوْمُكَ مِنْ قَبْلِ هَذَا...

before this, neither thou nor thy People knew them.

... فَاصْبِرْ إِنَّ الْعَاقِبَةَ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ (٤٩)

So persevere patiently:

for the End is for those who are righteous.

C1544. Cf. n. 1528 to 11:35.

The sum of the whole matter is that the righteous, who work for Allah and their fellow-men, may be traduced, insulted, and persecuted. But they will be sustained by Allah's Mercy. They must go on working patiently, for the End will all be for them and their Cause.

C.106 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(11:50-68)

*Awful were the fates of the 'Ad
And the Thamud, two mighty peoples
Of ancient Arabia. They rejected
Allah and His Message and went on
In their evil ways-the 'Ad
In their superstitions and arrogance,
And the Thamud in their entrenched
Selfishness, denying to others the gifts
Of Allah's spacious earth! How swiftly
Were they wiped out, as if they
Had never been? But wrong can never stand!*

Section 5

وَالِى عَادٍ أَخَاهُمْ هُودًا...

50. To the 'Ad People (We sent) Hud, one of their own brethren.

.. قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِنْ إِلَهٍ غَيْرُهُ...

He said:

"O my people! worship Allah! ye have no other god but Him.

C1545. Cf. the story of Hud the Messenger of the 'Ad People, in 7:65-72. There the argument was how other Peoples treated their prophets as the Makkans were treating Al-Mustafa.

Here we see another point emphasized: the insolence of the 'Ad in obstinately adhering to false gods after the true God had been preached to them, Allah's grace to them, and finally Allah's justice in bringing them to book while the righteous were saved.

The locality in which the 'Ad flourished is indicated in n. 1040 to 7:65.

...إِنَّ أَنْتُمْ إِلَّا مُفْتَرُونَ (٥٠)

(Your other gods) ye do nothing but invent!

يَا قَوْمِ لَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ أَجْرًا...

51. "O my people! I ask of you no reward for this (Message).

...إِنَّ أَجْرِيَ إِلَّا عَلَى الَّذِي فَطَرَنِي...

My reward is from none but Him Who created me:

...أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ (٥١)

will ye not then understand?

وَيَا قَوْمِ اسْتَغْفِرُوا رَبَّكُمْ ثُمَّ تُوبُوا إِلَيْهِ...

52. "And O my people!

ask forgiveness of your Lord, and turn to Him (in repentance):

...يُرْسِلُ السَّمَاءَ عَلَيْكُمْ مَدْرَارًا...

He will send you the skies pouring abundant rain,

C1546. The beautiful metaphor about the skies coming down with rain has been obscured unnecessarily in most translations.

The country of the 'Ad was an arid country, and rain was the greatest blessing they could receive. We can imagine this being said in a time of famine, when the people performed all sorts of superstitious rites and invocations instead of turning to the true God in faith and repentance.

Further, when we remember that there were, in this tract in ancient times, dams like that at Ma'arib, for the storage of rain water, the effect is still further heightened in pointing to Allah's care and mercy in His dealing with men.

... وَيَزِدُّكُمْ قُوَّةً...

and add strength to your strength:

C1547. Adding strength to strength may refer to increase of population, as some Commentators think.

While other parts of Arabia were sparsely populated, the irrigated lands of the 'Ad supported a comparatively dense population and added to their natural strength in the arts of peace and war.

But the term used is perfectly general. They were a powerful people in their time. If they obeyed Allah and followed the law of righteousness, they would be still more powerful, for "righteousness exalteth a nation."

...إِلَىٰ فُوتَيْكُمْ وَلَا تَتَوَلَّوْا مُجْرِمِينَ (٥٢)

so turn ye not back in sin!"

قَالُوا يَا هُوْدُ مَا جِئْتَنَا بِبَيِّنَةٍ...

53. They said:

"O Hud! no Clear (Sign) hast thou brought us,

...وَمَا نَحْنُ بِتَارِكِي آلِهَتِنَا عَنْ قَوْلِكَ وَمَا نَحْنُ لَكَ بِمُؤْمِنِينَ (٥٣)

and we are not the ones to desert our gods on thy word!

Nor do we believe in thee!

C1548. The argument of the Unbelievers is practically this:

"We are not convinced by you: we don't want to be convinced: we think you are a liar,-or perhaps a fool!"

(See next verse).

إِن نَّقُولُ إِلَّا اعْتَرَاكَ بَعْضُ آلِهَتِنَا بِسُوءٍ...

54. "We say nothing but that (perhaps) some of our gods may have seized thee with imbecility."

C1549. See [n. 1548](#) above.

Continuing their argument, the Unbelievers make a show of making all charitable allowances for Hud, but in reality cut him to the quick by bringing in their false gods.

"To be quite polite," said they, "we will not say that you are exactly a liar! Perhaps you have been touched with imbecility! Ah yes! You rail against what you call our false gods! Some of them have paid you out, and made you a fool! Ha! ha!"

This mockery is even worse than their other false accusations. For it sets up false gods against the One True God, even in dealing with Hud.

So Hud replies, with spirit and indignation:

"At least keep Allah's name out of your futile talk!
You know as well as I do, that I worship the One True God!

You pretend that your false gods can smite a true Prophet of Allah!

I accept the challenge. Scheme and plot against me as you may, all of you-you and your gods! See if you have any power! I ask for no quarter from you!

My trust is in Allah!"

...قَالَ إِنِّي أَشْهَدُ اللَّهَ وَأَشْهَدُوا أَنِّي بَرِيءٌ مِّمَّا تُشْرِكُونَ (٥٤)

He said: "I call Allah to witness, and do ye bear witness that I am free from the sin of ascribing, to Him,

مِنْ دُونِهِ...

55. "Other gods as partners!

...فَكِيدُونِي جَمِيعًا ثُمَّ لَا تُنظِرُون (٥٥)

So scheme (your worst) against me, all of you, and give me no respite.

C1550. Cf. 7:195 and n. 1168.

إِنِّي تَوَكَّلْتُ عَلَى اللَّهِ رَبِّي وَرَبِّكُمْ...

56. "I put my trust in Allah, my Lord and your Lord!

...مَّا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ إِلَّا هُوَ آخِذٌ بِنَاصِيَّتِهَا...

There is not a moving creature, but He hath grasp of its forelock.

C1551. Grasp of the fore-lock; an Arabic idiom, referring to a horse's fore-lock.

The man who grasps it has complete power over the horse, and for the horse the fore-lock is as it were the crown of his beauty, the sum of his power of self-

assertion. So Allah's power over all creatures is unlimited and no one can withstand His decree. Cf. 96:15-16.

...إِنَّ رَبِّي عَلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ (٥٦)

Verily, it is my Lord that is on a Straight Path.

C1552. That is, the standard of all virtue and righteousness is in the Will of Allah, the Universal Will that controls all things in goodness and justice.

You are on a crooked Path. Allah's Path is a straight Path.

فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَقَدْ أَبْلَغْتُكُمْ مَا أُرْسِلْتُ بِهِ إِلَيْكُمْ...

57. "If ye turn away -- I (at least) have conveyed the Message with which I was sent to you.

...وَيَسْتَخْلِفُ رَبِّي قَوْمًا غَيْرَكُمْ وَلَا تَضُرُّوهُ شَيْئًا...

My Lord will make another People to succeed you, and you will not harm Him in the least.

C1553. Hud was dealing with a people of pride and obstinate rebellion. He tells them that their conduct will only recoil on themselves. It can do no harm to Allah or in any way frustrate the beneficent Plan of Allah. He will only put some other people in their place to carry out His Plan.

That Plan is referred to in the next sentence as "care and watch" over all his Creation.

...إِنَّ رَبِّي عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ حَفِيظٌ (٥٧)

For my Lord hath care and watch over all things."

وَلَمَّا جَاءَ أَمْرُنَا نَجَّيْنَا هُودًا وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ بِرَحْمَةٍ مِنَّا...

58. So when Our decree issued, We saved Hud and those who believed with him, by (special) Grace from Ourselves:

C1554. A few just men might suffer for the iniquities of the many. But Allah's Plan is perfect and eventually saves His own people by special Grace, if they have Faith and Trust in Him.

...وَنَجَّيْنَاهُمْ مِّنْ عَذَابٍ غَلِيظٍ (٥٨)

We saved them from a severe Penalty.

...وَتِلْكَ عَادٌ...

59. Such were the 'Ad people:

...جَحَدُوا بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ وَعَصَوْا رُسُلَهُ وَاتَّبَعُوا أَمْرَ كُلِّ جَبَّارٍ عَنِيدٍ (٥٩)

they rejected the Signs of their Lord and Cherisher;

disobeyed His Messengers;

and followed the command of every powerful, obstinate transgressor.

C1555. Instead of following the beneficent Lord who cherished them, they followed every rebel against Allah's Law, if he only obtained a little power to dazzle them.

...وَأُتْبِعُوا فِي هَذِهِ الدُّنْيَا لَعْنَةً وَيَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ...

60. And they were pursued by a Curse in this Life -- and on the Day of Judgment.

...أَلَا إِنَّ عَادًا كَفَرُوا رَبَّهُمْ...

Ah! behold! for the 'Ad rejected their Lord and Cherisher!

...أَلَا بُعْدًا لِّعَادٍ قَوْمِ هُودٍ (٦٠)

Ah! behold! removed (from sight) were 'Ad, the people of Hud!

Section 6

...وَأِلَى ثَمُودَ أَخَاهُمْ صَالِحًا...

61. To the Thamud People (We sent) Salih, one of their own brethren.

C1556. The story of Salih and the Thamud people has been told from another point of view in 7:73-79. The difference in the point of view there and here is the same as in the story of Hud: see [n. 1545 to 11:50](#).

Note how the story now is the same, and yet new points and details are brought out to illustrate each new argument.

Note, also, how the besetting sin of the 'Ad-pride and obstinacy -is distinguished from the besetting sin of the Thamud- the oppression of the poor, as illustrated by the test case and symbol of the She-camel: see n. 1044 to 7:73.

All sin is in a sense pride and rebellion; yet sins take particular hues in different circumstances, and these colours are brought out as in a most artistically painted picture-with the greatest economy of words and the most piercing analysis of motives.

For the locality and history of the Thamud see n. 1043 to 7:73.

...قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِنْ إِلَهٍ غَيْرُهُ...

He said:

"O my people! worship Allah: ye have no other god but Him.

...هُوَ أَنْشَأَكُمْ مِنَ الْأَرْضِ وَاسْتَعْمَرَكُمْ فِيهَا ...

It is He Who hath produced you from the earth and settled you therein:

C1557. For **Anshaa** as process of creation see n. 923 to 6:98 and the further references given there.

As to his body, man has been produced from earth or clay, and his settlement on earth is a fact of his material existence. Therefore we must conform to all the laws of our physical being, in order that through our life on this earth we may develop that higher Life which belongs to the other part of our being, our spiritual heritage. Through the use we make of our health, of our tilth, of our pastures, of material facts of all kinds, will develop our moral and spiritual nature.

... فَاسْتَغْفِرُوا لَهُ ثُمَّ تُوْبُوا إِلَيْهِ...

then ask forgiveness of Him, and turn to Him (in repentance):

...إِنَّ رَبِّي قَرِيبٌ مُّجِيبٌ (٦١)

for my Lord in (always) near, ready to answer."

قَالُوا يَا صَالِحُ قَدْ كُنْتَ فِينَا مَرْجُوًّا قَبْلَ هَذَا...

62. They said:

"O Salih! thou hast been of us! -- a center of our hopes hitherto!

C1558. Salih's life with his people has been so righteous (like that of al-Amin in later times) that he might have been chosen leader or king if he had only conformed to their superstitions and supported their sins. But he was born for a higher mission--that of a preacher of truth and righteousness and an ardent opponent of selfish privilege and a champion of the rights of humanity on Allah's free earth by the symbol of the she-camel:

see n. 1044 to 7:73.

...أَنْتَهَانَا أَنْ نَعْبُدَ مَا يَعْبُدُ آبَاؤُنَا...

Dost thou (now) forbid us the worship of what our fathers worshipped?

...وَأِنَّا لَفِي شَكٍّ مِّمَّا نَدْعُونَ إِلَيْهِ مُرِيبٍ (٦٢)

But we are really in suspicious (disquieting) doubt as to that to which thou invitest us."

قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِن كُنْتُمْ عَلَىٰ بَيِّنَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّي وَآتَانِي مِنْهُ رَحْمَةً...

63. He said: "O my people!

Do ye see? -- if I have a Clear (Sign) from my Lord and He hath sent Mercy unto me from Himself --

...فَمَنْ يَنْصُرُنِي مِنَ اللَّهِ إِنْ عَصَيْتُهُ...

who then can help me against Allah if I were to disobey Him?

C1559."Allah has been good to me and bestowed on me His light and the inestimable privilege of carrying His mission to you.

Don't you see that if I fail to carry out his mission. I shall have to answer before Him? Who can help me in that case?

The only thing which you can add to may misfortunes would be total perdition in the Hereafter."

Cf. 11:28.

...فَمَا تَزِيدُونَنِي غَيْرَ تَخْسِيرٍ (٦٣)

What then would ye add to my (portion) but perdition?

وَيَا قَوْمِ هَذِهِ نَاقَةُ اللَّهِ لَكُمْ آيَةٌ فَدَرُوهَا تَأْكُلْ فِي أَرْضِ اللَّهِ...

64. "And O my people!

this she-camel of Allah is a symbol to you: leave her to feed on Allah's (free) earth,

C1560. Salih does not merely take up a negative attitude. He puts forward the she-camel as a sign see n. 1044 to 7:73.

"Give up your selfish monopoly. Make Allah's gifts on this free earth available to all. Give the poor their rights, including grazing rights on common lands. Show your penitence and your new attitude by leaving this she-camel to graze freely. She is a Symbol, and therefore sacred to you."

But their only reply was to defy the appeal and hamstring the camel. And so they went the way of all sinners-to total perdition.

...وَلَا تَمَسُّوهَا بِسُوءٍ فَيَأْخُذَكُمْ عَذَابٌ قَرِيبٌ (٦٤)

and inflict no harm on her, or a swift Penalty will seize you!

فَعَقَرُوهَا...

65. But they did hamstring her.

...فَقَالَ تَمَتَّعُوا فِي دَارِكُمْ ثَلَاثَةَ أَيَّامٍ...

So he said: "Enjoy yourselves in your homes for three days:

C1561. Just three days' time for further thought and repentance! But they paid no heed.

A terrible earthquake came by night, preceded by a mighty rumbling blast (probably volcanic), such as is well-known in earthquake areas. It came by night and

buried them in their own fortress homes, which they thought such places of security!

The morning found them lying on their faces hidden from the light. How the mighty were brought low!

ذَلِكَ وَعَدُّ غَيْرُ مَكْدُوبٍ (٦٥)...

(then will be your ruin): there is a promise not to be belied!"

فَلَمَّا جَاءَ أَمْرُنَا نَجَّيْنَا صَالِحًا وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ...

66. When Our Decree issued, We saved Saleh and those who believed with him,

...بِرَحْمَةٍ مِنَّا وَمِنْ خِزْيٍ يُومِيذٍ...

by (special) Grace from Ourselves -- and from the Ignominy of that Day.

C1562. Cf. [11:58 above](#) and [n. 1554](#).

...إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ الْقَوِيُّ الْعَزِيزُ (٦٦)

For thy Lord -- He is the Strong One, and Able to enforce His Will.

For 'Aziz, see [n. 2818 to 22:40](#).

وَأَخَذَ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا الصَّيْحَةَ...

67. The (mighty) Blast overtook the wrongdoers,

C1563. Cf. [7:78](#) and [n. 1047](#), also [n. 1561 above](#).

... فَأَصْبَحُوا فِي دِيَارِهِمْ جَائِمِينَ (٦٧)

and they lay prostrate in their homes before the morning --

كَأَن لَّمْ يَغْنَوْا فِيهَا...

68. As if they had never dwelt and flourished there.

...أَلَا إِنَّ تَمُودَ كَفَرُوا رَبَّهُمْ...

Ah! behold! for the Thamud rejected their Lord and Cherisher!

...أَلَا بُعْدًا لَتَمُودَ (٦٨)

Ah! behold! removed (from sight) were the Thamud!

C1564. Cf. [11:60 above](#).

C.107 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(11:69-95)

*When the angels, on a mission to Sodom
And Gomorrah, Cities of the Plain,
Passed by Abraham, he entertained them
And received from them the Good News
Of the line of Prophets to spring from his loins.
He tried, in his goodness of heart, to intercede
For the wicked Cities, but they were steeped
In Sin and past all hope of repentance.
Lut preached to them, but they flouted him
And went to their fate, as also did Midian.
The People of Shu'ayb destroyed their commerce
By fraudulent dealings and love of brute force.
Marvelous are Allah's Mercies, and strange
Art the ways of ungrateful man!*

Section 7

وَلَقَدْ جَاءَتْ رُسُلُنَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ بِالْبُشْرَى...

69. There came Our Messengers to Abraham with glad tidings.

...قَالُوا سَلَامًا...

They said, "Peace!"

...قَالَ سَلَامٌ... ..

He answered, "Peace!"

...فَمَا لَبِثَ أَنْ جَاءَ بِعِجْلٍ حَنِيذٍ (٦٩)

and hastened to entertain them with a roasted calf.

C1565. According to the sequence of Surah 7, the next reference should be to the story of Lut, and that story

commences at [11:77 below](#), but it is introduced by a brief reference to an episode in the life of his uncle Abraham, from whose seed sprang the peoples to whom Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad Al-Mustafa were sent with the major Revelations.

Abraham had by this time passed through the fire of persecutions in the Mesopotamian valleys: he had left behind him the ancestral idolatry of Ur of the Chaldees; he had been tried and he had triumphed over the persecution of Nimrud: he had now taken up his residence in Canaan, from which his nephew Lot (Lut) was called to preach to the wicked Cities of the Plain east of the Dead sea which is itself called Bahr Lut.

Thus prepared and sanctified, he was now ready to receive the Message that he was chosen to be the progenitor of a great line of Prophets, and that Message is now referred to.

Can we localize Nimrud?

If local tradition in place-names can be relied upon, this king must have ruled over the tract which includes the modern Nimrud, on the Tigris, about twenty miles south of Mosul. This is the site of Assyrian ruins of great interest, but the rise of Assyria as an Empire was of course much later than the time of Abraham. The Assyrian city was called Kalakh (or Calah), and archaeological excavations carried out there have yielded valuable results, which are however irrelevant for our Commentary.

فَلَمَّا رَأَى أَيْدِيَهُمْ لَا تَصِلُ إِلَيْهِ نَكِرَهُمْ وَأَوْجَسَ مِنْهُمْ خِيفَةً...

70. But when he saw their hands went not towards the (meal), he felt some mistrust of them, and conceived a fear of them.

C1565a. Abraham received the strangers with a salutation of Peace, and immediately placed before them a sumptuous meal of roasted calf,

The strangers were embarrassed. They were angels and did not eat. If hospitality is refused, it means that those who refuse it meditate no good to the would be host.

Abraham therefore had a feeling of mistrust and fear in his mind, which the strangers at once set at rest by saying that their mission was in the first place to help Lut as a warner to the Cities of Plain. But in the second place they had good news for Abraham; he was to be the father of great peoples! (R).

...قَالُوا لَا تَخَفْ إِنَّا أُرْسِلْنَا إِلَىٰ قَوْمِ لُوطٍ (٧٠)

They said: "Fear not: we have been sent against the people of Lut."

C1566. The people of Lut means the people to whom Lut was sent on his mission of warning, the people of the wicked Cities of the Plain, Sodom and Gomorrah.

وَأَمْرَأَتُهُ قَائِمَةٌ فَضَحِكَتْ...

71. And his wife was standing (there), and she laughed:

C1567. The narrative is very concise, and most of the details are taken for granted. We may suppose that the angels gave the news first to Abraham, who was already, according to Gen. 21:5, a hundred years of age, and his wife Sarah was not far short of ninety (Gen. 17:17).

She was probably screened. She could hardly believe the news. In her skepticism (some say in her joy) she laughed. But the news was formally communicated to her that she was to be the mother of Isaac, and through Isaac, the grandmother of Jacob. Jacob was to be a fruitful tree, with his twelve sons.

But hitherto Abraham had had no son by her, and Sarah was past the age of child-bearing. "How could it be?" she thought. (R).

...فَبَشِّرْنَاهَا بِإِسْحَاقَ وَمِنْ وَرَاءِ إِسْحَاقَ يَعْقُوبَ (٧١)

but We gave her glad tidings of Isaac, and after him, of Jacob.

قَالَتْ يَا وَيْلَتَىٰ

72. She said: "Alas for me!

C1568. This is as much a sigh of past regrets as of future wistfulness!

... أَلِدُّ وَأَنَا عَجُوزٌ وَهَذَا بَعْلِي شَيْخًا..

Shall I bear a child, seeing I am an old woman, and my husband here is an old man?

...إِنَّ هَذَا لَشَيْءٌ عَجِيبٌ (٧٢)

That would indeed be a wonderful thing!"

قَالُوا أَتَعْجَبِينَ مِنْ أَمْرِ اللَّهِ...

73. They said:

"Dost thou wonder at Allah's decree?

...رَحِمَتْ اللَّهُ وَبَرَكَاتُهُ عَلَيْكُمْ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ...

The grace of Allah and His blessings on you, O ye people of the house!

C1569. Ahl al bayt: people of the house, a polite form of addressing the wife and members of the family.

Blessings are here invoked on the whole family.

...إِنَّهُ حَمِيدٌ مَجِيدٌ (٧٣)

for He is indeed worthy of all praise, full of all glory!"

C1570. This little episode of Abraham's life comes in fitly as one of the illustrations of Allah's wonderful providence in His dealings with man.

Abraham had had a tussle with his father on behalf of Truth and Unity (6:74); he had passed through the fire unscathed (21:68-69); he had travelled to far countries, and was now ready to receive his great mission as the fountain-head of prophets in his old age.

Humanly speaking it seemed impossible that he should have a son at his age, and yet it came to pass and became a corner-stone of sacred history.

فَلَمَّا ذَهَبَ عَنْ إِبْرَاهِيمَ الرَّوْعُ وَجَاءَتْهُ الْبُشْرَى يُجَادِلُنَا فِي قَوْمِ لُوطٍ (٧٤)

74. When fear had passed from (the mind of) Abraham and the glad tidings had reached him, he began to plead with Us for Lut's people.

C1571. Glad-tidings: not only that he was to have a son, but that he was to be a fountain-head of prophets.

So he now begins to plead at once for the sinful people to whom Lut was sent as a warner.

إِنَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ لَحَلِيمٌ أَوَّاهٌ مُنِيبٌ (٧٥)

75. For Abraham was, without doubt, forbearing (of faults), compassionate, and given to look to Allah.

C1572. Like Al-Mustafa, Abraham had three qualities in a preeminent degree, which are here mentioned:

- he was long-suffering with other people's faults:
- his sympathies and compassion were very wide: and
- for every difficulty or trouble he turned to Allah and sought Him in prayer.

يَا إِبْرَاهِيمُ أَعْرِضْ عَنْ هَذَا إِنَّهُ قَدْ جَاءَ أَمْرُ رَبِّكَ...

76. Abraham! seek not this.

The decree of thy Lord hath gone forth:

...وَأَنَّهُمْ آتِيهِمْ عَذَابٌ غَيْرُ مَرْدُودٍ (٧٦)

for them there cometh a Penalty that cannot be turned back!

C1573. This is a sort of prophetic apostrophe.

'O Abraham! All your warning. O Lut, will be unheeded! Alas! they are so deep in sin that nothing will reclaim them!' This is illustrated in [verse 79 below](#).

And now we proceed to Lut and how he was dealt with by the wicked.

وَلَمَّا جَاءَتْ رُسُلُنَا لُوطًا سِيءَ بِهِمْ وَضَاقَ بِهِمْ ذَرْعًا...

77. When Our Messengers came to Lut, he was grieved on their account and felt himself powerless (to protect) them.

...وَقَالَ هَذَا يَوْمٌ عَصِيبٌ (٧٧)

He said: "This is a distressful day."

C1574. The story of Lut, as referred to in [7:80-84](#), laid emphasis on the rejection of Lut's mission by men who practised unnatural abominations. See [n. 1049 to 7:80](#).

Here the emphasis is laid on Allah's dealings with men;

- in mercy for true spiritual service and in righteous wrath and punishment for those who defy the laws of nature established by Him;
- also on men's dealings with each other and the contrast between the righteous and the wicked who respect no laws human or divine.

وَجَاءَهُ قَوْمُهُ يُهْرَعُونَ إِلَيْهِ...

78. And his people came rushing towards him,

...وَمِنْ قَبْلُ كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ السَّيِّئَاتِ...

and they had been long in the habit of practicing abominations.

...قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ هَؤُلَاءِ بَنَاتِي هُنَّ أَطْهَرُ لَكُمْ...

He said:

"O my people! here are my daughters: they are purer for you (if ye marry)!"

C1575. The Biblical narrative suggests that the daughters were married and their husbands were close by (Gen. 19:14) and that these same daughters afterwards committed incest with their father and had children by him (Gen. 19:31-33).

The holy Quran nowhere suggests such abominations. Some Commentators suggest that "my daughters" in the mouth of a venerable man like Lut, the father of his people, may mean any young girls of those Towns.

"My son" (waladi) is still a common mode of address in Arabic-speaking countries when an elderly man addresses a young man.

...فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَلَا تُخْزُونِ فِي ضَيْفِي...

Now fear Allah, and cover me not with shame about my guests!

...أَلَيْسَ مِنْكُمْ رَجُلٌ رَشِيدٌ (٧٨)

Is there not among you a single right-minded man?"

قَالُوا لَقَدْ عَلِمْتَمَا لَنَا فِي بَنَاتِكَ مِنْ حَقٍّ...

79. They said:

"Well dost thou know we have no need of thy daughters:

...وَأِنَّكَ لَتَعْلَمُ مَا نُرِيدُ (٧٩)

indeed thou knowest quite well what we want!"

قَالَ لَوْ أَنَّ لِي بِكُمْ قُوَّةً أَوْ آوِي إِلَىٰ رُكْنٍ شَدِيدٍ (٨٠)

80. He said: "Would that I had power to suppress you or that I could betake myself to some powerful support."

C1576. Lut seemed helpless in the situation in which he found himself, -alone against a rabble of people inflamed with evil passions. He wished he had had the strength to suppress them himself or had had some powerful support to lean on!

But the powerful support was there, though he had not realized it till then. It was the support of Allah. His guests were not ordinary men, but Angels who had come to test the people before they inflicted the punishment. They now declared themselves, and gave him directions to get away before the morning, when the punishment would descend on the doomed Cities of the Plain.

قَالُوا يَا لُوطُ إِنَّا رُسُلُ رَبِّكَ لَنْ يَصِلُوا إِلَيْكَ...

81. (The Messengers) said

"O Lut! we are Messengers from thy Lord! By no means shall they reach thee!

...فَأَسْرُ بِأَهْلِكَ بِقِطْعٍ مِّنَ اللَّيْلِ وَلَا يَلْتَفِتْ مِنْكُمْ أَحَدٌ إِلَّا أَمْرًا تَك...

Now travel with thy family while yet a part of the night remains, and let not any of you look back:

but thy wife (will remain behind):

C1577. Even in Lut's household was one who detracted from the harmony of the family. She was disobedient to

her husband, and he was here obeying Allah's Command.

She looked back and shared the fate of the wicked inhabitants of the Cities of the Plain:

see also 66:10.

The Biblical narrative suggests that she was turned into a pillar of salt (Gen. 19:26).

...إِنَّهُ مُصِيبُهَا مَا أَصَابَهُمْ...

to her will happen what happens to the people.

...إِنَّ مَوْعِدَهُمُ الصُّبْحُ...

Morning is their time appointed:

...أَلَيْسَ الصُّبْحُ بِقَرِيبٍ (٨١)

is not the morning nigh?"

...فَلَمَّا جَاءَ أَمْرُنَا جَعَلْنَا عَالِيَهَا سَافِلَهَا...

82. When Our decree issued, We turned (the cities) upside down,

...وَأَمْطَرْنَا عَلَيْهَا حِجَارَةً...

and rained down on them brimstones

C1578. Cf. 7:84 and n. 1052.

... مِّنْ سِجِّيلٍ مَّنضُودٍ (٨٢)

hard as baked clay, spread, layer on layer --

C1579. Sijjil, a Persian word Arabicised, from Sang-o-gil, or Sang-i-gil, stone and clay, or hard as baked clay, according to the Qamus.

Sodom and Gomorrah were in a tract of hard, caky, sulphurous soil, to which this description well applies.

Cf. 51:33, where the words are "stones of clay" (hijarat min tin) in connection with the same incident.

On the other hand, in 105:4, the word **sijjil** is used for pellets of hard-baked clay in connection with Abraha and the Companions of the Elephant.

مُسَوَّمَةٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ...

83. Marked as from thy Lord:

C1580. If we take the words literally, they would mean that the showers of brimstones were marked with the destiny of the wicked as decreed by Allah.

But would it not be better to take them figuratively, to mean that the shower of brimstones was especially appointed in Allah's Decree or Plan to mark the punishment for the crimes of Sodom and Gomorrah?

وَمَا هِيَ مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ بَبَعِيدٍ (٨٣)...

nor are they ever far from those who do wrong!

C1581. They: Arabic, **hiya:** some Commentators take the pronoun to refer to the wicked cities so destroyed: the meaning then would be: those wicked cities were not so different from other cities that do wrong, for they would all suffer similar punishment!

Perhaps it would be better to refer "they" to the stones of punishment by a metonymy for "Punishment": 'punishment would not be far from any people that did wrong.'

Section 8

وَالِى مَدْيَنَ أَخَاهُمْ شُعَيْبًا...

84. To the Madyan people (We sent) Shu'ayb, one of their own brethren:

C1582. Cf. 7:85-93.

The location of Madyan is explained in n. 1053 to 7:85 and the chronological place of Shu'ayb in n. 1064 to 7:93.

The point of the reference here is different from that in Surah 7. Here the emphasis is on Allah's dealings with men and men's crooked and obstinate ways:

There the emphasis was rather on their treatment of their Prophet, thus throwing light on some of the sins of the Makkans in later times.

...قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِنْ إِلَهٍ غَيْرُهُ...

he said:

"O my people! worship Allah:
ye have no other god but Him.

...وَلَا تَنْفُسُوا الْمِكْيَالَ وَالْمِيزَانَ...

And give not short measure or weight:

...إِنِّي أَرَأَكُمْ بِخَيْرٍ وَإِنِّي أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ مُحِيطٍ (٨٤)

I see you in prosperity, but I fear for you the Penalty of a Day that will compass (you) all round.

C1583. The Midianites were a commercial people, and their besetting sin was commercial selfishness and fraudulent dealings in weights and measures.

Their Prophet tells them that that is the surest way to cut short their "prosperity", both in the material and the spiritual sense. When the Day of Judgment comes, it will search out their dealings through and through: "it will compass them all round," and they will not be able to escape then, however Much they may conceal their frauds in this world.

...وَيَا قَوْمِ أَوْفُوا الْمِكْيَالَ وَالْمِيزَانَ بِالْقِسْطِ ...

85. "And O my people! give just measure and weight,

...وَلَا تَبْخَسُوا النَّاسَ أَشْيَاءَهُمْ ...

nor withhold from the people the things that are their due:

C1584. Both Plato and Aristotle define justice as the virtue which gives every one his due.

From this point of view Justice becomes the master virtue, and includes most other virtues. It was the lack of this that ruined the Midianites. Their selfishness was "intent on mischief," i.e., spoiling other people's business by not giving them their just dues.

... وَلَا تَعْتُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ مُفْسِدِينَ (٨٥)

commit not evil in the land with intent to do mischief.

بَقِيَّةُ اللَّهِ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ إِن كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ...

86. "That which is left you by Allah is best for you, if ye (but) believed!

C1585. Allah's Law does not require that a man should deprive himself of the things that are necessary for his own well-being and development.

If he follows Allah's Law, what is left him after he renders to others their just dues will be not only enough, but will be the best possible provision for his own physical and spiritual growth. Even the kindness and consideration which Allah's Law inculcates are in the best interests of the man's own soul. But of course the kindness and consideration must be spontaneous. It must flow from the man's own will, and cannot be forced on him by the Prophet who come from Allah to show him the way.

...وَمَا أَنَا عَلَيْكُمْ بِحَفِيظٍ (٨٦)

But I am not set over you to keep watch!"

قَالُوا يَا شُعَيْبُ أَصَلَاتُكَ تَأْمُرُكَ أَنْ تَتْرُكَ مَا يَعْبُدُ آبَاؤُنَا...

87. They said:

"Oh Shu'ayb! does thy (religion of) prayer command thee that we leave off the worship which our fathers practiced,

...أَوْ أَنْ تَفْعَلَ فِي أَمْوَالِنَا مَا نَشَاءُ...

or that we leave off doing what we like with our property?

C1586. It is the way of selfish and material minded people;

- to scoff at spiritual things like prayer and worship and
- to hug their own property rights as if there were not other rights even greater than those of property!

...إِنَّكَ لَأَنْتَ الْحَلِيمُ الرَّشِيدُ (٨٧)

Truly, though art the one that forbearth with faults and is right-minded!"

C1587. They grow sarcastic against Shu'ayb. In effect they say:

"You are a fine man! You teach us that we must be kind and forbearing with other people's faults, and now get at what you call our sins! You think you are the only right minded man!"

قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُ عَلَىٰ بَيِّنَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّي وَرَزَقَنِي مِنْهُ رِزْقًا حَسَنًا...

88. He said:

"O my people! see ye whether I have a Clear (Sign) from my Lord, and He hath given me sustenance (pure and) good as from Himself?

C1588. Shu'ayb's answer is gentle and persuasive,

- First, he would ask them not to fly into a passion but satisfy themselves that he had a mission from Allah, and was working in the discharge of his mission: he was not merely finding fault with them.
- Secondly, though he was a poor man, he asked them to note that he was happy and comfortable: Allah had given him good sustenance, material and spiritual, as from Himself, though he did not resort to the sort of tricks which they considered necessary for their prosperity.
- Thirdly, if he forbade them anything he wished to apply the same standards to himself.
- Fourthly, all the advice which he is giving them is for their own good, which he desires to advance to the utmost of his powers.
- Fifthly, he is humble for himself; he would not set himself up to be their teacher or guide, or expect to be obeyed; the success of any of his efforts on their behalf must come from Allah's grace; will they not therefore turn to Allah, so that Allah's grace can heal them?

...وَمَا أُرِيدُ أَنْ أُخَالِفَكُمْ إِلَىٰ مَا أَنهَاكُمْ عَنْهُ...

I wish not, in opposition to you, to do that which I forbid you to do.

...إِنْ أُرِيدُ إِلَّا الْإِصْلَاحَ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُ وَمَا تَوْفِيقِي إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ...

I only desire (your) betterment to the best of my power;
and my success (in my task) can only come from Allah:

...عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ وَإِلَيْهِ أُنِيبُ (٨٨)

in Him I trust, and unto Him I look.

وَيَا قَوْمِ لَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شِقَاقِي أَنْ يُصِيبَكُمْ مِثْلَ مَا أَصَابَ...

89. "And O my people!

let not my dissent (from you) cause you to sin, lest ye suffer a fate similar to that of

C1589. Finally, Shu'ayb appeals to them as man to man.

"Because I differ from you, do not think I do not love you or feel for you. Let it not drive you into obstinacy and sin. I see things that you do not. My vision takes in the fate of previous generations who sinned, and perished on account of their sins. Turn therefore to Allah in repentance."

...قَوْمِ نُوحٍ أَوْ قَوْمِ هُودٍ أَوْ قَوْمِ صَالِحٍ ...

the people of Noah or of Hud or of Salih,

...وَمَا قَوْمُ لُوطٍ مِّنْكُمْ بِبَعِيدٍ (٨٩)

nor are the people of Lut far off from you!

C1590. The generation of Lut was not far off from the generation of Shu'ayb chronologically if Shu'ayb was only in the fourth generation from Abraham (see n. 1064 to 7:93). Nor was its habitat geographically far from that of Shu'ayb, as the Midianites wandered about from Sinai Peninsula to the Jordan valley (see n. 1053 to 7:85).

وَأَسْتَغْفِرُوا رَبَّكُمْ ثُمَّ تُوبُوا إِلَيْهِ...

90. "But ask forgiveness of you Lord, and turn unto Him (in repentance):

...إِنَّ رَبِّيَ رَحِيمٌ وَدُودٌ (٩٠)

for my Lord is indeed Full of mercy and loving-kindness."

قَالُوا يَا شُعَيْبُ مَا نَفَقَهُ كَثِيرًا مِّمَّا تَقُولُ ...

91. They said:

"O Shuayb! much of what thou sayest we do not understand!

C1591. Spiritual things are easy to understand if we bring the right mind to them. But those who are contemptuous of them deliberately shut their eyes to Allah's Signs, and then pretend in their superior arrogance that they are 'quite beyond them'!

... وَإِنَّا لَنَرَاكَ فِينَا ضَعِيفًا ...

In fact among us we see that thou hast no strength!

...وَلَوْلَا رَهْطُكَ لَرَجَمْنَاكَ ...

Were it not for thy family, we should certainly have stoned thee!

...وَمَا أَنْتَ عَلَيْنَا بَعِزٌّ (٩١)

For thou hast among us no great position!"

C1592. What they do understand is brute strength. They practically say:

"Don't you see that we have all the power and influence, and you, Shu'ayb, are only a poor Teacher?

We could stone you or imprison you or do what we like with you!

Thank us for our kindness that we spare you-, for the sake of your family. It is more than you yourself deserve!"

قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ أَرَهْطِي أَعَزُّ عَلَيْكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ ...

92. He said: "O my people!

is then my family of more consideration with you than Allah?

...وَأَخَذْتُمُوهُ وَرَأَعْتُمْ ظُهُورِيَا ...

For ye cast Him away behind your backs (with contempt).

...إِنَّ رَبِّي بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ مُحِيطٌ (٩٢)

But verily my Lord encompasseth on all sides all that ye do!

C1593. Cf. 8:47.

وَيَا قَوْمِ اعْمَلُوا عَلَىٰ مَكَانَتِكُمْ إِنِّي عَامِلٌ...

93. "And O my people!

do whatever ye can: I will do (my part):

C1594. Cf. 6:135 and n. 957.

...سَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ مَنْ يَأْتِيهِ عَذَابٌ يُخْزِيهِ وَمَنْ هُوَ كَاذِبٌ...

soon will ye know who it is on whom descends the Penalty of ignominy, and who is a liar!

...وَأَرْتَقِبُوا إِنِّي مَعَكُمْ رَقِيبٌ (٩٣)

And watch ye!

for I too am watching with you!"

C1595. If the wicked will continue to blaspheme and mock, what can the godly say but this?

"Watch and wait! Allah's Plan works without fail! I have faith, and I too will watch with you for its fulfilment."

Cf. 10:102, and n. 1484.

وَلَمَّا جَاءَ أَمْرُنَا نَجَّيْنَا شُعَيْبًا وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ بِرَحْمَةٍ مِنَّا...

94. When Our decree issued, We saved Shu'ayb and those who believed with him, by (special) Mercy from Ourselves:

C1596. Cf. 11:66 and 11:58, n. 1554.

...وَأَخَذَتِ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا الصَّيْحَةَ فَأَصْبَحُوا فِي دِيَارِهِمْ جَاثِمِينَ (٩٤)

but the (mighty) Blast did seize the wrongdoers, and they lay prostrate in their homes by the morning --

كَأَن لَّمْ يَغْنَوْا فِيهَا...

95. As if they had never dwelt and flourished there!

C1597. Cf. 11:67-68.

The blast was probably the tremendous noise which accompanies volcanic eruptions.

...أَلَا بُعْدًا لِّمَدْيَنَ كَمَا بَعَدَتْ ثَمُودُ (٩٥)

Ah! behold! how the Madyan were removed (from sight) as were removed the Thamud!

C.108 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(11:96-123)

*How the arrogant Pharaoh misled his people
In resisting Allah's Message through Moses!
Thus did they ruin themselves! It was they
Who wronged themselves: for Allah is ever kind
And His punishments are just. All men
Will be brought to His Judgement Seat, and the good
Will be rewarded with bliss, as the evil
Will be consigned to misery. Eschew evil;
Stand firm in righteousness; be not immersed
In the lusts of this world. Learn from the stories
Of the past, and seek the Lord's Mercy;
Trust Him and serve and praise Him forever!*

Section 9

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا مُوسَىٰ بِآيَاتِنَا وَسُلْطَانٍ مُّبِينٍ (٩٦)

96. And We sent Moses, with Our Clear (Signs) and an authority manifest,

C1598. The story of Moses and Pharaoh is referred to in many places in the Quran, each in connection with some special point to be illustrated.

Here the point is that Allah's dealings with man are in all things and at all times just. But man falls under false leadership by deliberate choice and perishes along with his false leaders accordingly.

In exercise of the intelligence and choice given him, man should be particularly careful to understand his own responsibilities and to profit from Allah's Signs, so as to attain to Allah's Mercy and blessings.

إِلَىٰ فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَلَأِيهِ...

97. Unto Pharaoh and his Chiefs:

...فَاتَّبَعُوا أَمْرَ فِرْعَوْنَ...

but they followed the command of Pharaoh,

C1599. Pharaoh is the type of the arrogant, selfish, and false leader, who poses as a power in rivalry with that of Allah.

Such an attitude seems to attract unregenerate humanity, which falls a willing victim, in spite of the teaching and warning given by the men of Allah and the many moral and spiritual forces that beckon man towards Allah's Grace.

...وَمَا أَمْرُ فِرْعَوْنَ بِرَشِيدٍ (٩٧)

and the command of Pharaoh was no right (guide).

يَقْدُمُ قَوْمَهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ فَأَوْرَدَهُمُ النَّارَ...

98. He will go before his people on the Day of Judgment, and lead them into the Fire (as cattle are led to water):

C1600. Awrada: to lead, as cattle, down to their watering place.

The metaphor is apt. The true herdsman is trusted by his normal flock, and he leads them in the heat of the day down to pleasant and cool watering places in order that they may slake their thirst and be happy.

The false leader does the opposite: he takes them down to the fire of eternal misery! And yet men sin against their own intelligence, and follow the false leader like cattle without intelligence!

...وَيَسَّ الْوَرْدُ الْمَوْرُودُ (٩٨)

but woeful indeed will be this leading (and) the place led to!

وَأُتْبِعُوا فِي هَذِهِ لَعْنَةً وَيَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ...

99. And they are followed by a curse in this (life) and on the Day of Judgment:

...يَسَّ الرَّفْدُ الْمَرْفُودُ (٩٩)

and woeful is the gift which shall be given (unto them)!

ذَلِكَ مِنْ أَنْبَاءِ الْفُرَى نَفْصُهُ عَلَيْكَ ...

100. These are some of the stories of communities which We relate unto thee:

... مِنْهَا قَائِمٌ ...

of them some are standing,

C1601. Some are standing: like corn, which is ready to be reaped.

Among the communities which remained was, and is, Egypt, although the Pharaoh and his wicked people have been swept away.

The simile of standing corn also suggests that at no time can town or community expect permanency, except in the Law of the Lord.

... وَحَصِيدٌ (١٠٠)

and some have been mown down (by the sickle of time).

C1602. Notions grow and ripen and are mown down. If they disobeyed Allah, their end is evil; if they were true and godly, their harvest was good.

وَمَا ظَلَمْنَاهُمْ وَلَكِنْ ظَلَمُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ ...

101. It was not We that wronged them: they wronged their own souls:

... فَمَا أَغْنَتْ عَنْهُمْ آلِهَتُهُمُ الَّتِي يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ لَمَّا جَاءَ أَمْرُ رَبِّكَ ...

the deities, other than Allah, whom they invoked, profited them no whit when there issued the decree of thy Lord:

C1603. All false and fleeting shadows must vanish before the reality and permanence of the decree of Allah. If we worshipped the false, we earned nothing but perdition.

... وَمَا زَادُوهُمْ غَيْرَ تَتْبِيبٍ (١٠١)

nor did they add aught (to their lot) but perdition!

وَكَذَلِكَ أَخْذُ رَبِّكَ إِذَا أَخَذَ الْقُرَىٰ وَهِيَ ظَالِمَةٌ...

102. Such is the chastisement of thy Lord when He chastises communities in the midst of their wrong: grievous,

...إِنَّ أَخْذَهُ أَلِيمٌ شَدِيدٌ (١٠٢)

indeed, and severe is His chastisement.

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّمَنْ خَافَ عَذَابَ الْآخِرَةِ...

103. In that is a Sign for those who fear the Penalty of the Hereafter:

...ذَلِكَ يَوْمٌ مَّجْمُوعٌ لَّهُ النَّاسُ وَذَلِكَ يَوْمٌ مَّشْهُودٌ (١٠٣)

that is a Day for which mankind will be gathered together:
that will be a Day of Testimony.

C1604. Yaumun mashhud: To suggest the comprehensive meaning of the Arabic I have translated, "a Day of Testimony".

I proceed to explain the various shades of meaning implied:

- a Day to which all testimony points from every quarter;
- a Day when testimony will be given before Allah's Judgment Seat, by all who are relevant witnesses, e.g., the Prophets that preached, the men or women we benefited or injured, the angels who recorded our thoughts and deeds, or our thoughts and deeds personified;
- a Day which will be witnessed, i.e., seen by all, no matter how or where they died.

وَمَا نُؤَخِّرُهُ إِلَّا لِأَجَلٍ مَّعْدُودٍ (١٠٤)

104. Nor shall We delay it but for a term appointed.

يَوْمَ يَأْتِ لَا تَكَلِّمُ نَفْسٌ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ...

105. The day it arrives, no soul shall speak except His leave:

C1605. Speak i.e.,

- either in self-defence or

- in accusation of others or
- to intercede for others, or
- to enter into conversation or
- ask questions, one with another.

It will be a solemn Day, before the Great Judge of all, to whom everything will be known and whose authority will be unquestioned.

There will be no room for quibbling or equivocation or subterfuge of any kind, nor can any one lay the blame on another or take the responsibility of another. Personal responsibility will be enforced strictly.

...فَمِنْهُمْ شَقِيٌّ وَسَعِيدٌ (١٠٥)

of those (gathered) some will be wretched and some will be blessed.

C1606. Shaqi (wretched) and **Said** (blessed) have become almost technical theological terms. They are explained in the four following verses.

فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ شَفَعُوا فِي النَّارِ لَهُمْ فِيهَا زَفِيرٌ وَشَهِيقٌ (١٠٦)

106. Those who are wretched shall be in the Fire:

there will be for them therein (nothing but) the heaving of sighs and sobs:

C1607. The first word, **Zafir**, translated "sighs", is applied to one part in the process of the braying of an ass, when he emits a deep breath.

The second, **Shahiq**, translated, "sobs", is the other process in the braying of an ass, when he draws in a long breath.

This suggestion of an animal proverbial for his folly implies that the wicked, in spite of their arrogance and insolence in this world below, will at last realise that they have been fools after all, throwing away their own chances whenever they got them,

In 67:7 the word **Shahiq** is applied to the tremendous roaring in-take or devouring of Hell-fire.

خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا مَا دَامَتِ السَّمَاوَاتُ وَالْأَرْضُ إِلَّا مَا شَاءَ رَبُّكَ...

107.They will dwell therein for all the time that the heavens and the earth endure, except as thy Lord willeth:

C1608. Khalidin: This is the word which is usually translated "dwell for ever" or "dwell for aye".

Here it is definitely connected with two conditions, viz:

- as long as the heavens and the earth endure, and
- except as Allah wills.

Some Muslim theologians deduce from this the conclusion that the penalties referred to are not eternal, because the heavens and the earth as we see them are not eternal, and the punishments for the deeds of a life that will end should not be such as will never end.

The majority of Muslim theologians reject this view. They hold that the heavens and the earth here referred to are not those we see now, but others that will be eternal. They agree that Allah's Will is unlimited in scope and power, but that it has willed that the rewards and punishments of the Day of Judgment will be eternal.

This is not the place to enter into this tremendous controversy.

...إِنَّ رَبَّكَ فَعَالٌ لِّمَا يُرِيدُ (١٠٧)

for thy Lord is the (sure) Accomplisher of what He planneth.

وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ سُعِدُوا فَفِي الْجَنَّةِ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا مَا دَامَتِ السَّمَاوَاتُ وَالْأَرْضُ...

108.And those who are blessed shall be in the Garden:

they will dwell therein for all the time that the heavens and the earth endure,

C1609. Exactly the same arguments apply as in the last note.

...إِلَّا مَا شَاءَ رَبُّكَ...

except as thy Lord willeth:

...عَطَاءَ غَيْرَ مَجْدُودٍ (١٠٨)

a gift without break.

C1610. The felicity will be uninterrupted, unlike any joy or happiness which we can imagine in this life and which is subject to chances and changes, as our daily experience shows.

فَلَا تَكُ فِي مَرِيَّةٍ مِّمَّا يَعْبُدُ هَؤُلَاءِ...

109. Be not then in doubt as to what these men worship.

...مَا يَعْبُدُونَ إِلَّا كَمَا يَعْبُدُ آبَاؤُهُمْ مِّن قَبْلُ...

They worship nothing but what their fathers worshipped before (them):

C1611. Their worship is not based on any spiritual attitude of mind. They merely follow the ways of their fathers.

...وَأِنَّا لَمُوقِفُوهُمْ نَصِيبُهُمْ غَيْرَ مَنفُوصٍ (١٠٩)

but verily We shall pay them back (in full) their portion without (the least) abatement.

C1612. Allah will take fully into account all their motives in such mummery as they call worship, and they will have their full spiritual consequences in the future.

Section 10

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ فَاخْتَلَفَ فِيهِ...

110. We certainly gave the Book to Moses, but differences arose therein:

...وَلَوْلَا كَلِمَةٌ سَبَقَتْ مِن رَّبِّكَ لَفُضِيَ بَيْنَهُمْ...

had it not been that a Word had gone forth before from thy Lord, the matter would have been decided between them:

C1613. Cf. 10:19.

Previous revelations are not to be denied or dishonoured because those who nominally go by them have corrupted

and deprived them of spiritual value by their vain controversies and disputes.

It was possible to settle such disputes under the flag, as it were, of the old Revelations, but Allah's Plan was to revive and rejuvenate His Message through Islam, amongst a newer and younger people, unhampered by the burden of age long prejudices.

...وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِآيَاتِنَا مُشَكِّكُونَ (١١٠)

but they are in suspicious doubt concerning it.

C1614. Cf. 11:62.

There, is always in human affairs the conflict between the old and the new,-the worn out system of our ancestors, and the fresh living spring of Allah's inspiration fitting in with new times and new surroundings.

The advocates of the former look upon this latter not only with intellectual doubt but with moral suspicion, as did the People of the Book upon Islam, with its fresh outlook and vigorous realistic way of looking at things.

وَأَن تَكْفُرُوا بِاللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ وَرَبُّكُمْ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ...

111. And, of a surety, to all will your Lord pay back (in full the recompense) of their deeds:

...إِنَّهُ بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ (١١١)

for He knoweth well all that they do.

C1615. Cf. 11:109 above, with which the argument is now connected up by recalling the characteristic word ("pay back") and leading to the exhortation (in the verses following) to stand firm in the right path freshly revealed.

فَاسْتَقِمُّوا كَمَا أُمِرْتُمْ وَمِن تَائِبٍ مَعَكُمْ وَلَا تَطْغَوْا...

112. Therefore stand firm (in the straight path) as thou art commanded -- thou and those who with thee turn (unto Allah); and transgress not (from the Path):

...إِنَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ (١١٢)

for He seeth well all that ye do.

وَلَا تَرْكَبُوا إِلَى الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا فَتَمَسَّكُمُ النَّارُ...

113. And incline not to those who do wrong, or the Fire will seize you;

...وَمَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مِنْ أَوْلِيَاءَ ثُمَّ لَا تُنصَرُونَ (١١٣)

and ye have no protectors other than Allah, nor shall ye be helped.

وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ طَرَفَيِ النَّهَارِ ...

114. And establish regular prayers at the two ends of the day

C1616. The two ends of the day: Morning and afternoon.

- The morning prayer is the Fajr, after the light is up but before sunrise: we thus get up betimes and begin the day with the remembrance of Allah and of our duty to Him.
- The early afternoon prayer, Zuhr, is immediately after noon: we are in the midst of our daily life, and again we remember Allah. (R).

... وَزُلْفًا مِّنَ اللَّيْلِ ...

and at the approaches of the night:

C1617. Approaches of the night: Zulafun, plural of Zulfatun, an approach, something near at hand.

As Arabic has, like Greek, a dual number distinct from the plural, and the plural number is used here, and not the dual, it is reasonable to argue that at least three "approaches of the night" are meant.

- The late afternoon prayer, 'Asr, can be one of these three, and
- the evening prayer, Magrib, just after sunset, can be the second.
- The early night prayer, 'Isha, at supper time-when the glow of sunset is disappearing, would be the third

of the "approaches of the night", when we commit ourselves to Allah before sleep.

These are the five canonical prayers of Islam.

...إِنَّ الْحَسَنَاتِ يُذْهِبْنَ السَّيِّئَاتِ...

for those things that are good remove those that are evil:

C1618. "Those things that are good": in this context the words refer primarily to prayers, but they include all good thoughts, good words, and good deeds.

It is by them that we keep away everything that is evil, whether referring to the past, the present, or the future.

...ذَلِكَ ذِكْرَى لِلذَّاكِرِينَ (١١٤)

be that the word of remembrance to those who remember (their Lord):

...وَأَصْبِرْ...

115. And be steadfast in patience;

...فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُضِيعُ أَجْرَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ (١١٥)

for verily Allah will not suffer the reward of the righteous to perish.

فَلَوْلَا كَانَ مِنَ الْقُرُونِ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ أُولُوا بَعِيَّةٍ يَهْتُونَ عَنِ الْفَسَادِ فِي

الأرض...

116. Why were there not, among the generations before you, persons possessed of balanced good sense, prohibiting (men) from mischief in the earth --

C1619. Baqiyat: some virtue or faculty that stands assault and is lasting;

balanced good sense that stands firm to virtue and is not dazzled by the lusts and pleasures of this world, and is not deterred by fear from boldly condemning wrong if it was fashionable or customary.

It is leaders possessed of such character that can save a nation from disaster or perdition. The scarcity of such leaders-and the rejection of the few who stood out-

brought ruin among the nations whose example has already been set out to us as a warning.

In [11:86](#) the word has a more literal meaning.

...إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مَّمَّنَ أَنْجَيْنَا مِنْهُمْ...

except a few among them whom We saved (from harm)?

C1620. The exceptional men of firm virtue would have been destroyed by the wicked to whom they were an offence, had they not been saved by the grace and mercy of Allah.

Or perhaps, but for such grace, they might themselves have succumbed to the evil around them, or been overwhelmed in the general calamity.

...وَاتَّبَعَ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مَا أُتْرِفُوا فِيهِ وَكَانُوا مُجْرِمِينَ (١١٦)

But the wrongdoers pursued the enjoyment of the good things of life which were given them, and persisted in sin.

وَمَا كَانَ رَبُّكَ لِيُهْلِكَ الْقُرَىٰ بِظُلْمٍ وَأَهْلُهَا مُصْلِحُونَ (١١٧)

117. Nor would thy Lord be the One to destroy communities for a single wrongdoing if its members were likely to mend.

C1621. There are different shades of interpretation for this verse.

I follow Baydawi in construing *zulmin* here as "a single wrong".

He thinks that the wrong referred to is *shirk*, or polytheism; Allah will not destroy mere wrong belief if the conduct is right.

I am inclined to interpret it in more general terms.

Allah is Loving-Suffering and Oft-Forgiving: He is too Merciful to destroy for a single wrong, if there is any hope of reclaiming the wrongdoers to repentance and amendment or right life.

An alternative interpretation is: "to destroy communities unjustly."

وَلَوْ شَاءَ رَبُّكَ لَجَعَلَ النَّاسَ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً...

118. If thy Lord had so willed He could have made mankind one People:

C1622. Cf. 10:19.

All mankind might have been one. But in Allah's Plan man was to have a certain measure of free-will, and this made difference inevitable.

This would not have mattered if all had honestly sought Allah. But selfishness and moral wrong came in, and people's disputations became mixed up with hatred, jealousy, and sin, except in the case of those who accepted Allah's grace, which saved them.

The object of their creation was to raise them up spiritually by Allah's grace. But if they will choose the path of evil and fall into sin, Allah's decree must be fulfilled, and His justice will take its course. In the course of that justice Hell will be filled with men and jinns, such is the number of those who go astray.

...وَلَا يَزَالُونَ مُخْتَلِفِينَ (١١٨)

but they will not cease to dispute,

إِلَّا مَنْ رَحِمَ رَبُّكَ وَلِذَلِكَ خَلَقَهُمْ...

119. Except those on whom He hath bestowed His Mercy: and for this did He create them:

...وَوَيْمَتْ كَلِمَةً رَبُّكَ لِأَمْلَأَنَّ جَهَنَّمَ مِنَ الْجِنَّةِ وَالنَّاسِ أَجْمَعِينَ (١١٩)

and the Word of thy Lord shall be fulfilled:

"I will fill Hell with jinns and men all together."

C1623. Cf. 7:18 and 7:179.

If Satan and his evil soldiers tempt men from the path of rectitude, the responsibility of the tempted, who choose the path of evil, is no less than that of the tempters, and they will both be involved in punishment together.

وَكُلًّا نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ مِنْ أَنْبَاءِ الرُّسُلِ مَا نُثَبِّتُ بِهِ فُؤَادَكَ...

120. All that We relate to thee of the stories of the apostles -- with it We make firm thy heart:

...وَجَاءَكَ فِي هَذِهِ الْحَقُّ وَمَوْعِظَةٌ وَذِكْرَى لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ (١٢٠)

in them there cometh to thee the Truth, as well as an exhortation and a message of remembrance to those who believe.

C1624. The stories of the Prophets in the Quran are not mere narratives or histories: they involve three things:

- they teach the highest spiritual Truth;
- they give advice, direction, and warning, as to how we should govern our lives, and
- they awaken our conscience and recall to us the working of Allah's Law in human affairs.

The story of Joseph in the next Sura is an illustration in point.

وَقُلْ لِلَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ أَعْمَلُوا عَلَىٰ مَكَانَتِكُمْ إِنَّا عَامِلُونَ (١٢١)

121. Say to those who do not believe:

"Do whatever ye can: we shall do our part;

C1624a. Cf. [11:93](#) and [6:135](#), n. 957.

The worst that ye can will not defeat Allah's Plan; and as for us who believe, our obvious duty is to do our part as taught to us by Allah's revelation.

وَأَنْتَظِرُوا إِنَّا مُنْتَظِرُونَ (١٢٢)

122. "And wait ye! we too shall wait."

C1625. Cf. [11:93](#), n. 1595, and [10:102](#), n. 1484.

If the wicked only wait, they will see how Allah's Plan unfolds itself. As for those who believe, they are glad to wait in perfect confidence, because they know that Allah is good and merciful, as well as just and true.

وَاللَّهُ غَيْبُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَإِلَيْهِ يُرْجَعُ الْأَمْرُ كُلُّهُ...

123. To Allah do belong the unseen (secrets) of the heavens and the earth, and to Him goeth back every affair (for decision):

C1626. Cf. 2:210.

There is nothing, secret or open, in our world or in Creation, which does not depend ultimately on Allah's Will and Plan. Every affair goes back to Him for decision. Therefore we must worship Him and trust Him.

Worship implies many things: e.g.,

- trying to understand His nature and His Will:
- realising His goodness and glory, and His working in us; as a means to this end,
- keeping Him in constant remembrance and celebrating His praise, to whom all praise is due; and
- completely identifying our will with His, which means obedience to His Law, and service, to Him and His creatures in all sincerity.

...فَاعْبُدْهُ وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَيْهِ...

then worship Him, and put thy trust in Him:

...وَمَا رَبُّكَ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ (١٢٣)

and thy Lord is not unmindful of aught that ye do.



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