

# The Qur'an Explained

*Juz' 1:*  
*al-Fātiḥa and al-Baqara*  
until verse 141

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[Draft. Do not distribute.]





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## سورة الفاتحة

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

اَلْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِیْنَ ﴿٢﴾ الرَّحْمٰنِ  
الرَّحِیْمِ ﴿٣﴾ مَلِیْكَ یَوْمِ الدِّیْنِ  
﴿٤﴾ اِیَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَاِیَّاكَ نَسْتَعِیْنُ  
﴿٥﴾ اِهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِیْمَ  
صِرَاطَ الَّذِیْنَ اَنْعَمْتَ عَلَیْهِمْ غَیْرِ  
الْمَغْضُوْبِ عَلَیْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّیْنَ ﴿٧﴾

1:1 In the Name of Allah, the All-beneficent, the All-merciful.

1:2 All praise belongs to Allah, Lord of all the worlds,

1:3 the All-beneficent, the All-merciful,

1:4 Master of the Day of Retribution.

1:5 You [alone] do we worship, and to You [alone] do we turn for help.

1:6 Guide us on the straight path,

1:7 the path of those whom You have blessed—such as have not incurred Your wrath, nor are astray.

1:3 ﴿٥﴾ **'THE COMPASSIONATE, THE MERCIFUL'** 'The Compassionate' and 'the Merciful' are two of God's attributes (*ṣifāt*) and two of His beautiful names (*al-asmā' al-ḥusnā*). God introduces Himself with these attributes on numerous occasions. As for the precise meaning of each and the difference between the two, it has been said that name 'the Compassionate' – *al-Raḥmān* – is a noun of intensification (*mubālagha*), which means that it intensifies the meaning of the root '*raḥma*' (mercy). In this case, *Raḥmān* signifies the copious abundance of divine mercy, a mercy which encompasses all of God's servants – the good and the bad. On the other hand, *Raḥīm* is an adjective which signifies God's never-ending mercy and unceasing kindness, which is exclusively reserved for the truly faithful.<sup>1</sup>

It is narrated from the Prophet of Islam ﷺ: 'God has a hundred mercies. One of these, He sent to earth and shared it amongst His creatures. It is with this one mercy that his creatures are kind and show affection to one another. The ninety-nine mercies that remain are for Him to show mercy to His servants on the Day of Resurrection.'<sup>2</sup> It has also been narrated: 'God will return that one mercy to the others to make one hundred again and on the Day of Resurrection will be merciful to His servants with the hundred mercies – meaning with all of His mercy.'<sup>3</sup> Of course, these traditions only enumerate God's mercies as one, ninety-nine or one hundred to help us comprehend their meaning. In reality, God's mercy is limitless beyond counting.

1:4 ﴿٥﴾ **'MASTER OF THE DAY OF RECOMPENSE'** Of course, God is also the master and ruler of this world as well. However, it is only on the Day of Resurrection that God's mastery and dominion will be clear for all to see, as all the limitations of matter

and the apparent forms of governance will vanish on that day so that only God's absolute power will remain. As God says in *Sūrat al-Ghāfir*: '*The day when they will emerge [from their graves], nothing about them will be hidden from God. To whom does the sovereignty belong today? To God, the One, the All-paramount!*'<sup>4</sup> And in *Sūrat al-Infṣār*: '*It is a day when no soul will be of any avail to another soul and all command that day will belong to God.*'<sup>5</sup> A narration from Imam al-Bāqir عليه السلام explains the aforementioned verse as follows: 'Everything, whether today or on that day, is in God's hand... but on the Day of Resurrection, no one will have any authority, such that no authority save God's authority will remain.'<sup>6</sup> It is narrated about Imam al-Sajjād عليه السلام that when he would recite the verse 'Master of the Day of Recompense', he would keep repeating it until he was close to losing consciousness.<sup>7</sup>

1:6 ﴿٥﴾ **'THE STRAIGHT PATH'** 'The Straight Path' (*al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm*) means a road that is clearly visible, wide and straight, without curving or bending in any direction.<sup>8</sup> Here, it signifies the religion of worshipping God, the true faith, and following God's commandments devotedly. In *Sūrat al-An'ām*, God tells His Prophet: '*Say, 'Indeed my Lord has guided me to a straight path, the upright religion, the creed of Abraham, a hanīf, and he was not one of the polytheists.'*'<sup>9</sup> Some narrations identify 'the Straight Path' as the Qur'an, while others identify it as the Prophet's Household (*ahl al-bayt*).<sup>10</sup> This is because the only path that will lead the human being to eternal happiness and the only one that is utterly free from error is the path laid down by God with the guidance of the Qur'an and the Infallibles عليهم السلام.

<sup>1</sup> *Miẓān*, 1/21.

<sup>2</sup> *Majma' al-Bayān*, 1/54.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Q40:16.

<sup>5</sup> Q82:19.

<sup>6</sup> *Nimūnah*, 26/236.

<sup>7</sup> *Uṣūl al-Kāfi*, 2/595.

<sup>8</sup> *Majma' al-Bayān*, 1/65.

<sup>9</sup> Q6:161.

<sup>10</sup> *Majma' al-Bayān*, 1/65.

## سورة البقرة

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

اَلَمْ ﴿١﴾ ذٰلِكَ الْكِتٰبُ لَا رَيْبَ  
فِيْهِ هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِيْنَ ﴿٢﴾  
اَلَّذِيْنَ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِالْغَيْبِ وَيُقِيْمُوْنَ  
اَلصَّلٰوةَ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنٰهُمْ يُنْفِقُوْنَ ﴿٣﴾  
وَالَّذِيْنَ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِمَا اُنزِلَ اِلَيْكَ  
وَمَا اُنزِلَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ وَبِاِلْاٰخِرَةِ هُمْ  
يُوقِنُوْنَ ﴿٤﴾ اُولٰٓئِكَ عَلٰى هُدًى مِّنْ  
رَّبِّهِمْ ﴿٥﴾ وَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُوْنَ

*In the Name of Allah, the All-beneficent, the All-merciful.*


2:1 *Alif, Lam, Mim.*


2:2 *This is the Book, there is no doubt in it, a guidance to the Godwary,*

2:3 *who believe in the Unseen, and maintain the prayer, and spend out of what We have provided for them;*




2:4 *and who believe in what has been sent down to you and what was sent down before you, and are certain of the Hereafter.*

2:5 *Those follow their Lord's guidance, and it is they who are the felicitous.*

**2:1**  **THE DISCONNECTED LETTERS:** There are numerous interpretations of the disconnected letters (*al-hurūf al-muqatta'at*) and their significance. Of these, the two most interesting are: (i) That these letters are a secret code between God and His messenger whose meaning is known only to them,<sup>11</sup> and (ii) by beginning chapters with these disconnected letters, God wants to call attention to the fact that the Qur'an is made up of the same letters people use in everyday language (like *alif*, *lām*, and *mīm*) but, in spite of this, people cannot produce a book capable of rivalling the beauty of the Qur'an, and that this demonstrates its supernatural origins as a text.<sup>12</sup>

**2:2**  **GUIDANCE: THE PURPOSE FOR WHICH THE QUR'AN WAS REVEALED** 'Guidance' (*hidāya*) means to show someone the path in such a way as will cause them to reach their destination.<sup>13</sup> A 'guide' (*hādī*) is someone who leads a group of people and shows them the way.<sup>14</sup> In numerous verses, including the present one, God describes the Qur'an as a book of guidance. Indeed, the Qur'an is nothing but guidance from start to finish; a guidance in which there is no room for error or obscurity.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, the reason God sent down the Qur'an was to show human beings the path that would lead them to eternal happiness, as we read in *Sūrat al-Mā'ida*: '*...Certainly there has come to you a light from God, and a manifest Book. With it God guides those who follow [the course of] His pleasure to the ways of peace, and brings them out from darkness into light by His will, and guides them to a straight path.*'<sup>16</sup> With this in mind, it becomes clear that the Qur'an is neither a book of history, nor philosophy, nor science. On the contrary, the reason why the Qur'an discusses the history of the

Prophets and earlier peoples, or calls attention to various scientific phenomena, is only in order to guide mankind and show them the path to felicity and happiness.

**2:3**  **SUSTENANCE IS MORE THAN JUST FOOD AND DRINK** 'Sustenance' (*rizq*) means a gift that is continuously given at particular times. The term is sometimes used interchangeably with 'share' (*naṣīb*) or 'provision' (*matā'*). Some say sustenance means a special blessing or gift that is given to a person according to his needs and circumstances in order to keep him alive. It is interesting to see that this term is usually translated into Persian as 'rūzi' (lit. 'daily'), which refers to a blessing or gift that is given to an individual each and every single day.<sup>17</sup> It should also be noted that 'sustenance' does not only refer to material needs, such as food and drink, but to anything that a person needs in order to attain human flourishing. It is for this reason that we see examples of sustenance given in the supplications of the Infallibles  that go well beyond food and drink, such as a complete intellect, useful knowledge, abundant and licit wealth, a superb personality, a righteous child, firm faith, the best of this world and the hereafter, a clean life, intercession, the *Hajj* pilgrimage, pilgrimage to the graves of the Infallibles, being buried beside them and being raised from the dead alongside them. All of these are given as examples of divine sustenance. Imam al-Ṣādiq  said that a man's knowledge was His divine sustenance and said regarding this verse: 'It means whatever we taught to them, they teach to others.' By the same token, the act of teaching is also a kind of spending for the sake of God!<sup>18</sup>



<sup>11</sup> *Sāfi*, 1/90.

<sup>12</sup> See *Nimūnah*, 1/62.

<sup>13</sup> *Kashshāf*, 1/35.

<sup>14</sup> *Majma' al-Bayān*, 1/65.

<sup>15</sup> *Tafsīr Mawḍū'ī*, 1/183.

<sup>16</sup> *Qs*:15--16.

<sup>17</sup> *Payām-i Qur'an*, 4/307.


<sup>18</sup> *Aṭyab al-Bayān*, 1/210.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا سَوَاءٌ عَلَيْهِمْ ءَأَنذَرْتَهُمْ أَمْ لَمْ تُنذِرْهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٦﴾ خَتَمَ  
 اللَّهُ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ وَعَلَى سَمْعِهِمْ وَعَلَى أَبْصَارِهِمْ غِشَاوَةٌ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ  
 ﴿٧﴾ وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يَقُولُ ءَامَنَّا بِاللَّهِ وَبِالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَمَا هُمْ بِمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٨﴾  
 يُخَادِعُونَ اللَّهَ وَالَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَمَا يَخْدَعُونَ إِلَّا أَنفُسَهُمْ وَمَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿٩﴾ فِي  
 قُلُوبِهِم مَّرَضٌ فَزَادَهُمُ اللَّهُ مَرَضًا وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْذِبُونَ ﴿١٠﴾  
 وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمُ لَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ قَالُوا إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ مُصْلِحُونَ ﴿١١﴾ أَلَا إِنَّهُمْ هُمُ  
 الْمُفْسِدُونَ وَلَكِن لَّا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿١٢﴾ وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمُ ءَامِنُوا كَمَا ءَامَنَ النَّاسُ قَالُوا  
 أَنُؤْمِنُ كَمَا ءَامَنَ السُّفَهَاءُ ۗ أَلَا إِنَّهُمْ هُمُ السُّفَهَاءُ وَلَكِن لَّا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٣﴾ وَإِذَا  
 لَقُوا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا قَالُوا ءَامَنَّا وَإِذَا خَلَوْا إِلَىٰ شَيَاطِينِهِمْ قَالُوا إِنَّا مَعَكُمْ إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ  
 مُسْتَهْزِءُونَ ﴿١٤﴾ اللَّهُ يَسْتَهْزِئُ بِهِمْ وَيَمُدُّهُمْ فِي طُغْيَانِهِمْ يَعْمَهُونَ ﴿١٥﴾ أُولَٰئِكَ  
 الَّذِينَ اشْتَرُوا الضَّلَالََةَ بِالْهُدَىٰ فَمَا رَبِحَت تُّجَارَتُهُمْ وَمَا كَانُوا مُهْتَدِينَ ﴿١٦﴾

- 2:6 As for the faithless, it is the same to them whether you warn them or do not warn them, they will not have faith.
- 2:7 Allah has set a seal on their hearts and their hearing, and there is a blindfold on their sight, and there is a great punishment for them.
- 2:8 Among the people are those who say, "We have faith in Allah and the Last Day," but they have no faith.
- 2:9 They seek to deceive Allah and those who have faith, yet they deceive no one but themselves, but they are not aware.
- 2:10 There is a sickness in their hearts; then Allah increased their sickness, and there is a painful punishment for them because of the lies they used to tell.
- 2:11 "When they are told, 'Do not cause corruption on the earth,' they say, 'We are only reformers!'
- 2:12 Look! They are themselves the agents of corruption, but they are not aware.
- 2:13 And when they are told, 'Believe like the people who have believed,' they say, 'Shall we believe like the fools who have believed?' Look! They are themselves the fools, but they do not know.
- 2:14 "When they meet the faithful, they say, 'We believe,' but when they are alone with their devils, they say, 'We are with you; we were only deriding [them].'
- 2:15 It is Allah who derides them, and leaves them bewildered in their rebellion.
- 2:16 They are the ones who bought error for guidance, so their trade did not profit them, nor were they guided.


**2:10**  **THE HEART: THE ESSENCE OF THE HUMAN**

**BEING** When the Qur'an speaks about the 'heart' (*qalb*), it is referring to the very essence of the human being – his life and his soul.<sup>19</sup> From its verses, we understand that, just as the human body has states of health, sickness and death, so too does the human heart and soul. Regarding the healthy heart, the Qur'an says: '*...the Day [of Resurrection] when neither wealth nor children will avail, except him who comes to God with a healthy heart (qalb salīm).*'<sup>20</sup> In the present verse, it speaks about the heart's sickness: '*There is a sickness in their hearts.*' Elsewhere, it also speaks about the death of the heart: '*Only those who listen [to your preaching] will respond [to you]. As for the dead[of heart, they will not believe and] God will raise them up [on the Day of Resurrection], then they will be brought back to Him.*'<sup>21</sup> Sickness of the heart means it becoming beset by doubts and hesitation, to the extent that the light of belief in God and His signs fades from it. Whatever increases this doubt is said to increase the heart's sickness. According to the present verse, '*God increased their sickness*' until this light was extinguished and the human heart became dead. The cure for this sickness is belief in God and turning towards Him in repentance.<sup>22</sup>

**2:14**  **SHAYṬĀN** The word '*shayṭān*' means someone who is far removed from goodness and virtue<sup>23</sup>,

or a being of evil.<sup>24</sup> It does not only refer to Iblis but, because he has been driven so far from God's mercy, he has become the epitome of evil and removal from virtue, and so the word '*shayṭān*' has become like a proper name for him. God says: '*That is how for every prophet We appointed as enemy the devils from among humans and jinn, who inspire each other with flashy words, deceptively.*'<sup>25</sup> Here, the word 'devils' (*shayāṭīn*) denotes the leading disbelievers and the hypocrites who agree with them, who are secretly plotting against God's prophets.<sup>26</sup>

**2:15**  **GOD'S DERISION, THE RECOMPENSE OF THE**

**HYPOCRITES** According to one narration, someone asked Imam al-Riḍā  whether this verse means that God is mocking the hypocrites. He said: 'God does not mock them, but He does requite them for their mockery. In other words, this 'mockery' is their punishment.'<sup>27</sup> This principle is expressed by the verse: '*So should anyone aggress against you, assail him in the manner he assailed you.*'<sup>28</sup> This verse says that when someone mistreats you, you must requite them for their behaviour and teach them a lesson – you should not stay quiet. In whatever way he aggressed you, you should respond to him.<sup>29</sup>



<sup>19</sup> *Mizān*, 2/228.

<sup>20</sup> Q26:88.

<sup>21</sup> Q6:36.

<sup>22</sup> *Mizān*, 5/387.

<sup>23</sup> *Kashshāf*, 1/65.

<sup>24</sup> *Mizan*, 7/331.

<sup>25</sup> Q6:112; see *Majma' al-Bayan*, 1/49.

<sup>26</sup> *Atyab al-Bayan*, 1/399.

<sup>27</sup> *Saduq, Tawhīd*, 163, tradition no. 1.

<sup>28</sup> Q2:194.

<sup>29</sup> *Kashshāf*, 1/67; *Nimūnah*, 2/32.

مَثَلُهُمْ كَمَثَلِ الَّذِي اسْتَوْقَدَ نَارًا فَلَمَّا أَضَاءَتْ مَا حَوْلَهُ ذَهَبَ اللَّهُ بِنُورِهِمْ وَتَرَكَهُمْ  
 فِي ظُلُمَاتٍ لَا يُبْصِرُونَ ﴿١٧﴾ صُمُّ بَكْمٌ عُمَى فَهُمْ لَا يَرِجْعُونَ ﴿١٨﴾ أَوْ كَصَيْبٍ مِّنَ  
 السَّمَاءِ فِيهِ ظُلُمَاتٌ وَرَعْدٌ وَبَرْقٌ يَجْعَلُونَ أَصْبَعَهُمْ فِيْءِ آذَانِهِمْ مِّنَ الصَّوْعِقِ حَذَرَ  
 الْمَوْتِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ مُحِيطٌ بِالْكَافِرِينَ ﴿١٩﴾ يَكَادُ الْبَرْقُ يَخْطِفُ أَبْصَرَهُمْ ۗ كُلَّمَا أَضَاءَ  
 لَهُمْ مَّشَوْا فِيهِ وَإِذَا أَظْلَمَ عَلَيْهِمْ قَامُوا ۗ وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَذَهَبَ بِسَمْعِهِمْ وَأَبْصَرِهِمْ  
 ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿٢٠﴾ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اعْبُدُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ  
 وَالَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ ﴿٢١﴾ الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْأَرْضَ فِرَاشًا وَالسَّمَاءَ  
 بِنَاءً وَأَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَخْرَجَ بِهِ مِنَ الثَّمَرَاتِ رِزْقًا لَّكُمْ ۗ فَلَا تَجْعَلُوا لِلَّهِ  
 أَنْدَادًا وَأَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٢٢﴾ وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِي رَيْبٍ مِّمَّا نَزَّلْنَا عَلَىٰ عَبْدِنَا فَأْتُوا بِسُورَةٍ  
 مِّن مِّثْلِهِ ۚ وَادْعُوا شُهَدَاءَكُمْ مِّن دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿٢٣﴾ فَإِنْ لَّمْ تَفْعَلُوا  
 وَلَنْ تَفْعَلُوا فَأْتُوا نَارَ التَّيِّبِ وَفُودُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ ۗ أُعِدَّتْ لِلْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٢٤﴾

- 2:17 *Their parable is that of one who lighted a torch, and when it had lit up all around him, Allah took away their light, and left them sightless in a manifold darkness.*
- 2:18 *Deaf, dumb, and blind, they will not come back.*
- 2:19 *Or that of a rainstorm from the sky, wherein is darkness, thunder, and lightning: they put their fingers in their ears due to the thunderclaps, apprehensive of death; and Allah besieges the faithless.*
- 2:20 *The lightning almost snatches away their sight: whenever it shines for them, they walk in it, and when the darkness falls upon them, they stand. Had Allah willed, He would have taken away their hearing and their sight. Indeed Allah has power over all things.*
- 2:21 *O mankind! Worship your Lord, who created you and those who were before you, so that you may be Godwary.*
- 2:22 *He who made the earth a place of repose for you, and the sky a canopy, and He sends down water from the sky, and with it He brings forth crops for your sustenance. So do not set up equals to Allah, while you know.*
- 2:23 *And if you are in doubt concerning what We have sent down to Our servant, then bring a surah like it, and invoke your helpers besides Allah, should you be truthful.*
- 2:24 *And if you do not—and you will not—then beware the Fire whose fuel will be humans and stones, prepared for the faithless.*

**2:21** ﴿٥﴾ **A SCRIPTURE FOR ALL HUMANITY** The phrase 'O mankind!' (*yā ayyuha al-nās!*) appears twenty times in the Qur'an – it is a comprehensive and inclusive form of address, showing that the Qur'an is not specific to any one race, tribe or clan. On the contrary, the Qur'an speaks to everyone and calls on all humanity to worship the One God and oppose any kind of idolatry or straying from the path of divine unity (*tawhid*).<sup>30</sup>

**2:23** ﴿٥﴾ **NO ONE IS ABLE TO PRODUCE SOMETHING EQUAL TO THE QUR'AN** In this verse and others (10:38, 11:13–14, 17:88, and 55:33–34), God challenges all sentient beings – whether humans, jinn or otherwise – to produce a scripture like the Qur'an, to produce ten chapters like those of the Qur'an, or even to produce a single chapter like the Qur'an, and proclaims that they will be unable to do so because only God is capable of such eloquent speech. Without a doubt, had the sworn enemies of Islam and the Qur'an – some of whom openly disbelieved, some of whom feigned belief, and some of whom even gave their lives fighting against Islam – been able to produce a single chapter like those found in the Qur'an, they would have proven this verse and all the others like it wrong. It is a fact that even 1,400 years after the Prophet's mission and the revelation of the Qur'an, nothing like the Qur'an exists amongst mankind. This is something which grows more amazing with each passing day, to the extent that the human mind is astounded and awed by the greatness of this scripture. This is, in fact, the most compelling evidence that the Qur'an is the Word of God and, by extension, that Muhammad ﷺ was truly God's messenger.<sup>31</sup>

**2:24** ﴿٥﴾ **A FIRE KINDLED FROM WITHIN** This verse says that two things fuel the fires of Hell: Human beings and stones. These 'stones' are the idols carved from stone that people would worship besides God, as the Qur'an tells the idolaters: '*Indeed you and what you worship besides God shall be fuel for hell, and you will come to it.*'<sup>32</sup>

A very important point we also find in this verse is that some human beings are fuel for the fire! This shows that the evil thoughts and deeds that emanate from a person and pollute others will take the form of a blazing fire on the Day of Resurrection which will burn both the one who originated these thoughts and deeds, as well as those whom he led astray. God says in *Sūrat al-Humaza*: '*...the fire of God, set ablaze, which will overspread the hearts.*'<sup>33</sup>

'Fuel' (*waqud*) is something highly combustible. On the Day of Judgement there will be people who have acquired this combustibility from how they lived in this world, so they become like phosphorous or sulphur, as though they are ready to burst into flames and set others ablaze with them. This is the hell that they prepared for themselves in this world. That is why God adds at the end of the present verse: '*...prepared for the faithless.*' In other words, hell has been prepared to burn them and they have prepared *themselves* to be burned by becoming like phosphorous and sulphur. With regard to this verse, it is narrated from the Commander of the Faithful, 'Ali ibn Abī Ṭālib ؑ: 'O my followers! Be wary of God lest you become fuel for the fires of hell. And even if you believe in God, you must keep yourself safe from the evil of the blaze by avoiding wronging your brethren in faith!'<sup>34</sup>



<sup>30</sup> *Nimūnah*, 1/117.

<sup>31</sup> See *Nimūnah*, 1/125--138.

<sup>32</sup> Q21:98.

<sup>33</sup> Q104:6--7; *Aṭṭab al-Bayān*, 1/463; *Mizān*, 1/92.

<sup>34</sup> *Tasnim*, 2/463.

وَبَشِّرِ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ أَنَّ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرَى مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ ۖ<sup>ط</sup>  
كُلَّمَا رُزِقُوا مِنْهَا مِنْ ثَمَرَةٍ رِزْقًا لَقَالُوا هَذَا الَّذِي رُزِقْنَا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَأُتُوا بِهِ مُتَشَابِهًا  
وَلَهُمْ فِيهَا أَزْوَاجٌ مُطَهَّرَةٌ ۖ<sup>ط</sup> وَهُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿٢٥﴾ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَسْتَحْيِي ۚ أَنْ  
يَضْرِبَ مَثَلًا مَّا بَعُوضَةٌ فَمَا فَوْقَهَا ۚ فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا فَيَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ  
وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَيَقُولُونَ مَاذَا أَرَادَ اللَّهُ بِهَذَا مَثَلًا ۖ يُضِلُّ بِهِ كَثِيرًا وَيَهْدِي  
بِهِ ۚ كَثِيرًا ۗ وَمَا يُضِلُّ بِهِ ۚ إِلَّا الْفَاسِقِينَ ﴿٢٦﴾ الَّذِينَ يَنْقُضُونَ عَهْدَ اللَّهِ مِنْ  
بَعْدِ مِيثَاقِهِ ۚ وَيَقْطَعُونَ مَّا أَمَرَ اللَّهُ بِهِ ۚ أَنْ يُوصَلَ وَيُفْسِدُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ ۗ أُولَٰئِكَ  
هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ ﴿٢٧﴾ كَيْفَ تَكْفُرُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَكُنْتُمْ أَمْوَاتًا فَأَحْيَاكُمْ ۖ ثُمَّ يُمِيتُكُمْ  
ثُمَّ يُحْيِيكُمْ ثُمَّ إِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ ﴿٢٨﴾ هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مَّا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا  
ثُمَّ أَسْتَوَىٰ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ فَسَوَّاهُنَّ سَبْعَ سَمَوَاتٍ ۗ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٩﴾

- 2:25 *And give good news to those who have faith and do righteous deeds, that for them shall be gardens with streams running in them: whenever they are provided with their fruit for nourishment, they will say, 'This is what we were provided before,' and they were given something resembling it. In it there will be chaste mates for them, and they will remain in it [forever].*
- 2:26 *Indeed Allah is not ashamed to draw a parable whether it is that of a gnat or something above it. As for those who have faith, they know it is the truth from their Lord; and as for the faithless, they say, "What did Allah mean by this parable?" Thereby He leads many astray, and thereby He guides many; and He leads no one astray thereby except the transgressors*
- 2:27 *those who break the covenant made with Allah after having pledged it solemnly, and sever what Allah has commanded to be joined, and cause corruption on the earth—it is they who are the losers.*
- 2:28 *How can you be unfaithful to Allah, [seeing that] you were lifeless and He gave you life, then He will make you die, and then He shall bring you to life, and then you will be brought back to Him?*
- 2:29 *It is He who created for you all that is in the earth, then He turned to the heaven, and fashioned it into seven heavens, and He has knowledge of all things.*

## 2:26 ﴿٥﴾ THE PURPOSE OF QUR'ANIC PARABLES

Regarding the context in which this verse was revealed, it is narrated that after God sent down verses containing parables about the gnat (Q22:73) and the spider (Q29:41), a group of idolaters used these as a pretext for mocking and criticising the Qur'an. They asked: 'How can this be revelation from God when it is speaking about spiders and gnats!?' God revealed this verse in response to them.<sup>35</sup>

The reason why God draws parables about all manner of things in the Qur'an is to make understand complex ideas and abstract truths relatable to his audience. This is a common habit amongst educated persons and great thinkers.<sup>36</sup> The less well-informed a person is, the more they need parables to help them understand a subject. It is the same reason why a professor of mathematics will make copious use of examples and analogies when explaining the principles of geometry to beginners in his field. When presenting its teachings to people, the Qur'an also makes use of numerous and varied parables.<sup>37</sup>

Regarding this verse, Imam al-Sadiq عليه السلام has said: 'God drew a parable from the gnat, because while the gnat is very small, is created with all the same parts as an elephant, even though that elephant is very big, plus two others which it does not have!' Through this analogy, God wanted to show the faithful the wisdom of His creation and, by contemplating on this lowly gnat which God has made similar to the elephant, the human being comes to realise more and more the Creator's greatness.<sup>38</sup>

## 2:27 ﴿٥﴾ THE MOST DESPICABLE OF ALL ACTS IN THE

SIGHT OF GOD When this verse says 'what God has commanded to be joined', this refers to all the bonds that God has commanded to be maintained. This includes bonds with the Prophet ﷺ, bonds with the Imams عليهم السلام, bonds with one's own family, bonds with one's brethren in faith, and so on.<sup>39</sup> Although this verse enjoins us to observe all godly bonds, the clearest example of this by far is the bond of family. The Qur'an speaks very harshly about those who sever the bonds of family, and such persons are strongly criticised in traditions from the Prophet and Imams. The Qur'an says in *Sūrat Muhammad*: 'May it not be that if you were to wield authority you would cause corruption in the land and ill-treat your blood relations!'<sup>40</sup> Someone once asked the Prophet: 'What is the most despicable of all acts in the sight of God?' The Prophet responded: 'Associating partners with God (*shirk*).' They asked: 'Then what?' He answered: 'Cutting the bonds of family.'<sup>41</sup>

2:29 ﴿٥﴾ SEVEN HEAVENS From the various verses of the Qur'an on the topic, we can deduce that all the stars and planets that we see in the night sky are part of the first and lowest of the heavens. Beyond this are six other worlds which are beyond our ability to see or detect with our current level of scientific instruments. This means that, in total, there are seven worlds. The evidence for this can be found in *Sūrat Fuṣṣilat*, where God says: 'We have adorned the lowest heaven with lamps'<sup>42</sup> and *Sūrat al-Ṣāffāt*, where God says: 'Indeed We have adorned the lowest heaven with the finery of the stars.'<sup>43</sup>



<sup>35</sup> *Nimūnah*, 1/145.

<sup>36</sup> *Atyab al-Bayān*, 1/480.

<sup>37</sup> *Tafsīr Mawḍū'ī*, 1/432.

<sup>38</sup> *Nimūnah*, 1/167.

<sup>39</sup> *Atyab al-Bayān*, 1/484.

<sup>40</sup> Q47:22.


<sup>41</sup> *Nimūnah*, 1/156.

<sup>42</sup> Q41:12.


<sup>43</sup> Q37:6.


وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً ۖ قَالُوا أَتَجْعَلُ فِيهَا مَن يُفْسِدُ فِيهَا وَيَسْفِكُ الدِّمَاءَ وَنَحْنُ نُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِكَ وَنُقَدِّسُ لَكَ ۗ قَالَ إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٣٠﴾ وَعَلَّمَ آدَمَ الْأَسْمَاءَ كُلَّهَا ثُمَّ عَرَضَهُمْ عَلَى الْمَلَائِكَةِ فَقَالَ أَنْبِئُونِي بِأَسْمَاءِ هَؤُلَاءِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿٣١﴾ قَالُوا سُبْحَانَكَ لَا عِلْمَ لَنَا إِلَّا مَا عَلَّمْتَنَا ۚ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿٣٢﴾ قَالَ يَا آدَمُ أَنْبِئْهُمْ بِأَسْمَائِهِمْ ۖ فَلَمَّا أَنْبَأَهُمْ بِأَسْمَائِهِمْ قَالَ أَلَمْ أَقُلْ لَكُمْ إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ الْغَيْبَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَأَعْلَمُ مَا تُبْدُونَ وَمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْتُمُونَ ﴿٣٣﴾ وَإِذْ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ اسْجُدُوا لِآدَمَ فَسَجَدُوا إِلَّا إِبْلِيسَ أَبَىٰ وَاسْتَكْبَرَ وَكَانَ مِنَ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٣٤﴾ وَقُلْنَا يَا آدَمُ اسْكُنْ أَنْتَ وَزَوْجُكَ الْجَنَّةَ وَكُلَا مِنْهَا رَغَدًا حَيْثُ شِئْتُمَا وَلَا تَقْرَبَا هَذِهِ الشَّجَرَةَ فَتَكُونَا مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٣٥﴾ فَأَزَلَّهُمَا الشَّيْطَانُ عَنْهَا فَأَخْرَجَهُمَا مِمَّا كَانَا فِيهِ ۖ وَقُلْنَا اهْبِطُوا بَعْضُكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ وَلَكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ مُسْتَقَرٌّ وَمَتَاعٌ إِلَىٰ حِينٍ ﴿٣٦﴾ فَتَلَقَّى آدَمُ مِنْ رَبِّهِ ۖ كَلِمَاتٍ فَتَابَ عَلَيْهِ ۗ إِنَّهُ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿٣٧﴾

- 2:30 'When your Lord said to the angels, 'Indeed I am going to set a viceroy on the earth,' they said, 'Will You set in it someone who will cause corruption in it, and shed blood, while we celebrate Your praise and proclaim Your sanctity?' He said, 'Indeed I know what you do not know.'
- 2:31 And He taught Adam the Names, all of them; then presented them to the angels and said, 'Tell me the names of these, if you are truthful.'
- 2:32 They said, 'Immaculate are You! We have no knowledge except what You have taught us. Indeed You are the All-knowing, the All-wise.'
- 2:33 He said, 'O Adam, inform them of their names,' and when he had informed them of their names, He said, 'Did I not tell you that I indeed know the Unseen in the heavens and the earth, and that I know whatever you disclose and whatever you were concealing?'
- 2:34 And when We said to the angels, 'Prostrate before Adam,' they prostrated, but not Iblis: he refused and acted arrogantly, and he was one of the faithless.
- 2:35 We said, 'O Adam, dwell with your mate in paradise, and eat thereof freely whencesoever you wish; but do not approach this tree, lest you should be among the wrongdoers.'
- 2:36 Then Satan caused them to stumble from it, and he dislodged them from what they were in; and We said, 'Get down, being enemies of one another! On the earth shall be your abode and sustenance for a time.'
- 2:37 Then Adam received certain words from his Lord, and He turned to him clemently. Indeed He is the All-clement, the All-merciful.

**2:31**  **KNOWLEDGE OF THE NAMES** Teaching Adam the Names (*asma*) was the greatest gift that God bestowed upon him. This knowledge was the source of his virtue, his nobility, and his worthiness to undertake the role of God's vicegerent (*khalifa*). But what were these Names? Commentators on the Qur'an have offered a variety of theories:


Some have said that this refers to the knowledge of all languages. However, the mere knowledge of languages would not seem suitable to serve as a source for such merits, nor does this reading chime with the surrounding verses. After all, when God mentions 'the unseen of the heavens and the earth', this shows that these Names are connected to realities of the cosmos which were hidden even from God's most trusted angels.

Others have said that this refers to the names of God's representatives (*hujaj*), especially the Infallible Imams , whose souls had already been created by this stage – and there are narrations to this effect. However, while there is no doubting that these narrations point to an important element within the category of knowledge that the Names represent, these narrations do not limit the knowledge of the Names to just this.

Many scholars have said the meaning of 'Names' here is not the names themselves but the things to which those names refer. In other words, God taught Adam all the knowledges relating to the heavens and the earth; how to build structures, how to extract minerals; how to plant trees; and the properties and sources of different things – or God implanted the potential for obtaining this knowledge in his very nature. In this way, Adam became aware of all the secrets of the cosmos, and he passed on this potential for understanding to his descendants as a result. And what merit could be higher or better than to possess this knowledge and to pass on the potential for learning it to one's own children?! In a tradition from Imam al-Sadiq , about this verse, we read: 'It means all of the plains, the mountains, the valleys and the rivers.' Then the Imam looked at the carpet that was spread out beneath him and said: 'Even this carpet was included in the things that God taught to Adam!' From this expression we can see that God gave Adam the knowledge of everything in the cosmos.


After 'Allāma Ṭabāṭabā, considers all of these possibilities in *Tafsir al-Mizān*, he concludes: 'The Names which God taught Adam were supernatural beings who were hidden behind the veil of the

Unseen from which every name in this world receives goodness and blessings and benefits from its luminosity.' In any case, the knowledge contained in the Names was extremely broad, to the extent that it included all of the important realities of the cosmos.<sup>44</sup>

**2:35**  **THE GARDEN OF ADAM** Some interpreters of the Qur'an have said that the Garden in which Adam dwelled was one of the gardens of paradise promised to the good and the righteous. However, while Adam's garden was filled with blessings and spiritual benefits, it was most likely located in a green and fertile part of the material world. There are several reasons why this is the case:

First of all, the gardens of paradise which promised to the faithful in the Hereafter are blessings which never end. Numerous verses of the Qur'an indicate that paradise is everlasting and that it is not possible for anyone to be expelled from it.

Secondly, neither could Iblis or anyone else without faith enter the gardens of paradise, nor could someone be afflicted by temptation therein, nor could anyone actually disobey God.

Third, there are traditions from the Prophet's Household which make this clear. In one such tradition, it is narrated that someone asked Imam al-Sadiq  about the garden of Adam. In response, he said: 'It was a garden of this world upon which the Sun and the Moon rose and set. If it was one of the gardens of paradise, Adam could never have been driven out of it.'

Therefore, it is clear that when the Qur'an speaks of Adam's 'fall' or 'descent' to the earth, this is a fall in his spiritual station, not a fall in terms of physical location. In other words, he fell from his station of virtue and descended from that verdant garden in which he had lived. It is also possible that this garden was on another planet, and this is something to which several narrations appear to allude. Equally, it is possible that when some narrations use the term 'heavens' (*samā*) to refer to where Adam lived before the fall, this refers to his high status rather than a high location.

In any case, there is ample evidence to indicate that Adam's garden was not a garden of paradise. After all, the gardens of paradise are the results of human labours and the end of a person's journey. Meanwhile, the garden in which Adam lived was a preliminary to his labours and the beginning of his journey!<sup>45</sup>

<sup>44</sup> *Payām-i Qur'ān*, 7/202.

<sup>45</sup> *Nimūnah*, 1/186.

قُلْنَا أَهْبَطُوا مِنْهَا جَمِيعًا ۖ فَأَمَّا يَا تَيْتَمُكَم مِّنِّي هُدًى فَمَنِ تَبِعَ هُدَايَ فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ﴿٣٨﴾ وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَكَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿٣٩﴾ يٰبَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ اذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتِيَ الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَأَوْفُوا بِعَهْدِي أَوْفٍ بِعَهْدِكُمْ وَإِيَّايَ فَارْهَبُونِ ﴿٤٠﴾ وَعَامِنُوا بِمَا أَنْزَلْتُ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا مَعَكُمْ وَلَا تَكُونُوا أَوَّلَ كَافِرٍ بِهِ ۖ وَلَا تَشْتَرُوا بِآيَاتِي ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا وَإِيَّايَ فَاتَّقُونَ ﴿٤١﴾ وَلَا تَلْبِسُوا الْحَقَّ بِالْبَاطِلِ وَتَكْتُمُوا الْحَقَّ وَأَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٤٢﴾ وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَارْكَعُوا مَعَ الرَّاكِعِينَ ﴿٤٣﴾ أَتَأْمُرُونَ النَّاسَ بِالْبِرِّ وَتَنْسَوْنَ أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ تَتْلُونَ الْكِتَابَ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٤٤﴾ وَأَسْتَعِينُوا بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلَاةِ وَإِنَّهَا لَكَبِيرَةٌ إِلَّا عَلَى الْخَاشِعِينَ ﴿٤٥﴾ الَّذِينَ يَظُنُّونَ أَنَّهُمْ مُلِّقُوا رَبَّهُمْ وَأَنَّهُمْ إِلَيْهِ رُجْعُونَ ﴿٤٦﴾ يٰبَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ اذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتِيَ الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَأَنِّي فَضَّلْتُكُمْ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٤٧﴾ وَاتَّقُوا يَوْمًا لَا تَجْزِي نَفْسٌ عَنْ نَفْسٍ شَيْئًا وَلَا يُقْبَلُ مِنْهَا شَفَعَةٌ وَلَا يُؤْخَذُ مِنْهَا عَدْلٌ وَلَا هُمْ يُنصَرُونَ ﴿٤٨﴾

- 2:38 *We said, 'Get down from it, all together! Yet, should any guidance come to you from Me, those who follow My guidance shall have no fear, nor shall they grieve.*
- 2:39 *But those who are faithless and deny Our signs, they shall be the inmates of the Fire and they shall remain in it [forever].*
- 2:40 *O Children of Israel, remember My blessing which I bestowed upon you, and fulfil My covenant that I may fulfil your covenant, and be in awe of Me [alone].*
- 2:41 *And believe in that which I have sent down confirming that which is with you, and do not be the first ones to defy it, and do not sell My signs for a paltry gain, and be wary of Me [alone].*
- 2:42 *And do not mix the truth with falsehood, nor conceal the truth while you know.*
- 2:43 *And maintain the prayer, and give the zakat, and bow along with those who bow [in prayer].*
- 2:44 *Will you bid others to piety and forget yourselves, while you recite the 'Book'? Do you not apply reason?*
- 2:45 *And take recourse in patience and prayer, and it is indeed hard except for the humble*
- 2:46—*those who are certain that they will encounter their Lord, and that they will return to Him.*
- 2:47 *O Children of Israel, remember My blessing which I bestowed upon you, and that I gave you an advantage over all the nations.*
- 2:48 *Beware of the day when no soul shall compensate for another, neither any intercession shall be accepted from it, nor any ransom shall be received from it, nor will they be helped.*

**2:40** ﴿٤٠﴾ **‘THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL’** ‘Israel’ is one of the names of the Prophet Jacob (عليه السلام) – the father of Joseph (عليه السلام) – and in the Hebrew language it signifies him being God’s servant. Jacob had twelve sons, and each of the twelve tribes of Israel are descended from these sons. Moses (عليه السلام) was four generations removed from Jacob (عليه السلام).<sup>46</sup> The ‘covenant’ (*‘ahd*) which the Children of Israel had with God is discussed in verses 83–84 of this chapter of the Qur’an.<sup>47</sup> Meanwhile, God’s ‘blessing’ (*ni‘mah*) upon them is the great concern He showed for them and the gifts mentioned in verse 49 onwards.<sup>48</sup>

**2:45** ﴿٤٥﴾ **TAKING RECOURSE TO PRAYER** In this verse, God enjoins the faithful to seek help through perseverance (*sabr*) and prayer (*salāt*). Prayer means to turn one’s heart towards God and develop a spiritual connection with the Lord of the Worlds.<sup>49</sup> In their explanations of this verse, commentators on the Qur’an relate that when the Prophet (عليه السلام) faced a difficult problem, he would seek help through prayer and fasting. Meanwhile, it is narrated from Imam al-Sadiq (عليه السلام): ‘Whenever ‘Ali was confronted by an overwhelming problem, he would take refuge in prayer.’ Then the Imam recited this verse.<sup>50</sup>

**2:46** ﴿٤٦﴾ **ISRAEL’S SUPERIORITY OVER ALL NATIONS** When God speaks about the Israelites’ being superior to all nations, this refers to their superiority over the nations of their own time and context. In *Sūrat al-A‘rāf*, we read about the Israelites: ‘We made the people who were abased the heirs to the east and west of the land which We had blessed.’<sup>51</sup> From this, it is clear that the Israelites did not rule over the entirety of the land; the meaning of the verse is that the Israelites were masters of the lands to the east and the west of where they were. Therefore, their superiority over all the nations refers to their superiority over the peoples who lived around them at that time.<sup>52</sup>

**2:48** ﴿٤٨﴾ **THE CONDITIONS FOR ATTAINING INTERCESSION (SHAFĀ‘AH)** Some might imagine that the phrase ‘neither any intercession shall be accepted from it’ means that no one’s intercession will be accepted on the Day of Judgement. However, what it means is that no one’s intercession

will be accepted *without God’s permission*. On the other hand, those whom God permits to intercede, He will accept their intercession, as we read in *Sūrat Ṭa Ha*: ‘Intercession will not avail that day except from him whom the All-beneficent allows and approves of his word.’ This verse, and others like it, show that it is only the disbelievers and those who have committed grievous crimes who are deprived of intercession, and this does not conflict with the many verses and traditions which indicate that the Prophet (عليه السلام) and Imams (عليهم السلام) will intercede for the sinners of the *umma*.<sup>53</sup>

However, it must also be noted that intercession (*shafā‘ah*) is not an encouragement to sin, nor is it an excuse for backsliding, nor is it something akin to the favouritism we sometimes observe in human societies. On the contrary, it is a valuable tool in nurturing humanity and guiding them towards goodness, which is beneficial from a number of angles. First, it gives hope to sinners and keeps them from becoming despondent; they cannot use despair of their sins being forgiven to remain mired in corruption. Because intercession gives hope to people, they will try to form some kind of connection with the one who intercedes on their behalf and do things that will make that person happy. This spiritual connection, in turn, will lead them to adopt the positive attributes of the one who intercedes on their behalf.

So, as we have already mentioned, the most important condition for the fulfilment of intercession is God’s permission. There is no doubting that someone who hopes to attain this intercession must fulfil the prerequisites of attaining this permission. In other words, they must do things which are pleasing to God. In addition to this are verses of the Qur’an which indicate that intercession does not apply to the wrongdoers (*zālimin*). Therefore, one who hopes to receive God’s intercession must avoid all forms of wrongdoing and oppression. Taken together, these different aspects of intercession will lead the one who hopes to attain it to take stock of his past actions and make better decisions in future. This is yet another positive aspect to the doctrine of intercession and a valuable means of nurturing goodness in the human being.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>46</sup> *Atyab al-Bayān*, 2/7.

<sup>47</sup> *Nimūnah*, 1/202.

<sup>48</sup> *Atyab al-Bayān*, 2/8.

<sup>49</sup> *Mizān*, 1/152.

<sup>50</sup> *Nimūnah*, 1/219.

<sup>51</sup> Q7:137.


<sup>52</sup> *Nimūnah*, 1/221.

<sup>53</sup> Q20:109; see *Mizān*, 1/154.


<sup>54</sup> See *Payām-i Qur‘ān*, 6/508–525.


وَإِذْ نَجَّيْنَاكُمْ مِّنْ ءَالِ فِرْعَوْنَ يَسُومُونَكُمْ سُوءَ الْعَذَابِ يُدَبِّحُونَ أَبْنَاءَكُمْ وَيَسْتَحْيُونَ نِسَاءَكُمْ ۗ وَفِي ذَلِكُمْ بَلَاءٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ عَظِيمٌ ﴿٤٩﴾ وَإِذْ فَرَقْنَا بِكُمْ الْبَحْرَ فَأَنْجَيْنَاكُمْ وَأَغْرَقْنَا ءَالَ فِرْعَوْنَ وَأَنْتُمْ تَنْظُرُونَ ﴿٥٠﴾ وَإِذْ وَعَدْنَا مُوسَىٰ أَرْبَعِينَ لَيْلَةً ثُمَّ اتَّخَذْتُمُ الْعَجَلَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ ۗ وَأَنْتُمْ ظَالِمُونَ ﴿٥١﴾ ثُمَّ عَفَوْنَا عَنْكُمْ مِّنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٥٢﴾ وَإِذْ ءَاتَيْنَا مُوسَىٰ الْكِتَابَ وَالْفُرْقَانَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ ﴿٥٣﴾ وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسَىٰ لِقَوْمِهِ ۖ يَلْقَوُكُمْ إِنكُمْ ظَلَمْتُمْ أَنْفُسَكُمْ بِاتِّخَاذِكُمُ الْعَجَلَ فَتَوَبُوا إِلَيَّ ۖ بَارِئِكُمْ ۖ فَاقْتُلُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ ۖ ذَلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ عِنْدَ بَارِئِكُمْ ۖ فَتَابَ عَلَيْكُمْ ۗ إِنَّهُ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿٥٤﴾ وَإِذْ قُلْتُمْ يَا مُوسَىٰ لَنْ نُؤْمِنَ لَكَ حَتَّىٰ نَرَىٰ اللَّهَ جَهْرَةً فَأَخَذَتْكُمُ الصَّاعِقَةُ وَأَنْتُمْ تَنْظُرُونَ ﴿٥٥﴾ ثُمَّ بَعَثْنَاكَ مِّنْ بَعْدِ مَوْتِكَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٥٦﴾ وَظَلَّلْنَا عَلَيْكُمُ الْغَمَامَ وَأَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَنَّاءَ وَالسَّلْوَىٰ ۗ كُلُوا مِنْ طَيِّبَاتِ مَا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ ۗ وَمَا ظَلَمُونَا وَلَكِن كَانُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ ﴿٥٧﴾


- 2:49 And when We delivered you from Pharaoh's clan who inflicted a terrible torment on you, and slaughtered your sons and spared your women, and in that there was a great test from your Lord.
- 2:50 And when We parted the sea with you, and We delivered you and drowned Pharaoh's clan as you looked on.
- 2:51 And when We made an appointment with Moses for forty nights, you took up the Calf [for worship] in his absence, and you were wrongdoers.
- 2:52 Then We excused you after that so that you might give thanks.
- 2:53 And when We gave Moses the Book and the Criterion so that you might be guided.
- 2:54 And [recall] when Moses said to his people, 'O my people! You have indeed wronged yourselves by taking up the Calf [for worship]. Now turn penitently to your Maker, and slay [the guilty among] your folks. That will be better for you with your Maker.' Then He turned to you clemently. Indeed He is the All-clement, the All-merciful.
- 2:55 And when you said, 'O Moses, we will not believe you until we see Allah visibly.' Thereupon a thunderbolt seized you as you looked on.
- 2:56 Then We raised you up after your death so that you might give thanks.
- 2:57 And We shaded you with clouds, and We sent down to you manna and quails: 'Eat of the good things We have provided for you.' And they did not wrong Us, but they used to wrong [only] themselves.

**2:49**  **WHY DID PHARAOH SLAUGHTER THE SONS OF THE ISRAELITES?** There are various explanations of why Pharaoh slaughtered the children of the Israelites. Some say that he had a dream in which he saw a fire ignite in Jerusalem and spread until it spread through all of Egypt and burnt down the homes of the Egyptians in a great conflagration, while leaving the homes of the Israelites untouched. When Pharaoh awoke, he asked his advisors about this dream, and they told him that it meant that someone would come from Jerusalem and put an end to his reign. Others say that it was the soothsayers who came to Pharaoh and warned him of this. While others still say that this had been foretold by previous prophets and that Pharaoh learned of these prophecies. In any case, he resolved that he must kill the sons of the Israelites to prevent such a person ever arising.

Some commentators have suggested that Pharaoh slaughtered the sons of the Israelites as part of a plan to weaken them, by killing their male offspring (so that they would lack the strength to rise in rebellion) and leave them with only womenfolk who could be used as servants. In this regard, Q40:25 seems to indicate that the killing of sons and sparing of womenfolk continued even after Moses began his mission: *‘So when he brought them the truth from Us, they said, ‘Kill the sons of the faithful who are with him, and spare their women.’*

**2:52**  **THE HARSH CONSEQUENCES OF WORSHIPING THE GOLDEN CALF** According to some narrations, as many as seventy thousand of those who

had worshipped the Calf took up swords and began to kill one another. Ten thousand had been slain by the time Gabriel  descended and said to Moses: “Tell them to stop killing one another, God has accepted your repentance!”<sup>55</sup> But why did God impose such a harsh and unusual punishment on the Israelites for taking up the Golden Calf? Some commentators have said that this is because, in addition to the gravity of the idolatry in itself, these were a people who had witnessed countless miracles and signs from God, and so the fact that they began to worship an idol was all made all the worse by this. So, God imposed such a terrible punishment to ensure that they would never again even consider worshipping idols.<sup>56</sup>

**2:57**  **GOD’S PROVIDENCE FOR THE ISRAELITES** Some commentators have said that when Moses led his people out of captivity and across the Red Sea, they reproached him, saying: ‘O Moses, you have ruined us! You led us out of our city and our homes and into a desert where there is no shade, no trees and no water!’ In response, God sent clouds to shade them during the day. Then, at night, he would send down manna to them (which was most likely a kind of sweet sap); this would cover plants, trees, and rocks. At the same time, God would also send quails to them as they travelled. On another occasion, Moses struck a rock with his staff and caused twelve springs to gush forth – a number equal to the number of tribes of Israel – so that each tribe had a spring from which it could drink. This is referenced in verse 60 of this chapter.<sup>57</sup>



<sup>55</sup> *Mizān*, 1/190.

<sup>56</sup> See *Nimūnah*, 1/255.

<sup>57</sup> See *Mizān*, 1/191.

وَإِذْ قُلْنَا ادْخُلُوا هَذِهِ الْقَرْيَةَ فَكُلُوا مِنْهَا حَيْثُ شِئْتُمْ رَغَدًا وَادْخُلُوا الْبَابَ سُجَّدًا وَقُولُوا حِطَّةً نَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ خَطِيئَتِكُمْ وَسَنَزِيدُ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٥٨﴾ فَبَدَّلَ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا قَوْلًا غَيْرَ الَّذِي قِيلَ لَهُمْ فَأَنْزَلْنَا عَلَى الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا رِجْزًا مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ بِمَا كَانُوا يَفْسُقُونَ ﴿٥٩﴾ وَإِذْ اسْتَسْقَىٰ مُوسَىٰ لِقَوْمِهِ فَقُلْنَا اضْرِبْ بِعَصَاكَ الْحَجَرَ ۖ فَانفَجَرَتْ مِنْهُ اثْنَتَا عَشْرَةَ عَيْنًا ۗ قَدْ عَلِمَ كُلُّ أُنَاسٍ مَّشْرَبَهُمْ ۖ كُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا مِن رِّزْقِ اللَّهِ وَلَا تَعْتُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ مُفْسِدِينَ ﴿٦٠﴾ وَإِذْ قُلْتُمْ يَا مُوسَىٰ لَنْ نَّصْبِرَ عَلَىٰ طَعَامٍ وَاحِدٍ فَادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ يُخْرِجْ لَنَا مِمَّا تُنْبِتُ الْأَرْضُ مِنْ بَقْلِهَا وَقِثَّائِهَا وَفُومِهَا وَعَدَسِيهَا وَبَصَلِهَا ۗ قَالَ أَتَسْتَبِدُّونَ بِالَّذِي هُوَ أَذْنَىٰ بِالَّذِي هُوَ خَيْرٌ أَهْبِطُوا مِصْرًا فَإِنَّ لَكُمْ مَّا سَأَلْتُمْ ۗ وَضُرِبَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الذَّلَّةُ وَالْمَسْكَنَةُ وَبَاءُوا بِغَضَبٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ ۗ ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ كَانُوا يَكْفُرُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَيَقْتُلُونَ النَّبِيِّنَ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ ۗ ذَٰلِكَ بِمَا عَصَوْا وَكَانُوا يَعْتَدُونَ ﴿٦١﴾

- 2:58 *And when We said, ‘Enter this town, and eat thereof freely whencesoever you wish, and enter prostrating at the gate, and say, ‘Relieve [us of the burden of our sins],’ that We may forgive your iniquities, and soon We will enhance the virtuous.’*
- 2:59 *But the wrongdoers changed the saying with other than what they were told. So We sent down on those who were wrongdoers a plague from the sky because of the transgressions they used to commit.*
- 2:60 *And when Moses prayed for water for his people, We said, ‘Strike the rock with your staff.’ Thereat twelve fountains gushed forth from it; every tribe came to know its drinking-place. ‘Eat and drink of Allah’s provision, and do not act wickedly on the earth, causing corruption.’*
- 2:61 *And when you said, ‘O Moses, We will not put up with one kind of food. So invoke your Lord for us, that He may bring forth for us of that which the earth grows—its greens and its cucumbers, its garlic, its lentils, and its onions.’ He said, ‘Do you seek to replace what is superior with that which is inferior? Go down to any town and you will indeed get what you ask for!’ So they were struck with abasement and poverty, and they earned Allah’s wrath. That, because they would defy the signs of Allah and kill the prophets unjustly. That, because they would disobey and used to commit transgression.*

2:58 ﴿۝۵﴾ **ALLEGIANCE TO THE PROPHET'S HOUSEHOLD IS THE GATEWAY TO DIVINE FORGIVENESS**

A narration from Imam al-Ṣādiq عليه السلام reads: 'We are the gate of your "repentance" (*hittah*).<sup>58</sup> By this, he means that 'We are to you like the gate which the Israelites passed through, prostrating and saying "repentance" (*hittah*) so that their sins would be forgiven and they would receive God's blessing. If the Muslims also wish to be embraced by this divine forgiveness and mercy, they must acknowledge the spiritual station (*wilāyah*) of the Prophet's Household and enter the sanctuary of their love.'<sup>58</sup>

2:59 ﴿۝۵﴾ **THE ISRAELITES' DISREGARD FOR GOD'S COMMANDS** According to the Qur'an, when the Israelites entered the Temple in Jerusalem, they were supposed to say "*hittah*" (meaning: 'God, forgive us!'). Some commentators have said that they mockingly altered the pronunciation of the word, saying instead "*hintah*" (meaning: 'wheat').<sup>59</sup>

2:60 ﴿۝۵﴾ **GOD'S PUNISHMENT FOR DISREGARDING HIS COMMANDS** In Arabic, "*rijz*" literally means confusion and disorder, but in the dialect of Hijāz, it means 'punishment'. Some narrations interpret this to mean a kind of pestilence or plague which spread rapidly amongst the Israelites. But it is of interest that apparently only the wrongdoers were afflicted with this. One of the effects plague has on a person is that it causes their speech to become

confused and disordered, which explains why the Qur'an would refer to this with the word "*rijz*".<sup>60</sup>

2:61 ﴿۝۵﴾ **THE ISRAELITES' DISSATISFACTION WITH JUST ONE KIND OF FOOD** When the Israelites complained of 'one kind of food', they are referring to manna and quails which were mentioned previously. Of course, manna and quails are clearly *two* foodstuffs, but what they mean by this is that there was no variety in their diet and, as anyone will tell you, no matter how delicious a food might be, it is tiresome to eat the same food each and every single day.<sup>61</sup>

2:61 ﴿۝۵﴾ **'GO DOWN TO ANY TOWN...'** As well as being the Arabic name for Egypt, the word "*miṣr*" generally means any limit or border between two things or between two pieces of land. That is why cities with a clearly defined boundary are called '*miṣr*'.<sup>62</sup> Therefore, when Moses tells his people to 'go down to *miṣr*', it appears that, rather than telling them to go back to slavery in Egypt, he reminds them that they are in the desert in order to be tested and to develop as a people. The desert, of course, is not a place of plenty when it comes to food. On the other hand, they can go to any town and find what they are looking for – but they should know that there is no opportunity for them to grow as a people in these settlements.<sup>63</sup>



<sup>58</sup> See *Aṭyab al-Bayān*, 2/41.

<sup>59</sup> *Majma' al-Bayān*, 1/230.

<sup>60</sup> See *Nimūnah*, 1/269.

<sup>61</sup> *Aṭyab al-Bayān*, 2/44.

<sup>62</sup> *Qāmūs-i Qur'ān*, 6/260.

<sup>63</sup> *Nimūnah*, 1/278.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَادُوا وَالصَّٰلِحِينَ وَالصَّٰلِحِينَ مَن ءَامَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ ءَاخِرِ  
 وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ﴿٦٢﴾ وَإِذْ  
 أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَكُمْ وَرَفَعْنَا فَوْقَكُمُ الطُّورَ خُذُوا مَا ءَاتَيْنَاكُمْ بِقُوَّةٍ وَاذْكُرُوا مَا فِيهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ  
 تَتَّقُونَ ﴿٦٣﴾ ثُمَّ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ مِّنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ فَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ لَكُنْتُمْ مِّنَ  
 الْخَٰسِرِينَ ﴿٦٤﴾ وَلَقَدْ عَلِمْتُمُ الَّذِينَ ءَاعْتَدُوا مِنكُمْ فِي السَّبْتِ فَقُلْنَا لَهُمْ كُونُوا قِرَدَةً  
 خَٰسِئِينَ ﴿٦٥﴾ فَجَعَلْنَاهَا نَكَالًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهَا وَمَا خَلْفَهَا وَمَوْعِظَةً لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿٦٦﴾ وَإِذْ  
 قَالَ مُوسَىٰ لِقَوْمِهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تَذْبَحُوا بَقْرَةً بَقْرَةً قَالُوا أَتَتَّخِذُنَا هُزُوًا قَالَ أَعُوذُ  
 بِاللَّهِ أَنْ أَكُونَ مِنَ الْجَاهِلِينَ ﴿٦٧﴾ قَالُوا أَذْءُ لَنَا رَبِّكَ يُبَيِّنُ لَنَا مَا هِيَ قَالَ إِنَّهُ يَقُولُ  
 إِنَّهَا بَقْرَةٌ لَا فَارِضٌ وَلَا بَكْرٌ عَوَانٌ بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ فَافْعَلُوا مَا تُؤْمَرُونَ ﴿٦٨﴾ قَالُوا أَذْءُ لَنَا  
 رَبِّكَ يُبَيِّنُ لَنَا مَا لَوْنُهَا قَالَ إِنَّهُ يَقُولُ إِنَّهَا بَقْرَةٌ صَفْرَاءُ فَاقِعٌ لَّوْنُهَا تَسُرُّ النَّاظِرِينَ ﴿٦٩﴾

- 2:62 *Indeed the faithful, the Jews, the Christians, and the Sabaeans—those of them who have faith in Allah and the Last Day and act righteously—they shall have their reward near their Lord, and they will have no fear, nor will they grieve.*
- 2:63 *And when We took a pledge from you, and raised the Mount above you [declaring], ‘Hold on with power to what We have given you, and remember that which is in it, so that you may be Godwary.’*
- 2:64 *Then after that you turned away; and were it not for Allah’s grace on you and His mercy, you would surely have been among the losers.*
- 2:65 *And certainly you know those of you who violated the Sabbath, whereupon We said to them, ‘Be you spurned apes.’*
- 2:66 *So We made it an exemplary punishment for the present and the succeeding [generations], and an advice to the Godwary.*
- 2:67 *And when Moses said to his people, ‘Indeed Allah commands you to slaughter a cow,’ they said, ‘Do you take us in derision?’ He said, ‘I seek Allah’s protection lest I should be one of the senseless!’*
- 2:68 *They said, ‘Invoke your Lord for us, that He may clarify for us what she may be.’ He said, ‘He says, She is a cow, neither old nor young, of a middle age. Now do what you are commanded.’*
- 2:69 *They said, ‘Invoke your Lord for us, that He may clarify for us what her colour may be.’ He said, ‘He says, She is a cow that is yellow, of a bright hue, pleasing to the onlookers.’*

**2:62** ﴿٦٥﴾ **KILLING THE PROPHETS** It is said that the Israelites killed God's prophets in various ways, whether by cutting-off their head, imprisoning them in a well, boiling them alive... many of their prophets died at the command of their kings and at the hands of the disbelievers and idolaters.<sup>64</sup>

**2:62** ﴿٦٥﴾ **DO ALL RELIGIONS LEAD TO SALVATION?** Some have argued, based on this verse, that the Qur'an considers other religions as valid paths to God and that anyone who follows one of these paths will be saved on the Day of Resurrection. However, it should be noted that the tenor of this verse is a critique of the ideas of the Jews and the Christians. According to numerous verses in the Qur'an, each of them believed that they were God's chosen people, the truly guided ones, and above all other human beings. They claimed that they were God's children and his favourites, that the abode of the Hereafter was for them alone, and that if they went to hell, it would only be for a short time. This verse criticises this false doctrine with a universal proclamation, which says that all human beings are in the presence of the One God, that no one group of people is innately superior to any other, and that you cannot guarantee yourself salvation simply by giving yourself the label of "Muslim", "Christian", or "Jew"! On the contrary, on the Day of Judgement, one is saved through having true belief in one's heart and doing righteous deeds while alive in this world. Therefore, the intent of this verse is not to announce that all religious are

true and that the human being can choose to follow whichever of these he so pleases. Instead, it means to refute the idea that just calling yourself by a certain faith makes you better than anyone else. Hence, it cannot be argued on the basis of this verse that the followers of all religions and schools of thought will attain salvation. In order to see what kind of faith the Qur'an considers to have the power to save the human being in the Hereafter, one should refer to Q3:85.<sup>65</sup>

**2:63** ﴿٦٦﴾ **WHY DID GOD RAISE THE MOUNTAIN ABOVE THE ISRAELITES?** God raised the mountain above the Israelites in order to fill them with awe at His great might and enjoin them to act upon His laws. However, there was no compulsion or coercion, as this was only supposed to be a demonstration of his power. If one were to argue that His raising the mountain above the Israelites had been a means of coercing them into obeying Him, it could also be said that the miracles performed by Moses عليه السلام compelled them to accept his teachings. However, the Qur'an makes clear that even when they witnessed his miracles, they felt no compulsion to believe – indeed, many chose not to! In fact, the very next verse makes explicit that even after the mountain being raised above them, the Israelites turned away from God.<sup>66</sup> For more on this, see the commentary on Q7:171.

**2:65** ﴿٦٧﴾ **THE VIOLATION OF THE SABBATH** See the commentary on Q7:165.



<sup>64</sup> *Atyab al-Bayān*, 2/46.

<sup>65</sup> *Manshūr-i Jāwīd*, 3/217.

<sup>66</sup> See *Mizān*, 1/197.

قَالُوا أَذُعْ لَنَا رَبِّكَ يُبَيِّن لَنَا مَا هِيَ إِنَّ الْبَقَرَ تَشَبَهَ عَلَيْنَا وَإِنَّا إِن شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَمُهْتَدُونَ ﴿٧٠﴾  
 قَالَ إِنَّهُ يَقُولُ إِنَّهَا بَقَرَةٌ لَا ذَلُولٌ تُثِيرُ الْأَرْضَ وَلَا تَسْقِي الْحَرْثَ مُسَلَّمَةٌ لَا  
 شِيَةَ فِيهَا قَالُوا لَئِن جِئْتَ بِالْحَقِّ فَذَبْحُوهَا وَمَا كَادُوا يَفْعَلُونَ ﴿٧١﴾ وَإِذ قَتَلْتُمْ  
 نَفْسًا فَادَّارْتُمْ فِيهَا وَاللَّهُ مُخْرَجٌ مَّا كُنْتُمْ تَكْتُمُونَ ﴿٧٢﴾ فَقُلْنَا اضْرِبُوهُ بِبَعْضِهَا  
 كَذَلِكَ يُحْيِي اللَّهُ الْمَوْتَى وَيُرِيكُمْ آيَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٧٣﴾ ثُمَّ قَسَتْ قُلُوبُكُمْ  
 مِّن بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ فَهِيَ كَالْحِجَارَةِ أَوْ أَشَدُّ قَسْوَةً وَإِن مِّن الْحِجَارَةِ لَمَا يَتَفَجَّرُ  
 مِنْهُ الْأَنْهَارُ وَإِن مِّنْهَا لَمَا يَشَقُّقُ فَيُخْرِجُ مِنْهُ الْمَاءَ وَإِن مِنْهَا لَمَا يَهْبِطُ مِنْ  
 خَشْيَةِ اللَّهِ وَمَا اللَّهُ بِغَفِيلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٧٤﴾ أَفَتَطْمَعُونَ أَن يُؤْمِنُوا لَكُمْ وَقَدْ  
 كَانَ فَرِيقٌ مِّنْهُمْ يَسْمَعُونَ كَلِمَ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ يُحَرِّفُونَهُ مِن بَعْدِ مَا عَقَلُوهُ وَهُمْ  
 يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٧٥﴾ وَإِذَا لَقُوا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا قَالُوا ءَامِنَّا وَإِذَا خَلَا بِبَعْضِهِمْ إِلَى بَعْضٍ قَالُوا  
 أَتَحَدِّثُونَهُم بِمَا فَتَحَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكُمْ لِيُحَاجُّوكُمْ بِهِ عِنْدَ رَبِّكُمْ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٧٦﴾

- 2:70 They said, 'Invoke your Lord for us, that He may clarify for us what she may be. Indeed all cows are much alike to us, and, if Allah wishes, we will surely be guided.'
- 2:71 He said, 'He says, She is a cow not broken to till the earth or to water the tillage, sound and without blemish.' They said, 'Now have you come up with the truth!' And they slaughtered it, though they were about not to do it.
- 2:72 And when you killed a soul, and accused one another about it—and Allah was to expose whatever you were concealing—
- 2:73 We said, 'Strike him with a piece of it:.' thus does Allah revive the dead, and He shows you His signs so that you may apply reason.
- 2:74 Then your hearts hardened after that; so they are like stones, or even harder. For indeed there are some stones from which streams gush forth, and indeed there are some of them that split, and water issues from them, and indeed there are some of them that fall for the fear of Allah. And Allah is not oblivious of what you do.
- 2:75 Are you then eager that they should believe you, though a part of them would hear the word of Allah and then they would distort it after they had understood it, and they knew [what they were doing]?
- 2:76 When they meet the faithful, they say, 'We believe,' and when they are alone with one another, they say, 'Do you recount to them what Allah has revealed to you, so that they may argue with you therewith before your Lord? Do you not apply reason?'

**2:71** ﴿٥٥﴾ **MAKING EXCUSES AND THE TIGHTENING OF THE OBLIGATION** A narration from Imam al-Riḍā عليه السلام says that one of the Israelites killed a relative of his, and then left his body near to one of the other tribes. When a group of the victim's kin came to Moses عليه السلام calling for retribution and demanding that he identify the killer, Moses told them: 'Bring me a cow.' Perplexed, they asked: 'Do you mock us?' Moses said: 'I seek God's protection lest I should be one of the senseless!' At this point, if the Israelites had simply brought Moses a cow, they could have spared themselves any further trouble. However, they decided to be difficult about this, and so God made it difficult for them. They said: 'Ask God to clarify for us what kind of cow this is?' Moses said: '*He says it is a she-cow, neither old nor young...*' and this continued until he had provided them with a precise description of the cow and they found that it belonged to a young man. However, the young man said he would not part with his cow except for a cow-hide full of gold. So, they bought the cow at this high price, slaughtered it as Moses commanded them, and struck the victim's body with a piece of its meat. At this point, the victim came back to life and named his killer. Then Moses told his companions: 'That cow belonged to a virtuous young man who venerated his father greatly. One day, he saw a great business opportunity and so went to his father to ask for the key to his chest or storeroom. However, his father was asleep, but he did not wake him and instead put

aside the business opportunity. When the youth's father heard of this, he was greatly impressed and made a gift of this cow to him.' Then Moses said: 'Do you see how good deeds return to their doer?'<sup>67</sup>

**2:74** ﴿٥٦﴾ **EVEN INANIMATE BEINGS OBEY GOD** When one reads the part of this verse which says '*...and indeed there are some of them that fall for the fear of God...*', one might wonder how it can be that boulders tumbling down mountains can be described as falling 'for the fear of God'? After all, these boulders tumble down due to natural causes such as tremors, erosion and weather patterns – so why does the Qur'an personify them in this way? To answer this, it must be said first of all that all the chains of cause-and-effect that operate throughout the cosmos ultimately go back to a single cause – and that is God. When a boulder tumbles down a mountain slope, it is in actuality following God's laws and commands as embodied in the natural order that governs the cosmos. Therefore, it can be said that it fell in obedience to God and out of fear of disobeying him! Equally, we read in verse 116 of this same chapter: '*...Rather to Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and the earth. All are obedient to Him.*'<sup>68</sup> Perhaps what God means to call attention to in this verse is that all beings, even the stones on the mountainside, obey God's commands. On the other hand, the human heart is so hard and impenetrable (even compared to boulders) that it gives no heed to God's commandments!



<sup>67</sup> *Mizān*, 1/203.

<sup>68</sup> See *Mizān*, 1/202.

أَوَلَا يَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا يُسِرُّونَ وَمَا يُعْلِنُونَ ﴿٧٧﴾ وَمِنْهُمْ أُمِّيُونَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ  
 الْكِتَابَ إِلَّا أَمَانِيَّ وَإِنْ هُمْ إِلَّا يَظُنُّونَ ﴿٧٨﴾ فَوَيْلٌ لِلَّذِينَ يَكْتُبُونَ الْكِتَابَ بِأَيْدِيهِمْ  
 ثُمَّ يَقُولُونَ هَذَا مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ لَيْسَتُرَوْا بِهِ ۗ ثُمَّ قَلِيلًا ۗ فَوَيْلٌ لَهُمْ مِمَّا كَتَبَتْ  
 أَيْدِيهِمْ ۗ وَوَيْلٌ لَهُمْ مِمَّا يَكْسِبُونَ ﴿٧٩﴾ وَقَالُوا لَنْ تَمَسَّنَا النَّارُ إِلَّا أَيَّامًا مَعْدُودَةً ۗ  
 قُلْ أَتَّخَذْتُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ عَهْدًا فَلَنْ يُخْلِفَ اللَّهُ عَهْدَهُ ۗ أَمْ تَقُولُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ مَا  
 لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٨٠﴾ بَلَىٰ مَنْ كَسَبَ سَيِّئَةً وَأَحَاطَتْ بِهِ خَاطِبَةُ فَأُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ  
 النَّارِ ۗ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿٨١﴾ وَالَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ  
 الْجَنَّةِ ۗ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿٨٢﴾ وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ لَا تَعْبُدُونَ إِلَّا  
 اللَّهَ ۗ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا وَذَى الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَقُولُوا لِلنَّاسِ حُسْنًا  
 وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ ثُمَّ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِّنْكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ مُّعْرِضُونَ ﴿٨٣﴾

- 2:77 Do they not know that Allah knows whatever they hide and whatever they disclose?
- 2:78 And among them are the illiterate who know nothing of the Book except hearsay, and they only make conjectures.
- 2:79 So woe to those who write the Book with their hands and then say, 'This is from Allah,' that they may sell it for a paltry gain. So woe to them for what their hands have written, and woe to them for what they earn!
- 2:80 And they say, 'The Fire shall not touch us except for a number of days.' Say, 'Have you taken a promise from Allah? If so, Allah shall never break His promise. Or do you ascribe to Allah what you do not know?'
- 2:81 Certainly whoever commits misdeeds and is besieged by his iniquity—such shall be the inmates of the Fire, and they shall remain in it [forever].
- 2:82 And those who have faith and do righteous deeds,—they shall be the inhabitants of paradise; they shall remain in it [forever].
- 2:83 And when We took a pledge from the Children of Israel: 'Worship no one but Allah, do good to parents, relatives, orphans, and the needy, and speak kindly to people, and maintain the prayer, and give the zakat,' you turned away, except a few of you, and you were disregarding.

**2:78** ﴿BLIND OBEDIENCE OR FOLLOWING BASED ON UNDERSTANDING? In verses 75–79 of this chapter, the Qur'an divides the Jews in the Prophet's time into two groups: The first group read their own scripture but write it and distort it according to their own whims, while the second group cannot read or write their own scripture and, therefore, only know of it the lies and distortions that the first group have fed to them.<sup>69</sup> With regard to this verse, it has been narrated that a man asked Imam al-Ṣādiq عليه السلام: 'These Jewish laypeople had no knowledge of their sacred scripture except through the scholars of their faith, so how can God blame them for following their scholars? What is the difference between the Jewish laypeople following their scholars and our laypeople following their own scholars?' The Imam responded: 'Our laypeople and the Jewish laypeople are different in one regard and similar in one regard. They are similar in that God has blamed our laypeople in the same way he has blamed theirs. They are different in that the Jewish laypeople were well aware that their scholars were dishonest and actively deceiving them, taking bribes, making money in illicit ways, and changing God's laws. But even though they were aware that their scholars were sinners and that they should not believe what they had to say about God, His laws, or His prophets, they continued to accept their authority. This is why God blames them. Now, if our laypeople see open sinfulness, partisanship, and avarice for this world and ill-gotten gains from their scholars, but still follow them anyway, they will be exactly like the Jewish laypeople in this verse whom God censures for following sinful scholars!' Then the Imam said: 'The ordinary

people should follow scholars who keep themselves pure of spirit, who care about their religion, who resist desire and temptation, and who obey God's command.'<sup>70</sup>

**2:80** ﴿THE FIRE SHALL NOT TOUCH US EXCEPT FOR A NUMBER OF DAYS' This verse repeats one of the baseless claims of the Jews alive at the time of the Prophet with which they had deluded themselves. This sort of belief is a source of chauvinism and deviation, namely that one's own people is better than all other peoples and that they are set apart from the rest of humanity; they will only be punished for their sins for a short time before God allows them to go to heaven – which is exclusively for them. The Jews considered themselves the descendants of the Prophets and said that their patriarchs would intervene for them on the Day of Judgement. This is reflected by the claim that the Qur'an repeats from them in this verse: '*...the Fire shall not touch us except for a number of days.*' This verse refutes this erroneous belief by retorting: 'You are in one of two conditions: Either you have a special covenant with God in this regard, which you do not, or you are attributing lies and falsehoods to God!'<sup>71</sup>

**2:83** ﴿SPEAK GOOD WORDS TO PEOPLE' About the phrase '*...and speak good words to people...*' (*wa qūlū li al-nās ḥusnā*), it is narrated that Imam al-Ṣādiq عليه السلام said: 'When you speak to people, speak only what is good and proper to them. And when you do not know what speech is good, then do not speak at all.' And, in a narration from Imam al-Baqir عليه السلام, we read: 'It is best to speak to people in the way you would like to be spoken to.'<sup>72</sup>



<sup>69</sup> See *Mizān*, 1/214.

<sup>70</sup> *Nimūnah*, 1/319.

<sup>71</sup> *Nimūnah*, 1/322; *Manshūr-i Jāwid*, 8/68.

<sup>72</sup> *Mizān*, 1/218.

وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَكُمْ لَا تَسْفِكُونَ دِمَاءَكُمْ وَلَا تُخْرِجُونَ أَنْفُسَكُمْ مِنْ دِيَارِكُمْ ثُمَّ أَقْرَرْتُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ تَشْهَدُونَ ﴿٨٤﴾ ثُمَّ أَنْتُمْ هَؤُلَاءِ تَقْتُلُونَ أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَتُخْرِجُونَ فَرِيقًا مِّنْكُمْ مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ تَظَاهَرُونَ عَلَيْهِم بِالْإِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ وَإِن يَأْتُوكُمْ أُسْرَىٰ تَقْلُدُوهُمْ وَهُوَ مُحْرَمٌ عَلَيْكُمْ إِخْرَاجُهُمْ أَفْتُونُونَ بِبَعْضِ الْكِتَابِ وَتَكْفُرُونَ بِبَعْضٍ فَمَا جَزَاءُ مَنْ يَفْعَلُ ذَلِكَ مِنْكُمْ إِلَّا خِزْيٌ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَيَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ يُرَدُّونَ إِلَىٰ أَشَدِّ الْعَذَابِ ۗ وَمَا اللَّهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٨٥﴾ أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ اشْتَرُوا الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا بِالْآخِرَةِ ۗ فَلَا يُخَفَّفُ عَنْهُمُ الْعَذَابُ وَلَا هُمْ يُنصَرُونَ ﴿٨٦﴾ وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَىٰ الْكِتَابَ وَقَفَّيْنَا مِنْ بَعْدِهِ بِالرُّسُلِ ۗ وَآتَيْنَا عِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ الْبَيِّنَاتِ وَأَيَّدْنَاهُ بِرُوحِ الْقُدُسِ ۗ أَفَكُلَّمَا جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولٌ بِمَا لَا تَهْوَىٰ أَنْفُسُكُمْ اسْتَكْبَرْتُمْ فَفَرِيقًا كَذَّبْتُمْ وَفَرِيقًا تَقْتُلُونَ ﴿٨٧﴾ وَقَالُوا قُلُوبُنَا غُلْفٌ ۗ بَلْ لَعَنَهُمُ اللَّهُ بِكُفْرِهِمْ فَقَلِيلًا مَّا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٨٨﴾

- 2:84 And when We took a pledge from you: 'You shall not shed your [own people's] blood, and you shall not expel your folks from your homes,' you pledged, and you testify [to this pledge of your ancestors].
- 2:85 Then there you were, killing your folks and expelling a part of your folks from their homes, backing one another against them in sin and aggression! And if they came to you as captives, you would ransom them, though their expulsion itself was forbidden you. What! Do you believe in part of the Book and defy another part? So what is the requital of those of you who do that except disgrace in the life of this world? And on the Day of Resurrection, they shall be consigned to the severest punishment. And Allah is not oblivious of what you do.
- 2:86 They are the ones who bought the life of this world for the Hereafter; so their punishment shall not be lightened, nor will they be helped.
- 2:87 Certainly We gave Moses the Book, and followed him with the messengers, and We gave Jesus, the son of Mary, manifest proofs, and confirmed him with the Holy Spirit. Is it not that whenever a messenger brought you that which was not to your liking, you would act arrogantly; so you would impugn a part [of them], and slay a [another] part?
- 2:88 And they say, 'Our hearts are uncircumcised.' Rather Allah has cursed them for their unfaith, so few of them have faith.

2:85 ﴿AND IF THEY CAME TO YOU AS CAPTIVES, YOU WOULD RANSOM THEM...﴾ Several commentators have said that this verse alludes to two of the Jewish Arabian tribes of Yathrib, the Banū Qurayzah and the Banū Naḍir, who were closely related to one another but, because of competing worldly interests, had fallen-out with one another. The Banū Naḍir were aligned with the pagan Arab tribe, the Khazraj, while the Banū Qurayzah were aligned with their rivals, the Aws. When conflicts broke out between the Aws and the Khazraj, the Banū Qurayzah and the Banū Naḍir would help their allies. However, when the fires of war died down, the Jewish tribes would set aside their differences and pay ransoms to have their prisoners set free. In doing so, they said they were following the injunctions of the Torah. However, according to the Torah, they should not have been helping the Aws or the Khazraj, who were pagans, in the first place. Secondly, the same Torah which mandated the payment of ransoms for their prisoners also forbade them from killing one another. And these tribes engaged in many such contradictory behaviours. One of the points that this verse is making is that a person's submission to God and faith become apparent when they follow the law even though it goes against their own personal interests. Otherwise, there is no honour in following the divine law simply because it safeguards one's own interests, nor is this a mark of faith. Therefore, one of the ways in which it is possible to distinguish the truly faithful from the hypocrites is that the former submit to God's laws whether these benefit them or not, while the hypocrites only follow those which suit them.<sup>73</sup>

2:86 ﴿THIS WORLD'S LACK OF VALUE IN COMPARISON TO THE HEREAFTER﴾ On numerous occasions throughout the Qur'an, God criticises the life of this world and admonishes mankind: '*do not let the life of the world deceive you*'.<sup>74</sup> The reason for this criticism is that the Qur'an promises mankind a life which the life of this world seem pale by comparison. Therefore, human beings should not be

deceived by the life of this world into giving up the better life that awaits them. In *Sūrat al-Tawbah*, God explains the relation of the two lives as follows: '*Are you pleased with the life of this world instead of the Hereafter? But the wares of the life of this world compared with the Hereafter are but insignificant!*'<sup>75</sup> In a tradition attributed to the Prophet ﷺ, we read: 'The relation of the life of this world to that of the hereafter is as if one of you dipped his finger into the ocean and then brought it out. How much [of the ocean's water] do you think you would bring out?'<sup>76</sup> Meanwhile, there is a tradition from Imam 'Alī رضي الله عنه, which reads: 'Are you not freemen who can leave the scraps of this world to those ensnared by it? You are worth no less than paradise, so do not sell yourselves for any less than paradise!'<sup>77</sup> So, when the human being finds himself at the crossroads between this world and the hereafter, if he prefers this world over the hereafter, the Qur'an criticises him. Otherwise, if he only enjoys the permissible blessings and pleasures of this world, then the Qur'an does not condemn him. On the contrary, we read in *Sūrat al-A'raf* that we should enjoy this world: '*Say, Who has forbidden the adornment of God which He has brought forth for His servants, and the good things of His provision? Say, These are for the faithful in the life of this world, and exclusively for them on the Day of Resurrection.*' Thus do We elaborate the signs for a people who have knowledge.'<sup>78</sup>

2:87 ﴿THE HOLY SPIRIT﴾ Commentators have offered different explanations of 'the Holy Spirit' (*al-Rūḥ al-Qudus*). Some have said this refers to the Angel Gabriel. According to this reading, the verse would mean: 'God confirmed Jesus with the Angel Gabriel.' In support of this reading, its proponents cite the verse from *Sūrat al-Naḥl*: '*Say, the Holy Spirit has brought it down duly from your Lord...*'<sup>79</sup> – The reason why they refer to Gabriel as 'the Holy Spirit' is because the spiritual aspect of the angels is something known to everyone, and the attribute 'holy' (*qudus*) is added to this to emphasise the special sanctity of this particular angel.<sup>80</sup>

<sup>73</sup> *Nimūnah*, 1/231.

<sup>74</sup> Q33:36.

<sup>75</sup> Q9:38.

<sup>76</sup> See *Nimūnah*, 2/455.

<sup>77</sup> *Nahj al-Balāghah*, aphorism no. 456.

<sup>78</sup> Q7:32.

<sup>79</sup> Q16:102.

<sup>80</sup> *Nimūnah*, 1/338.

وَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ كِتَابٌ مِّنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ مُصَدِّقٌ لِّمَا مَعَهُمْ وَكَانُوا مِنْ قَبْلُ يَسْتَفْتِحُونَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ مَا عَرَفُوا كَفَرُوا بِهِ ۖ فَلَعْنَةُ اللَّهِ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٨٩﴾ بِئْسَمَا أَشْتَرُوا بِهِ ۖ أَنْفُسَهُمْ أَنْ يَكْفُرُوا بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ بَغْيًا أَنْ يَنْزِلَ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ ۗ عَلَىٰ مَنْ يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ ۗ طَبَأُوْا بِغَضَبٍ عَلَىٰ غَضَبٍ وَلِلْكَافِرِينَ عَذَابٌ مُّهِينٌ ﴿٩٠﴾ وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ ءَامِنُوا بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ قَالُوا نُوْمِنُ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْنَا وَيَكْفُرُونَ بِمَا وَرَاءَهُ ۗ وَهُوَ الْحَقُّ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا مَعَهُمْ ۗ قُلْ فَلِمَ تَقْتُلُونَ أَنْبِيَاءَ اللَّهِ مِنْ قَبْلُ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٩١﴾ وَلَقَدْ جَاءَكُمْ مُّوسَىٰ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ ثُمَّ اتَّخَذْتُمُ الْعِجْلَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ ۗ وَأَنْتُمْ ظَالِمُونَ ﴿٩٢﴾ وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَكُمْ وَرَفَعْنَا فَوْقَكُمُ الطُّورَ خُذُوا مَا آتَيْنَاكُمْ بِقُوَّةٍ وَأَسْمِعُوا ۗ طَبَأُوا سَمِعَنَا وَعَصَيْنَا وَأَشْرَبُوا فِي قُلُوبِهِمُ الْعِجْلَ بِكُفْرِهِمْ ۗ قُلْ بِئْسَمَا يَأْمُرُكُم بِهِ ۖ إِيمَانُكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٩٣﴾

- 2:89 And when there came to them a Book from Allah, confirming that which is with them—and earlier they would pray for victory over the pagans—so when there came to them what they recognized, they defied it. So may the curse of Allah be on the faithless!
- 2:90 Evil is that for which they have sold their souls, by defying what Allah has sent down, out of envy, that Allah should bestow His grace on any of His servants that He wishes. Thus they earned wrath upon wrath, and there is a humiliating punishment for the faithless.
- 2:91 And when they are told, "Believe in what Allah has sent down," they say, "We believe in what was sent down to us," and they disbelieve what is besides it, though it is the truth confirming what is with them. Say, "Then why would you kill the prophets of Allah formerly, should you be faithful?"
- 2:92 Certainly Moses brought you manifest proofs, but then you took up the Calf in his absence, and you were wrongdoers.
- 2:93 And when We took covenant with you and raised the Mount above you [declaring], 'Hold on with power to what We have given you, and listen!' They said, "We hear, and disobey," and their hearts had been imbued with [the love of] the Calf, due to their faithlessness. Say, 'Evil is that to which your faith prompts you, should you be faithful!'

**2:89** ﴿٥﴾ **THE JEWS OF YATHRIB RECOGNISED THE PROPHET** ﷺ With regard to this verse, there is a narration from Imam al-Ṣādiq عليه السلام which states that in their own scriptures the Jews knew that a prophet would seek refuge between Mount 'Ayr and Mount Uḥud – which were the mountains on either side of Yathrib. This led many of them to settle there, engage in trade and make lives for themselves while they awaited the advent of this Prophet. Later, the Arab tribes of the Aws and the Khazraj also settled there. However, because these Arab tribes were larger than the Jewish tribes, they would take their property. The Jewish tribes warned the Aws and the Khazraj that one day a prophet would come and drive them out of the land. But when the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ arrived, the Aws and the Khazraj believed in him and became known as 'the Helpers' (*al-Anṣār*), while the Jews who had found him foretold in their scripture and had been awaiting his arrival, now denied him.<sup>81</sup>

**2:90** ﴿٥﴾ **'THUS THEY EARNED WRATH UPON WRATH'** With regard to the part of the verse which reads '*thus they earned wrath upon wrath*', it

is said that because the Israelites had denied God's signs, disobeyed His commands, and killed His prophets, they had earned his wrath. This was the first wrath that they had earned. Now, the Jews of Yathrib adopted the same attitude towards the arrival of the Prophet of Islam ﷺ as their forebearers had displayed previously. In other words, they did not only disbelieve in him, but actively sought to oppose him. This also earned them God's wrath. Therefore, they were subject to two wraths.<sup>82</sup>

**2:91** ﴿٥﴾ **WHY DOES GOD BLAME THE JEWS OF YATHRIB FOR THE ISRAELITES KILLING HIS PROPHETS?** About the phrase "*Then why would you kill the prophets of God formerly, should you be faithful?*", it is narrated from Imam al-Ṣādiq عليه السلام: "This verse was revealed about the Jews who lived at the time of the Prophet. However, it was not they who killed the earlier prophets because none of them had been alive at that time. The Israelites had killed those prophets, but God counts the Jews of Yathrib as equal to them and attributes the evil actions of their forebearers to them. But this is only because they were following the example of their forebearers and approved of their actions."<sup>83</sup>



<sup>81</sup> *Mizān*, 1/221.

<sup>82</sup> *Nimūnah*, 1/346.

<sup>83</sup> *Ayyāshī*, 1/143.

قُلْ إِنْ كَانَتْ لَكُمْ الدَّارُ الْآخِرَةُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ خَالِصَةً مِّنْ دُونِ النَّاسِ فَتَمَنَّوْا  
 الْمَوْتَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿٩٤﴾ وَلَنْ يَتَمَنَّوَهُ أَبَدًا بِمَا قَدَّمْتُمْ أَيْدِيهِمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ  
 بِالظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٩٥﴾ وَلَتَجِدَنَّهُمْ أَحْرَصَ النَّاسِ عَلَى حَيَاتِهِ وَمِنَ الَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا ۗ يَوَدُّ  
 أَحَدُهُمْ لَوْ يُعَمَّرَ أَلْفَ سَنَةٍ وَمَا هُوَ بِمُزَحَّزِحَهُ مِنْ الْعَذَابِ ۗ مَنْ يُعَمَّرْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ بَصِيرٌ  
 بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٩٦﴾ قُلْ مَنْ كَانَ عَدُوًّا لِلْجِبْرِيلِ فَإِنَّهُ نَزَّلَهُ عَلَى قَلْبِكَ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ مُصَدِّقًا  
 لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَهُدًى وَبُشْرَىٰ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٩٧﴾ مَنْ كَانَ عَدُوًّا لِلَّهِ وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ  
 وَجِبْرِيلَ وَمِيكَالَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ عَدُوٌّ لِلْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٩٨﴾ وَلَقَدْ أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ آيَاتٍ بَيْنَتِ  
 وَمَا يَكْفُرُ بِهَا إِلَّا الْفٰلسِقُونَ ﴿٩٩﴾ أَوْ كَلَّمَا عَلَيْهِمْ عَهْدًا نَّبَذَهُ فَرِيقٌ مِّنْهُمْ ۗ بَلْ  
 أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١٠٠﴾ وَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ رَسُولٌ مِّنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ مُصَدِّقٌ لِّمَا مَعَهُمْ نَبَذَ  
 فَرِيقٌ مِّنَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ كِتَابَ اللَّهِ وَرَاءَ ظُهُورِهِمْ كَانَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٠١﴾

- 2:94 Say, 'If the abode of the Hereafter with Allah were exclusively for you, and not for other people, then long for death, should you be truthful.'
- 2:95 But they will not long for it ever because of what their hands have sent ahead, and Allah knows best the wrongdoers.
- 2:96 Surely, you will find them the greediest for life, of all people - even the idolaters. Each of them is eager to live a thousand years, though it would not deliver him from the punishment, were he to live [that long]. And Allah sees best what they do.
- 2:97 Say, 'Whoever is an enemy of Gabriel [should know that] it is he who has brought it down on your heart with the will of Allah, confirming what has been [revealed] before it, and as a guidance and good news to the faithful.'
- 2:98 [Say,] 'Whoever is an enemy of Allah, His angels and His messengers, and Gabriel and Michael, [let him know that] Allah is indeed the enemy of the faithless.'
- 2:99 We have certainly sent down manifest signs to you, and no one defies them except transgressors.
- 2:100 Is it not that whenever they made a covenant, a part of them would cast it away? Rather the majority of them do not have faith.
- 2:101 And when there came to them an messenger from Allah, confirming that which is with them, a part of those who were given the Book cast the Book of Allah behind their back, as if they did not know [that it is Allah's Book].

2:94 ﴿٥٣﴾ **‘IF THE ABODE OF THE HEREAFTER WITH GOD WERE EXCLUSIVELY FOR YOU...’** The Qur'an portrays the Jews of Yathrib as believing that, as Jews, they were superior to all other peoples, because they were God's chosen people. Therefore, God created paradise exclusively for them, they were God's children, and that they were the apple of His eye. In short, they believed that they alone were good and righteous to the exclusion of all others. The Qur'an frequently cites examples of this conceitedness. For example, in *Sūrat al-Mā'idah*, we read: *'The Jews and the Christians say, 'We are God's children and His beloved ones.'*<sup>84</sup> Meanwhile, later in *Sūrat al-Baqarah* we come across the verse: *'And they say, 'No one shall enter paradise except one who is a Jew or a Christian.'*<sup>85</sup> On the one hand, these beliefs led them to wrong others, who they saw as less than themselves. On the other hand, it also led them to become proud and arrogant. In the present verse, the Qur'an rebukes them for holding such ideas: *'Say, 'If the abode of the Hereafter with God were exclusively for you, and not for other people, then long for death, should you be truthful.'* In other words: *'If what you say is true, then why don't you want to go to God's mercy and enjoy the limitless blessings of paradise now?'* In fact, the Jews of Yathrib had only made this claim to the Muslims in order to dishearten them with their new faith. However, the Qur'an exposes this claim for the falsehood that it is by pointing out that the ones making this claim are not eager to leave this world themselves – something further alluded to in Q2:95, below.<sup>86</sup>

2:97 ﴿٥٤﴾ **‘WHOEVER IS AN ENEMY OF GABRIEL...’** Commentators have said that the occasion of this verse's revelation (*shān al-nuzūl*)<sup>87</sup> was that, when the Prophet ﷺ first came to Medina, one day, a Rabbi came with some Jews from Fadak and asked him a variety of questions and inquired about var-

ious signs that would mark him out as a prophet. The Prophet answered his questions correctly and convinced him of his veracity. The Rabbi said: *'I have just one more question which, if you answer correctly, I will believe in you and follow you: What is the name of the angel that brings the revelation to you?'* The Prophet replied: *'It is Gabriel.'* The Rabbi replied: *'Ah, that is our enemy, for he always brings down difficult commands to fight! As for Michael, he brings us easy and straightforward commands. If your angel of revelation was Michael, I would have believed in you!'* In response, the verse was revealed: *'Whoever is an enemy of Gabriel [is actually an enemy of God as] it is he who has brought it down on your heart with the will of God.'*<sup>88</sup>

2:98 ﴿٥٥﴾ **THE FOUR ARCHANGELS** Works of Islamic theology normally identify four archangels, which are the angels closest to God. They are Gabriel (*Fibrā'il*), Michael (*Mikā'il*), Raphael (*Isrā'fīl*) and Azrael (*'Azrā'il*). Of these, Gabriel is the highest in rank.<sup>89</sup> These angels are God's intermediaries for various functions: Gabriel is the bringer of revelation; Michael is the bringer of sustenance; Raphael is the one who brings the dead back to life on the Day of Resurrection; and Azrael is the one who takes a person's soul at their time of death.<sup>90</sup> In one of the supplications of Imam Zayn al-Ābidīn (عليه السلام) in which he mentions these angels, we read: *'O God! Send your blessings on Raphael, the angel who bears the Trumpet of Resurrection, who awaits Your command to blow into it and bring forth the dead from their graves; and Michael, who is ennobled by You and who, through his obedience to you, has a lofty station; and Gabriel, the one entrusted with revelation, who is obeyed by all the inhabitants of Your heavens, who is lofty in Your eyes and one of those brought near in Your court.'*<sup>91</sup>

<sup>84</sup> Q5:18.

<sup>85</sup> Q2:III.

<sup>86</sup> See *Nimūnah*, 1/354.

<sup>87</sup> 'Occasions of revelation' are those events immediately preceding the revelation of a verse, which provide context for it. As such, these can be incredibly useful for understanding the meaning of the Qur'an's verses.

<sup>88</sup> *Mizān*, 1/227.

<sup>89</sup> *Nimūnah*, 1/364.

<sup>90</sup> *Mizān*, 8/266.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 17/9.

وَاتَّبَعُوا مَا تَتْلُوا الشَّيَاطِينُ عَلَىٰ مُلْكِ سُلَيْمَانَ ۗ وَمَا كَفَرَ سُلَيْمَانُ وَلَكِنَّ الشَّيَاطِينَ  
كَفَرُوا يُعَلِّمُونَ النَّاسَ السِّحْرَ وَمَا أُنزِلَ عَلَى الْمَلَكَيْنِ بِبَابِلَ هِرُوتَ وَمَرُوتَ  
وَمَا يُعَلِّمَانِ مِنْ أَحَدٍ حَتَّى يَقُولَا إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ فِتْنَةٌ فَلَا تَكْفُرْ ۗ فَيَتَعَلَّمُونَ مِنْهُمَا  
مَا يُفَرِّقُونَ بَيْنَ الْمَرْءِ وَزَوْجِهِ ۗ وَمَا هُمْ بِضَارِّينَ بِهِ مِنْ أَحَدٍ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ  
اللَّهِ ۗ وَيَتَعَلَّمُونَ مَا يَضُرُّهُمْ وَلَا يَنْفَعُهُمْ ۗ وَلَقَدْ عَلِمُوا لَمَنِ اشْتَرَاهُ مَا لَهُ فِي  
الْآخِرَةِ مِنْ خَلْقٍ وَلَيْسَ مَا شَرَوْا بِهِ أَنْفُسَهُمْ ۗ لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١١٢﴾ وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ  
ءَامَنُوا وَاتَّقَوْا لَمَثُوبَةٌ مِّنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ خَيْرٌ لَّو كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١١٣﴾ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ  
ءَامَنُوا لَا تَقُولُوا رِعْنَا وَقُولُوا نُنظَرْنَا ۗ وَأَسْمَعُوا ۗ وَلِلْكَافِرِينَ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿١١٤﴾ مَا  
يُودُّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ وَلَا الْمُشْرِكِينَ أَنْ يُنَزَّلَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِّنْ خَيْرٍ  
مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يَخْتَصُّ بِرَحْمَتِهِ مَن يَشَاءُ ۗ وَاللَّهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيمِ ﴿١١٥﴾

- 2:102 *And they followed what the devils pursued during Solomon's reign—and Solomon did not turn faithless, but it was the devils who were faithless—teaching the people magic, and what was sent down to the two angels at Babylon, Harut and Marut, and they would not teach anyone without telling [him], 'We are only a test, so do not be faithless.' But they would learn from those two that with which they would cause a split between man and his wife—though they could not harm anyone with it except with Allah's leave. And they would learn that which would harm them and bring them no benefit; though they certainly knew that anyone who buys it has no share in the Hereafter. Surely, evil is that for which they sold their souls; had they known!*
- 2:103 *Had they been faithful and Godwary, the reward from Allah would have been better; had they known!*
- 2:104 *O you who have faith! Do not say Ra'ina, but say Unzurna, and listen! And there is a painful punishment for the faithless.*
- 2:105 *Neither the faithless from among the People of the Book, nor the idolaters, like that any good be showered on you from your Lord; but Allah singles out for His mercy whomever He wishes, and Allah is dispenser of a mighty grace.*

**2:102 ﴿﴾ 'SOLOMON DID NOT TURN FAITHLESS'**

According to the traditions, at the time of Solomon there were a group of people in his kingdom who were practicing magic and sorcery. Solomon ordered that all of their writings and books be gathered and kept securely. Perhaps this was because they contained useful knowledge about how to repel the magic of magicians. After Solomon died, they brought out some of these writings and began teaching people magic. Some even tried to claim that Solomon was not even a prophet but had actually used magic to perform miracles and win his kingdom. Some of the Israelites believed them and became deeply attached to magic, to the extent that they abandoned to Torah. When the Prophet of Islam ﷺ came and said that Solomon was a prophet of God, some of the Jewish priests and rabbis said: 'Isn't it strange that Muhammad claims Solomon was a prophet when he was actually a sorcerer?' As well as being a serious accusation to level at one of God's prophets, this also would imply that Solomon was not even a believer as, according to them, Solomon was a magician who falsely claimed to be a prophet. This is, of course, tantamount to disbelief. This verse was revealed in response to this claim of theirs.<sup>92</sup>

**2:102 ﴿﴾ NOTHING IS SUPERIOR TO THE WILL OF GOD** With regard to the phrase '*though they could not harm anyone with it except with God's leave*', commentators on the Qur'an have said that this does not mean that everything is predetermined by God. On the contrary, this alludes to one of

the principles of divine unity (*tawhīd*) namely that all the powers and forces at work in this world spring forth from the power of the Creator – even that a fire burns or a sword cuts is possible only by God's leave and willing it so. It is not the case that magicians can go against the world of God and interfere with His creation, or in some way restrict God's authority. On the contrary, what they do is only possible because of the system of cause and effect that God has created. Some use cause and effect for good, and others misuse it for evil. Therefore, the freedom of choice that God has given to mankind is a means by which they can be tested, and a means by which they can grow and develop.<sup>93</sup>

**2:102 ﴿﴾ SORCERY IS A MAJOR SIN** Sorcery is a form of supernatural activity that can either be used to have a real effect on human beings, to deceive them through trickery or sleight of hand, or simply have an psychological or imaginary effect on them.<sup>94</sup> According to all scholars of Islamic jurisprudence, the study and practice of magic is strictly forbidden. There is a tradition narrated from Imam 'Alī, which says: 'Anyone who learns magic, whether in a great or small amount, has disbelieved and cut himself off from God.' However, if someone learns magic for the sole purpose of warding off the magic of others, there is no problem with this. On the contrary, it could even be a collective obligation (*wājib kifā'i*) to study magic in order to expose charlatans and tricksters who are seeking to mislead people.<sup>95</sup>



<sup>92</sup> *Nimūnah*, 1/370.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 376.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 377.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 379.

مَا نَنْسَخْ مِنْ آيَةٍ أَوْ نُنسِهَا نَأْتِ بِخَيْرٍ مِّنْهَا أَوْ مِثْلَهَا أَلَمْ تَعْلَمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿١٠٦﴾ أَلَمْ تَعْلَمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مِنْ وَلِيٍّ وَلَا نَصِيرٍ ﴿١٠٧﴾ أَمْ تُرِيدُونَ أَنْ تَسْأَلُوا رَسُولَكُمْ كَمَا سُئِلَ مُوسَىٰ مِنْ قَبْلُ ۗ وَمَنْ يَتَّبِدَلِ الْكُفْرَ بِالْإِيمَانِ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ سَوَاءَ السَّبِيلِ ﴿١٠٨﴾ وَكَثِيرٌ مِّنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ لَوْ يَرُدُّونَكُمْ مِّنْ بَعْدِ إِيمَانِكُمْ كُفَّارًا حَسَدًا مِّنْ عِنْدِ أَنْفُسِهِمْ مِّنْ بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الْحَقُّ فَاعْفُوا وَاصْفَحُوا حَتَّىٰ يَأْتِيَ اللَّهَ بِأَمْرٍ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿١٠٩﴾ وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَمَا تُقَدِّمُوا لِأَنْفُسِكُمْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ تَجِدُوهُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ ﴿١١٠﴾ وَقَالُوا لَنْ يَدْخُلَ الْجَنَّةَ إِلَّا مَن كَانَ هُودًا أَوْ نَصْرَىٰ ۗ تِلْكَ أَمَانِيُّهُمْ ۗ قُلْ هَاتُوا بُرْهَانَكُمْ إِن كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿١١١﴾ بَلَىٰ مَنْ أَسْلَمَ وَجْهَهُ لِلَّهِ وَهُوَ مُحْسِنٌ فَلَهُ أَجْرُهُ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِ ۗ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ﴿١١٢﴾

- 2:106 For any verse that We abrogate or remove from memories, We bring another which is better than it, or similar to it. Do you not know that Allah has power over all things?
- 2:107 Do you not know that to Allah belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth? And besides Allah you do not have any guardian or any helper.
- 2:108 Would you question your Messenger as Moses was questioned formerly? Whoever changes faith for unfaith certainly strays from the right way.
- 2:109 Many of the People of the Book are eager to turn you into unbelievers after your faith, out of their inner envy, [and] after the truth had become manifest to them. Yet excuse [them] and forbear until Allah issues His edict. Indeed Allah has power over all things.
- 2:110 And maintain the prayer and give the zakat. Any good that you send ahead for your souls, you shall find it with Allah. Indeed Allah sees best what you do.
- 2:111 And they say, 'No one shall enter paradise except one who is a Jew or a Christian.' Those are their [false] hopes! Say, 'Produce your evidence, should you be truthful.'
- 2:112 Certainly whoever submits his will to Allah and is virtuous, he shall have his reward near his Lord, and they shall have no fear, nor shall they grieve.

**2:106** ﴿٥﴾ **A PROGRAMME FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT** 'Abrogation' (*naskh*) means to remove or erase something. In the logic of divine revelation, it means to alter a ruling or replace one with another. For example, for seven months after emigrating to Medina, the Muslims prayed with their direction of prayer (*Qiblah*) towards Jerusalem. Then, God sent down the command that they should change their direction of prayer and pray towards the Kaaba in Mecca instead. When discussing abrogation, we should keep in mind that the human being's needs are sometimes fixed and sometimes change with the passage of time or on account of changes in his environment. One day there is a particular programme which will lead the human being to happiness but, on another day, that same programme which previously was a means to happiness could become an obstacle to it because of changes in the environment. To give an analogy, a doctor might prescribe a particular kind of medicine for a patient but, when the patient improves, the doctor instructs him to stop taking the very same medicine that he prescribed previously and now gives him a different medicine to take. The same principle applies when discussing the development of human beings and human societies; sometimes a particular policy might be beneficial for a society, while at others the same policy might be harmful. This is especially true when we talk about revolutions or paradigm shifts, as there must be gradual shifts in policy over time to accommodate changing circumstances. However, be that as it may, we must also remember that the fundamental principles of revealed religions, which are the foundation of everything that springs from them, are the same in all times, places, and circumstances. There can never be a situation in which the principle of divine unity (*tawhid*) or divine justice (*'adl*), for instance, might change to something else. This is true of many other principles and beliefs too. Therefore, the doctrine of abrogation deals only with particular issues which are secondary to the fundamental tenets of the faith.<sup>96</sup>

**2:108** ﴿٥﴾ **MIRACLES AS A MEANS FOR PROVING CLAIMS OF PROPHETHOOD** In several places, the

Qur'an explains that the people of Moses ﷺ demanded things from him that were either impossible or whose occurrence would have been of no benefit for them. For example, in Q2:55, they say: 'O Moses, we will not believe you until we see God visibly.' Meanwhile, in *Sūrat al-Zykhruf*, Pharaoh says that, if Moses is truly a prophet as he claims, then 'Why have no bracelets of gold been cast upon him, nor have the angels come with him as escorts?'<sup>97</sup> In fact, in the Qur'an we see that God doles out severe punishments to the people who concoct these pretexts for rejecting the truth or who make such demands of His prophets. And the idolaters at the time of the Prophet ﷺ made similar demands of him. For instance, in *Sūrat al-Isrā'*, they are quoted as telling him: 'We will not believe you until you make a spring gush forth for us from the ground. Or until you have a garden of date palms and vines and you make streams gush through it. Or until you cause the sky to fall in fragments upon us, just as you would aver. Or until you bring God and the angels before us. Or until you have a house of gold, or you ascend into the sky. And we will not believe your ascension until you bring down for us a book that we may read.'<sup>98</sup> However, the truth is that the Prophets were only able to perform their miracles by God's leave in order to demonstrate the veracity of their claims, and only to the extent that the people of their own time were able to perceive and understand – feats that people recognised themselves as being unable to perform. In fact, this is where the Arabic word for miracle – *mu'jizah* – is derived; the root '*ajaza*' literally means 'to be unable' or 'to be incapable.' Therefore, a miracle is literally something that others cannot do. So this verse rebukes the opponents of the Prophet of Islam and warns them against making such impertinent demands lest the same fate befall them as befell the people of Moses. Fundamentally, God gave the Prophets miracles to show that they were, in fact, His messengers. He did not give them superpowers so that they could do whatever the people demanded of them or to win people to God's message by performing magic tricks for their entertainment!<sup>99</sup>

<sup>96</sup> See *Nimūnah*, 1/390.

<sup>97</sup> Q43:53.

<sup>98</sup> Q17:90--93.

<sup>99</sup> See *Atyab al-Bayān*, 2/145.

وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُودُ لَيْسَتِ النَّصْرَىٰ عَلَىٰ شَيْءٍ وَقَالَتِ النَّصْرَىٰ لَيْسَتِ الْيَهُودُ عَلَىٰ شَيْءٍ وَهُمْ يَتْلُونَ الْكِتَابَ ۗ كَذٰلِكَ قَالَ الَّذِيْنَ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ مِثْلَ قَوْلِهِمْ ۗ قَالَ لَهِ يَحْكُمُ بَيْنَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ فِىْمَا كَانُوْا فِيْهِ يَخْتَلِفُوْنَ ﴿۱۱۴﴾ وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّن مَّنَعَ مَسٰجِدَ اللّٰهِ اَنْ يُذَكَرَ فِيْهَا اَسْمُهُ وَاَسْعٰى فِىْ خَرَابِهَا ۗ اُولٰٓئِكَ مَا كَانَ لَهُمْ اَنْ يَدْخُلُوْهَا اِلَّا خٰفِيْنَ ۗ لَهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا خِزْيٌ وَّلَهُمْ فِي الْاٰخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ عَظِيْمٌ ﴿۱۱۵﴾ وَاَللّٰهُ الْمَشْرِقُ وَالْمَغْرِبُ ۗ فَاِيْمًا تُوَلُّوْا فَتَمَّ وَجْهُ اللّٰهِ ۗ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ وَسِيْعٌ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿۱۱۶﴾ وَقَالُوْا اتَّخَذَ اللّٰهُ وَلَدًا ۗ سُبْحٰنَهُ ۗ بَلْ لَّهٗ مَا فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ۗ كُلُّ لَهٗ قٰنِتُوْنَ ﴿۱۱۷﴾ بَدِيْعُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ۗ وَاِذَا قَضٰى اَمْرًا فَاِنَّمَا يَقُوْلُ لَهٗ كُنْ فَيَكُوْنُ ﴿۱۱۸﴾ وَقَالَ الَّذِيْنَ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ لَوْلَا يُكَلِّمُنَا اللّٰهُ اَوْ تَاْتِيْنَا ءَايَةً ۗ كَذٰلِكَ قَالَ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ مِّثْلَ قَوْلِهِمْ ۗ تَشٰبَهَتْ قُلُوْبُهُمْ ۗ قَدْ بَيَّنَّا اٰلَآءِىٰتِ لِقَوْمٍ يُوقِنُوْنَ ﴿۱۱۹﴾ اِنَّا اَرْسَلْنَاكَ بِالْحَقِّ بَشِيْرًا وَّنٰذِيْرًا ۗ وَلَا تُسْئَلُ عَنْ اَصْحٰبِ الْجَحِيْمِ ﴿۱۲۰﴾

- 2:114 *Who is a greater wrongdoer than him who denies access to the mosques of Allah lest His Name be celebrated therein, and tries to ruin them? Such ones may not enter them, except in fear. There is disgrace for them in this world, and there is for them a great punishment in the Hereafter.*
- 2:115 *To Allah belong the east and the west: so whichever way you turn, there is the face of Allah! Allah is indeed all-bounteous, all-knowing.*
- 2:116 *And they say, 'Allah has taken a son.' Immaculate is He! Rather to Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and the earth. All are obedient to Him,*
- 2:117 *the Originator of the heavens and the earth; and when He decides on a matter, He just says to it, "Be!" and it is.*
- 2:118 *Those who have no knowledge say, "Why does not Allah speak to us, or come to us a sign?" So said those who were before them, [words] similar to what they say. Alike are their hearts. We have certainly made the signs clear for a people who have certainty.*
- 2:119 *Indeed We have sent you with the truth, as a bearer of good news and as a warner, and you will not be questioned concerning the inmates of hell.*

2:114 ﴿۝۵ 'WHO IS A GREATER WRONGDOER THAN HIM WHO DENIES ACCESS TO THE MOSQUES OF GOD LEST HIS NAME BE CELEBRATED THEREIN, AND TRIES TO RUIN THEM?' This verse was originally revealed about the disbelievers and idolaters of the Quraysh who prevented the Muslims from reciting their prayers in the Holy Sanctuary and in the vicinity of the Kaaba.<sup>100</sup> However, the meaning of the verse is not restricted to any one time or place; just as other verses of the Qur'an were revealed in a particular context but their ruling applies to all eras of human history. Therefore, any individual or group who tries to destroy divine places of worship in any way, tries to prevent God's name being mentioned therein, or forbids people from worshipping God in them, they are included in the rebuke and punishment contained in this verse. It should also be noted that the meaning of destroying a mosque or preventing God's name being mentioned in it does not just refer to attacking the physical structure of the mosque – its bricks and mortar – but to any action whose effect is to prevent it from thriving and growing as it should, and to any action which distracts people from remembering God.<sup>101</sup>

2:115 ﴿۝۵ WHY DO WE TURN TOWARDS THE QIBLAH WHEN WE PRAY? The previous verse spoke those wrongdoers who prevented people from entering divine places of worship and sought to destroy them in the broadest sense of the word. This verse builds on this idea, by saying: '*To God belong the east and the west: so whichever way you turn, there is the face of God!*' In other words, even if they prevent you from going to mosques or other centres of divine unity, they cannot prevent you from serving and worshipping God, because no matter where you turn – to the east or to the west – the whole world in its entirety belongs to God. Therefore, no matter where you go, no matter which direction you turn, God is always there. This means

that you can worship God wherever you are – not only in a mosque. Another point which we can arrive at from reading this verse is that even if there is a particular direction of prayer, God's presence is never limited to a single direction or location. On the contrary, it is only because the human being is a material entity and, therefore, must face some direction when praying, that God instructed mankind to all face in the same direction as they prayed. This was to foster unity in the ranks of Muslims and prevent division or disorder between them. Equally, a particular location was specified as the direction of prayer, or *Qiblah*: The Kaaba in Mecca which, according to the Qur'an is the original and most ancient house of worship. This too was done to inspire a sense of unity and to foster a mindset of divine unity in worshippers.<sup>102</sup> So the Kaaba is the direction of prayer and prostration, but it should never be mistaken for the object of prayer and prostration. We pray *towards* the Kaaba, but we pray *to* God. After all, not every act of worship must be directed towards it – only some.<sup>103</sup>

2:119 ﴿۝۵ THE MOST IMPORTANT TASK OF ALL THE PROPHETS AND MESSENGERS Bringing good news and warning is the most important function of all of God's prophets and messengers. On the one hand, they make the faithful and the virtuous aware of the rewards that lie in store for their actions in this world and the hereafter. On the other hand, they warn the disbelievers and wrongdoers about the terrible fate that awaits them for their ingratitude and sinning. In this way, people are clearly able to see that there are two paths, one of salvation and one of damnation, and they can choose of their own free will which of these they want to walk upon. As God says in *Sūrat al-Anfāl*: '*so that he who perishes (by going astray) might perish by a manifest proof, and he who lives (by following guidance) may live on by a manifest proof...*'<sup>104</sup>

<sup>100</sup> *Mizān*, 1/254.

<sup>101</sup> *Nimūnah*, 1/411.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 414.

<sup>103</sup> *Tafsīr Mawdū'ī*, 8/112.

<sup>104</sup> Q8:42; *Atyab al-Bayān*, 2/170.

وَلَنْ تَرْضَىٰ عَنْكَ الْيَهُودُ وَلَا النَّصَارَىٰ حَتَّىٰ تَتَّبِعَ مِلَّتَهُمْ ۗ قُلْ إِنْ هُدَىٰ اللَّهُ هُوَ  
 الْهُدَىٰ ۗ وَلَئِن آتَيْتَهُمْ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ بَعْدَ الَّذِي جَاءَكَ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ ۗ مَا لَكَ مِنَ اللَّهِ مِنْ  
 وَلِيٍّ وَلَا نَصِيرٍ ﴿١٢٠﴾ الَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ يَتْلُونَهُ حَقَّ تِلَاوَتِهِ ۗ أُولَٰئِكَ يُؤْمِنُونَ  
 بِهِ ۗ وَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِهِ ۗ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ ﴿١٢١﴾ يٰٓبَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ ۗ اذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتِيَ الَّتِي  
 أَنْعَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ ۗ وَأَنَّىٰ فَضَّلْتُكُمْ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٢٢﴾ وَاتَّقُوا يَوْمًا لَا تَجْزِي نَفْسٌ  
 عَنْ نَفْسٍ شَيْئًا وَلَا يُقْبَلُ مِنْهَا عَدْلٌ وَلَا تَنْفَعُهَا شَفَعَةٌ وَلَا هُمْ يُنصَرُونَ ﴿١٢٣﴾  
 وَإِذِ ابْتَلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ رَبُّهُ بِكَلِمَاتٍ فَأَتَمَّهُنَّ ۗ قَالَ إِنِّي جَاعِلُكَ لِلنَّاسِ إِمَامًا ۗ قَالَ  
 وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِي ۗ قَالَ لَا يَنَالُ عَهْدِي الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١٢٤﴾ وَإِذْ جَعَلْنَا الْبَيْتَ مَثَابَةً لِّلنَّاسِ  
 وَأَمْنَا وَاتَّخِذُوا مِنْ مَّقَامِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ مُصَلًّى ۗ وَعَهِدْنَا إِلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ أَن طَهِّرَا  
 بَيْتِي لِلطَّائِفِينَ وَالْعَاكِفِينَ وَالرُّكَّعِ السُّجُودِ ﴿١٢٥﴾ وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ رَبِّ اجْعَلْ  
 هَذَا بَلَدًا ءَامِنًا وَارْزُقْ أَهْلَهُ مِنَ الثَّمَرَاتِ ۗ مَنْ ءَامَنَ مِنْهُمْ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ  
 ۗ قَالَ وَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَأُمْتِعْهُ قَلِيلًا ۗ ثُمَّ أَضْطَرُّهُ إِلَىٰ عَذَابِ النَّارِ ۗ وَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيرُ ﴿١٢٦﴾

- 2:120 Never will the Jews be pleased with you, nor the Christians, unless you followed their creed. Say, 'Indeed it is the guidance of Allah which is the [true] guidance.' And should you follow their desires after the knowledge that has come to you, you will not have against Allah any guardian nor any helper.
- 2:121 Those to whom We have given the Book follow it as it ought to be followed: they have faith in it. As for those who defy it—it is they who are the losers.
- 2:122 O Children of Israel, remember My blessing which I bestowed upon you, and that I gave you an advantage over all the nations.
- 2:123 And beware of the Day when no soul shall compensate for another, neither shall any ransom be accepted from it, nor shall any intercession benefit it, nor will they be helped.
- 2:124 And when his Lord tested Abraham with certain words, and he fulfilled them, He said, 'I am making you the Imam of mankind.' Said he, 'And from among my descendants?' He said, 'My pledge does not extend to the unjust.'
- 2:125 And [remember] when We made the House a place of reward for mankind and a sanctuary, [declaring], 'Take the venue of prayer from Abraham's Station.' We charged Abraham and Ishmael [with its upkeep, saying], 'Purify My House for those who go around it, [for] those who make it a retreat and [for] those who bow and prostrate.'
- 2:126 And when Abraham said, 'My Lord, make this a secure town, and provide its people with fruits—such of them as have faith in Allah and the Last Day,' He said, 'As for him who is faithless, I will provide for him [too] for a short time, then I will shove him toward the punishment of the Fire, and it is an evil destination.'

2:121 ﴿٥٥﴾ **READING THE QUR'AN AS IT SHOULD BE**

**READ** With regards to the phrase, 'Those to whom We have given the Book read it as it ought to be read...'. Imam al-Ṣādiq عليه السلام is narrated to have said: "This means that the verses of the Qur'an should be read in a careful and measured fashion, their meanings should be understood, and their ordinances acted upon. Their rewards should be hoped for and their punishments feared. Their stories should have a lesson taken from them, their commands should be followed, and their prohibitions should be avoided. I swear by God that this verse does not simply mean that one should memorise the Qur'an's verses, learn how to recite its letters and chapters, or that its chapters are divided into ten or five groups. There are those who memorise the Qur'an's letters but forget its boundaries! No, the meaning of this verse is that you should ponder about the meaning of its verses and act on their commands!"<sup>105</sup>

2:124 ﴿٥٦﴾ **THE IMAMATE OF THE PROPHET ABRAHAM**

About the verse, 'And when his Lord tested Abraham with certain words', commentators have said that God tested Abraham عليه السلام with a variety of hardships and challenges: For example, by commanding him to leave behind his wife and child in a barren desert, the opposition of the idol worshippers toward him, commanding him to destroy the idols in their temple and his being thrown into a bonfire, his being forced to leave his homeland, and so on. In *Sūrat al-Sāffāt*, God says describes 'a manifest test'<sup>106</sup>, namely when He commanded Abraham to offer his son, Ishmael, as a sacrifice. Commentators on the Qur'an have said that this command was revealed to Abraham towards the end of his life and that, before he was made an Imam, he was already a prophet. This shows that the rank of Imamate is higher than that of prophethood. There is a tradition from Imam al-Sādiq عليه السلام, which says: 'God chose Abraham as His servant before He chose him as His prophet. And God chose him as a prophet before He made him his messenger. And He made him

a messenger before He selected him as His confidant (*khalīl*). And He selected him as His confidant before He made him an Imam. It was only once Abraham had achieved all of these ranks that God told him: 'I am making you the Imam of mankind.' Abraham realised the importance of this rank, so he implored God: 'And from among my descendants?' (i.e. 'Will you make my descendants Imams as well?'). An Imam is someone who other people take as an example and follow in both speech and action. The task of a prophet is to deliver God's message and to show mankind the way to happiness. However, the task of an Imam is to apply God's laws and commandments. In other words, through the divine power given to him, the Imam provides a practical demonstration to people of how to walk the path of guidance and attain spiritual and moral perfection. The Imam doesn't just point people to the way, he leads them along it.<sup>107</sup> This verse is also one of the proofs for the infallibility of the Imams, as God explicitly says that His covenant of Imamate does not include any wrongdoers. In other words, any act of wrongdoing, injustice, or oppression – no matter where, how or by whom – would automatically preclude a person from holding the rank of Imamate.<sup>108</sup>

2:125 ﴿٥٧﴾ **'AND WHEN WE MADE THE HOUSE A PLACE OF RETURN FOR MANKIND AND A SANCTUARY...'**

The Arabic word 'mathaba' is derived from 'thawb' meaning 'to return something to its original state.' The House of God is a place towards which monotheists throughout history have turned, not only in the physical sense of facing it in prayer, but in the spiritual sense also of turning back to divine unity (*tawhid*) and their original nature (*fitrah*). In this sense, the Kaaba is a *mathaba*, or 'place of return'. Meanwhile, the Station of Abraham (Maqām Ibrāhīm) is a location in the vicinity of the Kaaba, which pilgrims pass by as they perform the rite of circumambulation. According to one narration, the Station of Abraham is the place where Abraham actually stood and where his foot left an impression on a stone.<sup>109</sup>

<sup>105</sup> *Mizān*, 1/262.<sup>106</sup> Q37:106.<sup>107</sup> See *Mizān*, 1/262; *Nimūnah*, 1/436.<sup>108</sup> *Tafsīr Mawḍū'ī*, 3/221.<sup>109</sup> See *Nimūnah*, 1/447; *Atyab al-Bayān*, 2/187.

وَإِذْ يَرْفَعُ إِبْرَاهِيمُ الْقَوَاعِدَ مِنَ الْبَيْتِ وَإِسْمَاعِيلُ رَبَّنَا تَقَبَّلْ مِنَّا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ السَّمِيعُ  
 الْعَلِيمُ ﴿١٢٧﴾ رَبَّنَا وَاجْعَلْنَا مُسْلِمِينَ لَكَ وَمِن ذُرِّيَّتِنَا أُمَّةً مُّسْلِمَةً لَّكَ وَأَرِنَا مَنَاسِكَنَا  
 وَتُبْ عَلَيْنَا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ التَّوَّابُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿١٢٨﴾ رَبَّنَا وَابْعَثْ فِيهِمْ رَسُولًا مِّنْهُمْ  
 يَتْلُوا عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِكَ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَزِيزُ  
 الْحَكِيمُ ﴿١٢٩﴾ وَمَنْ يَرْغَبْ عَن مِّلَّةِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ إِلَّا مَن سَفِهَ نَفْسَهُ وَلَقَدْ اصْطَفَيْنَاهُ  
 فِي الدُّنْيَا وَإِنَّهُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ لَمِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ ﴿١٣٠﴾ إِذْ قَالَ لَهُ رَبُّهُ أَسْلِمْ قَالَ  
 أَسْلَمْتُ لِرَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٣١﴾ وَوَصَّي بِهَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ بَنِيهِ وَيَعْقُوبَ يٰبَنِيَّ إِنَّ اللَّهَ  
 اصْطَفَىٰ لَكُمْ الدِّينَ فَلَا تَمُوتُنَّ إِلَّا وَأَنْتُمْ مُّسْلِمُونَ ﴿١٣٢﴾ أَمْ كُنْتُمْ شُهَدَاءَ إِذْ  
 حَضَرَ يَعْقُوبَ الْمَوْتُ إِذْ قَالَ لِبَنِيهِ مَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِن بَعْدِي قَالُوا نَعْبُدُ إِلَهَكَ وَاللَّهُ  
 ءَابَاؤُكُمْ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ إِلَهًُا وَحَدًّا وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُّسْلِمُونَ ﴿١٣٣﴾ تِلْكَ أُمَّةٌ  
 قَدْ خَلَتْ لَهَا مَا كَسَبَتْ وَلَكُمْ مَا كَسَبْتُمْ وَلَا تُسْأَلُونَ عَمَّا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٣٤﴾

- 2:127 *As Abraham raised the foundations of the House with Ishmael, [they prayed]: ‘Our Lord, accept it from us! Indeed You are the All-bearing, the All-knowing.*
- 2:128 *‘Our Lord, make us submissive to You, and [raise] from our progeny a nation submissive to You, and show us our rites [of worship], and turn to us clemently. Indeed You are the All-clement, the All-merciful.*
- 2:129 *‘Our Lord, raise amongst them an messenger from among them, who should recite to them Your signs, and teach them the Book and wisdom, and purify them. Indeed You are the All-mighty, the All-wise.’*
- 2:130 *And who will [ever] renounce Abraham’s creed except one who fools himself? We certainly chose him in the [present] world, and in the Hereafter he will indeed be among the Righteous.*
- 2:131 *‘When his Lord said to him, ‘Submit,’ he said, ‘I submit to the Lord of all the worlds.’*
- 2:132 *Abraham enjoined this [creed] upon his children, and [so did] Jacob, [saying], ‘My children! Allah has indeed chosen this religion for you; so never die except as muslims.*
- 2:133 *‘Were you witnesses when death approached Jacob, when he said to his children, ‘What will you worship after me?’ They said, ‘We will worship your God, and the God of your fathers, Abraham, Ishmael, and Isaac, the One God, and to Him do we submit.’*
- 2:134 *That was a nation that has passed: for it there will be what it has earned, and for you there will be what you have earned, and you will not be questioned about what they used to do.*

2:127 ﴿...AND SHOW US OUR RITES...﴾ Regarding the phrase in this verse, ‘and show us our rites (*manasik*)’, there are two interpretations worthy of attention. One is that the meaning of *manasik* in this verse are the rites and rituals of the Hajj pilgrimage. In other words, once Abraham and Ishmael ﷺ had finished building the Kaaba, they asked God to show them how to make pilgrimage to it. The second interpretation is that the term *manasik* refers to all religious obligations and acts of worship. In other words, Abraham and his son ask God to show them how to worship Him and serve Him, so that they can worship God in a way that is most pleasing to Him.<sup>110</sup>

2:128 ﴿WHAT DOES IT MEAN WHEN PROPHETS ASK GOD TO FORGIVE THEM?﴾ Regarding the phrase, ‘and turn to us clemently’ (*wa tub ‘alayna* – using the word ‘tub’ which is derived from ‘*tawba*’, which is frequently translated as ‘repentance’), commentators have said that Abraham and Ishmael ﷺ do not say this because they have committed a sin for which they wish to repent. After all, they are prophets, and prophets are infallible and do not commit sins. However, when someone is a servant in God’s presence, no matter how high a station they reach, no matter how deeply or profoundly they come to know God in comparison to ordinary human beings, they see themselves as nothing compared to God. They see themselves as fundamentally weak and unworthy. They look at God’s grace and kindness towards them and see their own worship and actions as being deficient by comparison. Therefore, they repent for their worship! This is reflected in the saying narrated from the Prophet ﷺ: ‘O God! We have not known You as You deserve to be known, nor have we worshipped You as You deserve to be worshipped!’<sup>111</sup>

2:130 ﴿THE CREED OF THE RIGHT-MINDED﴾ After God speaks about his righteous servant Abraham ﷺ, whom He chose as his confidant, He begins to describe Abraham’s utter devotion as a servant of God and his profound supplications – which en-

compass both his worldly and otherworldly needs – as well as praising him for helping other people. God describes Abraham as a perfect human being and a leader for mankind, saying that only someone foolish – whose mind is immature – would renounce the creed that Abraham followed. This is because a healthy and mature mind bids the human being to go out in search of happiness and self-development, while the Qur’an explains that the only way to happiness is through a pure recognition of God’s divine unity and submission to Him – and this is the very essence of Abraham’s creed. Therefore, a person who is wise ponders on the story of Abraham and reflects on his beliefs, he will recognise that happiness lies in following the example of this great human being. Therefore, anyone who allows prejudice or obstinacy to divert them from the path of Abraham is not following what their intellect is telling them to do, and whoever ignores their intellect is surely a fool!<sup>112</sup>

2:131 ﴿THE MEANING AND LEVELS OF ISLAM﴾ The Arabic terms ‘*islām*’ and ‘*taslīm*’ both signify the same thing: To obey another absolutely and without hesitation. In this verse and others like it, the word *islām* is used to denote absolute submission to whatever God commands and to whatever emanates from God. There are, of course, different levels of submission to divine ordinances and commands. The lowest level of submission is to verbally acknowledge God’s oneness and the other fundamental beliefs represented by the twin testimonies of faith (*shahadatayn*). However, it is clear that this level is not what is meant by Abraham’s ﷺ submission in the present verse! On the contrary, when someone submits to God as Abraham does here, this means that they do not see themselves as possessing anything for themselves and, in fact, see God as the only real possessor of everything – and this includes their own existence! Therefore, whatever God wants, the servant wants, and all of the servants efforts will be directed towards pleasing God.<sup>113</sup>

<sup>110</sup> See *Aṭyab al-Bayān*, 2/197.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*; see also *Manshūr-i Jāwīd*, 5/84.

<sup>112</sup> See *Mizān*, 1.294; *Aṭyab al-bayan*, 2/201.

<sup>113</sup> See *Mizān*, 1/296; *Aṭyab al-bayan*, 2/206.

وَقَالُوا كُونُوا هُودًا أَوْ نَصَارَى تَهْتَدُوا ۗ قُلْ بَلْ مِلَّةَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَنِيفًا ۗ وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴿١٣٥﴾ قُولُوا ءَامَنَّا بِاللَّهِ وَمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْنَا وَمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَالْأَسْبَاطَ وَمَا أُوتِيَ مُوسَى وَعِيسَى وَمَا أُوتِيَ النَّبِيُّونَ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ لَا نُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِّنْهُمْ وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ ﴿١٣٦﴾ فَإِنْ ءَامَنُوا بِمِثْلِ مَا ءَامَنْتُمْ بِهِ ۖ فَقَدْ اهْتَدَوْا ۗ وَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَإِنَّمَا هُمْ فِي شِقَاقٍ ۗ فَسَيَكْفِيكَهُمُ اللَّهُ ۗ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ ﴿١٣٧﴾ صِبْغَةَ اللَّهِ وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ مِنَ اللَّهِ صِبْغَةً ۗ وَنَحْنُ لَهُ عَابِدُونَ ﴿١٣٨﴾ قُلْ أَتُحَاجُّونَنَا فِي اللَّهِ وَهُوَ رَبُّنَا وَرَبُّكُمْ وَلَنَا ءَعْمَلُنَا وَلَكُمْ ءَعْمَلُكُمْ وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُخْلِصُونَ ﴿١٣٩﴾ أَمْ تَقُولُونَ إِنَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَالْأَسْبَاطَ كَانُوا هُودًا أَوْ نَصَارَى ۗ قُلْ ءَأَنْتُمْ ءَعْلَمُ أَمْ اللَّهُ ۗ وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّن كَتَمَ شَهَادَةً عِنْدَهُ مِنَ اللَّهِ ۗ وَمَا اللَّهُ بِغَفِيلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٤٠﴾ تِلْكَ أُمَّةٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ ۗ لَهَا مَا كَسَبَتْ وَلَكُمْ مَا كَسَبْتُمْ ۗ وَلَا تُسْأَلُونَ عَمَّا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٤١﴾

- 2:134 *That was a nation that has passed: for it there will be what it has earned, and for you there will be what you have earned, and you will not be questioned about what they used to do.*
- 2:135 *And they say, 'Be either Jews or Christians, that you may be [rightly] guided.' Say, 'Rather [we will follow] the creed of Abraham, a hanif, and he was not one of the polytheists.'*
- 2:136 *Say, 'We have faith in Allah, and that which has been sent down to us, and that which was sent down to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob and the Tribes, and that which Moses and Jesus were given, and that which the prophets were given from their Lord; we make no distinction between any of them, and to Him do we submit.'*
- 2:137 *So if they believe in the like of what you believe in, then they are certainly guided; ? and if they turn away, then they are only [steeped] in defiance. Allah shall suffice you against them, and He is the All-hearing, the All-knowing.*
- 2:138 *The baptism of Allah, and who baptizes better than Allah? And Him do we worship.'*
- 2:139 *Say, 'Will you argue with us concerning Allah, while He is our Lord and your Lord, and our deeds belong to us, and your deeds belong to you, and we worship Him dedicatedly?'*
- 2:140 *'Do you say that Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes were Jews or Christians? Say, 'Is it you who know better, or Allah?'' And who is a greater wrongdoer than him who conceals a testimony that is with him from Allah? And Allah is not oblivious of what you do.*
- 2:141 *That was a nation that has passed: for it there will be what it has earned, and for you there will be what you have earned, and you will not be questioned about what they used to do.*

**2:138** ﴿٥﴾ **GOD'S BAPTISM** This verse says that the faith described two verses previously (Q2:136) is a form of divine baptism, and indeed the best kind of baptism – not the baptism of Jews or Christians who have divided-up God's religion between themselves and abandoned God's commandments.<sup>114</sup> Some commentators say that the reason why God uses the term 'baptism' (*sibghah*) in this verse is because it can also mean 'to dye', and just as dyeing something marks it, so too does Islam and faith in God mark out the faithful! Or, just as you cannot separate a colour the thing that has been dyed, neither can you separate faith from the hearts of the faithful when it has penetrated them.<sup>115</sup> It is narrated from Imam al-Sadiq عليه السلام with regards to this verse: 'God's baptism is nothing other than Islam.'<sup>116</sup>

**2:139** ﴿٥﴾ **WHAT DETERMINES WHETHER OUR DEEDS ARE ACCEPTED BY GOD?** The Arabic word '*ikhhlās*' ('sincerity' or 'devotion') literally means to cleanse something of anything that is not itself.<sup>117</sup> In the Qur'an, *ikhhlās* means that the servant does not serve anyone or anything alongside God, and that he reserves his worship and humility solely for seeking God's satisfaction.<sup>118</sup> In *Sūrat al-Kahf*, we read: '*So whoever expects to encounter his Lord let him act righteously, and not associate anyone with the worship of his Lord*'<sup>119</sup> Both the Qur'an and the narrations from the Prophet's Household emphasise the importance of sincerity in one's worship, to the extent that this is the most important factor in determining whether our worship is accepted by God. It is narrated from Imam al-

Sādiq عليه السلام: 'Your Lord is kind, for He accepts even few [good deeds]. God's servant might offer just two *rak'ats* of prayer for God's satisfaction and, because of those two *rak'ats* of prayer, God will admit him to Paradise!'<sup>120</sup> On the other hand, being concerned with pleasing anyone besides God is the major cause of someone's good deeds being ruined. It is narrated from the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم: 'Your Lord says: I am an excellent partner. Anyone who does a deed in which he makes one of the creatures my partner, I will give all of that deed to my partner, because I do not accept any deed unless it is done purely for my sake.'<sup>121</sup>

**2:141** ﴿٥﴾ **'THAT IS A NATION THAT HAS PASSED...'** This verse addresses one of the mistakes made by the Jews at the Prophet's time, namely that they were excessively proud of their ancestors and relied on their past glories for winning God's favour. They believed that, even if they were impure, their righteous ancestors would guarantee them salvation. However, in this verse the Qur'an tells them: '*That was a nation that has passed: for it there will be what it has earned, and for you there will be what you have earned, and you will not be questioned about what they used to do.*' Therefore, instead of boasting proudly about your ancestors, you should direct your energies towards setting right your own beliefs and actions. However, while the outward form of this verse is addressed to Jews, it is clear that its meaning is not restricted to them at that time – it can apply to the Muslims of today as well!<sup>122</sup>



<sup>114</sup> *Mizan*, 1/308.

<sup>115</sup> *Safi*, 1/193.

<sup>116</sup> *Mizan*, 1/310.

<sup>117</sup> *Al-Mu'jam al-wasit*, 249.

<sup>118</sup> See *Mizān*, 13/77.

<sup>119</sup> Q18:110.

<sup>120</sup> *Safinat al-Bihar*, 2/667.

<sup>121</sup> *Mizān*, 13/402.

<sup>122</sup> *Nimūnah*, 1/265.

