

DR. ABU AMEENAH BILAL PHILIPS

تفسير سورة البروج

A COMMENTARY ON
SURAH AL-BURŪJ

tafsir 85

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Imām al-Shawkānī said the following regarding this chapter:
 “It contains twenty two verses and is undoubtedly Makkan. Ibn al-
 Ḍurays, al-Naḥḥās, Ibn Mardūyah and al-Bayhaqī narrated from
 Ibn ‘Abbās that he said: “*Was-Samā’i dhātil-Burūj* was revealed in
 Makkah.”²

² The Qur’ān was revealed in sections to Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) from the beginning of his prophethood until shortly before his death. Thus, the Qur’ān came down continuously over a period of twenty-three years. Scholars of *Tafsīr* categorised the various verses and chapters of the Qur’ān which were revealed into Makkan and Madīnan.

Makkan revelations are defined as all verses and chapters of the Qur’ān which were revealed to the Prophet (ﷺ) before his emigration to Madīnah (*Hijrah* 622 CE). This category also includes verses which were revealed in Ṭā’if, as well as those revealed in other areas outside of Makkah.

Madīnan revelations are all those verses and chapters of the Qur’ān which were revealed after the *Hijrah*. This includes verses which were revealed during the battles, as well as those revealed in Makkah and Minā during and after the Farewell Pilgrimage.
 (*Al-Itqān*, vol. 1, p. 23)

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Importance of the Distinction

There are a number of reasons why a distinction needs to be made between Makkan and Madīnan chapters and verses. The following are three of the most important reasons:

1. *Fiqh* (Islamic Law): The various laws of Islām were revealed throughout the twenty-three years of prophethood. Some laws cancelled earlier laws and other laws were revealed bit by bit. Thus, it is necessary to know at which point in time the various laws were revealed in order to apply them properly. The laws of the later Madīnan period sometimes took the place of earlier laws. For example, alcohol was made forbidden in gradual stages. The first law concerning alcohol was simply a warning of its dangers. Allāh said:

يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْخَمْرِ
وَالْمَيْسِرِ قُلْ فِيهِمَا إِتْمَاعٌ كَبِيرٌ وَمَنْفَعَةٌ لِلنَّاسِ وَإِثْمُهُمَا
أَكْبَرُ مِنْ نَفْعِهِمَا

“And they ask you about alcohol and gambling; tell them that they contain some benefit, but the sin is greater than the benefit.”

(Sūrah al-Baqarah, 2:219)

The second law that was revealed warned Muslims away from *ṣalāh* when they were intoxicated (drunk). Allāh said:

لَا تَقْرُبُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَنْتُمْ سُكَرَىٰ حَتَّىٰ تَعْلَمُوا
مَا تَقُولُونَ

“Do not come to ṣalāh when you are intoxicated, until you know what you are saying.”

(Sūrah al-Nisā, 4: 43)

The third law, however, was a complete prohibition of even coming near any form of alcohol. Allāh said:

إِنَّمَا الْخَمْرُ وَالْمَيْسِرُ وَالْأَنْصَابُ وَالْأَزْلَامُ رِجْسٌ مِّنْ عَمَلِ الشَّيْطَانِ
فَاجْتَنِبُوهُ

“Verily, khamr, maysir and azlām (fortunetelling) are filth, as a result of Shayṭān’s work, so stay away from them.”

(Sūrah al-Mā’idah, 5: 90)

If one was unaware of the order in which these verses were revealed, he may mistakenly think that he is allowed to drink alcohol as long as he doesn’t get drunk and come to *ṣalāh*. Or, he may think that it is allowed for him to benefit from the sale of alcohol.

2. *Da'wah*: By understanding the order in which the verses of the Qur'ān were revealed, one can learn the best method of teaching Islām. For example, the Qur'ān taught the believers not to curse or make fun of the idols of the disbelievers in order not to drive them away and in order that they not curse Allāh out of ignorance.

لَا تَسُبُّوا الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ فَيَسُبُّوا اللَّهَ عَدْوًا
بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ

“Do not curse what the disbelievers worship besides Allāh, lest they curse Allāh in enmity and ignorance.”

(Sūrah al-An'ām, 6: 108)

Instead, they were told to reason with the disbelievers and show them logically why the worship of idols was incorrect. Allāh quoted Prophet Abraham as saying to his people:

أَفَتَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مَا لَا يَنْفَعُكُمْ شَيْئًا وَلَا
يَضُرُّكُمْ

“Are you worshipping besides Allāh other gods which cannot benefit you at all nor harm you?”

(Sūrah al-Anbiyā', 21: 66)

The following verse quoting Abraham's declaration of enmity to his people and what they worshipped instead of Allāh was revealed in Madīnah, after the Muslims had practised years of patient argument with their relatives in Makkah:

قَدْ كَانَتْ لَكُمْ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ فِي إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَالَّذِينَ مَعَهُ إِذْ قَالُوا
لِقَوْمِهِمْ إِنَّا بُرَءُكُمْ وَإِنَّا بِمَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ كَغُرَابٍ يَكُرُّ
وَيَلِدُ أَيْبَانًا وَبَيْنَكُمْ الْعَدَاوَةُ وَالْبَغْضَاءُ أَبَدًا حَتَّى تُؤْمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ
وَحْدَهُ

“There is an excellent example for you in Abraham and those with him, when they said to their people, ‘We are clear of you and of whatever you worship besides Allāh; we have rejected you, and there has arisen, between us and you, enmity and hatred forever, unless you believe in Allāh alone.’”

(Sūrah al-Mumtaḥinah, 60:4)

The disbelievers of Makkah had met reasoned argument with persecution and violence. They had driven the Muslims from their homes, and a state of armed conflict existed between the two sides. It is not, therefore, *Sunnah* for a person to accept Islām, read this verse and try to apply it on his family and acquaintances.

3. *Sīrah*: The majority of the most important events in the Prophet's life have been recorded in various verses of the Qur'ān. Thus, by knowing the order in which the verses were revealed, it is possible to piece together a large portion of the Prophet's (ﷺ) biography.

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Characteristics of Makkan Revelations

1. **Tawhīd** (The Oneness of Allāh): The early revelations taught the pagans of Makkah about Allāh's unity and power over all things. They told the people that Allāh was without parents, offspring or any partner who shared His powers. They also pointed out that idols could neither bring good nor hold back evil. They questioned the logic of worshipping things which could not even see or hear.

2. **Ṣalāh** (Formal Prayer): After the first verses of revelation came informing the Prophet (ﷺ) that he had been chosen for prophethood, Allāh sent Jibrīl to teach him the correct method of prayer. The verses taught that both *ṣalāh* and *du'ā* (supplication) should only be made to Allāh, as He is the only one who can answer them. Great stress was placed on *ṣalāh* because it represents *tawhīd* in practice.

3. **The Unseen**: Since there was no way that human beings could possibly come to know about the unseen world, the early verses taught them about its wonders, its mysteries, and its horrors. The verses described Paradise and its pleasures in order to encourage the believers to continue to do good deeds. They also described the Hellfire and its torments in order to encourage the believers to strive to avoid evil deeds.

4. **Allāh's Existence**: There were some individuals among the Makkans who were in doubt about Allāh's very existence. Thus, some of the early verses presented logical arguments proving Allāh's existence. Sometimes proofs were taken from nature and the creatures common to that society. At other times straight logic was used.

5. **Challenges**: In order to prove to the Quraysh that the Qur'ān was from Allāh and that Muḥammad (ﷺ) was a prophet of Allāh, some of the Makkan verses challenged the Arabs to imitate the Qur'ān. Since the Arabs were unable to produce a chapter similar to the smallest chapter of the Qur'ān, the miraculous nature of the Qur'ān and its divine origin were clearly proven to the people at that time.

6. **The People of Old**: The Makkan verses often mentioned historical examples of earlier civilisations, like the 'Ād and the *Thamūd* as a warning to those who had rejected the message of Islām. The verses spoke about the wonders of the ancient civilisations and how they were destroyed when the people disobeyed Allāh and denied His blessings.

7. **Īmān**: Makkan verses concentrated on principles which would build the *īmān* (faith) of the early Muslims. These verses spoke of the importance of fearing Allāh and were often filled with advice about being patient, perseverant, truthful and trustworthy, in order to build the moral and spiritual character of the early Muslims, who were in a minority and under great pressure from Makkan society.

8. **Short Verses**: The Makkan sūrahs usually had short verses, catchy rhymes, and a very strong rhythm. These qualities were meant to catch the attention of listeners who were basically opposed to the message of Islām. The verses had to be short because the disbelieving audience would not be willing to listen to long, drawn-out statements. As soon as they heard any of the Qur'ān, they would stick their fingers in their ears and turn away.

Characteristics of Madīnah Revelations

1. **Laws:** Once the Prophet (ﷺ) became ruler over the Muslims of Madīnah, as well as the Jews and the Arab idol worshippers who lived there, a constitution was drawn up and a system of justice was established. Thus, the verses during the Madīnan stage contained the many social, economic and spiritual laws which were necessary for the organisation and development of an Islamic state. It was during this period that the last three pillars of Islām: *zakāh*, *ṣawm* and *hajj*, were revealed. Likewise, it was during this period that drinking alcohol, eating swine and gambling were all forbidden.

2. **People of the Book:** In Madīnah, Muslims came in contact with the Jews for the first time. Thus, a number of Madīnan verses represented answers to the many questions raised by the Jews. The Muslims of Madīnah also came in contact with the Christians on a larger scale. As a result of that, we find a number of Madīnan verses clarifying Christian misconceptions about Prophet Jesus and Allāh.

3. **The *Munāfiqūn*:** In Makkah, Muslims were oppressed and attacked, so no one would enter Islām unless he truly believed. On the other hand, the Muslims of Madīnah were strong and they ruled the city. Thus, we find some people entering Islām in order to benefit from its strength and to oppose it from within. Thus, the verses of the Madīnan stage warned the Muslims about the dangers of the hypocrites and taught them how to deal effectively with them.

4. ***Jihād*:** During the Makkah period, Muslims were forbidden to fight the idolaters because they were a minority and could easily have been completely wiped out. Also, this was a stage where the believers' characters were being forged. During the Madīnan stage, a series of battles were fought against the forces of disbelief, until finally Makkah was conquered and the whole of the Arabian Peninsula came under the rule of Islām. Thus, a number of the Madīnan verses taught Muslims the Islamic principles of war.

5. **Long Verses:** Madīnan verses tended to be longer than those of Makkah. The need to catch the attention of unwilling listeners was no longer there, because Islām had become strong and its followers were many. Thus, the audience at this stage was quite willing to listen attentively to longer verses teaching the vital laws of Islām.

6. **Order of the *Sūrah*s:** Although all of the Makkah verses were revealed during the same period, they were neither memorised nor written in the same order in which they were revealed. Thus, when the revelation of the Qur'ān was complete, Makkah verses could be found within Madīnan *sūrah*s and Madīnan verses within Makkah *sūrah*s.

The Prophet (ﷺ) ordered the verses and *sūrah*s of the Qur'ān according to Allāh's command. The reason for the mingling may have been that the verses were revealed according to the needs of a developing community, whereas the order for reading purposes was varied to make it clear that the Qur'ān is not a mere historical document. By divorcing the verses from the chronological order of their revelation, the general and universal aspects of their message are emphasized. (*Uṣool at-Tafseer*, pp. 204-217)

Sūrah al-Burūj in the Sunnah

Abū Hurayrah related that Allāh's Messenger (ﷺ) used to recite *Was-Samā'i dhātil-Burūj* and *Was-Samā'i waṭ-Ṭāriq* in the prayers of 'Ishā.³ And Jābir ibn Samurah stated that the Prophet (ﷺ) used to recite *Was-Samā'i waṭ-Ṭāriq* and *Was-Samā'i dhātil-Burūj* in the prayers of Ḍuhr and 'Aṣr.⁴⁵

³ *Musnad Aḥmad*, vol. 2, p. 327.

⁴ *Sunan Abu Dawūd*, Kitāb al-Ṣalāt (805) and *Sunan al-Nasā'i*, Kitāb al-Ṣalāt.

⁵ *Fat'h al-Qadīr*, vol. 5, p. 547.

VERSE 01

وَالسَّمَاءِ ذَاتِ الْبُرُوجِ ﴿١﴾

*I swear by the sky possessing
constellations,*

Ibn Kathīr said: “Allāh swears by the heaven and its constellations.
The *burūj* are the giant stars, as Allāh states:

نَبَارِكُ الَّذِي جَعَلَ فِي السَّمَاءِ بُرُوجًا وَجَعَلَ فِيهَا سِرَاجًا
وَقَمَرًا مُنِيرًا ﴿٦١﴾

“Blessed is He Who placed in the sky stars and among
them a lamp and a shining moon.”⁶

(Sūrah al-Furqān, 25: 61)

⁶ The description of the sun and moon here is considered among the scientific miracles of the Qur’ān. The sun is described 1,400 years ago as a lamp or a source of light and the moon shining reflected light. It is only in relatively recent times after the discovery of the telescope that scientists came to know that the sun produces its own light while the moon reflects the light of the sun and does not produce its own light.

Ibn ‘Abbās, Mujāhid, al-Ḍaḥḥāk, al-Ḥasan, Qatādah and al-Suddī all said that the *burūj* are stars.⁷ Ibn Jarīr chose the view that it meant the twelve positions of the sun and moon. The sun travels through one *burj* each month and the moon travels through one every two-and-a-third days, making a total of twenty-eight positions, and it is hidden for two nights.⁸

Yusuf Ali translates the word “*burūj*” as “the Zodiacal signs,” while Pickthall translates it as “Mansions of the Stars,” but says in his introduction to the *sūrah* that it “is applied to the signs of the zodiac.” Thus, according to them, Allāh is making an oath by the zodiacal signs. Some English-speaking Muslims have taken this to be indirect support for astrology. However, “*burūj*” originally only meant “star configuration,” and it was not until later times that it was used to refer to the imaginary figures of the zodiac that pagan Babylonians and Greeks superimposed on them. Astrology has been forbidden by the Prophet (ﷺ) in no uncertain terms, as it falls under the general prohibition of visiting fortune-tellers. The Prophet (ﷺ) said,

مَنْ آتَى... كَاهِنًا فَقَدْ كَفَرَ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ

Whoever...visits a fortune-teller [and believes in what he says]⁹ has disbelieved in what was revealed to Muḥammad.”¹⁰

Ibn al-Qayyim commented on this verse saying: Almighty Allāh said: “I swear by the sky possessing mansions,” in which the sun and moon descend. *Burūj* is also explained as stars or one of their forms, or by great mansions, all of which are among the signs of Allāh’s power, and proofs of His unique unity (*wahḍāniyyah*). For the sky is a globe, round in shape, whose parts resemble each other and whose sides are indistinguishable from each other in length, width and position. Constellations of varying forms and sizes are placed within this globe

⁷ *Tafsīr al-Qurtubī*, vol. 19, p. 200.

⁸ *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, vol. 24, p. 332.

⁹ This addition is from Abū Dāwūd’s version.

¹⁰ Collected by al-Tirmidhī, Ibn Mājah and *Sunan Abu Dawud*, vol. 3, p. 1095, no. 3895 and authenticated in *Ṣaḥīḥ Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, vol. 2, p 739, no. 3304.

which could not possibly exist without a designer. And it is impossible that its designer would be incapable, without knowledge or intent, unloving, unwise, and inseparable from what He designed.

These would all be among things which go against natural laws. [Yet, that is the claim of] the atheists and philosophers who do not accept that the world has a Lord, separate from it, able, acting by choice, aware of its details, wise, arranging and administering it. Thus, the constellations of the sky are the mansions in which they exist or in which the stars move, making them among the greatest of His signs. Consequently, He swore by the [constellations] along with the sky.”¹¹

Elsewhere in the Qur’ān, Allāh has referred to the greatness and enormity of the sky, in order to put arrogant human beings in their proper place.

أَأَنْتُمْ أَشَدُّ خَلْقًا أَمْ السَّمَاءُ بِنهَا (٢٧)

“Are you more difficult to create, or is the heaven that He constructed?”

(Sūrah al-Nāzi’āt, 79: 27)

لَخَلْقُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ أَكْبَرُ مِنْ خَلْقِ النَّاسِ
وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ (٥٧)

“The creation of the heavens and earth is indeed greater than the creation of humankind, but most humans do not realise it.”

(Sūrah Ghāfir, 40: 57)

In modern times, the science of astronomy and technological advancements in a variety of fields has opened up vast new fields revealing incredible new details of the starry sky. From the use of massive optical telescopes and the satellite telescope, Hubble, to radio telescopes, knowledge of the

¹¹ *Badā’i’ al-Tafsīr*, vol. 5, p. 169.

constellations and their contents has increased exponentially over the past century. Using this technology, astronomers have been able to observe new objects and phenomena in the sky such as Novas, supernovas, black holes, neutron stars, and the expansion of the universe, just to mention a few of them. The more astronomers probe the sky the more they find it to be increasingly complex and complicated. Even the commonly held conclusion that the universe began with a massive explosion, commonly called the Big Bang, came from observations of the movement of the stars. All of this newly discovered knowledge contains additional strong evidences and clear signs of God's existence.

VERSES

02

03

وَالْيَوْمِ الْمَوْعُودِ ۚ وَشَاهِدٍ وَمَشْهُودٍ ﴿٣﴾

By the promised day, and by the witness and the witnessed.

Ibn Kathīr narrated from Ibn Abī Ḥātim that Abū Hurayrah quoted Allāh’s Messenger (ﷺ) as saying,

“And by the promised Day; this refers to the Day of Judgment. ‘And by the witness,’ refers to Friday, and the sun does not rise or set on a day better than Friday. During it there is an hour that no Muslim servant catches while asking Allāh for some good except that Allāh will give it to him. He does not seek refuge from any evil in it except that Allāh will protect him.”¹²

¹² Authenticated by al-Albānī in *Ṣaḥīḥ Sunan al-Tirmidhī*, vol. , p. , no. . The text is as follows:

‘And by the witnessed,’ refers to the Day of ‘Arafat [in Hajj].”¹³

Ibn al-Qayyim commented on the “Promised Day”, saying: “[Allāh] then swore by “the promised day,” which is the Day of Resurrection. It is sworn by and sworn on in the same way that the Qur’ān can be sworn by and sworn on. It points to the occurrence of the Day of Resurrection which is agreed upon by all the messengers, and what is known [by logic and reason] to His worshippers regarding His wisdom and power which

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ: الْيَوْمُ الْمَوْعُودُ يَوْمُ الْقِيَامَةِ وَالْيَوْمُ الْمَشْهُودُ يَوْمُ عَرَفَةَ وَالشَّاهِدُ يَوْمُ الْجُمُعَةِ وَمَا طَلَعَتِ الشَّمْسُ وَلَا غَرَبَتْ عَلَى يَوْمٍ أَفْضَلَ مِنْهُ فِيهِ سَاعَةٌ لَا يَوَاقِفُهَا عَبْدٌ مُؤْمِنٌ يَدْعُو اللَّهَ بِحُجْرٍ إِلَّا اسْتَجَابَ اللَّهُ لَهُ وَلَا يَسْتَعِيدُ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِلَّا أَعَادَهُ اللَّهُ مِنْهُ

Abū Hurayrah quoted Allāh’s Messenger (ﷺ) as saying: “The Promised day is the Day of Judgment, the Witnessed Day is the Day of ‘Arafat, and the Witness is Friday. The sun has neither raised nor set on a day better than it. During it there is an hour in which Allāh will answer the prayer for good of any believer who catches it and protect any believer who seeks His protection from anything.”

¹³ Also narrated by al-Tirmidhī and al-Bayhaqī with a weak chain. However, the first part is supported by the *ḥadīth* of Abū Mālik al-Ash‘arī (*Silsilah al-Aḥādīth al-Ṣaḥīḥah*, no. 1502) and its second part has support in *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, and *Sahih Muslim*, vol. 2, p. 405 no. 1856-7 & p. 404, nos. 1849-50.

Abū Hurayrah stated that Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) said:

خَيْرُ يَوْمٍ طَلَعَتْ فِيهِ الشَّمْسُ يَوْمَ الْجُمُعَةِ، فِيهِ خُلِقَ آدَمُ، وَفِيهِ أُهْبِطَ، وَفِيهِ أُعْلِيَ، وَفِيهِ قُبِضَ، وَفِيهِ تَمُّومُ السَّاعَةِ، مَا عَلَى الْأَرْضِ مِنْ دَابَّةٍ إِلَّا وَهِيَ تَضِيحُ يَوْمَ الْجُمُعَةِ مُصْبِحَةً: حَتَّى تَطْلُعَ الشَّمْسُ شَفِيقًا مِنْ السَّاعَةِ: إِلَّا أَيْنَ آدَمَ، وَفِيهِ لَيَسَادُهَا عَبْدٌ مُؤْمِنٌ وَهُوَ فِي الصَّلَاةِ يَسْأَلُ اللَّهَ شَيْئًا إِلَّا أَعْطَاهُ إِيَّاهُ

“The best day on which the sun has risen is Friday. On it Adam was created, on it he was placed in Paradise, on it he left Paradise, on it he was forgiven, on it he died, and on it the final hour will take place. Every creature on the face of the earth, except Adam’s descendants, awakens on Friday on the lookout fearing the final hour until the sun rises. And there is an hour on Friday in which Allāh will grant anything a believer asks, if he is in formal prayer (*ṣalāh*) during it.” *Sunan Abu Dawud*, vol. 1, p. 269 no. 1041 and authenticated in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Jāmi‘ al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, no. 3334].

rejects that they be left aimless, or created uselessly. [Not to mention] other signs and proofs which Allāh employs to indicate its possibility and at other times to indicate its occurrence, and to elevate Him above the false claims of His enemies who deny resurrection of the dead.

Swearing by [the Day of Resurrection], to those who believe in Allāh, is like swearing by the sky and other visible created things.”¹⁴ Their belief gives them a certainty of faith which makes belief in the unseen (the *ghayb*) equal in strength to their belief in what is seen. This is the level of faith known as *iḥsān* wherein the most perfect believers worship Allāh as if they see Him, and those below them worship Him knowing that He sees them.

Ibn al-Qayyim then commented on the “Witness and the witnessed”, saying: [Allāh then] made a general oath by “**the witness and the witnessed,**” without specifying [anyone or anything]. Its most general meanings are that they refer to the sensor and the sensed, the knower and the known, and the seer and the seen. These are the most suitable meanings for them.¹⁵ As for other opinions [in which they are specified]¹⁶, they are only examples, for which there is no basis to specify them to the exclusion of others.¹⁷

¹⁴ *Badā’i’ al-Tafsīr*, vol. 5, p. 169.

¹⁵ Because they include witnessing by means of all the five senses.

¹⁶ Ibn Kathīr related that it was reported from Abū Hurayrah, Ibn ‘Abbās, al-Ḥasan ibn ‘Alī, al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, Sa‘īd ibn al-Musayyib, Mujāhid, ‘Ikrimah and al-Ḍaḥḥāk that “the witnessed,” refers to the Day of Judgment. (*Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr*, vol. 10, p. 425) [However,] al-Baghawī claimed, “The majority considered “the witness” to be Friday, and “the witnessed” to be the Day of ‘Arafat.” (*Ma‘ālim al-Tanzīl*, vol. 4, pp. 466-7)

¹⁷ The previously mentioned authenticated narration of Abū Hurayrah does specify the basic meaning. However, that specification does not rule out other references found in the Qur’ān and the authentic Sunnah.

[For example], Allāh’s speech is witnessed, as the Almighty said:

أَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِدُلُوكِ الشَّمْسِ إِلَى غَسَقِ اللَّيْلِ وَقُرْآنَ
الْفَجْرِ إِنَّ قُرْآنَ الْفَجْرِ كَانَ مَشْهُودًا ﴿٧٨﴾

“Establish the prayer from mid-day until the darkness of the night, and recite the Qur’ān in the early dawn. Indeed, the recitation of the Qur’ān in the early dawn is witnessed.”

(Sūrah al-Isrā’, 17: 78)

It is witnessed by the angels of the night and the angels of the day.¹⁸ The witnessed [i.e., the Qur’ān] is among the greatest of His signs, and likewise the witness.

Also, the Record Book of the righteous in ‘Ilīyyīn is witnessed by the close angels.

كَلَّا إِنَّ كِتَابَ الْأَبْرَارِ لَفِي عِلِّيِّينَ ﴿١٨﴾ وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا عِلِّيُّونَ ﴿١٩﴾
كِتَابٌ مَرْقُومٌ ﴿٢٠﴾ يُشْهَدُهُ الْمُقَرَّبُونَ ﴿٢١﴾

“Yes. Indeed the Record of the pious is in ‘Ilīyyīn. And what will inform you of what ‘Ilīyyīn is? It is an Inscribed Register. Witnessed by the cherubim.”

(Sūrah al-Muṭaffifīn, 83: 18-21)

Thus, the record is witnessed and the close angels are witnesses. Also, the Day of Resurrection is witnessed as the Almighty said:

¹⁸ Abū Hurayrah said, “I heard Allāh’s Messenger (ﷺ) saying,

فَضْلُ صَلَاةِ الْجَمِيعِ عَلَى صَلَاةِ الْوَاحِدِ خَمْسٌ وَعِشْرُونَ دَرَجَةً وَتَجْمَعُ مَلَائِكَةُ اللَّيْلِ وَمَلَائِكَةُ النَّهَارِ فِي صَلَاةِ الصُّبْحِ

‘The reward of a prayer in congregation is twenty-five times more than the prayer of a person alone. The angels of the night and the angels of the day gather at the time of the dawn prayer.’ “
(Sahih Al Bukhari, vol.6, p.193, no.4717)

ذَلِكَ يَوْمٌ يَجْمَعُ لَهُ النَّاسُ وَذَلِكَ يَوْمٌ مَّشْهُودٌ ﴿١٠٣﴾

“...That is a Day in which humankind will be gathered,
and that is a Day to be witnessed.”

(Sūrah Hūd, 11: 103)

Allāh will witness it, so will His angels, the humans, the *jinn*, and wild animals from among His signs and the witnessed are also among His signs.

Therefore, everything referred to as witness or witnessed is included in this oath. There is no basis for limiting it to some particular types or specific things, except as examples.

[There are] common factors linking these three matters which have been sworn by¹⁹ - praise be to Allāh. Swearing by them includes everything in existence in this world and the next, and each individual matter points to Allāh's dominion and divinity. He [first] swore by the uppermost world, the sky and the constellations in it, which is the greatest and most vast location. Then He swore by the greatest and most glorious day in order to highlight His dominion, His command, and His reward and punishment. It [is the Day which] gathers His allies and His enemies, and judgment between them will be according to His knowledge and His justice. Then He swore by something more general than all of that, the witness and the witnessed, and linked the oath to the story of the People of the Trench who tortured Allāh's allies. They were witnesses to what they did to the believers, and they were witnessed by the angels and the prophets, and even their limbs will bear witness against them...²⁰

¹⁹ The sky, Day of Judgment and the witness and the witnessed.

²⁰ This is in reference to the following verse:

يَوْمَ تَشْهَدُ عَلَيْهِمْ أَلْسِنَتُهُمْ وَأَيْدِيهِمْ وَأَرْجُلُهُمْ
بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٢٤﴾

“On the Day when *their tongues, their hands, and their feet will bear witness against them* regarding what they were doing.”

(Sūrah al-Nūr, 24: 24)

The One who varied the creation into witness and witnessed - and He is the most able – also varied it into the visible and the invisible, as He said:

فَلَا أُقْسِمُ بِمَا تُبْصِرُونَ ﴿٣٨﴾ وَمَا لَا تُبْصِرُونَ ﴿٣٩﴾

“So, I swear by what you see, and what you do not see.”

(Sūrah al-Hāqqah, 69: 38-9)

Similarly, He varied [the world] into earth and sky, night and day, and male and female. This variation and differentiation is among His signs – may He be glorified.²¹ In the same way that He differentiated His creation and creatures into opposites, He varied them into witnesses and what they witnessed.

There is also another secret inference in [divine variation pointing to the Ultimate Witness, Allāh]. Without witnesses being present and giving witness against some creatures, the system of the world would be deficient. If that is so, how could creatures be witnesses, watchers, and guardians for others and the Creator, Blessed and Transcendent not be a witness for His slaves, aware of them and watching over them?

Allāh’s oath by the witness and witnessed also includes an oath by His angels, prophets and messengers, as they are His witnesses against His

²¹ Allāh noted in the Qur’ān that He created everything in pairs, mates or opposites.

وَمِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ خَلَقْنَا زَوْجَيْنِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٥١﴾

“And I created pairs of everything that perhaps you may reflect.”

(Sūrah al-Dhāriyāt, 51: 49)

slaves.²² It is a case of an oath with something and an oath about the same thing, like the oath by the Promised Day which is also an oath about that day.”²³

This concept is also relevant to the issue of why there is evil in the world. For, good is known through its opposite, evil, just as sweet is known through its opposite, sour, soft through hard, etc.

²² Allāh talks about the witness of the prophets and messengers as well as Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) in the following verse:

فَكَيْفَ إِذَا جِئْنَا مِنْ كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ بِشَهِيدٍ وَجِئْنَا بِكَ عَلَى
هَؤُلَاءِ شَهِيدًا ﴿٤١﴾

“How will it be, when I bring from each nation a witness and I bring you as a witness against these people.”

(Sūrah al-Nisā', 4: 41)

²³ Badā'ī' al-Tafsīr, vol. 5, pp. 169-171.

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قُنِلَ أَصْحَابُ الْأُخُدُودِ ۖ النَّارِ ذَاتِ الْوُقُودِ ۗ إِذْ هُمْ عَلَيْهَا
قُعُودٌ ۖ وَهُمْ عَلَى مَا يَفْعَلُونَ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ شُهُودٌ ۗ

Cursed are those who dug the trench of fire abundantly supplied with fuel, when they sat by it and witnessed what they did to the believers.

Ibn Kathīr commented on the meaning of the term *qutila* (killed) saying, “The people of the ditch are killed,” means ‘the people of the ditch were cursed.’” He then went on to say: “This [verse contains] information about a disbelieving community who sought to force those among them who believed in Allāh to give up their religion. When the believers refused to renounce their faith, the disbelievers dug a trench in the ground, lit a fire in it and gathered fuel to keep it ablaze. Then they tried to scare the believers into apostating from their religion, but they still refused. So they threw them into the fire.

“And they witnessed what they did to the believers,” meant that they were witnesses to what was done to these believers.”²⁴

Al-Sa‘dī added, “This [scene] represents the height of tyranny, arrogance and mercilessness. The unbelievers combined disbelief in Allāh and opposition to His signs with fighting those who accepted His signs and punishing them with this heartbreaking punishment. Furthermore, the unbelievers were present while the believers were being thrown into the fire.”²⁵

The story behind this incident and its details were mentioned by the Prophet (ﷺ) and conveyed to us by his Companions. Ṣuhayb related that Allāh’s Messenger (ﷺ) told them there was a king in an earlier age that had a [court] magician. When [the magician] grew old, he told the king, “I have grown old. Send a young boy to me so that I may teach him sorcery,” so [the king] sent a boy to him for training. Everyday on his way [to the magician], the boy would pass by a monk. [One day] he decided to sit with the monk and listen to what he had to say. After sitting with the monk, he became greatly impressed by his words. From then onward, it became his habit to sit with the monk on his way to the magician. However, whenever he arrived [late] the magician would beat him. When the boy complained about the beatings to the monk, he told him, “When you feel afraid of the magician, say, ‘My family delayed me.’ And when you feel afraid of your family, say, ‘The magician delayed me.’”

While he was in that [routine], a huge beast blocked the people’s way, and [the boy] said, “Today I will know whether the magician or the monk is superior.” He picked up a stone and said, “O Allāh, if the way of the monk is dearer to you than the way of the magician, kill this animal so that the people can pass.” He threw the stone at it and killed it, and the people were able to pass. The boy then came to the monk and informed him, and the monk said, “Son, today you have surpassed me. I see that your affair has reached a stage where you will soon be put to trial. If you are put to trial, don’t tell [them] about me.” The boy then began to treat the blind and lepers, and he began to cure people

²⁴ *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, vol. 10, pp. 426.

²⁵ *Taysir al-Karim al-Rahmān*, pp. 1083.

from all kinds of illnesses. One of the king's courtiers who had gone blind heard about him. He came to him with many gifts and said, "If you cure me, all of these things will be yours." He said, "I do not cure anyone by myself. It is Allāh Who cures, and if you believe in Allāh, I will pray to Allāh to cure you." The courtier affirmed his faith in Allāh, and Allāh cured him. He came to the king and sat by his side as he used to do before. The king asked, "Who restored your sight?" He replied, "My Lord." The king said, "And do you have a Lord beside me?" He answered, "My Lord and your Lord is Allāh." The king seized him and had him tortured until he told him about the boy.

The boy was brought and the king said to him, "O boy, you have become so proficient in your magic that you cure the blind and lepers, and you do such-and-such and such-and-such." He said, "I do not cure anyone; it is Allāh Who cures." The king seized him and had him tortured until he told him about the monk. The monk was brought and told, "Renounce your religion!" but he refused to do so. The king called for a saw to be brought, had it placed on the middle of his head, and had him sawn in half. Then the courtier was brought and told, "Renounce your religion!" but he refused, so the saw was placed on the middle of his head, and he was sawn in half.

Then the boy was brought and told to renounce his religion, but he refused to do so. The king handed him over to a group of his courtiers and told them, "Take him to such-and-such mountain and climb to the top of it with him. When you reach the top, he either gives up his religion or you throw him off." So they took him to the top of the mountain, and he said, "O Allāh, save me from them by whatever [means] You like." The mountain then began shaking and they all fell off the mountain except the boy who came walking back to the king. The king asked him, "What happened to your companions?" He replied, "Allāh saved me from them." He again handed him over to some of his courtiers and said, "Take him on a boat into the middle of the sea. Then he must either repudiate his religion or you throw him off." So they took him, and he said, "O Allāh, save me from them by whatever [means] You like." The boat overturned; they were drowned, and the boy came walking back to the king, who asked him, "What happened to your companions?" He replied, "Allāh saved me from them." Then he told the king, "You will not be able to kill me unless you do as I instruct you."

The king asked, “What’s that?” He said, “You gather the people on open ground and hang me on the trunk [of a tree]. Then take an arrow from my quiver, put it in the bow and say, ‘In the name of Allāh, the Lord of this boy,’ then shoot me. If you do that, you will be able to kill me.”

So the king gathered the people in an open field and hung the boy from the trunk of a tree. He took an arrow from the boy’s quiver, placed it in the bow and said, “In the name of Allāh, the Lord of this boy.” He shot the arrow, which hit [the boy in] his temple. He laid his hand on his temple where the arrow had hit him and died. The people said, “We believe in the Lord of this boy! We believe in the Lord of this boy! We believe in the Lord of this boy!” [The courtiers] came to the king and said, “You know what you feared? By Allāh, the very thing you were afraid of has just happened! The people have believed [in Allāh]!”

[The king] commanded that ditches be dug along the roads. When the ditches had been dug, fires were lit in them. [The people] were told, “Anyone who does not repudiate his [new] religion will be thrown in the fire or told to jump into it.” [The people] did [just that], until a woman came with her child, and she wavered about jumping into the fire. The child told her, “Mother, be steadfast, for you are upon the Truth.”²⁶

Lessons and Benefits from the Story of the Boy and the King²⁷

1 – Allāh sends revivers of the faith in each era. Throughout human history Allāh has chosen certain individuals and prepared them to revive His religion and spread it throughout various regions of the earth. Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) prophesied that at the beginning or ending of every century, Allāh would send someone to revive the religion of Islām.

²⁶ *Sahih Muslim*, vol. 4, p. 1543, no. 7148.

²⁷ The origins of these points are taken from *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Qiṣaṣ al-Nabawiyyah*, pp. 313-5 and *Min Qiṣaṣ al-Māḍīn*, pp. 201-7.

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ فِيمَا أَعْلَمَ عَنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ ﷺ قَالَ: إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَبْعَثُ لِهَذِهِ
الْأُمَّةِ عَلَى رَأْسِ كُلِّ مِائَةِ سَنَةٍ مَنْ يُجَدِّدُهَا دِينَهَا

*Abū Hurayrah related that the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) said, "Indeed, at the beginning of every hundred years Allāh will send to the Muslim Nation one who would revive its religion for it."*²⁸

He also prophesied that among the signs of the final hour would be the appearance of The Guide (*al-Mahdī*) who would re-establish the religion of Islām throughout the earth.

عَنْ أَبِي سَعِيدٍ الْخُدْرِيِّ قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ: الْمَهْدِيُّ مِنِّي أَجْلَى
الْجِبْهَةِ أَقْنَى الْأَنْفِ يَمْلَأُ الْأَرْضَ قِسْطًا وَعَدْلًا كَمَا مَلَأَتْ جَوْرًا وَظُلْمًا
يَمْلِكُ سَبْعَ سِنِينَ

*Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī quoted Allāh's Messenger (ﷺ) as saying: "The Mahdī is from me, having a broad forehead and a pointed nose. He will fill the earth with justice as it was filled with corruption and oppression. He will rule for seven years."*²⁹

Allāh's Messenger (ﷺ) further prophesied that after the Mahdī, Prophet Jesus would return and revive Islamic law. Abū Hurayrah quoted Allāh's Messenger (ﷺ) as saying, "And he (Jesus) will rule you by the Book of your Lord (*Qur'ān*) and the Sunnah of your Prophet (ﷺ)."³⁰

²⁸ *Sunan Abu Dawud*, Kitāb al-Malāḥim, bāb: mā yudhkar fī qarn al-mi'ah

²⁹ *Ibid.*, Kitāb al-Mahdī

³⁰ *Sahih Muslim*, vol.1, p.106, no.155.

In this story, Allāh selected the boy to be the reason his people found true faith. The divine message had become marginalised in that society and was only taught secretly by the monk. Through the boy's efforts and martyrdom the True Religion, Islām, became known to the people and many of them accepted it.

2 – **The plans of the forces of evil are not greater than Allāh's plans.** The evil king selected the boy to be his master magician who would further strengthen the foundations of his kingdom, but Allāh wanted him to be a righteous servant who would destroy the evil kingdom and guide its inhabitants to Islām. This principle is in conformity with Allāh's statement in the Qur'ān:

وَمَكْرُوا وَمَكَرَ اللَّهُ وَاللَّهُ خَيْرُ الْمَكْرِينَ ﴿٥٤﴾

“They plot and Allāh plots and Allāh is the best plotter.”

(Sūrah Āl ‘Imrān, 3: 54)

The lesson in this is that Allāh prepares people for the defence of His religion who may even grow up in the homes of tyrants. Prophet Moses is a classical example of this principle. Pharaoh was aware that an Israelite was destined to destroy his kingdom, so he had all new-born Israelite males slaughtered. Moses' mother was inspired by Allāh to put her new born child in a basket in the Nile River, and Pharaoh and his wife found him, adopted him and raised him in their own home.

3 – **Strong faith does not necessarily take a long time to develop.** Firm belief can settle rapidly in the hearts of those who accept Islām or awaken to Islām and revive their souls. This is not always the case, for Allāh scolded the newly-converted desert Arabs for claiming to have true faith saying:

قَالَتِ الْأَعْرَابُ ءَأَمْنَا قُل لَّمْ تُؤْمِنُوا وَلَكِنْ قُولُوا أَسْلَمْنَا
وَلَمَّا يَدْخُلِ الْإِيْمَانُ فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ

“The desert Arabs say: ‘We believed.’ Tell them: ‘You haven’t believed yet.’ Instead, say: ‘We have accepted Islām. For faith has not yet settled in your hearts.’ ”

(Sūrah al-Hujurāt, 49: 14)

However, there were others whose faith reached the highest level upon their conversion to Islām, like the companion who accepted Islām and was promised Paradise though he did not pray a single obligatory prayer.³¹ In the story of the boy and the king, the people accepted the horrendous punishment of death by fire after only spending a few hours in their new faith. Similarly Pharaoh's magicians believed firmly when

³¹ The narration in *Musnad Ahmad* is as follows:

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ قَالَ كَانَ يَقُولُ حَدَّثَنِي عَنْ رَجُلٍ دَخَلَ الْجَنَّةَ لَمْ يَصَلْ قَطُّ فَإِذَا يُعْرَفُهُ النَّاسُ سَأَلُوهُ مَنْ هُوَ فَيَقُولُ
أَصِيرِمُ بَنِي عَبْدِ الْأَشْهَلِ عَمْرُو بْنُ ثَابِتِ بْنِ وَقْشِ قَالَ الْحَصِينُ فَقُلْتُ لِمَ عَمْرُو بْنُ لَبِيدٍ كَيْفَ كَانَ شَأْنُ الْأَصِيرِمِ
قَالَ كَانَ يَأْتِي الْإِسْلَامَ عَلَى قَوْمِهِ فَلَمَّا كَانَ يَوْمَ أُحُدٍ وَخَرَجَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ إِلَى أُحُدٍ بَدَأَ لَهُ الْإِسْلَامَ فَأَسْأَلُهُ
فَأَخَذَ سَيْفَهُ فَعَدَا حَتَّى أَتَى الْقَوْمَ فَدَخَلَ فِي غَرَضِ النَّاسِ فَقَاتَلَ حَتَّى أَثْبَتَهُ الْجِرَاحَةُ قَالَ فَبَيْنَمَا رِجَالُ بَنِي
عَبْدِ الْأَشْهَلِ يَلْتَمِسُونَ قَتْلَهُمْ فِي الْمَعْرَكَةِ إِذَا هُمْ بِهِ فَقَالُوا وَاهٍ إِنَّ هَذَا لِلْأَصِيرِمِ وَمَا جَاءَ لَقَدْ تَرَكَاهُ وَإِنَّهُ
لَمُنْكَرٌ هَذَا الْحَدِيثُ فَسَأَلُوهُ مَا جَاءَ بِهِ قَالُوا مَا جَاءَ بِنَا بِنَا عَمْرُو أَحْرَبًا عَلَى قَوْمِكَ أَوْ رَغْبَةً فِي الْإِسْلَامِ قَالَ نِلَ
رَغْبَةً فِي الْإِسْلَامِ آمَنْتُ بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَأَسْلَمْتُ ثُمَّ أَخَذْتُ سَيْفِي فَقَدَوْتُ مَعَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ ﷺ فَقَاتَلْتُ حَتَّى
أَصَابَنِي مَا أَصَابَنِي قَالَ ثُمَّ بَلَّغْتُ أَنَّ مَاتَ فِي أَيْدِيهِمْ فَذَكَرُوهُ لِرَسُولِ اللَّهِ ﷺ فَقَالَ: إِنَّهُ لَمِنَ أَهْلِ الْجَنَّةِ

Abū Hurayrah related that he used to say: Tell me about a person who entered Paradise without praying a single prayer. If the people did not know who he was, they would ask him: Who is he? And he would say Uṣayrim of the 'Abdul-Ash-hal clan, 'Amr ibn Thābit. Al-Ḥuṣayn asked Maḥmūd ibn Labīd about al-Uṣayrim's situation. He replied: He used to refuse to accept Islām along with his clan. However, when the day of the Battle of Uḥud came and the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) set out for Uḥud, Islām became clear to him and he converted, took his sword, set out in the early morning until he found the battle, entered the middle of the people, and fought until he fell to the ground from his wounds. While people from the 'Abdul-Ash-hal clan were searching for their dead in the battle, they found him. Some said: By Allāh this is Uṣayrim. He didn't come with us. We left him rejecting Islām. They asked him what brought him saying: "What brought you 'Amr? Was it warring against your people or your love for Islām?" He replied, "Only my love for Islām. I believe in Allāh and His Messenger. I accepted Islām, then took my sword and set out with the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) and fought until I was struck down." Then he died in their hands. When they mentioned him to Allāh's Messenger, he said: "Indeed he is among the People of Paradise."
(Bāqī Musnad al-Anṣār, Ḥadīth Maḥmūd ibn Labid, no. 22, 526 CD)

Moses' miraculous snake devoured their illusions. Pharaoh's power and threat of painful punishment did not turn them back from their belief.³²

The story also contains an example of the steadfastness of early Muslims in holding on to their faith in spite of the trials they faced. For, if *imān* becomes rooted in a person's soul, then this life becomes valueless and petty in his eyes and giving up his life for the sake of Allāh will be for him a real bargain.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ اشْتَرَىٰ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَنفُسَهُمْ وَأَمْوَالَهُمْ
بِأَنَّ لَهُمُ الْجَنَّةَ

“Indeed, Allāh has purchased from the believers their souls and their property for Paradise...”

(Sūrah al-Tawbah, 9: 111)

4 - Allāh grants miracles to others besides the prophets. Throughout human history, Allāh has created miracles³³ to support His allies and to confirm their belief. For example, Mary the mother of Jesus' mother was given food miraculously when she was in seclusion in the monastery.³⁴ In this story, the boy was not a prophet, yet Allāh answered his prayer by miraculously killing the beast with the stone which he threw. Furthermore, Allāh healed the blind at his hands and cured the sick, and He miraculously saved him from death at the hands of the King's courtiers.

5 - Sacrificing one's life for the sake of Allāh is not a form of suicide. The

³² 20: 70-3; 26: 46-52.

³³ Referred to in Islamic Arabic literature as *karāmāh* to distinguish them from the miracles of the prophets which are called *mu'jizāt*.

³⁴

كُلَّمَا دَخَلَ عَلَيْهَا زَكَرِيَّا الْمِحْرَابَ وَجَدَ عِنْدَهَا رِزْقًا قَالَ
يَمْرُؤُا أَنَّىٰ لَكَ هَٰذَا قَالَتْ هُوَ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ

“Whenever Zakariyyā entered her room, he found provisions with her. He asked her: ‘Maryam! Where did this come from?’ She replied, ‘It is from Allāh.’”

(Sūrah Āl ‘Imrān, 3: 37)

boy explained to the king how he could be killed in order to disprove the king's claim to divinity, to make belief in the true God, Allāh, known to the king's subjects and to provide living proof of its reality. In the story, some of the believers from the town were thrown in the fire, while others rushed into it on their own. However, their rushing into the fire was not suicide; rather it was open confirmation of their belief in God which enraged the king and his supporters and pleased the Lord of all the worlds.

Although, the incident of the boy and his followers has been used by some modern movements to justify suicide bombing in certain parts of the Muslim world, the circumstances are completely unrelated. The reasons are different and the lives of innocent non-combatants were not destroyed in the process.

6 – Lying is permissible during trying times in order to avoid suffering.

The monk instructed the boy to claim that his teacher had delayed him if his parents asked why he was late and that his parents delayed him if his teacher asked in order to avoid unjust punishment. The Prophet (ﷺ) was reported by Asmā' bint Yazīd to have said:

لَا يَحِلُّ الْكَذِبُ إِلَّا فِي ثَلَاثٍ يُحَدِّثُ الرَّجُلُ امْرَأَتَهُ لِيُرْضِيَهَا وَالْكَذِبُ فِي
الْحَرْبِ وَالْكَذِبُ لِيُصْلِحَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ

“Lying is impermissible except in three cases: a man saying things to his wife³⁵ to please her; lying during war; and lying to reconcile people.”³⁶

³⁵ In the narration of Umm Kulthūm in *Sahih Muslim*, the Prophet (ﷺ) added, “and a woman says to her husband.” *Tuhfat al-Aḥwadhī*

³⁶ *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*, Kitāb al Birr wal Ṣīlah, bāb: mā jā'a fi iṣlāh dhār al bayn. No. 1862 CD

Al-Nawawī said the following concerning the Prophet's *ḥadīth* on lying: “Scholars differed concerning what was intended by permissible lying. A group held that it was generally allowed and regarded it permissible on other occasions nor mentioned in the *ḥadīth* where there was benefit. They said that blameworthy lying was that which contained harm.

Abū Hurayrah narrated from the Prophet (ﷺ) that Prophet Abraham lied under similar circumstances:

لَمْ يَكْذِبْ إِبْرَاهِيمُ النَّبِيُّ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ قَطُّ إِلَّا ثَلَاثَ كَذَبَاتٍ نُسِنَ فِي ذَاتِ
 اللَّهِ قَوْلُهُ إِنِّي سَقِيمٌ وَقَوْلُهُ بَلْ فَعَلَهُ كَبِيرُهُمْ هَذَا وَوَاحِدَةٌ فِي شَأْنِ سَارَةَ
 فَإِنَّهُ قَدِمَ أَرْضَ جَبَّارٍ وَمَعَهُ سَارَةُ وَكَانَتْ أَحْسَنَ النَّاسِ فَقَالَ لَهَا إِنَّ
 هَذَا الْجَبَّارُ إِنْ يَعْلَمُ أَنَّكَ امْرَأَتِي يُغْلِبُنِي عَلَيْكَ فَإِنْ سَأَلَكَ فَأَخْبِرِيهِ أَنَّكَ
 أُخْتِي فَإِنَّكَ أُخْتِي فِي الْإِسْلَامِ فَإِنِّي لَا أَعْلَمُ فِي الْأَرْضِ مُسْلِمًا غَيْرِي
 وَغَيْرِكَ فَلَمَّا دَخَلَ أَرْضَهُ رَأَاهَا بَعْضُ أَهْلِ الْجَبَّارِ أَنَاهُ فَقَالَ لَهُ لَقَدْ قَدِمَ
 أَرْضَكَ امْرَأَةٌ لَا يَنْبَغِي لَهَا أَنْ تَكُونَ إِلَّا لَكَ فَأَرْسَلِ إِلَيْهَا فَأْتِي بِهَا فَقَامَ
 إِبْرَاهِيمُ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ إِلَى الصَّلَاةِ فَلَمَّا دَخَلَتْ عَلَيْهِ لَمْ يَتَمَلَّكَ أَنْ بَسَطَ
 يَدَهُ إِلَيْهَا فَقَبِضَتْ يَدَهُ قَبْضَةً شَدِيدَةً فَقَالَ لَهَا ادْعِي اللَّهَ أَنْ يُطَلِّقَ يَدِي
 وَلَا أَضْرِكَ فَفَعَلَتْ فَغَادَ قَبْضَتُهَا أَشَدَّ مِنْ الْقَبْضَةِ الْأُولَى فَقَالَ لَهَا مِثْلُ

They used as evidence Prophet Abraham's statements: "Their biggest one did it," "I am sick," and "She is my sister." And the statement of Prophet's Yūṣuf's announcer: "O caravan. You are thieves." They also said that there is no difference of opinion regarding a situation where a tyrant seeks to kill a person hidden by another; that the latter must lie saying that he does not know where he is. The other group, among them al-Ṭabarī, held that lying was impermissible under any circumstance. They said that what was mentioned as permissible referred to ambiguous statements and allusions and not clear lies... The use of words which have more than one possible meaning in such a way that the one addressed understands from it what is pleasing to his heart... For example, in war he may say to his enemy: "Your leader has died," while intending one of their past leaders." (*Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*)

ذَلِكَ فَعَلَتْ فَعَادَ فُقِبِضَتْ أَشَدَّ مِنَ الْقُبُضَيْنِ الْأُولَيْنِ فَقَالَ ادْعِي اللَّهَ
 أَنْ يُطْلِقَ يَدَيَّ فَلَكَ اللَّهُ أَنْ لَا أَضْرَكَ فَعَلَتْ وَأُطْلِقَتْ يَدُهُ وَدَعَا الَّذِي
 جَاءَ بِهَا فَقَالَ لَهُ إِنَّكَ إِنَّمَا أَتَيْتَنِي بِشَيْطَانٍ وَمِمَّا تَأْتِي بِنَاسٍ فَأَخْرِجْهَا مِنْ
 أَرْضِي وَأَعْطِهَا هَاجِرًا قَالَ فَأَقْبَلَتْ تَمْشِي فَلَمَّا رَأَاهَا إِبْرَاهِيمُ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ
 انْصَرَفَ فَقَالَ لَهَا مَهْمٌ قَالَتْ خَيْرٌ أَكَلَّ اللَّهُ يَدَ الْفَاجِرِ وَأَخَذَمَ خَادِمًا

“Prophet Abraham, peace be on him, only told three lies: Twice for the sake of Allāh; his statement “I am sick,”³⁷ and his statement, “No. Their biggest one did it,”³⁸ and once in the case of Sārah. When he and Sārah, who was extremely beautiful, went to the land of a tyrant, he told her: ‘If this tyrant comes to know that you are my wife, he will overpower me to get you. So if he asks you, tell him that you are my sister, for you are my sister in Islām, and I don’t know of any other Muslim in this land besides myself and yourself.’ When he entered the tyrant’s land, some of the tyrant’s family saw her and ran to him saying: ‘A woman has entered your land that should not belong to anyone but you.’ He immediately sent for her and she was brought to him, and Abraham, peace be on him, turned to Allāh in prayer. When she came before him, he could not resist stretching out his hand to grab her. But his hand was restrained in a tight invisible grip. So he asked her: ‘Pray to Allāh to release my hand and I won’t harm you.’ When she did so, he immediately tried again, but his hand was snatched even more tightly than before. So he pleaded with her as he did before and she did as he

³⁷ He feigned sickness in order to avoid joining his people in their idolatrous festival.

³⁸ When asked if he had destroyed their idols, Abraham said that it was their largest idol that he had spared in order for them to realise their error in worshipping idols whom they knew were incapable of attacking others or even defending themselves.

(Sūrah al-Anbiyā’, 21: 62-3)

asked. When his hand was released, he tried again, but his hand was caught in a grip tighter than on the previous two occasions. So he begged her: 'Pray to Allāh that He release my hand and you have Allāh as a witness that I won't harm you.' When she did so and his hand was released, he called the one who had brought her and said: 'Indeed you have brought me a devil; not a human. Take her out of my land and give her Hājar.' She returned to Abraham walking and when he saw her, he immediately rushed to her and asked what had happened. She replied: 'All is well. Allāh restrained the hand of the corrupt and gave us a servant.'³⁹

Also in the case of 'Ammār ibn Yāsir, when he was tortured and lied to his masters saying ill of the Prophet (ﷺ) and accepting their gods; the Prophet (ﷺ) told him that if they repeated their torture, he could repeat what he said.⁴⁰

7 – The forces of evil are ultimately weak. The story exposes the weakness and frailty of the oppressors before Allāh, for the king who claimed divinity was unable to kill the boy despite his power and authority. His inability became even more evident when he was obliged to follow the boy's instructions in order to kill him. This is the nature of evil and falsehood; that is, it is weak in the presence of truth. As Allāh said:

وَقُلْ جَاءَ الْحَقُّ وَزَهَقَ الْبَاطِلُ إِنَّ الْبَاطِلَ كَانَ زَهُوقًا ﴿٨١﴾

*"The truth has come and falsehood has vanished.
Indeed falsehood is bound to vanish."*

(Sūrah al-Isrā', 17: 81)

³⁹ *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, vol. 4, p. 347, no. 3358, Kitāb: Ahādīth al-Anbiyā', bāb: Qawlihi Ittakhadha Allāh Ibrāhīm Khalīl and *Sahih Muslim*, no. 2371 Kitāb: al-Faḍā'il, bāb: Faḍā'il Ibrāhīm. The wording is that of the narration in *Sahih Muslim*.

⁴⁰ *Sunan al-Bayhaqī* and *al-Mustadrak*

Even the most primary force of evil, Satan, is described as weak. Allāh said:

إِنَّ كَيْدَ الشَّيْطَانِ كَانَ ضَعِيفًا ﴿٧٦﴾

“Indeed the plan of Satan is weak.”

(Sūrah al-Nisā, 4: 76)

And Allāh quotes Satan as saying that he has no power over anyone:

وَمَا كَانَ لِي عَلَيْكُمْ مِّنْ سُلْطٰنٍ اِلَّا اَنۡ دَعَوْتُكُمْ فَاَسْتَجِبْتُمْ لِيۡ

“I had no power over you. Except that I invited you and you responded to me.”

(Sūrah Ibrāhīm, 14: 22)

Knowledge of the ultimate weakness of evil gives the believers confidence to confront it fearlessly.

8 – The true believer may weaken under severe torture or fear, but his faith remains intact. The king’s courtier, whose sight was restored, implicated the boy under the pressure of punishment, and the boy, in turn, implicated the monk when he was tortured. However, this did not lower their ranks, for they both withstood punishment that led to their deaths when they were told to abandon their belief in Allāh.

In the Prophet’s time, one of his companions, Hāṭib ibn Abī Balta‘ah, tried to inform the Quraysh about the impending Muslim attack on Makkah. However, when others cursed him, the Prophet (ﷺ) praised him.

عَنْ عَلِيٍّ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ بَعَثَنِي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ وَأَبَا مَرْثَدَ الْغَنَوِيِّ
وَالزُّبَيْرِ بْنِ الْعَوَّامِ وَكُنَّا فَارِسًا قَالَ انْطَلِقُوا حَتَّى تَأْتُوا رَوْضَةَ خَاخِ
فَإِنَّ بِهَا امْرَأَةً مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ مَعَهَا كِتَابٌ مِنْ حَاطِبِ بْنِ أَبِي بَلْتَعَةَ إِلَى

الْمُشْرِكِينَ فَأَدْرَكَهَا تَسِيرٌ عَلَى بَعِيرٍ لَهَا حَيْثُ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ قُلْنَا
 الْكِتَابُ فَقَالَتْ مَا مَعَنَا كِتَابٌ فَأَخْنَاهَا فَالْتَمَسْنَا فَلَمْ تَرَ كِتَابًا فَقُلْنَا مَا
 كَذَبَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ لُتْخْرِجَنَّ الْكِتَابَ أَوْ لِنَجْرِدَنَّكَ
 فَلَمَّا رَأَتْ الْجِدَّ أَهْوَتْ إِلَى حُجْزَتِهَا وَهِيَ مُحْتَجِزَةٌ بِكِسَاءٍ فَأَخْرَجَتْهُ
 فَأَنْطَلَقْنَا بِهَا إِلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَقَالَ عُمَرُ يَا رَسُولَ
 اللَّهِ قَدْ خَانَ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَالْمُؤْمِنِينَ فَدَعْنِي فَلَاضْرِبَ عَنْقَهُ فَقَالَ النَّبِيُّ
 صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ مَا حَمَلَكَ عَلَيَّ مَا صَنَعْتَ قَالَ حَاطَبٌ وَاللَّهِ
 مَا بِي أَنْ لَا أَكُونَ مُؤْمِنًا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أَرَدْتُ أَنْ
 يَكُونَ لِي عِنْدَ الْقَوْمِ يَدْفَعُ اللَّهُ بِهَا عَنْ أَهْلِي وَمَالِي وَلَيْسَ أَحَدٌ مِنْ
 أَصْحَابِكَ إِلَّا لَهُ هُنَاكَ مِنْ عَشِيرَتِهِ مَنْ يَدْفَعُ اللَّهُ بِهِ عَنْ أَهْلِهِ وَمَالِهِ فَقَالَ
 النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ صَدَقَ وَلَا تَقُولُوا لَهُ إِلَّا خَيْرًا فَقَالَ عُمَرُ
 إِنَّهُ قَدْ خَانَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَالْمُؤْمِنِينَ فَدَعْنِي فَلَاضْرِبَ عَنْقَهُ فَقَالَ أَيْسَ
 مِنْ أَهْلِ بَدْرٍ فَقَالَ لَعَلَّ اللَّهَ أَطَّلَعَ إِلَى أَهْلِ بَدْرٍ فَقَالَ اأَعْمَلُوا مَا شِئْتُمْ فَقَدْ
 وَجَبَتْ لَكُمْ الْجَنَّةُ أَوْ فَقَدْ غَفَرْتُ لَكُمْ فَدَمَعَتْ عَيْنَا عُمَرَ وَقَالَ اللَّهُ
 وَرَسُولُهُ أَعْلَمُ

‘Alī said: Allāh’s Messenger (ﷺ) sent me, Abū Marthad
 al-Ghanawī and al-Zubayr ibn al-‘Awwām – and we
 were all knights – on a mission saying: “Go to Rawḍat

Khākh where you will find a pagan woman with a letter to the pagans from Ḥāṭib ibn Abī Balta‘ah.” We caught up with her riding on a camel where Allāh’s Messenger (ﷺ) said she would be and told her: “[Give us] the letter.” She replied: “There is no letter with me.” We made her dismount and searched her, but did not find any letter. We said: “Allāh’s Messenger (ﷺ) didn’t lie, so either you turn over the letter or we will strip you of all your clothes.” When she saw that we were serious, she reached her hand into her braid – her hair was in braids covered by a cloth – and took it out. We then set off with it to Allāh’s Messenger (ﷺ). ‘Umar said, “Messenger of Allāh! He has betrayed Allāh, His Messenger, and the believers, so allow me to cut off his head.” The Prophet (ﷺ) asked Ḥāṭib, “What led you to do this?” He replied, “By Allāh, it is not that I don’t believe in Allāh and His Messenger (ﷺ). It is just that I wanted to gain the favour of those people by which Allāh could protect my family and my property. And all of your companions have family there by whom Allāh would protect their family and property.” The Prophet (ﷺ) said, “You have spoken the truth. So let no one say anything to him other than good.” ‘Umar repeated, “He has betrayed Allāh, His Messenger and the believers, so allow me to cut off his head.” The Prophet (ﷺ) asked, “Isn’t he among those who fought in the Battle of Badr? Perhaps Allāh has seen those who fought in Badr and said: ‘Do whatever you wish, for Paradise is yours [for I have forgiven you].’ ” ‘Umar’s eyes became filled with tears and he said, “Allāh and His Messenger know best.”⁴¹

⁴¹ *Sahih Al Bukhari*, vol. 5, p. 346, no. 4274. Kitāb: al Maghāzī; Bāb: Faḍl Ahl Badr and *Sahih Muslim*, no. 4550, Kitāb: Faḍā’il al-Ṣahābah; Bāb: Faḍā’il Ahl Badr.

9 – A student may surpass his teacher. The boy’s miracles put him on a level of faith above that of his mentor, the monk, and the monk acknowledged his supremacy. This is why the Prophet (ﷺ) stressed the importance of conveying the knowledge of Islām to others.

لِيُبَلِّغَ الشَّاهِدُ الْغَائِبَ فَإِنَّ الشَّاهِدَ عَسَى أَنْ يُبَلِّغَ مَنْ هُوَ أَوْعَى لَهُ مِنْهُ

“Let those present convey what they heard to those absent. For, perhaps he may inform one better able to understand it than him.”⁴²

عَنْ زَيْدِ بْنِ ثَابِتٍ قَالَ سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ﷺ يَقُولُ: نَضَّرَ اللَّهُ أُمَّرَأَةً

سَمِعَ مِنَّا حَدِيثًا فَحَفِظَهُ حَتَّى يُبَلِّغَهُ قُرْبًا حَامِلٍ فَفِيهِ إِلَى مَنْ هُوَ أَفْقَهُ

مِنْهُ وَرُبَّ حَامِلٍ فَفِيهِ لَيْسَ بِفَقِيهِ

Zayd ibn Thābit quoted Allāh’s Messenger (ﷺ) as saying: “May Allāh bless the person who hears a narration from me, guards it until he conveys it. For, perhaps one conveys a law to one who is a better legist than himself, or perhaps one conveying a law is not a legist at all.”⁴³

Historically, there have been many examples of this phenomenon. For example, Imām al-Bukhārī was a student of Imām Aḥmad, and Imām al-Shāfi‘ī was a student of Imām Mālik and in both cases these students surpassed their teachers in knowledge of certain areas of the religion. Imām al-Bukhārī compiled the most authentic book of *ḥadīths* and Imām al-Shāfi‘ī was the first to compile and deduce the fundamental principles of Islamic law known as the science of *Uṣūl al-Fiqh*.

However, the credit for the boy’s guidance remains with the monk.

⁴² Ibid., Kitāb: al-‘Ilm; Bāb: Rubba Muballigh.

⁴³ *Sunan Abu Dawūd*, vol. 3, p. 1038, no. 3652, Kitāb: ‘Ilm, Bāb: Faḍl nashr al-‘Ilm

Consequently, all subsequent good which the boy did was added to the monk's scale of good deeds. The Prophet (ﷺ) said:

مَنْ دَعَا إِلَى هُدًى كَانَ لَهُ مِنَ الْأَجْرِ مِثْلُ أُجُورِ مَنْ تَبِعَهُ لَا يَنْقُصُ ذَلِكَ
مِنْ أُجُورِهِمْ شَيْئًا

“Whoever calls to guidance will receive the same reward as the one who follows him without any decrease in the reward of [his follower].”⁴⁴

10 – Social welfare works play an important role in *Da‘wah*. The *ḥadīth* contains a reply to those who claim that doing social works is not beneficial in calling to Allāh. They claim that what is obligatory on the Muslims is to establish Islamic law, or the *khilāfah*. In their view, being active in charitable works like feeding the hungry, clothing the poor, and building schools, mosques and hospitals, is all wasted effort. This *ḥadīth* proves them wrong, for Allāh supported the boy's healing of the blind and curing the sick, which attracted the common masses to him and made them accept his call. Furthermore, the success of Christian missionaries in spreading their falsehood even in Muslim communities' world wide is directly a result of their charitable works.

11 - Hardships and trials refine people and as such they are a part of Allāh's Sunnah. That was the message which the monk told the boy when he said, “And you shall be tried.” What made the monk sure about this reality, which was something from the future and as such unseen (*ghayb*) to him, was his divinely inspired understanding that the trials of the righteous are continuous in every age and time. Even in the prophetic descriptions of the Final Hour, trials and tribulations will occur with the coming of *Dajjāl* and his persecution of the righteous followers of the *Mahdī*. The Prophet (ﷺ) related that a young believer who confronts *Dajjāl* will also be sawn into two halves; from the middle of his head to his crotch. *Dajjāl* will then walk between the two halves of the young man and call him back to life, and he will arise whole. However, when he asks the young man to affirm his belief in him, the youth will reply,

⁴⁴ *Sahih Muslim*, vol. 4, p. 1406, no. 6470.

“I’ve only become more certain [that you are false].” And he will turn to the people and proclaim, “O people! He won’t be able to do this with anyone after me.” *Dajjāl* will then grab him by his neck in order to chop off his head, but a copper band will appear there and prevent him from doing so. He will then grab the young man by his hands and feet and throw him into his river of fire. People will think that the fire consumed him, but he actually fell into Paradise. And the Prophet (ﷺ) added:

هَذَا أَعْظَمُ النَّاسِ شَهَادَةً عِنْدَ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

“This [young man] is the greatest martyr in the sight of the Lord of the Worlds.”⁴⁵

Following the demise of *Dajjāl*, there will be further trials from the Gog and the Magog for the followers of Prophet Jesus at the end of time. Al-Nawwās ibn al-Sam‘ān related that Allāh’s Messenger (ﷺ) said, “A group of people who, by Allāh’s help, survived the *Dajjāl* War, will come to Jesus. He will anoint their faces and inform them about their grades in Paradise. Shortly afterwards, Allāh will speak to Jesus saying, ‘I have called forth a people from My creatures whom no one can defeat. Therefore, gather My righteous servants on the Mountain of *al-Ṭūr*.’⁴⁶ Then Allāh will raise up the Gog and the Magog and they will swiftly spread over the land...”⁴⁷

Abū Sa‘īd al-Khudrī narrated from the Prophet (ﷺ) that he said, “*The Gog and the Magog will set loose upon humankind just as Allāh said, ‘And they will swiftly swarm from every mound. (21: 96)’ They will overwhelm the people and Muslims will have to seek refuge in their cities and fortresses along with their cattle. The Gog and the Magog will consume the earth’s waters. Some of them will pass by a river and consume all of its water until it becomes dry. Whoever is following them will pass by the river [bed] and remark, ‘There was water here once!’ Everyone will seek refuge in fortresses or cities. One among [the Gog*

⁴⁵ *Sahih Muslim*, vol. 8, p. 359, no. 2938

⁴⁶ There are two mountains called *al-Ṭūr*. One is in the Sinai, where Allāh spoke to Moses. The other one is near Jerusalem.

⁴⁷ *Sahih Muslim*, vol. 8, p. 356, no. 2137.

and Magog] will exclaim, 'We are finished with those inhabitants of the earth, only the inhabitants of the sky remain!' Then one of them will heft his spear and heave it into the sky and it will fall back with blood on it as a test and trial [for humans]."⁴⁸

Al-Nawwās ibn al-Sam‘ān quoted Allāh’s Messenger (ﷺ) as saying, “Jesus, Allāh’s Prophet, along with his companions will be surrounded and [blockaded] until the head of a bull will be more precious to them than a hundred dīnārs to you today. Jesus, Prophet of Allāh, and his companions will turn to Allāh in prayers. Then Allāh will send worms⁴⁹ which will attach themselves to the necks [of the Gog and the Magog]... ”⁵⁰ Abū Sa‘īd al-Khudrī quoted the Prophet (ﷺ) as saying, “... Allāh will send creatures like locust larvae which will bore into their necks until they die like locusts piled upon one another. In the morning the Muslims [barricaded with Prophet Jesus] will not hear a sound from them. The Muslims will then ask, ‘Who will sacrifice himself by going out and seeing what has happened to them?’ A man from among them will go out certain that they will kill him only to find them dead, piled on top of each other. He will then proclaim to the Muslims, ‘Good news! Your enemy has been destroyed!’ Then the people will come out [of their fortresses] and release their cattle. There will be nothing for the cattle to graze on besides the corpses [of the Gog and the Magog]. However, the cattle will become fatter from [eating their corpses] than they ever did from eating grass.”⁵¹

Through difficulties, trials and tribulations, a person’s strength of faith becomes evident whereby those of weak faith are distinguished from those whose faith is strong. It is easy for people to claim *īmān* when they do not have to face persecution from the disbelievers, whose plan is to turn people away from their religion with whatever power and authority they have.

⁴⁸ *Sunan Ibn Majah*, vol. 5, p. 387, no. 4079 and authenticated in *Ṣaḥīḥ Sunan Ibn Mājah*, no. 3297.

⁴⁹ The Arabic term used for the worm in this narration is *naghaf* which is a worm that usually lives inside the nostrils of cattle causing them illness and sometimes death.

⁵⁰ *Saḥīḥ Muslim*, vol. 8, p. 356, no. 2137

⁵¹ *Sunan Ibn Majah*, vol. 5, p. 387, no. 4079 and authenticated in *Ṣaḥīḥ Sunan Ibn Mājah*, no. 3297.

This point is mentioned in numerous places in the Qur’ān.
For example:

أَحْسِبَ النَّاسُ أَنْ يُتْرَكُوا أَنْ يَقُولُوا إِيَّاكُمْ آمَنَّا وَهُمْ لَا
يُفْتَنُونَ ﴿٢﴾

*“Do people think that they will be left alone after
saying they believe without being tested?”*

(Sūrah al-‘Ankabūt, 29: 2)

Calamities are the foundation on which higher spiritual qualities like patience are developed. Consequently, it is not surprising to find that the righteous are subject to many tragedies and difficulties in their lives.

عَنْ سَعْدِ بْنِ أَبِي وَقَّاصٍ قَالَ قُلْتُ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ أَيُّ النَّاسِ أَشَدُّ بَلَاءً قَالَ
: الْأَنْبِيَاءُ ثُمَّ الْأَمْثَلُ فَالْأَمْثَلُ يُبْتَلَى الْعَبْدُ عَلَى حَسَبِ دِينِهِ فَإِنْ كَانَ فِي
دِينِهِ صُلْبًا اشْتَدَّ بَلَاؤُهُ وَإِنْ كَانَ فِي دِينِهِ رِقَّةً ابْتُلِيَ عَلَى حَسَبِ دِينِهِ فَمَا
يَبْرَحُ الْبَلَاءُ بِالْعَبْدِ حَتَّى يَتْرُكَهُ يَمْشِي عَلَى الْأَرْضِ وَمَا عَلَيْهِ مِنْ خَطِيئَةٍ

Sa’d reported that he asked the Prophet (ﷺ) who among mankind had the most trials and he replied, “The prophets, then those most like them and then those most like them. Man is tested according to the level of his faith. If his faith is firm, his trials increase in severity, and if there is weakness in his faith, he will be tried accordingly. Trial will continue with a man until they leave him walking on the earth without any sins.”⁵²

⁵² Collected by al-Tirmidhī and Ibn Mājah and authenticated in *Ṣaḥīḥ Sunan al-Tirmidhī*, vol. 2, p. 286, no. 1956.

True patience is itself the product of complete trust in God at the time of calamity. Trust in one's Lord is the natural consequence of real faith. Since belief in Allāh means accepting that nothing takes place in the universe without His permission, then only Allāh deserves humankind's complete trust. For, it is only God's promise which is never broken.⁵³

The boy was first tried with the beast which blocked the people's path, then with punishment until he gave up the monk, then with death by being thrown of a mountain top and with drowning by being thrown in the sea. Following those progressively more difficult tests which refined his patience and completed his trust in God, he then offered his own life to spread the message of Islām to the common masses.

12 – The believer should not deliberately expose himself to hardships and trials. It is somewhat extraordinary that the monk asked the boy not to reveal his name when he is tortured. He apparently did so because he was afraid that he would also be exposed to the same trial. However, when his turn came, even though he was sawed in half, he did not turn back from his religion. So, why did he request the boy not to expose him in the first place? The answer is comprised of two points: firstly, one must try to keep himself away from trials, since he cannot be sure about the outcome; and secondly he should not hope for trials because, in hoping for trials there is an element of arrogance which may invalidate his good deeds. And that is why the Prophet (ﷺ) discouraged people from hoping to meet the enemy, as stated in the following *ḥadīth*:

أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ لَا تَمَنَّوْا لِقَاءَ الْعَدُوِّ وَسَلُّوْا اللّٰهَ الْعَاقِبَةَ فَإِذَا لَقِيتُمْهُمْ
فَاصْبِرُوا وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ الْجَنَّةَ تَحْتَ ظِلِّالِ السُّيُوفِ

*“O People! Do not wish to meet the enemy. Instead, ask Allāh for safety from trial. And if you meet them, then be patient and know that Paradise is beneath the shade of swords.”*⁵⁴

⁵³ *Purpose of Creation*, pp. 76-7.

⁵⁴ *Sahib al Bukhari*, Kitāb: al Jihād was siyar, bāb: Don't wish to meet the enemy

Regarding this prohibition, Ibn Baṭṭāl quoted Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq as saying the following:

لَا نَأْفَى فَاشْكُرْ أَحَبُّ إِلَيَّ مِنْ أَنْ أُبْتَلَى فَاَصْبِرْ

“To be safe from trial and thankful is more beloved to me than to be tested and patient.”

Ibn Daqīq al-‘Īd noted: “Since meeting death is the most difficult thing a soul can face and unseen things are not like those which have already taken place, one cannot be certain that he will be as he should when things happen. Consequently, it is disliked that one wishes for such a situation, since there is the possibility that a person may contradict what he promised himself. Then he is instructed to be patient when and if the situation actually occurs.”⁵⁵

The Prophet (ﷺ) had also said that if we hear that *Dajjāl* is in a land nearby, we should flee and not try to confront him, because he will be too much for us.

13 - It is not permissible to attribute things, like curing and healing to other than Allāh, Most Exalted. When the king’s blind courtier went to the boy bearing many gifts and offered them in exchange for curing him, the boy replied, “I do not cure anyone by myself. It is Allāh who cures, and if you believe in Allāh, I will pray to Allāh to cure you.” The courtier affirmed his faith in Allāh, and Allāh cured him. Thus, the following should not be said, “So and so was cured by the doctor or by the shaykh.” In fact, all cures should be attributed to Allāh alone. Ignorance of this principle can inadvertently lead to *shirk*. ‘Abdullāh ibn Mas‘ūd’s wife, Zaynab, reported that once Ibn Mas‘ūd saw a cord necklace around her neck and he asked what it was; she replied, “It is a cord in which a spell has been placed to help me.” He snatched it from her neck, broke it up and said “Surely the family of ‘Abdullāh has no need for *shirk*! I have heard Allāh’s Messenger say, ‘*Verily spells, talismans and charms are shirk.*’” Zaynab replied, “Why are you saying this? My eye used to twitch, and when I went to so and so, the Jew, he put a spell on it and it stopped twitching!” Ibn Mas‘ūd replied,

⁵⁵ *Fat’h al-Bārī*

“Verily it was only a devil prodding it with his hand so when you had it bewitched he left it alone. It would have been sufficient for you to have said as the Prophet (ﷺ) used to say:

أَذْهِبِ الْبَأْسَ رَبَّ النَّاسِ اشْفِ أَنْتَ الشَّافِي لَا شِفَاءَ إِلَّا شِفَاؤُكَ

شِفَاءَ لَا يَفَادِرُ سَقَمًا

“[*Adhhib il-ba’sa rabban-nās, ishfi antash-shāfi lā shifā’a illā shifā’uka shifā’an lā yughādiru saqamā*] Remove the harm, O Lord of humankind! Heal, because you are the [true] Healer! There is no cure besides Your cure which is not followed by further sickness.”⁵⁶

14 - Magic is real, and it is a science that has fundamental principles and rules. The boy went to the magician daily to learn the principles of magic. However, magic is among the forbidden sciences. Imām al-Dhahabī said, “Among the forbidden sciences are magic, alchemy, evil omens, natural magic, illusion, astrology, geomancy. Some of these are outright acts of disbelief.”

It has become popular in modern times to deny any reality to magic. Popular stories about the effects of magic are explained away as the result of psychological disorders like hysteria, etc., and it is often claimed that magic only affects those who believe in it.⁵⁷ Magical feats are all described as hoaxes based on illusions and tricks. It is true that much of the magic around today is a product of trickery involving gadgets cleverly designed to deceive audiences. But, there does exist around the world some people who practise real magic resulting from their contact with the evil *jinn*s.

⁵⁶ *Sunan Abu Dawud*, vol. 3, p. 1089, no. 3874), and authenticated in *Ṣaḥīḥ Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, vol. 2, pp. 736-7, no. 3288. The *du’ā* is also reported by both ‘Ā’ishah and Anas in *Saḥīḥ al-Bukhari*, vol. 7, pp. 427-8, no.5, 638-9 and *Saḥīḥ Muslim*, vol. 3, p. 1195, no. 5434.

⁵⁷ The *Ash’arite* scholar, Fakhruddīn al-Rāzī (d. 1210 CE) proposed this idea in his commentary on verse 102 of *Sūrah al-Baqarah* and the noted historian, Ibn Khaldūn, further developed it.

The Qur'an itself addresses the reality of magic, its source and some of its effects as follows:

وَاتَّبَعُوا مَا تَتْلُوا الشَّيَاطِينُ عَلَىٰ مُلْكِ سُلَيْمَانَ ۗ وَمَا كَفَرَ
 سُلَيْمَانُ ۗ وَلَكِنَّ الشَّيَاطِينَ كَفَرُوا يُعَلِّمُونَ النَّاسَ
 السِّحْرَ وَمَا أُنزِلَ عَلَى الْمَلَكَيْنِ بِبَابِلَ هِرُوتَ وَمُرُوتَ
 وَمَا يَعْلَمَانِ مِنْ أَحَدٍ حَتَّى يَقُولَا إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ فِتْنَةٌ فَلَا تَكْفُرْ
 فَيَتَعَلَّمُونَ مِنْهُمَا مَا يُفَرِّقُونَ بِهِ بَيْنَ الْمَرْءِ وَزَوْجِهِ
 وَمَا هُمْ بِضَارِّينَ بِهِ مِنْ أَحَدٍ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ ۗ وَيَتَعَلَّمُونَ
 مَا يَضُرُّهُمْ وَلَا يَنْفَعُهُمْ ۗ وَلَقَدْ عَلَّمُوا لَمَنِ اشْتَرَاهُ
 مَا لَهُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِنْ خَلْقٍ ۗ وَلَبِئْسَ مَا شَرَوْا بِهِ
 أَنفُسَهُمْ لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٠٢﴾

“They follow what the devils related concerning Solomon’s kingdom, but it was not Solomon who disbelieved, it was the devils who disbelieved by teaching the people magic and that which was revealed to the angels Hārūt and Mārūt in Babylon. Although the two would not teach anyone anything until after they warned them saying, ‘Verily we are only a test and trial, so do not commit disbelief.’ But the people went ahead and learned from the two of them what could cause the separation of a man from his wife. However, they could not harm anyone with it except by Allāh’s permission. They (in fact) learned what would only harm their own souls and not benefit them. Verily they knew that whoever purchases it would have no share in the Hereafter. Evil indeed was the price for which they sold their own souls if they only knew.”

(Sūrah al-Baqarah, 2: 102)

There are also narrations which mention that the Prophet (ﷺ) himself suffered from the effects of magic. Zayd ibn Arqam reported that a Jew by the name of Labīb ibn A‘ṣam, cast a magical spell on the Prophet (ﷺ) and when he began to suffer from it, Jibrīl came to him and revealed the *Mu‘awwidhatān* (*Sūrah*s *al-Falaq* and *al-Nās*) and then said to him, “Surely it was a Jew who cast this spell on you and the magical charm is in a certain well.” The Prophet sent ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib to retrieve the charm. When he returned with it, the Prophet (ﷺ) told him to unite the knots in it, one by one, and recite a verse from the two *Sūrah*s with each. When he did so, the Prophet (ﷺ) got up as if he had been released from being tied up.⁵⁸

Every nation on Earth has records of people who have practised some form of magic. Although some of it may have been false, it is highly unlikely that the whole of humankind could have agreed to make up similar stories about magical and supernatural events. Anyone who seriously contemplates the widespread presence of recorded instances of supernatural phenomena will conclude that there must be some common thread of reality to them. “Haunted” houses, séances, ouija boards, voodoo, demonic possession, speaking in tongues, levitation, etc., all represent puzzles to those unfamiliar with the world of the *jinn*. All of these occurrences have their own manifestations in various parts of the world. Even the Muslim world is plagued with it, especially, among the shaykhs of various extremist *Ṣūfī* orders. Many of them appear to levitate, travel huge distances instantaneously, produce food or money from no where, and so forth. Their ignorant followers believe these feats of magic to be divine miracles and thus, willingly give their wealth and lives in service to their shaykhs. But behind all of these phenomena lie the hidden and sinister world of the *jinn*.⁵⁹

15 – The battle between Muslims and their sworn enemies is, in reality, a battle of belief systems. It is not a battle purely of economics or politics, though it may seem that way in the cases of Iraq, Palestine, Afghanistan and Chechnya. Had it been any of these things, it would have been much simpler to stop, and solutions could more easily have been found. However, because it is in essence a battle of beliefs, paganism versus

⁵⁸ Collected by ‘Abd ibn Ḥumayd and al-Bayhaqī and much of it can also be found in *Sahih al-Bukhari*, vol. 7, pp. 443-4, no. 660 and *Sahih Muslim*, vol. 3, pp. 1192-3, no. 5428.

⁵⁹ *The Fundamentals of Tawheed*

faith, arrogance versus submission, it continues on. Though it may die down in one area of the Muslim world, it soon rears its head in another Muslim land. Muslims must be certain of this reality whenever they are faced with any of their enemies. They must have no doubt that the enemy is not fundamentally against anything about them except for their belief, as Allāh said, **“They only resented them because of their belief in Almighty Allāh, Worthy of all praise,”**⁶⁰ and they make their obedience and submission sincere for Him alone.

In battle, the enemies of Muslims may try to raise a flag other than the flag of belief to distort the reality of the battle and blow out the fire of belief in the souls of the believers. Therefore, Muslims should not be deceived by such manoeuvres. Instead, they should realise that this ploy is only a tool used to deceive them and prevent them from attaining true victory in whatever form it comes, even if it were to come in the form of the departure of their souls; as happened to the believers in the incident of *Ukhdūd*, or in the form of preventing the souls’ departure, as happened to the first generations of Muslims.

⁶⁰ 85:8.

VERSE 08

﴿٨﴾ وَمَا نَقَمُوا مِنْهُمْ إِلَّا أَنْ يُؤْمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَمِيدِ

*They only resented them because
of their belief in Almighty Allāh,
Worthy of all praise,*

Ibn Kathīr commented: “According to these people, they did not commit any error, except having faith in Almighty Allāh, who would not treat unjustly those who desire to be with Him. He is the Most Powerful and Praiseworthy in all of His statements, actions, laws, and decrees. He decreed what happened to these servants of His at the hands of the disbelievers and He is the Most Mighty and Praiseworthy, even though the reason for this decree is unknown to most people.”⁶¹

In his commentary, Ibn Kathīr addressed a question commonly raised in such tragic cases, “If Allāh is Almighty and Compassionate, why would He allow such a terrible tragedy to befall His devoted servants?” Allāh permitted this incident to take place, not for the sake of the incident itself, which was evil, but for the greater good which resulted and the greater good known only to Himself at that time which was yet to come from it.

⁶¹ *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, vol. 10, p. 426.

Among the great benefits to those who were martyred was their purification from sin and their guaranteed place in Paradise for their sincere sacrifice.

Similar to this situation is when ‘Uthmān related that he heard Allāh’s Messenger (ﷺ) saying to ‘Ammār, his father Yāsir and his mother Sumayyah while they were being tortured by their masters,

اصْبِرُوا آلَ يَاسِرٍ، مَوْعِدُكُمْ الْجَنَّةُ

Be patient, family of Yāsir, for your appointed time is Paradise.”⁶²

As a result of the town’s people’s sacrifice of their lives, Christianity spread throughout that region, displacing idolatry and Judaism, and remained there until the arrival of Islām a century later.⁶³

Al-Sa’dī added that the King and his cohorts “only resented one characteristic of the believers for which they were praised [by Allāh], and in which their ultimate happiness lay. It was that **“they believed in Allāh the Almighty, the most Worthy of Praise,”** the One who has the power to overwhelm and subjugate everything, and Who deserves to be praised for all His statements, attributes and acts.”⁶⁴

Ibn al-Qayyim further commented that “[Allāh] described the wretched state [of the disbelievers] who remained untouched by any feelings of pity, mercy [or guilt] as they sat at the sides of the trench witnessing what was taking place to the worshippers and friends of Almighty Allāh. Yet the only fault they could find in the [believers’] religion was their firm faith in Almighty Allāh, Worthy of praise, to whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth. This description [of their faith] actually required that they be treated hospitably, loved and adored, but

⁶² *Majma’ al-Zawā’id*, vol. 9, p. 293 from *Musnad al-Ṭabarānī*. Another narration can also be found in *Musnad Aḥmad*, vol. 1, p. 62.

⁶³ Dhū Nuwās, the last Himyarite King of Yemen, by religion a Jew, persecuted the Christians of Najrān and is said to have burnt them to death. He seems to have lived in the later half of the sixth Christian century, in the generation immediately preceding the Prophet’s birth in 570 A.D. (*Sīrah Ibn Hishām*.)

⁶⁴ *Taysīr al-Karīm al-Raḥmān*, p. 1083.

the disbelievers treated them in the opposite way. *That is always the way of Allāh's enemies; they resent the friends of Allāh concerning matters they should love them for and show kindness to them for.*

The Almighty said:

قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ هَلْ تَنْقِمُونَ مِنَّا إِلَّا أَنْ آمَنَّا بِاللَّهِ وَمَا أُنزِلَ
إِلَيْنَا وَمَا أُنزِلَ مِن قَبْلُ وَأَنْ أَكْثَرُكُمْ فَاسِقُونَ ﴿٥٩﴾

“Say: O people of the scripture! Do you criticise us for no other reason than that we believe in Allāh, we believe in what was revealed to us and what was revealed earlier, and we believe that most of you are disobedient [to Allāh]:”

(Sūrah al-Mā'idah, 5: 59)

Consequently, homosexuals of the past resented the servants of Allāh's strict avoidance of their corrupt deeds saying:

أَخْرِجُوهُمْ مِّن قَرْيَتِكُمْ إِنَّهُمْ أَنَاسٌ يَّنطَهُرُونَ ﴿٨٢﴾

“Drive them out of your town! They are people who want to remain pure.”

(Sūrah al-A'rāf, 7: 82)⁶⁵

⁶⁵ The complete exchange between Prophet Lot and his people is as follows:

وَلوطاً إِذْ قَالَ لِقَوْمِهِ يَا تَأْتُونَ الْفَاحِشَةَ مَا سَبَقَكُمْ
بِهَا مِنْ أَحَدٍ مِّنَ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٨١﴾ إِنَّكُمْ لَتَأْتُونَ الرِّجَالَ
شَهْوَةً مِّن دُونِ النِّسَاءِ بَلْ أَنْتُمْ قَوْمٌ مُّسْرِفُونَ ﴿٨٢﴾
وَمَا كَانَتْ جَوَابَ قَوْمِهِ إِلَّا أَنْ قَالُوا أَخْرِجُوهُمْ مِّن
قَرْيَتِكُمْ إِنَّهُمْ أَنَاسٌ يَّنطَهُرُونَ ﴿٨٣﴾

“And [remember] when Lot said to his people: ‘Do you commit corruption not done by anyone in the world before you? You fulfil your desires from men instead of women. Indeed, you are a people who know no limits.’ The only answer of his people was that they said: ‘Drive them out of your town! They are people who want to remain pure.’”

(Sūrah al-A'rāf, 7: 80-82)

Opposition to and dislike of homosexuality is now considered a mental disorder called

In current times, the believers are portrayed as bigoted, intolerant and fanatical. They have been classified by the psychiatric profession, which removed homosexuality from its list of diseases back in the seventies, as homophobic and in need of psychiatric treatment. In a world which has grown to accept homosexuality as an alternative lifestyle and an expression of freedom of choice, the idea that Muslim Law still prescribes death for those caught in the act is inconceivable. Most have forgotten that the Law of Moses prescribed the same penalty, thousands of years before the Qur'ān was revealed.

Similarly, idol worshippers resent Unitarians for their pure monotheism (*Tawhīd*) in making their prayers and their worship for Allāh alone.⁶⁶ Likewise, the people of innovation (*bid'ah*) resent the people of the

“homophobia” and those who have this “illness” are labelled as bigots, fanatics, and intolerant.

⁶⁶ There was a serious conflict between the Pauline and the Jerusalem interpretations of Jesus and his message. This conflict, after simmering for years, finally led to a complete break, in which the Pauline Christian Church was founded, comprising, in effect, a new religion, separate from Judaism. On the other hand, the Jerusalem Nazarenes did not sever their links with Judaism, but regarded themselves essentially as practising Jews, loyal to the Torah, who also believed in Jesus, a human Messiah figure. (*The Myth-maker*, p. 172)

When the Jewish insurrection was crushed by the Romans and their Temple destroyed in 70 CE, the Jewish Christians were scattered, and their power and influence as the Mother Church and centre of the Jesus movement was ended. The Pauline Christian movement, which up until 66 CE had been struggling to survive against the strong disapproval of Jerusalem, now began to make headway.

The Jerusalem Church, under the leadership of James, originally known as Nazarenes, later came to be known by the derogatory nickname Ebionites (Hebrew *evyonium*, “poor men”), which some Nazarenes adopted with pride as a reminder of Jesus’ saying, “Blessed are the poor.” After the ascendancy of the Greco-Roman Church, the Nazarenes became despised as heretics, due to their rejection of the doctrines of Paul. (*The Myth-maker*, p. 175)

According to the ancient Church historian, Irenaeus (c. 185 CE), the Ebionites believed in one God, the Creator, taught that Jesus was the Messiah, used only the Gospel according to Matthew, and rejected Paul as an apostate from the Jewish Law. Ebionites were known to still exist in the 4th century. Some had left Palestine and settled in Transjordan and Syria and were later known to be in Asia Minor, Egypt and Rome. (*The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 4, p. 344)

Monarchianism, a Gentile Christian movement which developed during the 2nd and 3rd centuries continued to represent the “extreme” monotheistic view of the Ebionites. It held that Christ was a man, miraculously conceived, but was only ‘Son of God’ due to his being filled with divine wisdom and power.

=

Sunnah for limiting their following to the Prophet (ﷺ) alone and their abandonment of whatever contradicts it.⁶⁷ Also, the rationalists (*mu'aṭṭilah*) resent the people of affirmation (literalists) for their affirmation of Allāh's attributes of perfection and His glorious descriptions.⁶⁸ Also, the Shi'ites (*rāfiḍah*) resent the Sunnites for their love of all the Companions, their pleasure with them, their alliance to them, their giving prominence to those among them whom Allāh's Messenger (ﷺ) gave prominence, and their giving them the status given

This view was taught at Rome about the end of the 2nd century by Theodotus, who was excommunicated by Pope Victor, and taught somewhat later by Artemon, who was excommunicated by Pope Zephyrinus. About 260 CE, it was again taught by Paul of Samosata, (*The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 8, p. 244) the bishop of Antioch in Syria, who openly preached that Jesus was a man through whom God spoke his Word (*Logos*), and he vigorously affirmed the absolute unity of God. Between 263 and 268 at least three church councils were held at Antioch to debate Paul of Samosata's orthodoxy. The third condemned his doctrine and deposed him. (*The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 9, p. 208)

In the late third and early fourth centuries, Arius (b. c. 250, Libya - d. 336 CE), a presbyter of Alexandria, Egypt, also taught the finite nature of Christ and the absolute oneness of God, which attracted a large following, until he was declared a heretic by the council of Nicaea in May 325 CE. During the council, he refused to sign the formula of faith stating that Christ was of the same divine nature as God. (*The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 1, pp. 556-7) The movement which he was supposed to have begun, but which was in fact an extension of Jerusalem Nazarene/Jewish Christian belief, came to be known as Arianism and constituted the greatest internal threat to the Pauline Christian orthodoxy's belief in Jesus' divinity.

From 337 to 350 CE, the emperor in the West, Constantius, was sympathetic to the orthodox Christians, and Constantius II, sympathetic to the Arians, was Emperor in the East. Arian influence was so great that at a church council held in Antioch (341 CE), an affirmation of faith was issued which omitted the clause that Jesus had the "same divine nature as God". In 350 CE, Constantius II became sole ruler of the empire, and under his leadership, the Nicene party (orthodox Christians) was largely crushed. After Constantius the Second's death in 361 CE, the orthodox Christian majority in the West consolidated its position. However, the defense of absolute monotheism and the suppression of orthodox Christian trinitarian beliefs continued in the East under the Arian emperor Valens (364-383 CE). It was not until Emperor Theodosius I (379-395 CE) took up the defense of orthodoxy that Arianism was finally crushed. The unitarian beliefs of Arius, however, continued among some of the Germanic tribes up until the end of the 7th century. (*The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 1, pp. 549-50 and pp. 556-7; vol. 4, p. 344; vol. 8, p. 244 and vol. 9, p. 208 quoted in *True Message of Jesus Christ*, pp. 62-66)

With regard to Hinduism, for example, they compare their idolatry to Muslim prostration towards the Ka'bah or they claim that their repulsive idol "Shiva-lingam" is kept inside the Ka'bah.

⁶⁷ For example, their refusal to celebrate the Prophet's birthday, and *du'ā* in congregation.

⁶⁸ For example, the rationalists claim that Allāh does not see or hear though He describes Himself as being the Seer and that He sees, and the Hearer and that He hears.

to them by Allāh and His Messenger.⁶⁹ Likewise, the modernists resent the people of *ḥadīth* and the party of the Messenger (ﷺ) for adhering to his ḥadīthic instructions and abandonment of whatever contradicts it.⁷⁰

All of these [groups and others like them] have a share [in resentment of the believers]. Thus, they all resemble the owners of the trench, in one way or another, because they have either a close or a distant relationship between them.”⁷¹

⁶⁹ Shi'ites consider that the majority of Companions apostated with the exception of three or four.

⁷⁰ For example, modernists reject the prophetic statement that a nation which chooses a woman as their leader will not succeed, or that we should drink milk in which a fly falls after submerging it, because the fly has with it the antidote to its diseases, etc.

⁷¹ *Badā'ī al-Tafsīr*, vol. 5, p. 171.

VERSE 09

الَّذِي لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۖ وَاللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيدٌ ﴿٩﴾

To who belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth and Allāh is witness to everything.

Ibn Kathīr commented, “Among [Allāh’s] perfect attributes is that He is the owner of the heavens, the earth, whatever is in them, and whatever is between them.”⁷² This attribute is mentioned here to reaffirm that what befell the believers that day, was by Allāh’s permission. Had He wished, He could have prevented it. It did not take place due to any weakness or inability on God’s part. It was all a part of the master plan.

Al-Sa’dī added, “**And Allāh is witness to everything,**” by His knowledge, Hearing and Sight. Will those rebelling against Allāh not fear that the Almighty might snatch them, or do they not know that they are all possessions of Allāh, and that none of them has authority over another without the permission of their Owner, Allāh? Or is it hidden from them that Allāh is aware of their deeds while allowing them to do whatever they do.

⁷² *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, vol. 10, pp. 426-7.

Indeed, the disbeliever is deluded, and the sinner ignorant or blind to the correct path.”⁷³

Mention of Allāh’s witness here also affirms that an account will have to be given. Those held responsible for this heinous crime will eventually have to pay. Their actions have been recorded and will not be forgotten. Thus, this verse encourages the believers to be firm and steadfast in times of trial which are unavoidable and inevitable. Allāh then goes on in the next verse to warn the disbelievers of the punishments awaiting them for persecuting the believers.

⁷³ *Taysir al-Karim al-Rahman*, pp. 1083-4.

VERSE 10

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ فَتَنُوا الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَتُوبُوا فَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ
جَهَنَّمَ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ الْحَرِيقِ ﴿١٠﴾

Surely, those who persecute believing men and believing women, and do not repent, will face the torment of Hell, and the punishment of the blazing Fire.

Ibn Kathīr commented: “Surely, those who persecute the believing men and believing women,” meaning, they burned them. This was the opinion of Ibn ‘Abbās, Mujāhid, Qatādah, al-Ḍaḥḥāk, and Ibn Abzā. “And do not repent,” meaning, they do not cease from what they are doing, and do not regret what they had done before. “They will face the torment of Hell, and the punishment of the blazing Fire,” because the recompense is according to the type of evil deed committed.⁷⁴

Ibn al-Qayyim said: “[Allāh] then informed that He has prepared a punishment of Hell and a blazing fire if they do not repent, and that if they repent after persecuting His friends and torturing them with fire,

⁷⁴ *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, vol. 10, p. 433.

He would forgive them and not punish them. This is the ultimate in kindness and generosity... Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī said, ‘Look at the kindness of the Lord Almighty, He invites them to repentance though they persecuted His friends and burned them with fire.’⁷⁵ The servant should not become despondent or give up hope in [Allāh’s] forgiveness and pardon, whatever he may have done, for there is no form of enmity greater than this enmity, and no form of disbelief worse than that one who burns to death a believer who worships Allāh alone. In spite of that, if he repents, he will not be punished and he will be added to Allāh’s [list of] friends.’⁷⁶

That was the case of ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb and other Makkans who persecuted Muslims and later joined the fold of Islām. This complete erasure of sin is based on the following prophetic principle:

عَنْ أَبِي عُبَيْدَةَ بْنِ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ عَنْ أَبِيهِ قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ: التَّائِبُ
مِنَ الذَّنْبِ كَمَنْ لَا ذَنْبَ لَهُ

*Abū ‘Ubaydah ibn ‘Abdillāh narrated from his father that Allāh’s Messenger (ﷺ) said, “One who repents from sin is like one without sin.”*⁷⁷

To further illustrate the power of repentance, the Prophet (ﷺ) related a story from the past concerning a serial killer. Abū Sa‘īd al-Khudrī narrated that the Prophet (ﷺ) said, “There was a man from a previous era who killed ninety-nine people. When he asked who the most knowledgeable person in the world was, he was directed to a monk. He went to him and informed him that he had killed ninety-nine people, and asked him if [it was possible] for him to repent [and be forgiven].

⁷⁵ *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, vol. 10, p. 433.

⁷⁶ *Badāi’ al-Tafsīr*, vol. 5, p. 172.

⁷⁷ *Sunan Ibn-i-Majah*, Kitāb: Zuhd, Bāb: Dhikr Tawbah.

The monk told him it was not, so he killed him also and completed a hundred murders.⁷⁸

Then he again asked who was the most knowledgeable person in the world, and was directed to a very learned man. He informed him that he had killed a hundred people, and asked if it were [possible] for him to repent. The scholar replied, "Yes. Who can stand between you and repentance? Go to such-and-such a land, as there are people there who worship Allāh. Worship Allāh along with them, and do not go back to your own land, for it is a place of evil."⁷⁹ The man set out for the land, but halfway through his journey he died.⁸⁰ The angels of mercy and the angels of punishment fell into a dispute over him. The angels of mercy said, 'He came repentant with his heart turned toward Allāh.'⁸¹ The angels of punishment argued, '[But,] he never did a good deed.' An angel then came to them in human form and they asked him to judge between them. He said, 'Measure the distance between the two lands, and whichever he is closest to will determine his fate.' They measured and found him closer to the land he was headed for, so the angels of mercy took him.⁸²⁸³

⁷⁸ Not only was the monk ignorant about the religion, he was not wise enough to consider the consequences of enraging a serial killer.

⁷⁹ This is a very important piece of advice for one who wants to repent. It will be much easier to do so if he changes his environment. His old friends with whom he used to commit sins are likely to invite him to keep on sinning with them. Others who did not participate with him may be sceptical that he will really change. Their negativity will discourage him from persevering.

⁸⁰ Al-Ḥasan said, "We were told that while he was dying he continued to crawl forward on his chest."

⁸¹ This indicates that Allāh allows some angels knowledge about people's internal states, not just their outer actions. It is also apparent that the angels of punishment were not aware of his inner state, since they based their judgment on his deeds.

⁸² This is one of many evidences for the majority of scholars, who consider it possible for a Muslim who deliberately murders another Muslim to have his repentance accepted. It is also evidence for Imām Mālik's position that when two parties agree to make a third person a judge between them, his decision is binding upon them. *Al-Muḥḥim*, 7:90-2.

⁸³ *Sahih Muslim*, vol. 4, p. 1443, no. 6662.

VERSE 11

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٌ تَجْرِي
مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ ذَلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْكَبِيرُ ﴿١١﴾

Indeed, those who believe and do righteous good deeds will have gardens with rivers flowing beneath them. That is the ultimate victory.

Ibn Kathīr commented: “Allāh relates that His believing servants “...will have gardens with rivers flowing beneath them,” which is the total opposite of what He has prepared for His enemies; the fires of Hell. Consequently, He says: “That is the ultimate victory.”⁸⁴

This verse contains a reminder that success should be measured on the scale of the next life and not solely according to what is apparent in this life. The young man who confronts *Dajjāl* and is thrown by *Dajjāl* into the fire will appear to those present to die consumed by his fire, yet the Prophet (ﷺ) informed us that he was thrown into Paradise. For the believers, there is victory even in apparent defeat in this world, but it

⁸⁴ *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, vol. 10, p. 434.

requires patience in responding Islamically. For example, in the case of the French government's ruling that Muslim girls will not be allowed to wear the *hijāb* in schools, there is apparent defeat to the Islamic awakening. However, as a result, the first Muslim girl's secondary school was established with many more to come. What initially appeared to be a victory for secularism ultimately will become a symbol of its defeat. French Muslim girls wearing *hijāb* but learning from secularists would have been in a much weaker position and much more subject to secular influence than those same girls in a Muslim school. This is particularly significant when one considers that the greatest level of conversion to Islām in Europe is in France where between 30 and 40,000 French people convert annually.

This verse also reminds the believers of the Islamic "win-win" principle which leaves no room for defeat and loss. The Prophet (ﷺ) enunciated the principle as follows:

عَنْ صُهَيْبٍ قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ : عَجَبًا لِأَمْرِ الْمُؤْمِنِ إِنَّ أَمْرَهُ كُلَّهُ
 خَيْرٌ وَلَيْسَ ذَلِكَ لِأَحَدٍ إِلَّا لِلْمُؤْمِنِ إِنْ أَصَابَتْهُ سَرَّاءٌ شَكَرَ فَكَانَ خَيْرًا
 لَهُ وَإِنْ أَصَابَتْهُ ضَرَّاءٌ صَبَرَ فَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَهُ

*Ṣuhayb ibn Sinān related that the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) said, "The affair of the believer is amazing! The whole of his life is beneficial, and that is only in the case of the believer. When good times come to him, he is thankful and it is good for him, and when bad times befall him, he is patient and it is also good for him."*⁸⁵

Consequently, belief in the rewards of the Hereafter keeps the believers on the straight path and gives them patience to hold firm even in the most trying times.

⁸⁵ *Sahih Muslim*, vol. 4, p. 1541, no. 7138.

Abū Bakr al-Jazā'irī mentioned here four main elements of guidance found in the previously mentioned verses:

1. Affirmation of belief in resurrection and recompense.
2. The virtues of Friday and the Day of 'Arafat.
3. An explanation of what the believers will be tested with in this life and their patience and their reward of Paradise.
4. Fear and hope from the mention of the recompense of the disbelievers and the righteous believers.⁸⁶

⁸⁶ *Aysar al-Tafāsīr*, vol. 2, p. 1462.

VERSE 12

إِنَّ بَطْشَ رَبِّكَ لَشَدِيدٌ ﴿١٢﴾

Surely, your Lord's strike is devastating.

Ibn Kathīr commented: “This means, indeed His punishment and His vengeance upon His enemies, who have rejected His messengers, and opposed His command, is severe, mighty and strong. For, He is the Owner of power, Most Mighty. He is the One that whatever He wants, then it will be however He wants it, in the blinking of an eye, or even swifter.”⁸⁷

Al-Sa’dī added: “That is, indeed the punishment for major sinners is severe and He is on the lookout for wrongdoers.

As Almighty Allāh said:

وَكَذَلِكَ أَخْذُ رَبِّكَ إِذَا أَخَذَ الْقُرَىٰ وَهِيَ ظَالِمَةٌ إِنَّ أَخْذَهُ
أَلِيمٌ شَدِيدٌ ﴿١٠٢﴾

⁸⁷ *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, vol. 10, p. 434.

“Such is the seizure of your Lord when He snatches towns in sin. Indeed His seizure is painful and severe.”

(Sūrah Hūd, 11: 102)⁸⁸

Highlighting the reality of Allāh’s snatching and its severity on this occasion is in suitable contrast to the appearance of a small insignificant strike which took place and which is considered great and powerful by those who did it and by people on earth. The truly severe strike is that of the Irresistible to whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth and not the puny blow of the weak and emaciated who gain limited authority over a limited piece of earth, for a limited portion of time.⁸⁹

⁸⁸ *Taysīr al-Karīm al-Rahmān*, p. 1084.

⁸⁹ *Fī Zilāl al-Qur’ān*, vol. 6, p. 3875.

VERSE 13

إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْبَدِيُّ وَيَعِيدُ ﴿١٣﴾

*Indeed, He is the One who creates
and recreates,*

Ibn Kathīr commented: “A part of His perfect ability and power is that He alone can begin creation, and repeat it just as He began it, without opposition or resistance.”⁹⁰

Al-Sa‘dī added: “He alone begins creation and repeats it, and no one shares that with Him.”⁹¹

Al-Shawkānī said: “He creates the creation in this world and returns them to life after their death. That is the opinion of the majority.”

⁹⁰ *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, vol. 10, p. 434.

⁹¹ *Taysir al-Karim al-Rahman*, p. 1084.

He also said concerning a similar verse in *Sūrah Yūnus*:

إِلَيْهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ جَمِيعًا وَعَدَّ اللَّهُ حَقًّا إِنَّهُ يَبْدَأُ الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ
يُعِيدُهُ لِيَجْزِيَ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ بِالْقِسْطِ

“All of you will return to Him alone, a true promise of Allāh. Indeed He alone begins creation then repeats it in order to reward those who believe and do righteous deeds.”

(*Sūrah Yūnus*, 10: 4)

It is also said to mean that He begins with the punishment of the fire in this world then returns it to them in the Hereafter. And that was the preferred opinion of Ibn Jarīr. However, the first opinion is more appropriate.”⁹²

“The one able to begin creation is, of necessity, able to repeat it. One who holds that Allāh began creation then denies His repeating it has lost his mind, denying one of two examples while affirming what is more basic to it. It is clear logical evidence for the Hereafter.”⁹³

Ibn ‘Abbās related that the Prophet (ﷺ) gave a sermon in which he said, *“Indeed, you will be gathered before Allāh, barefooted, naked and uncircumcised. As I began the first creation I will repeat it, a promise which I will fulfil. Then the first to be clothed on the Day of Resurrection will be Abraham. Then some people from my nation will be brought and they will be pulled off to the left. So I will ask: ‘O my Lord, they are my companions?’ And I will be told: ‘You do not know what innovations they made after you.’ I will say, as the righteous servant said: ‘I was a witness for them as long as I was with them. But when You took my life You became the watcher over them and You are witness of everything.’ Then it will be said: ‘Indeed, they are those who continued to turn on their heels from the time you left them.’”*⁹⁴

⁹² *Fat’h al-Qadīr*, vol. 5, p. 551.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 485.

⁹⁴ *Sahih Al Bukhari*, vol. 6, p. 116, no. 4625 and *Sahih Muslim*, vol. 8, p. 319, no. 2860.

Consequently, Allāh confidently asserts elsewhere in the Qur’ān that His creatures, Humans and *Jinn*, could not create even the most insignificant and lowliest of creatures like a fly, even if they all collaborated in doing so.

يَأْتِيهَا النَّاسُ ضُرْبَ مَثَلٍ فَاَسْتَمِعُوا لِلَّذِينَ
تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ لَنْ يَخْلُقُوا ذُبَابًا وَلَوْ اجْتَمَعُوا لَهُ

“O humankind! A similitude has been coined, so listen to it carefully: Indeed, those on whom you call besides Allāh, cannot create even a fly, even if they all gathered together to do so.”

(Sūrah al-Ḥajj, 22: 73)

Human scientists, in their arrogance have been loudly asserting their ability to create life from the early sixties when they claimed they had produced the first “test-tube baby” until today. Such claims make good headlines and sells newspapers, but they are false and hollow claims when examined closely.

VERSE 14

وَهُوَ الْغَفُورُ الْوَدُودُ ﴿١٤﴾

And He is the Forgiving, the Loving,

Ibn Kathīr commented: “Meaning that He forgives the sin of whoever repents to Him and humbles himself before Him, no matter what the sin may be. Ibn ‘Abbās and others have said that the name *al-Wadūd* means *al-Ḥabīb* (The Beloved)⁹⁵.⁹⁶”

Al-Sa’dī added: “*Al-Wadūd* is one who loves those beloved to him in a way dissimilar to anyone else. Just as there is nothing resembling Him in his characteristics of glory, beauty, meanings and actions, the love for Him in the hearts of special members of His creatures resulting from that is dissimilar to any other type of love. Consequently, loving Him is the foundation of servitude (*‘ubūdiyyah*), which is the type of love which precedes and dominates all other forms of love. And if other forms of love are not secondary to it, they become a source of torment for those possessing them.”⁹⁷ An example of this is love of the pleasures of this world.

⁹⁵ *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, vol. 24, p. 346.

⁹⁶ *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr*, vol. 10, pp. 434-5.

⁹⁷ *Tafsīr al-Karīm al-Raḥmān*, p. 1084.

Zayd ibn Thābit related that he heard the Prophet (ﷺ) say:

مَنْ كَانَتْ الدُّنْيَا هَمَّهُ فَرَّقَ اللهُ عَلَيْهِ أَمْرَهُ وَجَعَلَ فَقْرَهُ بَيْنَ عَيْنَيْهِ وَلَمْ يَأْتِهِ
مِنَ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا مَا كُتِبَ لَهُ وَمَنْ كَانَتْ الْآخِرَةُ نِيَّتَهُ جَمَعَ اللهُ لَهُ أَمْرَهُ وَجَعَلَ
غِنَاهُ فِي قَلْبِهِ وَأَتَتْهُ الدُّنْيَا وَهِيَ رَاغِمَةٌ

“Whoever makes this world his main concern, Allāh will scatter his affairs and place poverty between his eyes, and he will not acquire anything of this world except what was already written for him. But whoever makes the Hereafter his main goal, Allāh will gather his affairs, place richness in his heart and the world will come to him conquered and submissive.”⁹⁸

Imām al-Sindī said commenting on the last phrase: “This means that it will come overpowered and conquered. The point here is that the provision that is written for a servant will come to him no matter what, except if he strives for the Hereafter. In this case, it will come to him without any effort. On the other hand, if he strives for this world, it will come to him with extreme difficulty and after great pains. Consequently, one who seeks the Hereafter has combined this world with the next, because the only reason for gaining money is to achieve comfort in this world, and this will only be achieved by a person who strives for the Hereafter. As for one who strives for this world, he will lose this world and the Hereafter, because in this world he will undergo extreme hardship and exert great efforts to achieve it.⁹⁹ So what benefit is there in all this money if it does not bring comfort?”¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ *Sunan Ibn-i-Majah*, vol. 5, p. 409, no. 4105 and authenticated in *Silsilah al-Aḥādith al-Ṣaḥīḥah*, no. 950.

⁹⁹ He will never attain the good of the Hereafter since he did not strive for it in the first place.

¹⁰⁰ *Ḥāshiyah Sunan Ibn Mājah*, vol. 4, no. 425.

‘Abdullāh ibn Mas‘ūd narrated that the Prophet (ﷺ) said: “Whoever makes his concerns one concern – concern about the Hereafter – then Allāh will suffice him his worldly needs, while he who multiplies his concerns – the various concerns of this world – then Allāh does not care in which valley he is destroyed.”¹⁰¹

Abū Hurayrah quoted the Prophet (ﷺ) as saying: “Allāh said: ‘O son of Adam! Take time out to regularly worship Me and I will fill your heart with richness and remove your poverty. But if you do not do so, I will make your hands occupied and will never remove your poverty.’”¹⁰²

Commenting on this *ḥadīth* Yasir Qadhi said: “So the wise man is he who realises that all goals are useless and trivial, except for the goal of Paradise. Therefore, he removes all other desires from his heart, and he concentrates on the one and only worthwhile goal: that of pleasing Allāh by worshipping Him. Such a person will be blessed by Allāh, and his needs will be taken care of. And how can it be that the needs of the servant not be taken care of by the Lord, especially when the Lord is *al-Karīm* (The Ever-Generous), *al-Mannān* (The Constant Giver)

As for one whose heart is filled with multiple goals – for he wants to hoard as much money as he can, build fancy houses and mansions, marry beautiful women, own the most luxurious of items, and try to fulfil every whim and caprice that his heart yearns for – then such a person is no servant to Allāh, and Allāh does not care what happens to him. When the servant does not fulfil the rights of the Creator, how can he expect the Creator to fulfil His rights to the servant?”¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ *Sunan Ibn-i-Majah*, vol. 1, p. 148, no. 257 and authenticated (*ḥasan*) in *Mishkāt al-Maṣābiḥ*, no. 263.

¹⁰² *Sunan Ibn-i-Majah*, vol. 5, p. 411, no. 4107 and authenticated in *Ṣaḥīḥ Sunan al-Tirmidhī*, no. 300.

¹⁰³ *15 Ways to Increase Your Earnings*, pp. 114-5.

Al-Sa'dī went on to say that “the Loving Almighty loves those who are beloved to Him as He stated:

فَسَوْفَ يَأْتِي اللَّهُ بِقَوْمٍ يُحِبُّهُمْ وَيُحِبُّونَهُ

“Allāh will bring a people whom He will love and they will love Him.”

(Sūrah al-Mā'idah, 5: 54)

There is a subtle implication in linking *al-Wadūd* with *al-Ghafūr* in order to indicate that if sinful people repent to Allāh and turn to Him, *He will not only forgive their sins but also love them*. Therefore, it cannot be said that He would forgive their sins, but His love would not return for them, as claimed by some. Instead, Allāh is happier with the repentance of His servant when he turns back to Him than a man whose ride bearing his food, drink and goods, is lost in the open desert, and he loses hope of finding it, so he lies down in the shade of a tree awaiting death, only to find his ride suddenly appearing by his head and he grabs hold of its reins.¹⁰⁴ Allāh is happier with the repentance of His slave than that man in finding his ride, which is the greatest imagined happiness. Thus, all praise is due to Allāh, and the purest love. How great is His generosity, kindness, goodness and compassion!”¹⁰⁵

Ibn al-Qayyim commented: “[After] mentioning the reward for His friends, the believers, He then mentioned the severity of His strike, and that nothing can stop Him for He is the Creator and the Re-Creator. And anyone so described, no one’s strike could be more devastating. But, in spite of that, He is the Forgiving and the Loving. He forgives whoever repents to Him and He loves and cherishes him. He, Most Glorious, is described simultaneously as being severe in striking and at the same time forgiving and loving, who lovingly showers His worshippers with His blessings, who loves whoever repents and turns to Him.

He is also *al-Wadūd* meaning *al-Maḥbūb* (the Beloved). Al-Bukhārī stated in his authentic collection: *al-Wadūd* is *al-Ḥabīb* (the Beloved). Investigation indicates that the word refers to two matters, to His being loving to His friends and loved by them. One of them is the original

¹⁰⁴ *Sahih Muslim*, vol. 8, p. 258, no. 2747

¹⁰⁵ *Taysir al-Karim al-Rahman*, p. 1084.

literal meaning and the other is the necessary consequence. He is the Beloved, who loves His friends and they love Him.”¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶ *Badā'ī' al-Tafsīr*, vol. 5, p. 172.

VERSE 15

ذُو الْعَرْشِ الْمَجِيدُ ﴿١٥﴾

The Glorious Owner of the Throne,

Ibn Kathīr commented: “Owner of the Throne,” means the owner of the Mighty Throne that is above all of creation.¹⁰⁷ “The Glorious;” this word has been recited in two different ways: either with a *ḍammah* as *al-majīdu*¹⁰⁸ which is an attribute of the Lord, or with a *kasrah* as *al-majīdi*¹⁰⁹ which is an adjective describing the throne.¹¹⁰ Both recitations and their meanings are correct.”¹¹¹

Al-Sa’dī added: “That is, [He is] possessor of the great throne whose vastness is such that it encompasses the heavens and the earth and the

¹⁰⁷ ‘Ubādah ibn al-Ṣāmit reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) said, “There are 100 levels in Paradise, the distance between each is like the distance between the sky and earth. Firdaws is the highest. From it flows the four rivers of Paradise and above it is the Throne. So if you ask Allāh for anything, ask for Firdaws.” (*Ṣaḥīḥ Sunan al-Tirmidhī*, vol. 2, p. 312, no. 2056)

¹⁰⁸ This was the recitation of Ibn Kathīr, Nāfi’, Abū ‘Amr and Ibn ‘Āmir.

¹⁰⁹ This was the recitation of Ḥamzah, al-Kisā’ī and ‘Āṣim.

¹¹⁰ This authentic recitation *Dhul-‘arshil-majīdi* means: “Owner of the Glorious Throne.”

¹¹¹ *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, vol. 10, p. 435.

footstool (*al-Kursī*).¹¹² The footstool relative to the throne is like a ring thrown in open desert in relationship to the remainder of the earth.¹¹³ Allāh specifically mentioned the throne due to its vastness and because it is the closest of creation to Him, the Most High. That is according to the *majrūr* recitation in which *al-Majīd* is describing the throne.”¹¹⁴

The early generations of pious Muslims confirmed the existence of Allāh’s throne and it was not until after Greek philosophy challenged Islamic thought that scholastic theology arose in which the existence of the throne was denied. The Mu’tazilites, sects of the Khārijites and groups among the Ash‘arites all claimed that the throne meant “dominion” and “completeness of authority”¹¹⁵ and not a king’s chair known to people. Others claimed that it is spherical and encompasses the universe on all sides and they call it *falak al-aṭlas* (the outer spherical world) or the “ninth sphere”.¹¹⁶

Among the Jaḥmites were some who claimed when Allāh created the creation, He named it “throne” and rose above it. However, all such claims are false because there are many texts of the Qur’ān and Sunnah which contradict it. For example, Allāh, Almighty’s statement:

وَكَانَ عَرْشُهُ عَلَى الْمَاءِ

“And His throne was on the waters.”

(Sūrah Hūd, 11: 7)

¹¹² Regarding Allāh’s statement “His foot-stool extends over the heavens and earth,” Sa’īd ibn al-Jubayr said, “The *kursī* is a foot-stool and the extent of the throne is only known to Allāh, the Almighty.” (Collected by Ibn Abī Shaybah and al-Ḥākim and authenticated in *Sharḥ al-‘Aqīdah al-Ṭahāwīyyah*, p. 279)

¹¹³ Abū Dharr quoted the Prophet (ﷺ) as saying, “The foot-stool (*kursī*) in comparison to the throne (‘arsh) is like an iron ring thrown in the middle of an open desert.” (*Silsilah al-Aḥādīth al-Ṣaḥīḥah*, 1/109).

¹¹⁴ *Taysīr al-Karīm al-Raḥmān*, p. 1084.

¹¹⁵ This position is echoed by Imām al-Shawkānī in his commentary on this verse: “The meaning of ‘The Glorious Owner of the Throne,’ is the possessor of dominion and authority, as is said: So-and-so is on the chair of his kingdom.” (*Fat’h al-Qadīr*, p. 551)

¹¹⁶ *Commentary on the Creed of at-Tahawī*, p. 224.

It is not logical to say that Allāh's dominion is on the waters.

وَيَحْمِلُ عَرْشَ رَبِّكَ فَوْقَهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ ثَمَنِيَةً ﴿١٧﴾

“And your Lord's throne will be carried on that Day by eight [angels].”

(Sūrah al-Hāqqah, 69: 17)

The Prophet (ﷺ) was also reported to have said,

عَنْ أَبِي سَعِيدٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ عَنِ النَّبِيِّ ﷺ قَالَ: النَّاسُ يَصْعُقُونَ
يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ فَأَكُونُ أَوَّلَ مَنْ يَفِيقُ فَإِذَا أَنَا بِمُوسَى آخِذًا بِقَائِمَةٍ مِنْ قَوَائِمِ
الْعَرْشِ فَلَا أَدْرِي أَفَاقَ قَبْلِي أَمْ جُوزِي بِصَعْفَةِ الطُّورِ

“Indeed people will go unconscious on the Day of Resurrection and I will be the first to awaken only to find Moses holding on to one of the legs of the Throne. I don't know whether he awoke before me or he was excused by the thunderclap of Mount Tūr.”¹¹⁷

The Prophet (ﷺ) was also reported to have said,

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ عَنِ النَّبِيِّ ﷺ قَالَ: مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَأَقَامَ الصَّلَاةَ
وَصَامَ رَمَضَانَ كَانَ حَقًّا عَلَى اللَّهِ أَنْ يُدْخِلَهُ الْجَنَّةَ هَاجِرًا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ
أَوْ جَلَسَ فِي أَرْضِهِ الَّتِي وُلِدَ فِيهَا قَالُوا يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ أَفَلَا نُنَبِّئُ النَّاسَ
بِذَلِكَ قَالَ إِنَّ فِي الْجَنَّةِ مِائَةَ دَرَجَةٍ أَعَدَّهَا اللَّهُ لِلْمُجَاهِدِينَ فِي سَبِيلِهِ

¹¹⁷ Sahih Al Bukhari, vol. 4, p. 400, no. 610.

كُلُّ دَرَجَتَيْنِ مَا بَيْنَهُمَا كَمَا بَيْنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ فَإِذَا سَأَلْتُمُ اللَّهَ فَسَلُوهُ
 الْفِرْدَوْسَ فَإِنَّهُ أَوْسَطُ الْجَنَّةِ وَأَعْلَى الْجَنَّةِ وَفَوْقَهُ عَرْشُ الرَّحْمَنِ وَمِنْهُ
 تَجَرُّ أَنْهَارُ الْجَنَّةِ

“If you ask Allāh, ask Him for Firdaws as it is the middle and highest point of Paradise from which the rivers of Paradise spring forth and above it is the throne of the Most Merciful.”¹¹⁸

It is obviously inappropriate to say that Allāh’s dominion is above Firdaws or that Prophet Moses was holding on to the leg of Allāh’s dominion.

As a result of such evidences, the mainstream of *Ahl al-Sunnah* have held that Allāh’s throne is a chair with legs like a dome over the world. It is the roof of creation and the greatest of Allāh’s creations.

Some scholars like Ibn Taymiyyah, Ibn al-Qayyim, Ibn Kathīr and Ibn Abil-‘Izz considered the throne to be the first created thing based on the following *ḥadīth*:

عَنْ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ عَمْرٍو بْنِ الْعَاصِ قَالَ سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ﷺ يَقُولُ:
 كَتَبَ اللَّهُ مَقَادِيرَ الْخَلَائِقِ قَبْلَ أَنْ يَخْلُقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ بِمِائَتِينَ
 أَلْفَ سَنَةٍ قَالَ وَعَرْشُهُ عَلَى الْمَاءِ

“Allāh wrote the destiny of the creatures fifty thousand years before He created the heavens and the earth and His throne was on the waters.”¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ *Sahih al Bukhari*, vol. 4, pp. 39-40, no. 48.

¹¹⁹ *Sahih Muslim*, vol. 4, pp.1396-7, no. 6416.

Others considered the pen the first created thing based on the following *ḥadīth*:

قَالَ عُبَادَةُ بْنُ الصَّامِتِ لِابْنِهِ يَا بُنَيَّ إِنَّكَ لَنْ تَجِدَ طَعْمَ حَقِيقَةِ الْإِيمَانِ
 حَتَّى تَعْلَمَ أَنَّ مَا أَصَابَكَ لَمْ يَكُنْ لِيُخْطِئَكَ وَمَا أَخْطَاكَ لَمْ يَكُنْ لِيُصِيبَكَ
 سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ ﷺ يَقُولُ: إِنَّ أَوَّلَ مَا خَلَقَ اللَّهُ الْقَلَمَ فَقَالَ لَهُ أَكْتُبْ
 قَالَ رَبِّ وَمَاذَا أَكْتُبُ قَالَ أَكْتُبْ مَقَادِيرَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ حَتَّى تَقُومَ السَّاعَةُ
 يَا بُنَيَّ إِنِّي سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَقُولُ مَنْ مَاتَ عَلَيَّ
 غَيْرِ هَذَا فَلَيْسَ مِنِّي

*‘Ubādah ibn al-Ṣāmit said, “O my little son, you will never find the taste of imān’s reality until you know that whatever caught you would not have missed you and what missed you would never have caught you. I heard Allāh’s Messenger (ﷺ) say: “Indeed the first thing which Allāh created was the pen and He told it to write. It asked: ‘O my Lord, what should I write?’ He said: Write the destiny of everything until the Final Hour comes.”*¹²⁰

As to the composition of the throne, there are no authentic narrations from the Prophet (ﷺ) on the subject, however the leading students of the Companions, Ismā’īl ibn Abī Khālid and Qatādah both said that the Throne was made of red ruby.¹²¹

The footstool (*al-Kursī*) is different from the throne (*al-‘Arsh*) and is smaller than it according to the following statement of the Prophet (ﷺ):

¹²⁰ Ibn Abī Shaybah collected it in his book *al-‘Arsh* and so did Ibn Jarīr in his *Tafsīr*, *ḥadīth* no. 5794. It was authenticated in *Silsilah al-Aḥādīth al-Ṣaḥīḥah*, no. 109.

¹²¹ *Al-‘Ulūww lil-‘Alī al-Ghaffār*, p. 71.

مَا السَّمَاوَاتُ السَّبْعُ فِي الْكُرْسِيِّ إِلَّا كَحَلْقَةٍ مُلقَاةٍ بِأَرْضِ فَلَاةٍ وَفَضْلُ
 الْعَرْشِ عَلَى الْكُرْسِيِّ كَفَضْلِ تِلْكَ الْفَلَاةِ عَلَى تِلْكَ الْحَلْقَةِ

“The seven heavens in relation to the footstool is that of a ring thrown into a boundless desert and the superiority of the Throne over the footstool is like that of the boundless desert in relation to the ring.”¹²²

As to the footstool, Ibn ‘Abbās was authentically reported to have said regarding the phrase “... His footstool encompasses the heavens and the earth...” that “The *kursī* is the place for the feet and the throne cannot be estimated by anyone.”¹²³ Regarding the Throne, Imām al-Ṭaḥāwī stated in his creed, “61. Allāh is not in need of the Throne and what is beneath it. He encompasses all and is above everything. His creation is not able to encompass Him.” Ibn Abil-‘Izz commented on this text as follows: “Regarding the words, ‘Allāh is not in need of the Throne and what is beneath it’, Allāh says in the Qur’ān:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَغَنِيٌّ عَنِ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٦﴾

“Indeed Allāh is altogether independent of His creatures.”

(Sūrah al-‘Ankabūt, 29: 6)

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ أَنْتُمُ الْفُقَرَاءُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ هُوَ الْغَنِيُّ
 الْحَمِيدُ ﴿١٥﴾

“O people! You are in need of Allāh and Allāh is free from all wants, Most Praised.”

(Sūrah Fāṭir, 35: 15)

¹²² Ibn Abī Shaybah collected it in his book *al-‘Arsh* and so did Ibn Jarīr in his *Tafsīr*, ḥadīth no. 5794. It was authenticated in *Silsilah al-Aḥādīth al-Ṣaḥīḥah*, no. 109.

¹²³ Collected by al-Dārimī in *al-Radd ‘alā Bishr al-Mirrīsī*, Ibn Abī Shaybah in *al-‘Arsh*, Ibn Khuzaymah in *al-Tawḥīd*, etc. and authenticated in *Mukhtaṣar al-‘Uluww*, p. 102.

The author mentioned these words at this point because, after mentioning the Throne and the Footstool he wanted to point out that Allāh does not depend on or need that Throne or what is below the Throne. Thereby, he makes it clear that Allāh's creating the Throne and ascending it was not done due to any need. Instead, it was done for some other reason that His wisdom determined. If something is above some other thing, it does not follow, therefore, that the latter surrounds or encompasses the former or holds and sustains it. Nor does it follow that the former needs the latter and depends upon it. Look at the sky, how it is about the earth but not in need of it. Allāh is incomparably superior to the sky. So how could His being on the Throne imply that He depends upon it or needs it?"^{124 125}

Ibn al-Qayyim commented: "He attributed the throne to Himself, in the same way that other great and noble created things are attributed to Him. This type of attribution indicates the greatness of the Throne and its ultimate closeness to Him, Most Glorious, and its being absolutely specific to Him. [This was done] in the same way that He attributes to Himself other attributes which are existent in His person with *dhu* (owner, possessor of) as in *dhul-quwwah* (the Possessor of Power) in *Sūrah al-Dhāriyāt*, 51: 58, and *dhil-Jalāli wal-Ikrām* in *Sūrah al-Rahmān*, 55: 78.

¹²⁴ *Commentary on the Creed of at-Tahawi*, pp. 226-7.

¹²⁵ *The Radiance of Faith*, pp. 75-80.

VERSE 16

فَعَالَ لِمَا يُرِيدُ ﴿١٦﴾

He does what He wishes.

Ibn Kathīr commented: “This means that whatever He wants to do He does, and there is no one who can counter His decision. He cannot be questioned about what He does due to His greatness, His power, His wisdom and His justice. As we have related previously some people came to Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq,¹²⁶ while he was on his death bed and asked him, “Has a doctor seen you?” He replied, “Yes.” They asked, “What did he say to you?” He replied, “He told me, بِرِّي هَذَا أُرِيدُ ‘I’m the Doer of whatever I intend.’”¹²⁷

Al-Sa’dī added: “Whenever He wants to do something, He does it. If He wants something, He tells it: “Be!” And it becomes existent. No other being or entity is able to do whatever it wishes besides Allāh. If a created being wants to do something, there must exist support for the fulfilment of its wants and prevention [of inhibitors]. Conversely, Allāh needs no support for the fulfilment of His wish, and there is nothing which can prevent what He wants.

¹²⁶ *Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī*, vol. 19, p. 297. Ibn Sa’d collected it in his *al-Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 3, p. 198 with an authentic chain of narration.

¹²⁷ *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr*, vol. 10, p. 435.

He then mentioned among His acts which indicate the truth of what His messengers brought: “Have you heard about the stories of the armies of Pharaoh and Thamūd?”¹²⁸

Ibn al-Qayyim stated that the phrase “Doer of whatever He wishes,” is proof for the following matters:

Firstly: That Allāh, May He be glorified, does actions according to His wish and will.¹²⁹

Secondly: That He remains that way – as attributes of perfection do not occur after not existing.¹³⁰

Thirdly: If He wants to do something, He does it – relative to His own actions. However, relative to the actions of His creatures – If He wants a servant’s action but does not wish to help him do it, the deed will not exist even though He wanted it, until He wants to help him do it.

There are two types of want: (a) wanting the slave to do something, and (b) wanting to help the slave do something. They are not the same. Even though the second necessitates the first, the first does not necessitate the second.

The Prophet (ﷺ) quoted Allāh as saying on the Day of Judgment: “I wanted from you less than that when you were in the loins of your father; to not worship anything along with Me.”¹³¹
But it did not happen because He did not want to help him.

Fourthly: Allāh’s acts and wants necessitate each other: What He wants to do He does, and what He does He wanted to do. On the other hand, the creatures are different: They may want to do something and not do it (due to their choice not to, or their inability to), or they may do something which they do not want to do. From this perspective, only the Almighty does whatever He wishes.

¹²⁸ *Taysīr al-Karīm al-Raḥmān*, p. 1084.

¹²⁹ That is, nothing or no one can force Him to do anything against His wish or will.

¹³⁰ Nor do they cease to occur after existing.

¹³¹ *Sahih al-Bukhari*, vol. 8, p. 299, no. 6557

Fifthly: Whatever may be suitably attached to His wish, is possible for Him to do. If He wishes to descend every night to the sky of this world, or come on the Day of Resurrection to make judgment, He can.

VERSE 17

18 هَلْ أُنْتِكَ حَدِيثُ الْجُنُودِ ﴿١٧﴾ فِرْعَوْنَ وَثَمُودَ ﴿١٨﴾

Have you heard about the story of the armies of Pharaoh and Thamūd?

Ibn Kathīr commented: “This means, has the news reached you of the torment Allāh caused to befall them, and that He sent down on them a punishment that no one was able to divert from them? This is a further affirmation of His previous statement, “**Surely, your Lord’s strike is devastating,**” meaning that when He seizes a wrongdoer, He does so in a severe and painful way. It is the mighty crushing blow of One Most Strong and Powerful.”¹³²

This verse contains a reference to two lengthy stories, depending on what is known regarding their affair to those addressed, after their frequent mention in the Noble Qur’ān. He called them troops referring to their power and preparation. Has their story reached you and the story of how your Lord did with them as He wished? They are two different

¹³² *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, vol. 10, pp. 435-6.

stories with regard to their nature as well as their conclusions. As for Pharaoh, Allāh destroyed him and his armies and saved the Children of Israel, and established them in the land for a period of time in order to realise a part of Allāh's destiny and His wish. As for the story of Thamūd, Allāh destroyed every last one of them and saved Ṣāliḥ and a few others along with him, without giving them dominion or establishing them. Instead, He merely saved them from a corrupt people. Thus, they represent two examples of the realisation of Allāh's wish and will and two pictures of *da'wah* to Allāh and their possible conclusions beside the third possibility, which is what happened in the story of the trench. The Qur'ān mentions all three forms for the believing minority in Makkah, and for every generation of believers.¹³³

In contrast to the real, all-embracing, and eternal power of Allāh, what are the forces of man at their best? Two examples are mentioned: (1) Pharaoh was a proud monarch of a powerful kingdom, as good as any in the world today. When he pitted himself against Allāh's Prophet, he and his forces were destroyed (79:15-16). (2) The Thamūd were great builders, who had achieved a high standard of technology. However, when they defied the laws of Allāh taught to them by Prophet Ṣāliḥ, they were likewise annihilated (7:73-79).¹³⁴

¹³³ *Fī Zilāl al-Qur'ān*, vol. 6, p. 3876.

¹³⁴ *The Holy Quran*.

VERSE 19

20 **بَلِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فِي تَكْذِيبٍ ﴿١٩﴾ وَاللَّهُ مِنْ وَرَائِهِمْ مُحِيطٌ ﴿٢٠﴾**

Yet the disbelievers remain in denial, but Allāh surrounds them from behind!

Ibn Kathīr commented: “Yet the disbelievers remain in denial,” means that they are in doubt, suspicion, disbelief and rebellion. “But Allāh surrounds them from behind,” meaning He has power over them, and is able to compel them. They cannot escape Him or evade Him.”¹³⁵

Al-Sa’dī added: “They continue in their denial and stubbornness, signs do not benefit them, and lessons and admonitions are useless. He surrounds them with His knowledge and power. This contains a severe warning for the disbelievers about the punishment of those who are already in His grasp.”¹³⁶

¹³⁵ *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, vol. 10, p. 436.

¹³⁶ *Taysir al-Karim al-Rahman*, p. 1084.

In spite of signs, people remain in denial because they do not want to accept the consequence of the truth. For example, AIDS began in the homosexual community, but was denied until it spread among promiscuous heterosexuals. Again people remained in denial until it spread among the general population through blood transfusions.

The case of the disbelievers and the reality of their state is that they remain in a state of denial “**but Allāh surrounds them from behind,**” while they are ignorant about what surrounds them of Allāh’s irresistible power and His knowledge. They are weaker than a rat cornered in a huge flood.¹³⁷

¹³⁷ *Fī Zilāl al-Qur’ān*, vol. 6, p. 3876.

*Indeed, this is a Glorious Qur'ān
[inscribed] in a Secured Book.*¹³⁸

Ibn Kathīr commented: “Glorious Qur’ān,” meaning that it is magnificent and noble. “In a secured book,” means that it is among the host on high, guarded from increase, decrease, distortion, or change.”¹³⁹

Al-Sa’dī added: *Majīd* means having vast and magnificent meanings, full of goodness and knowledge. And ‘secured’ means protected from change, increase, decrease, guarded from the devils. It is *al-Lawḥ al-Maḥfūz* in which Allāh has recorded everything. And this indicates the majesty of the Qur’ān, its eloquence, and the loftiness of its rank in the sight of Allāh, the Almighty.”¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ “Inscribed in a Preserved Tablet”, i.e., Allāh’s Message is eternal. The “Tablet” is “preserved”, i.e., guarded from corruption or change (15: 9). The secured book is also called the “Mother of the Book” (3: 7). It contains the destiny of all things.

¹³⁹ *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, vol. 10, p. 436.

¹⁴⁰ *Taysir al-Karim al-Rahman*, p. 1084.

Ibn al-Jawzī commented: “Indeed, this is a Glorious Qur’ān,” meaning, noble, because it is the Word of Allāh, and not poetry, incantations or magic as they claim. “In a Secured Book,” refers to the Protected Tablet *al-Lawḥ al-Mahfūz* from which the Qur’ān and the other scriptures are transcribed. Thus, it is guarded with Allāh, secured from the devils and from interpolation or deletion.”¹⁴¹

The title “Protected Tablet” implies that Allāh’s Message is eternal. It is also called the “Mother of the Book” (3:7) and contains the destiny of all things according to the Prophet’s statement narrated by ‘Ubādah ibn al-Ṣāmit:

أَوَّلُ مَا خَلَقَ اللَّهُ تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى الْقَلَمُ ثُمَّ قَالَ لَهُ أَكْتُبْ قَالَ وَمَا أَكْتُبُ قَالَ
فَاكْتُبْ مَا يَكُونُ وَمَا هُوَ كَائِنٌ إِلَى أَنْ تَقُومَ السَّاعَةُ

*“The first thing Allāh created was a writing instrument. Then He told it to write. When it asked Him what it should write, He told it to write what was decreed. So it wrote what had taken place and what would take place until eternity.”*¹⁴²

Humans are unable to understand the true nature of the Protected Tablet because it is among the unseen matters known only to Allāh. They are only able to benefit from the shadow cast by its expression and the inspiration which it leaves in the hearts; that this Qur’ān is secured and fixed, and its statements are the final reference on all matters. All other statements come and go, whilst its statements are protected and eternal. Consequently, the Qur’ānic description of the events of the trench and its hidden realities is the final word on the matter.¹⁴³

¹⁴¹ *Zād al-Masīr*, vol. 9, p. 79.

¹⁴² *Sunan Abu Dawud*, vol. 3, p. 1317, no. 4683 and authenticated in *Ṣaḥīḥ Sunan al-Tirmidhī*, vol. 2, pp. 228-9, no. 1749.

¹⁴³ *Fī Zilāl al-Qur’ān*, vol. 6, p. 3876.

Abū Bakr al-Jazā'irī mentioned five points of guidance to be gained from these remaining verses:

1. Warning to the oppressors of torment as punishment in this life and the Hereafter.
2. Indeed Almighty Allāh, due to His kindness, loves His allies among His slaves.
3. The benefit of stories is their lessons which act as an admonishment to the slave, so he will not leave any obligatory duties or engage in the forbidden.
4. Explanation of Allāh's surrounding of His slaves and that they are in His grasp and under His authority.
5. The nobility of the Qur'ān and affirmation of the Protected Tablet and its importance.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁴ *Aysar al-Tafāsīr*, vol. 2, p. 1463.

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