

Section 2: The Sufferings of the Guilty

Surah As-Saffat – Verses 22–24

احْشُرُوا الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا وَأَزْوَاجَهُمْ وَمَا كَانُوا يَعْبُدُونَ

مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ فَأَهْدُوهُمْ إِلَى صِرَاطِ الْجَحِيمِ

وَقِفُّهُمْ إِنَّهُمْ مَسْئُولُونَ

22. “(And Allah will command the angels:) ‘Gather you together those who were unjust and their mates and what they used to worship,’

23. “Besides Allah, and lead them (all) unto the path of Hell.’”

24. “And stop them, for verily they must be questioned:”

He, who does not accept the Divine guidance in the world, will be lead to the Hell on the Day of Hereafter.

Therefore, Allah will command the angels, who are responsible to send the guilty toward the Hell, as follows:

“(And Allah will command the angels:) ‘Gather you together those who were unjust and their mates and what they used to worship,’

This is enough for the wretchedness of man that he should be mustered together with inanimate idols.

And in the next verse the noble Qur'an implies that whatever they worshipped, besides Allah, should lead to the Hell. Thus, the wrong objects of worship not only are not able to solve any problem, but also they themselves will have difficulty.

The Qur'anic term /uhšuru/ is derived from /hašr/, and as Raqib says in Mufradat, it means to excel a group of people from their place and to send them to a battle-field, and the like. In many instances, this word has been used in the sense of: 'gathering javelins'.

However, this statement is either from the side of Allah or from the side of a group of angels unto another group who are responsible to gathering and moving the guilty toward the Hell, and the consequence is the same.

The Arabic word /**azwaj**/ (**wives**) here refers to their guilty wives who are idol worshippers, or to those who have the same opinion and manner with theirs, because this word has been used in both of these two meanings; as we recite in Surah Al-Waqi'ah, No. 56, verse 7:

“And you shall be sorted out into three classes.”

Therefore, the polytheists together with polytheists, and wrong doers together with people and things like them, will be sent into the Hell in some rows.

Or the purpose is the Satans who had the same shape and the same action as theirs.

In the meanwhile, these three meanings do not contrast with each other, and they all may be found in the concept of the verse.

The Qur'anic sentence:

‘... and what they used to worship’

refers to the polytheists' object, of worship, irrespective of idols, Satans, and the cruel people such as Pharaohs and Namruds. And this meaning may be for the sake of this that their objects of worship were some inanimate things that had no intellect.

The Qur'anic word /jahim/ means Hell and is derived from /jahmah/ with the sense of 'violence of the burning fire'.

The Qur'an says:

“Besides Allah, and lead them (all) unto the path of Hell’.”

It is interesting that the Qur'an renders it into:

‘lead them (all) unto the path of Hell’.

What a wonderful sentence it is! One day they were lead unto the Straight Way, but they did not accept it, but today they must be lead unto the path of Hell, and they have to accept it. This is a heavy blame which burns their souls deeply.

The next verse implies that the command will be issued saying:

“And stop them, for verily they must be questioned:”

Yes, they must be stopped and answer some different questions. But, what will they be questioned of? Some commentators have said that they will be questioned of the innovations they have left.

Some other commentators of the Holy Qur’an have said they will be questioned of the ugly deeds and sins they have committed.

Some have added that they will be asked of Unity, and of ‘there is no god but Allah’.

A group of them have said they will be questioned of different bounties: the bounties of their youth, health, lifetime, wealth, and the like. A well known tradition narrated by the Sunnites and Shi’ites indicates that they will be questioned of ‘the friendship (Wilayah) of Ali (as)’.

This matter has also been narrated in Sawa’iq from Abu Sa’id Khidri, from the Prophet (S); and also in Shawahid-ut-Tanzil by Hakim Abul-Ghasim Huskani it has also been narrated from him (S). It has also been recorded in ‘Uyun ’Akhbar-ur-Rida narrated from Ali-ibn-Musar-Rida (as) 1.

These commentaries, of course, do not contradict with each other, because on that Day everything will be questioned of: of beliefs, of Unity, of friendship (Wilayah), of sayings and deeds, and of the bounties and merits that Allah has bestowed on man.

Surah As-Saffat – Verses 25-27

مَا لَكُمْ لَا تَنَاصِرُونَ

بَلْ هُمْ الْيَوْمَ مُسْتَسْلِمُونَ

وَأَقْبَلَ بَعْضُهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ يَتَسَاءَلُونَ

25. “(They will be told:) ‘How now, that you help not one another?’”

26. “Nay! this day they make full submission.”

27. “And some of them shall turn to the others questioning each other.”

On the Day of Hereafter, the guilty cannot help anything to each other. These miserable hellish people can do nothing when they will be leading in the path to Hell.

They will be told that they used to refuge to each other in the world forgetting help in their difficulties, but in Hereafter, the verse says:

“(They will be told:) ‘How now, that you help not one another?’”

Yes, all the supports they imagined for themselves in the world have been ruined here. They can neither get help from each other, nor their object of worship come to aid them, because they are themselves helpless.

It is said that on the day of the Battle of Badr, Abu-Jahl shouted, saying:

“We all help each other (and will overcome Muslims).”

This statement has been reiterated in the Qur’an, Surah Al-Qamar, No. 54, verse 44 saying:

“... We are a host allied together to help each other.”

But in Hereafter the people who are like Abu-Jahl, and those who have such qualities, will be asked why they do not help each other, while they have no answer to this question, and they can do nothing save having a disgraceful silence.

The next holy verse adds implying that they will submit the command of Allah (s.w.t.) and will not be able to do anything let alone opposition.

It says:

“Nay! this day they make full submission.”

It is here that they begin to blame each other and everyone of them tries to put his sin on the shoulder of another.

The followers count their chiefs and leaders guilty and vice versa; as in the next verse, it says:

“And some of them shall turn to the others questioning each other.”

Surah As-Saffat – Verse s 28-29

قَالُوا إِنَّكُمْ كُنْتُمْ تَأْتُونَنَا عَنِ الْيَمِينِ

قَالُوا بَلْ لَمْ تَكُونُوا مُؤْمِنِينَ

28. “They will say: ‘Verily you used to come unto us, from the right side.’”

29. “They answer: ‘Nay! you (yourselves) were not believers.’”

One of the current styles of the leaders of the infidels and polytheists for beguiling others is using force or pretending to benediction.

In this verse, the aberrant followers tell their perversive leaders that through the way of advice and benevolence and sympathy and as guidance, and leading, you came to us, but you had nothing except plot and delusion.

The verse says:

“They will say: ‘Verily you used to come unto us, from the right side.’”

Because of our nature, we were seeking for benevolence, purity, and happiness that we accepted your invitation. We were unaware that under your benevolent feature there is hidden a Satanic feature which drives us to the valley of wretchedness.

Yes, all our sins originate from you. We had no capital save good intention and purity in heart, but you, the satans, the liars, had no means but deceit and illusion.

The Arabic word ***iyamin*** which means ‘right hand’, or ‘right side’, is sometimes used ironically by Arabs in the sense of goodness, blessing, and advice. And Arabs, basically, used to whatever comes to them from the right side take as a ‘good omen’.

That is why, as we said in the above, many of the Islamic commentators have commented the Qur’anic sentence: /kuntum ta’tunana ‘anil yamin/ (you used to come unto us from the right side) ‘showing benediction and advice’.

However, this is a common culture that the right limb and the right side is considered ‘honoured’, and the left side rather ‘dishonoured’, and this very thing has caused ‘right’ to be used in good things and charitable deeds.

A group of commentators have mentioned here another interpretation and said that the purpose is that 'you came to us by relying on your force', since the right side is usually stronger. It is for this reason that most people do their important actions by their right hand, and therefore, this application has been ironically understood as power.

However, in the second verse it implies that their leaders will not be silent, either, and as the verse says:

“They answer: ‘Nay! you (yourselves) were not believers.’”

If your innate state were not receptive of deviation and if you yourselves were not the seeker of vice and Satanic actions, how would you come to us? Why did you not answer to the invitation of the prophets, the sages, and the purified ones, and as soon as we hinted you hastened to us?

Thus, it is certain that the fault is in you, yourselves. You must blame yourselves, and send all your curses to yourselves.

Surah As-Saffat – Verses 30-31

وَمَا كَانَ لَنَا عَلَيْكُمْ مِنْ سُلْطَانٍ بَلْ كُنْتُمْ قَوْمًا طَآغِينَ

فَحَقَّ عَلَيْنَا قَوْلُ رَبِّنَا إِنَّا لَذَائِقُونَ

30. “And there was not for us any authority over you. Nay! You were a rebellious people!”

31. “So, now the word of our Lord has been proved against us that verily we shall taste (the chastisement).”

The leaders of infidelity both confess to their own aberration and accept the responsibility of deceiving and misleading their followers, but they do not accept the responsibility of force and authority over others.

In this verse they say:

“And there was not for us any authority over you. Nay! You were a rebellious people!”

How painful is that a person sees that the leader, in whom he believed for a life-long-time, has provided the causes of his wretchedness and then he repudiates from him like that! He puts the whole sin and fault on his shoulder and acquits himself entirely.

The fact is that each of these two groups is right from one point of view. Neither these nor those are sinless. Those were seductive and evil, and these were practically submissive to their seductions.

So, the second holy verse implies that these debates result nothing and, at last, these aberrant leaders confess this fact and say that for this reason the command of Allah has been fixed against all of them and the order of punishment has been issued about them and they all shall taste it.

The verse says:

“So, now the word of our Lord has been proved against us that verily we shall taste (the chastisement).”

You were disobedient and this is the end of the disobedient persons (to the command of Allah), and we were both pervertible and perverse.

Surah As-Saffat – Verses 32–33

فَاغْوَيْنَاكُمْ إِنَّا كُنَّا غَاوِينَ

فَإِنَّهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ فِي الْعَذَابِ مُشْتَرِكُونَ

32. “So we misled you, for verily we were ourselves astray.”

33. “So verily they (both) on that Day are sharers in the (Divine) chastisement.”

In the world, the leaders and chiefs of polytheists have heard the promise and warning of Allah, but they have denied it intentionally.

In the above verses and in some other verses of the Qur’an there are some expressive hints to the enmity between the aberrant leaders and their followers in Hereafter or in the Hell.

The verse says:

“So we misled you, for verily we were ourselves astray.”

This is an instructive warning to all of those who put their intellect and religion in the authority of aberrant leaders.

On that Day, when everybody tries to acquit from another, and even puts his own sin on that one’s shoulder, yet neither of them can prove his innocence.

Therefore, this verse implies that, on that Day, everyone irrespective of obedient and obeyed, follower and leader, all are sharers in the punishment of Allah.

The verse says:

“So verily they (both) on that Day are sharers in the (Divine) chastisement.”

Surah As-Saffat – Verses 34–36

إِنَّا كَذَلِكَ نَفْعَلُ بِالْمُجْرِمِينَ

إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا إِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ

وَيَقُولُونَ إِنَّا لَنَأْتِيَنَّكَ بِكُفْرٍ مَّعِينٍ لَّيْسَ بِيَدِنَا أَنْ نَنزِلَهُ عَلَيْكَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ طُفْرًا

34. “Verily thus do We deal with the guilty.”

35. “Verily they used to be proud when it was said to them: ‘There is no god but Allah’.”

36. “And said: ‘Shall we give up our gods for the sake of a mad poet?’”

The first verse indicates that Allah implicitly says that He will deal with the guilty seriously by His punishment. This is the everlasting way of treatment of Allah; a way of treatment that has originated from the law of justice.

The verse says:

“Verily thus do We deal with the guilty.”

The sign of a guilty is that he has proud manner concerning Monotheism. So, this verse says:

“Verily they used to be proud when it was said to them: ‘There is no god but Allah’.”

Yes, the root of all their deviations was mostly pride, self-admiration and assumption, refusing the clear right, having obstinacy and often insisting on the wrong customs and false imitations, and looking at everything contemptuously.

The opposite point of pride is humbleness and submission to the Truth, and the true Islam is only this.

That pride is the cause of wretchedness, and this humbleness and submission is the source of happiness.

And in the next holy verse the Qur'an implies that for this great sin of theirs the polytheists brought a clumsy excuse, and always they murmured:

“And said: ‘Shall we give up our gods for the sake of a mad poet?’”

They called him a poet because his statements influenced so deeply in the hearts and attracted the people's emotions that as if he made the most rhythmical poets, while his ordinary talk was never poetry.

They called him mad, because he did not follow the current custom of his environment, and he stood against the superstitious beliefs of the crowd of zealous obstinate people. From the view of some groups of aberrant people, this action was a kind of self-murder and insanity. But this was the greatest honour of the Prophet (S), and he did not submit to those circumstances.

Surah As-Saffat – Verses 37-39

بَلْ جَاءَ بِالْحَقِّ وَصَدَّقَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ

إِنَّكُمْ لَذَائِقُوا الْعَذَابِ الْأَلِيمِ

وَمَا تُجْزَوْنَ إِلَّا مَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ

37. “Nay: he has come with the Truth and verified the (former) messengers.”

38. “Verily you will taste the painful punishment, (too).”

39. “And you are not requited except (for) what you were doing.”

The teachings of all Divine prophets are the same, and all prophets invite to Unity and the Truth, and the Prophet of Islam (S) has verified them, too.

In this verse, in order to negate these baseless words and to defend the rank of revelation and prophecy of the holy Prophet (S), the Qur'an adds:

“Nay: He has come with the Truth and verified the (former) messengers.”

But you, O blind-hearted people! And you, O' aberrant and foul-mouthed ones! You will surely taste the painful chastisement of Allah, because the retribution of those who intentionally called the content of the Holy Qur'an poems, and considered the holy Prophet of Islam (S) mad is a painful punishment.

“Verily you will taste the painful punishment, (too).”

This verse implies that they should not imagine that Allah is taker of vengeance and He wants to take vengeance from them.

It is not such, as the verse says:

“And you are not requited except (for) what you were doing.”

In fact, it is the result of your own deeds that incarnates in front of you and remains with you and hurts you. Your retribution is that very deed of yours.

Surah As-Saffat – Verses 40-44

إِلَّا عِبَادَ اللَّهِ الْمُخْلَصِينَ

أُولَئِكَ لَهُمْ رِزْقٌ مَّعْلُومٌ

فَوَاكِهُ وَهُمْ مُكْرَمُونَ

فِي جَنَّاتِ النَّعِيمِ

عَلَى سُرُرٍ مُتَقَابِلِينَ

40. “Save the servants of Allah, the purified ones,”

41. “For them is a known sustenance,”

42. “(Kinds of) fruits, and they shall be highly honoured,”

43. "In the gardens bountiful,"

44. "Upon thrones facing each other."

In this holy verse the Qur'an says:

"Save the servants of Allah, the purified ones,"

For the relation of this group to Allah, only the phrase /'ibad-allah/ (servants of Allah) is enough, but when the word /muxlasin/ (the purified) comes beside it, the phrase will earn another kind of depth in its meaning.

The Arabic word *Imuxlas* is in passive participle form, which means: 'the one whom Allah has purified'. He is purified from any kind of polytheism and hypocrisy, and also from any kind of Satanic temptation and blemishes of low desire.

Yes, it is only this group whose deeds will not be simply rewarded, but Allah (s.w.t.) will treat them with His Grace and generosity and will give them innumerable rewards.

In the second verse under discussion, the Qur'an mentions the numerous merits and blessings that Allah bestows on the purified servants. They can be referred to shortly in a few divisions.

At first, it says:

"For them is a known sustenance,"

Is this an extract of the bounties which will be explained in later verses of the Qur'an, or it refers to the unknown spiritual and unexplainable blessings which are at the top of the blessings of Paradise?

According to the interpretation of a group of commentators, the proportion of discussion and totality of blessings are more consistent with the second meaning, and, thus, the first blessing from the blessings which have been mentioned in the verses under discussion, are spiritual merits, spiritual pleasures, and apprehension of the splendour of the Pure Essence of Allah, and being drunk from the pure wine of His love.

The same pleasure which none knows unless he sees it.

And that the material merits of the Paradise have been mentioned frequently in the verses of the Holy Qur'an, but the spiritual merits and the pleasures of soul have been stated ambiguously is for this very sake that the former ones are explainable and the latter ones are not explainable.

Concerning the Arabic phrase: *Irizqun ma'lum* (a known sustenance) there have been delivered many statements: whether its time is known; or its duration, or its other qualifications. But, based on what was said in the above, the Arabic word *Ima'lum* is an ambiguous sense for these unexplainable merits.

In the third verse, the Qur'an has referred to stating other blessings, and before anything else, it has mentioned the blessings of heaven. They are the blessings which will be given to the people of Paradise with the utmost respect.

It says:

“(Kinds of) fruits, and they shall be highly honoured,”

They will be entertained honourably as some dear guests who are received with utmost esteem, not like some animals that food is poured in front of them.

And in the fourth verse, after mentioning the blessings: the colourful fruits and respecting and honouring the purified servants, the words are about their position in the green, bountiful gardens.

The verse says:

“In the gardens bountiful,”

Whatever blessing they wish they can find there, and whatever they intend to have will be ready in front of them.

In view of the fact that the greatest delight of man is enjoying the meeting of sincere friends, this bounty is pointed out in the fourth stage. It says about the people of Paradise that they sit therein:

“Upon thrones facing each other.”

They look each other, and speak about everything.

They sometimes talk about their past deeds in the world, and sometimes about the great bounties of Allah in Hereafter, sometimes about the attributes of beauty and dignity of Allah, and sometimes about the ranks of the saints and their extraordinary acts, and some other affairs the information upon which is not conceivable for us, the prisoners of this world.

The Arabic word ***/surur/*** is the plural form of ***/sarir/*** which is called to the thrones on which people sit in the meetings of pleasure and intimacy; though it has also been used in a vaster scope of meaning, so far that sometimes the shroud of a dead has been called ***/sarir/***, perhaps for the hope that it may be a mount of happiness for him toward he Divine forgiveness and His eternal garden.

Surah As-Saffat – Verses 45-47

يُطَافُ عَلَيْهِمْ بِكَأْسٍ مِّن مَّعِينٍ

بَيْضَاءَ لَذَّةٍ لِلشَّارِبِينَ

لَا فِيهَا غَوْلٌ وَلَا هُمْ عَنْهَا يُنْزَفُونَ

45. "Round will go unto them a cup (of wine) from a clear spring,"

46. "Crystal-white, delicious to the drinkers,"

47. "Free from headiness, nor will they suffer intoxication from it."

Being entertained in Paradise is not limited to a particular side, but the bounties are turned round from every side of the people of Paradise.

In the fifth stage of the statement of the merits of the people of Paradise, the words are about their purified drink. It says:

"Round will go unto them a cup (of wine) from a clear spring,"

Whenever they decide they can be satiated from its cup and can feel its world of mirth and spirituality.

These cups are not set in a corner or a place that they come and ask for one of them, but these cups will be turned round unto them.

The Arabic word */ka's/* philologically is called to a cup which is completely full, and if it is rather empty it is called 'goblet'.

Raqib in Mufradat says:

"Cup is a container which is full of beverage."

The Qur'anic term */ma'in/* is derived from */ma'n/* in the sense of 'flow'. It points to this fact that there are some flowing springs therein which have purified wine out of which every moment the cups are filled and turned round among the people of Paradise.

It is not such that this purified wine finishes or that it may need any trouble, pain, and task to be provided, or that it may become old, decayed, and imperfect.

Then, the second holy verse explains these cups of purified wine.

It says:

"Crystal-white, delicious to the drinkers,"

The pleasures in Heaven have no hidden and manifest evil sequels. The heavenly wine is delicious, but it has not the intoxication and other sequels of the worldly wine.

The third holy verse, by mentioning a short and expressive sentence, explaining that purified wine, says:

“Free from headiness, nor will they suffer intoxication from it.”

And there is nothing in it but spiritual intelligence, mirth, and joy.

The Arabic word */qaul/* originally is in the sense of a corruption which penetrates into a thing in a hidden manner and it is for this reason that, in the literature of Arab, the hidden murders and terrors are called */qilah/*.

The Arabic term */yunzafun/* originally is derived from */nazf/* in the sense of ‘to destroy something gradually’. When this word is used for the water of a well, its concept is that the water is gradually taken out from the well until when it finishes.

However, the purpose of it in the verse under discussion is that the gradual destruction of intellect does not absolutely exist in the purified wine of Paradise. It neither decreases the intellect, nor does it cause any infection.

These two meanings are implicitly very thin and exact about the worldly wines and alcoholic materials which gradually influence in man’s body and cause destruction and decadence in it.

It not only spoils intellect and the system of nerves, but also it has an undeniable destructive effect on all systems of man’s body, irrespective of heart, blood vessels, stomach, kidneys, and liver. As if it destroys man. And also like the water of a well, it gradually decreases the man’s intellect and intelligence until when it empties it.

But, in Hereafter the purified wine of Allah is free from all these qualities.

Surah As-Saffat – Verses 48-49

وَعِنْدَهُمْ قَاصِرَاتُ الطَّرْفِ عِينٌ

كَأَنَّهُنَّ بَيْضٌ مَّكَنُونٌ

48. “And with them will be chaste women; restraining their glances,”

49. “As if they were (as white as) eggs (secured) hidden.”

Among the characteristics of the women in Paradise is that they restrain their eyes from other than their husbands. The women in Paradise are not only beautiful and charming, but also chaste and covered.

And finally, in the sixth stage, the Qur’an points to the chaste women in Paradise, who do not make love to anyone save their husbands, and do not look at anybody except them. They have beautiful large eyes.

It says:

“And with them will be chaste women; restraining their glances,”

The Arabic word */tarf/* originally means eyelids, and since at the time of looking the eyelids move, this word ironically refers to the act of looking. Thus, the Qur’anic phrase */qasirat-ut-tarf/* means the women who have a short glance; and in commenting it, there have been delivered different numerous probabilities of meaning which, at the meanwhile, can be gathered with together.

The first meaning is that: they look only at their husbands, and restraining their eyes from anything, they look at them alone.

The second meaning is that: this application canonically shows that they make love only to their husbands, and except their love, they have no other love in their hearts. This is one of the greatest privileges of a wife that she does not think of anyone but her husband and makes love to none but to him.

The Arabic word */iyn/* is the plural form of */iyna’/* in the sense of ‘a large-eyed woman’.

The next verse explains these very women in Paradise in another form of statement, and introduces their chastity and the sanctity of their bodies as follow:

“As if they were (as white as) eggs (secured) hidden.”

Indicating that: from the point of intense of purity, delicacy, whiteness, and serenity, their bodies are like some eggs that neither the hand of a man has touched, nor has any dust covered them, but they have been as if covered and hidden under the wing and feather of a hen.

The Arabic word */bayd/* is the plural form of */baydah/* with the sense of ‘egg’, (the egg of any bird); and the term */maknun/* is derived from */kin/* in the sense of ‘covered’.

This resemblance of the Qur’an will exactly be made clear when a person sees closely the egg of a hen at the time when it separates from the hen and no man’s hand has still touched it and it is under the wing and feather of the hen. At this time, it has a wonderful transparency and pleasantness.

Some commentators have taken the Qur'anic term /maknun/ in the sense of the content of an egg which is concealed under the egg-shell and, in fact, the above resemblance refers to the time when the egg has been cooked and its shell has been entirely separated. In that state, besides its whiteness and its brightness, it has a special delicacy and smoothness.

However, the Qur'anic meanings in stating the facts are so deep and comprehensive that in a short and tender expression it conveys a lot of matters with a particular delicacy.

Surah As-Saffat – Verses 50-52

فَأَقْبَلَ بَعْضُهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ يَتَسَاءَلُونَ

قَالَ قَائِلٌ مِّنْهُمْ إِنِّي كَانَ لِي قَرِينٌ

يَقُولُ أَأَنتَ لَمِنَ الْمُصَدِّقِينَ

50. “Then shall some of them advance to others, questioning each other.”

51. “One of them will say: ‘Verily I had an intimate companion (in the world),’

52. “Who used to say: ‘Are you really among the believers (of Hereafter)?’”

In the feast of the people of Paradise, where they have sat on the thrones in front of each other, they begin questioning about their worldly companions.

Through this verse the Qur'an implies that the sincere servants of Allah who, according to the previous verse, are in the spiritual and material bounties of Paradise, including the kinds of fruits of Paradise, from one side, and with the maidens (a nymph) of Paradise, from the other side, and the cups of the purified wine turned round them while they are leaning against the thrones in Paradise busy speaking with their sincere friends, suddenly some of them think of their past and their friends in the world, the same friends who separated their way and they are missed in Paradise and among them.

They want to know what their destiny is.

Yes, while they are busy speaking and talk about everything, as the verse says:

“Then shall some of them advance to others, questioning each other.”

Then, in the second and third verse, the Qur'an implicitly says that one of them remembers some events and then he turns to the others, talking as follows:

“One of them will say: ‘Verily I had an intimate companion (in the world),’

But unfortunately, he was led astray and paved the way of the rejecters of Resurrection. He repeatedly used to ask me whether I had really believed this word of theirs and confirmed it.

The verse says:

“Who used to say: ‘Are you really among the believers (of Hereafter)?’”

Surah As-Saffat – Verse 53

أَءِذَا مِتْنَا وَكُنَّا تُرَابًا وَعِظَامًا أَءِنَّا لَمَدِينُونَ

53. “When we die and have become dust and bones, shall we then in fact be brought in account?”

Pagans never have any proof upon their saying of lack of Resurrection.

Whatever they have in this regard is mostly improbability and wonder, so, concerning the disbelievers, this verse says:

“When we die and have become dust and bones, shall we then in fact be brought in account?”

They say this and strengthen it by announcing that they do not believe in it.

Surah As-Saffat – Verses 54–55

قَالَ هَلْ أَنْتُمْ مُطَّلِعُونَ

فَاطَّلَعَ فَرَءَاهُ فِي سَوَاءِ الْجَحِيمِ

54. “He says: ‘Can you take a look?’”

55. “Then he looks and sees him in the midst of Hell.”

The people of Paradise get information about the state of the people of Hell that the rejecters of

Hereafter are in the midst of Fire.

So, the first verse from the tongue of him about his friend, says:

“He says: ‘Can you take a look?’”

Then, the second holy verse implies that it is here that this friend also begins searching about him and looks toward the Hell and suddenly he sees his friend in the middle of Hell.

The verse says:

“Then he looks and sees him in the midst of Hell.”

Surah As-Saffat – Verses 56-57

قَالَ تَاللَّهِ إِنْ كِدْتَ لِتُرْدِينِ

وَلَوْلَا نِعْمَةُ رَبِّي لَكُنْتُ مِنَ الْمُحْضَرِينَ

56. “He says: ‘By Allah! You had almost caused me to perish;”

57. “And had it not been the bounty of my Lord, certainly would I have been brought into (the Hell).”

The Qur’anic term /turdin/ is derived from /’ida’/ in the sense of ‘to fall from a height which is accompanied with destruction’.

In these two verses the Qur’an implies that he addresses his deviated friend and:

“He says: ‘By Allah! You had almost caused me to perish;”

And also it was nigh that your temptations would affect on my pure heart and bring me into the same deviated path that you were in.

The verse says:

“And had it not been the bounty of my Lord, certainly would I have been brought into (the Hell).”

It was the Divine success which helped me in my way and it was the grace of Allah that came to me and guided me aright.

Surah As-Saffat – Verses 58-61

أَفَمَا نَحْنُ بِمَيِّتِينَ

إِلَّا مَوْتَتَنَا الْأُولَىٰ وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمُعَذَّبِينَ

إِنَّ هَذَا لَهُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ

لِمِثْلِ هَذَا فَلْيَعْمَلِ الْعَامِلُونَ

58. “Is it that we do not die,”

59. “Save our first death; and we shall not be chastised?”

60. “Verily this is the mighty triumph,”

61. “And for the like of this let the workers work.”

In the first two verses in the above, the Qur’an implicitly says that the believing person turns to his hellish friend and, as a blame, reminds this word to him, saying:

“Is it that we do not die,”

And that, except the first death in the world, there is not any death and life again after it, and there will not be any punishment.

The verse says:

“Save our first death; and we shall not be chastised?”

Now you may look and see that what a great mistake you made. After death, there is such a life and such reward, recompense, and retribution. Now all the facts have been made manifest for you, but alas, there is no way to return.

According to the commentator of these two holy verses, by the statement of the faithful person to his hellish friend, he reminds him his words upon the denial of Resurrection.

But some other commentators have mentioned another probable commentary on these two verses. It says that the talk of the man in Paradise with his hellish friend has finished and the people of Paradise speak again with each other.

One of them happily cries:

“Is it then that we do not die,”

“Save our first death; and we shall not be chastised?”

Do we have an eternal life here and does this grace of Allah remain for ever and we will not be chastised?

These words, of course, are not said doubtfully, but they are expressed because of joy and happiness. Just like the person who, after a long time of expectation, gains a vast and comfortable house.

He surprisingly says:

“Is this mine? O’ Lord! What a blessing it is! Will it not be taken from me?”

However, in the next two verses, this debate finishes with an expressive, meaningful fall of feelings and is emphasized by kinds of emphasis.

It says:

“Verily this is the mighty triumph,”

What a triumph is greater than this that a person is given an eternal bounty and a permanent life that has kinds of Divine bounties? What can be considered better and more superior than this?

And, finally, by an expressive, awakening and short sentence, Allah, the Great, puts an end to this discussion:

“And for the like of this let the workers work.”

Some commentators have thought that the recent verse may also be said by the people of Paradise. But it seems very improbable, because on that Day there is no deed to be done.

And, in other words, on that Day there is not any program that by this sentence people may be encouraged to it, while the apparent of the verse shows that the aim is that, by mentioning this sentence, all the former verses can be concluded and people may be driven toward faith and action. Therefore, it is suitable that this word of Allah comes at the end of this discussion.

Surah As-Saffat – Verses 62-64

أَذَلِكْ خَيْرٌ نُّزُلًا أَمْ شَجَرَةُ الزَّقُّومِ

إِنَّا جَعَلْنَاهَا فِتْنَةً لِلظَّالِمِينَ

إِنَّهَا شَجَرَةٌ تَخْرُجُ فِي أَصْلِ الْجَحِيمِ

62. “Is that the better entertainment or the Tree of Zaqqum?”

63. “Verily We have appointed it as a trial for the unjust.”

64. “Verily, it is a tree that grows in the bottom of the Hell.”

We must compare the examples of the grace of Allah with His wrath so that we may act better. The tyrants, who cause others to feel smarting grief in the world, will be entertained with a blazing food in the Hereafter.

After stating the pleasant and worthy bounties of Paradise, the verses under discussion refer to the painful and grievous chastisement of the Hell, and illustrate them in such a way that, comparing the aforementioned Divine bounties, they affect deeply on the receptive persons and restrain them from performing any ugly and impure action.

At first, I implicitly ask whether these eternal and pleasant bounties with which the people of Paradise are entertained are better or the Tree of Zaqqum.

The verse says:

“Is that the better entertainment or the Tree of Zaqqum?”

Regarding to its concept, the application of the Arabic term */nuzul/* is called to something which is prepared for the entertainment of a guest. Some commentators have said that it is the first thing by which a guest is entertained. This shows that the people of Paradise will be entertained as some dear and respectful guests.

The Holy Qur’an asks whether this is better or the Tree of Zaqqum.

The application of the word ‘better’ is not any evidence that the tree of Zaqqum is a good thing and the

bounty of the people of Paradise is better than that. These meanings are sometimes used in the Arabic language for the aspects that, from one side, they have no goodness at all. But there is this probability that this is a kind of allusion.

It is just like this that a person, as the result of being polluted by kinds of sins, has become seriously disgrace among people and we tell him whether this disgrace is better or honour and honesty.

As for the Arabic word */zaqqum/* according to the philologists, it is the name of a plant which has some small leaves that are bitter with bad smell. It grows in the land of Tahamah and polytheists were acquainted with it.² And it is also said in Tafsir-Rauh-ul-Ma'ani that this plant has a sap that when it reaches the body of a person, it swells.³

Raqib in Mufradat says that Zaqqum is any kind of hateful food for the people of Hell.

However, the Arabic word does not always mean 'Tree'. Sometimes it is also used in the sense of 'plant', and the context shows that its objective meaning here is 'plant'.

Then, in the second verse, referring to some qualities of this plant, the Qur'an says:

“Verily We have appointed it as a trial for the unjust.”

The Qur'anic term /fitnah/ may be used in the sense of punishment, or with the sense of trial, as the Qur'an has often applied it in this meaning. Thus, it points to this concept that when they heard the name of Zaqqum, they began to mock and, therefore, it became a mean of trial against the unjust.

In the next verse, the Qur'an says:

“Verily, it is a tree that grows in the bottom of the Hell.”

But these proud unjust people continued mocking and said that:

“Is it possible that a tree grows in the bottom of Hell?”

“How different is between Fire and a tree and plant?”

Therefore, hearing the name of this plant and its qualities is the source of their trial in this world, and the tree itself is the source of their pain and punishment in Hereafter.

It seems that they were neglectful of this fact that the principle governed on the life of the next world is very different from that of this world. The plant and tree which grows in the bottom of Hell is of the same nature of Hell, and it has grown up with the conditions of Hell.

It is not a plant like the plants that grow in the gardens of this world. And perhaps they are unaware of this point; but their aim is only mock and ridicule.

Surah As-Saffat – Verses 65–68

طَلْعُهَا كَأَنَّهُ رُءُوسُ الشَّيَاطِينِ

فَأَنَّهُمْ لَأَكْلُونَ مِنْهَا فَمَالِؤُونَ مِنْهَا الْبُطُونَ

ثُمَّ إِنَّ لَهُمْ عَلَيْهَا لَشَوْبًا مِنْ حَمِيمٍ

ثُمَّ إِنَّ مَرْجِعَهُمْ لَإِلَى الْجَحِيمِ

65. “The shoots of its fruit-stalks are like the heads of devils,”

66. “Then verily they eat from it and fill (their bellies with it).”

67. “Then verily on Top of it they will have a mixture made of boiling water.”

68. “Then verily their return shall be unto the Hell.”

Like the people of Paradise, the people of Hell have also some things to eat and to drink, but the latter not only is not delicious and pleasant, but also they are ugly, distasteful, and injurious.

For being far from the foods of Hell, there is no way to escape, nor any way to evade.

The people of Hell are so hungry that they fill their bellies with the worst food.

(... **and fill (their) bellies with it.**)

The first verse says:

“The shoots of its fruit-stalks are like the heads of devils,”

The Arabic word *tal'* is usually used for the shoot of some white strings that later they change into a cluster of dates. This term is derived from *tulu'*, because it is the first fruit that appears on the tree as it rises.

Here, there comes forth a question asking whether people had seen the heads of devils that the Qur'an likens the shoots of Zaqum to it.

The commentators have answered this question by different answers. Some of them have said: one of the meanings of 'Satan' is a kind of ugly snake that the shoots of Zaqqum have been likened to it.

Some have said that it is a kind of ugly plant. It is cited in Muntah-il-Adab: /ra's-uš-šaytan/ or /ru'us-uš-šayatin/ is an ugly plant.

But what is more correct is that this likening is for the statement of the utmost ugliness and its hateful shape.

Then, in the second verse, the Qur'an implies that these proud unjust people will certainly eat of this plant and fill their bellies from it.

The verse says:

"Then verily they eat from it and fill (their bellies with it.)"

This is the same punishment and trial which was mentioned on the previous verse. Eating from this hellish plant, with that bad smell and bitter taste, and with that sap, the touch of which with the body causes hurt and swelling, and specially eating abundantly, is a painful chastisement.

It is evident that eating this bitter and unwholesome food brings thirst, but what do they drink when they become thirsty?

The Qur'an in the third verse says:

"Then verily on Top of it they will have a mixture made of boiling water."

The Arabic word *šaub* means something which is mixed with something else; and the Qur'anic term /hamim/ is 'hot blazing water'. So, the hot water they drink is not unmixed, but it is polluted.

That is the food of the people of Hell and this is their drink, but where do they go after this entertainment?

The Qur'an in the fourth verse says:

"Then verily their return shall be unto the Hell."

Some of the commentators have understood from this meaning that this hot polluted water comes from a spring from outside of Hell. The people of Hell are formerly taken there like animals that are taken to a pond, and after drinking from it, they are returned into the Hell.

As we pointed out before, neither the blessings of Heaven are available for us in this world as they are, nor the chastisements of the people of Hell. Only by some short sentences their outline from a far distance are partly illustrated in our mind.

(O' Lord! Protect us, by Your grace, from these punishments.)

Surah As-Saffat – Verses 69-70

إِنَّهُمْ أَفْوَا ءَابَاءَهُمْ ضَالِّينَ

فَهُمْ عَلَي ءَأَثَارِهِمْ يُهْرَعُونَ

69. “Verily they found their fathers on the wrong path.”

70. “So in their footsteps they are being hastened on.”

One of the qualities of the people of the Hell is blindly imitation from their fathers and ancestors, while imitation in beliefs is not permissible and one's beliefs should be based on the basis of intellect and reasoning.

In these two verses, the Qur'an states the main cause of the inflection of the people of Hell in the grips of these painful punishments through two short and expressive sentences.

It says:

“Verily they found their fathers on the wrong path.”

Yet, involuntarily they hasten to follow them.

The Qur'an says:

“So in their footsteps they are being hastened on.”

It is interesting that the Arabic term */yuhra'un/* is mentioned in the passive form derived from */ihra'/* which means 'to run swiftly'. It indicates that they have so believed in imitating from their ancestors that as if they had not any act of willing from their own selves. And this is a sign of their utmost bigotry and being interested in their ancestors' superstitions.

Surah As-Saffat – Verses 71-74

وَلَقَدْ ضَلَّ قَبْلَهُمْ أَكْثَرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا فِيهِمْ مُنذِرِينَ

فَانظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُنذِرِينَ

إِلَّا عِبَادَ اللَّهِ الْمُخْلَصِينَ

71. “And indeed most of the ancient went astray before them.”

72. “And certainly We sent among them warners.”

73. “Then see how was the end of those warned,”

74. “Except the servants of Allah, the purified ones.”

In the atmosphere of deviation, the most important dusty is ‘warning’. Allah has sent some warners for the deviated nations.

Through these verses, the Qur’an prepares the ground for the life story of many former nations, the information of whose states is an expressive proof for the former discussions. These are nations such as: the peoples of Noah, Abraham, Moses and Aaron, Lot, Yunus, and the like.

At first, it says:

“And indeed most of the ancient went astray before them.”

It is not only the polytheists of Mecca who, imitating their ancestors, are involved in a deep corruption, but before them, the majority of the ancient nations were involved in the same fate, too, and the number of their believers comparing those who went astray were very small.

This is a solace for the Prophet (S) and the believers of Mecca whose number was small and were surrounded by the enemy from every side.

Then, in the second verse, the Holy Qur’an adds that their aberration was because of having no leader or guide.

So, He says:

“And certainly We sent among them warners.”

These warners were the Divine prophets who used to warn them from polytheism, disbelief, injustice, tyranny, and blindly imitation from others, and made them acquainted with their responsibilities.

It is true that the Divine prophets had the letter of warning in one hand and the letter of glad tiding in the other hand, but since the great pillar of their teaching, specially for such a corrupt and rebellious nation, was ‘warning’, it has been emphasized on here.

And, in the third verse, through a short and meaningful sentence, it says:

“Then see how was the end of those warned,”

The addressee in the Qur’anic sentence /fanzur/ (then see) may be the Prophet (S) himself, or any other wise and aware person.

This sentence, in fact, is a hint to the end of the nations whose explanation will be expressed in the coming verses.

Through the fourth verse, as an exception, it says:

“Except the servants of Allah, the purified ones.”

In fact, this sentence points to this fact that you may see the end of these nations that how Allah caused them to be involved in a painful punishment and destroyed them, except the purified faithful servants who were saved from this destruction.

It is noteworthy that in this Surah ‘the purified servants of Allah’ are emphasized on five times in different verses, and this is a sign upon the greatness of their rank.

And, as we pointed out before, they are those who have been so victorious in the path of Knowledge, faith, and struggle against carnal soul that Allah has elected them and purified them, and that is why they have become secured from deviations and faults.

Satan cannot influence in them and, from the first day, hopelessly he expressed his inability before them.

The uproar of the environment, the temptations of the seductive factors, the imitation from ancestors, and the wrong and oppressive cultures can never mislead them from their way.

And this, in fact, is a message for the persisting believers of that day in Mecca, and for us, the Muslims of the world of today that we should not be afraid of the abundance of the enemies and try to stand in the row of the purified servants of Allah, because it is only the purified servants of Allah who take the warnings of the prophets earnest.

“Then see how was the end of those warned,”

“Except the servants of Allah, the purified ones.”

1. Among those who have narrated this tradition are the following scholars:

- A) Ibn-Hajar Hiythami, in Sawa'iq-ul-Muhraghah, P. 147
- B) 'Abd-ur-Razzaq Hanbali, according to Kashf-ul-Qummah, P. 92
- C) 'Allamah Sibt-ibn-Jauzi, in Tathkirah, P. 21
- D) 'Alusi, in Rauh-ul-Ma'ani, following the verse under discussion
- E) 'Abu-Na'im Esfahani, according to Kifayat-ul-Khisal, P. 360

And some others that for more information you may refer to the worthy book entitled "Ihqaq-ul-Haqq", Vol. 3, P. 104 (new edition), and Al-Murajirat, P. 58.

2. Tafsir-i-Rouh-ul-Bayan, Vol. 7, P. 464

3. Rauh-ul-Ma'ani, Vol. 23, P. 85

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