

Surah Fussilat, Chapter 41, Verses 1-40

(Explained in detail)

Section (juz' 25)

Number of Verses: 54

General Overview of Surah Fussilat

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

This Meccan Chapter has fifty four Verses and whose title derives from the third Verse. It is also called “HM sajdah” since it opens with HM and it is the first among the four Chapters with obligatory prostrations. The Verses of the Chapter concerns Resurrection, history of ancient peoples, the Glory of the Holy Qur'an, and manifestations of Divine Omnipotence in the world of existence.

The Merits of the Recitation of the Chapter

According to a Prophetic tradition,

*“One who recites HM sajdah, God Almighty will bestow upon him ten good deeds for each of its letters.”*¹

According to another tradition, the Messenger of God (S) recited the Chapter every night before going to bed.² It is also worthy of note that the title of the Chapter, Fussilat, is taken from the third Verse, and the title HM sajdah derives from the opening of the Chapter, HM, as well as Verse 37, requiring an obligatory prostration.

Surah Fussilat – Verses 1 – 4

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

ح

تَنْزِيلٌ مِنَ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

كِتَابٌ فَصَّلَتْ آيَاتُهُ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ

بَشِيرًا وَنَذِيرًا فَأَعْرَضَ أَكْثَرُهُمْ فَهُمْ لَا يَسْمَعُونَ

1. *HM*

2. *A Revelation [the Qur'an] from the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.*

3. *A Book whereof the Verses are explained clearly, a Qur'an in Arabic for people who know.*

4. *[A Book] bearing glad tidings and warning, but most of them turn away, so they hear not [the Qur'an].*

The Arabic words:

anzalna (“*We sent down*”)

and

tanzil (“*sending down*”)

are employed in the senses of sending down at one time and in time respectively.

To assume a common meaning out of the twain, one may say that the content of the Holy Qur'an was

revealed to the Noble Prophet of Islam (S) at one time on the Night of Ordainment (Qadr) though the forms and words were revealed to him in time.

The mere mention of the Revelation of the Holy Qur'an indicates guidance, decisiveness, exaltedness, wisdom, and mercy.

The Holy Qur'an makes use of every means of guidance (e.g. commanding the good and forbidding evil, stories and accounts of ancient peoples as lessons, arguments, allegories, exposition of Divine Bounties, future of mankind, the manner of Resurrection, factors leading to exaltedness and denigration) in details with decisiveness and unambiguity.

The Holy Qur'an draws a distinction between Truth and falsehood, believer and disbeliever, Paradise and Hellfire, obedient and disobedient, obligatory and unlawful (acts), blessing and torment, good and evil, and the like.

The Holy Qur'an was revealed in eloquent Arabic.

The word:

'Arabi ("***Arabic***")

designates both Arabic tongue and eloquent. It is needless to say that those familiar with eloquent Arabic may comprehend the eloquence of the Qur'an.

Verse 2 reads:

"A Revelation [the Qur'an] from the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful."

The word

tanzil ("***Revelation***")

is in the predicative position (khabar) whose subject (mubtada') is omitted, namely the Holy Qur'an is revealed by God Almighty Whose Mercy and Grace are bestowed upon all existent beings.

Verse 3 says:

"A Book whereof the Verses are explained clearly, a Qur'an in Arabic for people who know."

The Verse clearly makes a reference to the inimitability of the Qur'an which may be comprehended by the knowledgeable.

Those who pay no heed of the Qur'an are devoid of true knowledge. Divine Revelation of the Holy Qur'an from Divine realm to the material world aims at the knowledgeable who are capable of comprehending some secrets of the Holy Qur'an.

They know that it lies without human ability to bring the like of the Qur'an; as a consequence of which, they believe in Divine Revelation of the Holy Qur'an and the fact that it is revealed for the guidance of jinn and mankind, but the knowledgeable are solely capable of comprehending it.

Verse 4 says:

“[A Book] bearing glad tidings and warning, but most of them turn away, so they hear not [the Qur'an].”

The Arabic adjectives:

bashir (“bearing glad tidings”)

and

nadhir (“bearing warning”)

are two attributes of the Holy Qur'an designating the Qur'an bears glad tidings to believers that as a consequence of their righteous good deeds, exalted stations and Bounties in Paradise will fall into their share in the Hereafter.

It also warns disbelievers that they will be chastised with torments in Hell as a result of their evil deeds. Those who turn away from hearing the Holy Qur'an are unable to give their ears to the Holy Qur'an being recited owing to their vain desires.

The Holy Qur'an says elsewhere that disbelievers are deaf, dumb, and blind unable to comprehend Divine Word since they do not make use of their intellect.

Those who turn away from God Almighty turn toward nature, and are wholly preoccupied with mundane affairs and the pleasures of the flesh are actually unable to hear the Truth. Such people may not endure to hear Qur'anic Verses being recited.

Surah Fussilat – Verse 5

وَقَالُوا قُلُوبُنَا فِي أَكِنَّةٍ مِمَّا تَدْعُونَا إِلَيْهِ وَفِي آذَانِنَا وَقْرٌ وَمِنْ بَيْنِنَا وَبَيْنِكَ حِجَابٌ
فَاعْمَلْ إِنَّا عَامِلُونَ

5. And they say: “Our hearts are wrapped up in coverings from that to which you invite us and in our ears is deafness and between us and you is a screen: so work you [on your way]. Indeed, we are working [on our way].”

The Arabic word akinna is the plural form of kinan which indicates a piece of fabric in which something is wrapped up. The word waqr indicates deafness.³

Disbelievers rigorously took a fivefold stance against the Messenger of God (S) and the Holy Qur'an:

1. Turning away and keeping distance against them:

(“But most of them turn away, so they hear not [the Qur’an],”⁴).

2. Unpreparedness for acknowledging the Truth:

(“Our hearts are wrapped up in coverings from that to which you invite us”).

3. Failing to listen to the Messages:

(“In our ears is deafness”).

4. Making mention of impediments, namely the covering of self-conceit, worshipping mammon, and the like.

5. Persisting obdurately in their error

(“Indeed, we are working [on our way]”).

God Almighty bestows His Bounties upon man and sends down His Revelation springing from His Fountainhead of Mercy, but disbelievers are obdurate and turn away from Truth.

If the audience be not prepared, neither Divine Revelation and Mercy nor Scriptures nor its glad tidings and warnings shall be of no avail, since obduracy and bias cast their veils onto their hearts.

It is in this vein that the blessed Verse says that when disbelievers noticed that they had sunk into shadows as if they failed to hear Qur'anic Verses, they said that their hearts had been wrapped up in natural covering and they were deaf such that they were unable to hear Qur'anic Verses.

In other words, they said that there had been a veil of ignorance and arrogance between them and God Almighty such that the Messenger of God (S) could not expect them to turn to Qur'anic Verses and each of the parties was supposed to be preoccupied with their own affairs.

Surah Fussilat – Verses 6-7

قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَنَا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُكُمْ يُوحَىٰ إِلَيَّ أَنَّمَا إِلَهُكُمُ اللَّهُ وَاحِدٌ فَاسْتَقِيمُوا إِلَيْهِ وَاسْتَغْفِرُوهُ
وَوَيْلٌ لِلْمُشْرِكِينَ

الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَهُمْ بِالْآخِرَةِ هُمْ كَافِرُونَ

6. Say [O Prophet (S)]: “I am only a human being like you [the difference is that] it is revealed to me that your God is One God; therefore take the Straight Path toward Him and seek forgiveness of Him and woe to the polytheists.

7. Those who give not the alms tax and they are disbelievers in the Hereafter.

In Qur’anic terms, indifference toward a number of Divine Commands is regarded as disbelief and polytheism.

It is said concerning pilgrimage to Mecca that:

“Pilgrimage to Mecca is a duty that mankind owes to Allah, those who can afford the expenses, and whoever disbelieves, then Allah sands not in need of any of the both worlds”⁵.

Regarding non-performance of daily prayers, the Messenger of God (S) said:

“Any Muslim who fails to perform obligatory prayers is on a par with disbelievers.”⁶

Concerning failing to pay alms tax, the blessed Verse in question reads:

“Woe to the polytheists, those who give not the alms tax.”

Alms tax (zakat) is a source of revenue for the Islamic government and failing to settle the same will be equal to failing to recognize the monotheism or disbelieving in the Hereafter which is on a par with disbelief.

It is worthy of note that the blessed Verse in question is addressed to the exalted Messenger of Allah (S), asking him to say unto those who are in error and raise objections against you saying that you eat, sleep, and marry like them, assuming that you are like them, pursuing pleasures of the flesh, such as property, exalted ranks, sovereignty and you lay claims to divinity.

Say unto them that you are neither an angel nor a genie, but you are a human being like them in terms of eating, sleeping, and other natural acts. Your only privilege is that Divine Revelation is communicated to you. Your Creator, Origin, and Resurrection are the same.

You are supposed to worship him and solely invoke Him for support. It is a quite logical and clear statement.

If you render the veil of arrogance, bias, and ignorance and be moderate in human attributes and turn away from bestial desires, you will perceive through your intellect and conscience that your source of support is the One who brought you from non-existence into existence and everything lies within His

Omnipotence.

Thus, you will perceive the manifestation of His Unity emanated to all beings.

The blessed Verse closes with an injunction to mankind as to perseverance in their belief in monotheism and invoke God Almighty to forgive their sins as polytheists and disbelievers will be sunk in denigration and humility.

Verse 7 treats of polytheists' attributes: failure to pay alms tax and denial of the Hereafter. The blessed Verse explicitly indicates that paying alms tax serves as a trial for believers' belief in the Hereafter, since mundane property is loved by people and it may not be easily forsaken.

According to the Noble Prophet of Islam (S),

*“Failing to pay alms tax is on a par with disloyalty and polytheism.”*⁷

As per another Prophetic tradition,

*“One who does not pay any alms tax will die a Jew or a Christian.”*⁸

Surah Fussilat – Verse 8

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَهُمْ أَجْرٌ غَيْرُ مَمْنُونٍ

8. Indeed, those who believe and do righteous good deeds, for them will be an endless reward that will never stop.

Faith and righteous good deeds are inseparable. Those who do righteous good deeds in this world without expecting any reward will avail themselves of Divine Bounties and Rewards. God Almighty grants His Rewards non gratia.

It would be unbecoming to expect remuneration for our insignificant favors. The blessed Verse is saying that believers enjoy permanent and endless rewards.

Some Qur'anic exegetes maintain that mamnun designates expecting reward or remuneration and some others take it in the sense of innumerable and endless. There are still some other exegetes holding that the sustenance granted to believers is non gratia and the Provider does not denigrate His Favors.

It is worthy of note that God Almighty is Most-Bountiful and Most-Gracious and belief and righteous good deeds are both possible through His Favor and the Rewards promised to believers are all fulfilled through His Grace and Bounty.

Despite doing righteous good deeds, servants are not worthy of compensation since it is their obligation as servants to serve their Lord. However, the blessed Verse in question is saying that those who believe and do righteous good deeds will be granted permanent and endless rewards non-gratia.

Surah Fussilat – Verse 9

قُلْ أَلَيْسَ لَكُمْ لَتَكْفُرُونَ بِالَّذِي خَلَقَ الْأَرْضَ فِي يَوْمَيْنِ وَتَجْعَلُونَ لَهُ أُندَاداً ذَلِكَ رَبُّ
الْعَالَمِينَ

9. Say: “Do you verily disbelieve in Him Who created the earth in two days? And you set up rivals [in worship] with Him? That is the Lord of the worlds.

By the creation of the earth in two days, two stages are being intended. Prior to the creation of the earth and the heaven and the emergence of night, day, month, and year, there existed no day so that we say God Almighty created the earth in two days.

Divine Omnipotence accompanies His Omniscience and although God Almighty may create the heavens and the earth and whatever exists between them at one time and the recurrent clauses:

“Be! And it was”

indicate the same, but He created the heavens and the earth in several stages which bears testimony to the fact that exercising power requires consideration and expediency and creation was expediently carried out in several stages.

The blessed Verse in question is a reproach to mankind in the form of a rhetorical question addressed to the Messenger of God (S) saying:

O Muhammad (S) say unto these disbelievers:

“Do you disbelieve and deny God Almighty Who created the earth in two days and set up rivals in worship for him? God Almighty Who created the earth in two days is the Lord of all the worlds. He is Omnipotent over the creation of the earth. He is the Creator of all creatures, since the heaven, the earth, and all the world of existence are inseparable from each other.

‘Had there been gods beside God Almighty in them, they would have gone on the way to perdition.’”

Unity of the world bears testimony to Divine Unity since it is evident that all creatures are inseparable from each other like the rings of a chain.

Unity in creation indicates the Oneness of Creator since two causes may not affect one effect, hence the blessed Verse thus closes:

“That is the Lord of the worlds.”

The Verse indicates that material beings come into being in time and the One Who created the earth also created all the worlds of existence.

The phrase:

“two days”

apparently demonstrates that had there been day and night, it would have taken two days, since there were neither days nor nights at the time so that creation could be restricted.

Surah Fussilat – Verses 10–11

وَجَعَلَ فِيهَا رَوَاسِيَ مِنْ فَوْقِهَا وَبَارَكَ فِيهَا وَقَدَّرَ فِيهَا أَقْوَاتَهَا فِي أَرْبَعَةِ أَيَّامٍ سَوَاءً
لِلسَّائِلِينَ

ثُمَّ اسْتَوَى إِلَى السَّمَاءِ وَهِيَ دُخَانٌ فَقَالَ لَهَا وَلِلْأَرْضِ ائْتِيَا طَوْعًا أَوْ كَرْهًا قَالَتَا
أَتَيْنَا طَائِعِينَ

10. He placed therein firm mountains from above it, and He blessed it, and measured therein its sustenance in four days sufficient for all those in need.

11. Then He rose over towards the heaven when it was smoke and said unto it and unto the earth “Come both of you willingly or unwillingly [and take shape].” They both said: “We come willingly [took shape].”

The Arabic word rawasi is the plural form of rasiya designating firm mountains. Sawa’ indicates equal and the phrase sawa’an li-sa’ilin signifies that abilities are proportionate to needs. Taw’an and karhan are used in the senses of willingly and unwillingly respectively.

The verbal form istawa used with the preposition ‘ala literally indicates dominion (as in:

“The Most Gracious [Allah] rose over towards the heaven,9”);

however juxtaposed with the preposition ila it designates intention (as in the blessed Verse in

question). 10

The earth and mountains are Divine Blessings including provision of sustenance, growth of plants, refinement of polluted water into pure water; sowing seeds and harvesting abundantly; excavation of mines; preservation of snow; provision of rocks for building; checking earthquakes, storms, and winds; serving as beacons for travelers.

It is worthy of note that mountains serve as the anchor of the earth since some of their roots lie in water so that waves may not destroy the earth.

The blessed Verse 10 says:

“And He blessed it, and measured therein its sustenance,”

that is, all types of corns, vegetables, and fruits are produced for mankind and animals.

The phrase:

“in four days”

includes the aforesaid two days. In other words, the creation of the earth, mountains, and plants took four days.

Taking the two days for the creation of the heavens mentioned in the following Verse, it could be said that the creation of the earth and heavens and the creatures between them took six days, as it is reflected elsewhere in the Holy Qur’an¹¹:

“Indeed your Lord is Allah Who created the heavens and the earth in six days.”

The phrase:

“sufficient for all those in need”

indicates that creation is well-measured according to Divine Omniscience which is free from immoderation, vanity, and defect.

Verse 11 says:

“Then He rose over towards the heaven,”

that is, He set order in heavenly bodies, some of which are far larger than the earth in size such that a specific place was apportioned for each of them and they may not exceed their bounds and veer off their orbits as it is reflected elsewhere in the Holy Qur’an¹²:

“It is not for the sun to overtake the moon, nor does the night outstrip the day. They all float,

each in an orbit.”

The clause:

“it was smoke”

indicates that owing to distance from the earth, it seemed like smoke, in the same manner that the air and sea water seems to be blue from afar.

The blessed Verse 11 closes by saying that following the creation of the heaven and the earth in due measure, it was said unto them by the Glorious Creator that they had to obey Divine Commands willingly or unwillingly.

The blessed Verse in question explicitly indicates that the heaven, the earth, and all creatures are intelligent and it is a consequence of their intelligence that they are addressed by God.

The Verse confirms the views held by Philosophers and theologians who maintain that depending on their degrees of power and weakness, all creatures are intelligent. The Command may also be taken as existential rather than legislative making a reference to Divine Omnipotence through Which existent beings come into being.

Surah Fussilat – Verse 12

فَقَضَاهُنَّ سَبْعَ سَمَاوَاتٍ فِي يَوْمَيْنِ وَأَوْحَىٰ فِي كُلِّ سَمَاءٍ أَمْرَهَا وَزَيَّنَّا السَّمَاءَ
الدُّنْيَا بِمَصَابِيحَ وَحِفْظًا ذَٰلِكَ تَقْدِيرُ الْعَزِيزِ الْعَلِيمِ

12. Then He completed and finished [it was in the form of smoke] from their creation seven heavens in two days and He made in each heaven its affair. And We adorned the nearest heaven with lamps to be an adornment as well as to guard [heavens]. Such is the Decree of Him, the Omnipotent, the Omniscient.

Although God Almighty was Able to create everything at a single instance, but it was because of His Omniscience that He created the heavens in two stages. In terms of Divine Omnipotence, there is no difference between the Creation of the earth or that of the seven heavens as He created them in two stages.

Whatever lies within our knowledge concerning celestial bodies and whatever which will be discovered later on are adornments of the lower heaven:

“We adorned the nearest heaven with lamps to be an adornment.”

The blessed Verse in question is saying that Divine Decree was acted upon throughout the seven heavens in two days and the Decree of each heaven was Divinely revealed unto it. It is a reference to the fact that each heaven is inclined by nature to act upon its existential Command as per Divine Omniscience and the order of the world.

The Arabic word **sama'** deriving from sammu designates "high" and it is applied to the atmosphere encompassing celestial bodies. The lights of the heaven are the sun, moon, and all the stars and planets.

They are likened to lights owing to their brilliance and giving off light onto the earth day and night.

Specification of lights to the sky of the world indicates that all the planets and stars visible in the sky are those belonging to the sky of our own world which is lower than all the planets since the word:

dunya ("world")

derives from dunuw ("proximity") above which lie other heavens whose number is solely known by God Almighty as their innumerability is attested in a number of traditions.

It is narrated from Imam Ja'far Sadiq (as) in al-Khisal that the noble Imam said:

"To God Almighty belong twelve thousand worlds each of which is greater than the seven heavens and the seven earths none of which is sentient of other worlds."

Many other traditions indicate that the world is not limited to the seven heavens and the seven earths.

Surah Fussilat – Verses 13 – 14

فَإِنْ أَعْرَضُوا فَقُلْ أَنْذَرْتُكُمْ صَاعِقَةً مِثْلَ صَاعِقَةِ عَادٍ وَثَمُودَ

إِذْ جَاءَتْهُمْ الرُّسُلُ مِنْ بَيْنِ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا اللَّهَ قَالُوا لَوْ شَاءَ رَبُّنَا
لَأَنْزَلَ مَلَائِكَةً فَأِنَّا بِمَا أُرْسِلْتُمْ بِهِ كَافِرُونَ

13. But if they turn away, then say: "I have warned you of a destructive awful cry like that which overtook 'Ad and Thamud."

14. When the Messengers came to them from before them and behind them [saying]: "Worship none but Allah," they said: "If our Lord had so willed, He would surely have sent down the angels. So indeed we disbelieve in that with which you have been sent."

Prophets were divinely appointed to bear glad tidings and warnings unto mankind. These guides are supposed to prognosticate deviations and errors and find solutions to them.

It is worthy of note that the blessed Verses in question warn disbelievers and address the Messenger of God (S) that O Muhammad say unto them that if they turn away from Divine Command, you will be cast into perdition through startling torment resembling lightning in the same manner that the peoples of 'Ad and Thamud were afflicted with destructive gale (sarsar) and awful cry respectively and they were both destroyed.

Verse 14 is saying that the peoples of 'Ad and Thamud committed sins since they denied the Calls of the divinely appointed Prophets saying that had our Lord willed to send Messengers to us, He would have made angels descend from the heaven, but you are like us and we will never acknowledge your Prophetic mission.

They were too ignorant to comprehend that angels are different from mankind by nature and they may neither associate with nor guide them, unless they take the form of human beings; however, in such case they would be regarded as human beings.

The motif is elsewhere attested in the Holy Qur'an13:

“And had We appointed him an angel, We truly would made him a man and We would have certainly disguised them in human form.”

Surah Fussilat – Verse 15

فَأَمَّا عَادٌ فَاسْتَكْبَرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ وَقَالُوا مَنْ أَشَدُّ مِنَّا قُوَّةً أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّ
اللَّهَ الَّذِي خَلَقَهُمْ هُوَ أَشَدُّ مِنْهُمْ قُوَّةً وَكَانُوا بِآيَاتِنَا يَجْحَدُونَ

15. As for 'Ad, they were arrogant in the land without right and they said: “Who is mightier than us in strength?” See they not that Allah Who created them is mightier in strength than them. And they used to deny Our Ayat [Signs and Verses].

The people of 'Ad inhabited the South of the Arabian Peninsula. They were mighty warriors who had constructed fortified castles and lofty buildings and all these had led to their arrogance and vanity.

What leads to disbelievers' perdition is their persistence in their disbelief and obduracy. The blessed Verse is saying that the people of 'Ad were destroyed by gale owing to their sin of being arrogant in the land without right. They regarded themselves to be superior in strength assuming that no one may vanquish them.

Consequently, they asked others as to the existence of any people superior to them in terms of strength and power.

When arrogance stemming from the bestial faculty vanquishes man, he consigns to oblivion his essential non-existence and contingent needs and takes pride in himself assuming that his glory and power is permanent, but he disregards the truth that God Almighty is All-Superior in His Omnipotence against Whose Boundless Power, all other powers are nothing in comparison.

The rhetorical question aims to reveal that all these people who deny Prophetic Calls disregard the fact that the Creator who has brought them from non-existence into existence is far superior to them in terms of power.

How could they deny His Signs of Omnipotence? It is needless to say that taking a glance at one's creation and the frailties of man from his embryonic stage onwards may remove arrogance and vanity.

“See they not that Allah Who created them is mightier in strength than them. And they used to deny Our Ayat [Signs and Verses].”

Surah Fussilat – Verse 16

فَأَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ رِيحًا صَرْصَرًا فِي أَيَّامٍ نَحْسَاتٍ لِنُذِيقَهُمْ عَذَابَ الْخِزْيِ فِي الْحَيَاةِ
الدُّنْيَا وَلِعَذَابِ الْآخِرَةِ أَكْزَىٰ وَهُمْ لَا يُنصَرُونَ

16. So We sent upon them a furious and poisonous gale in days of evil omen that We might give them a taste of disgracing torment in this present worldly life. But surely the torment of the Hereafter will be more disgracing and they will never be helped.

Another reference is made to the people of 'Ad elsewhere in the Holy Qur'an¹⁴:

“And as for 'Ad, they were destroyed by a furious violent gale! Which Allah inflicted upon them for seven nights and eight days successively, so that you could see men lying overthrown as if they were hollow trunks of date-palms!”

Divine Wrath may destroy some people in an instant, though their perdition may take a number of days and nights. It is worthy of note that the blessed Verse in question is saying that incompetent people with small capacities take pride in their limited power and rise in rebellion.

They may even rise against Divine Omnipotence out of ignorance. God Almighty may easily turn their opportunities into means of their perdition, as it is reflected in the story of the people of 'Ad in the blessed Verse in question:

“So We sent upon them a furious and poisonous gale in days of evil omen that We might give them a taste of disgracing torment in this present worldly life.”

The strange gale levitated them from the ground and knocked them down as it is attested elsewhere in the Holy Qur’an:

“Indeed, We sent against them a furious gale of harsh noise on a day of evil omen and continuous calamity. Plucking out men as if they were uprooted stems of date-palms”¹⁵;

“And as for ‘Ad, they were destroyed by a furious violent gale! Which Allah inflicted upon them for seven nights and eight days successively, so that you could not see men lying overthrown, as if they were hollow trunks of date-palms! Do you see any remnants of them?”¹⁶.

This violent gale blew for seven nights and eight days and all the possessions of the wrong doing and arrogant people were being knocked and there remained solely ruins of their glorious palaces, abundant possessions, and luxurious life.

The blessed Verse in question closes by saying that:

“disgracing torment in this present worldly life. But surely the torment of the Hereafter will be more disgracing.”

All these excruciating torments in this worldly life resemble a spark against a sea of fire! What is worse than that is that:

“they will never be helped.”

Such wrong doing and arrogant people tried for a life time to show their glory, but at the time of torment, God Almighty inflicted a disgracing chastisement upon them in this world and another humiliating punishment will be in store for them in the Hereafter such that such vain arrogant people comprehend their humility.

Surah Fussilat – Verses 17 – 18

وَأَمَّا ثَمُودُ فَهَدَيْنَاهُمْ فَاسْتَحَبُّوا الْعَمَىٰ عَلَى الْهُدَىٰ فَأَخَذَتْهُمُ صَاعِقَةُ الْعَذَابِ الْهُونِ
بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ

وَنَجَّيْنَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَكَانُوا يَتَّقُونَ

17. And as for Thamud, We showed and made clear unto them the Path of Truth, but they preferred blindness to guidance. Therefore, a destructive cry of disgracing torment seized them because of what they used to earn.

18. And We saved those [from 'Ad and Thamud] who believed and used to fear Allah, keep their duty to Him, and avoid evil.

The Prophet of the people of Thamud was Salih (Salah). They lived in Umm al-Qura ("the Mother of Cities) located between Medina and Sham, and possessed great strength and agricultural means and opportunities.

Their perdition was caused by lightning and earthquake as reflected in Qur'anic Verses, though both afflictions might have led to their destruction. Verse 17 is saying that God Almighty provided them with means of guidance, but they denied it.

It is worthy of note that Divine Guidance was available to all disbelievers and polytheists and it was not restricted to the people of Thamud. The blessed Verses apparently allude to the Salih's she-camel that came out of rock with her calf.

She provided them with sufficient milk and it was a miracle to guide them; however they preferred blindness over guidance and cut the sinews of her feet and killed her calf which led to the warning against their perdition.

"Therefore, a destructive cry of disgracing torment seized them."

The blessed Verse makes a reference to the destructive cry expressed as lightning. The destructive cry was so harsh that it deafened their ears and they were all destroyed instantly.

The clause:

"because of what they used to earn"

refers to severing the sinews of the she-camel's feet and killing her calf. It is reported that three members of Ahl al-Bayt (Prophetic family, AS) made references to Salih's she-camel:

firstly, Sadiqa Tahira saying:

"Salih's she-camel and her calf were not superior to me before God Almighty in terms of excellence,"

al-Husayn (as) when Radih (the suckling infant) was killed said:

"O Lord! This infant before you is not inferior to the calf of Salih's she-camel,"

Imam Hadi (as), accompanying Mutawakkil to the latter's palace said:

“My index finger is superior to Salih’s she-camel.”

Mutawakkil did not live longer than three days and his body was cut into pieces.

Verse 18 says:

“And We saved those [from ‘Ad and Thamud] who believed and used to fear Allah, keep their duty to Him, and avoid evil.”

Many Qur’anic Verses and traditions indicate that so long as believers and the God fearing live among disbelievers and the corrupt, Divine torment will not be sent to them and they should fear that if religious scholars, the pious, and the God fearing leave them, such torments will be inflicted upon them.

Surah Fussilat – Verses 19 – 20

وَيَوْمَ يُحْشَرُ أَعْدَاءُ اللَّهِ إِلَى النَّارِ فَهُمْ يُوزَعُونَ

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا مَا جَاءُوهَا شَهِدَ عَلَيْهِمْ سَمْعُهُمْ وَأَبْصَارُهُمْ وَجُلُودُهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

19. And [remember] the Day that the enemies of Allah will be gathered to the Fire, then they will be restrained.

20. Till when they reach it, their hearing and their eyes and their skins will bear witness against them as to what they used to do.

The Arabic verbal form **yuza’un** is used in the sense of “they are restrained,” connoting that the first one is restrained to the coming of the last one following which they shall be driven to Hell. Representation of Resurrection leads to warning and guidance.

The Holy Qur’an asks the Noble Prophet (S) to remind people of such Day.

The blessed Verse 19 is saying that God Almighty makes mention of disbelievers and the manner of their advent of the Day of Resurrection reminding His Messenger (S) that upon their arrival, God’s enemies will be gathered such that those occupying the front row shall be restrained so that others may arrive and they all enter Hell.

Upon their assembly, their bodily organs, through Divine Command, bear witness against them: their ears bear testimony that they disregarded both the Signs of existence which were recurrently heard by them and the Qur’anic Verses heard by them.

They did not take any lessons but neglected them. Their skins bear witness that they touched unlawful objects. It is worthy of note that there is a vital force within bodily organs and everything shall attain to perfection on the Day of Resurrection.

Upon the arrival of human body from the mundane world to the Hereafter, all inward deeds and conducts shall be manifest through Divine Command and it may justify the secret of the manner of bearing testimony by bodily organs against man.

Verse 20 is saying that their ears bear witness to hearing the Call to proceed toward Truth but they turned away from it. Their eyes bear witness that they saw many a Signs indicating Divine Unity, but they failed to believe. Other bodily organs bear witness against their deeds and sins.

It is mentioned in 'Ali ibn Ibrahim Qumi's Tafsir¹⁷ that the Verse is concerned with those whose deeds become manifest to them, but they deny them, saying:

"We are not aware of such deeds in the least."

Then, the angels in charge of recording their deeds bear witness that they have committed such acts.

Imam Sadiq (as) said:

"They say unto God Almighty

'O Lord! They are your angels and bear witness to your benefit.'

They take an oath that they have not committed any of such deeds."

Thus, God Almighty places the seal of silence on their tongues and makes their bodily organs speak—any ear, eye, hand, and foot, having heard, seen, touched, and proceeded toward unlawful words, sights, objects, directions bear testimony before God Almighty.

Surah Fussilat – Verse 21

وَقَالُوا لَجُلُودِهِمْ لِمَ شَهِدْتُمْ عَلَيْنَا قَالُوا أَنْطَقَنَا اللَّهُ الَّذِي أَنْطَقَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ وَهُوَ
خَلَقَكُمْ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ

21. And they will say to their skins, "Why did you testify against us?" They will say: "Allah has caused us to speak, He causes all things to speak and He created you the first time and to Him you are made to return."

There will be numerous witnesses on the Day of Resurrection, including God Almighty, Prophets, the

earth, time, angels, and bodily organs.

Bearing witness by bodily organs indicates their knowledge as to human deeds. It is worthy of note that the One Who is Omnipotent and creates creatures is also Able to make them speak as well. The blessed Verse in question treats of bodily organs' response to man's objection to his skins bearing witness against him, saying:

“Allah has caused us to speak, He causes all things to speak.”

It is worthy of note that the word:

“thing” (shay’)

is used in the general sense of the word which indicates that all the constituent elements of the world shall speak, which may in turn designate disclosure of their inner secrets, since nothing shall be concealed at that time and everything shall manifest its truth and inner secrets.

The One Who makes everything speak is the One Who created you in the first place and you shall return unto Him.

Surah Fussilat – Verses 22 – 23

وَمَا كُنْتُمْ تَسْتَتِرُونَ أَنْ يَشْهَدَ عَلَيْكُمْ سَمْعُكُمْ وَلَا أَبْصَارُكُمْ وَلَا جُلُودُكُمْ وَلَكِنْ ظَنَنْتُمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَعْلَمُ كَثِيرًا مِمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ

وَذَلِكُمْ ظَنُّكُمُ الَّذِي ظَنَنْتُمْ بِرَبِّكُمْ أَرْدَاكُمْ فَأَصْبَحْتُمْ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ

22. And [suppose that] you have not been hiding yourselves lest your ears and your eyes and your skins should testify against you, but you thought that Allah knew not much of what you were doing.

23. And that thought of yours which you thought about your Lord, has brought you to destruction; and you have become of those utterly lost.

Bearing witness to deeds committed in this world by bodily organs is indubitable, though sinners neglect the same. Belief in the fact that we are in the presence of God Almighty is the most significant factor leading to human growth and guidance.

We may invoke God Almighty to render us succor so that through logical reasoning we may make our

beliefs firm and transparent and thereby avoid suspicion as to Divine Omnipotence and Omniscience.

It is worthy of note that the blessed Verse raises an objection against disbelievers that they may not conceal anything since your bodily organs like ears, eyes, and skins bear witness against you on the Day of Resurrection. Furthermore, God Almighty is Omniscient and Omnipotent and such groundless suspicions against God led to their perdition and they have become utter losers.

Qur'anic exegetes narrate on the authority of Ibn 'Abbas concerning the occasion of revelation of the Verses in question as saying:

“One day I had covered my face in the Ka’ba covering when three persons approached – Safwan from Rabi’a, Umayya, and ‘Abd Allah Thaqaifi.

One of them said:

‘May God hear what we say?’

Another one replied:

‘If we speak loudly, He will hear us.’

The other said:

‘If He hears our loud speech, he may hear our whisper.’

*I went to the Noble Prophet (S) and quoted their words. Then, the Verse was revealed to remove such baseless suspicions.”*¹⁸

Finally, mention will be made of fair thought toward God Almighty and suspicion against Him.

The above Verses clearly indicates that suspicion against God Almighty is so perilous that it may lead to perdition and everlasting torment, instances of which include a group of disbelievers who imagined that God Almighty may neither see their deeds nor may He hear their words and such suspicion caused their utter loss and perdition. Au contraire, entertaining fair thought about God Almighty leads to deliverance in this world and the Hereafter.

According to a Prophetic tradition:

*“Entertaining good thought about God is the best of devotions.”*¹⁹

As per another Prophetic tradition:

*“Make attempts to entertain fair thought about God, since it is the cost of Paradise.”*²⁰

Imam Sadiq (as) said:

*“Entertaining fair thought about God is that you do not set your hopes on anyone else and be solely afraid of your sin.”*²¹

Musa ibn Ja’far, Imam Kasim (as), said:

*“The Good of this world and the Hereafter is solely due to believers’ good thought about God and causes them to set their hopes on Him.”*²²

There are many other traditions for which one may consult the related sources.

Mention will hereunder be made of witnesses at the Tribunal to be held on the Day of Resurrection. When we say all human beings shall stand the Tribunal in the Hereafter, it may remind one of the tribunals held in this world at which each person produces documents and/or witnesses before judges and following questions and answers the final verdict is issued.

However, it has been mentioned many a time that words designate broader and deeper meanings there which at times may defy the understanding of the prisoners of this world and at times it may be impossible to grasp at all.

It is worthy of note that taking into account the Qur’anic allusions and the traditions narrated from the Infallible Imams, we may discover truths which to some extent, uncover the grandeur and profundity of the world to come and demonstrate that the Tribunal to be held on the Day of Resurrection shall be quite extraordinary.

For instance, when it is said:

“scales of deeds”

one may assume that our deeds will turn into light and heavy objects weighed on a balance. According to traditions narrated from the Infallible Imams (as), ‘Ali (as) is the standard for assaying deeds.

In other words, human deeds and characters will be compared with those of this eminent man in the world of humanity. The more one resembles him, the heavier one weights on the balance.

Qur’anic Verses reveal truths concerning the question of testimonies and treat of issues which are not issues at the courts of law in this world but they play significant roles at the Tribunals in the Hereafter. Generally speaking, there are six types of witnesses for the Tribunal.

The Most Sublime in rank is Divine Pure Essence:

“Neither you [O Muhammad!] do any deed nor recite any portion of the Qur’an, nor you do any deed but We are Witness thereof”²³.

It is worthy of note that the same testimony is sufficient for anyone and anything, but Divine Grace and

Justice necessitate the presence of other witnesses as well.

The Prophet (S) and the trustees:

“How then, when We bring from each nation a witness and We bring you [O Muhammad] as a witness against these people?”²⁴.

According to a tradition narrated from Imam Sadiq (as) regarding the Verse in issue quoted in Kafi

*“It is revealed about Muhammad’s nation that there will be witnesses for them from amongst us in each and every century and Muhammad (S) is a witness to all of us.”*²⁵

Bodily organs, e.g. tongue, hands, feet, eyes, and ears

“On the Day when their tongues, their hands, and their legs [or feet] will bear witness against them as to what they used to do”²⁶.

The blessed Verses in question indicate that eyes and ears bear witness in the hereafter and a number of traditions designate that all bodily organs in their turn bear witness to their acts.²⁷

Skins also bear witness in the Hereafter.

The blessed Verses in question explicitly treat of the issue and further add that sinners will never expect their skins to bear testimony against them, as they address their skins saying:

“Why do you bear testimony against us?”

They reply:

“God Almighty Who makes everything speak has made us speak too.”

Angels will be witnesses then, as reflected in the Holy Qur’an:

“And every person will come forth [on that Day] along with an angel to drive him toward Reckoning and angels bear witness to his deeds”²⁸.

The earth that is beneath our feet and we are always its guest enjoying its blessings closely keeps an eye on us.

On that Day, it will bear testimony to all our deeds, as it is reflected in the Holy Qur’an:

“That Day it will declare its information [about all that happened over it of good or evil]”²⁹.

Time is also among the witnesses, though it is not reflected in the Holy Qur’an, but traditions narrated from the Infallibles (as) bear witness to the same, as it is narrated from Imam ‘Ali (as):

“No day passes for the son of Adam unless it tells him:

‘O son of Adam! I am a new day witnessing to your deeds, say good words and do righteous good deeds in me so that I bear witness to your good words and deeds on the Day of Resurrection.’”³⁰

It is actually a source of wonder that so many truthful witnesses of that great Tribunal, from space and time to angels, bodily organs, Prophets, saints, and above all, Divine Pure Essence, closely watch our deeds and we are unaware of the same. Belief in the existence of such watching witnesses should suffice to make man tread the Path of Truth, Justice, Purity, and fearing God.

Surah Fussilat – Verse 24

فَإِنْ يَصْبِرُوا فَالنَّارُ مَثْوًى لَهُمْ وَإِنْ يَسْتَعْتِبُوا فَمَا هُمْ مِنَ الْمُعْتَبِينَ

24. Then if they bear the torment patiently, [it will be of no avail, since] the Fire is the home for them, and if they seek Divine Forgiveness, yet they are not of those who will ever be forgiven by Allah.

Neither patience nor crying shall be of no avail to disbelievers in Hell, since repentance and asking for Divine Forgiveness may solely help man in this world. The Arabic word mathwan indicates permanent residence and the verbal form yasta'tibu deriving from isti'ab designates request forgiveness.

The blessed Verse in question is saying that Hellfire shall be disbelievers' home whether they endure the pain or no and it shall be of no point to ask for Divine Forgiveness then since it shall be of no avail.

Surah Fussilat – Verse 25

وَقَيَّضْنَا لَهُمْ قُرَنَاءَ فَزَيَّنُوا لَهُمْ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ وَحَقَّ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقَوْلُ فِي أُمَمٍ
قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ مِنَ الْجِنِّ وَالْإِنْسِ إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا خَاسِرِينَ

25. And we have assigned for them companions who have made fair-seeming to them, what was before them and what was behind them [i.e., their evil deeds]. And the Word [Divine Command of torment] is justified against them as it was justified against those who were among the previous generations of jinn and men that had passed away before them. Indeed they were the losers.

Addled friends adversely influence human mind and character, since they take advantage of instincts and natural desires. Man loves good and beauty by dispositions and seducers take advantage of the

same to make vicious acts seem fair so that their victims faceily accept them; as a consequence of which, man regards his past sins as fair and thereby refrains from repentance.

To sum up, the blessed Verse in question makes a reference to disbelievers' misfortune, evil fate, humility and the fact that they have lost the sacred spirit and the Divine faculty vested in human disposition.

Their heart was supposed to embrace angels instead devils frequent it. Consequently, friends and companions from amongst devils and evil jinn and men are assigned to them as their intimate companions encompassing them from all sides making their vicious deeds seem fair to them.

Thus Divine Command of torment is justified against them as it was justified against the peoples of the past. Those who follow Satan and their vain desires shall be losers who have lost their life and shall reap nothing but regret and grief.

The verbal form qayyadna derives from qayd designating egg shell since the vicious and corrupt people who vanquish man encompass him like egg shell, robbing them of their thought and distinction such that evils deeds seem fair to them.

How painful is such state for man leading him to the abyss of corruption impeding him from finding deliverance. The Arabic root q-y-d is at times employed in the sense of metamorphosing, namely changing something into something else.

Thus, the contextual meaning of the blessed Verse would be:

"We take righteous friends them from them and instead give them addled friends."

Surah Fussilat – Verses 26 – 28

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَا تَسْمَعُوا لِهَذَا الْقُرْآنِ وَالْغَوَا فِيهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ

فَلَنُذِيقَنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا عَذَابًا شَدِيدًا وَلَنَجْزِيَنَّهُمْ أَسْوَأَ الَّذِي كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

ذَلِكَ جَزَاءُ أَعْدَاءِ اللَّهِ النَّارُ لَهُمْ فِيهَا دَارُ الْخُلْدِ جَزَاءً بِمَا كَانُوا بِآيَاتِنَا يَجْحَدُونَ

26. And those who disbelieve say: "Listen not to this Qur'an, and make noise in the midst of its

[recitation] that you may overcome.”

27. But surely, We shall cause those who disbelieve to taste a severe torment and certainly, We shall requite them the worst of what they used to do.

28. That is the recompense of the enemies of Allah: the Fire. Therein will be for them the eternal home, a recompense for that they used to deny Our Ayat [Signs, Verses].

Propaganda against religion has existed at all times. Those whose words do not stand to reason, hinder people from listening to the logical words uttered by others. The clause **wa alghu fihi** indicates “they endeavor to make deviation in the True Path through vain acts, e.g. whistling, clapping, making noise, telling tales, creating suspicions, and raising irrelevant questions.”

It is narrated from Ibn ‘Abbas concerning the occasion of Revelation of blessed Verse 26 that the chiefs of disbelievers failed at imitating Qur’anic Verses and were afraid that Arabs from different regions depart for Mecca and believe in the Prophetic Call.

Following consultations they decided to distract the Prophet (S) and his audience while he was reciting the Holy Qur’an. Serving this purpose, they gathered at his reciting the Qur’anic Verses and sang songs, uttered vain words, whistled, and clapped their hands so as to impede the audience from listening to the Noble Prophet (S).

It is in this vein that the blessed Verse says:

“And those who disbelieve say: “Listen not to this Qur’an, and make noise in the midst of its [recitation] that you may overcome.”

Enemies of religion imagined that they could extinguish Divine Light, but they were unaware that Divine Light may not be put out.

Verse 27 is saying that disbelievers resorted to such inappropriate and inhumane act imagining that they could succeed in their evil ways, but were unaware that they would fail and thereby pave the way for their perdition since it is emphatically stated that they shall taste excruciating torments and chastisements for their vicious deeds.

Verse 28 makes a reference to the previous Verse saying that the torment shall be very painful and enemies of God shall be chastised by Hellfire therein shall be their everlasting abode as a recompense for their denial of Divine Revelations.

Surah Fussilat – Verse 29

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا رَبَّنَا أَرْنَا الَّذِينَ أُضَلَّلْنَا مِنَ الْجِنِّ وَالْإِنْسِ نَجْعَلُهُمَا تَحْتَ

أَقْدَامِنَا لِيَكُونَا مِنَ الْأَسْفَلِينَ

29. And those who disbelieve will say: “Our Lord! Show us those among jinn and men who led us astray: that we may crush them under our feet so that they become the lowest.”

Disbelievers wish to know those who led them to error so that they may take their vengeance upon them. Those who led people in this world were highly respected to those in error but the latter wish to denigrate the former in the Hereafter.

The blessed Verse in question is saying that when disbelievers find themselves in the shadows of Abyss and the blazing Hellfire lose their hope of deliverance and utter such words out of desperateness wishing to find those who led them to such unfortunate state and take their vengeance upon them for having them misled and crush them and send them to the lowest level of Hell.

They will apparently say that those who were their chiefs and leaders seduced them and they wish that they be crushed by them so that they may be happy to take their vengeance upon them.

Surah Fussilat – Verse 30

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا رَبُّنَا اللَّهُ ثُمَّ اسْتَقَامُوا تَتَنَزَّلُ عَلَيْهِمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ أَلَّا تَخَافُوا وَلَا تَحْزَنُوا
وَأَبْشِرُوا بِالْجَنَّةِ الَّتِي كُنتُمْ تُوعَدُونَ

30. Indeed, those who say: “Our Lord is Allah,” and then they stand firm, on them the angels will descend [at the time of their death, saying]: “Fear not, nor grieve! But receive the glad tidings of Paradise which you have been promised!”

Perseverance fosters faith and large were in number the believers who had an evil fate, since perseverance is supposed to accompany faith, otherwise, disbelievers stand firm on their false belief. The most exalted blessing given to believers by angels is serenity and peace of mind.

Following a depiction of disbelievers’ torments and unfortunate state as the consequences of their vicious deeds, the blessed Verse in question depicts the merits of the God fearing believers saying that they said that God Almighty is the Lord and Fosterer.

They stood firm on their beliefs and obligations. Angels welcome them upon their death and on the Day of Resurrection making them feel secure and confident without entertaining any fear or grief, when disbelievers are scared by witnessing the awe inspiring scenes of that Day, since God Almighty promised God fearing believers that they would be secure and angels bear them glad tidings of the

Paradise promised by God Almighty to believers.

The comprehensive and interesting expression actually encompasses all goods and excellent characteristics: love of God and firm belief in Him in the first place and then act upon such belief in all spheres of life. Many a people claim His love, but they lack perseverance owing to their weakness and frailty.

Upon facing with the tempests of passions and lusts, they bid farewell to belief and turn into polytheists. When they find out that their interests are in jeopardy, they lose their weak and frail belief of theirs.

In one of the sermons of Nahj al-Balagha, Imam 'Ali (as) provides a clear and meaningful interpretation of the Verse, saying:

“You said that our Lord is Allah. Now stand firm on your word and persevere in acting upon His Commands, treading His Path, and praising Him as it is worthy of Him. Do not disobey Him, nor make innovations in His Religions, nor deny His Prophet’s Call.”

According to a Prophetic tradition, following the recitation of the blessed Verse, the Noble Prophet (S) said:

“Some uttered such words, but the majority of them disbelieved. However, one who utters such word and perseveres in acting upon it to his last day will be regarded among those who stand firm on their beliefs.”³¹

It is narrated from Imam 'Ali ibn Musa al-Rada (as) that in reply to a question raised concerning the interpretation of perseverance, he said:

“It is Divine Guardianship that is available to you.”³²

Such interpretation does not mean that the general context of the Verse in question solely refers to Divine Guardianship, but it aims to designate that acknowledgement of the guardianship of the Infallible Shi'i Imams (as) guarantees steadfastness in adhering to monotheism and doing righteous good deeds according to pure Islamic beliefs.

To sum up, it could be said that human value lies in keeping his faith and doing righteous good deeds as reflected in this Verse:

“Our Lord is Allah, and then they stand firm.”

It is narrated that someone asked the Noble Prophet of Islam (S):

“Provide me with injunctions through acting upon them I may be among the saved in this world and the Hereafter.”

The Noble Prophet (S) replied:

“Say my Lord is Allah and stand firm on your word.”

The man further inquired:

“What is the most perilous thing of which I should stand in fear?”

The Prophet (S) touched his tongue and said:

*“This!”*³³

Surah Fussilat – Verses 31 – 32

نَحْنُ أَوْلِيَاؤُكُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ وَلَكُمْ فِيهَا مَا تَشْتَهِي أَنْفُسُكُمْ وَلَكُمْ فِيهَا مَا تَدْعُونَ

نُزُلًا مِّنْ غَفُورٍ رَّحِيمٍ

31. “We [angels] have been your friends in the life of this world and are [so] in the Hereafter. Therein [paradise] you shall have [all] that your inner selves desire, and therein you shall have [all] for which you ask.

32. “An entertainment from [Allah], the Oft-Forgiving, the Most Merciful.”

Perseverant believers have friends amongst heavenly creatures and their material and spiritual demands shall be met in Paradise. The Arabic word nuzl designates foods and drinks served to guests.

The blessed Verse is saying that addressing believers, angels say that they were their friends in the world and the Hereafter.

Imam Muhammad Baqir (as) is narrated as saying that angels say unto believers that they protected them from afflictions and hardships and upon death they protect them against satanic temptations. It will be in the Hereafter that they will protect them from the severity of chastisement and will accompany them unto Paradise.

Interpreting the Quranic Verse:

“Indeed, those who say: ‘Our Lord is Allah,’ and then they stand firm,”

a number of mystics maintain that they said that their Lord had been Allah following which they persevered in keeping their faith and abstained from turning away from Him, as a consequence of which angels descend upon them willingly saying unto them.

“Do not entertain fear of being reproached nor grieve for transience since we bear glad tidings to you for your admission into the everlasting abode in Paradise.

There shall be no fear in the everlasting abode since the persevering believers are not supposed to be afraid of anything are they supposed to entertain grief and sorrow. There will be all kinds of blessings for you. We bear glad tidings to you for all blessings.”

(“Stand firm. Do not grieve. Grasp the Divine Cord. There are glad tidings for you for your admission into Paradise that is the abode of satisfaction.”).³⁴

Angels are the friends of God’s friends and the enemies of God’s enemies in this world and the Hereafter. All creatures are the Most Gracious Allah’s Host protecting God’s friends and they are enemies of God’s enemies and whenever they are permitted by God Almighty, they bring ruin to disbelievers.

Verse 32 says:

“An entertainment from [Allah], the Oft-Forgiving, the Most Merciful.”

In his Mufradat, Raghīb says that the Arabic word *nuzl* designates what is served to guests following their arrival.

The blessed Verse in question may make a reference to the blessings of the people of Paradise as promised by angels when they said unto believers that they were their friends, protectors, and guardians in this world and they will accompany them upon their hardships in the Hereafter and will take them to Paradise which is the abode of Divine Blessing wherein is prepared what you desire by your Lord Who is the Oft-Forgiving of sins and is the Most Gracious and the Most Compassionate.

The author of the Tafsir [“Exegesis] titled *Atyab al-Bayan* says:

“Nuzlan designates the glad tidings to be borne by angels upon death encompassing all this worldly and otherworldly blessings from the moment of death to entering Paradise and the phrase:

min ghafurin [“from the Oft-Forgiving”]

indicates the first glad tidings upon death which is forgiving of their sins. God Almighty is Rahim [“All-Compassionate”] such that He will bestow all Bounties upon them.”

Now let us consider the Blessings bestowed by God Almighty upon those people who revive the two significant principles of monotheism and perseverance.

Man attains to a station in which angels descend upon him through his belief and perseverance and proclaim unto him the Divine Message which abounds in Divine Mercy and Favor. The first and the second glad tidings pertain to the aforesaid lack of fear and grief.

They are followed by the third glad tiding:

“Receive the glad tidings of Paradise which you have been promised!”

The fourth glad tiding is:

“We [angels] have been your friends in the life of this world and are [so] in the Hereafter.”

The fifth glad tiding is:

“Therein [paradise] you shall have [all] that your inner selves desire.”

The sixth one is:

“And therein you shall have [all] for which you ask.”

The seventh and the last glad tiding borne to believers by angels is that you are God’s guests abiding in His everlasting Paradise and all the Bounties and Blessings are offered to them as they are His cherished guests:

“An entertainment from [Allah], the Oft-Forgiving, the Most Merciful.”

Surah Fussilat – Verse 33

وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ قَوْلًا مِّمَّنْ دَعَا إِلَى اللَّهِ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا وَقَالَ إِنَّنِي مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ

33. And who is better in speech than he who [says: “My Lord is Allah” and then stands firm and] invites [men] to Allah’s and does righteous deeds and says: “I am one of the Muslims.”

Propagation of religion is the best of words and Divine Messengers are the best of speakers. The best of words is not the most scholarly and the most melodious rather it is the Call to people to embrace faith, one which is purposeful.

The blessed Verse in question praises those who act in three ways: firstly, they call people to God Almighty, guide them, and show unto them the path to happiness and Divine Guidance and show them the Straight Path of Divine Laws.

Such people are those who call people to embrace true faith. Their words and deeds are the best.

Secondly, one calling people to embrace faith are supposed to do righteous good deeds so that his words impress the audience.

Those who call people to turn to Truth are supposed to base their words on their deeds otherwise their words will be of not be efficacious, since empty words go into one ear and out the other without impressing the audience.

Thirdly, it is incumbent upon those calling people to turn to Allah to say that he is a Muslim, i.e., totally submitted to Divine Commands, and he is calling his audience to submit to Divine Will and truly believe in God.

Their words are supposed to be substantiated by their deeds. It is worthy of note to consider two traditions:

1. Ibn Shahr Ashub narrates from Ibn ‘Abbas who in turn narrates from the Messenger of God (S) that He said:

“After me, ‘Ali (as) will call and guide people to my Lord. He is the pious man among believers (salih al-mu’minin) and the clause:

“He is the best who invoked Allah and did righteous good deeds”

*is addressed to him.*³⁵

2. According to ‘Ayyashi’s Tafsir [“Exegesis”], the blessed Verse in question was revealed concerning ‘Ali (as).³⁶

Although a number of Qur’anic exegetes maintain that such attributes belong to the Noble Prophet of Islam (S), the Noble Prophet (S) and the Shi’i Imams calling people to Truth, or Callers to daily prayers, but it is evident that the blessed Verse is applicable to all those calling people to monotheism; however, it is best applicable to the Noble Prophet of Islam (S).

Taking into account the Occasion of Revelation of the blessed Verse, it may be said that the Verse is applicable to the Noble Prophet of Islam (S), the Infallible Imams (as), and all scholars and those who struggle in the Path of Allah, those who command good and forbid evil and all the propagators of the Islamic faith from all walks of life.

The blessed Verse is a great glad tiding and an unequalled glory to those who may be encouraged by it.

Surah Fussilat – Verse 34

وَلَا تَسْتَوِي الْحَسَنَةُ وَلَا السَّيِّئَةُ ادْفَعْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ فَإِذَا الَّذِي بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَهُ عَدَاوَةٌ

كَانَهُ وَلِيَّ حَمِيمٍ

34. The good deed and the evil deed cannot be equal. Repel [the evil] with one which is better; then verily he between whom and you there was enmity [will become] as though he was a closed friend.

One way of calling people unto Allah is to erase tensions and do good in return for the evil acts committed by others.

One is not supposed to think that the passage of time consigns everything to oblivion. Positive and negative reactions are not on a par as they impress minds. It is worthy of note that indifferent and ill-mannered people confront those who call people unto Allah.

In this vein, the propagators of religion are supposed to face them with their good disposition and tolerance or else they may not succeed in their call.

The blessed Verse in question is advising callers to do good in return for the evil acts committed by other people and abstain from taking vengeance, as reflected in the prayer of Excellences of Disposition (Makarim al-Akhlāq), in which Imam Zayn al-'Abidin (as) invokes Allah to bestow upon him the favor of saying good things about people in return for their slanders and backbiting, forgive them, and associate with those who turn away from him.

There are many an account in the biographies of the Noble Prophet (S) and the Infallible Ahl al-Bayt regarding such excellences of dispositions through which the strictest opponents turned into their adherents.

In other words, it is evident that good and evil are not on a par – wrong-doers and the just, believers and disbelievers, monotheists and polytheists, the knowledgeable and the ignorant, the generous and the close-fisted are not equal as the truthful and righteous people whose words are substantiated by their deeds are not equal with the lying and the ill-mannered man.

Thus, the Most Gracious Lord Whose Mercy encompasses all His creatures and servants commands the Messenger of His Mercy who represents His Graciousness and Mercifulness and calls Him a Mercy to the world:

“O Muhammad (S)! Turn evil and sin into something better and wrath into clemency and conceal sin with forgiveness or words and refute falsehood with truth.”

In other words, God Almighty is saying unto His Noble Prophet (S) that no matter how disbelievers utter slanderous words against you and do wrong to you, you should return their evil words with clemency and speak unto them gently and kindly so that your enemies and foes may befriend you and turn to the

Islamic faith.

It is mentioned elsewhere in the Holy Qur'an37:

“And argue with them in a way that is better.”

It was the Noble Prophet's (S) disposition to behave with his enemies and foes in a friendly manner and treated them kindly and gently and it is said that most of those who embraced the Islamic faith did so through his favorable disposition.

Thus it is said in the Holy Qur'an concerning his disposition:

“Indeed you the best in terms of good disposition.”

A tradition is narrated from Imam Sadiq (as) concerning the blessed Verse in question in Tafsir Burhan according to which the Noble Imam (as) said:

“The good deed (hasana) is discretionary concealment of one's beliefs under duress (taqiya) and keeping secrets and the vicious deed (sayi'a) is disclosure of secrets.”

Concerning the meaning of:

“Repel [the evil] with one which is better,”

the Noble Imam (as) said:

“Defend yourself through discretionary concealment of beliefs under duress which is the good deed.”

It is said in the Tafsir Atyab al-Bayan under the blessed Verse in question that good and evil deeds are interpreted in many traditions as discretionary concealment of one's beliefs under duress and disclosure of secrets respectively, saying:

“It is a significant issue since the Noble Imams (as) hardships under Umayyad, Marwanid, and 'Abbasid tyrannous rules were caused by the statements uttered by some ignorant Shi'is who disclosed their secrets.

Had they concealed their beliefs out of discretion, they would not have suffered so many afflictions. Even today, one is at times supposed to conceal one's beliefs out of discretion.”

Surah Fussilat – Verse 35

وَمَا يُلْقَاهَا إِلَّا الَّذِينَ صَبَرُوا وَمَا يُلْقَاهَا إِلَّا نُوْحًا عَظِيمًا

35. But none is granted it [such good disposition] except those who are patient and none is granted it except the owner of the great portion [of excellences of dispositions] in this world.

It is only the patient who possess the great portion. Those who seek worldly gains regard Korah as the possessor of the great portion, but the Holy Qur'an says that it belongs to those who possess excellences of disposition.

The blessed Verse in question says that one may not possess such praiseworthy character which is the opposite of committing evil deeds unless he is patient and tolerant in hardships.

Only those who possess a great portion of wisdom, clemency, and knowledge may attain to the exalted station of the patient and those who do good in return for the evil deeds of others. Some Qur'anic exegets maintain that the great portion indicates Paradise and the exalted stations bestowed by God Almighty in the Hereafter.³⁸

Surah Fussilat – Verse 36

وَأِمَّا يَنْزَغَنَّكَ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ نَزْغٌ فَاسْتَعِذْ بِاللَّهِ إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ

36. And if an evil whisper from Satan tries to turn you away [from doing good in return for the evil deeds committed by others], then seek refuge in Allah. Indeed, He is the All-Hearer, the Omniscient.

The Arabic word nazgh is used in the sense of incitement to evil and Satan's temptation and provocation. Incitement of vengeance is a satanic stratagem but doing good in return for the evil deeds committed by others is a Divine Injunction.

Satan often holds man in check when his irascible faculty is incited through some unfavorable state as a consequence of which he gets into a rage and many a time loses control of himself and may commit a sin.

Thus, God Almighty addresses the Noble Prophet (S) in the blessed Verse in question and says unto him that whenever Satan desires to incite some temptation in your heart and provoke you to do something, seek refuge in Allah, since He is All-Hearing to hear your invocation and is Omniscient and nothing is concealed from Him.

The blessed Verse in addressed to the Noble Prophet (S), but it actually addresses the Muslim community, since Satan may not hold Prophets in check, let alone the Seal of the Prophets (S). Numerous Qur'anic Verses bear testimony to the point in question.

Mention is herein made of two traditions. According to a Prophetic tradition, someone slandered at someone else.

The latter got into a rage, but the Noble Prophet (S) said:

“I know a word that if the wrathful utter it, their wrath subsides:

‘I seek refuge in Allah from the accursed Satan.’”

The tradition is a reference to the fact that the tempest of wrath is one of the satanic temptations, in the same manner that the tempests of lusts and passions are among satanic temptations.³⁹

It is mentioned in the book titled Khisal that the Commander of the Faithful, Imam ‘Ali (as) taught his companions four hundred aphorisms regarding the issues which are to the benefit of Muslims in this world and the Hereafter, an instance of which is:

“Whenever one of you is tempted by Satan, he should seek refuge in God Almighty and say

‘I believe in Allah and purify my faith for him.’”⁴⁰

Surah Fussilat – Verse 37

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ اللَّيْلُ وَالنَّهَارُ وَالشَّمْسُ وَالْقَمَرُ لَا تَسْجُدُوا لِلشَّمْسِ وَلَا لِلْقَمَرِ وَاسْجُدُوا
لِلَّهِ الَّذِي خَلَقَهُنَّ إِن كُنتُمْ إِيَّاهُ تَعْبُدُونَ

37. And from among His Signs are the night and the day, and the sun and the moon. Prostrate yourselves not to the sun nor to the moon, but prostrate yourselves to Allah Who created them, if you worship Him.

The night and the day are the Signs of Divine Omnipotence, Omniscience, and Mercy. Verse 32 terms the best word as a call toward Allah and the blessed Verse in question treats the Path to Call to Him.

The night and the day are Divine Signs indicating His Omnipotence: the serenity of night and its consecution with the day, their timing, decrease, and increase and their proportion to sleep and peace of mind.

The blessings of the day include growth of plants and animals, evaporation of waters which leads to formation of clouds, rain, fruit bearing of trees, saving of energy, genesis of motion, circling, and circulation and contribution of the earth in its revolving and motion, the distance of the sun from the earth, the atmosphere that controls the solar heat, the moon as the nightly light and the natural and

common calendar for all, phases of the moon in their roles in the ebb and flow are all the Signs of Divine Omnipotence.

In other words, the blessed Verse in question is saying that consecutive nights and days are Signs of Divine Omnipotence, Omniscience, and Governance.

The sun and the moon are among His evident Signs each of which perform their functions in its own position as per the Ordainment of the Governor and Provider of the world and do not veer off its orbit.

The sun and the moon despite their grandeur and glory follow Divine Commands and their existence and survival depends upon Divine Will, but they are not worthy of being worshipped, since prostration and showing humility are worthy of the Lord Who brought them from non-existence into existence and ordained them for human existence and survival.

Polytheists imagine that prostrating before the sun and the moon would lead to their exalted station before God as a consequence of which they said:

“We solely worship them in order to be closer to Allah.”

God Almighty is saying unto them that if they wish to become closer to Truth and worship Him, they should not prostrate before them but they should prostrate before God Who is their Creator and Provider.

Surah Fussilat – Verse 38

فَإِنْ اسْتَكْبَرُوا فَالَّذِينَ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ يُسَبِّحُونَ لَهُ بِاللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ وَهُمْ لَا يَسْأَمُونَ

38. But if they are too proud [to worship God Almighty, it matters not, since] there are those who are with your Lord [angels] glorify Him night and day, and never are they tired.

Turning away from prostration and worship are clear indications of arrogance.

The blessed Verse in question is addressed to the Noble Prophet (S) saying:

“O Muhammad! If these polytheists turn away from prostrating before and worshipping Allah out of arrogance and enmity, diverse ranks of angels and heavenly creatures who are close to Allah glorify and worship their Lord night and day and they are never tired of glorification at all times.”

Surah Fussilat – Verse 39

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ أَنْكَ تَرَى الْأَرْضَ خَاشِعَةً فَإِذَا أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْهَا الْمَاءَ اهْتَزَّتْ وَرَبَتْ إِنَّ الَّذِي أَحْيَاهَا لَمُحْيِي الْمَوْتَى إِنَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

39. And among His Signs is that you see the earth barren, but when We send down water to it, it is stirred to life and growth. Indeed, He Who gives it life, surely is Able to give life to the dead. Indeed He is Able to do all things.

God Almighty works through natural means. It is a representative sample; He Who revives the barren earth is Able to raise the dead on the Day of Resurrection.

In blessed Verse in question, God Almighty addresses His Messenger (S) to show the veracity of Resurrection and raising of the dead on the Last Day so that His Prophet (S) reminds people to consider the Divine Signs and notice that the earth, withered and barren in winter is revived in spring when the rain renders the barren earth verdant and lush green.

One Who is Able to make the barren earth alive and verdant is also Able to resurrect the dead bodies through His Mercy, since He is Omnipotent.

The motif of raising the dead on the Day of Resurrection and its similitude to the rejuvenation of the earth in springtime following its withering away in winter season is to attested in numerous Qur'anic Verses.

Since there should exist a point of similarity between tenor and vehicle in eloquent speech, without which similes lose their effectiveness, one may infer from the Verse that as the potentiality and actuality of the earth exists in winter season though the growth of plants stay stagnant, in like manner, man does not become non-existent following death but the external indications of his existence are not evident and he will be raised on the Day of Resurrection which is the springtime of his actuality through Divine Command and whatever stays dormant in his mind shall become evident.

Surah Fussilat – Verse 40

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُلْحِدُونَ فِي آيَاتِنَا لَا يَخْفَوْنَ عَلَيْنَا أَفَمَنْ يُلْقَى فِي النَّارِ خَيْرٌ مِمَّنْ يَأْتِي آمِنًا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ اعْمَلُوا مَا شِئْتُمْ إِنَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ

40. Indeed, those who turn away from Our Ayat [Signs, Verses] are not hidden from Us. Is he who is cast into the Fire better or he who comes secure on the Day of Resurrection? Do what you will. Verily He is All-Seer of what you do.

The Arabic word

ilhad (“apostasy”)

is cognate with *lahad* (“hole deviating toward one side”) and *mulhid* (“apostate”).

God provides man with respite but He is All-Aware of deviations. He grants respite to those in error so that they may repent. The people of Paradise proceed toward their everlasting abode in peace and glory but the people of Hell will be cast into Hell.

Upon hearing the Holy Qur’an, disbelievers attempted at distracting the audience through making noise and clapping their hands. The blessed Verse in question is saying that evil doers should know that God Almighty is All-Aware of their vicious deeds and it is such deeds that will lead them to Hell.

The hamza in the initial position of ‘a-fa-man indicates a rhetorical question connoting guidance for disbelievers reminding them of the necessity of intellection and reflection upon the evil consequences of their deeds in Hell.

The blessed Verse poses this question:

“Is he who is cast into the Fire better or he who come secure on the Day of Resurrection”

without fear?

It stands to reason that the two are no on a par.

It is worthy of note that:

“Do what you will”

is addressed to those who uttered false words regarding the Holy Qur’an. The blessed Verse is saying that they are granted respite to do what they will; however, they should know that God Almighty is All-Aware of what they do and He will provide them with the recompense of what they do in this world.

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1. Majma’ al-Bayan, the opening of the Chapter in question.
 2. Tafsir Ruh al-Ma’ani, under the Chapter in question.
 3. Raghib’s Mufradat.
 4. the preceding Verse
 5. 3:97
 6. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 77, p. 58.

7. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 96, p. 29.
8. Mizan al-Hikma, s.v. Zakat.
9. Chapter 20
10. Raghīb's Mufradat.
11. 7:54
12. 36:49
13. 6:9
14. 69:6-7
15. 54: 19-20
16. 69:6-8
17. vol. 2, p.264
18. Tafsir Qurtubi, Tafsir Majma' al-Bayan, Fakhr Razi's Tafsir, Ruh al-Bayan, Maraghi's Tafsir, Bukhari's and Muslim's Sahih, and Tirmidhi.
19. Madinat al-Balagha, vol. 2, p. 450.
20. Safinat al-Bihar, vol. 2, p. 109.
21. Usul Kafi, vol. 3, p. 116; Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 67, p. 367.
22. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 67, p. 389.
23. 10:61
24. 4:41
25. Usul Kafi, vol. 1, p. 190.
26. 24:24
27. La'ali al-Akhbar, p. 462.
28. 50:21
29. 99:4
30. Safinat al-Bihar, vol. 2, s.v. yawm ["day"].
31. Majma' al-Bayan, under the blessed Verses in question.
32. Ibid.
33. Tafsir Ruh al-Bayan, vol. 8, p. 454.
34. Abu al-Futuh's Tafsir.
35. Tafsir Burhan, vol. 4, p. 111; Tafsir Majma' al-Bayan, under the blessed Verse in question.
36. Tafsir Safi, p. 361, under the blessed Verse in question.
37. 16: 126
38. Tafsir Majma' al-Bayan.
39. Ruh al-Ma'ani, vol. 24, p. 111.
40. Tafsir Nur al-Thiqalayn; Majma' al-Bayan, under the blessed Verse in question.

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