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HOLY QURAN

ENGLISH TAFSEER

CHAPTER 26

SURAH ASH-SHU'ARA

COMMENTARY & EXPLANATORY

By

ABDULLAH YUSUF ALI

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HOLY QURAN

CHAPTER

026

SURAH ASH-SHU'ARA

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Introduction and Summary

This Surah begins a new series of four Surahs (26-29), which illustrate the contrast between the spirit of Prophecy and spiritual Light and the reactions to it in the communities among whom it appeared, by going back to old Prophet and the stories of the Past, as explained in the Introduction to Surah 17.

In this particular Surah we have the story of Moses in his fight with Pharaoh and of Pharaoh's discomfiture. Other Prophets mentioned are Abraham, Noah, Hud, Salih, Lut, and Shu'ayb. The lesson is drawn that the Quran is a continuation and fulfilment of previous Revolution, and is pure Truth, unlike poetry of vain poets.

Chronologically the Surah belongs to the middle Makkan period, when the contact of the Light of Prophecy with the milieu of Pagan Makkah was testing the Makkans in their most arrogant mood.

Summary- The conflict of Unbelief with Truth is vain; so was the conflict of Pharaoh with Moses; Pharaoh's magicians bowed to the Truth, and Pharaoh and his hosts were drowned (26:1-68, and C. 164).

Nor did Abraham's people gain anything by their resisting of the Truth he preached, and Noah's people perished by their Unbelief (26:69-122, and C. 165).

Hud warned his people against reliance on their material strength and Salih against sacrilege, but in both cases the evil ones were brought low (26:123-159, and C. 166).

Lut had to deal with unspeakable crimes, and Shu'ayb against dishonest dealings and mischief; their teaching was rejected, but the rejecters were wiped out (26:160-191, and C. 167).

SO, when the spirit of Prophecy came to Makkah, it was resisted by the votaries of evil: but Truth is not like vain poetry, and must triumph at last (26:192-227, and C. 168).

C.164 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(26:1-68)

*Allah's Plan works unceasingly: His Light
Shines none the less brightly, because some
Reject it or mock at it. Moses was freed
From all fear when Allah gave him His Signs
And sent him to Pharaoh: he boldly
Proclaimed the Message, and won the wise ones
Of Egypt: the rejecters, with Pharaoh, perished,
And their heritage passed to worthier hands.*

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

طسم (١)

1. Ta Sin Mim.

C3137. This is a combination of three Abbreviated Letters, as to which, generally, see Appendix 1, printed at the end of Surah 2.

This particular combination occurs here and at the head of Surah 28, while the intervening Surah 27 has it in the syncopated form Ta Sin. None of the explanatory conjecture which I have seen carries conviction for me. If the letters stand *Tur al Sinin* (Mount Sinai) and *Musa* (Moses) whose story fills a large part of the Surah, why is the letters Mim omitted in Surah 27, where the same meaning would apply?

There is however, one fact to which I should like to draw attention. There are eleven sections in this Surah, and eight of them end with the word **Rahim** (with the final *Mim*). The three exceptions are section 2 and 3, and section 11.

But section 2 and 3 are part of the story of Moses, which is completed in section 4, and that ends with "**Rahim**".

The main argument in section 11 ends at verse 217, which ends with **Rahim**. We can say that the whole Surah is based on a refrain in the word "**Rahim**".

Whether this has any bearing on our present enquiry I cannot say. My own position is that where we have material, we should pursue our researches, but we should never be dogmatic in such matters, as some Mysteries can never be solved by mere research.

تِلْكَ آيَاتُ الْكِتَابِ الْمُبِينِ (٢)

2. These are Verses of the Book that makes (things) clear.

C3138. Cf. 5:15, and n. 716.

The comparison of Allah's revelation with Light is continued.

لَعَلَّكَ بِاِحْوَاسِكُمْ اَلَا يَكُوْنُوْنَ مُؤْمِنِيْنَ (۳)

3. It may be thou frettest thy soul with grief, that they do not become Believers.

C3139. "They" are the Pagans of Makkah.

From a human point of view it was a great disappointment to Allah's Messenger in the middle period of his Makkan ministry that the Makkan could not be brought to believe in the Truth.

اِنْ نَّشَاۗءُ نُنزِّلْ عَلَيْهِم مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ آيَةً...

4. If (such) were Our Will, We could send down to them from the sky a Sign,

C3140. If it had been Allah's Will and Plan to force people's will, He could quite easily have forced the Makkans.

But His Will and Plan work differently. His revelation is meant to train man's own will so that it conforms to Allah's beneficent purpose.

...فَطَلَّتْ اَعْنَافُهُمْ لَهَا خَاضِعِيْنَ (۴)

to which they would bend their necks in humility.

وَمَا يَأْتِيهِمْ مِّنْ ذِكْرٍ مِّنَ الرَّحْمٰنِ مُحَدَّثٍ اِلَّا كَانُوْا عَنْهُ مُعْرِضِيْنَ (۵)

5. But there comes not to them a newly-revealed message from (Allah) Most Gracious, but they turn away therefrom.

فَقَدْ كَذَّبُوْا...

6. They have indeed rejected (the Message):

...فَسِيْءَاتِيْهِمْ اَنْبَاء مَا كَانُوْا بِهٖ يَسْتَهْزِئُوْنَ (۶)

so they will know soon (enough) the truth of what they mocked at!

C3141. They may laugh at Allah's Message of righteousness, but they will soon see the power of Truth and realise the real significance of the movement which they opposed.

Where were the Pagans of Makkah after Badr, and still more, after the bloodless surrender of Makkah?

And the meaning may be applied universally in all history.

أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا إِلَى الْأَرْضِ كَمْ أَنْبَتْنَا فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ زَوْجٍ كَرِيمٍ (٧)

7. Do they not look at the earth -- how many noble things of all kinds we have produced therein?

C3142. If evil has a little run in this life, let them not run away with the notion that the world is for evil. They have only to look round at the physical and moral world around them, and they would be undeceived.

But they are blind and without the Faith (the Light) which would open their eyes.

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لآيَةً...

8. Verily, in this is a Sign:

وَمَا كَانَ أَكْثَرُهُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ (٨)

but most of them do not believe.

وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ (٩)

9. And verily, thy Lord is He, the **Exalted in Might**, Most Merciful.

C3143. One Who is able to carry out all His Will and Plans.

See n. 2818 to 22:40.

Section 2

وَإِذْ نَادَى رَبُّكَ مُوسَى ...

10. Behold, thy Lord called Moses:

C3144. The part of the story of Moses told here is how Moses felt diffident about undertaking his commission;

- how Allah reassured him;
- how he went to Pharaoh with "the Signs";

- how Pharaoh and his people rejected him;
- how their blasphemy recoiled on themselves, but the cause of Allah triumphed;

in other words the point here is the reaction of a wicked people to the light that was held up to them, considered in its relation to the mind of Allah's Messenger.

... أَنْ أَنْتِ الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ (١٠)

"Go to the people of iniquity --

قَوْمَ فِرْعَوْنَ...

11. "The people of Pharaoh:

... أَلَا يَتَّقُونَ (١١)

will they not fear Allah?"

قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّي أَخَافُ أَنْ يُكَدِّبُونَ (١٢)

12. He said:

"O my Lord! I do fear that they will charge me with falsehood:

وَيَضِيقُ صَدْرِي وَلَا يَنْطَلِقُ لِسَانِي فَأَرْسِلْ إِلَى هَارُونَ (١٣)

13. "My breast will be straitened, and my speech may not go (smoothly):

so send unto Aaron.

C3145. As we should say in English, "My heart would fail me, and my tongue cleave to my mouth."

Moses had an impediment in his speech, and his mission was risky: see next note.

But Allah's Plan works in wondrous ways. Aaron was given to assist him in his mission, and Moses' shortcomings were transformed by Allah's grace into power, so that he became the most powerful leader of Israel.

وَلَهُمْ عَلَيَّ ذَنْبٌ فَأَخَافُ أَنْ يَقْتُلُونِ (١٤)

14. "And (further), they have a charge of crime against me; and I fear they may slay me."

C3146. Moses was brought up in the palace of Pharaoh, as narrated in his personal story in 20:39-40 and n. 2563.

When he was grown-up he saw an Egyptian smiling an Israelite, and as the Israelites were being generally oppressed by the Egyptians, Moses' anger was roused, and he slew the Egyptian.

He then fled to the Midianite country in the Sinai peninsula, where he received the divine commission. But the charge of slaying the Egyptian was hanging against him.

He was also apparently quick-tempered. But Allah's grace cured his temper and he became wise; his impediment in speech, for he stood up boldly to speak to Pharaoh; and his fear, for he dared the Egyptians with Allah's Signs, and they were afraid of him.

قَالَ كَلْنَا...

15. Allah said: "By no means!

...فَاذْهَبَا بِآيَاتِنَا...

proceed then, both of you, with Our Signs;

... إِنَّا مَعَكُمْ مُسْتَمِعُونَ (١٥)

We are with you, and will listen (to your call).

فَأْتِيَا فِرْعَوْنَ فَقُولَا...

16. "So go forth, both of you, to Pharaoh, and say:

... إِنَّا رَسُولُ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (١٦)

'We have been sent by the Lord and Cherisher of the Worlds;

أَنْ أُرْسِلَ مَعَنَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ (١٧)

17. "'Send thou with us the Children of Israel.'"

قَالَ أَلَمْ نُرَبِّكَ فِينَا وَلِيدًا وَلَبِثْتَ فِينَا مِنْ عُمُرِكَ سِنِينَ (١٨)

18. (Pharaoh) said: "Did we not cherish thee as a child among us, and didst thou not stay in our midst many years of thy life?"

C3147. There is here a little play of wit on the part of Pharaoh. When Moses speaks of the "Lord and Cherisher of the Worlds", Pharaoh says:

"Who cherished you?

Did we not bring you up as a child?

Did you not grow up among us?"

By implication Pharaoh suggest that he is the cherisher of Moses, and in any case Pharaoh laid claim to godhead himself.

وَفَعَلْتَ فَعَلْتِكَ الَّتِي فَعَلْتَ وَأَنْتَ مِنَ الْكَافِرِينَ (١٩)

19. "And thou didst a deed of thine which (thou knowest) thou didst, and thou art an ungrateful (wretch)!"

C3148. Further, Pharaoh reminds Moses of his having slain the Egyptian, and taunts him:

"You are not only a murderer: you are an ungrateful wretch" (using *kafir* again in a double sense) "to have killed one of the race that brought you up!"

قَالَ فَعَلْتُهَا إِذَا وَأَنَا مِنَ الضَّالِّينَ (٢٠)

20. Moses said:

"I did it then, when I was in error.

C3149. What is Moses' reply?

He is no longer afraid. He tells the whole truth, extenuating nothing in his own favour.

"Yes I did it: but I did it under an error."

There are three implications in this:

1. "I was wrong in doing it in a temper and in being hasty;
2. was wrong in taking the law into my own hands, but I repented and asked for Allah's pardon (xxviii. 15-16);
3. that was at a time when I was under your influence, but since then I am a changed man, as Allah has called me."

فَقَرَرْتُ مِنْكُمْ لَمَّا خِفْتُكُمْ...

21. "So I fled from you (all) when I feared you;

C3150. He accounts for all his movements, much more than Pharaoh had asked for. He has nothing to hide. At that time he was under the influence of fear, and he had fled from him.

Now he is serving Allah, the Lord of the Worlds. He has no fear: he is a messenger.

...فَوَهَبَ لِي رَبِّي حُكْمًا وَجَعَلَنِي مِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ (٢١)

but my Lord has (since) invested me with judgment (and wisdom) and appointed me as one of the messengers.

وَتِلْكَ نِعْمَةٌ تَمُنُّهَا عَلَيَّ أَنْ عَبَّدتَّ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ (٢٢)

22. "And this is the favor with which thou dost reproach me -- that thou hast enslaved the Children of Israel"

C3151. Pharaoh had called Moses ungrateful and reproached him with all the favours which Moses had received from the Egyptians.

"What favours?" he says; "Do you count it also as a favour to me that you have enslaved my brethren the Children of Israel?"

Moses was now speaking as a Prophet of Allah, not as an individual. Any individual favours he may have received were blotted out by the oppression of his people. (R).

قَالَ فِرْعَوْنُ وَمَا رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ (٢٣)

23. Pharaoh said: "And what is the 'Lord and Cherisher of the Worlds?'"

C3152. Moses having eliminated all personalities, the argument now comes up to the highest plane of all,-the attributes of Allah and His mercies. Moses had put forward this before, as implied in verse 16 above, but Pharaoh had twisted it into personalities.

Now we come back to the real issue. It may have been in the same sitting, or it may have been in a later sitting. (R).

قَالَ رَبُّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا...

24. (Moses) said:

"The Lord and Cherisher of the heavens and the earth, and all between --

...إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُوقِنِينَ (٢٤)

if ye want to be quite sure."

قَالَ لِمَنْ حَوْلَهُ أَلَا تَسْتَمِعُونَ (٢٥)

25. (Pharaoh) said to those around: "Do ye not listen (to what he says)?"

C3153. Moses had stiffed up the wrath of Pharaoh both by putting forward the name of the One True God as against Pharaoh's pretended godhead, and by suggesting that any man of judgment would understand Allah's majesty.

While Pharaoh turns to his people in indignation, Moses drives the nail in further:

"He is the God of the heavens and the earth and all between: therefore He is also your God, and the God of your fathers from the beginning. Any other pretensions are false!" (R).

قَالَ رَبُّكُمْ وَرَبُّ آبَائِكُمُ الْأُولِينَ (٢٦)

26. (Moses) said: "Your Lord and the Lord of your fathers from the beginning!"

قَالَ إِنَّ رَسُولَكُمْ الَّذِي أُرْسِلَ إِلَيْكُمْ لَمَجْنُونٌ (٢٧)

27. (Pharaoh) said: "Truly your messenger who has been sent to you is a veritable madman!"

C3154. Pharaoh is further perturbed. In reply to Moses' statement that Allah, the One True God is also the God of the Egyptians and Pharaoh also, Pharaoh says sarcastically to his Court:

"Look at this 'Messenger' of yours; he seems to be mad!"

But Moses is not abashed. He boldly says what is the truth:

"It is you who are mad! The God Whom I preach is the universal Lord,-of the East and of the West. He reigns wherever you go!"

قَالَ رَبُّ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا...

28. (Moses) said: "Lord of the East and the West, and all between!"

...إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ (٢٨)

If ye only had sense!"

قَالَ لَئِنْ آتَّخَذْتَ إِلَهًا غَيْرِي لِأَجْعَلَكَ مِنَ الْمَسْجُونِينَ (٢٩)

29. (Pharaoh) said: "If thou dost put forward any god other than me, I will certainly put thee in prison!"

C3155. Now we come to the crisis. Pharaoh threatens Moses with prison for treason.

Moses remains calm and stiff argues:

"What if I show you a miracle? Will it convince you that I am not mad, and that I have behind me the Lord of all the Worlds?"

قَالَ أَوَلَوْ جِئْتُكَ بِشَيْءٍ مُّبِينٍ (٣٠)

30. (Moses) said: "Even if I showed you something clear (and) convincing?"

C3156. The Egyptians were addicted to magic and sorcery. If a true miracle were shown to them, would they believe?

Perhaps they would see the hollowness of their own magic. In fact this actually happened with the Egyptian sorcerers themselves and perhaps with the commonalty.

But Pharaoh and his Court were too arrogant, and battered too much on frauds to yield to Truth.

قَالَ فَأْتِ بِهِ إِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ (٣١)

31. (Pharaoh) said: "Show it then, if thou tellest the truth!"

فَأَلْقَى عَصَاهُ فَإِذَا هِيَ ثُعْبَانٌ مُّبِينٌ (٣٢)

32. So (Moses) threw his rod, and behold, it was a serpent, plain (for all to see)!

وَنَزَعَ يَدَهُ فَإِذَا هِيَ بَيْضَاءُ لِلنَّاظِرِينَ (٣٣)

33. And he drew out his hand, and behold, it was white to all beholders!

C3157. Cf. 7:107-108.

See the whole passage there, and the notes thereon.

Section 3

قَالَ لِلْمَلَإِ حَوْلَهُ ...

34. (Pharaoh) said to the Chiefs around him:

C3158. In 7:109 it is the Chiefs who say this.

The fact is that it was a general consultation, and this was the general feeling, expressed in words by each to the others.

... إِنَّ هَذَا لَسَاحِرٌ عَلِيمٌ (٣٤)

"This is indeed a sorcerer well-versed:

يُرِيدُ أَنْ يُخْرِجَكُمْ مِنْ أَرْضِكُمْ بِسِحْرِهِ...

35. "His plan is to get you out of your land by his sorcery;

...فَمَاذَا تَأْمُرُونَ (٣٥)

then what is it ye counsel?"

قَالُوا أَرْجِهْ وَأَخَاهُ وَأَبْعَثْ فِي الْمَدَائِنِ حَاشِرِينَ (٣٦)

36. They said:

"Keep him and his brother in suspense (for a while), and dispatch to the Cities heralds to collect --

يَأْتُوكَ بِكُلِّ سَحَّارٍ عَلِيمٍ (٣٧)

37. "And bring up to thee all (our) sorcerers well-versed."

فَجُمِعَ السَّحَرَةُ لِمِيقَاتِ يَوْمٍ مَّعْلُومٍ (٣٨)

38. So the sorcerers were got together for the appointment of a day well-known,

C3159. A day well-known: a solemn day of festival: see 20:59.

The object was to get together as large a concourse of people as possible. It was confidently expected that the Egyptian sorcerers with all their organisation would win with their tricks against these amateur Israelites, and so the State cult of the worship of Pharaoh would be fastened on the necks of the people more firmly than ever.

وَقِيلَ لِلنَّاسِ هَلْ أَنْتُمْ مُجْتَمِعُونَ (٣٩)

39. And the people were told:
"Are ye (now) assembled? --

لَعَلَّنَا نَتَّبِعُ السَّحَرَةَ إِنْ كَانُوا هُمُ الْغَالِبِينَ (٤٠)

40. "That we may follow the sorcerers (in religion) if they win?"

C3160. See the last note.

The people are to come and witness the triumph of the State religion, so that they may become the more obedient to Pharaoh and more compliant with the demands of the priests.

The State religion included magic and the worship of Pharaoh.

فَلَمَّا جَاءَ السَّحَرَةُ قَالُوا لِرِعْوَانَ أَيْنَ لَنَا لَأَجْرًا إِنْ كُنَّا نَحْنُ الْغَالِبِينَ (٤١)

41. So when the sorcerers arrived, they said to Pharaoh:
"Of course -- shall we have a (suitable) reward if we win?"

C3161. There was no such thing as pure loyalty to an exploiting ruler like this Pharaoh. The sorcerers, who were probably also priests, were venal, and they hoped to establish their own hold on both king and people by the further enrichment of themselves and their order.

قَالَ نَعَمْ وَإِنَّكُمْ إِذَا لَمِنَ الْمُقَرَّبِينَ (٤٢)

42. He said: "Yea, (and more) -- for ye shall in that case be (raised to posts) nearest (to my person)."

قَالَ لَهُمْ مُوسَى أَلْقُوا مَا أَنْتُمْ مُقْتُونَ (٤٣)

43. Moses said to them: "Throw ye -- that which ye are about to throw!"

C3162. The euphemism implies a taunt, as if Moses had said:

"I know about your tricks! You pretend to throw ropes and rods, and make people believe they are snakes. But now come on!"

فَأَلْقُوا حِبَالَهُمْ وَعَصِيَّهِمْ...

44. So they threw their ropes and their rods,

...وَقَالُوا بَعْزَةَ فِرْعَوْنَ إِنَّا لَنَحْنُ الْغَالِبُونَ (٤٤)

and said: "By the might of Pharaoh, it is we who will certainly win!"

C3163. Though Pharaoh claimed to be a god, it is not likely that those nearest to him - his priests and sorcerers - believed such a thing! But it was game of mutual pretence before the world. And so they appeal to his "divine" power.

فَأَلْفَى مُوسَى عَصَاهُ...

45. Then Moses threw his rod,

...فَإِذَا هِيَ تَلْفَفُ مَا يَأْفِكُونَ (٤٥)

when behold, it straightway swallows up all the falsehoods which they fake!

C3164. The sorcerers' ropes and rods seemed to have become serpents, but the rod of Moses was mightier than all of them and quickly swallowed them up.

So truth is more powerful than tricks and win expose and destroy them.

فَأَلْقَى السَّحَرَةُ سَاجِدِينَ (٤٦)

46. Then did the sorcerers fall down, prostrate in adoration,

قَالُوا آمَنَّا بِرَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (٤٧)

47. Saying:

"We believe in the Lord of the Worlds,

رَبِّ مُوسَى وَهَارُونَ (٤٨)

48. "The Lord of Moses and Aaron."

قَالَ آمَنْتُمْ لَهُ قَبْلَ أَنْ آذَنَ لَكُمْ...

49. Said (Pharaoh):

"Believe ye in him before I give you permission?

...إِنَّهُ لَكَبِيرُكُمْ الَّذِي عَلَّمَكُمُ السِّحْرَ فَلَسَوْفَ نَعْلَمُونَ...

Surely he is your leader, who has taught you sorcery!

But soon shall ye know!

C3165. The sorcerers knew that they had met something very different from their tricks. Allah's power worked on them and they professed the True God.

As they represented the intelligence of the community, it may be presumed that they carried the intelligence of Egypt with them and perhaps some of the commonality, who were impressed by the dramatic scene!

Hence Pharaoh's anger, but it is the beginning of his decline!

...لَأَقْطَعَنَّ أَيْدِيَكُمْ وَأَرْجُلَكُمْ مِنْ خِلَافٍ وَلَأَصْلَبَنَّكُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ (٤٩)

"But sure I will cut off your hands and your feet on opposite sides, and I will cause you all to die on the cross!"

قَالُوا لَا ضَيْرَ...

50. They said:

"No matter!

...إِنَّا إِلَى رَبِّنَا مُنْقَلِبُونَ (٥٠)

for us, we shall but return to our Lord!

إِنَّا نَطْمَعُ أَنْ يَغْفِرَ لَنَا رَبُّنَا خَطَايَانَا أَنْ كُنَّا أَوَّلَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (٥١)

51. "Only, our desire is that our Lord will forgive us our faults, that we may become foremost among the Believers!"

C3166. This is the core of the lesson enforced in this passage.

What was the reaction of the environment to the Light or Message of Allah?

- It transformed Moses so that he became a fearless leader, one of the foremost in faith.
- From men like Pharaoh and his corrupt court, it called forth obstinacy, spite, and all the tricks and snares of evil, but Evil was defeated on its own ground.
- The magicians were touched by the glorious Light of Allah, and they were ready to suffer tortures and death, their sole ambition (in their transformed state) being to be foremost in Faith!

Section 4

وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ مُوسَىٰ أَنْ أَسْرِ بِعِبَادِي إِنَّكُمْ مُتَّبَعُونَ (٥٢)

52. By inspiration We told Moses: "Travel by night with My servants; for surely ye shall be pursued."

C3167. The rest of the story -of the plagues of Egypt- is passed over as not germane to the present argument. We come now to the story of Israel leaving Egypt, pursued by Pharaoh.

Here again there are three contrasts:

1. the blind arrogance of the Egyptians, against the development of Allah's Plan;
2. the Faith of Moses, against the fears of his people; and
3. the final deliverance of the Israelites against the destruction of the host of brute force.

فَأَرْسَلَ فِرْعَوْنُ فِي الْمَدَائِنِ حَاشِرِينَ (٥٣)

53. Then Pharaoh sent heralds to (all) the Cities,

إِنَّ هَؤُلَاءِ لَشِرْذِمَةٌ قَلِيلُونَ (٥٤)

54. (Saying): "These (Israelites) are but a small band,

وَأِنَّهُمْ لَنَا لِعَاظُونَ (٥٥)

55. "And they are raging furiously against us;

وَأِنَّا لَجَمِيعٌ حَاذِرُونَ (٥٦)

56. "But we are a multitude amply fore-warned."

فَأَخْرَجْنَاهُمْ مِنْ جَنَّاتٍ وَعُيُونٍ (٥٧)

57. So We expelled them from gardens, springs,

C3168. In deference to almost unanimous authority I have translated this passage (verses 58-60) as if it were a parenthetical statement of Allah's purpose.

Personally I prefer another construction.

According to that, verses 58-59 will be part of Pharaoh's proclamations; "We have dispossessed the Israelites from everything good in the land, and made them our slaves";

and verse 60 only will be parenthetical;

"Poor ignorant men! You may oppress those who are helpless, but We (i.e. Allah) have declared that they shall inherit all these things",

as they certainly did (for a time) in the Land of Palestine.

وَكُنُوزٍ وَمَقَامٍ كَرِيمٍ (٥٨)

58. Treasures, and every kind of honorable position;

كَذَلِكَ...

59. Thus it was,

...وَأَوْرَثْنَاهَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ (٥٩)

but We made the Children of Israel inheritors of such things.

C3169. The Children of Israel certainly inherited the gardens, springs, treasures, and honourable positions in Palestine after many years' wanderings in the wilderness.

But when they were false to Allah, they lost them again, and another people (the Muslims) inherited them when they were true in Faith.

"Of such things": literally, "of them".

فَأَتَّبَعُوهُمْ مُشْرِقِينَ (٦٠)

60. So they pursued them at sunrise.

C3170. The story is here resumed after the parenthesis of verses 58-60.

فَلَمَّا تَرَأَى الْجَمْعَانِ قَالَ أَصْحَابُ مُوسَى إِنَّا لَمُدْرِكُونَ (٦١)

61. And when the two bodies saw each other, the people of Moses said: "We are sure to be overtaken."

قَالَ كَلَّا...

62. (Moses) said: "By no means!

...إِنَّ مَعِيَ رَبِّي سَيَهْدِينِ (٦٢)

my Lord is with me! Soon will He guide me!

C3171. Guide me: i.e., show me some way of escape from danger.

This actually happened for Pharaoh's host was drowned. The faith of Moses stands in strong contrast to the fears of his people.

فَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ مُوسَىٰ أَنْ اضْرِبْ بِعَصَاكَ الْبَحْرَ...

63. Then We told Moses by inspiration: "Strike the sea with thy rod."

...فَانفَلَقَ فَكَانَ كُلُّ فِرْقٍ كَالطَّوْدِ الْعَظِيمِ (٦٣)

So it divided, and each separate part become like the huge, firm mass of a mountain.

وَأَزَلُّنَا تَمَّ الْآخِرِينَ (٦٤)

64. And We made the other party approach thither.

C3172. The miracle was twofold:

1. Moses with his people passed safely through the sea;
2. and Pharaoh and his great host were drowned in the sea.

وَأُنجَيْنَا مُوسَى وَمَنْ مَعَهُ أَجْمَعِينَ (٦٥)

65. We delivered Moses and all who were with him;

ثُمَّ أَغْرَقْنَا الْآخِرِينَ (٦٦)

66. But We drowned the others.

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لآيَةً...

67. Verily in this is a Sign:

...وَمَا كَانَ أَكْثَرُهُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ (٦٧)

but most of them do not believe.

C3173. As it was then, so it is now. In spite of the obvious Signs of Allah, people who are blind in their obstinate resistance to Truth accomplish their own destruction, while humble, persecuted men of Faith are transformed by the Light of Allah, and obtain salvation.

وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ (٦٨)

68. And verily thy Lord is He, the Exalted in Might, Most Merciful.

C3174. Nothing that the powers of evil can do, will ever defeat the merciful Purpose of Allah. Evil, in resisting good, will effect its own destruction.

C.165 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(26:69-122)

*Abraham patiently argued with his people
About Allah's Truth; prayed for wisdom*

*And righteous, for himself, his father,
And future generations; and taught Truth
About the Hereafter. Noah preached
To a world of Unfaith, and would not reject
The humble and lowly: his arrogant rejecters
Were brought low: in him and his following
Were vindicated Allah's righteous Purpose and Mercy.*

Section 5

وَآئِلٌ عَلَيْهِمْ نَبَأُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ (٦٩)

69. And rehearse to them (something of) Abraham's story.

C3175. For the argument of this Surah the incidents in Abraham's life are not relevant and are not mentioned. What is mentioned is:

- the steps by which he taught about the sin of false worship, in the form of a Dialogue;
- the aims of a righteous man not only in his individual life, but for his ancestors and posterity, in the form of a Prayer;
- and a picture of the Future Judgment, in the form of a vision.

is covered by verses 70-82; by 83-87; and by 88-102.

إِذْ قَالَ لِأَبِيهِ وَقَوْمِهِ مَا تَعْبُدُونَ (٧٠)

70. Behold, he said to his father and his people: "What worship ye?"

قَالُوا نَعْبُدُ أَصْنَامًا فَنَنْظِلُ لَهَا عَاكِفِينَ (٧١)

71. They said: "We worship idols, and we remain constantly in attendance on them."

C3176. They want to show their true and assiduous devotion. But Abraham goes at once to the heart of the matter by asking:

"To whom is your devotion paid?

Is the object worthy of it?"

قَالَ هَلْ يَسْمَعُونَكَ إِذْ تَدْعُونَ (٧٢)

72. He said:

"Do they listen to you when ye call (on them),

أَوْ يَنْفَعُونَكَ أَوْ يَضُرُّونَ (٧٣)

73. "Or do you good or harm?"

قَالُوا بَلْ وَجَدْنَا آبَاءَنَا كَذَلِكَ يَفْعَلُونَ (٧٤)

74. They said: "Nay, but we found our fathers doing thus (what we do)."

قَالَ أَفَرَأَيْتُمْ مَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْبُدُونَ (٧٥)

75. He said:

"Do ye then see whom ye have been worshipping --

أَنْتُمْ وَأَبَاؤُكُمْ الْأَقْدَمُونَ (٧٦)

76. "Ye and your fathers before you? --

فَأِنَّهُمْ عَدُوٌّ لِي ...

77. "For they are enemies to me;

C3177. The things that you worship are enemies to mankind: let me testify from my own personal experience: they are enemies to me: they can do me no good, but would lead me astray.

Contrast with their impotence or their power of mischief the One True God Whom I worship: He created me and all the Worlds: He cherishes me and guides me; He takes care of me; and when I die, He will give me new life; He will forgive me and grant me final Salvation.

Will you then come to this true worship?

How can you doubt, after seeing the contrast of the one with the other?

Is it not as the contrast between Light and Darkness?'

... إِنْ أَرَبَّ الْعَالَمِينَ (٧٧)

not so the Lord and Cherisher of the Worlds;

الَّذِي خَلَقَنِي فَهُوَ يَهْدِين (٧٨)

78. "Who created me, and it is He Who guides me;

وَالَّذِي هُوَ يُطْعِمُنِي وَيَسْقِين (٧٩)

79. "Who gives me food and drink,

وَإِذَا مَرَضْتُ فهُوَ يَشْفِين (٨٠)

80. "And when I am ill, it is He Who cures me;

وَالَّذِي يُمَيِّتُنِي ثُمَّ يُحْيِين (٨١)

81. "Who will cause me to die, and then to live (again);

وَالَّذِي أَطْمَعُ أَنْ يَغْفِرَ لِي خَطِيئَتِي يَوْمَ الدِّينِ (٨٢)

82. "And Who, I hope, will forgive me my faults on the Day of Judgment...

رَبِّ هَبْ لِي حُكْمًا وَأَلْحِقْنِي بِالصَّالِحِينَ (٨٣)

83. O my Lord! bestow wisdom on me, and join me with the righteous;

C3178. Having shown clearly the distinction between the False and the True, Abraham now shows in the form of a Prayer what his inmost wishes are.

- He wants his own soul enlightened with divine wisdom, and
- his heart and life filled with righteousness;
- he will not be content with working for himself or his own generation: his view extends to all future generations;
- and of course he wishes to attain the goal of the righteous, the Garden of the Bliss of the Divine Countenance;

but he is not content with this;

- for he wants his father and relatives to share in his spiritual joy, so that he can proudly see all whom he can reach, in an honourable station (contrasted with disgrace) on the Day of Judgment.

وَأَجْعَلْ لِي لِسَانَ صِدْقٍ فِي الْآخِرِينَ (٨٤)

84. "Grant me honorable mention on the tongue of truth among the latest (generations);

C3179. Cf. 19:50. The whole of the passage about Abraham there may be compared with this passage.

وَأَجْعَلْنِي مِنْ وَرَثَةِ الْجَنَّةِ النَّعِيمِ (٨٥)

85. "Make me one of the inheritors of the Garden of Bliss;

وَاعْفِرْ لَأَبِي إِنَّهُ كَانَ مِنَ الضَّالِّينَ (٨٦)

86. "Forgive my father, for that he is among those astray;

وَلَا تُخْزِنِي يَوْمَ يُبْعَثُونَ (٨٧)

87. "And let me not be in disgrace on the Day when (men) will be raised up --

يَوْمَ لَا يَنْفَعُ مَالٌ وَلَا بُنُونَ (٨٨)

88. The Day whereon neither wealth nor sons will avail,

C3180. Now we have a vision of the Day of Judgment.

Nothing will then avail except a pure heart; all sorts of the so-called "good deeds" of this world, without the motive of purity, will be useless.

The contrast of the Garden of Bliss with the Fire of Misery will be plainly visible. Evil will be shown in its true colours,-isolated, helpless, cursing and despairing; and all chances will then have been lost.

إِلَّا مَنْ أَتَى اللَّهَ بِقَلْبٍ سَلِيمٍ (٨٩)

89. "But only he (will prosper) that brings to Allah a sound heart;

وَأُزْلِفَتِ الْجَنَّةُ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ (٩٠)

90. "To the righteous, the Garden will be brought near,

C3181. The Good will only see good (the Garden of Bliss), and the Evil will only see evil (the Fire of Hell).

The type of this contrast is shown to us in the world of our spiritual sense even in this life.

وَبُرِّزَتِ الْجَحِيمُ لِلْغَاوِينَ (٩١)

91. "And to those straying in Evil, the Fire will be placed in full view;

وَقِيلَ لَهُمْ أَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْبُدُونَ (٩٢)

92. "And it shall be said to them:

'Where are the (gods) ye worshipped --

مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ هَلْ يَنْصُرُونَكُمْ أَوْ يَنْتَصِرُونَ (٩٣)

93. "'Besides Allah?

Can they help you or help themselves?'

فَكُنِبُكِبُوا فِيهَا هُمْ وَالْغَاوُونَ (٩٤)

94. "Then they will be thrown headlong into the (Fire) -- they and those straying in Evil,

C3182. The false gods, being devils or personified false fancies, will be all involved in the punishment of Hell, together with their worshippers, and the ultimate sources of evil, the hosts of Iblis or Satan.

وَجُنُودُ إِبْلِيسَ أَجْمَعُونَ (٩٥)

95. "And the whole hosts of Iblis together.

قَالُوا وَهُمْ فِيهَا يَخْتَصِمُونَ (٩٦)

96. "They will say there in their mutual bickerings:

تَاللَّهِ إِنْ كُنَّا لَفِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ (٩٧)

97. "'By Allah, we were truly in an error manifest,

C3183. Error-manifest.-

'our error is now plainly manifest, but it should have been manifest to us before it was too late, because the Signs of Allah were always around us'.

This will be said by the ungodly, whose eyes will then be fully opened.

إِذْ نُسَوِّدُكُمْ بِرَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (٩٨)

98. "When we held you as equals with the Lord of the Worlds;

وَمَا أَضَلَّنَا إِلَّا الْمُجْرِمُونَ (٩٩)

99. "And our seducers were only those who were steeped in guilt.

C3184. They now see that the people who seduced them were themselves evil and subject to the penalties of evil, and their seductions were frauds. They feel that they ought to have seen it before.

For who would deliberately follow the paths of those condemned to misery and punishment?

How simple they were not to see the true character of their seducers, though they had been warned again and again against them! It was their own folly that made them accept such obviously false guidance!

فَمَا لَنَا مِنْ شَافِعِينَ (١٠٠)

100. "Now, then, we have none to intercede (for us),

وَلَا صَدِيقَ حَمِيمٍ (١٠١)

101. "Nor a single friend to feel (for us).

فَلَوْ أَن لَنَا كَرَّةٌ فَنَكُونُ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (١٠٢)

102. "Now if we only had a chance of return, we shall truly be of those who believe!"

C3185. This apparent longing for a chance of return is dishonest. If they were sent back, they would certainly return to their evil ways: 6:27-28.

Besides, they have had numerous chances already in this life, and they have used them for mischief or evil.

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لآيَةً...

103. Verily in this is a Sign,

...وَمَا كَانَ أَكْثَرُهُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ (١٠٣)

but most of them do not believe.

وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ (١٠٤)

104. And verily the Lord is He, the Exalted in Might, Most Merciful.

Section 6

كَذَّبَتْ قَوْمُ نُوحٍ الْمُرْسَلِينَ (١٠٥)

105. The people of Noah rejected the messengers.

إِذْ قَالَ لَهُمْ أَخُوهُمْ نُوحٌ أَلَا تَتَّقُونَ (١٠٦)

106. Behold, their brother Noah said to them:

"Will ye not fear (Allah)?"

C3186. Noah's generation had lost all faith and abandoned themselves to evil. They had rejected the Message of messengers previously sent to the world.

Noah was sent to them as one of themselves ("their brother"). His life was open before them: he had proved himself pure in heart and conduct (like the holy Prophet of Islam long after him), and worthy of every trust.

Would they fear Allah and follow his advice?

They could see that he had no ends of his own to serve. Would they not listen to him?

إِنِّي لَكُمْ رَسُولٌ أَمِينٌ (١٠٧)

107. "I am to you a messenger worthy of all trust:

C3187. Amin= one to whom a trust has been given, with several shades of meaning implied: e.g.,

- worthy of trust,
- bound to deliver his trust, as a prophet is bound to deliver his Message,
- bound to act entirely as directed by the trust, as a prophet is bound to give only the Message of Allah, and not add anything of his own, and
- not seeking any interest of his own.

فَأَتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا (١٠٨)

108. "So fear Allah, and obey me.

وَمَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ...

109. "No reward do I ask of you for it:

...إِنْ أَجْرِي إِلَّا عَلَى رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (١٠٩)

my reward is only from the Lord of the Worlds:

فَأَتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا (١١٠)

110. "So fear Allah, and obey me."

C3188. Note how the repetition rounds off the argument. See [n. 3186](#) above.

قَالُوا أَنْتُمْ لَكُمْ وَاتَّبَعَكَ الْأَرْذَلُونَ (١١١)

111. They said: "Shall we believe in thee when it is the meanest that follow thee?"

C3189. The leaders of the people are speaking, as the Quraish leaders spoke in the time of the holy Prophet.

"We know that thou hast been trustworthy in thy life. But look at the 'rag tag and bob tail' that follow thee! Dost thou expect us to be like them or to be classed with them?"

His answer was:

"I know nothing against them; if they have done any wrong, or are only hypocrites, they are answerable to Allah; how can I drive them away from me, seeing that I am expressly sent to admonish all people?"

قَالَ وَمَا عَلِمِي بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ (١١٢)

112. He said:

"And what do I know as to what they do?

إِنْ حِسَابُهُمْ إِلَّا عَلَى رَبِّي...

113. "Their account is only with my Lord,

...لَوْ تَسْعُرُونَ (١١٣)

if ye could (but) understand.

وَمَا أَنَا بِطَارِدِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (١١٤)

114. "I am not one to drive away those who believe.

C3190. Cf. 11:29.

All people who have faith have the right to come and listen to Allah's Word and receive Allah's Mercy, whether they are publicans and sinners, "Harijans" and low-caste men, men of "superior" or "inferior" races. The Prophet of Allah welcomes them all, as His Message has to shine before the whole world. (R).

إِنِّ أَنَا إِلَّا نَذِيرٌ مُّبِينٌ (١١٥)

115. "I am sent only to warn plainly in public."

قَالُوا لئن لَمْ تَنْتَهَ يَا نُوحُ لَتَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْمَرْجُومِينَ (١١٦)

116. They said: "If thou desist not, O Noah! thou shalt be stoned (to death)."

C3191. Two other cases occur to me where prophets of Allah were threatened with death by stoning:

- one was Abraham (19:46),
- and the other was Shu'ayb (11:91).

In neither case did the threats deter them from carrying out their mission.

On the contrary the threats recoiled on those who threatened. So also did it happen in the case of Noah and the holy Prophet.

قَالَ رَبِّ إِنَّ قَوْمِي كَذَّبُونِ (١١٧)

117. He said:

"O my Lord! truly my people have rejected me.

فَأَفْتَحْ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَهُمْ فَتْحًا...

118. "Judge thou, then, between me and them openly,

...وَنَجِّنِي وَمَنْ مَعِيَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (١١٨)

and deliver me and those of the Believers who are with me."

فَأَنجَيْنَاهُ وَمَنْ مَعَهُ فِي الْفُلِّ الْمَشْحُونِ (١١٩)

119. So we delivered him and those with him, in the Ark filled (with all creatures).

C3192. The story of Noah's Flood is told in 11:36-48. Here the point emphasised is Noah's patience and constancy against threats, and the triumph and preservation of Allah's Truth even though the world was ranged against it.

ثُمَّ أَغْرَقْنَا بَعْدَ الْبَاقِينَ (١٢٠)

120. Thereafter We drowned those who remained behind.

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لآيَةً...

121. Verily in this is a Sign:

...وَمَا كَانَ أَكْثَرُهُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ (١٢١)

but most of them do not believe.

C3193. This and the following verse run like a refrain throughout this Surah, and give the key-note to the subject-matter: how the Message of Allah is preached, how it is rejected in all ages, and how it triumphs at last, through the Mercy of Allah.

See 26:8-9, 68-69, 103-104, here (121-122), 139-140, 158-159, 174-175, and 190-191. (R).

وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ (١٢٢)

122. And verily thy Lord is He, the Exalted in Might, Most Merciful.

C.166 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(26: 123-159)

The 'Ad were addicted to arrogance;

They exulted in material strength

*And possessions, and had no faith but in force:
They were brought low, as were the Thamud,
Who gave way to extravagance, and were guilty
Of sacrilege in destroying a symbol
Of justice and fair-dealing: their repentance
Was too late; they were blotted out
Of the earth for the mischief they had made.*

Section 7

كَدَّبَتْ عَادُ الْمُرْسَلِينَ (١٢٣)

123. The 'Ad (people) rejected the messengers.

C3194. See n. 1040 to 7:65 for the 'Ad people and their location.

Here the emphasis is on the fact that they were materialists believing in brute force, and felt secure in their fortresses and resources, but were found quite helpless when Allah's Message came and they rejected it.

إِذْ قَالَ لَهُمْ أَخُوهُمْ هُودٌ أَلَا تَتَّقُونَ (١٢٤)

124. Behold, their brother Hud said to them:

"Will ye not fear (Allah)?"

إِنِّي لَكُمْ رَسُولٌ أَمِينٌ (١٢٥)

125. "I am to you a messenger worthy of all trust.

C3195. See n. 3187 to 26:107 above.

فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا (١٢٦)

126. "So fear Allah and obey me.

وَمَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ...

127. "No reward do I ask of you for it:

إِنِ اجْرِيَ إِلَّا عَلَى رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (١٢٧)

my reward is only from the Lord of the Worlds.

أَنْبِئُونَا بِكُلِّ رِيْعٍ آيَةٍ تَعْبَثُونَ (١٢٨)

128. "Do ye build a landmark on every high place to amuse yourselves?"

C3196. Any merely material civilisation prides itself on show and parade. Its votaries scatter monuments for all sorts of things in conspicuous places-monuments which commemorate deeds and events which are forgotten in a few generations!

Cf. Shelley's poem on Ozymandias:

"I am Ozymandias, King of Kings!

Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair!

Boundless and bare the lonely and level sands stretch far away!"

وَتَتَّخِذُونَ مَصَانِعَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَخْلُدُونَ (١٢٩)

129. "And do ye get for yourselves fine buildings in the hope of living therein (forever)?"

وَإِذَا بَطَشْتُمْ بَطْشَتُمْ جَبَّارِينَ (١٣٠)

130. "And when ye exert your strong hand, do ye do it like men of absolute power?"

C3197. "Without any responsibility or consideration for those who come within your power?"

فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا (١٣١)

131. "Now fear Allah, and obey me.

C3198. See [n. 3188](#) above.

وَأَنْفُوا الَّذِي أَمَدَّكُمْ بِمَا تَعْلَمُونَ (١٣٢)

132. "Yea, fear Him Who has bestowed on you freely all that ye know.

C3199. The gifts are described generally, immaterial and material.

"All that ye know" includes not only material things, but knowledge and the faculties by which knowledge may be used for human well-being, all that makes life beautiful and refined.

"Cattle" means wealth generally, and "sons" means population and manpower. "Gardens and Springs" are things that contribute to the delight and pleasure of man.

أَمَدَّكُمْ بِأَنْعَامٍ وَبَنِينَ (١٣٣)

133. "Freely has He bestowed on you cattle and sons --

وَجَنَّاتٍ وَعُيُونٍ (١٣٤)

134. And Gardens and Springs.

إِنِّي أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ (١٣٥)

135. "Truly I fear for you the Penalty of a Great Day."

C3200. "But you have misused all those gifts, and you will suffer the inevitable penalties for your misuse and or your ingratitude."

قَالُوا سَوَاءٌ عَلَيْنَا أَوَعَظْتَ أَمْ لَمْ تَكُنْ مِنَ الْوَاعِظِينَ (١٣٦)

136. They said:

"It is the same to us whether thou admonish us or be not among (our) Admonishers!

C3201. "We are not going to attend to you whether you preach to us or not."

The construction of the second clause, **"or be not among our admonishers"** is a rapier cut at Hud, as if they had said:

"Oh yes! we have heard plenty of admonishers like you!"

See the next verse.

إِنَّ هَذَا إِلَّا خُلُقُ الْأَوَّلِينَ (١٣٧)

137. "This is no other than a customary device of the ancients,

C3202. They said, as many of our modern enemies of religion say,

"you are only reviving an ancient superstition, a dope of the crowd; there is no such thing as a Hereafter, or the sort of punishments you announce!"

وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمُعَذِّبِينَ (١٣٨)

138. "And we are not the ones to receive Pains and Penalties!"

فَكَذَّبُوهُ فَأَهْلَكْنَاهُمْ...

139. So they rejected him,
and We destroyed them,

...إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لآيَةً...

verily in this is a Sign:

...وَمَا كَانَ أَكْثَرُهُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ (١٣٩)

but most of them do not believe.

وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ (١٤٠)

140. And verily thy Lord is He, the Exalted in Might, Most Merciful.

Section 8

كَذَّبَتْ ثَمُودُ الْمُرْسَلِينَ (١٤١)

141. The Thamud (people) rejected the messengers.

C3203. For the Thamud people see n. 1043 to 7:73.

They were great builders in stone and a people with agricultural wealth, but they were an exclusive people and oppressed the poor.

The point emphasised here is:

"How long will your wealth last, especially if you depress your own people and dishonour Allah's Signs by sacrilege?"

The inscriptions on the Thamud remains of rock-cut buildings in Al-Hijr are described in the [Appendix VII](#) at the end of this Surah.

إِذْ قَالَ لَهُمْ أَخُوهُمْ صَالِحٌ أَلَا تَتَّقُونَ (١٤٢)

142. Behold, their brother Salih said to them:

"Will you fear (Allah)?

إِنِّي لَكُمْ رَسُولٌ أَمِينٌ (١٤٣)

143. "I am to you a messenger worthy of all trust.

فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا (١٤٤)

144. "So fear Allah, and obey me.

وَمَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ...

145. "No reward do I ask of you for it:

...إِنْ أَجْرِي إِلَّا عَلَى رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (١٤٥)

my reward is only from the Lord of the Worlds.

أَتُتْرَكُونَ فِي مَا هَاهُنَا آمِنِينَ (١٤٦)

146. "Will ye be left secure, in (the enjoyment of) all that ye have here? --

فِي جَنَّاتٍ وَعُيُونٍ (١٤٧)

147. "Gardens and Springs,

وَزُرُوعٍ وَنَخْلٍ طَلْعُهَا هَضِيمٌ (١٤٨)

148. "And corn-fields and date-palms with spathes near breaking (with the weight of fruit)?

C3204. The date palm flowers on a long spathe: when the flowers develop into fruit, the heavy ones hang with the load of fruit.

The Thamud evidently were proud of their skill in producing corn and fruit and in hewing fine dwellings out of rocks, like the later dwellings of Roman times in the town of Petra.

وَتَنْحِتُونَ مِنَ الْجِبَالِ بُيُوتًا قَارِهِينَ (١٤٩)

149. "And ye carve house out of (rocky) mountains with great skill.

فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا (١٥٠)

150. "But fear Allah and obey me;

وَلَا تُطِيعُوا أَمْرَ الْمُسْرِفِينَ (١٥١)

151. "And follow not the bidding of those who are extravagant --

C3205. They are told:

"All your skill is very well; but cultivate virtue and do not follow the ways of those who put forward extravagant claims for men's powers and material resources, or who lead lives of extravagance in luxury and self-indulgence; that makes mischief: but the door of repentance is open: win you repent?"

الَّذِينَ يُفْسِدُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا يُصْلِحُونَ (١٥٢)

152. "Who make mischief in the land, and mend not (their ways)."

قَالُوا إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ مِنَ الْمُسَحَّرِينَ (١٥٣)

153. They said:

"Thou art only the of those bewitched!

C3206. They think he is talking like a madman, and they say so.

مَا أَنْتَ إِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِثْلُنَا...

154. "Thou art no more than a mortal like us:

... فَأْتِ بآيَةٍ إِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ (١٥٤)

then bring us a Sign, if thou tellest the truth!"

قَالَ هَذِهِ نَاقَةٌ...

155. He said: "Here is a she-camel:

... لَهَا شَرِبٌ وَلَكُمْ شَرِبٌ يَوْمَ مَعْلُومٍ (١٥٥)

she has a right of watering, and ye have a right of watering, (severally) on a day appointed.

C3207. For this she-camel, see n. 1044 to 7:73.

The she-camel was to be a Sign and a test-case. Would they respect her rights of watering (and pasturage)?

وَلَا تَمَسُّوْهَا بِسُوءٍ فَيَأْخُذْكُمْ عَذَابٌ يَوْمَ عَظِيمٍ (١٥٦)

156. "Touch her not with harm, lest the Penalty of a Great Day seize you."

فَعَقَرُوْهَا...

157. But they hamstrung her:

...فَأَصْبَحُوا نَادِمِينَ (١٥٧)

then did they become full of regrets.

C3208. Their regrets were too late. They had themselves asked for a Sign. The Sign had been given to them in the she-camel, which their prophet Salih had put forward as a test-case.

Would they, through that symbol, respect the law' of equity by which all people had rights in water and in the gifts of nature?

They refused to respect that law, and committed sacrilege by deliberately killing the she-camel. They themselves came to an evil end.

فَأَخَذَهُمُ الْعَذَابُ...

158. But the Penalty seized them.

...إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لآيَةً...

Verily in this is a Sign:

...وَمَا كَانَ أَكْثَرُهُمْ مُّؤْمِنِينَ (١٥٨)

but most of them do not believe.

وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ (١٥٩)

159. And verily thy Lord is He, the Exalted in Might, Most Merciful.

C.167 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(26: 160-191)

*The task of Lut was a hard one: his mission
Was to people addicted to crimes abominable.
His reasoning with them was in vain: it only
Excited their wrath. They threatened to cast
Him out, but were themselves overwhelmed
In disaster. Shu'ayb had to rebuke fraud
And commercial dishonesty; he met only
Ridicule, but the just and fair dealing
He preached was vindicated in the end.*

Section 9

كَذَّبَتْ قَوْمُ لُوطٍ الْمُرْسَلِينَ (١٦٠)

160. The people of Lut rejected the messengers.

C3209. The story of Lut (Lot) will be found in 7:80-84: see n. 1049.

Here the point is that the people of the Cities of the Plain were shamelessly addicted to vice against nature, and Lut's warning only exasperated them, until they were destroyed by a shower of brimstone.

إِذْ قَالَ لَهُمُ أَخُوهُمْ لُوطٌ أَلَا تَتَّقُونَ (١٦١)

161. Behold, their brother Lut said to them:

"Will ye not fear (Allah)?"

إِنِّي لَكُمْ رَسُولٌ أَمِينٌ (١٦٢)

162. "I am to you a messenger worthy of all trust.

فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا (١٦٣)

163. "So fear Allah and obey me.

وَمَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ...

164. "No reward do I ask of you for it:

...إِنْ أَجْرِي إِلَّا عَلَى رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (١٦٤)

my reward is only from the Lord of the Worlds.

أَتَأْتُونَ الذُّكْرَانَ مِنَ الْعَالَمِينَ (١٦٥)

165. "Of all the creatures in the world, will ye approach males.

وَتَذَرُونَ مَا خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ...

166. "And leave those whom Allah has created for you to be your mates?

...بَلْ أَنْتُمْ قَوْمٌ عَادُونَ (١٦٦)

Nay, ye are a people transgressing (all limits)!"

قَالُوا لَئِن لَّمْ تَنْتَهَ يَا لُوطُ لَتَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْمُخْرَجِينَ (١٦٧)

167. They said: "If thou desist not, O Lut! thou wilt assuredly be cast out!"

C3210. Their threat to cast him out has a grim significance in what actually happened. They were destroyed where they were, and he was glad to escape the dreadful Punishment according to the warning he had received.

قَالَ إِنِّي لِعَمَلِكُمْ مِنَ الْقَالِينَ (١٦٨)

168. He said:

"I do detest your doings."

C3211. He was only among them from a stem sense of duty. The whole atmosphere there was detestable to him, and he was glad to escape when duty no longer demanded his presence there. He prayed for deliverance from such surroundings.

رَبِّ نَجِّنِي وَأَهْلِي مِمَّا يَعْمَلُونَ (١٦٩)

169. "O my Lord!

deliver me and my family from such things as they do!"

فَنَجَّيْنَاهُ وَأَهْلَهُ أَجْمَعِينَ (١٧٠)

170. So We delivered him and his family -- all

إِلَّا عَجُوزًا فِي الْعَابِرِينَ (١٧١)

171. Except an old woman who lingered behind.

C3212. This was Lut's wife, who lingered behind and was among those who perished, See n. 1051 to 7:83.

ثُمَّ دَمَّرْنَا الْآخَرِينَ (١٧٢)

172. But the rest We destroyed utterly.

وَأَمْطَرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ مَطَرًا...

173. We rained down on them a shower (of brimstone):

C3213. See n. 1052 to 7:84.

...فَسَاءَ مَطَرُ الْمُنذَرِينَ (١٧٣)

and evil was the shower on those who were admonished (but heeded not)!

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لآيَةً...

174. Verily in this is a Sign:

...وَمَا كَانَ أَكْثَرُهُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ (١٧٤)

but most of them do not believe.

وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ (١٧٥)

175. And verily thy Lord is He, the Exalted in Might, Most Merciful.

Section 10

كَذَّبَ أَصْحَابُ الْأَيْكَةِ الْمُرْسَلِينَ (١٧٦)

176. The Companions of the Wood rejected the messengers.

C3214. See n. 2000 to 15:78.

إِذْ قَالَ لَهُمُ شُعَيْبٌ ...

177. Behold, Shuaib said to them:

C3215. For Shu'ayb see n. 1054 to 7:85.

... أَلَا تَتَّقُونَ (١٧٧)

"Will ye not fear (Allah)?"

إِنِّي لَكُمْ رَسُولٌ أَمِينٌ (١٧٨)

178. "I am to you a messenger worthy of all trust.

فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا (١٧٩)

179. "So fear Allah and obey me.

وَمَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ...

180. "No reward do I ask of you for it:

...إِنْ أَجْرِيَ إِلَّا عَلَى رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (١٨٠)

my reward is only from the Lord of the Worlds.

أَوْفُوا الْكَيْلَ وَلَا تَكُونُوا مِنَ الْمُخْسِرِينَ (١٨١)

181. "Give just measure, and cause no loss (to others by fraud).

C3216. They were a commercial people, but they were given to fraud, injustice, and wrongful mischief (by intermeddling with others).

They are asked to fear Allah and follow His ways: it is He Who also created their predecessors among mankind, who never prospered by fraud and violent wrong-doing, but only justice and fair dealing.

وَزِنُوا بِالْقِسْطِاسِ الْمُسْتَقِيمِ (١٨٢)

182. "And weigh with scales true and upright.

وَلَا تَبْخَسُوا النَّاسَ أَشْيَاءَهُمْ...

183. "And withhold not things justly due to men,

...وَلَا تَعْتُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ مُفْسِدِينَ (١٨٣)

nor do evil in the land, working mischief.

وَاتَّقُوا الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ وَالْجِيلَ الْأَوَّلِينَ (١٨٤)

184. "And fear Him Who created you and (Who created) the generations before (you).

قَالُوا إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ مِنَ الْمُسَحَّرِينَ (١٨٥)

185. They said: "Thou art only one of those bewitched!

وَمَا أَنْتَ إِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُنَا...

186. "Thou art no more than a mortal like us,

...وَأِنْ تَظُنُّكَ لَمِنَ الْكَاذِبِينَ (١٨٦)

and indeed we think thou art a liar!

C3217. They deny that he is a prophet or that they are doing wrong, or that any former generations behaved differently. They think they are the true exponents of human nature, and that such as he-idealists-are mere madmen.

فَأَسْقِطْ عَلَيْنَا كِسْفًا مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ إِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ (١٨٧)

187. "Now cause a piece of the sky to fall on us, if thou art truthful!"

C3218. 'If you really claim any real contact with Allah, let us see if you can bring down a piece of the sky to fall on us!'

قَالَ رَبِّي أَعْلَمُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ (١٨٨)

188. He said: "My Lord knows best what ye do."

C3219. The challenge to bring down a piece of the sky was merely empty bravado, on the part of those who had called him a liar. But Shu'aib does not insult them. He merely says: "Allah is the best judge of your conduct: what more can I say?" And Allah did punish them.

فَكَذَّبُوهُ...

189. But they rejected him.

...فَأَخَذَهُمْ عَذَابٌ يَوْمَ الظُّلَّةِ...

Then the punishment of a day of overshadowing gloom seized them,

C3220. Perhaps a shower of ashes and cinders accompanying a volcanic eruption. If these people were the same as the Midianites, there was also an earthquake.

See 7:91 and n. 1063.

...إِنَّهُ كَانَ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ (١٨٩)

and that was the Penalty of a Great Day.

C3221. It must have been a terrible day of wholesale destruction-earthquake, volcanic eruption, lava, cinders and ashes and rumbling noises to frighten those whose death was not instantaneous.

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لآيَةً...

190. Verily in that is a Sign:

...وَمَا كَانَ أَكْثَرُهُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ (١٩٠)

but most of them do not believe.

وَأَنَّ رَبَّكَ لَهوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ (١٩١)

191. And verily thy Lord is He, the Exalted in Might, Most Merciful.

C3222. See above, n. 3193 to 26:121.

C.168 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(26: 192-227)

*Thus the Truth of Allah must win against folly
And falsehood. The spirit of Inspiration
And Faith brought down the Quran to the mind
Of the Holy Prophet, that he might teach
In noble Arabic speech, and trough it
Reach the world. If obstinate rebels
Do resist the Message, their day in brief:
With humble, gentle kindness it must make*

*Its way to all, nearest and farthest.
It is not like the vain words of poets false,
Wandering without a goal: it is Truth,
That fills the heart which trusts in Allah.*

Section 11

وَأِنَّهُ لَنَزِيلُ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (١٩٢)

192. Verily this is a Revelation from the Lord of the Worlds:

C3223. The hostile reception of some of the previous Messengers having been mentioned, the special characteristics of the Qur-an are now referred to, to show

- that it is true, and
- that its rejection by the Makkan Pagans was of a piece with previous experience in the history of man: vested interests resist Truth, but it conquers.

نَزَلَ بِهِ الرُّوحُ الْأَمِينُ (١٩٣)

193. With it came down the Spirit of Faith and Truth --

C3224. Ruh al Amin, the epithet of Gabriel, who came with the inspired Messages to the holy Prophet, is difficult to render in a single epithet in translation.

In n. [3187](#) to [26:107](#) I have described some of the various shades of meaning attached to the adjective **Amin** as applied to a Prophet.

A further signification as attached to the Spirit of Inspiration is that it is the very quintessence of Faith and Truth, unlike the lying spirits which delude men with falsehood.

On the whole, I think "the Spirit of Faith and Truth" will represent the original best here.

عَلَى قَلْبِكَ لِتَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُنذِرِينَ (١٩٤)

194. To thy heart and mind that thou mayest admonish

C3225. Qalb (Heart) signifies not only the seat of the affections, but also the seat of the memory and understanding.

The process of inspiration is indicated by the impression of the divine Message on the inspired one's heart, memory, and understanding, from which it was promulgated in human speech to the world.

In this case the human speech was the perspicuous Arabic tongue, which would be plainly intelligible to the audience who would immediately hear it and be through them transmitted to all the world.

بِلِسَانٍ عَرَبِيٍّ مُبِينٍ (١٩٥)

195. In the perspicuous Arabic tongue.

وَإِنَّهُ لَفِي زُبُرِ الْأَوَّلِينَ (١٩٦)

196. Without doubt it is (announced) in the mystic Books of former peoples.

C3226. The word **Zubur**, used here, is plural of **Zabar**, which is mentioned in the Quran as the Book revealed to the prophet Da'ud.

It has also been used in the Quran in generic sense of "Book" (54:52).

Here the word refers to the earlier Revelations. (Eds).

أَوَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُمْ آيَةٌ أَنْ يَعْلَمَهُ عُلَمَاءُ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ (١٩٧)

197. Is it not a Sign to them that the learned of the Children of Israel knew it (as true)?

C3227. Many of the Jewish Doctors recognised the holy Prophet's Message as a Message from Allah, e.g., 'Abdullah ibn Salam and Mukhairiq.

The latter was a man of property, which he left for Islam.

(There were also Christian monks and learned men who recognised the Prophet's mission.)

وَلَوْ نَزَّلْنَاهُ عَلَىٰ بَعْضِ الْأَعْجَمِينَ (١٩٨)

198. Had We revealed it to any of the non-Arabs,

فَقَرَأَهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مَا كَانُوا بِهِ مُؤْمِنِينَ (١٩٩)

199. And had he recited it to them, they would not have believed in it.

C3228. The turn of Arabia having come for receiving Allah's Revelation, as was foretold in previous Revelations, it was inevitable that it should be in the Arab tongue through the mouth of an Arab. Otherwise it would have been unintelligible, and the Arabs could not have received the Faith and become the vehicles for its promulgation as actually happened in history.

كَذَلِكَ سَلَكْنَاهُ فِي قُلُوبِ الْمُجْرِمِينَ (٢٠٠)

200. Thus have We caused it to enter the hearts of the Sinners.

C3229. "Thus" I think means through the medium of the Arabic language and the Arab people.

The Quran penetrated through their language and their hearts. If the hard- hearted among them did not believe, they will see when the Penalty comes, how grievous a mistake they made. For the Penalty must come; even when they least expected it.

They will be caught saying or thinking, "There is plenty of time; we can get another respite," when already it will have become too late for them to turn over a new leaf.

لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ حَتَّىٰ يَرَوْا الْعَذَابَ الْأَلِيمَ (٢٠١)

201. They will not believe in it until they see the grievous Penalty;

فَيَأْتِيهِمْ بَعْثَةٌ وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ (٢٠٢)

202. But the (Penalty) will come to them of a sudden, while they perceive it not;

فَيَقُولُوا هَلْ نَحْنُ مُنظَرُونَ (٢٠٣)

203. Then they will say: "Shall we be respited?"

أَفَبِعَذَابِنَا يَسْتَعْجِلُونَ (٢٠٤)

204. Do they then ask for Our Penalty to be hastened on?

C3230. While some sinners out of negligence postpone the day of repentance till it is too late, others more bold actually ask out of bravado that Allah's Punishment should be brought down on them at once, as they do not believe in Allah or His Punishment!

The answer to them is:

It will come soon enough-too soon, they will think, when it comes!

Cf. (22:47) and notes.

أَفَرَأَيْتَ إِنْ مَتَّعْنَاهُمْ سِنِينَ (٢٠٥)

205. Seest thou? If We do let them enjoy (this life) for a few years,

ثُمَّ جَاءَهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يُوعَدُونَ (٢٠٦)

206. Yet there comes to them at length the (Punishment) which they were promised!

مَا أَغْنَىٰ عَنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يُمَتَّعُونَ (٢٠٧)

207. It will profit them not that they enjoyed (this life)!

وَمَا أَهْلَكْنَا مِنْ قَرْيَةٍ إِلَّا لَهَا مُنذِرُونَ (٢٠٨)

208. Never did We destroy a population, but had its warners --

ذَكَرَىٰ وَمَا كُنَّا ظَالِمِينَ (٢٠٩)

209. By way of reminder; and We never are unjust.

C3231. Allah will grant much respite to sinners, for He is Most Gracious and Merciful.

But all this respite will profit them nothing if they are merely immersed in the vanities of this world. Again and again, in spite of their rebellion and their rejection, does Allah send warnings and warners before the final Punishment of Justice. For Allah knows human weakness, and He win never be unjust in the least.

وَمَا تَنْزَلَتْ بِهِ الشَّيَاطِينُ (٢١٠)

210. No evil ones have brought down this (Revelation):

C3232. When anything extraordinary happens, there are always people desirous of putting the worst construction on it, and saying that it is the work of Satan. So when the Quran came with its Message in wondrous Arabic, its enemies could only account for its power by attributing it to evil spirits!

Such a beneficent message can never suit the purposes of Satan, nor would it be in their power to produce it. In fact Good and Evil are poles asunder, and Evil cannot even hear words of Good, of tender Pity for sinners and Forgiveness for the penitent!

وَمَا يَنْبَغِي لَهُمْ وَمَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ (٢١١)

211. It would neither suit them, nor would they be able (to produce it).

إِنَّهُمْ عَنِ السَّمْعِ لَمَعَزُؤْلُونَ (٢١٢)

212. Indeed they have been removed far from even (a chance of) hearing it.

فَلَا تَدْعُ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهًا آخَرَ فَتَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُعَذَّبِينَ (٢١٣)

213. So call not on any other god with Allah, or thou wilt be among those under the Penalty.

وَأَنْذِرْ عَشِيرَتَكَ الْأَقْرَبِينَ (٢١٤)

214. And admonish thy nearest kinsmen,

وَاخْفِضْ جَنَاحَكَ لِمَنِ اتَّبَعَكَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (٢١٥)

215. And lower thy wing to the Believers who follow thee.

C3233. That is, be kind, gentle, and considerate with them, as a high flying bird is when she lowers her wing to her offspring.

Cf. 17:24 and n. 2205, and 15:88 and n. 2011.

فَإِنْ عَصَوْكَ فَقُلْ إِنِّي بَرِيءٌ مِّمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ (٢١٦)

216. Then if they disobey thee, say: "I am free (of responsibility) for what ye do!"

C3234. "Disobey thee" implied that they did something wrong, for the holy Prophet commanded what was right and forbade what was wrong.

If, then, any of his flock did wrong the responsibility was not his, for he, like a good shepherd, tried to keep them right.

What was he then to do?

He would continue his teaching. But if any of them went so far wrong as to try to injure their own Teacher, Leader, and Guide, there was nothing for him to fear. His trust was only in Allah, and Allah sees and appraises all men's actions at their true worth. (R)

وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى الْعَزِيزِ الرَّحِيمِ (٢١٧)

217. And put thy trust on the Exalted in Might, the Merciful --

الَّذِي يَرَاكَ حِينَ تَقُومُ (٢١٨)

218. Who seeth thee standing forth (in prayer),

وَتَقَلُّبِكَ فِي السَّاجِدِينَ (٢١٩)

219. And thy movements among those who prostrate themselves.

C3235. Literally, the standing and prostration are postures in Muslim prayer: the holy Prophet was equally earnest, sincere, and zealous in prayer for himself and for all his people.

The Prophet's behaviour was exemplary in all the turns of fortune, and however foolish men may cavil, his purity and uprightness are fully known to Allah.

إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ (٢٢٠)

220. For it is He Who heareth and knoweth all things.

هَلْ أُنَبِّئُكُمْ عَلَىٰ مَن تَنَزَّلُ الشَّيَاطِينُ (٢٢١)

221. Shall I inform you, (O people!), on whom it is that the evil ones descend?

C3236. To people who maliciously suggested that the holy Prophet was possessed or inspired by evil spirits (26:210 above) the reply had already been made, but it is now declared that that suggestion is itself the work of Evil. Behind such suggestions are lying and wickedness, or at best some half-truths caught up in hearsay and twisted so as to show Allah in an evil light.

تَنَزَّلُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ أَفَّاكٍ أَثِيمٍ (٢٢٢)

222. They descend on every lying, wicked person,

يُلْقُونَ السَّمْعَ وَأَكْثُرُهُمْ كَاذِبُونَ (٢٢٣)

223. (Into whose ears) they pour hearsay vanities, and most of them are liars.

وَالشُّعْرَاءُ يَتَّبِعُهُمُ الْغَاوُونَ (٢٢٤)

224. And the Poets -- it is those straying in Evil, who follow them:

C3237. The Poets: to be read along with the exceptions mentioned in [verse 227 below](#).

Poetry and other arts are not in themselves evil, but may on the contrary be used in the service of religion and righteousness. But there is a danger that they may be prostituted for base purposes. If they are insincere ("they say what they do not") or are divorced from actual life or its goodness or its serious purpose, they may become instruments of evil or futility.

They then wander about without any set purpose, and seek the depths (valleys) of human folly rather than the heights of divine light.

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّهُمْ فِي كُلِّ وَادٍ يَهِيمُونَ (٢٢٥)

225. Seest thou not that they wander distracted in every valley?

وَأَنَّهُمْ يَقُولُونَ مَا لَا يَفْعَلُونَ (٢٢٦)

226. And that they say what they practice not? --

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَذَكَرُوا اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا...

227. Except those who believe, work righteousness, engage much in the remembrance of Allah,

C3238. Poetry and the fine arts which are to be commended are those which emanate from minds steeped in Faith, which try to carry out in life the fine sentiments they express in their artistic work, aim at the glory of Allah rather than at self-glorification or the fulsome praise of men with feet of clay, and do not (as in Jihad) attack anything except aggressive evil.

In this sense a perfect artist should be a perfect man. Perfection may not be attainable in this life, but it should be the aim of every man, and especially of one who wishes to become a supreme artist, not only in technique but in spirit and essentials.

Among the commendable poets contemporary with the holy Prophet may be mentioned Hassan and Labid: the latter had the honour of being one of the seven whose poems were selected for "hanging" (the Mu'allaqat) in the Days of Ignorance.

...وَأَنْتَصِرُوا مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا ظَلَمُوا...

and defend themselves only after they are unjustly attacked.

...وَسَيَعْلَمُ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا أَيَّ مُنْقَلَبٍ يَنْقَلِبُونَ (٢٢٧)

And soon will the **unjust** assailants know what vicissitudes their affairs will take!

C3239. These were the scurrilous rhymesters, who were doomed to come to an evil end.