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THE
HOLY QURAN

ENGLISH TAFSEER
CHAPTER 40
SURAH GHAFIR

COMMENTARY & EXPLANATORY

By
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HOLY QURAN

CHAPTER

040

SURAH GHAFIR

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Introduction and Summary

The Surah is called **Ghafir** (Forgiver, see verse 3), It is also called "The Believer (Mu'min) from the story of the individual Believer among the people of Pharaoh, who declares his faith and looks to the Future (verses 28-45). In Surah 23, called Believers (Mu'mininun), the argument was about the collective force of Faith and virtue. Here it is about the Individual's witness to Faith and Virtue, and his triumph in the End.

We now begin a series of seven Surahs (40-46) to which are affixed the Abbreviated Letters **Ha Mim**. Chronologically they all

belong to the same period, the later Makkan Period, and they immediately follow the last Surah in time. About the Abbreviated Letters generally, see Appendix 1 at the end of Surah 2.

As to the precise meaning of **Ha Mim** no authoritative explanation is available. If **Mim** here has a signification similar to **Mim** in **Alif, Lam, Mim** (see n. 25 to 2:1), it means the End of things, the Last Day, and all these Surahs direct our special attention to that **Ha**, the emphatic guttural, in contrast with the softer breathing of **Alif**, may be meant to suggest that the Beginning (see n. 25 to 2:1, last paragraph) is only for the End, the Present for the Future, and to emphasize the eschatological element in Faith. But this is mere conjecture, and should be taken for no more than it is worth.

The general theme of the whole series is the relation of Faith to Unfaith, Revelation to Rejection, Goodness to Evil. Truth to Falsehood.

It is shown that the first in each of these pairs is the real friend, helper, and protector of man, while the second is his enemy. The very word **Hamim** in that sense is used in Surah 40 and 41 (40:18 and 41:34), while in the other Surahs we have words of equivalent import, e.g.

- **wali** or **nasir** (42:8 and 42:31);
- **qarin** (43:36), 43:38);
- **mawla** (44:41);
- **awliya'** or **nasirin** (45:19, 45:34); and
- **awliya** (46:32).

Is it permissible to connect the abbreviated Letters **Ha Mim** with these ideas as expressed in the word **Hamim**?

Another suggestion worthy of consideration is that **Ha** stands for **Hayy**, and **Mim** for **Qayyum**. These are two attributes of Allah, meaning,

- the Living, and
- the Self-Subsisting, Eternal.

The one points to Life, and Revelation, and the other to the Hereafter and Eternity; and both these matters are specially dealt with in the seven **Ha Mim** Surahs. The first letter of **Hayy (Ha)** is appropriate for life, and the last letter of **Qayyum** is appropriate for the Last Days, the Ma'ad, the Hereafter. Again this is mere conjecture, and should not be taken for more than it is worth.

Summary- Faith is ever justified, for Allah forgives; but evil deeds must have evil fruits, for Allah knows and is just (40:1-20 and C. 206).

In all history Evil came to evil; the protest of Faith, in the midst of Evil, may be ignored; but Faith is protected by Allah, while Evil perishes (40:21-50, and C. 207).

No doubt is there of the Future Judgement; the Power, Goodness, and Justice of God are manifest; will man dispute, or will he accept the Signs before it is too late? (40:51-85, and C. 208).

C.206 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(40:1-20)

*Believe in God. For He Perfect
In Knowledge and Power, forgives Sins
And accepts Repentance, and justly
Enforces His Law. Those who reject Him
Are but in deceit: His glory is sung
By the highest and purest. Give all devotion
To Him alone. The Day of Requital
Is ever drawing near, when Falsehood
Will vanish, and Allah's Truth and Justice
Will be established for all Eternity.*

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

حم (١)

1. Ha Mim.

C4356. See the [Introduction to this Surah](#).

تَنْزِيلُ الْكِتَابِ مِنَ اللَّهِ الْعَزِيزِ الْعَلِيمِ (٢)

2. The revelation of this Book is from Allah, Exalted in Power, Full of Knowledge --

C4357. This verse is the same as Surah 39:1, except for the last words describing the attribute of Allah.

In Surah 39:1, it was "Full of Wisdom", because stress was laid on the wisdom of Allah's Plan in ordering His World. In this Surah the stress is laid on Allah's Knowledge, before which the shallow knowledge of men is vain ([40:83](#)).

غَافِرِ الذَّنْبِ وَقَابِلِ التَّوْبِ...

3. Who forgiveth Sin, accepteth Repentance,

C4358. Allah's knowledge is supreme and all-reaching. But there are other attributes of His, which concern us even more intimately; e.g., He forgives sin and accepts our repentance when it is sincere and results in our change of heart and life:

but He is also just, and strict in punishment; and so no loophole will be left for Evil except in repentance. And further, all His attributes reach forward to everything: His Mercy, as well as His Knowledge and Justice; His Bounties as well as His Punishments.

... شَدِيدِ الْعِقَابِ ذِي الطَّوْلِ ...

is strict in Punishment, and hath a Long Reach (in all things).

... لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ ...

There is no god but He:

... إِلَيْهِ الْمَصِيرُ (٣)

to Him is the Final Goal.

مَا يُجَادِلُ فِي آيَاتِ اللَّهِ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا...

4. None can dispute about the **Signs of Allah** but the Unbelievers.

C4359. Allah's knowledge and attributes are perfect, and everything around us proclaims this. We are surrounded by His Signs. It is only want of Faith that will make people dispute about them.

... فَلَا يَغْرُرُكَ تَقَلُّبُهُمْ فِي الْبِلَادِ (٤)

Let not, then, their strutting about through the land deceive thee!

C4360. Cf. 3:196.

Their strutting about shows how little they can read the Signs.

كَذَّبَتْ قَبْلَهُمْ قَوْمُ نُوحٍ وَالْأَحْزَابُ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ...

5. But (there were people) before them, who denied (the Signs) -- the People of Noah, and the confederates (of Evil) after them;

C4361. Cf. 38:11-13, and n. 4158.

All the hosts of wickedness collected together from history will have no power against Allah's Truth, or the Messenger of that Truth, or Allah's holy Plan for all His Creation.

... وَهَمَّتْ كُلُّ أُمَّةٍ بِرَسُولِهِمْ لِيَأْخُذُوهُ...

and every People plotted against their prophet, to seize him,

... وَجَادَلُوا بِالْبَاطِلِ لِيُذْخِطُوا بِهِ الْحَقَّ...

and disputed by means of vanities, therewith to condemn the truth;

C4362. Whenever a great or vital Truth is proclaimed and renewed, there are always shallow minds that are ready to dispute about it! And what petty and vain arguments they advance! They think they can discredit or condemn the Truth in this way, or render "of none

effect" Allah's Plan. But they are mistaken. If they seem to succeed for a time, that is merely their trial. They may try to plan and plot against Allah's men. But their plots will fail in the long run. They will themselves be caught in their own snares. And then, how terrible will be their Punishment!

... فَأَخَذْتُهُمْ ...

but it was I that seized them!

... فَكَيْفَ كَانَ عِقَابِ (٥) ...

And how (terrible), was My Requital!

C4363. Cf. 13:32.

وَكَذَلِكَ حَقَّتْ كَلِمَتُ رَبِّكَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا...

6. Thus was the Decree of thy Lord proved true against the Unbelievers;

C4364. Cf. 39:71.

The Decree, or Word of Allah, by which Evil was to be judged and condemned, was proved true against these men.

... أَنَّهُمْ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ (٦) ...

that truly they are Companions of Fire!

They are "**Companions of the Fire**": in other words, they are fit to live only in the environment of Evil!

الَّذِينَ يَحْمِلُونَ الْعَرْشَ وَمَنْ حَوْلَهُ...

7. Those who sustain the Throne (of Allah) and those around it

C4365. Cf. 39:75. (R).

... يُسَبِّحُونَ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّهِمْ وَيُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ وَيَسْتَغْفِرُونَ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا...

sing Glory and Praise to their Lord;

believe in Him; and implore forgiveness for those who believe:

... رَبَّنَا وَسِعْتَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ رَحْمَةً وَعِلْمًا...

"Our Lord! Thy reach is over all things, in Mercy and Knowledge.

C4366. Cf. [verse 3 above](#).

... فَأَغْفِرْ لِلَّذِينَ تَابُوا وَاتَّبَعُوا سَبِيلَكَ وَقِهِمْ عَذَابَ الْجَحِيمِ (٧)

Forgive, then, those who turn in repentance, and follow Thy Path:
and preserve them from the Penalty of the Blazing Fire!

رَبَّنَا وَأَدْخِلْهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ عَدْنٍ الَّتِي...

8. "And grant, our Lord! That they enter the Gardens of Eternity,

... وَعَدَّتْهُمْ وَمَنْ صَلَحَ مِنْ آبَائِهِمْ وَأَزْوَاجِهِمْ وَذُرِّيَّاتِهِمْ...

which Thou hast promised to them, and to the righteous among
their fathers, their wives, and their posterity!

C4367. There is nothing selfish in prayer. We pray for all who are true and sincere. But just as Evil is catching, so Goodness is catching in another sense. The associates of the Good and those near and dear to them also share in their goodness and happiness, if only they try to walk in the same Way. And the Grace of Allah is working for all, all the time.

... إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ (٨)

For Thou art (He), the Exalted in Might, Full of Wisdom.

وَقِهِمُ السَّيِّئَاتِ...

9. "And preserve them from (all) ills;

... وَمَنْ تَقِ السَّيِّئَاتِ يَوْمَئِذٍ فَقَدْ رَحِمْتَهُ...

and any whom thou dost preserve from ills that Day -- on them wilt Thou have bestowed Mercy indeed:

C4368. That is the final Judgment, and any who is saved from the evil consequences of their deeds in this life will truly have been saved by Allah's Mercy, and for them it is the highest achievement they could have, the attainment of all their wishes, the fulfilment of their destiny and the noblest purpose of their Life, the supreme Salvation and Felicity.

... وَذَلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ (٩)

and that will be truly (for them) the highest Achievement.

C4369. Muslim Salvation, then, is more positive than mere safety from dangers or evils: it is the complete fulfilment of the noble destiny of man in the attainment of the fullest Grace.

Section 2

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا يُنَادُونَ...

10. The Unbelievers will be addressed:

... لَمَقْتٌ لِلَّهِ أَكْبَرُ مِنْ مَقْتِكُمْ أَنْفُسَكُمْ ...

"Greater was the aversion of **Allah to you** than (is) your aversion to yourselves,

C4370. The Unbelievers having rejected Allah's Signs, they now see how they are shut out from Grace, and they feel disgusted with themselves.

How much greater was Allah's displeasure with them, when He showered mercy upon mercy on them and they yet rebelled!

How could they now hope for Grace!

... إِذْ تُدْعَوْنَ إِلَى الْإِيمَانِ فَتَكْفُرُونَ (١٠)

seeing that ye were called to the Faith and ye used to refuse."

قَالُوا رَبَّنَا أَمَتْنَا اثْنَتَيْنِ وَأَحْيَيْنَا اثْنَتَيْنِ...

11. They will say: "Our Lord! twice hast Thou **made** us without life, and twice hast Thou given us Life!

C4371. Cf. 2:28:

"How can ye reject the faith in Allah?-seeing that ye were without life, and He gave you life; then will He cause you to die, and will again bring you to life; and again to Him will ye return."

Non-existence or existence as clay without life was equivalent to death. Then came true Life on this earth; then came physical death or the cessation of our physical life; and now at the Resurrection, is the second life.

... فَأَعْتَرَفْنَا بِذُنُوبِنَا ...

Now have we recognized our sins:

... فَهَلْ إِلَى خُرُوجٍ مِّن سَبِيلٍ (١١)

is there any way out (of this)?"

ذَلِكُمْ بِأَنَّهُ إِذَا دُعِيَ اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ كَفَرْتُمْ...

12. (The answer will be:)

"This is because, when Allah was invoked as the only (object of worship), ye did reject Faith,

C4372. Cf. 39:45, and n. 4313.

When exclusive devotion is not rendered to Allah, there is no true understanding, in the mind of a creature, of his own true position, or of the working of the Divine Will and Purpose. How can he then hope to achieve the purpose of his life, or obtain Allah's Mercy, which is the only way to obtain release from the consequences of Sin?

... وَإِن يُشْرَكَ بِهِ تُؤْمِنُوا...

but when partners were joined to Him, ye believed!

... فَالْحُكْمُ لِلَّهِ الْعَلِيِّ الْكَبِيرِ (١٢)

The command is with Allah, Most High, Most Great!"

C4373. At the Judgment, the matter will have passed out of the stage at which further chances could have been hoped for. But in any case Allah is High above all things, Great above all that we can conceive of, both in Mercy and in Justice. The Decision will be with Him, and Him alone.

هُوَ الَّذِي يُرِيكُمْ آيَاتِهِ وَيُنَزِّل لَكُمْ مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ رِزْقًا...

13. He it is Who showeth you His Signs and sendeth down sustenance for you from the sky:

C4374. Lest it should be thought that Allah's Grace did not meet the Sinner again and again and offer Allah's Mercy again and again, it is pointed out that Allah's Signs were freely vouchsafed everywhere and

continuously, and that every kind of means was provided for man's "**Sustenance**" or growth and development, physical, mental, and spiritual. But only those could take advantage of it who turned their attention to Allah, who submitted their will to Him.

... وَمَا يَنْذَرُ إِلَّا مَنْ يَنْيِبُ (١٣)

but only those receive admonition who turn (to Allah).

فَادْعُوا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْكَافِرُونَ (١٤)

14. Call ye, then, upon Allah with sincere devotion to Him, even though the Unbelievers may detest it.

C4375. Cf. 9:33.

رَفِيعُ الدَّرَجَاتِ ذُو الْعَرْشِ...

15. Raised high above ranks (or degrees), (He is) the Lord of the Throne (of authority):

C4376. He is raised far above any rank or degree which we can imagine.

It is possible also to treat **Rafi**, as equivalent to **Rafi**, meaning that He can raise His creatures to the highest ranks and degrees for He is the fountain of all honour.

... يُنْفِئِ الرُّوحَ مِنْ أَمْرِهِ عَلَى مَنْ يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ ...

by his command doth He send the spirit (of inspiration) to any of His servants He pleases,

C4377. The choosing of a man to be the recipient of inspiration-to be the standard bearer of Allah's Truth-is the highest honour possible in the Kingdom of Allah. And Allah bestows that honour according to His own most perfect Will and Plan, which no one can question, for He is the fountain of all honour, dignity, and authority.

... لِيُنذَرَ يَوْمَ التَّلَاقِ (١٥)

that it may warn (men) of the Day of Mutual Meeting --

C4378. All men will meet together and meet their Lord at the Resurrection, no matter how far scattered they may have been in life or in death.

يَوْمَ هُمْ بَارِزُونَ...

16. The Day whereon they will (all) come forth:

... لَا يَخْفَى عَلَى اللَّهِ مِنْهُمْ شَيْءٌ ...

Not a single thing concerning them is hidden from Allah.

... لِمَنْ الْمُلْكُ الْيَوْمَ ...

Whose will be the dominion that Day?

C4379. The Kingdom of Allah-of Justice, Truth, and Righteousness-will then be fully established. Evil can then no more come into competition with Good, even in the subjective consciousness of man.

... لِلَّهِ الْوَاحِدِ الْقَهَّارِ (١٦)

That of Allah, the One, the Irresistible!

الْيَوْمَ تُجْزَى كُلُّ نَفْسٍ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ...

17. That Day will every soul be requited for what it earned;

... لَا ظُلْمَ الْيَوْمَ ...

no injustice will there be that Day,

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ (١٧)

for Allah is Swift in taking account.

C4380. Swift in several senses;

- the time of the present life or of the interval before Judgment. i.e., before the restoration of true values, is so short as compared to Eternity, that it may be counted as negligible: in the next verse the Day is characterized as "(ever) drawing near";
- in spite of the great concourse of souls to be judged, the process of Judgment will be almost instantaneous, "in the twinkling of an eye" (16:77), because everything is already known to Allah; and yet not the least injustice will be done.

وَأَنْذِرْهُمْ يَوْمَ الْأَزْفَةِ إِذِ الْقُلُوبُ لَدَى الْحَنَاجِرِ كَاطْمِينٍ...

18. Warn them of the Day that is (ever) drawing near, when the Hearts will (come) right up to the Throats to choke (them);

C4381. Hearts will come right up to the Throats to choke them:

an idiom implying that the whole of their life-functions will be choked up with terror.

But a more subtle meaning emerges from further analysis.

The heart (or the breast) is the seat of affection, emotion, and every kind of feeling, such as terror, pain, despair, etc. These things will as it were overflow right up to the throat and choke it. The throat is the vehicle for the voice; their voice will be choked, and they will be able to say nothing. The throat is the channel for food, which goes to the stomach and maintains a healthy functioning of life; the choking means that the healthy functioning will stop, and there will be nothing but woe.

... مَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ مِنْ حَمِيمٍ وَلَا شَفِيعٍ يُطَاعُ (١٨)

no intimate friend nor intercessor will the wrongdoers have, who could be listened to.

C4382. In that enforcement of personal responsibility, what sympathy or intercession can the wrong-doers get?

Is **Hamim** in any way connected with the Abbreviated letters Ha Mim attached to this Surah?

See [Introduction](#).

يَعْلَمُ خَائِنَةَ الْأَعْيُنِ ...

19. (Allah) knows of (the tricks) that deceive with the eyes,

C4383. Men may be taken in by tricks that deceive with the eyes, but Allah's perfect knowledge penetrates through all mysteries.

"Deceive with the eyes" may mean several things;

- a sleight of hand (literally or figuratively) may deceive in respect of the eyes of beholders, for the things that they see do not actually happen;
- it may be the deceiver's own eyes that play false, because, for example, they show love when hatred is meant; or
- it may be that the eyes of the beholder play him false, in that he sees things that he should not see, and thus sins with his eyes.

... وَمَا تُخْفِي الصُّدُورُ (١٩)

and all that hearts (of men) conceal.

C4384. Here we come into the region of evil motives and thoughts which may be concealed in the hearts, breast, or mind, but which are all perfectly known to Allah.

وَاللَّهُ يَقْضِي بِالْحَقِّ...

20. And Allah will judge with (Justice and) Truth:

... وَالَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِهِ لَمْ يَقْضُوا بِشَيْءٍ...

but those whom (men) invoke besides Him, will not (be in a position) to judge at all.

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ (٢٠)

Verily it is Allah (alone) Who hears and sees (all things).

C4385. If men build their hopes or their faith in anything except the Divine Grace, they will find themselves deserted. Any pretences that they make will be known to Allah. On the other hand every single good act, or word, or motive, or aspiration of their win, will reach Allah's Throne of Mercy.

C.207 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(40:21-50)

*Travel in space and time, and you
Will see that Evil came to nothing
But evil. Mighty men of old
In arrogance plotted against Allah's Truth,
But were brought low. A humble Believer
In Pharaoh's Court stood up for Truth,
And counseled his People to obey the Right:
In earnest humility did he address them,
They heard him not. But he was saved,
And they were engulfed in the Wrath of Allah.*

Section 3

أَوَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَيَنْظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِينَ كَانُوا
مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ ...

21. Do they not travel through the earth and see what was the End of those before them?

C4386. Cf. 30:9.

and several other similar passages.

... كَانُوا هُمْ أَشَدَّ مِنْهُمْ قُوَّةً وَآثَارًا فِي الْأَرْضِ ...

They were even superior to them in strength, and in the traces (they have left) in the land:

C4387. See n. 3515 to 30:9.

We can learn from the history of previous nations. Many of them were more powerful, or have left finer and more imposing monuments and made a deeper impression on the world around them than any particular generation addressed. "Traces" in the text may be taken in that

extended sense. And yet all this did not save them from the consequences of their sins. They were called to account and punished. None of the power or pomp or skill of which they boasted could for a moment ward off the punishment when it came in God's good time.

... فَأَخَذَهُمُ اللَّهُ بِذُنُوبِهِمْ وَمَا كَانَ لَهُم مِّنَ اللَّهِ مِن وَّاقٍ (٢١)

but Allah did call them to account for their sins, and none had they to defend them against Allah.

ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ كَانَتْ تَأْتِيهِمْ رُسُلُهُم بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ فَكَفَرُوا...

22. That was because there came to them their messengers with Clear (Signs), but they rejected them:

C4388. But Allah in His Mercy always sends a Message of warning and good news through his messengers, and He gives His messengers Clear Signs and an authority that can be recognised.

Among the Clear Signs are:

- the pure and unselfish lives of the messengers;
- the revelation of truth which they bring;
- their influence on the course of events in their own and succeeding generations; etc. Some of these may be so remarkable that they merit the name of Miracles.

... فَأَخَذَهُمُ اللَّهُ ...

So Allah called them to account:

... إِنَّهُ قَوِيٌّ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ (٢٢)

for He is full of Strength, Strict in Punishment.

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا مُوسَىٰ بِآيَاتِنَا وَسُلْطَانٍ مُّبِينٍ (٢٣)

23. Of old We sent Moses, with Our Signs and Authority manifest,

C4389. This is not the story of Moses himself, so much as an introduction to the story of the one just man who believed, in the court of Pharaoh:

see verse 28 below. This Surah ("The Believer") is called after him.

إِلَىٰ فِرْعَوْنَ وَهَامَانَ وَقَارُونَ ...

24. To Pharaoh, Haman, and Qarun;

C4390. Here are three types of Unfaith, each showing a different phase, and yet all united in opposition to the Truth and Mission of Moses.

- Pharaoh is the type of arrogance, cruelty, and reliance on brute force; cf. 28:38-39.
- Haman was Pharaoh's minister (n. 3331 to 28:6; also 28:38): he was the type of a sycophant who would pander to the vanity of any man in power.
- Qarun excelled in his wealth, was selfish in its use, and overbearing to the poor (28:76-81, and n. 3404).

They all came to an evil end eventually.

... فَقَالُوا سَاحِرٌ كَذَّابٌ (٢٤)

but they called (him) "a sorcerer telling lies!"...

فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُم بِالْحَقِّ مِنْ عِنْدِنَا ...

25. Now, when he came to them in Truth, from Us,

C4391. Verse 24 described the opposition of three types of Unfaith, which opposed Faith, in different ways, as described in the last note. Qarun, in his overweening insolence, may well have called Moses and Aaron "sorcerers telling lies" in the Sinai desert, as he despised priests and men of God, and might cast the Egyptian reproach in their teeth as a reminiscence.

Here, in verse 25, we have an episode about the time of the birth of Moses: "**them**" and "**they**" refer to Pharaoh and his Court; the "**coming**" of Moses here refers to the time of his birth.

On that construction, "**with him**", lower down in their speech would be elliptical, referring to "**slay the sons**",

as if they had said, "Kill all Israelite male children: the unknown Prophet to be born would be amongst them: so kill them all with him."

In verse 26 we again skip some years and recall an episode when Moses, having got his mission, stood in Pharaoh's Court, and some of the Egyptian Commonalty were almost ready to believe in him.

... قَالُوا اقْتُلُوا أَبْنَاءَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ وَاسْتَحْيُوا نِسَاءَهُمْ...

they said, "Slay the sons of those who believe with him, and keep alive their females,"

C4392. That is, the Israelites, for they were the custodians of Allah's Faith then. For the slaughter of Israelite children by Pharaoh, see 28:4-6, and notes.

... وَمَا كَيْدُ الْكَافِرِينَ إِلَّا فِي ضَلَالٍ (٢٥)

but the plots of Unbelievers (end) in nothing but errors (and delusions)!"...

وَقَالَ فِرْعَوْنُ ذَرُونِي أَقْتُلْ مُوسَى وَلْيَدْعُ رَبَّهُ...

26. Said Pharaoh:

"Leave me to slay Moses; and let him Call on his Lord!

C4393. This is an episode that occurs when Moses, invested with his mission, confronts Pharaoh in his Court and preaches to him:

see 20:49 and following verses; also 20:57,63.

... إِنِّي أَخَافُ أَنْ يُبَدِّلَ دِينَكُمْ أَوْ أَنْ يُظْهِرَ فِي الْأَرْضِ الْفَسَادَ (٢٦)

What I fear is lest he should change your **religion**, or lest he should cause mischief to appear in the land!"

C4394. Some of Pharaoh's people did afterwards give up the worship of Pharaoh and of the Egyptian gods and believed "in the Lord of Aaron and Moses" and in fact suffered martyrdom for the Faith of Unity: 20:70-73.

وَقَالَ مُوسَى إِنِّي عُذْتُ بِرَبِّي وَرَبِّكُمْ...

27. Moses said:

"I have indeed called upon my Lord and your Lord

C4395. The whole point of the Gospel of Unity which Moses preached was that the God of Moses and the God of Pharaoh, of Israel and Egypt, the Lord of all the Worlds, was One,-Allah, the only True God.

See 20:49-50 and notes 2572 and 2573.

... مِّنْ كُلِّ مُتَكَبِّرٍ لَّا يُؤْمِنُ بِيَوْمِ الْحِسَابِ (٢٧)

(for protection) from every arrogant one who believes not in the Day of Account!"

Section 4

وَقَالَ رَجُلٌ مُُّؤْمِنٌ مِّنْ آلِ فِرْعَوْنَ يَكْتُمُ إِيمَانَهُ...

28. A believer, a man from among the people of Pharaoh, who had concealed his faith, said:

C4396. There is nothing to justify the identification of this man with the man mentioned in 28:20, who warned Moses long before Moses had received his mission. On the contrary, in this passage, the man is evidently speaking after Moses had received his mission, preached to Pharaoh, and got a certain amount of success, for which Pharaoh and his people were trying, to seek his life. Moses had evidently already brought his Clear Signs.

... أَتَقْتُلُونَ رَجُلًا أَنْ يَقُولَ رَبِّيَ اللَّهُ وَقَدْ جَاءَكُمْ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ ...

"Will ye slay a man because he says, 'My Lord is Allah'? -- when he has indeed come to you with Clear (Signs) from your Lord?"

... وَإِنْ يَكُ كَاذِبًا فَعَلَيْهِ كَذِبُهُ...

And if he be a liar on him is (the sin of) his lie:

... وَإِنْ يَكُ صَادِقًا يُصِيبْكُمْ بَعْضُ الَّذِي يَعِدُكُمْ...

but, if he is telling the Truth, then will fall on you something of the (calamity) of which he warns you:

C4397. A commonsense view is put before them by an Egyptian who loves his own people and does not wish them to perish in sin. "Will you kill this man for calling on Allah?"

Have you not seen his character and behaviour? Do you not see the 'Clear Signs' about him that bespeak his credentials?

Suppose for a moment that he is a liar and pretender: he will suffer for his falsehood, but why should you turn against Allah? But suppose that he is really inspired by Allah to tell you the truth and warn you against evil, what will be your fate when Allah's Wrath descends? For it must descend if he is a true Messenger sent by Allah."

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي مَنْ هُوَ مُسْرِفٌ كَذَّابٌ (٢٨)

truly Allah guides not one who transgresses and lies!

C4398. This is with reference to the "Clear signs". 'They are Signs of Allah's guidance, for Allah would never guide a man who exceeds the bounds of truth and tells you lies! Such a man is bound to be found out!'

يَا قَوْمِ لَكُمْ الْمُلْكُ الْيَوْمَ ظَاهِرِينَ فِي الْأَرْضِ..

29. "O my people!

yours is the dominion this day: you have the upper hand in the land:

C4399. 'Do not be puffed up with arrogance because the power is in your hands at present! Do you deserve it?

Will it last?

If you are sinning and drawing upon yourselves Allah's Punishment, is there anything that can shield you from it?'

... فَمَنْ يَنْصُرُنَا مِنَ بَأْسِ اللَّهِ إِذَا جَاءَنَا...

but who will help us from the Punishment of Allah, should it befall us?"

... قَالَ فِرْعَوْنُ مَا أُرِيكُمْ إِلَّا مَا أَرَى...

Pharaoh said:

"I but point out to you that which I see (myself);

C4400. Pharaoh's egotism and arrogance come out. 'I can see and understand everything. As I see things, so

do I direct you. The Path which I see must be right, and you must follow it.'

... وَمَا أَهْدِيكُمْ إِلَّا سَبِيلَ الرَّشَادِ (٢٩)

nor do I guide you but to the Path of Right!"

وَقَالَ الَّذِي آمَنَ يَا قَوْمِ إِنِّي أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ مِثْلَ يَوْمِ الْأَحْزَابِ (٣٠)

30. Then said the man who believed:

"O my People! truly I do fear for you something like the Day (of disaster) of the **Confederates** (in sin)! --

C4401. He appeals to past history.

"Have you not heard of people who lived before you?-like the generations of Noah, the 'Ad, the Thamud, and many more-who held together in sin against Allah's Preachers, but were wiped out for their sins?"

C4402. Cf. 38:11-13, and n. 4158,

also [40:5](#), and [n. 4361](#).

مِثْلَ دَأْبِ قَوْمِ نُوحٍ وَعَادٍ وَثَمُودَ وَالَّذِينَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ...

31. "Something like the fate of the people of Noah, the 'Ad, and the Thamud, and those who came after them:

... وَمَا اللَّهُ يُرِيدُ ظُلْمًا لِلْعِبَادِ (٣١)

but Allah never wishes injustice to His Servants.

C4403. 'All these disasters happened in history, and they will happen again to you if you do not give up evil. Do not for a moment think that Allah is unjust. It is you who are deliberately preparing the disasters by your conduct.'

وَيَا قَوْمِ إِنِّي أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ يَوْمَ التَّنَادِ (٣٢)

32. "And, O my People!

I fear for you a **Day** when there will be mutual calling (and wailing).

C4404. This Day may refer to the Day of Judgment, of which three features are here referred to.

- People may wail and call to each other, but no one can help another: each one will have his own judgment to face;
- the wicked will then be driven to Hell from the Judgment-Seat; and
- there will be no one to help, guide, or intercede, because the grace and guidance of Allah had already been rejected.

But the words are perfectly general, and are applicable to all stages at which the Wrath of Allah is manifest.

يَوْمَ تَوَلَّوْنَ مُدْبِرِينَ مَا لَكُمْ مِّنَ اللَّهِ مِنْ عَاصِمٍ...

32. "And, O my People!

I fear for you a Day when there will be mutual calling (and wailing).

... وَمَنْ يُضِلِلِ اللَّهُ فَمَا لَهُ مِنْ هَادٍ (٣٣)

any whom Allah leaves to stray, there is none to guide...

وَلَقَدْ جَاءَكُمْ يُوسُفُ مِنْ قَبْلُ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ...

34. "And to you there came Joseph in times gone by, with Clear Signs,

C4405. So far he has been speaking of general religious tradition. Now, as an Egyptian, addressing Egyptians, he refers to the mission of Joseph in Egypt, for which see the whole of Surah 12.

Joseph was not born in Egypt, nor was he an Egyptian. With what wonderful incidents he came into Egypt! What difficulties did he not surmount among his own brothers first, and in the Egyptian family which afterwards adopted him! How injustice, spite, and forgetfulness on the part of others, yet wove a spell round him and made him a ruler and saviour of Egypt in times of famine!

How he preached to prisoners in prison, the wife of 'Aziz in her household, to the Egyptian ladies in their banquet, and to the Court of Pharaoh generally. The Egyptians profited by the material gains which came to them

through him, but as a nation remained skeptical of his spiritual truths for many generations after him.

... فَمَا زِلْتُمْ فِي شَكِّ مِمَّا جَاءَكُمْ بِهِ...

but ye ceased not to doubt of the (mission) for which he had come:

... حَتَّى إِذَا هَلَكَ قُلْتُمْ لَنْ يَبْعَثَ اللَّهُ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ رَسُولًا...

at length, when he died, ye said: 'No messenger will Allah send after him.'

C4406. See [Appendix IV](#) for a discussion of the interval between Joseph and Moses. Perhaps the interval was about one to three centuries, a very short period for the memory of a learned nation like the Egyptians.

And yet they as a nation ignored his spiritual work, and afterwards even persecuted Israel in Egypt until Moses delivered them. They actually saw the benefits conferred by Joseph, but did not realise that Allah's Kingdom works continuously even though men ignore it.

See [Appendix V](#); for a sketch of Religion in Egypt.

For such men how could the Grace and Guidance of Allah be effective in their hearts?

... كَذَلِكَ يُضِلُّ اللَّهُ مَنْ هُوَ مُسْرِفٌ مُرْتَابٌ (٣٤)

Thus doth Allah leave to stray such as transgress and live in doubt

الَّذِينَ يُجَادِلُونَ فِي آيَاتِ اللَّهِ بِغَيْرِ سُلْطَانٍ أَتَاهُمْ...

35. "(Such) as dispute about the Signs of Allah, without any authority that hath reached them.

... كَبُرَ مَقْتًا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَعِنْدَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا...

Grievous and odious (is such conduct) in the sight of Allah and of the Believers.

... كَذَلِكَ يَطْبَعُ اللَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ قَلْبٍ مُتَكَبِّرٍ جَبَّارٍ (٣٥)

Thus doth Allah **seal up every heart** -- of arrogant and obstinate transgressors."

C4407. See the last note.

The arrogant transgressors having closed their hearts to the Message of Allah and to every appeal made to them, it followed by Allah's Law that their hearts were sealed up to any fresh influences for good.

Cf. 7:100; also 2:7, and n. 31.

وَقَالَ فِرْعَوْنُ يَا هَامَانَ ابْنِ لِي صَرْحًا لَعَلِّي أَبْلُغُ الْأَسْبَابَ (٣٦)

36. Pharaoh said:

"O Haman! Build me a lofty **palace**, that I may attain the ways and means --

C4408. Cf. 28:38, and n. 3371.

There are two points to be noted here.

1. Pharaoh, in the arrogance of his materialism, thinks of the Kingdom of Heaven like a kingdom on earth; he thinks of spiritual things in terms of palaces and ladders: notice that the word **asbab** (ways and means) is emphasised by repetition
2. His sarcasm turns Moses and Allah to ridicule, and he frankly states that 'for his part he thinks Moses is a liar', though other men less lofty than he (Pharaoh) may be deceived by the Clear Signs of Moses.

أَسْبَابَ السَّمَاوَاتِ فَأَطَّلِعَ إِلَى إِلَهِ مُوسَى...

37. "The ways and means of (reaching) the heavens, and that I may mount up to the Allah of Moses;

... وَإِنِّي لَأَظُنُّهُ كَاذِبًا...

but as far as I am concerned, I think (Moses) is a liar!"

... وَكَذَلِكَ زُيِّنَ لِفِرْعَوْنَ سُوءَ عَمَلِهِ وَصَدَّ عَنِ السَّبِيلِ...

Thus was made **alluring**, in Pharaoh's eyes, the evil of his deeds, and he was hindered from the Path;

C4409. Pharaoh's speech shows how his own egotism and haughty arrogance brought him to this pass, that even the evil which he did seemed alluring in his own eyes!

His heart was indeed sealed, and his arrogance prevented him from seeing the right path.

(With the Kufi Qiraat I read **sudda** in the passive voice).

... وَمَا كَيْدُ فِرْعَوْنَ إِلَّا فِي تَبَابٍ (٣٧)

and the **plot** of Pharaoh led to nothing but perdition (for him).

C4410. Pharaoh had plotted to slay Moses (40:26) and to kill the Children of Israel (40:25).

The plot recoiled on his own head and on the head of his people who joined in the plot; for they were all drowned in the Red Sea.

Section 5

وَقَالَ الَّذِي آمَنَ يَا قَوْمِ اتَّبِعُونِ أَهْدِكُمْ سَبِيلَ الرَّشَادِ (٣٨)

38. The man who believed said further:

"O my People! follow me: I will lead you to the Path of Right.

C4411. Note the contrast between the earnest beseeching tone of the Believer here and the hectoring tone of Pharaoh in using similar words in 40:29 above.

يَا قَوْمِ إِنَّمَا هَذِهِ الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا مَتَاعٌ...

39. "O my people!

This life of the present is nothing but (temporary) convenience:

... وَإِنَّ الْآخِرَةَ هِيَ دَارُ الْقَرَارِ (٣٩)

it is the Hereafter that is the Home that will last.

C4412. Faith makes him see the contrast between vanities, even though they may glitter temporarily, and the eternal Good that is destined for man.

مَنْ عَمِلَ سَيِّئَةً فَلَا يُجْزَىٰ إِلَّا مِثْلَهَا...

40. "He that works evil will not be requited but by the like thereof:

... وَمَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا مِّنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنْثَىٰ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ ...

and he that works a righteous deed -- whether man or woman --
and is a believer --

... فَأُولَٰئِكَ يَدْخُلُونَ الْجَنَّةَ يُرْزَقُونَ فِيهَا بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ (٤٠)

such will enter the Garden (of Bliss):

therein will they have **abundance** without measure.

C4413. Cf. 2:212.

This sustenance will not only last. It will be a most liberal reward, far above any merits of the recipient.

وَيَا قَوْمِ مَا لِي ...

41. "And O my People! how (strange) it is for me

C4414. It may seem strange according to the laws of this world that he should be seeking their Good while they are seeking his damnation! But that is the merit of Faith. Its mission is to rescue its enemies and Allah's enemies, as far as their will will consent!

... أَدْعُوكُمْ إِلَى النَّجَاةِ وَتَدْعُونَنِي إِلَى النَّارِ (٤١)

to call you to Salvation while ye call me to the Fire!

تَدْعُونَنِي لِأَكْفُرَ بِاللَّهِ وَأُشْرِكَ بِهِ مَا لَيْسَ لِي بِهِ عِلْمٌ ...

42. "Ye do call upon me to **blaspheme against Allah**, and to join with Him Partners of whom I have no knowledge;

C4415. The worship of Pharaoh was **blasphemy**, but it had many sides, including the worship of heroes, animals, powers of good and evil in nature, and idols of all kinds.

It is this comprehensive cult which required warnings again and again, but Allah is Exalted in Power, and gives such forgiveness on repentance.

... وَأَنَا أَدْعُوكُمْ إِلَى الْعَزِيزِ الْعَقَّارِ (٤٢)

and I call you to the Exalted in Power, Who forgives again and again!"

لَا جَرَمَ أَنَّمَا تَدْعُونَنِي إِلَيْهِ لَيْسَ لَهُ دَعْوَةٌ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَلَا فِي الْآخِرَةِ...

43. "Without doubt ye do call me to one who is not fit to be called to, whether in this world, or in the Hereafter;

C4416. Faith is not content with its own inner vision and conviction. It can give ample arguments. Three are mentioned here:

1. nothing but Allah is worthy of worship, either in this world of sense or in the next world;
2. our Return will be to Allah, the Eternal Reality; and
3. the worship of Falsehood must necessarily lead to the Penalty of Falsehood, unless Allah's Mercy intervenes and forgives on our sincere repentance. (R).

... وَأَنَّ مَرَدَّنَا إِلَى اللَّهِ...

our Return will be to Allah;

... وَأَنَّ الْمُسْرِفِينَ هُمْ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ (٤٣)

and the Transgressors will be Companions of the Fire!

فَسَتَذْكُرُونَ مَا أَقُولُ لَكُمْ...

44. "Soon will ye remember what I say to you (now),

C4417. The next verse shows his thought to the last is with his People. 'No matter what you do to me: you will have cause to remember my admonition, when perhaps it is too late for you to repent. For my part I commit myself to the care of Allah, and my Faith tells me that all will be right.'

... وَأَفْوضُ أَمْرِي إِلَى اللَّهِ...

my (own) affair I commit to Allah:

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِصَيْرٍ بِالْعِبَادِ (٤٤)

for Allah (ever) watches over His Servants."

فَوَقَاهُ اللَّهُ سَيِّئَاتِ مَا مَكَرُوا...

45. Then Allah saved him from (every) ill that they plotted (against him),

... وَحَاقَ بِآلِ فِرْعَوْنَ سُوءُ الْعَذَابِ (٤٥)

but the brunt of the **Penalty** encompassed on all sides the People of Pharaoh.

C4418. The Pharaoh of the time of Moses, and his people, suffered many calamities in this world: 7:130-136.

But those were nothing to the Penalties mentioned in the next verse.

النَّارُ يُعْرَضُونَ عَلَيْهَا غُدُوًّا وَعَشِيًّا...

46. In front of the Fire will they be brought, morning and evening:

C4419. When the Judgment really comes, it is not like an ordinary physical disaster. The Fire of Punishment is ever present-morning and evening- i.e. at all times. The sentence becomes final and there is no mitigation.

... وَيَوْمَ تَقُومُ السَّاعَةُ أَدْخِلُوا آلَ فِرْعَوْنَ أَشَدَّ الْعَذَابِ (٤٦)

and (the Sentence will be) on the Day that Judgment will be established:

"Cast ye the People of Pharaoh into the severest Penalty!"

وَإِذْ يَتَحَاوُونَ فِي النَّارِ ...

47. Behold, they will dispute with each other in the Fire!

C4420. Just as Unity, Harmony, and Peace are indications of Truth, Bliss, and Salvation, so Reproaches, Disputes, and Disorders are indications of Hell.

... فَيَقُولُ الضُّعَفَاءُ لِلَّذِينَ اسْتَكْبَرُوا...

The weak ones (who followed) will say to those who had been arrogant,

...إِنَّا كُنَّا لَكُمْ تَبَعًا فَهَلْ أَنْتُمْ مُعْتَدُونَ عَلَيْنَا نَصِيبًا مِّنَ النَّارِ (٤٧)

"We but followed you:

can ye then take (on yourselves) from us some share of the Fire?"

قَالَ الَّذِينَ اسْتَكْبَرُوا إِنَّا كُلٌّ فِيهَا...

48. Those who had been arrogant will say:

"We are all in this (Fire)!

C4421. Note the evasion and cynicism of the answer, befitting the character of spiritual misleaders!

'What! are we not suffering with you in the same Fire! Pray to Allah if you like! He has pronounced His Judgment!'

Cf. 14:21-22.

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَدْ حَكَمَ بَيْنَ الْعِبَادِ (٤٨)

Truly, Allah has judged between (His) Servants!"

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ فِي النَّارِ لِخَزَنَةِ جَهَنَّمَ...

49. Those in the Fire will say to the Keepers of Hell:

C4422. Cf. 39:71.

The poor misguided ones will turn to the angels who are their Keepers, asking them to pray and intercede for them. But the angels are set there to watch over them, not to intercede for them. In their innocence they ask, 'Did you have no warnings from messengers, men like yourselves, in your past life?'

ادْعُوا رَبَّكُمْ يُخَفِّفْ عَنَّا يَوْمًا مِّنَ الْعَذَابِ (٤٩)

"Pray to your Lord to lighten us the Penalty for a Day (at least)!"

قَالُوا أَوَلَمْ تَكُنْ تَأْتِيكُمْ رُسُلُكُمْ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ...

50. They will say: "Did there not come to you your messengers with Clear Signs?"

... قَالُوا بَلَى...

They will say, "Yes."

... قَالُوا فَادْعُوا...

They will reply, "Then pray (as ye like)

C4423. The answer being in the affirmative, they will have to tell the dreadful truth:

'This is neither the time nor the place for prayer, for mercy! And in any case, Prayer without Faith is Delusion, and must miss its mark.'

Cf. 13:14.

... وَمَا دُعَاءُ الْكَافِرِينَ إِلَّا فِي ضَلَالٍ (٥٠)

but the Prayer of those without Faith is nothing but (futile wandering) in (mazes of) error!"

C.208 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

(40:51-85)

*Allah's grace and help are ever ready
For His servants who patiently persevere,
Let not arrogance blind the souls
Of men; the Hour of Judgement is bound
To come. The keys of Life and Death
Are in the hands of Allah. Dispute not
The Signs of Allah, but learn from History
And the world around you. Science and skill
Avail you not if the soul is dead.*

Section 6

إِنَّا لَنَنْصُرُ رُسُلَنَا وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا...

51. We will, without doubt, help Our messengers and those who believe (both) in this world's life

... وَيَوْمَ يَقُومُ الْأَشْهَادُ (٥١)

and on the Day when the Witnesses will stand forth --

C4424. The Day of Judgment is described as "the Day when Witnesses will stand forth". This description implies two things:

- that there man will be judged justly; his past actions and his faculties and opportunities will be witnesses as to the use he made of them (24:24); in fact he will himself be a witness against himself (6:130);
- and the prophets and just men will bear witness to the fact that they preached and warned men (39:69; 2:133).

يَوْمَ لَا يَنْفَعُ الظَّالِمِينَ مَعذِرَتُهُمْ...

52. The Day when no profit will it be to Wrongdoers to present their excuses,

C4425. After the testimony mentioned in the last note, there will be no room for excuses, and if any were made, they could serve no purpose, unlike the state of matters in this world, where there is much make-believe, and Falsehood often masquerades as Truth and is accepted as such even by those who should know better.

... وَلَهُمُ اللَّعْنَةُ وَلَهُمْ سُوءُ الدَّارِ (٥٢)

but they will (only) have the Curse and the Home of Misery.

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْهُدَى...

53. We did aforetime give Moses the (Book of) Guidance,

C4426. Moses was given a Revelation, and it was given in heritage to the Children of Israel, to preserve it, guide their conduct by it, and hold aloft its Message: but they failed in all these particulars.

... وَأَوْزَنَّا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ الْكِتَابَ (٥٣)

and We gave the Book in inheritance to the Children of Israel --

هُدًى وَذِكْرَى لِأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ (٥٤)

54. A Guide and a Message to men of understanding.

فَاصْبِرْ ...

55. Patiently, then, persevere:

C4427. The Israelites corrupted or lost their Book; they disobeyed Allah's Law; and failed to proclaim and exemplify Allah's Message. That is why the new Revelation came to the holy Prophet.

If, in the beginning, it was rejected and persecuted, there was no cause for discouragement; on the contrary, there was all the greater need for patience and perseverance.

... إِنَّ وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقٌّ ...

for the Promise of Allah is true:

... وَأَسْتَغْفِرُ لِدُنْبِكَ ...

and ask forgiveness for thy fault,

C4428. Every mortal according to his nature and degree of spiritual enlightenment falls short of the perfect standard of Allah (16:61), and should therefore ask Allah for forgiveness.

What is merit in an ordinary man may be a human shortcoming in one nearest to Allah: see 38:24-25, and notes 4175-76. Prophets have a further responsibility for their People or their Ummah, and they ask in a representative capacity.

... وَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ بِالْعَشِيِّ وَالْإِبْكَارِ (٥٥)

and celebrate the Praises of thy Lord in the evening and in the morning.

C4429. Cf. i3:41. Evening and morning are the best times for contemplation and prayer. But the phrase "**evening and morning**" may mean "at all times". (R).

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُجَادِلُونَ فِي آيَاتِ اللَّهِ بِغَيْرِ سُلْطَانٍ أَتَاهُمْ...

56. Those who dispute about the Signs of Allah without any authority bestowed on them --

... إِنَّ فِي صُدُورِهِمْ إِلَّا كِبْرٌ مَّا هُمْ بِبَالِغِيهِ ...

there is nothing in their breasts but (the quest of) greatness, which they shall never attain to:

C4430. The Disputes are actuated by nothing but the desire for self-glory and self-aggrandizement. Their desire is not likely to receive fruition, but others should take warning from it.

... فَاسْتَعِذْ بِاللَّهِ ...

seek refuge, then, in Allah:

... إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ (٥٦)

it is He Who hears and sees (all things).

لَخَلْقُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ أَكْبَرُ مِنْ خَلْقِ النَّاسِ ...

57. Assuredly the creation of the heavens and the earth is a greater (matter) than the creation of men:

C4431. The heavens and the earth include mankind and all other creatures and millions of stars. Man is himself but a tiny part of creation. Why should he be so ego-centric?

The whole is greater than a tiny part of it. And Allah Who created the whole of the Worlds is able to do much more wonderful things than can enter the imagination of man. Why should man be arrogant and doubt the Resurrection, and take upon himself to doubt the possibility of Allah's Revelation? It is only because he has made himself blind.

See next verse.

... وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ (٥٧)

Yet most men understand not.

وَمَا يَسْتَوِي الْأَعْمَى وَالْبَصِيرُ ...

58. Not equal are the blind and those who (clearly) see:

C4432. The man of Faith who backs his faith by righteous conduct is like the man of clear vision, who sees things in their true perspective and walks with firm steps in the Way of Allah.

The man who does evil is like a blind man: the Light of Allah is all around him, but he is blind, and he can see nothing. He has rejected Faith and cannot even learn by other people's admonition.

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَلَا الْمُسِيءُ...

nor are (equal) those who believe and work deeds of righteousness, and those who do evil.

... قَلِيلًا مَّا تَتَذَكَّرُونَ (٥٨)

Little do ye learn by admonition!

إِنَّ السَّاعَةَ لَأَتِيَةٌ لَّا رَيْبَ فِيهَا...

59. The Hour will certainly come:

therein is no doubt:

C4433. "The Hour" is the crown and consummation of man's life on this earth,-the gateway to the Hereafter.

... وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ (٥٩)

yet most men believe not.

Section 7

وَقَالَ رَبُّكُمْ ادْعُونِي أَسْتَجِبْ لَكُمْ...

60. And your Lord says:

"Call on Me; I will answer your (Prayer):

C4434. As this life is not the end of all things, and we are to have its fulfilment in the Hereafter: we have only to pray to the Lord of the Present and the Hereafter, and He will hear us, forgive us, guide us, and make our Path smooth.

But Pride will have its fall,-and its humiliating Punishment: Cf. 37:18.

... إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ عَنْ عِبَادَتِي سَيَدْخُلُونَ جَهَنَّمَ دَاخِرِينَ (٦٠)

But those who are too arrogant to serve Me will surely find themselves in Hell -- in humiliation!"

اللَّهُ الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمْ اللَّيْلَ لِتَسْكُنُوا فِيهِ وَالنَّهَارَ مُبْصِرًا...

61. It is Allah Who has made the Night for you, that ye may rest therein, and the Day, as that which helps (you) to see.

C4435. The succession of Day and Night in our physical life is frequently appealed to, as a symbol to draw our attention to the Mercy and Bounty of Allah. If we viewed these things aright, we should serve Allah and seek Light from Him and Rest from Him, and celebrate His praises with gratitude.

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَدُوٌّ فَضْلٍ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَشْكُرُونَ (٦١)

Verily Allah is Full of Grace and Bounty to men:
yet most men give no thanks.

ذَلِكُمُ اللَّهُ رَبُّكُمْ خَالِقُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ...

62. Such is Allah, your Lord, the Creator of all things,

... لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ ...

there is no god but He:

... فَأَنَّى تُؤْفَكُونَ (٦٢)

then how ye are deluded away from the Truth!

C4436. If we worship false gods, i.e., go after vanities, what is it that **deludes** us and leads us astray?

What could it be but our rank ingratitude and failure to use the understanding which Allah has given us?

كَذَلِكَ يُؤْفَكُ الَّذِينَ كَانُوا بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ يَجْحَدُونَ (٦٣)

63. Thus are deluded those who are wont to reject the Signs of Allah.

C4437. See the last two notes.

If men are deluded by Falsehoods, it is because they reject Revelation and refuse to learn from the Signs of Allah all around them.

اللَّهُ الَّذِي ...

64. It is Allah Who **has**

C4438. The argument in the last two verses was from man's personal experiences of his physical life.

In this and the next verse a parallel argument is addressed to man on a much higher plane: 'look at the spacious earth and the canopy of the sky; look at the special position you occupy above other animals that you know, in shape and form, and moral and spiritual capacities; consider your refinements in food and fruits and the higher spiritual Sustenance of which your physical food is a type; would you not indeed say that the Lord is good, and would you not glorify His holy name?'

... جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْأَرْضَ قَرَارًا ...

made for you the earth as a resting place,

C4439. A resting place: I understand this to imply a temporary place of rest or sojourn, a period of probation, to be followed by the eternal Home.

... وَالسَّمَاءَ بِنَاءٍ ...

and the sky as a canopy,

... وَصَوَّرَكُمْ فَأَحْسَنَ صُوَرَكُمْ ...

and has given you shapes -- and made your shapes beautiful --

C4440. Cf. 7:11 and n. 996.

The shape and form refer to the physical form as well as to the inborn moral and spiritual capacities of man.

As regards physical form, Cf. Milton's description of Adam and Eve,

"Two of far noble shape, erect and tall" (Paradise Lost, iv. 288).

As regards moral and spiritual capacities, they are typified by the breathing of Allah's spirit into man: 15:29.

... وَرَزَقَكُمْ مِنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ ...

and has provided for you Sustenance, of things pure and good --

C4441. "Sustenance": all that is necessary for growth and development, physical, moral, and spiritual.

Cf. n. 2105 to 16:73.

... ذَلِكُمْ اللَّهُ رَبُّكُمْ...

such is Allah your Lord.

... فَتَبَارَكَ اللَّهُ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ (٦٤)

So Glory to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds!

هُوَ الْحَيُّ ...

65. He is the living (One):

C4442. The real, self-subsisting Life is only in Him:

Cf. 2:255, and n. 296.

All other forms of life are but shadows compared to His perfect Light.

... لَّا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ فَادْعُوهُ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ...

There is no god but He:

Call upon Him, giving Him sincere devotion.

... الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (٦٥)

Praise be to Allah, Lord of the Worlds!

قُلْ إِنِّي نُهَيْتُ أَنْ أَعْبُدَ الَّذِينَ تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ...

66. Say:

"I have been forbidden to invoke those whom ye invoke besides Allah,

C4443. All objects of worship besides Allah are mere delusions. To any one who sees this clearly, through Allah's Self-revelations, the only possible course is to give up everything else, which his own inner experience as well as outer Revelation tell him is false or of a temporary nature, and to bring his own will and actions into complete unison with Allah's Will: for that is the meaning of Islam, bowing to the Will of Allah.

When we bow to the Real and Everlasting, we are automatically saved from failing victims to the False and Evanescent. (R).

... لَمَّا جَاءَنِيَ الْبَيِّنَاتُ مِنْ رَبِّي وَأَمُرْتُ أَنْ أُسَلِّمَ لِلرَّبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ (٦٦)

seeing that the Clear Signs have come to me from my Lord: and I have been commanded to bow (in Islam) to the Lord of the Worlds."

هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ تُرَابٍ...

67. It is He Who has created you from dust,

C4444. Cf. this passage with 22:5 and notes 2773 and 2774.

The various stages of man's physical life are:

- first, simple matter (dust);
- the sperm-drop in the father;
- the fertilised ovum in the mother's womb;
- out into the light, as a human child;
- youth and full maturity;
- decay; and
- death.

In some cases the later stages are curtailed or cut off; but in any case, a Term appointed is reached, so that the higher purpose of Allah's Will and Plan may be fulfilled in each given case, that man "may learn wisdom".

... ثُمَّ مِنْ نُطْقَةٍ ...

then from a sperm-drop,

... ثُمَّ مِنْ عَلَقَةٍ ...

then from a leech-like clot;

... ثُمَّ يُخْرِجُكُمْ طِفْلًا ...

then does He get you out (into the light) as a child:

... ثُمَّ لِيَبْلُغُوا أَشُدَّهُمْ ...

then lets you (grow and) reach your age of full strength;

... ثُمَّ لَتَكُونُوا شُيُوخًا ...

then lets you become old,

... وَمِنْكُمْ مَن يُوَفَّىٰ مِنْ قَبْلُ ...

though of you there are some who die before;

... وَلِيَبْلُغُوا أَجَلًا مُّسَمًّى ...

and lets you reach a Term appointed:

... وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ (٦٧)

in order that ye may learn wisdom.

هُوَ الَّذِي يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ ...

68. It is He Who gives Life and Death;

C4445. The keys of life and death are in Allah's hands. But He is not dependent on time or place or instruments or materials. All that He has to do is to say "Be", and it comes into existence.

Cf. 16:40, and n. 2066; 36:82, and n. 4029.

Conversely, His Will or Command is sufficient to annihilate Existence into Non-Existence (Life into Death) or determine the limits or conditions of Existence or Non-Existence.

... فَإِذَا قَضَىٰ أَمْرًا فَإِنَّمَا يَقُولُ لَهُ ...

and when He decides upon an affair, He says to it,

... كُن فَيَكُونُ (٦٨)

"Be," and it is.

Section 8

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ يُجَادِلُونَ فِي آيَاتِ اللَّهِ أَنَّىٰ يُصْرَفُونَ (٦٩)

69. Seest thou not those that dispute concerning the signs of Allah?
How are they turned away (from Reality)? --

C4446. Those who dispute about the Signs of Allah which are clear to all who care to see, are merely in the mists of Unreality:

Cf. 10:32.

الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِالْكِتَابِ وَمَا أُرْسِلْنَا بِهِ رُسُلَنَا...

70. Those who reject the Book and the (revelations) with which We sent Our messengers:

C4447. "The Book" may refer to the Holy Quran or to the fundamental, Revelation the "Mother of the Book" (13:39), while the Books revealed to the messengers are the definite Revelations that came down to men from time to time.

... فَسَوْفَ يَعْلَمُونَ (٧٠)

But soon shall they know --

إِذِ الْأَغْطَالُ فِي أَعْنَاقِهِمْ وَالسَّلَاسِلُ يُسْحَبُونَ (٧١)

71. When the yokes (shall be) round their necks, and the chains; they shall be dragged along --

C4448. The rejection of Allah's Message, however brought, carries its own penalty. The **yoke** of slavery to Sin and Evil is fastened more and more firmly round the rejecter's neck, because there is no one to safeguard his freedom, and the chains of superstitions and the ugly consequences of evil restrict his freedom and the limited faculty of choice which was given by Allah to man.

This process receives its climax at the Hour of Judgment.

فِي الْحَمِيمِ...

72. In the boiling fetid fluid;

C4449. The sinner gets dragged further and further in the disgusting consequences of his evil actions, until the fire of destruction closes in upon him.

... ثُمَّ فِي النَّارِ يُسْجَرُونَ (٧٢)

then in the Fire shall they be burned;

ثُمَّ قِيلَ لَهُمْ أَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ تُشْرِكُونَ (٧٣)

73. Then shall it be said to them: "Where are the (deities) to which ye gave part-worship --

من دُونِ اللَّهِ...

74. "In derogation of Allah?"

... قَالُوا ضَلُّوا عَنَّا...

They will reply: "They have left us in the lurch:

C4450. All falsehoods will vanish: Cf. 7:36.

The only Reality will be fully manifest even to those to whom Evil was made to seem alluring in the lower life. They will feel in their inmost souls that they had been pursuing mere shadows, things of no real existence. This was the result of their rejecting the Light and the Grace of Allah: they got entangled in the mazes of error.

... بَلْ لَمْ نَكُنْ نَدْعُوا مِنْ قَبْلُ شَيْئًا ...

nay, we invoked not, of old, anything (that had real existence)."

... كَذَلِكَ يُضِلُّ اللَّهُ الْكَافِرِينَ (٧٤)

Thus does Allah leave the Unbelievers to stray.

دَلِّكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَفْرَحُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ...

75. "That was **because** ye were wont to rejoice on the earth in things other than the Truth,

C4451. Allah does not withdraw His grace from any unless,

- they actively and deliberately take a delight in things that are vain or false, and
- they insolently reject the things that are truer-in other words, unless men are deliberately false to their own fights, as illuminated by the Light of Allah.

... وَبِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَمْرَحُونَ (٧٥)

and that ye were wont to be insolent.

ادْخُلُوا أَبْوَابَ جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا ...

76. "Enter ye the gates of Hell, to dwell therein:

C4452. Cf. 39:72.

... فَبئسَ مَثْوًى الْمُتَكَبِّرِينَ (٧٦)

and evil is (this) abode of the arrogant!"

فَاصْبِرْ إِنَّ وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقٌّ...

77. So persevere in patience! For the Promise of Allah is true:

فَأَمَّا تُرَيَّبُكَ بَعْضَ الَّذِي نَعِدُهُمْ أَوْ نَتَوَقَّئُكَ...

and **whether** We show thee (in this life) some part of what We promise them, or We take thy soul (to Our Mercy) (Before that),

C4453. Cf. 10;46, and n. 1438.

As the eventual justice and readjustment of values must take place, when every soul returns to the Judgment-Seat of Allah, it makes no difference if good and evil meet their deserts in this very life or not.

Cf. also 13:40.

... فَأَلَيْنَا يَرْجِعُونَ (٧٧)

(in any case) it is to Us that they shall (all) return.

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلًا مِّن قَبْلِكَ مِنْهُمْ...

78. We did aforetime send messengers before thee:

... مِّن قَصَصْنَا عَلَيْكَ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّن لَّمْ نَقْصُصْ عَلَيْكَ...

of them there are some whose story We have related to thee, and some whose story We have not related to thee.

C4454. Cf. 4:164.

Allah sent Messengers of His Truth to every people. There are some whose names are known to us through the Holy Quran, but there are a large number whose names are not made known to us through that medium. We must recognise the Truth wherever we find it.

... وَمَا كَانَ لِرَسُولٍ أَنْ يَأْتِيَ بِآيَةٍ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ ...

It was not (possible) for any messenger to bring a Sign except by the leave of Allah:

... فَإِذَا جَاءَ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ فُضِيَ بِالْحَقِّ وَخَسِرَ هُنَالِكَ الْمُبْطِلُونَ (٧٨)

but when the Command of Allah issued, the matter was decided in truth and justice, and there perished, there and then, those who stood on Falsehoods.

C4455. The Signs of Allah are everywhere, and can be seen by the discerning eye at all times. But if any extraordinary Signs are demanded by cynics or Unbelievers, they will not be granted merely because they are demanded.

It is Allah's Will that issues them, not merely the desire of human beings, even if he be a Messenger of Allah.

But when an extraordinary Sign does issue by the Command of Allah, it means that the cup of the iniquitous is full; that their case is decided, and their time of respite is past; and that Justice takes the place of Mercy, and evil is blotted out.

Section 9

اللَّهُ الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمْ الْأَنْعَامَ لِتَرْكَبُوا مِنْهَا وَمِنْهَا تَأْكُلُونَ (٧٩)

79. It is Allah Who made cattle for you, that ye may use some for riding and some for food;

C4456. Cf. 16:5-8.

The fact that beasts, which in their wild state are so noxious, are, when domesticated, so useful to man, is itself one of the great and standing Signs of Allah's care for man.

The great usefulness of cattle is very instructive. They serve for riding, and many of them for food; further, they are used for the plough, and they produce milk, or wool, or hair; and from their carcasses man derives bones and horns for many industrial uses; but passing on to higher aspects of life, they further social, moral,

and spiritual uses as drought-animals, in that transport serves one of the fundamental purposes of civilisation, being in this respect like ships for international commerce: 30:46, and n. 3565.

It is by means of human intercourse through transport that we can carry out the highest needs of our culture, "any need there may be in our hearts", i.e., in our inner being.

وَلَكُمْ فِيهَا مَنَافِعُ وَلِتَبَلَّغُوا عَلَيْهَا حَاجَةً فِي صُدُورِكُمْ...

80. And there are (other) advantages in them for you (besides); that ye may through them attain to any need (there may be) in your hearts;

... وَعَلَيْهَا وَعَلَى الْفُلْكِ تُحْمَلُونَ (٨٠)

and on them and on ships ye are carried.

وَيُرِيكُمْ آيَاتِهِ...

81. And He shows you always His Signs;

C4457. The Signs of Allah's goodness and mercy are so numerous that it is impossible to enumerate them. Which of them can any mortal deny?

This is the theme of that highly poetical Surah Rahman (55).

... فَأَيَّ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ تُنْكِرُونَ (٨١)

then which of the Signs of Allah will ye deny?

أَفَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَيَنْظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ ...

82. Do they not travel through the earth and see what was the end of those before them?

... كَانُوا أَكْثَرَ مِنْهُمْ وَأَشَدَّ قُوَّةً وَأَثَارًا فِي الْأَرْضِ...

They were more numerous than these and superior in strength and in the traces (they have left) in the land:

C4458. Cf. 9:69.

For any generation to take inordinate pride in its own single achievements in science or skill becomes ridiculous if we consider the broad stream of history.

- In the first place, men will find that a great deal of what they attribute to their own merits only became possible owing to the earlier work of their predecessors.
- Secondly, many of their predecessors were more numerous and mightier in power than they, although the perspective of time may have reduced the apparent depth of their influence, and the monuments which they have left behind may have suffered from the destroying hand of Time.
- Thirdly, and most important of all, when they forgot Allah and His inexorable Law, nothing of their own handiwork profited them: they perished in the common ruin as all vanities must perish.

Cf. also [40:21](#) above, and [n. 4387](#).

See how the recapitulation rounds off the argument.

... فَمَا أَغْنَىٰ عَنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ (٨٢)

yet all that they accomplished was of no profit to them.

فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ رَسُولُهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ فَرَحُوا بِمَا عِنْدَهُمْ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ...

83. For when their messengers came to them with Clear Signs, they exulted in such knowledge (and skill) as they had;

C4459. Arrogance and an exaggerated idea of Self were at the bottom of the Evil to which they succumbed.

... وَحَاقَ بِهِمْ مَا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِءُونَ (٨٣)

but that very (Wrath) at which they were wont to scoff hemmed them in.

C4460. Cf. 16:34.

Nothing could stop Justice of Allah punishing Evil. What they had ridiculed came as an inexorable fact. None of their grandeur or art or science or skill was of any use when they lost their souls!

فَلَمَّا رَأَوْا بَأْسَنَا قَالُوا آمَنَّا بِاللَّهِ وَحَدُّهُ...

84. But when they saw Our punishment, they said:

"We believe in Allah -- the One Allah --

... وَكَفَرْنَا بِمَا كُنَّا بِهِ مُشْرِكِينَ (٨٤)

and we reject the partners we used to join with Him."

فَلَمْ يَكُ يَنْفَعُهُمْ إِيمَانُهُمْ لَمَّا رَأَوْا بَأْسَنَا...

85. But their professing the Faith when they (actually) saw Our Punishment was not going to profit them.

C4461. Again and again were they given chances, and again and again did they reject them. When it was too late, and in fact when it had no meaning, they offered to profess Faith. That was of no use.

Allah does not accept unmeaning things of that kind. He wants to train and purify our will. For their disobedience and rebellion they perished utterly.

... سُنَّتَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي قَدْ خَلَتْ فِي عِبَادِهِ...

(Such has been) Allah's way of dealing with His servants (from the most ancient times).

... وَخَسِرَ هُنَالِكَ الْكَافِرُونَ (٨٥)

And even thus did the rejecters of Allah perish (utterly)!