



CHAPTER 42

Al-Shūrā: The Counsel

(REVEALED AT MAKKAH: 5 sections; 53 verses)

This is the third chapter of the *Hā Mim* group, and is known as *The Counsel*. The title is taken from v. 38, which enjoins the Muslims to make it a rule to take counsel in all affairs of importance. The injunction lays down the basis of government by council or parliamentary government.

As regards the date of revelation and the context, see the introductory note to chapter 40. Having spoken of the consequences of the rejection of Truth in the last chapter, we are here told that Divine mercy is predominant over all other Divine attributes, and accordingly the first section tells us that even the act of warning is a merciful act on the part of the Divine Being, for He reveals His will through His prophets, while His angels solicit forgiveness for men. The second section states that Divine judgment is given to settle differences. The third shows that Allāh's dealing with men is just and no nation is destroyed unjustly. The fourth section calls attention to the fact that even the unjust are given respite, therefore, the believers must wait patiently. The last section states that the Qur'ān, being a revelation from the Divine Being, guides aright, hence those who do not follow its directions will find themselves in an evil plight.

SECTION 1: Divine Mercy in giving Warning

In the name of Allāh, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

1 Beneficent God!

حَمْدًا

2 Knowing, Hearing, Powerful God!^a

عَسَقًا

3 Thus does Allāh, the Mighty, the Wise, reveal to thee, and (He revealed) to those before thee.

كَذَلِكَ يُوحِي إِلَيْكَ وَإِلَى الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ اللَّهُ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ

4 To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth; and He is the High, the Great.

لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ ط وَهُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْعَظِيمُ

5 The heavens may almost be rent asunder above them, while the angels celebrate the praise of their Lord and ask forgiveness for those on earth.^a Now surely Allāh is the Forgiving, the Merciful.

تَكَادُ السَّمَوَاتُ يَتَّقَطْنَ مِنْ فَوْقِهِنَّ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ يَسْبِحُونَ بِحَمْدِ سَرَابِهِمْ وَيَسْتَغْفِرُونَ لِمَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ ط الْآلَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ

6 And those who take protectors besides Him — Allāh watches over them; and thou hast not charge over them.

وَالَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِهِ أَوْلِيَاءَ اللَّهُ حَفِيفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ ط وَمَا أَنْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِوَكِيلٍ

7 And thus have We revealed to thee an Arabic Qur'ān, that thou mayest warn the mother-town and those around it,^a and give warning of the day of Gathering, wherein is no doubt.

وَكَذَلِكَ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا لَتُنذِرَ أُمَّ الْقُرَى وَمَنْ حَوْلَهَا وَتُنذِرَ يَوْمَ الْجَمْعِ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ ط فَرِيقٌ فِي الْجَنَّةِ

2a. The first two letters (v. 1) are the same as at the commencement of chapter 40; in the latter three (v. 2), 'Ain stands for 'Alim or Knowing, Sin for Sami' or Hearing, Qāf for Qādir or Powerful.

5a. The significance is that the wickedness of man calls for immediate punishment, but the mercy of Allāh withholds it. The rending asunder of the heaven is elsewhere used to signify Divine displeasure at the Christian doctrine of the divinity of Jesus (19:90, 91). The Divine displeasure at the wickedness of man is very great, but His mercy supercedes all. The angels' prayer for forgiveness for man shows that Allāh Himself desires to forgive man. The deeds of men do not merit forgiveness, but forgiveness is the attribute of the Divine Being, and that Divine attribute is exercised through the solicitude of the angels.

7a. *Umm al-quṛā* is Makkah, which is called the *mother of the towns* because it was destined to be the spiritual centre of the whole world; see 6:92a.

A party will be in the Garden and (another) party in the burning Fire.

وَكَرِيمٌ فِي السَّعِيرِ ﴿٧﴾

8 And if Allāh had pleased, He would surely have made them a single nation, but He admits whom He pleases to His mercy. And the wrongdoers have no protector nor helper.

وَكُوشَاءَ اللَّهِ لَجَعَلَهُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً
وَلَكِنْ يُدْخِلُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ فِي رَحْمَتِهِ
وَالظَّالِمُونَ مَا لَهُمْ مِنْ وَدِيِّ وَلَا نَصِيرٍ ﴿٨﴾

9 Or have they taken protectors besides Him? But Allāh is the Protector, and He gives life to the dead, and He is Possessor of power over all things.

أَمْ اتَّخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِهِ آلِيَاءَ ۗ قَالَ اللَّهُ
هُوَ الْوَدِيُّ وَهُوَ يُحْيِي الْمَوْتَىٰ وَهُوَ
عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿٩﴾

SECTION 2: Judgment is Given

10 And in whatever you differ, the judgment thereof is with Allāh. That is Allāh, my Lord; on Him I rely, and to Him I turn.

وَمَا اخْتَلَفْتُمْ فِيهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ فَحُكْمُهُ
إِلَى اللَّهِ ذُو لَكُمْ اللَّهُ رَبِّي عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ
وَإِلَيْهِ أُنِيبُ ﴿١٠﴾

11 The Originator of the heavens and the earth. He has made for you pairs from among yourselves, and pairs of the cattle, too, multiplying you thereby. Nothing is like Him; and He is the Hearing, the Seeing.^a

فَاطْرُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ط جَعَلَ لَكُمْ
مِّنْ اَنْفُسِكُمْ اَزْوَاجًا وَّمِنَ الْاَنْعَامِ
اَزْوَاجًا ۗ يَذُرُّكُمْ فِيْهِ لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهٖ
شَيْءٌ ۗ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ ﴿١١﴾

12 His are the treasures of the heavens and the earth — He amplifies and straitens subsistence for whom He pleases. Surely He is Knower of all things.

لَهُ مَقَالِيدُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ۗ يَبْسُطُ
الرِّزْقَ لِمَنْ يَّشَاءُ وَيَقْدِرُ ۗ اِنَّهٗ
بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ﴿١٢﴾

13 He has made plain to you the religion which He enjoined upon Noah and which We have revealed to thee, and which We enjoined on Abraham and Moses and Jesus — to establish

شَرَعَ لَكُمْ مِنَ الدِّينِ مَا وَصَّىٰ بِهِ
نُوحًا وَّالَّذِي اَوْحَيْنَا اِلَيْكَ وَّمَا
وَصَّيْنَا بِهِ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ وَمُوسٰى وَعِيسٰى
اَنْ اَوْسُوا الدِّينَ وَلَا تَتَفَرَّقُوْا فِيْهِ ط

11a. So transcendent is the Divine Being, and so far above all material conceptions, that a likeness of Him cannot be conceived, even metaphorically. The words translated like Him literally mean like a likeness of Him. He is not only above all material limitations, but even above the limitation of metaphor.

religion and not to be divided therein.^a Hard for the polytheists is that to which thou callest them. Allāh chooses for Himself whom He pleases, and guides to Himself him who turns (to Him).

كَبُرَ عَلَى الْمُشْرِكِينَ مَا تَدْعُوهُمْ إِلَيْهِ
اللَّهُ يَخْتِي إِلَيْهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَهْدِي
إِلَيْهِ مَنْ يُنِيبُ ﴿١٤﴾

14 And they were not divided until after knowledge had come to them, out of envy among themselves. And had not a word gone forth from thy Lord for an appointed term, the matter would surely have been judged between them. And those who were made to inherit the Book after them are surely in disquieting doubt about it.^a

وَمَا تَفَرَّقُوا إِلَّا مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَهُمُ
الْعِلْمُ بَعِيًّا بَيْنَهُمْ وَكَوَلَاكِمِهِ
سَبَقَتْ مِنْ رَبِّكَ إِلَى أَجَلٍ مُسَمًّى
لَقَضَىٰ بَيْنَهُمْ وَإِنَّ الَّذِينَ أُورِثُوا
الْكِتَابَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ لَنَفَىٰ شَكٍّ
مِّنْهُ مُرِيبٍ ﴿١٥﴾

15 To this then go on inviting, and be steadfast as thou art commanded, and follow not their low desires, and say: I believe in what Allāh has revealed of the Book, and I am commanded to do justice between you. Allāh is our Lord and your Lord. For us are our deeds; and for you your deeds. There is no contention between us and you. Allāh will gather us together, and to Him is the eventual coming.^a

فَلِذَلِكَ فَادْعُ ۗ وَاسْتَقِمْ كَمَا أُمِرْتَ
وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ وَقُلْ أَمِنْتُ
بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ مِنْ كِتَابٍ ۗ وَأُمرْتُ
لِأَعْدِلَ بَيْنَكُمْ ۗ اللَّهُ رَبُّنَا وَرَبُّكُمْ ۗ
لَنَا أَعْمَالُنَا وَلَكُمْ أَعْمَالُكُمْ لَا حِجَّةَ
بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ ۗ اللَّهُ يَجْمَعُ بَيْنَنَا
وَاللَّهُ الْمَصِيرُ ﴿١٦﴾

13a. Even so early did the Qur'an announce that the religion preached by the Prophet was not a new religion, but, so far as its basic principles were concerned, it was the same religion as was preached by Noah and Abraham and Moses and Jesus. The basic principle of Islām — entire submission to One God only — is, in fact, the basic principle of the common religion of humanity.

14a. The personal pronoun *them* in *those who were made to inherit the Book after them* refers to the prophets. The people who were made to inherit the Book after the prophets, rejected the very message with which these prophets came. But they are told that their punishment is postponed till an appointed term. Such was the Divine law — *a word gone forth from thy Lord* — that the struggle against Truth gathers strength at first and seems to have the upper hand for a time, but it ultimately comes to naught, thus showing that an unseen hand works in support of the Truth.

15a. The argument was so simple and sound. The Prophet told the followers of earlier revelation that he was a believer in *what Allāh had revealed of the Book*, in all revelation that came before him, and the basic principles of his revelation were the same as those of the earlier revelation. The whole thing was so clear that there could not be any dispute. There is a clear ray of hope in the concluding verses — *Allāh will gather us* — that they will ultimately accept the Truth.

16 And those who dispute about Allāh after obedience has been rendered to Him, their plea is null with their Lord, and upon them is wrath, and for them is severe chastisement.^a

17 Allāh is He Who revealed the Book with truth, and the Balance;^a and what will make thee know that perhaps the Hour is nigh.

18 Those who believe not in it would hasten it on, and those who believe are in fear from it, and they know that it is the Truth. Now surely those who dispute concerning the Hour are far astray.

19 Allāh is Benignant to His servants; He gives sustenance to whom He pleases; and He is the Strong, the Mighty.

وَالَّذِينَ يُحَاجُّونَ فِي اللَّهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ
مَا اسْتَجِيبَ لَهُ حُجَّتُهُمْ دَاحِضَةٌ
عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَعَلَيْهِمْ غَضَبٌ وَكَلَّهُمْ
عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ ﴿١٦﴾

اللَّهُ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ
وَالْمِيزَانَ وَمَا يُدْرِيكَ لَعَلَّ
السَّاعَةَ قَرِيبٌ ﴿١٧﴾

يَسْتَعْجِلُ بِهَا الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهَا
وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مُشْفِقُونَ مِنْهَا
وَيَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّهَا الْحَقُّ أَأَلَا إِنَّ
الَّذِينَ يُبَادِرُونَ فِي السَّاعَةِ كَفَىٰ صَلِيلِ
عَبِيدٍ ﴿١٨﴾ اللَّهُ لَطِيفٌ بِعِبَادِهِ
يُرِي قُلُوبَهُمْ مَنْ يَشَاءُ
وَهُوَ الْقَوِيُّ الْعَزِيزُ ﴿١٩﴾

SECTION 3: Allāh's Dealing is Just

20 Whoso desires the tilth of the Hereafter, We give him increase in his

مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ حَرْثَ الْآخِرَةِ نَزِدْ لَهُ فِي

16a. The reference in *those who dispute about Allāh after obedience has been rendered to Him* may be to the followers of earlier revelation, because their books required obedience to a Prophet who should appear after them. Or, the meaning may be, after people have begun to enter Islām, and Islām has been established in the land notwithstanding the severest opposition.

17a. The construction is, Allāh revealed the Book and the Balance (Ar., *mizān*, balance or measure). The *balance* is that by which things are weighed. Elsewhere it is said: "Certainly We sent Our messengers with clear arguments, and sent down with them the Book and the measure (*mizān*), that men may conduct themselves with equity" (57:25). The purpose of revealing the *Balance* or *measure* is thus made clear here. It is that men may conduct themselves with equity; in other words that they may be able to carry out the ordinances contained in the Book justly. This is what the Prophet shows by his example. He is not only a preacher but also an exemplar. The ordinances of the Book are given in words, and the Prophet translates them into deeds, so that it is by following his example that men are led aright. The Prophet's example is thus a balance or measure which is as essential for the right guidance of men as the Book. The word *mizān* is generally taken here as meaning 'Adl or Justice (IJ), which would mean the *right use of the Book*, which is really shown by the Prophet himself, and thus indicates the Prophet's example. According to others, the *Balance* here means the *Law* (Bd, JB) by which the rights and obligations of men are weighed. Mark how material terms are converted into spiritual usage by the Holy Qur'ān. A right realization of this point removes many of the difficulties in the study of the Holy Book.

tilth; and whoso desires the tilth of this world, We give him thereof; and he has no portion in the Hereafter.

21 Or have they associates who have prescribed for them any religion that Allāh does not sanction? And were it not for the word of judgment, it would have been decided between them. And surely for the wrongdoers is a painful chastisement.^a

22 Thou seest the unjust fearing on account of what they have earned, and it must befall them. And those who believe and do good are in the meadows of the Gardens — they have what they please with their Lord. That is the great grace.

23 This it is of which Allāh gives the good news to His servants, who believe and do good. Say: I ask of you naught in return for it but love for relatives.^a And whoever earns good, We give him more of good therein. Surely Allāh is Forgiving, Grateful.

حَرِيثَهُ وَمَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ حَرْثَ الدُّنْيَا
نُؤْتِيهِ مِنْهَا وَمَا لَهُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِنْ نَصِيبٍ ۝

أَمْ لَهُمْ شُرَكَاءُ شَرَعُوا لَهُمْ مِنْ
الدِّينِ مَا لَمْ يَأْذُنْ بِهِ اللَّهُ ط وَ لَوْ
لَا كَلِمَةُ الْفَصْلِ لَفُضِّى بَيْنَهُمْ وَرَأَى
الظَّالِمِينَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ۝

تَرَى الظَّالِمِينَ مُشْفِقِينَ مِمَّا كَسَبُوا
وَهُوَ وَاقِعٌ بِهِمْ ط وَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَ
عَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ فِي رَوْضَاتِ الْجَنَّاتِ ؕ
لَهُمْ مَا يَشَاءُونَ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ ذَٰلِكَ
هُوَ الْفَضْلُ الْكَبِيرُ ۝

ذَٰلِكَ الَّذِي يُبَشِّرُ اللَّهُ عِبَادَهُ الَّذِينَ
آمَنُوا وَ عَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ ط قُلْ لَا
أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ أَجْرًا إِلَّا الْمَوَدَّةَ فِي
الْقُرْبَى ط وَ مَنْ يَفْقَرُ فَحَسَنَةٌ تَرْدُّ لَهُ
فِيهَا حَسَنًا ط إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَفُورٌ شَكُورٌ ۝

21a. The *word of judgment* indicates a judgment already pronounced, that a respite will be given to the wrongdoers so that they may have an opportunity to reform themselves.

23a. Commentators generally think that the love enjoined here in respect of relationship signifies loving the offspring (*āl*) of the Prophet, but there is nothing in the words which entitles us to place that limitation upon the words. The correct significance of the words is that *I ask of you naught in return for it; what I ask you is to love your own relatives*. The statement that the Prophet did not ask for any reward at all is made very often in the Holy Qur'ān, and the preacher of virtue never asks for any reward. What he asked them was to live in peace and harmony with each other. The Arabs, closely related as they were to each other, were in a state of constant warfare. They are told to give up mutual warfare and to love one another. A somewhat similar statement is made elsewhere: "I ask of you naught in return for it, except that he who will may take a way to his Lord" (25:57). In both cases what the Prophet wanted was not a reward for himself, but it was a good for the people themselves, being, in the second case, that they walk in the ways of God or lead godly lives and, in the first, that they love one another. Love of God and love of man are thus the two essentials of religion taught in these two verses. According to some, however, *qurbā* here carries the same significance as *qurbat* or *nearness*, and what it meant is to love the attainment of nearness to God (R).

24 Or say they: He has forged a lie against Allāh? So, if Allāh please, He would seal thy heart (against them).^a And Allāh blots out the falsehood and confirms the Truth with His words.^b Surely He is Knower of what is in the breasts.

25 And He it is Who accepts repentance from His servants and pardons evil deeds, and He knows what you do;

26 And He answers those who believe and do good deeds, and gives them more out of His grace. And for the disbelievers is a severe chastisement.

27 And if Allāh were to amplify the provision for His servants, they would rebel in the earth; but He sends (it) down by measure, as He pleases. Surely He is Aware, Seer of His servants.

28 And He it is Who sends down the rain after they have despaired, and He unfolds His mercy. And He is the Friend, the Praiséd One.

29 And of His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth and what He has spread forth in both of them of living beings. And He is All-powerful to gather them together, when He will.

أَمْ يَقُولُونَ افْتَرَى عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا
فَإِنْ يَشَاءَ اللَّهُ يَخْتِمْ عَلَى قَلْبِكَ ط وَ
يَسْحَ اللَّهُ الْبَاطِلَ وَيُخَيِّطُ الْحَقَّ بِكَلِمَاتِهِ ط
إِنَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ ﴿٢٤﴾

وَهُوَ الَّذِي يَقْبَلُ التَّوْبَةَ عَنْ عِبَادِهِ
وَيَعْفُو عَنِ السَّيِّئَاتِ وَيَعْلَمُ
مَا تَفْعَلُونَ ﴿٢٥﴾

وَيَسْتَجِيبُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا
الصَّالِحَاتِ وَيَزِيدُهُمْ مِّنْ فَضْلِهِ ط
وَ الْكُفْرُونَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ ﴿٢٦﴾

وَلَوْ بَسَطَ اللَّهُ الرِّزْقَ لِعِبَادِهِ لَبَغَوْا
فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَكِنْ يُنَزِّلُ بِقَدَرٍ مَّا
يَشَاءُ ط إِنَّهُ بِعِبَادِهِ خَبِيرٌ بَصِيرٌ ﴿٢٧﴾

وَهُوَ الَّذِي يُنَزِّلُ الْغَيْثَ مِنْ بَعْدِ
مَا قَنَطُوا وَيَنْشُرُ رَحْمَتَهُ ط وَهُوَ
الْوَلِيُّ الْحَمِيدُ ﴿٢٨﴾

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ خَلْقُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ
وَمَا بَيْنَ فِيهِمَا مِنْ ذَاتِ ط وَهُوَ عَلَى
جَمْعِهِمْ إِذَا يَشَاءُ قَدِيرٌ ﴿٢٩﴾

24a. The sealing of the Prophet's heart cannot imply its being sealed against the Truth — Truth was being revealed to him — but the making of it secure against the abuse of his opponents, for they abused the Prophet and called him an impostor. This significance is, moreover, in accordance with the context, for by blotting out the falsehood and confirming the Truth, the abuses would be stopped, and thus his heart would be made secure against them.

24b. The words here imply the prophecies whose fulfilment would firmly establish the Truth.

SECTION 4: Believers should be Patient

30 And whatever misfortune befalls you, it is on account of what your hands have wrought and He pardons much.

وَمَا أَصَابَكُمْ مِنْ مُصِيبَةٍ فِيمَا كَسَبْتُمْ
أَيِّدِيكُمْ وَيَعْفُوا عَنْ كَثِيرٍ ﴿٣٠﴾

31 And you cannot escape in the earth, and besides Allāh you have no protector nor helper.

وَمَا أَنْتُمْ بِمُعْجِزِينَ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا
لَكُمْ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مِنْ وَلِيٍّ وَلَا نَصِيرٍ ﴿٣١﴾

32 And of His signs are the ships, like mountains on the sea.

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ الْجَوَارِ فِي الْبَحْرِ كَالْأَعْلَامِ ﴿٣٢﴾

33 If He will, He stills the wind so that they lie motionless on its back. Surely there are signs in this for every patient, grateful one,

إِنْ يَشَأْ يُسْكِنِ الرِّيحَ فَيَظَلْنَ رَوَاكِدًا
عَلَى ظَهْرِهِ ط إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِكُلِّ
صَبَّارٍ شَكُورٍ ﴿٣٣﴾

34 Or He causes them to perish for what they have earned, and He pardons much;^a

أَوْ يُؤَيِّقُهُنَّ بِمَا كَسَبُوا وَيَعْفُ
عَنْ كَثِيرٍ ﴿٣٤﴾

35 And (that) those who dispute about Our messages may know. There is no refuge for them.

وَيَعْلَمَ الَّذِينَ يُجَادِلُونَ فِي آيَاتِنَا
مَا لَهُمْ مِنْ مَحْجِصٍ ﴿٣٥﴾

36 So whatever you are given is but a provision of this world's life, and that which Allāh has is better and more lasting for those who believe and rely on their Lord;

فَمَا أَوْتَيْنَهُمْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ فَتَنَاءُ
الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَمَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ خَيْرٌ
وَأَبْغَى لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَلَى رَبِّهِمْ
يَتَوَكَّلُونَ ﴿٣٦﴾

37 And those who shun the great sins and indecencies, and whenever they are angry they forgive;

وَالَّذِينَ يَجْتَنِبُونَ كَبِيرَ الْإِثْمِ
وَالْفَوَاحِشَ وَإِذَا مَا غَضِبُوا هُمْ
يَعْفِرُونَ ﴿٣٧﴾

38 And those who respond to their Lord and keep up prayer, and whose affairs are (decided) by counsel among themselves, and who spend out of what We have given them;^a

وَالَّذِينَ اسْتَجَابُوا لِرَبِّهِمْ وَأَقَامُوا
الصَّلَاةَ وَأَمْرُهُمْ شُورَى بَيْنَهُمْ
وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ ﴿٣٨﴾

34a. The ship in these two verses is the ship of the affairs of the disbelievers, which was ultimately to be wrecked, yet Allāh dealt with them mercifully by pardoning most of the wicked things they did. The next verse makes the significance clear by drawing attention to the fact that the statement is a warning to *those who dispute about the messages of Allāh*, that they will find no refuge when their ship is wrecked.

38a, see next page.

39 And those who, when great wrong afflicts them, defend themselves.^a

وَالَّذِينَ إِذَا أَصَابَهُمُ الْبَغْيُ هُمْ
يَنْتَصِرُونَ ﴿٣٩﴾

40 And the recompense of evil is punishment like it; but whoever forgives and amends, his reward is with Allāh. Surely He loves not the wrongdoers.^a

وَجَزَاءُ سَيِّئَةٍ سَيِّئَةٌ مِّثْلُهَا ۗ فَمَنْ
عَفَا وَأَصْلَحَ فَأَجْرُهُ عَلَى اللَّهِ ۗ إِنَّهُ
لَا يُحِبُّ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٤٠﴾

41 And whoever defends himself after his being oppressed, these it is against whom there is no way (of blame).

وَلَمَنِ انْتَصَرَ بَعْدَ ظُلْمِهِ فَأُولَٰئِكَ
مَّا عَلَيْهِمْ مِنْ سَبِيلٍ ﴿٤١﴾

42 The way (of blame) is only against those who oppress men and

إِنَّمَا السَّبِيلُ عَلَى الَّذِينَ يَظْلِمُونَ
النَّاسَ وَيَبْعُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ

38a. The occurrence in an early Makkan revelation of the words *whose affairs are decided by counsel among themselves* is very significant. The Muslims are here enjoined as usual to observe prayer and to spend out of what Allāh has given them. Yet between these two injunctions, which always go together in the Holy Qur'ān, is placed a third: *whose affairs are decided by counsel among themselves*. It is clear that at this early period the Muslims had no important matters to decide for which they might have stood in need of counsel, yet between two injunctions which are the basis of a true Islamic life, a third is inserted enjoining that, as a rule, counsel should be taken. The injunction is clearly meant to prepare them for transacting the momentous affairs of State and all matters connected with national weal or woe. In fact, the word *amr*, which I have translated as *affairs*, means *command*; and *amr Allāh*, or *Allāh's command*, often signifies the establishment of the kingdom of God, which stands for an Islamic kingdom. The use of the word *amr*, therefore, here refers to the Islamic kingdom, the affairs of which must be transacted by counsel. In this Islām has laid the basis of Government by parliaments, and the idea found a clear practical expression in the early days of the Caliphate, when the *Khalifah* had to refer every important affair to counsel. It is strange indeed that Government by parliament is now looked upon by Europeans as an institution which is quite foreign to Islām and unsuited for the Muslim people.

39a. *Intaṣara* alone signifies *he defended himself against his injurer* (LL); followed by *min*, it signifies the taking of revenge. The first meaning is applicable here, as it is not followed by *min*.

40a. A golden rule relating to forgiveness of evil is given here. The rule laid down is that evil must be requited by punishment proportionate thereto. Note that punishment which is meted out for an evil is called a *sayyi'ah* or *an evil*, because the Arabs speak of the requital of an evil in terms of that evil; see 2:15a. Also note that the punishment must be proportionate to the evil. A very just and necessary restriction. And this beautiful maxim is given by a man whose people were in the habit of slaughtering whole tribes for the most trifling fault of one member. Again, forgiveness is not neglected, nor preached in such a manner as to make it impracticable. There is in Islām neither the one extreme of *tooth for tooth* or the opposite one of *turning the left cheek when the right is smitten* or *giving away the cloak to one who has already wrongfully taken the coat* of his brother; it is the golden and beautiful mean that forgiveness may be exercised, if forgiveness will mend the matter and do good to the wrongdoer himself. The object to be kept in view is to *amend*, whether it is attained by giving proportionate punishment or by exercising forgiveness.

revolt in the earth unjustly. For such there is a painful chastisement.

43 And whoever is patient and forgives — that surely is an affair of great resolution.

الْحَقُّ أُولَئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿٥٠﴾

وَلَمَنْ صَبَرَ وَعَفَرَ إِنَّ ذَلِكَ لَمِنْ عَزْمِ الْأُمُورِ ﴿٥١﴾

SECTION 5: Revelation guides aright

44 And he whom Allāh leaves in error, has no friend after Him. And thou wilt see the iniquitous, when they see the chastisement, saying: Is there any way of return?

45 And thou wilt see them brought before it, humbling themselves because of abasement, looking with a faint glance. And those who believe will say: Surely the losers are they who lose themselves and their followers on the Resurrection day. Now surely the iniquitous are in lasting chastisement.

46 And they will have no friends to help them besides Allāh. And he whom Allāh leaves in error cannot find a way.

47 Hearken to your Lord before there comes from Allāh the day which there is no averting. You will have no refuge on that day, nor will it be yours to make a denial.

48 But if they turn away, We have not sent thee as a watcher over them. Thy duty is only to deliver (the message). And surely when We make man taste mercy from Us, he rejoices thereat; and if an evil afflicts them on account of what their hands have sent before, then surely man is ungrateful.

49 Allāh's is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth. He creates what

وَمَنْ يُضِلِلِ اللَّهُ فَمَا لَهُ مِنْ وَدِيِّ
مِنْ بَعْدِهِ ۗ وَتَرَى الظَّالِمِينَ لَمَّا
رَأَوْا الْعَذَابَ يَقُولُونَ هَلْ إِلَى
مَرَدٍّ مِنْ سَبِيلِ ﴿٥٢﴾

وَتَرَاهُمْ يُعْرَضُونَ عَلَيْهَا خاشِعِينَ
مِنَ الذَّلِيلِ يَنْظُرُونَ مِنْ طَرْفٍ حَافِيٍّ
وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّ الْخُسِرِينَ
الَّذِينَ خَسِرُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ وَاهْلِيَهُمْ
يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ أَلَا إِنَّ الظَّالِمِينَ فِي
عَذَابٍ مُّقِيمٍ ﴿٥٣﴾

وَمَا كَانَ لَهُمْ مِنْ أَوْلِيَاءٍ يَتَصَدَّقُهُمْ
مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَمَنْ يُضِلِلِ اللَّهُ فَمَا
لَهُ مِنْ سَبِيلٍ ﴿٥٤﴾

إِسْتَجِيبُوا لِرَبِّكُمْ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ يَأْتِيَ
يَوْمٌ لَا مَرَدَّ لَهُ مِنَ اللَّهِ مَا لَكُمْ
مِنْ مَلْجَأٍ يَوْمَئِذٍ وَمَا لَكُمْ مِنْ تُكْدِيرٍ ﴿٥٥﴾

فَإِنْ أَعْرَضُوا فَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ عَلَيْهِمْ
حَفِظَاطٌ إِنَّ عَلَيْكَ إِلَّا الْبَلْغُ ۗ وَإِنَّمَا
إِذَا أَدَقْنَا لِلْإِنْسَانِ مِنَّا رَحْمَةً فَرِحَ

بِهَا ۗ وَإِنْ تُصِيبْهُمْ سَيِّئَةٌ يَبْغَا قَدَمَتَ
أَيْدِيهِمْ فَإِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ كَفُورٌ ﴿٥٦﴾
لِلَّهِ مُلْكُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ يُخَلِّقُ

He pleases. He grants females to whom He pleases and grants males to whom He pleases,

50 Or He grants them both males and females, and He makes whom He pleases, barren. Surely He is Knower, Powerful.^a

51 And it is not vouchsafed to a mortal that Allāh should speak to him, except by revelation or from behind a veil, or by sending a messenger and revealing by His permission what He pleases.^a Surely He is High, Wise.

52 And thus^a did We reveal to thee an inspired Book^b by Our command.

مَا يَشَاءُ يَهَبُ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ إِنَّا
وَيَهَبُ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ الذُّكُورَ ۝

أَوْ يُزَوِّجُهُمْ ذُكْرَانًا وَإِنثَاءً وَ
يَجْعَلُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ عَقِيمًا إِنَّهُ
عَلِيمٌ قَدِيرٌ ۝

وَمَا كَانَ لِنَبِيٍّ أَنْ يَكْتُمَ اللَّهُ إِلَا
وَحْيًا أَوْ مِنْ وَرَائِهِ جَبَابٌ أَوْ يُرْسِلَ
رَسُولًا فَيُوحِيَ بِإِذْنِهِ مَا يَشَاءُ إِنَّهُ
عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ ۝

وَكَذَلِكَ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ رُوحًا مِّنْ
أَمْرِنَا مَا كُنْتَ تَدْرِي مَا الْكِتَابُ

50a. The birth of a daughter was looked upon by the Arabs as a calamity (see 16:58, 59), this being due to the low position which women held in society. The wonderful change brought about by Islām in the status of woman is clearly foreshadowed in this early revelation, where the daughter has the precedence over the son.

51a. This verse shows how Allāh speaks to a person or makes known His will to him. Three modes of this are stated: (1) by *wahy*, which word is generally translated as meaning *revelation*. The primary significance of the word *wahy* is, however, a *hasty suggestion*, and since the different kinds of revelation are spoken of here, the meaning intended must be the primary significance of the word. Hence the inspired word, which enters the hearts of the prophets and of the righteous, is called *wahy* or *revelation*, because it is like a hasty suggestion made directly to the heart of the inspired one, *ilqā-'un fi-l-rau'i*. It is in this sense that a revelation is spoken of as being granted to the mother of Moses (28:7), and to the apostles of Jesus who were not prophets (5:111). (2) The second mode of Allāh's speaking to His servants is that He speaks from behind a veil — a scene is shown as in a vision carrying deeper significance, or words are heard by the person spoken to as from behind a veil. (3) The third form of revelation is that in which a messenger — an angel — is chosen by the Almighty to deliver His message to the person to whom He wishes to speak. This is the highest form of revelation, and such is the revelation of the Qur'ān as granted to the Holy Prophet, being recited by Gabriel. This is called *wahy matluww* or *revelation that is recited*. This revelation is granted only to prophets, while the other two may also be granted to the righteous who are not raised to the dignity of prophethood. It should, however, be borne in mind that in all these cases the recipient of the revelation is granted certain other senses. He sees what others do not see and he hears words which others do not hear. It is, therefore, with what may be called the spiritual senses that he hears and sees and feels things which others do not hear, see, or feel.

52a. *Thus* refers to the last mode of granting revelation, because the Holy Qur'ān is spoken of as having been brought by the *Angel Gabriel* (2:97) or the *Faithful Spirit* (26:193).

52b. The use of the word *rūh* ("inspired Book") as meaning *inspiration*, and not the *soul*, is conclusive here. The Qur'ān is called the *rūh* or the *spirit*, because it gave life to a dead world. It is dead again, and again will life be breathed into it by the Qur'ān.

Thou knewest not what the Book was, nor (what) Faith (was), but We made it a light, guiding thereby whom We please of Our servants. And surely thou guidest to the right path —

53 The path of Allāh, to Whom belongs whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth. Now surely to Allāh do all affairs eventually come.

وَلَا الْإِيمَانُ وَلَكِنْ جَعَلْنَاهُ نُورًا
تَهْدِي بِهِ مَنْ نَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا
وَإِنَّكَ لَتَهْدِي إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿٥٣﴾

صِرَاطِ اللَّهِ الَّذِي لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ
وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ ۗ أَلَا إِلَى اللَّهِ
تَصِيرُ الْأُمُورُ ﴿٥٣﴾