



## CHAPTER 29

### *Al-‘Ankabūt: The Spider*

(REVEALED AT MAKKAH: 7 sections; 69 verses)

This chapter is entitled *The Spider* from the fact that false, idolatrous, and polytheistic beliefs are here (v. 41) compared with a spider’s web. The significance is clear: false beliefs will not stand the test of time, and they shall be swept away before the strong current of Truth. This chapter and the three following form another group of Makkan revelation, each being headed by the letters *alif, lām, mim*, and each containing clear prophecies of the onward march of Islām, and may be given the name of the *Alif lām mim* Makkan group. These chapters belong to the close of the early, or the beginning of the middle, Makkan period.

The last chapter predicted in plain words a triumphal return of the Holy Prophet to Makkah, thus indicating the triumph of Islām. Here we are told that the great object of the triumph of Truth has never been achieved except by suffering sore afflictions and severe trials in its cause. Hence trials and persecutions were necessary. Starting thus, there is a reference to the persecution of children by their very parents, and the converts to Islām are told that they must yield to their parents in all other matters, but must resolutely reject false doctrines. The second, third and fourth sections make brief references to the histories of Noah, Abraham, Lot and other prophets, showing how the righteous had always to undergo trials and how they were subjected to persecutions, but false beliefs had no basis and had always been swept away by Truth. At the end of the fourth section, false beliefs are compared with a spider’s web, thus illustrating their extreme frailty. The fifth section refers to the purifying effect of the Qur’ān, and the repeated demand for more signs is met with the simple answer that the Holy Word of God was in itself a sufficiently clear sign, because it wrought a transformation in the lives of those who followed it. The sixth section warns the disbelievers of the fate in store for them and of the consequences of their tyrannical persecutions of the Muslims; it also comforts the latter by stating that their sufferings will soon be changed into a state of happiness. The seventh section shows that Allāh, Who deals mercifully even with the disbelievers, will not allow the exertions of the faithful in the cause of Truth to remain unfruitful, and that those who strive hard and earnestly will be guided in the right way, which is the way to success.

## SECTION 1: Trials purify

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

1 I, Allāh, am the best Knower.<sup>a</sup>

2 Do men think that they will be left alone on saying, We believe, and will not be tried?<sup>a</sup>

3 And indeed We tried those before them, so Allāh will certainly know those who are true and He will know the liars.<sup>a</sup>

4 Or do they who work evil think that they will escape Us? Evil is it that they judge!

5 Whoever hopes to meet with Allāh, the term of Allāh is then surely coming. And He is the Hearing, the Knowing.

6 And whoever strives hard, strives for himself. Surely Allāh is Self-sufficient, above (need of) (His) creatures.<sup>a</sup>

7 And those who believe and do good, We shall certainly do away with their afflictions and reward them for the best of what they did.<sup>a</sup>

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ  
الْمَعَّةَ

أَحْسَبَ النَّاسُ أَنْ يُتْرَكُوا أَنْ يَقُولُوا آمَنَّا وَهُمْ لَا يُفْتَنُونَ ①

وَلَقَدْ فَتَنَّا الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ فَلَيَعْلَمَنَّ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ صَدَقُوا وَلَيَعْلَمَنَّ الْكٰذِبِينَ ②

أَمْ حَسِبَ الَّذِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ السَّيِّئَاتِ أَنْ يَسْبِقُونَا سَاءَ مَا يَحْكُمُونَ ③

مَنْ كَانَ يَرْجُوا لِقَاءَ اللَّهِ فَإِنَّ أَجَلَ اللَّهِ لَآتٍ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ ④

وَمَنْ جَاهَدَ فَإِنَّمَا يُجَاهِدُ لِنَفْسِهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَغَنِيٌّ عَنِ الْعَالَمِينَ ⑤

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَنُكَفِّرَنَّ عَنْهُمْ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ وَلَنَجْزِيَنَّهُمْ أَحْسَنَ الَّذِي كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ⑥

1a. See 2:1a.

2a. By the trials spoken of in these verses are meant the persecutions of the believers by the disbelievers. This is made clear in v. 10. A misconception as to the nature of these trials has led some critics to think that the first ten verses must have been revealed at Madinah.

3a. The *knowing* in this case relates to a knowledge of the event when it takes place, when reward or punishment is meted out to a man for what he does. Allāh knows what a man will do but does not reward or punish, until He knows that the man has done a deed.

6a. As shown in 25:52a, the word *jihād* occurs in Makkah revelation frequently, and carries its proper significance of *striving hard* in Allāh's way. The suffering of persecutions and tortures at the hands of their enemies for the sake of their faith was no less a *jihād* for the Muslims at Makkah than their fighting in defence of Islām at Madinah.

7a, see next page.

8 And We have enjoined on man goodness to his parents. But if they contend with thee to associate (others) with Me, of which thou hast no knowledge, obey them not. To Me is your return, so I will inform you of what you did.<sup>a</sup>

9 And those who believe and do good, We shall surely make them enter among the righteous.

10 And among men is he who says: We believe in Allāh; but when he is persecuted for the sake of Allāh, he thinks the persecution of men to be as the chastisement of Allāh.<sup>a</sup> And if there comes help from thy Lord, they will say: Surely we were with you. Is not Allāh the Best Knower of what is in the hearts of mankind?

11 And certainly Allāh will know those who believe, and He will know the hypocrites.

وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ حُسْنًا  
وَإِنْ جَاهَدَاكَ لِتُشْرِكَ بِي مَا لَيْسَ  
لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ فَلَا تُطِعْهُمَا إِنِّي مَرْجِعُكُمْ  
فَأُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ①

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ  
لَنُدْخِلَنَّهُمْ فِي الصَّالِحِينَ ④

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يَقُولُ آمَنَّا بِاللَّهِ  
فَإِذَا أُوذِيَ فِي اللَّهِ جَعَلَ فِتْنَةً  
لِلنَّاسِ كَعَذَابِ اللَّهِ ۗ وَلَئِن جَاءَ  
نَصْرٌ مِّن سِرِّكَ لَيَقُولُنَّ إِنَّا كُنَّا  
مَعَكُمْ ۗ أَوَلَيْسَ اللَّهُ بِأَعْلَمَ بِمَا  
فِي صُدُورِ الْعَالَمِينَ ⑤

وَلَيَعْلَمَنَّ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا  
وَلَيَعْلَمَنَّ الْمُنَافِقِينَ ⑩

7a. *Kafara*, as also *kaffara*, means originally *he covered or concealed*, and *kaffara-la-sayyi'at*, *he did away with the evil or effaced it* (LL). *Sayyi'ah* has a double significance, it means *an evil deed or a sin*, as also *an evil accident, a trial or an affliction* (LL). Hence the words *la-nukaffiranna 'an-hum sayyi'āti-him* may signify either *the doing away with their afflictions or trials*, or *the doing away with their evil deeds*. I prefer the first because it is of the trials and afflictions of the believers that these verses speak. If the second significance is adopted, it would mean that the evil deeds which the believers did before they accepted the Truth would be effaced, because the course of their lives was now changed.

8a. This verse, while signifying the importance of obedience to parents, warns against attaching over-importance even to filial duty. It shows that when an important duty clashes with a still higher one, the former is to be sacrificed for the latter. It is related that when Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqās became a convert to Islām, his mother swore that she would neither eat nor drink, until he reverted to disbelief, and that this verse was revealed on that occasion. It is a further proof that these verses were revealed at Makkah, because Sa'd was one of the early converts. In fact, it was at Makkah that children had to leave their parents on account of their conversion to Islām, the parents not allowing them to forsake their old religion.

10a. The meaning is that those who are weak in faith consider the persecution by the disbelievers, which was necessary to strengthen and purify their faith, as if it were a punishment from Allāh for their change of faith. The latter part of the verse is a prophecy as to what the weak in faith will say when they see the help of Allāh coming to the Muslims.

12 And those who disbelieve say to those who believe: Follow our path and we will bear your wrongs. And they can never bear aught of their wrongs. Surely they are liars.

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا  
اتَّبِعُوا سَبِيلَنَا وَلْنَحْمِلْ خَطِيئَتَكُمْ  
وَمَا هُمْ بِحَامِلِينَ مِنْ خَطِيئَتِهِمْ مِنْ  
شَيْءٍ إِنَّهُمْ لَكَاذِبُونَ ﴿١٢﴾

13 And they will certainly bear their own burdens, and other burdens besides their own burdens; and they will certainly be questioned on the day of Resurrection as to what they forged.<sup>a</sup>

وَلْيَحْمِلْنَ أَثْقَالَهُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا مَعَهُمْ  
أَنْتُمْ لَهُمْ لَكِيدُونَ وَلَيُسْأَلُنَّ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ  
عَمَّا كَانُوا يَفْتَرُونَ ﴿١٣﴾

### SECTION 2: Noah and Abraham

14 And We indeed sent Noah to his people, so he remained among them a thousand years save fifty years.<sup>a</sup> And the deluge overtook them, and they were wrongdoers.

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا نُوحًا إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِ فَلَبِثَ  
فِيهِمْ أَلْفَ سَنَةٍ إِلَّا خَمْسِينَ عَامًا  
فَأَخَذَهُمُ الطُّوفَانُ وَهُمْ ظَالِمُونَ ﴿١٤﴾

15 So We delivered him and the inmates of the ark, and made it a sign to the nations.

فَأَنْجَيْنَاهُ وَأَصْحَابَ السَّفِينَةِ وَجَعَلْنَاهَا  
آيَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٥﴾

16 And (We sent) Abraham, when he said to his people: Serve Allāh and keep your duty to Him. That is better for you, if you did but know.

وَإِبْرَاهِيمَ إِذْ قَالَ لِقَوْمِهِ اعْبُدُوا  
اللَّهَ وَاتَّقُوهُ ذَلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ  
إِن كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٦﴾

17 You only worship idols besides Allāh and you invent a lie. Surely they whom you serve besides Allāh control no sustenance for you; so

إِنَّمَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ أَوْثَانًا  
وَتَخْلُقُونَ إِفْكًا إِنَّ الَّذِينَ  
تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ لَا يَبْلُغُونَ  
لَكُمْ رِزْقًا فَابْتَغُوا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الرِّزْقَ

13a. It should be noted that the Qur'ān does not anywhere say that the burden of one shall be taken away by another. Each one is responsible for what he does. The "other burdens" are really their own burdens in misleading others, and thus the two burdens spoken of here are the burden of one's own wrongdoing and the burden of misleading others.

14a. The Bible gives 950 years to be the age of Noah. It is not improbable that the span of man's life may have been greater in his earlier history than at present, and Noah may have attained an extraordinary age among his compatriots. But there are indications that the reference here is to the abiding for 950 years of the law preached by Noah, his place then being taken by Abraham, and the reference may be to these 950 years, as the mention of Abraham immediately afterwards shows.

seek sustenance from Allāh and serve Him and be grateful to Him. To Him you will be brought back.

**18** And if you reject, nations before you did indeed reject (the Truth). And the duty of the Messenger is only to deliver (the message) plainly.

**19** See they not how Allāh originates the creation, then reproduces it? Surely that is easy to Allāh.<sup>a</sup>

**20** Say: Travel in the earth then see how He makes the first creation, then Allāh creates the latter creation. Surely Allāh is Possessor of power over all things.<sup>a</sup>

**21** He chastises whom He pleases and has mercy on whom He pleases, and to Him you will be turned back.

**22** And you cannot escape in the earth nor in the heaven, and you have no protector or helper besides Allāh.

وَأَعْبُدُوهُ وَأَشْكُرُوا لَهُ طَائِبِينَ  
تُرْجَعُونَ ﴿١٧﴾

وَأِنْ تَكَدَّرْتُمْ عَلَيْهِ فَكَلِمَةٌ مِّنْ قَبْلِكُمْ وَمَا عَلَى الرَّسُولِ إِلَّا الْبَلْغُ الْمُسِينُ ﴿١٨﴾

أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا كَيْفَ يُبْدِئُ اللَّهُ الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيدُهُ ط إِنَّ ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرٌ ﴿١٩﴾

قُلْ سِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَانظُرُوا كَيْفَ بَدَأَ الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ اللَّهُ يُنشِئُ النَّشْأَةَ الْآخِرَةَ ط إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿٢٠﴾

يُعَذِّبُ مَن يَشَاءُ وَيَرْحَمُ مَن يَشَاءُ ط وَإِلَيْهِ تُقْلَبُونَ ﴿٢١﴾

وَمَا آنتُمْ بِمُعْجِزِينَ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فِي السَّمَاءِ ط وَمَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مَن وَّلِيٍّ وَلَا نَصِيرٌ ﴿٢٢﴾

### SECTION 3: Abraham and Lot

**23** And those who disbelieve in the messages of Allāh and the meeting

وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَرِيقَائِهِ  
أُولَٰئِكَ يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنْهُمْ وَأُولَٰئِكَ

19a. The law of creation and destruction of things, which is constantly working in nature, finds an expression in the lives of nations: a nation is brought into existence, then it is swept away and a new nation raised in its stead. It is to this law that the verse refers as a warning to the idolatrous Makkans that the time had now come when their place would be taken by another nation. This is made clear in the verses that follow.

It should be noted that vv. 18–23 are parenthetical, being an address to the opponents of the Holy Prophet. The Qur'an frequently adopts this method of warning in the middle of another narration, for its object is not to relate a story, but to warn those who opposed the spread of Truth as revealed to the Holy Prophet.

20a. Elsewhere, the words *travel in the earth* are always followed by *then see what was the end of the rejectors*, instead of which we have here *how He makes the first creation, then Allāh creates the latter creation*. The apparent identity of the significance of these two statements is thus made clearer by the comparison, which shows that what is meant is the disappearance of one nation to give place to another.

with Him, they despair of My mercy, and for them is a painful chastisement.

لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٠﴾

24 So naught was the answer of his people except that they said: Slay him or burn him! But Allāh delivered him from the fire. Surely therein are signs for a people who believe.<sup>a</sup>

فَمَا كَانَ جَوَابَ قَوْمِهِ إِلَّا أَنْ قَالُوا اقْتُلُوهُ أَوْ حَرِّقُوهُ فَأَنْجَاهُ اللَّهُ مِنَ النَّارِ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٢٤﴾

25 And he said: You have only taken idols besides Allāh by way of friendship between you in this world's life, then on the day of Resurrection some of you will deny others, and some of you will curse others; and your abode is the Fire, and you will have no helpers.

وَقَالَ إِنَّمَا اتَّخَذْتُمْ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ أَوْثَانًا مَمْلُوءَةً بَيْنَكُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا ثُمَّ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ يَكْفُرُ بَعْضُكُمْ بِبَعْضٍ وَيَعْنُ بَعْضُكُمْ بِبَعْضٍ زُومًا وَلَكُمْ النَّارُ وَمَا لَكُمْ مِنْ نَاصِرِينَ ﴿٢٥﴾

26 So Lot believed in him. And he said: I am fleeing to my Lord. Surely He is the Mighty, the Wise.<sup>a</sup>

فَأَمِنَ لَهُ لُوطٌ وَقَالَ إِنِّي مُهَاجِرٌ إِلَىٰ رَبِّي إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿٢٦﴾

27 And We granted him Isaac and Jacob, and ordained prophethood and the Book among his seed. And We gave him his reward in this world, and in the Hereafter he will surely be among the righteous.

وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ إِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَجَعَلْنَا فِي ذُرِّيَّتِهِ النُّبُوَّةَ وَالْكِتَابَ وَأَتَيْنَاهُ أَجْرَهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا ۗ وَإِنَّهُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ لَمِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ ﴿٢٧﴾

28 And (We sent) Lot, when he said to his people: Surely you are guilty of an abomination which none of the nations has done before you.

وَلُوطًا إِذْ قَالَ لِقَوْمِهِ إِنَّكُمْ لَأنتهون الفاحشةَ بما سبقكم بها من أحدٍ من العالمين ﴿٢٨﴾

29 Do you come to males and commit robbery on the highway, and commit evil deeds in your assemblies?<sup>a</sup>

أَيُّكُمْ لَمَّا تَتَّبِعُونَ الرِّجَالَ وَتَقْطَعُونَ السَّبِيلَ ۗ وَتَأْتُونَ فِي نَادِيكُمُ الْمُنْكَرَ طَمَا كَانَ جَوَابَ قَوْمِهِ

24a. As in 21:69, so here, it is not stated that Abraham was actually cast into the fire. On the other hand, the plan was either *to slay* or *to burn* him, and therefore the *fire* may only stand for the opposition which these plans involved.

26a. The words *I am fleeing to my Lord* indicate his flight to another country whither he was commanded to flee by his Lord. This is more clearly stated in 19:48: "And I withdraw from you," being followed by the statement made in 19:49: "So when he withdrew from them". This makes it further clear that his deliverance from the fire was brought about by his flight to another country.

29a, see next page.

But the answer of his people was only that they said: Bring on us Allāh's chastisement, if thou art truthful.

30 He said: My Lord, help me against the mischievous people.

إِلَّا أَنْ قَالُوا اتَّخَذْنَا بِعَدَابِ اللَّهِ  
إِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ ﴿٢٩﴾  
قَالَ رَبِّ انصُرْنِي عَلَى الْقَوْمِ  
الْمُفْسِدِينَ ﴿٣٠﴾

#### SECTION 4: Opposition to Truth ever a Failure

31 And when Our messengers came to Abraham with good news, they said: We are going to destroy the people of this town, for its people are iniquitous.

وَلَمَّا جَاءَتْ رُسُلُنَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ بِالْبُشْرَى  
قَالُوا إِنَّا مَهْلِكُوا أَهْلَ هَذِهِ الْقَرْيَةِ  
إِنَّ أَهْلَهَا كَانُوا ظَالِمِينَ ﴿٣١﴾

32 He said: Surely in it is Lot. They said: We know well who is in it; we shall certainly deliver him and his followers, except his wife; she is of those who remain behind.

قَالَ إِنَّ فِيهَا لُوطًا قَالُوا نَحْنُ  
أَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ فِيهَا اللَّهُ لَنُنَجِّيَنَّهُ وَأَهْلَهُ  
إِلَّا امْرَأَتَهُ كَانَتْ مِنَ الْغَابِرِينَ ﴿٣٢﴾

33 And when Our messengers came to Lot, he was grieved on account of them, and he lacked strength to protect them.<sup>a</sup> And they said: Fear not, nor grieve; surely we will deliver thee and thy followers, except thy wife — she is of those who remain behind.

وَلَمَّا أَنْ جَاءَتْ رُسُلُنَا لُوطًا سِمْءًا  
بِهِمْ وَوَضَّاقُ بِهِمْ ذُرْعًا وَقَالُوا لَا  
تَخَفْ وَلَا تَحْزَنْ إِنَّا مُنَجِّوكَ وَأَهْلَكَ  
إِلَّا امْرَأَتَكَ كَانَتْ مِنَ الْغَابِرِينَ ﴿٣٣﴾

34 Surely We are going to bring down upon the people of this town a punishment from heaven, because they transgressed.

إِنَّا مُنْزِلُونَ عَلَى أَهْلِ هَذِهِ الْقَرْيَةِ  
رِجْزًا مِنَ السَّمَاءِ بِمَا كَانُوا يَفْسُقُونَ ﴿٣٤﴾

29a. Three evils are ascribed to Lot's people — unnatural crime, highway robbery, and openly committing evil deeds in their assemblies. Therefore it is a mistake to explain all incidents in connection with Lot's story only with reference to unnatural crime as the sole evil of which they were guilty. *Qat' al-sabil* is, according to Kf, "the work of robbers, killing men and seizing their property". JB adds after the words *taqta'un al-sabil* by way of explaining them, "for they used to murder the passers-by and rob them of their property". Other commentators give similar explanations.

33a. *Dhar'* signifies literally *the stretching forth of the arm*, and thus stands for *power or ability or extent of power*; and *dāqa bi-l-amri dhar'-an* means *he was unable to accomplish the affair, or he lacked strength to accomplish the affair* (LL).

35 And certainly We have left a clear sign of it for a people who understand.<sup>a</sup>

وَلَقَدْ تَرَكْنَا مِنْهَا آيَةً بَيِّنَةً  
لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٣٥﴾

36 And to Midian (We sent) their brother Shu'uib, so he said: O my people, serve Allāh and fear the Latter day, and act not corruptly, making mischief, in the land.

وَإِلَى مَدْيَنَ أَخَاهُمْ شُعَيْبًا فَقَالَ  
يَقَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَارْجُوا الْيَوْمَ الْآخِرَ  
وَلَا تَكُونُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ مَفْسِدِينَ ﴿٣٦﴾

37 But they rejected him, so a severe earthquake overtook them and they lay prostrate in their abodes.

فَكَذَّبُوهُ فَأَخَذَتْهُمُ الرَّجْفَةُ  
فَصَبَّحُوا فِي دَارِهِمْ جَثِيئِينَ ﴿٣٧﴾

38 And 'Ād and Thamūd! And some of their dwellings are indeed apparent to you. And the devil made their deeds fairseeming to them, so he kept them back from the path, and they could see clearly.

وَعَادًا وَثَمُودًا وَقَدْ تَبَيَّنَ لَكُمْ مِنْ  
مَسْكَنِهِمْ فِي تَرَائِينَهُمْ الشَّيْطَانُ  
أَعْمَأَلَهُمْ فَوَسَّوهُمْ عَنِ السَّبِيلِ  
وَكَانُوا مُسْتَبْصِرِينَ ﴿٣٨﴾

39 And Korah and Pharaoh and Hāmān! And certainly Moses came to them with clear arguments, but they behaved haughtily in the land; and they could not outstrip (Us).

وَقَارُونَ وَفِرْعَوْنَ وَهَامَانَ وَلَقَدْ  
جَاءَهُمْ مُوسَى بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ فَاسْتَكْبَرُوا  
فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا كَانُوا اسْمِعِينَ ﴿٣٩﴾

40 So each one We punished for his sin. Of them was he on whom We sent a violent storm, and of them was he whom the rumbling overtook, and of them was he whom We caused the earth to swallow, and of them was he whom We drowned.<sup>a</sup> And it was not Allāh, Who wronged them, but they wronged themselves.

فَكُلًّا أَخَذْنَا بِذُنُوبِهِ فَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ  
أَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِ حَاصِبًا وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ  
أَخَذْتُهُ الضَّيْحَةَ وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ  
خَسَفْنَا بِهِ الْأَرْضَ وَمِنْهُمْ  
مَنْ أَغْرَقْنَا وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيُظْلِمَهُمْ  
وَلَكِنْ كَانُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ ﴿٤٠﴾

41 The parable of those who take guardians besides Allāh is as the parable of the spider that makes for

مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ  
أَوْلِيَاءَ كَمَثَلِ الْعَنْكَبُوتِ إِذَا  
خَدَّتْ بَيْتًا وَإِنَّ أَوْهَنَ الْبُيُوتِ لَلْبَيْتِ

35a. Sodom and Gomorrah, the cities destroyed, are in the neighbourhood of the Dead Sea, on the road from Arabia: "And it is on a road that still abides" (15:76).

40a. See 7:72a for the storm; 7:78a, 84a for the rumbling; 28:81a for the swallow; 2:50a, 7:64a for the drowning.

itself a house; and surely the frailest of the houses is the spider's house — if they but knew!<sup>a</sup>

42 Surely Allāh knows whatever they call upon besides Him. And He is the Mighty, the Wise.

43 And these parables, We set them forth for men, and none understand them but the learned.

44 Allāh created the heavens and the earth with truth. Surely there is a sign in this for the believers.

الْعُنْكَبُوتِ لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٤١﴾

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِهِ  
مَنْ شَاءَ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿٤٢﴾

وَتِلْكَ الْأَمْثَالُ نَضْرِبُهَا لِلنَّاسِ  
وَمَا يَعْقِلُهَا إِلَّا الْعَالِمُونَ ﴿٤٣﴾

خَلَقَ اللَّهُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ بِالْحَقِّ  
إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٤٤﴾

## Part 21

### SECTION 5: The Qur'ān is a Purifier

45 Recite that which has been revealed to thee of the Book and keep up prayer. Surely prayer keeps (one) away from indecency and evil; and certainly the remembrance of Allāh is the greatest (force). And Allāh knows what you do.<sup>a</sup>

أَشْرُ مَا أَوْحَىٰ إِلَيْكَ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ  
وَآقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ تَنْهَىٰ عَنِ  
الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ وَكَذَلِكَ اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ  
وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تَصْنَعُونَ ﴿٤٥﴾

41a. A trust in false deities, which really stands for all false beliefs, is here compared with a spider's web to express the nature of its extreme frailty. It may prosper for a time, but no sooner is the light of criticism and research brought to bear upon it than it vanishes and leaves no trace behind.

There is also a reference here to the plans of the Holy Prophet's opponents, which were destined to be brought to naught by reason of their inability to withstand the overwhelming advance of Truth.

45a. This verse invites the followers of all religions to accept the Qur'ān on account of its purifying effect upon life, as the previous scriptures had ceased to effect deliverance from the bondage of sin, which is the real object of revelation. The verse also lays down the right principle for getting rid of the bondage of sin in the words *the remembrance of Allāh is the greatest*, i.e., *the most powerful and effective restraint* upon sin. It is a living belief in the Divine power, knowledge, and goodness that restrains man from walking in the ways of His displeasure. A sure and certain knowledge that every evil action leads to an evil consequence, that there is a Supreme Being, Who knows what is hid from human eyes and Whose moral law is effective where the moral force of society fails, that He is

46 And argue not with the People of the Book except by what is best,<sup>a</sup> save such of them as act unjustly.<sup>b</sup> But say: We believe in that which has been revealed to us and revealed to you, and our God and your God is One, and to Him we submit.

وَلَا تُجَادِلُوا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ إِلَّا بِالْبَیِّنَاتِ  
 هِيَ أَحْسَنُ ۗ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مِنْهُمْ  
 وَقُولُوا آمَنَّا بِالَّذِي أُنزِلَ إِلَيْنَا  
 وَأُنزِلَ إِلَيْكُمْ وَإِلَهُنَا وَإِلَهُكُمْ  
 وَاحِدٌ ۖ وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ ﴿٤٦﴾

47 And thus have We revealed the Book to thee.<sup>a</sup> So those whom We have given the Book believe in it,

وَكَذَلِكَ أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ  
 فَالَّذِينَ قَالُوا رَبِّيَ اللَّهُ  
 وَمِنْ

the source of all goodness and it is through goodness that man can have communion with Him, are the only effective restraints upon evil.

It should also be noted that the recitation of the Book, the keeping up of prayer, and the remembrance of Allāh are really identical; for the Qur'ān is recited in prayers, and the Qur'ān is the best means of the remembrance of Allāh. Every line of it brings before the mind of the reader the goodness, power, and knowledge of the Divine Being, while there is no other Book which fulfils this requirement. The Qur'ān is neither a book of law, though it contains the principles of the laws necessary for the guidance of man, nor a book of sacred history, though it contains the necessary sacred history, but it is pre-eminently a Book that manifests the glory, greatness, grandeur, goodness, love, purity, power, and knowledge of the Supreme Being.

While, as generally understood, by the remembrance of Allāh is meant His glorification and praise in prayer, I'Ab is reported to have said that by the *dhikr* (remembrance) of Allāh is here meant Allāh's remembrance of man or His raising him to a place of eminence (IJ). Thus the significance would be that through prayer to God, not only is man freed from the bondage of sin, but (which is greater than this) he is raised to a place of higher eminence.

46a. It should be noted that this passage deals only with the mode of controversy to be adopted in inviting those who already had scriptures in their hands — which the Arabs had not — to the truth of Islām and the revelation of the Qur'ān. The Qur'ān makes its own meaning clear when it explains that it is the broad principles of religion that should demand paramount consideration. The fundamental principle of religion is that God exists and that He reveals Himself to man, and it is common to all revealed religions. The only difference is that a Muslim's is a purer monotheism, a conception of the Divine Being which gives the most perfect attributes to Him while declaring Him to be free from all imperfections and weaknesses, a conception which cannot reasonably be criticized by anyone who admits a belief in a Supreme Being. A Muslim's conception of Divine revelation is wider than that of the follower of any other religion, recognizing, as it does, that Divine revelation is granted in all ages and to all nations. A Muslim, therefore, admits the truth of all the prophets and revelations, and the follower of any other religion has nothing to lose but everything to gain by accepting Islām.

46b. The significance of the words *save such of them as act unjustly* is not that controversy is to be carried on with these in a different manner, but that the unjust would not accept this reasonable interpretation of the principles of religion. This is made clear in the verse that follows.

47a. *And thus have We revealed the Book*; that is, by confirming the truth of all previous revelation.

and of these<sup>b</sup> there are those who believe in it; and none deny Our messages except the disbelievers.

48 And thou didst not recite before it any book, nor didst thou transcribe one with thy right hand, for then could the liars have doubted.<sup>a</sup>

49 Nay, it is clear messages in the hearts of those who are granted knowledge.<sup>a</sup> And none deny Our messages except the iniquitous.

50 And they say: Why are not signs sent down upon him from his Lord? Say: Signs are with Allāh only, and I am only a plain warner.<sup>a</sup>

51 Is it not enough for them that We have revealed to thee the Book which is recited to them? Surely there is mercy in this and a reminder for a people who believe.<sup>a</sup>

هَؤُلَاءِ مَنْ يُؤْمِنُ بِهِ ۖ وَمَا يَجْحَدُ  
بِآيَاتِنَا إِلَّا الْكَافِرُونَ ﴿٥٠﴾

وَمَا كُنْتَ تَتْلُو مِنْ قَبْلِهِ مِنْ كِتَابٍ  
وَلَا تَحْطُ بِبَيِّنَاتِكَ إِذَا الْأُمْرَاتُ  
الْمُبْطِلُونَ ﴿٥١﴾

بَلْ هُوَ آيَاتٌ بَيِّنَاتٌ فِي صُدُورِ  
الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ ۚ وَمَا يَجْحَدُ  
بِآيَاتِنَا إِلَّا الظَّالِمُونَ ﴿٥٢﴾

وَقَالُوا لَوْلَا أُنزِلَ عَلَيْهِ آيَاتٌ مِنْ  
رَبِّهِ قُلْ إِنَّمَا الْآيَاتُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَ  
إِنَّمَا أَنَا نَذِيرٌ مُبِينٌ ﴿٥٣﴾

أَوَلَمْ يَكْفِهِمْ أَنَّا أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ  
يَتْلَى عَلَيْهِمْ ۗ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَرَحْمَةً وَ  
ذِكْرًا لِقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٥٤﴾

47b. The reference in *these* is to the Arabs, who possessed no sacred scriptures.

48a. The broad principles of religion and the beautiful moral and spiritual truths which find expression in the Qur'ān could not have been collected, if such a collection by human exertion were possible, except by one who had knowledge of all the previous scriptures; but the Holy Prophet had not read even a single book. He could neither read nor write. What might have been said against a prophet like Jesus, that he had read the previous scriptures and collected some beautiful truths from them, could not be said against the Holy Prophet, for the latter could neither read nor write, and his inability to do either is thus a confirmation of his truth. Leaving aside all the principles and truths, if we consider the broad principles that Islām taught with regard to the truth of Divine revelation in all ages and to all nations, a truth never taught or recognized by any religion or by any man before the Holy Prophet, it is remarkable that such a broad truth should have been preached by one who had never read the scriptures of any religion and who lived in a country which was almost cut off from all communication with other countries. See also 7:157a.

49a. The Qur'ān contains not only truths which are met with in previous scriptures, but also others which are not to be found in any scripture, and which are only in the breasts of the learned ones, or those that may ever be conceived by the learned ones. What the most progressive religious thought of today considers desirable for the basis of a common religion of humanity is met with in Islām.

50a. The Prophet is a warner, and gives warning in due time that the signs are with Allāh, Whose power to send these signs they deny. Read also in this connection vv. 53–55, which uphold the coming of the punishment, leaving no doubt as to the meaning of signs being *with Allāh*.

51a. See next page.

## SECTION 6: Warning and Consolation

52 Say: Allāh is sufficient as a witness between me and you — He knows what is in the heavens and the earth. And those who believe in falsehood and disbelieve in Allāh, these it is that are the losers.

قُلْ كَفَىٰ بِاللَّهِ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَكُمْ شَهِيدًا  
يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالَّذِينَ  
آمَنُوا بِالْبَاطِلِ وَكَفَرُوا بِاللَّهِ أُولَٰئِكَ  
هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ ﴿٥٢﴾

53 And they ask thee to hasten on the chastisement. And had not a term been appointed, the chastisement would certainly have come to them. And certainly it will come to them all of a sudden, while they perceive not.

وَيَسْتَعْجِلُونَكَ بِالْعَذَابِ طُوًّا لَّا أَجَلَ  
مُسَمًّى لَّجَاءَهُمُ الْعَذَابُ وَلَيَأْتِيَهُمْ  
بَغْتَةً وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿٥٣﴾

54 They ask thee to hasten on the chastisement, and surely hell encompasses the disbelievers<sup>a</sup> —

يَسْتَعْجِلُونَكَ بِالْعَذَابِ وَإِنَّ جَهَنَّمَ  
لَسَاطِئَةٌ بِالْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٥٤﴾

55 The day when the chastisement will cover them from above them, and from beneath their feet!<sup>a</sup> And He will say: Taste what you did.

يَوْمَ يَغْشَاهُمْ الْعَذَابُ مِنْ فَوْقِهِمْ  
وَمِنْ تَحْتِ أَرْجُلِهِمْ وَيَقُولُ ذُوقُوا  
مَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٥٥﴾

56 O My servants who believe, surely My earth is vast, so serve Me only.<sup>a</sup>

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا اِنَّ اَرْضِيْ  
وَاسِعَةٌ فَاَعْبُدُوْنِ ﴿٥٦﴾

57 Every soul must taste of death; then to Us you will be returned.

كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ذٰۤاِئِقَةُ الْمَوْتِ ثُمَّ اِلَيْنَا  
تُرْجَعُوْنَ ﴿٥٧﴾

51a. This is another reply to those who demanded signs. The Qur'ān is a mercy, if they would only accept it. They could see how the believers had benefited by it; how a wonderful transformation had been wrought in their lives. Was it not a sufficient sign for them? Indeed, this was direct evidence of the truth of the Holy Word, for to effect a pure transformation in the lives of those who would follow it was its avowed object, while the overthrow of its enemies was only an indirect testimony.

54a. Here the punishment of this life, which the disbelievers would hasten, is called *a hell*. If this verse is taken as indicating the punishment of the life after death, it is a transition from the punishment of this life to the punishment after death.

55a. The expression used is simply to indicate the all-encompassing nature of the punishment, which will not leave them a way to escape. Compare 6:65, and see 6:65a.

56a. This is to comfort the Muslims against the severe persecutions by their enemies. If they are persecuted at Makkah, they will find a refuge elsewhere.

**58** And those who believe and do good, We shall certainly give them an abode in high places in the Garden wherein flow rivers, abiding therein. Excellent the reward of the workers,

**59** Who are patient, and on their Lord they rely!

**60** And how many a living creature carries not its sustenance! Allāh sustains it and yourselves. And He is the Hearing, the Knowing.<sup>a</sup>

**61** And if thou ask them, Who created the heavens and the earth and made the sun and the moon subservient? they would say, Allāh. Whence are they then turned away?

**62** Allāh makes abundant the means of subsistence for whom He pleases of His servants, or straitens (them) for him. Surely Allāh is Knower of all things.

**63** And if thou ask them, Who is it that sends down water from the clouds, then gives life to the earth with it after its death? they will say, Allāh. Say: Praise be to Allāh! Nay, most of them understand not.<sup>a</sup>

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ  
لَنُبَوِّئَنَّهُمْ مِنَ الْجَنَّةِ غُرَفًا تَجْرِي  
مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا  
نِعْمَ أَجْرُ الْعَامِلِينَ ﴿٥٨﴾

الَّذِينَ صَبَرُوا وَعَلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ ﴿٥٩﴾

وَكَأَيِّن مِّن دَابَّةٍ لَّا تَحْمِلُ رِزْقَهَا  
اللَّهُ يَرْزُقُهَا وَإِيَّاكُمْ ۗ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ ﴿٦٠﴾

وَلَيِّنُ سَأَلَتَهُمْ مَّن خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ  
وَالْأَرْضَ وَسَخَّرَ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ  
لَيَقُولَنَّ اللَّهُ فَاَلَيْ يُوَفِّكُونَ ﴿٦١﴾

اللَّهُ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَن يَشَاءُ مِنْ  
عِبَادِهِ وَيَقْدِرُ لَهُ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِكُلِّ  
شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٦٢﴾

وَلَيِّنُ سَأَلَتَهُمْ مَّن تَنَزَّلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ  
مَاءٌ فَأَحْيَا بِهِ الْأَرْضَ مِنْ بَعْدِ  
مَوْتِهَا لَيَقُولَنَّ اللَّهُ ط قُلِ الْحَمْدُ  
لِلَّهِ ۗ بَلْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٦٣﴾

## SECTION 7: Triumph of the Faithful

**64** And the life of this world is but a sport and a play. And the home of the Hereafter, that surely is the Life, did they but know!

وَمَا هَذِهِ الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا لَهْوٌ وَ  
لَعِبٌ ۗ وَإِنَّ الدَّارَ الْآخِرَةَ لَهِیَ  
الْحَيَوَانُ لَوَكَّا لَوَاعِلُونَ ﴿٦٤﴾

60a. This is a consolation to the Muslims that the giving up of their concerns and business at Makkah will not lead to their ruin.

63a. Most of them did not understand that the dead earth was now about to be raised to life.

65 So when they ride in the ships, they call upon Allāh, being sincerely obedient to Him; but when He brings them safe to the land, lo! they associate others (with Him),

فَإِذَا سَرَكِبُوا فِي الْفُلِكِ دَعَوْا اللَّهَ  
مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ ۗ فَلَمَّا نَجَّاهُمْ  
إِلَى الْبَرِّ إِذَا هُمْ يُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٦٥﴾

66 That they may be ungrateful for what We have given them, and that they may enjoy. But they shall soon know.

لِيَكْفُرُوا بِمَا آتَيْنَاهُمْ ۗ وَلِيَتَمَتَّعُوا  
فَسَوْفَ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٦٦﴾

67 See they not that We have made a sacred territory secure, while men are carried off by force from around them?<sup>a</sup> Will they still believe in the falsehood and disbelieve in the favour of Allāh?

أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّا جَعَلْنَا حَرَمًا مَّأْمُونًا وَّيَحْتَفُطُ  
النَّاسُ مِنْ حَوْلِهِمْ ۗ أَفَبِالْبَاطِلِ يُؤْمِنُونَ  
وَ بِنِعْمَةِ اللَّهِ يَكْفُرُونَ ﴿٦٧﴾

68 And who is more iniquitous than one who forges a lie against Allāh, or gives the lie to the Truth, when it has come to him? Is there not an abode in hell for the disbelievers?

وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرَى عَلَى اللَّهِ  
كُذِبًا أَوْ كَذَّبَ بِالْحَقِّ لَمَّا جَاءَهُ ۗ  
أَلَيْسَ فِي جَهَنَّمَ مَثْوًى لِّلْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٦٨﴾

69 And those who strive hard for Us, We shall certainly guide them in Our ways. And Allāh is surely with the doers of good.

وَالَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا فِينَا لَنَهْدِيَنَّهُمْ  
سُبُلَنَا ۗ وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَمَعَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٦٩﴾

67a. The *haram* ("sacred territory") includes the city of Makkah and several miles of territory around it. War is forbidden within these limits. The reference in *men are carried off by force* is to the great insecurity of life and property in Arabia, while no one dared violate the sacredness of Makkah.