

Sura 17: Al-Israa (The Night Journey, Children of Israel)

In the name of God, the Lord of Mercy, the Giver of Mercy

This Sura is a Meccan Sura. It starts by glorifying God and ends by praising Him. It deals with a number of topics, most of them are related to the doctrine. It also deals with topics related to the code of ethics for the individuals and the communities. It narrates some of the stories about the Children of Israel and Adam (PBUH).

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) figures prominently in the Sura. The Sura narrates the story of his night journey to heaven and meeting God. The Sura deals with the interactions between the Prophet (PBUH) and the people of Mecca. It talks about the Quran, its nature and its contents. It also considers the unique characteristic of Muhammad's (PBUH) message.

Hawwa suggested that the Sura consists of an introduction and five sections. The introduction consists of the first three verses. The first section consists of the verses 4 to 40. The second section consists of verses 41 to 69. The third section consists of verses 70 to 88. The fourth section consists of the verses 89 to 100. The fifth section consists of the verses 101 to 111.

Verses 1 to 21:

1. *Glorified be He who carried His servant by night from the Sacred Mosque to the far distant Mosque whose neighbourhood We have blessed, that We might show him of Our signs. Indeed, He is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing.*
2. *We gave Moses the Scripture, and made it guidance for the Children of Israel, saying, "Choose no guardian beside Me."*
3. *(They were) the seed of those whom We carried (in the ship) along with Noah. He was a grateful servant.*
4. *And We decreed for the Children of Israel in the Scripture, "Most certainly you will spread corruption in the earth twice, and you will become great tyrants."*
5. *So when the time for the first of the two came, We sent against you servants of Ours of great might who ravaged (your) country, and it was a promise fulfilled.*
6. *Then we allowed you to prevail against your enemy, and We aided you with wealth and children and made you more numerous.*
7. *(Saying), "If you do good, you do good for your own souls, and if you do evil, it is for them (in like manner). So, when the time for the second (of the judgments) came (We sent against you others of Our slaves) to shame your faces, and to enter the Temple as they entered it the first time, and to lay waste all that they conquered.*
8. *It may be that your Lord will have mercy on you, but if you repeat (the crime) We shall repeat (the punishment), and We have appointed Hell a prison for the disbelievers.*
9. *Verily this Quran does guide to that which is most upright, and gives the glad tidings to the believers who do good deeds, that they shall have a magnificent reward;*
10. *And to those who do not believe in the Hereafter, We have prepared for them a painful torment.*
11. *And humankind prays for evil as he ought to pray for good, and humankind is ever hasty.*

12. *We have made the night and the day as two (of Our) signs. Then We have made the sign of night to pass away and We have made the sign of the day manifest (enabling people to see), so that you may seek a bounty from your Lord, and that you might know the numbering of years and the reckoning; and We have explained everything with distinctness.*
13. *Every person's fate We have fastened to his own neck and on the Day of Judgment We shall bring out for him a scroll, which he will find wide open.*
14. *(It will be said to him), "Read your (own) record. Your soul suffices as a reckoner against you this day."*
15. *Whosoever is guided, it is only for (the good of) his own soul; and whosoever goes astray it is only to its detriment. Nor can the bearer of a burden bear the burden of another, nor do We torment until We have sent a messenger.*
16. *When We decide to destroy a township, We (first) send a definite command to its affluent folk but they transgress therein, so the word (of doom) comes into effect against them, and we destroy it (with complete) destruction.*
17. *How many generations have We destroyed since Noah? And God suffices as Totally-Aware and All-Seeing with regard to His servants' sins.*
18. *Whoso desires this present life, We hasten for him therein what We will for whom We please. And afterward We assign him to Hell; he will enter it to burn, despised and banished.*
19. *Those who desire the Hereafter, and strive for it with the necessary effort, being believers; for such, their striving shall surely be accepted.*
20. *Of the bounties of your Lord We bestow freely on all - these as well as those. The bounties of your Lord are never restricted.*
21. *See how We have bestowed more on some than on others; but verily the Hereafter will be greater in degrees and greater in distinction. (17: 1 – 21)*

"Glorified be He who carried His servant by night from the Sacred Mosque to the far distant Mosque whose neighbourhood We have blessed, that We might show him of Our sign. Indeed, He is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing." The Sura opens by glorifying God, an appropriate opening that is befitting the topic of the miracle of carrying the Prophet (PBUH) from the Sacred Mosque to the far distant Mosque. The opening emphasized the fact that even though the Prophet (PBUH) has reached a rank with God that has not been achieved by any other mortal, he is still God's servant. The rationale behind this is to clarify any doubt regarding the human nature of the Prophet (PBUH).

The Arabic word "Israa," is derived from the word "Sara," meaning walking by night. The location of the beginning and end of the trip which was taken by the Prophet (PBUH) has been decided by God. The path of the trip brings together the monotheistic messages which embodied the doctrine of the Oneness of God. These are the messages which were brought by the messengers of God starting by Abraham and Ishmael (PBUT) and ending by Muhammad (PBUH). It is intended as a statement of the progression of the chain of prophet-hood from Abraham (PBUH) to Muhammad (PBUH). The precinct of the far distant Mosque has been blessed by God. The use of the expression, *"the far distant Mosque whose neighbourhood We have blessed,"* indicates that God not only blessed the mosque but His blessings also flooded the

mosque and overflowed onto its surroundings. The miracle of carrying the Prophet (PBUH) from the Sacred Mosque in Mecca to the far distant Mosque in Jerusalem was not the only miracle that the Prophet (PBUH) experienced during this trip.

This trip was one of God's miracles. It started at the Sacred Mosque in Mecca and ended at the far distant Mosque in Jerusalem. The far distant Mosque is located in the middle of the Sacred Land in which God settled the Children of Israel for some time. It was then appropriate to mention Prophet Moses (PBUH), "*We gave Moses the Scripture, and made it guidance for the Children of Israel, saying, 'Choose no guardian beside Me.'*" This verse and the subsequent ones narrate a part of the history of the Children of Israel. This part was not told in any other Sura in the Quran. The verses reminded the Jewish people of the Scripture that has been revealed to Prophet Moses (PBUH) and which included God's warning. A reminder of their relationship to Prophet Noah (PBUH) is also mentioned, "*(They were) the seed of those whom We carried (in the ship) along with Noah. He was a grateful servant.*" This was a reminder and a warning of God's promise that will be stated later, "*nor do We torment until We send a messenger.*"

The verse stated that the first objective of giving Moses (PBUH) the Scripture was to command the Children of Israel not to choose a guardian other than God. They should put their trust in God alone. This is the guidance and this is the true faith. The verse addressed the Children of Israel as the descendants of Noah (PBUH) to remind them that their ancestors were among those who believed in God and were saved by Him in the ship with Prophet Noah (PBUH). Prophet Noah (PBUH) was described as the "*grateful servant of God.*" Being a servant of God puts Prophet Noah (PBUH) among the group of people who were chosen by God. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was given the same attribute in the first verse of this Sura.

The Scripture that was given to Moses (PBUH) as a guidance to the Children of Israel foretold of God's punishment that would be inflicted on them because of the mischief they committed twice, therefore they deserved to be punished twice, "*And We decreed for the Children of Israel in the Scripture, 'Most certainly you will spread corruption in the earth twice, and you will become great tyrants.'*" This does not mean that God has prescribed on the Children of Israel to commit mischief. God does not command people to commit sinful acts, "*God, verily, does not enjoin immorality.*" (7: 28). The verse foretold what they will do because God knows what will happen. They deserved to be punished because they chose to commit sinful behavior.

"*So when the time for the first of the two came, We sent against you servants of Ours of great might who ravaged (your) country, and it was a promise fulfilled.*" The verse describes the first of these episodes. The Children of Israel became powerful in the Holy land. Their power tempted them to become tyrants and spread mischief in the land. God sent some of His servants who were more powerful who conquered the land and destroyed everything with impunity. This was a promise fulfilled.

When the Children of Israel tasted defeat and humility they regretted their previous behavior, sought repentance and did good deeds, God rewarded them and allowed them to defeat their enemy, "*Then we allowed you to prevail against your enemy, and We aided you with wealth and children and made you more numerous.*"

But the story was repeated again. Before the narrative of the second episode was completed a statement of a fundamental rule of the commensuration of deed and reward is interjected, “(Saying), *‘If you do good, you do good for your own souls, and if you do evil, it is for them (in like manner).’*” This is a fundamental rule that does not change. The reward is proportionate to the deed. One thus reaps what he had sown. The narrative then continued to describe the second episode, “*So, when the time for the second (of the judgments) came (We send against you others of Our slaves) to shame your faces, and to enter the Temple as they entered it the first time, and to lay waste all that they conquered.*” The narrative did not tell what happened in the period between the two episodes but continued to describe the second episode directly. Their enemy entered and shamed their faces and destroyed everything. The prophecy was realized and the promised was fulfilled. The Quran does not mention any details about the enemy of the Children of Israel. This is in accordance with the style of the Quran; it does not mention details which do not contribute to the lesson to be learnt. However, this punishment may have been a way for receiving God’s mercy, “*It may be that your Lord will have mercy on you, but if you repeat (the crime) We shall repeat (the punishment), and We have appointed Hell a prison for the disbelievers.*”

“*Verily this Quran does guide to that which is most upright, and gives the glad tidings to the believers who do good deeds, that they shall have a magnificent reward;*” This is a comprehensive statement. This Quran guides all people, in all places and at all times. The Quran guides to that which is upright in the cognitive as well as the psychological domains. The Quran offers a simple and a clear doctrine as a vehicle for this guidance, a doctrine which frees the human soul of the shackles of myth and superstition. It frees human energy so that a civilization that benefits humankind can be established, a civilisation that is based on the harmony between the laws of nature and the laws of the initial natural disposition of the humankind.

The Quran guides to a way of life that is based on maintaining a harmony between emotions and behavior; and between faith and deeds. It provides a connection between the humankind and God through the link that does not break. It transforms all human endeavors that have been dedicated to God into acts of worship even if these endeavors involved entertainment and seeking pleasure.

The Quran guides to what is upright in the area of performing acts of worship. It guides to the maintenance of a balance between ability and duty, preventing human tendencies to go to the extreme.

The Quran guides to what is upright in the relationships among members of the same community, between the state and people, and among different states. It guides to relationships that are based on objective and rational principles and not based on the whims and desires of mortals. These are the principles that God has established. He knows best what benefits His creatures. The Quran provides principles which organize the political, economic, social, and international relations systems that befit a human society.

The Quran guides to a way which accepts and reconciles all divinely revealed religions; respects their holy traditions; and protects their sanctuaries. This will establish peace between all.

The Quran brings glad tidings to the believers who do good deeds that they will have a great reward. But those who chose to reject faith will be recompensed accordingly, *“And to those who do not believe in the Hereafter, We have prepared for them a painful torment.”* It is the same principle that the deeds and the recompense are commensurate. Those who reject the guidance of the Quran will fall prey to the whims of humankind; this is the humankind who cannot find the way to achieve his best interest. He is ever hasty and often follows unsubstantiated gut feelings to his detriment, *“And humankind prays for evil as he ought to pray for good, and humankind is ever hasty.”* His actions are irrational and they are usually motivated by urges which he cannot control. He does not appreciate the consequences of his deeds. Thus ends up committing mistakes.

The phenomenon of the ever sequential day and night is controlled by a universal law. This phenomenon organises people’s activities, allows us to perform computations, and helps us to determine the elapsed time. It is a phenomenon which reflects the perfection of God’s law, *“We have made the night and the day as two (of Our) signs. Then We have made the sign of night to pass away and We have made the sign of the day manifest (enabling people to see), so that you may seek a bounty from your Lord, and that you might know the numbering of years and the reckoning; and We have explained everything with distinctness.”* The verse describes the night as if it were an eraser which erases the light and the activities of the day so only darkness and quiet remain. Daylight allows people to see what is happening. This sequence allows people to pursue their normal activities during the day and they can rest during the night. Humankind can design a calendar to show the passing of time on the basis of the alternation of day and night. God has provided clear explanations for everything. God controls the universe and everything in the universe runs according to God’s plan. The perfect execution of the plan attests to the power of the Creator.

It is God’s plan that everyone in this universe will be rewarded according to his deeds, *“Every person’s fate We have fastened to his own neck and on the Day of Judgment We shall bring out for him a scroll, which he will find wide open.”* The actions of a person are allegorically referred to in this verse as his/her fate. The actions are inseparable from the person. One cannot escape what he /she had done during life on earth. All these actions will be presented to the individual on the Day of Judgement in an open scroll. One cannot hide or ignore it, *“It will be said to him), ‘Read your (own) record. Your soul suffices as a reckoner against you this day.’”*

Thus, accepting guidance is a personal responsibility, *“Whosoever is guided, it is only for (the good of) his own soul; and whosoever goes astray it is only to its detriment. Nor can the bearer of a burden bear the burden of another, nor do We punish until We send a messenger.”* Each person will be held accountable for his/her own deeds. No one can carry the burden of another. In addition to God’s signs in the universe and the initial natural disposition of the human being which guide to the existence of the Creator, God sent His messengers to guide people to the straight path. This is God’s mercy.

“When We decide to destroy a township, We (first) send a definite command to its affluent folk but they transgress therein, so the word (of doom) comes into effect against them, and we destruct it (with complete) destruction.” When a community allows its affluent people, who lost

their lives completely to the pursuit of pleasures and immersed themselves in carnal desires; to continue in spreading mischief with impunity, God's punishment seizes it. It is the community's responsibility to stop its affluent people from spreading corruption in the land and if it does not, then the community deserves to be punished. The verse stresses the importance of the collective responsibility of the community as a whole in following the straight path. Many communities were destroyed because they did not heed God's law, *"How many generations have We destroyed since Noah? And God suffices as Totally-Aware and All-Seeing with regard to His servants' sins."*

Those whose mere interest is the enjoyment of this life, do not need to concern themselves with the pursuit of a higher goal. God will give them what they worked for in this life, but Hellfire will be waiting for them in the Hereafter. Those who are merely interested in pursuing the satisfaction of their lusts and carnal desires will be certainly rewarded for their sins with the proper punishment, *"Whoso desires this present life, We hasten for him therein what We will for whom We please. And afterward We assign him to Hell; he will enter it to burn, despised and banished."* But those who are more interested in a better life in the Hereafter must work hard to achieve their goal. Strong faith can only be achieved by hard work. A strong faith cannot be achieved merely by wishing for it. A strong faith rests deep in one's heart and is reflected in the deeds of the person, *"Those who desire the Hereafter, and strive for it with the necessary effort, being believers; for such, their striving shall surely be accepted."* Pursuing a better life in the Hereafter does not mean that a person should be deprived of the good pleasures of this world. But pursuing the worldly pleasures should not be the ultimate goal of the person. People who seek a better life in the Hereafter should not be enslaved by the pleasures of this worldly life.

"Of the bounties of your Lord We bestow freely on all - these as well as those. The bounties of your Lord are never restricted." Everyone will get his/her share from the bounty of God. Those who seek this worldly life will get their share and those who seek a better life in the Hereafter will get their share.

It is obvious that people in this life have different means, different goals, and different lives. The real difference in status will be seen in the Hereafter, *"See how We have bestowed more on some than on others; but verily the Hereafter will be greater in degrees and greater in distinction."*

Verses 22 to 39:

22. *Do not associate with God any other god, lest you sit down despised, forsaken.*
23. *Your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him, and that you be kind to parents. Whether one or both of them attain old age in your life, say not to them a word of contempt, nor repel them, but address them in terms of honour.*
24. *And, out of kindness, lower to them the wing of humility, and say, "My Lord, bestow on them Your mercy as they cared for me in my childhood."*
25. *Your Lord knows best what is in your hearts. If you are righteous, then He was ever Forgiving to those who turn often (to Him).*
26. *Give the kinsman his due, and the needy, and the wayfarer, and do not squander (your wealth) wastefully.*

27. *Verily the squanderers were ever brothers of the devil, and the devil was ever ungrateful to his Lord.*
28. *And even if you had to turn aside from them in pursuit of mercy from your Lord, which you hope for, speak to them a gentle word.*
29. *And do not let your hand be chained to your neck nor open it widely, lest you sit down rebuked and overwhelmed with regret.*
30. *Verily your Lord does provide sustenance in abundance for whom He pleases and He provides in a just measure. He was Totally-Aware, All- Seeing of His servants.*
31. *Do not kill your children for fear of poverty. We shall provide sustenance for them as well as for you. Verily the killing of them is a great sin.*
32. *Nor come near adultery, for it is an immorality and an evil way.*
33. *And do not take the life which God has made sacred except for a just cause. And if anyone is slain wrongfully, We have given his heir authority, but let him not exceed the bounds in the matter of taking life; for he is helped (by the Law).*
34. *Come not near the orphan's property except to improve it, until he attains the age of full strength; and fulfill (every) pledge, for you will be asked about (every) pledge (on the Day of Reckoning).*
35. *Give full measure when you measure, and weigh with an even balance. This is the most fitting and the most advantageous in the final determination.*
36. *And pursue not that of which you have no knowledge. You will be asked about every act of hearing, or of seeing or of (feeling in) the heart (on the Day of Reckoning).*
37. *And do not walk on earth with insolence, for you cannot rend the earth asunder, nor will you reach the mountains in height;*
38. *The evil of all that is hateful in the sight of your Lord.*
39. *This is part of the (precepts of) wisdom, which your Lord has revealed to you. Do not associate any other god with God lest you should be thrown into Hell, blamed, banished. (17: 22 – 39)*

“Do not associate with God any other god, lest you sit down despised, forsaken.” The verse states a basic principle: do not associate partners with God. It is a general command but it is given in the singular form to indicate that it is a command for each and every human being. The belief in the Oneness God is a personal responsibility. The consequence for anyone who commits this sin is to remain despised and forsaken. Those whom God does not support will find no support. The use of the word, “sit down,” casts a shadow of weakness and debilitation on the person, “Your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him, and that you be kind to parents. Whether one or both of them attain old age in your life, say not to them a word of contempt, nor repel them, but address them in terms of honour.” The command to worship no one but God was followed by the command to be kind to your parents. It came as a decree. God’s decrees could not be disputed. This is the basic foundation of this doctrine. Laws dealing with personal and communal responsibilities are built upon the basic foundation of the doctrine. The first of these responsibilities is to be kind to one’s parents. This command places family bond next to the faith bond, emphasizing its importance in the sight of God. The language of the verse evokes emotions of mercy, love, and kindness in the hearts of the children towards their parents. Human beings by nature focus their attention on their children. The children are a symbol of hope in the future. The initial natural disposition of human beings drives parents to care for their children. Parents are happy to make sacrifices and to work hard to provide a good life for their children. In

the process of raising their children, people forget the older generations. The Quran reminds people that the older generations need their attention and need to be treated kindly. The command has been constructed in the form of a decree to emphasize its unequivocal certainty.

The mention of old age alludes to the vulnerability of old people and their need for help. That requires that children not only be careful in addressing them and never to scold them or talk to them harshly, but also to speak to them respectfully. *“And, out of kindness, lower to them the wing of humility, and say, ‘My Lord, bestow on them Your Mercy as they cared for me in my childhood.’”* The children should be humble when they treat their parent. Furthermore, they should pray God to bestow His mercy on them.

“Your Lord knows best what is in your hearts. If you are righteous, then He was ever Forgiving to those who turn often (to Him).” The verse is interjected here to remind people that God knows their intentions and their emotions. It also opens the door for the sinner to repent.

“Give the kinsman his due, and the needy, and the wayfarer, and do not squander (your wealth) wastefully.” The Quran gave family members, the needy, and the wayfarer rights that need to be fulfilled. Helping family members, the needy, and the wayfarer financially is a duty upon those who are able. It is a debt that one has to pay to those named. This serves two purposes. It spreads love among people and it fulfills one’s duty towards God. Helping these people is an integral part of worshipping God. The verse commands people not to squander their wealth. Ibn Mass’oud (RA) and Ibn Abbas (RA) define squandering as the act of spending money wastefully. Mejahed (RA) said that those who spend their wealth for a legitimate cause are not considered squanderers even if they spend all what they have got, but those who spend even a small portion of their wealth wastefully are considered squanderers. The squanderers are the brothers of the devil because they spend their money in evil sinful deeds, *“Verily the squanderers were ever brothers of the devil, and the devil was ever ungrateful to his Lord.”*

If the person is unable to help those in need, he/she should explain their reasons in kind words and ask them to be patient until such time he/she has the means to help, *“And even if you had to turn away from them in pursuit of mercy from your Lord, which you hope for, speak to them a gentle word.”*

In general, we are commanded to spend money moderately, *“And do not let your hand be chained to your neck nor open it widely, lest you sit down rebuked and overwhelmed with regret.”* Moderation is a cardinal rule in Islam. Islam is against extremism in everything including spending money. One should neither be extravagant nor spendthrift; both extremes are unwise. God provides according to His wisdom, *“Verily your Lord does provide sustenance in abundance for whom He pleases and He provides in a just measure. He was Totally-Aware, All-Seeing of His servants.”* God knows best what is appropriate.

“Do not kill your children for fear of poverty. We shall provide sustenance for them as well as for you. Verily the killing of them is a great sin.” A corrupted doctrine has a negative impact not only on the practice of rituals but also on the daily life of the members of the community. A

sound doctrine helps develop human beings with healthy feelings and emotions which is necessary for the sound and healthy social life in the community. The practice of infanticide was a direct import of the crooked doctrine of the idolater Arabs. There is a verse in Surat Al-An'am which addresses the same issue. It is interesting to note the subtle difference in the composition of the two verses. Here it says, "*We shall provide sustenance for them as well as for you,*" while in Surat Al-An'am it says, "*We shall provide sustenance for you as well as for them.*" The verse in this Sura addresses those who kill their children because they are afraid that getting more children will make the parents poor. God says He will provide for the newborn and in addition He will also provide for you. In Surat Al-An'am, God addresses the parents who kill their children because they are already poor. The verse stresses that God will provide for the parents and in addition He will also provide for the newborn.

"Nor come near adultery, for it is an immorality and an evil way." There is a connection between infanticide and adultery. Adultery involves killing in a different form. The sperms which form the material of life are wasted. Adultery usually results in undesirable consequences which may be eliminated by performing abortion. If the child is born, he/she becomes a bastard and consequently will lead a miserable life. This is one life lost to the community. Adultery weakens family ties. Consequently, it weakens community bonds. It obscures the lineage and it reduces marriage rates and increases divorce rates. Reading history shows that nations in which adultery became pervasive were doomed to destruction. Because of these dire consequences Quran takes a preventive approach by commanding people to avoid the means that lead to adultery.

"And do not take the life which God has made sacred except for a just cause. And if anyone is slain wrongfully, we have given his heir authority, but let him not exceed the bounds in the matter of taking life; for he is helped (by the Law)." Islam is a religion of peace it protects the sanctity of life. Killing people is a capital crime. It is an abhorrent sin second only to the sin of associating partners with God. God gives life; no one else has the right to take it back. The right of life is sacred and is protected. Killing can only be executed according to the law for a just cause. The just causes which allow killing were made clear by God. It was not left to whims of people to decide which cause is just. The Prophet (PBUH) has been quoted to have said, "*The law allows the execution of a Muslim as a punishment for three sins only: taking the life of another person, committing adultery by a married person or have been married, and apostasy and abandoning the community.*" The first just cause for executing a person is as a retribution for a murder crime that has been committed. This is a fair retribution. It prevents the possibility of the vicious cycle of revenge. This harsh punishment is a deterrent for those who contemplate killing others. It actually provides a protection and security for members of the society. The second just cause for executing a person is a deterrent against spreading immorality. The third just cause is a deterrent for those who want to spread chaos and mischief in the community. Apostates who cause harm to the community are punished by execution.

If someone was murdered for a reason other than the three just causes mentioned above, then his nearest of kin is given an authority either to exact retribution or to forgive with or without a ransom. The government should support the family's victim in exercising their right. Having

given the next of kin this power to exact retribution or to forgive, Islam warns against taking an unnecessary revenge. The approach that Islam has taken to deal with this crime addresses the needs of the victim's family and it brings closure and peace to the family. It closes the door in the way of the possibility of the eruption of a vicious circle of revenge. It also opens up the door for the chance that they may forgive the culprit thus bringing peace to the community and spreading tolerance. The verse warns the victim's family against exacting extreme measures of retribution.

“Come not near the orphan's property except to improve it, until he attains the age of full strength; and fulfill (every) pledge, for you will be asked about (every) pledge (on the Day of Reckoning).” The verse addresses the issue of the sanctity of the Muslim's wealth. The Prophet (PBUH) has been quoted to have said, *“Muslim's blood, honor, and wealth have been sanctified. No Muslim should violate the sanctity of these three for another Muslim.”* This verse stresses the abhorrence of defrauding an orphan of his/her wealth. Orphans are usually helpless and vulnerable. The guardians should look after their trust. It is the duty of the Muslim community to make sure that the guardians are doing their job.

It is interesting to note that the commands regarding matters which are considered personal responsibilities were issued in the singular form. These included the commands regarding being kind to parents; helping family members, the needy, and the wayfarer; avoiding extravagance; exercising moderation in spending; shunning arrogance. Commands dealing with matters which are considered communal responsibilities were issued in the plural form. These included the commands to shun infanticide, adultery, murder, defrauding orphans, and breaking promises.

Islam emphasized the importance of honoring a promise. The verse stated that people will be held accountable on the Day of Judgement for the promises that they broke. Honoring promises is the backbone of the integrity of the individual and the society.

“Give full measure when you measure, and weigh with an even balance. This is the most fitting and the most advantageous in the final determination.” Conducting fair business dealings is in a way a form of honoring a promise. Fair business dealings create an atmosphere of trust and bring blessings to life. It brings goodness to this life and in the Hereafter there will be a good reward. The Prophet (PBUH) has been quoted to have said, *“If a person is able to defraud another but he/she chose not to, only because he/she fears God, then God will give him/her a better gain in this life and a better reward in the Hereafter.”* Fraudulent business transactions may bring short term gains but in the end they will cause great loss to the individual and to the community. This is a fact that many business people realized. Islam espoused this principle as part of its doctrine which brings material success in line with spiritual fulfillment. This adds more dimensions to life and broadens its horizon.

The Islamic doctrine is a clear and straight doctrine. It is not based on conjectures but it is based on clear proofs, *“And pursue not that of which you have no knowledge. You will be asked about every act of hearing, or of seeing or of (feeling in) the heart (on the Day of Reckoning).”* These few words establish a comprehensive plan for the heart and the mind. This plan comprises the

scientific approach, the purity of the heart, and the consciousness of God. This plan is far more superior over the abstract scientific approach alone.

The verse tells us that in order to be able to make a sound determination regarding a news item, a phenomenon, or a suggestion one should be absolutely sure of their meaning, veracity, and reliability. People should not make a decision on the basis of a conjecture. If we apply this principle, then objectivity will prevail in all aspects of life. The banner of scientific integrity which has been raised recently is only a component of the intellectual and spiritual integrity which has been commanded by Islam. The verse indicated the consequence of violating this integrity. It is a trust for which everyone will be held accountable on the Day of Judgement. It is a trust that needs to be observed by all the senses that a human owns: the hearing, the sight, and the intellect. The Prophet (PBUH) has been quoted to have said, *“Avoid conjecture. A conjecture is the most severe act of lying.”* Prophetic traditions as well as Quranic verses point to the importance of making sure that the available information in a certain situation are authentic and reliable before making a decision. Thus, the verses establish a methodology which is based on the certainty of information and the objectivity of the person.

The last of these commands which constitute a component of the belief in the Oneness of God is to abandon arrogance, *“And do not walk on earth with insolence, for you cannot rend the earth asunder, nor reach the mountains in height.”* When a heart becomes void of the belief in God, it becomes an easy prey to the temptation to be boastful of what its owner has of wealth, power, or beauty. A person who realizes that whatever he/she has of wealth, power, or beauty is a blessing from God relinquishes any desire to be boastful of these material acquisitions. The verse brings the boastful face to face with human weaknesses and limitations, *“you cannot rend the earth asunder, nor will you reach the mountains in height.”* Islam commands modesty to combat the sin of arrogance. Modesty is a necessary attribute necessary for the individual to maintain sound relationships with God and with people. An arrogant person is hated by God because of his ingratitude and is hated by people because of his boastful attitude.

The commands are then followed by a statement that expresses God’s abhorrence of the bad attributes that the commands shunned, *“The evil of all that is hateful in the sight of your Lord.”* It is a reminder that these bad attributes have been shunned because God hates them. Finally, a reminder of the relationship between the content of these commands and the belief in the Oneness of God is made, *“This is part of the (precepts of) wisdom, which your Lord has revealed to you. Do not associate any other god with God lest you should be thrown into Hell, blamed, banished.”*

Verses 40 to 57:

40. *Has then your Lord chosen you (to have) sons, and (for Himself) taken daughters from among the angels? Most surely you utter a grievous saying.*
41. *We verily have explained things in various ways in this Quran that they may become mindful, but it only added to their aversion.*
42. *Say, “If there had been (other) gods with Him, as they say, they would certainly have sought out a way against the Lord of the Throne.”*

43. *Glory be to Him. Exalted is He above what they say by great sublimity.*
44. *The seven heavens and the earth, and all beings therein praise Him. There is not a thing but celebrates His praise and yet you understand not their praise. Verily He is Forbearing, All-Forgiving.*
45. *When you recite the Quran, We place, between you and those who do not believe in the Hereafter, an invisible veil.*
46. *And We placed veils upon their hearts lest they should understand it, and in their ears a deafness; and when you mention your Lord alone in the Quran, they turn their backs in aversion.*
47. *We know best what they wish to hear when they give you an ear and when they take secret counsel, when the evil-doers say, "You follow but a man bewitched."*
48. *See what similes they strike for you, but they have gone astray, and never can they find a way.*
49. *They say, "What, when we are reduced to bones and dust, should we really be raised up as a new creation?"*
50. *Say, "Be you stones or iron;*
51. *Or some created thing that is yet greater in your thoughts." Then they will say, "Who shall bring us back (to life)." Say, "He who created you in the first instance." They will shake their heads at you, and say, "When will it be?" Say, "Perhaps, it will be soon.*
52. *It will be on a day when He will call you, and you will answer (His call) with (words of) His praise, and you will think that you tarried but a little while."*
53. *Say to My servants that they should (only) say those things that are best, for Satan does sow dissensions among them. Satan is indeed humankind's avowed enemy.*
54. *It is your Lord who knows you best. If He pleases, He grants you mercy, or if He pleases, He will torment you. We have not sent you (Muhammad) as a guardian over them.*
55. *And your Lord knows best all who are in the heavens and the earth. And we preferred some of the prophets above others, and We gave David the Psalms.*
56. *Say, "Call on those whom you claim beside Him, they have neither the power to remove your troubles from you nor to change them."*
57. *Those whom they call upon seek a way of approach to their Lord, which of them shall be the nearest; they hope for His mercy and they fear His torment. The torment of your Lord is to be cautious of. (17: 40 – 57)*

"Has then your Lord chosen you (to have) sons, and (for Himself) taken daughters from among the angels? Most surely you utter a grievous saying." This question is posed in such a way to express God's sarcasm and denunciation of what the disbelievers say. The question rejects the claim they make that the angels are females and they are God's daughter. If they believe that God gives both males and females, then how come, and He is the Creator, that he chooses females while they themselves reject females? This is a horrible saying.

"We verily have explained things in various ways in this Quran that they may become mindful, but it only added to their aversion." The Quran came with the message that is based on the fact that God is One. The Quran explained and clarified the doctrine of Islam in many ways so that they would heed the message. But whenever they heard these clarifications they became more averse to the message. They did not want to leave the superficial security that they find in their false beliefs. The Quran refutes their claim that there are other gods with God, *"Say, 'If there*

had been (other) gods with Him, as they say, they would certainly have sought out a way against the Lord of the Throne.” This claim is not true. All those whom they took as gods besides God, are things which God created. God is Glorified above all these claims, *“Glory be to Him. Exalted is He above what they say by great sublimity.”*

Everything in the heavens and earth praise His glory, *“The seven heavens and the earth, and all beings therein praise Him. There is not a thing but celebrates His praise and yet you understand not their praise. Verily He is Forbearing, All-Forgiving.”* Reading this verse, an image comes to mind in which one sees each atom in this universe as if it were a living being praising the glory of God. The whole universe becomes alive singing in unison the praise of God. Each thing in the universe sings the praise of God in its own way and using its own language. Your mortality hinders your understanding of these languages. One needs to listen to the praise with one’s heart not ears. As the soul becomes sublimated it will be able to listen to the praise of the creatures of God, it will be ready to connect with the sublime host, and it will be able to comprehend the secrets of the universe. God is truly Forbearing and All-Forgiving. He is forbearing towards those who are ungrateful and those who associate partners with God; He reprieves them, reminds them, and admonishes them so they may see the truth and repent. He forgives the heedlessness of the mortals who do not praise His glory while the rest of the universe is singing His praise.

The chiefs of Quraish used to listen to the Quran being recited but they resisted their initial natural disposition to be touched by its beauty. Thus, God placed a barrier between them and Muhammad (PBUH). They heard the verses but they did not listen or understand, *“When you recite the Quran, We place, between you and those who do not believe in the Hereafter, an invisible veil. And We placed veils upon their hearts lest they should understand it, and in their ears a deafness; and when you mention your Lord alone in the Quran, they turn their backs in aversion. We know best what they wish to hear when they give you an ear and when they take secret counsel, when the evil-doers say, “You follow but a man bewitched. See what similes they strike for you, but they have gone astray, and never can they find a way.”* Ibn Ishaq narrated that one night three of the chiefs of Quraish - Abu Sufian ibn Harb, Abu Jahl ibn Hesham, and Al-Akhnas ibn Shuraiq – went separately and discreetly to listen to the Prophet (PBUH) reciting Quran. Each one of them was unaware of what the others were doing. Each one of them hid in a place close to the Prophet’s (PBUH) house. They spent the whole night listening to him reciting the Quran. At dawn when they were about to leave to go home, they bumped into each other. They started rebuking each other. They admonished each other not to do this again. They reminded each other that they should not do this otherwise they would be setting a bad example for the people of Quraish. However, the same story was repeated for three nights. On the third night when they met as they were heading home, they said we have to make a pledge to each other not to listen again to Muhammad (PBUH) reciting Quran. The next day when Al-Akhnas met Abu Sufian, he asked him what he thought of what he heard from Muhammad (PBUH). Abu Sufian said, “I heard things that I knew about and I know what they mean, and I heard things which I did not know before and I do not understand what they mean.” Al-Akhnas said to him, “This is exactly my experience.” Al-Akhnas then went to see Abu Jahl and asked him the same question. Abu Jahl said, “We were in a competition with Banu Abd Manaf, which of the two tribes gets higher status among the other tribes; they fed people and we matched them, they provided rides for people and we matched them, they helped people financially and we matched them; but when

we were about to be equal in status they came up with the idea that one of them is a prophet who receives revelation from heaven. How can we compete with this? We will never believe in Muhammad (PBUH) nor will we follow him.”

The Quran touched the hearts and souls of the chiefs of Quraish, however, they forced themselves to disbelieve. Their initial natural disposition was to accept the Message but they worked hard to suppress this natural feeling in their hearts. This is why God placed a barrier between them and the Quran. The barrier prevented the guidance to reach them. They were averse to the message because it posed a threat to their status among the other Arabs. Islam threatened the chiefs’ power and authority. They finally found a plausible excuse not to follow Muhammad (PBUH), “*You follow but a man bewitched.*” This statement in itself reflects the magnitude of the Quran’s impact on them. They realized that this could not have been composed by a mortal. They thought that there must have been a supernatural power behind it; because they did not want to admit that it is God’s revelation, they said it must be magic.

The idolaters of Mecca found the concept of resurrection after death difficult to accept. They argued at length with the Prophet (PBUH) about it and these arguments were documented in the Quran. The Quran explained the concept in great detail. Those who understood the nature of life, death, and resurrection found it easy to accept, “*They say, ‘What, when we are reduced to bones and dust, should we really be raised up as a new creation?’*” did they not realize that they were not alive before they were born? And that resurrecting a dead person is not much different from creating this person in the first instance. God Who has the power to create humankind is able to resurrect them. The response came to challenge them, “*Say, ‘Be you stones or iron; or some created thing that is yet greater in your thoughts.’ Then they will say, ‘Who shall bring us back (to life).’ Say, ‘He who created you in the first instance.’ They will shake their heads at you, and say, ‘When will it be?’ Say, ‘Perhaps, it will be soon.’*” Even if you were a stone or a piece of iron God is able to put life back into you. Stone and iron are farther from life than bones and dust. Then they will ask who will resurrect us. The answer is simple, God who created you the first time is able to bring you back to life another time. They will ask again when this will take place. The Prophet (PBUH) did not know when, but he was commanded to say, “*Perhaps, it will be soon.*”

The verses continued to construct the scene when this will happen, “*It will be on a day when He will call you, and you will answer (His call) with (words of) His praise, and you will think that you tarried but a little while.*” The scene depicts those who rejected faith before, rising to sing the praise of God.

The narrative then moves to deal with another theme. The verse commands the Prophet (PBUH) to direct the believers to always say a good word, “*Say to My servants that they should (only) say those things that are best, for Satan does sow dissensions among them. Satan is indeed humankind’s avowed enemy.*” This is a comprehensive statement. God’s servants should always say only good things. They should always choose the best speech to address each other. A good word spreads love and brotherhood and eliminates hate and animosity. This is the way to circumvent Satan’s efforts who will try always to sow the seeds of discord among them. Satan is

humankind's avowed enemy.

God has the absolute knowledge of what will happen and what people will do. He will bestow His mercy on whoever He pleases and He will punish whoever He pleases, *"It is your Lord who knows you best. If He pleases, He grants you mercy, or if He pleases, He will torment you. We have not sent you (Muhammad) as a guardian over them."* The Prophet's (PBUH) task is only to deliver the message not to act as a warden over people.

"And your Lord knows best all who are in the heavens and the earth. And we preferred some of the prophets above others, and We gave David the Psalms." God in His divine knowledge chose to prefer some prophets over others. Only God knows the criteria for this categorization. One of the signs of preference is that some got books as in the case of David (PBUH).

This group of verses deals with the denunciation of the concept of God's having daughters or partners. The verses emphasize God's uniqueness and oneness and His comprehensive and absolute knowledge. The verses conclude by a challenge to the disbelievers, *"Say, 'Call on those whom you claim beside Him, they have neither the power to remove your troubles from you nor to change them.'"* Those whom the disbelievers call upon are only part of the creation of God. They cannot offer their followers any help. God is the only one who can offer help to His creatures. Those whom the disbelievers call upon besides God they themselves race to please God and they fear His torment, *"Those whom they call upon seek a way of approach to their Lord, which of them shall be the nearest; they hope for His mercy and they fear His torment. The torment of your Lord is to be cautious of."*

Verses 58 to 72:

58. *There is not a township but We shall destroy before the Day of Resurrection, or torment it a dire torment. That has been written in the Book.*
59. *And We refrain from sending the signs, only because the people of former generations denied them. And We gave Thamud the she camel as a clear sign but they wronged it, and We do not send signs but as a warning.*
60. *We told you that your Lord does know all about humankind. We gave you the vision which We showed you, as a test for people, as also the cursed tree (mentioned) in the Quran. We threaten them, but it only increases their inordinate transgression.*
61. *And when We said to the angels, "Prostrate before Adam and they fell prostrate all save Iblis, he said, "Shall I fall prostrate before that which You created out of clay?"*
62. *He (Iblis) said, "Do You see the one whom You honoured above me, if You give me respite till the Day of Judgment, I will surely bring all his descendants under my sway except for a few."*
63. *(God) said, "Go, and whosoever of them follows you, then certainly Hell is your recompense, an ample recompense."*

64. *And incite whomsoever of them you can with your voice, and use against them what you can muster of forces riding and on foot, and share with them their wealth and children, and hold out promises to them; and Satan's promises are only a deception.*
65. *Indeed, you have no authority over My servants. Your Lord suffices as (their) Guardian.*
66. *Your Lord is He who makes the ships go smoothly for you through the sea, in order that you may seek of His grace, for He is most Merciful toward you.*
67. *And when distress touches you at sea, those whom you call upon desert you except He; but when He brings you safe to the land, you turn away; and humankind is ever ungrateful.*
68. *Do you then feel secure that He will not cause you to be swallowed up beneath the earth when you are on land, or that He will not send a sand-storm upon you, and then you will find that you have no guardian?*
69. *Or do you feel secure that He will not send you back a second time to sea and send against you a heavy gale to drown you because of your ingratitude, so that you find no helper against Us?*
70. *Verily We have honored the Children of Adam. We carry them on land and sea, and have made provision of good things for them, and have favoured them far above many of those whom We created.*
71. *On the Day when We shall summon all people along with their leaders, those who are given their books in their right hands will read their books and they will not be wronged a shred.*
72. *But those who were blind in this world, will be blind in the Hereafter, and will be further away from the path. (17: 58 – 72)*

The previous verses established the fact that only God controls people's fate. He can either forgive them or punish them as He pleases. The following verse describes the fate that awaits all people, *"There is not a township but We shall destroy before the Day of Resurrection, or torment it a dire torment. That has been written in the Book."* God willed that all human beings would perish before the Day of Resurrection. God also decreed that the people who sinned should be punished.

God sent messengers to guide people and gave them miraculous signs to convince people of the veracity of the message. Those whose hearts were open to receive guidance believed but many rejected guidance. The last messenger was not supported with such material miraculous evidence, *"And We refrain from sending the signs, only because the people of former generations denied them. And We gave Thamud the she camel as a clear sign but they wronged it, and We do not send signs but as a warning."* The Quran is the miracle of Islam. It is a Book that presents a complete way of life. It addresses both the intellect and the emotions of humankind. It appeals to the initial natural disposition of humankind. It is an everlasting Book that will remain available for all future generations. Physical miracles benefit only those who experience it firsthand. Many of the people who witnessed God's miracles did not believe in their messengers. An example of that is the she camel that was sent to the tribe of Thamud who asked their prophet to bring about a sign but when the sign came they rejected it.

These human experiences indicated that the last Message should not be accompanied by a physical miracle but it should be supported by an everlasting miracle which can benefit all future generations. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was given physical miracles as well but these miracles were not meant to be a proof of his prophet hood. These miracles were meant to be a test for his followers, *“We told you that your Lord does know all about humankind. We gave you the vision which We showed you, as a test for people, as also the cursed tree (mentioned) in the Quran. We threaten them, but it only increases their inordinate transgression.”* Some people became apostates after the miracle of Israa and Mi’raj but the same event strengthened the faith of others. The statement, *“We told you that your Lord does know all about humankind,”* was a promise from God to His Messenger that God will protect him and grant him victory over his enemies.

The subsequent verses disclose the real reasons behind rejecting guidance. They also illustrate the reasons behind the traditional animosity between Iblis and humankind, *“And when We said to the angels, ‘Prostrate before Adam,’ and they fell prostrate all save Iblis, he said, ‘Shall I fall prostrate before that which You created out of clay?’”* Iblis envied Adam (PBUH) for the honor that God bestowed on him. Iblis looked down upon this creature whom God created from mud. He forgot that God breathed of His breath in this creature. Iblis then expressed his disdain for the weakness of humankind, *“He (Iblis) said, ‘Do You see the one whom You honoured above me, if You give me respite till the Day of Judgment, I will surely bring all his descendants under my sway except for a few.’”* Iblis forgot that humankind has equal propensity for guidance and misguidance. Iblis forgot that humankind has the will to reach for God and become guided. Humankind was given the will to choose. That is why God allowed Iblis to try, *“(God) said, ‘Go, and whosoever of them follows you, then certainly Hell is your recompense, an ample recompense.’”*

“And incite whomsoever of them you can with your voice, and use against them what you can muster of forces riding and on foot, and share with them their wealth and children, and hold out promises to them; and Satan’s promises are only a deception.” It is a battle between humankind and Satan. He will amass his power and will use different strategies to conquer his enemies and tempt them to deviate from the straight path. He will share their wealth and their children as they used to do in the name of the idols. This also refers to the wealth which is obtained through illegitimate means and the children who are conceived outside wedlock. The partnership between the disbelievers and Iblis is about sharing wealth and children which are the main sources for pleasure and enjoyment for the human world. Iblis will try to use all means to achieve his objectives. Perhaps one of the most tempting promises is the promise that the sinner will be forgiven.

“Indeed you have no authority over My servants. Your Lord suffices as (their) Guardian.” Iblis has no authority on those whose hearts are connected to God, who nurture that link through acts of worship, and who hold tight to the most trustworthy handhold.

Iblis tries to sway people away from the straight path and God bestows His mercy on people and saves them from difficult situations, *“Your Lord is He who makes the ships go smoothly for you through the sea, in order that you may seek of his grace, for He is most Merciful toward you.”*

And when distress touches you at sea, those whom you call upon desert you except He; but when He brings you safe to the land, you turn away; and humankind is ever ungrateful.” The verses use the scene of a ship at sea as an example for difficult situations when there is no one to save those aboard the ship except God. The verses juxtapose the comfortable scene in which a ship sails safely on a quiet sea with the promise of a profit that will be gained at the completion of the trip with the difficult scene of a ship being tossed around by huge waves no one is able to control; and no one knows what the end will be. The first scene reflects God’s mercy on people. In the second scene people pray to God to save them. But once they feel secure upon reaching the shore they forget their Savior.

Is there real security except with God? *“Do you then feel secure that He will not cause you to be swallowed up beneath the earth when you are on land, or that He will not send a sand-storm upon you, and then you will find that you have no guardian? Or do you feel secure that He will not send you back a second time to sea and send against you a heavy gale to drown you because of your ingratitude, so that you find no helper against Us?”* People are in God’s hands whether they are at sea or on land. No one can provide protection against the dangers that one faces on land like tornados and volcanos or at sea like giant waves and stormy winds except God.

God honored humankind over many of His creatures. God honored humankind when He bestowed on him a straight posture and an initial natural disposition that combines mud and God’s breath. This is the initial natural disposition which joins the heavens and the earth. God honored humankind when He bestowed on him the aptitude that makes him eligible for the position of vicegerency on earth. He gave him the ability to develop the earth and make it a habitable place. God honored humankind when He subjected the forces of the universe to make him live a better life. God honored humankind when He prepared for him a huge reception during which the angels bowed to him, *“Verily we have honored the Children of Adam. We carry them on land and sea, and have made provision of good things for them, and have favoured them far above many of those whom We created.”*

God also honored humankind by giving him the responsibility to conduct himself. Humankind is responsible for his actions and has the free will to choose, consequently he will be held accountable for his actions and choices, *“On the Day when We shall summon all people along with their leaders, those who are given their books in their right hands will read their books and they will not be wronged a shred. But those who were blind in this world, will be blind in the Hereafter, and will be further away from the path.”* The verse describes the scene on the Day of Resurrection when all human beings will be gathered together. Each nation will be called by its name, whether it is the name of its ideology, its messenger, or its leader. Every nation will receive its record and its reward. Those who will be given their record in their right hands will be happy with their record. They will get a full reward. But those who were blind in their daily life and missed the guidance, they will also be blind in the Hereafter. They will miss the good reward.

Verses 73 to 111:

73. *And their purpose was to tempt you away from that which We had revealed to you, to substitute in our name something quite different; and then they would have accepted you as a friend.*
74. *And had We not given you strength, you would nearly have inclined to them a little.*
75. *Then We would have made you taste double (of punishment) in this life, and double after death, and moreover you would have found none to help you against Us.*
76. *Their purpose was to scare you off the land, in order to expel you; but in that case they would not have stayed (therein) after you, except for a little while.*
77. *(This was Our) way with the messengers We sent before you. You will not find a change in Our ways.*
78. *Establish regular prayers at the sun's decline till the darkness of the night, and (the recital of) the Quran at dawn. (the recital of) the Quran at dawn is ever witnessed.*
79. *And during the night wake up and pray, as an extra offering of your own. So that your Lord may raise you to a praised station.*
80. *And say, "My Lord, make me enter in a sincere manner and exit in a sincere manner. And give me from Yourself a sustaining Power.*
81. *And say, "Truth has arrived, and falsehood perished. Falsehood is (by its nature) bound to perish."*
82. *And We reveal of the Quran that which is a healing and a mercy for the believers, and it adds only to the perdition of the wrongdoers.*
83. *And when We bestow Our blessings on humankind, he turns away and becomes averse; and when evil touches him he is in despair.*
84. *Say, "Everyone acts according to his own disposition. But your Lord knows best who it is that is best guided on the way."*
85. *They ask you concerning the Spirit. Say, "The Spirit is of the affair of my Lord. And you have not been given of knowledge except a little."*
86. *If We had willed, We could take away that which We have revealed to you, then you would find no guardian for you against Us.*
87. *Except (We have left it with you) as mercy from your Lord. Indeed, the grace He bestowed on you is great.*
88. *Say, "If the whole of humankind and jinn were to gather together to produce the like of this Quran, they could not produce the like thereof, even if they backed up each other with help and support."*
89. *And We have explained to the people, in this Quran, every kind of similitude, but most people persist in disbelieving.*
90. *They say, "We shall not believe in you, until you cause a spring to gush forth for us from the ground,*
91. *Or (until) you have a garden of date trees and vines, and cause rivers to gush forth in their midst, carrying abundant water;*
92. *Or you cause the sky to fall in pieces on us, as you claimed will happen; or you bring God and the angels before (us) face to face;*
93. *Or you have a house adorned with gold; or you ascend into the skies. No, we shall not even believe in your ascension until you send down to us a book that we could read."*
Say, "Glory to my Lord, was I ever but a human messenger."

94. What prevented people from believing when the guidance came to them save that they said, "Has God sent a mortal as (His) messenger?"
95. Say, "If there were on the earth angels walking securely, We would have sent down for them from heaven an angel as a messenger."
96. Say, "God suffices as a witness between me and you. Indeed, He is Totally-Aware and All-Seeing of His servants.
97. It is he whom God guides, that is on true guidance; but he whom He leaves to go astray, you will find no protecting guardians besides Him. On the Day of Judgment, We shall gather them together, on their faces, blind, dumb and deaf; their habitation will be Hell. Whenever it subsides, We increase its flame for them.
98. That is their recompense, because they rejected Our signs, and said, "When we are reduced to bones and broken dust, shall we really be raised up (to be) a new creation?"
99. Have they not seen that God who created the heavens and the earth is able to create the like of them, and has appointed for them a term about which there is no doubt? But the wrongdoers persist in disbelieving.
100. Say, "If you had control of the treasures of the mercy of my Lord, you would have kept them back, for fear of spending them. Humankind is indeed stingy."
101. And verily We gave Moses nine clear signs. Do ask the Children of Israel when he came to them, then Pharaoh said to him, "Moses, I think you are bewitched."
102. Moses said, "You know well that these things have been sent down by none but the Lord of the heavens and the earth as eye-opening evidence. Pharaoh, I believe you are indeed doomed to destruction."
103. And he wished to scare them away from the land, but We drowned him and those with him, all together.
104. And We said to the Children of Israel after him, "Dwell in the land; but when the promise of the Hereafter comes to pass We shall bring you as a crowd gathered out of various nations."
105. We sent down the (Quran) in truth, and in truth has it descended. And We did not send you except as a bearer of glad tidings and a warner.
106. (It is) a Quran which We have divided in parts, in order that you recite it to the people over a long period of time. We have revealed it in stages.
107. Say, "Whether you believe in it or not, it is true that those who were given knowledge beforehand, when it is recited to them, fall down prostrate on their faces."
108. And they say, "Glory to our Lord, verily the promise of our Lord has been fulfilled."
109. They fall down on their faces in tears, and it increases their humility.
110. Say, "Call upon God, or call upon Al-Rahman. By whatever name you call upon Him, for to Him belong the Most Beautiful Names. Do not raise your voice in your prayer, nor say it in a low voice, but seek a middle course in between."
111. Say, "Praise be to God, who begat no son, and has no associate in (His) dominion. He is not weak as to need any protector. Magnify Him for His greatness and glory." (17: 73 – 111)

"And their purpose was to tempt you away from that which We had revealed to you, to substitute in our name something quite different; and then they would have accepted you as a friend. And

had We not given you strength, you would nearly have inclined to them a little. Then We would have made you taste double (of punishment) in this life, and double after death, and moreover you would have found none to help you against Us. Their purpose was to scare you off the land, in order to expel you; but in that case they would not have stayed (therein) after you, except for a little while. (This was Our) way with the messengers We sent before you. You will not find a change in Our ways.” The verses refer to the attempts that the idolaters of Mecca tried with the Prophet (PBUH) to sway him from performing his task. They tried to reach a compromise with him. At one time they offered to worship his God and in return he should stop criticizing their gods. Another time some of them wanted to make their land sacred land like the land around the Sacred Mosque. A third time the chiefs wanted exclusive audience with Muhammad (PBUH), no one except them would be allowed to attend. The verses do not give details of such attempts but simply remind the Prophet (PBUH) that it is by the grace of God that he was able to stay the course according to the revelation he received.

The attempts that the idolaters of Mecca tried are a classic example of the way people in authority deal with people of principle. They try to get them to compromise their principles. Initial compromises may be minor but as time passes the compromise increases and soon the initial message would be replaced by a completely different thing.

When the idolaters of Mecca failed to sway the Prophet (PBUH) from his path, they tried to drive him out of Mecca. However, God commanded him to migrate to Medina. The verse states that had the idolaters of Mecca been successful in forcing the Prophet (PBUH) out of Mecca they would have been destroyed, *“Their purpose was to scare you off the land, in order to expel you; but in that case they would not have stayed (therein) after you, except for a little while. (This was Our) way with the messengers We sent before you. You will not find a change in Our ways.*” This is God’s law that does not change.

The Prophet (PBUH) was commanded to connect with God and seek His help and support, *“Establish regular prayers at the sun's decline till the darkness of the night, and (the recital of) the Quran at dawn. (The recital of) the Quran at dawn is ever witnessed.*” This command was specific to the Prophet (PBUH). He was commanded to pray during the time between sunset till the beginning of the night. Times for regular prayers are known and were given in authentic prophetic traditions. The expression, *“the sun's decline till the darkness of the night,”* alludes to the time of the vanishing day light; while the expression, *“and (the recital of) the Quran at dawn,”* alludes to the beginning of the day. These two times have their impact on the believer. They evoke feelings of complete dedication to God. They inspire the believer to reflect on the signs of God in the universe. The dawn announces the beginning of life at the start of the day as is the prayer which fills the believer’s heart with life.

The Prophet (PBUH) was commanded to perform extra prayer during the night. The voluntary prayers and the recitation of the Quran will strengthen the connection with God which will lead to a high status, *“And during the night wake up and pray, as an extra offering of your own. So that your Lord may raise you to a praised station.”* Muslims are in great need to follow this advice.

“And say, ‘My Lord, make me enter in a sincere manner and exit in a sincere manner. And give me from Yourself a sustaining Power.’” God taught His Prophet (PBUH) this supplication so that he can teach his nation to say it. It is a supplication that requests God to make Muslims truthful from the entrance to the exit, from the beginning to the end. Truthfulness promotes security, purity, and fidelity. The supplication implies that one should seek support and help only from God.

“And say, ‘Truth has arrived, and falsehood perished. Falsehood is (by its nature) bound to perish.’” Falsehood is bound to disappear. History teaches us that no matter how long a kingdom built on falsehood lasted it was bound to be destroyed. Falsehood is bound to perish. Falsehood may be supported by human power and it is certainly supported by Satan but God’s promise is the truth and His power is stronger and everlasting. Whoever tasted the sweetness of faith also tasted the sweetness of God’s promise. Who is more truthful in His promise than God?

“And We reveal of the Quran that which is a healing and a mercy for the believers, and it adds only to the perdition of the wrongdoers.” The Quran brings healing to the believers in so many ways. It is a remedy for confusion, insecurity, and scepticism. It purifies the heart and removes any traces of greed, envy, and immorality. It supports the believer against the temptation of Satan and the whims and desires of the self. The Quran brings stability to the human soul. It supports the intellect with the objectivity of thought. It frees the mind to seek productive ways. The Quran brings remedy to the social illnesses that afflict communities. It provides a theme for the unity of the community, thus bringing peace and security to the life of people. The wrongdoers will not benefit from the mercy and healing that the Quran brings. This fills their hearts with envy and hate. However, they continue in their obstinacy thus become losers.

Those who are left out of the mercy of God suffer the tribulations of life, *“And when We bestow Our blessings on humankind, he turns away and becomes averse; and when evil touches him he is in despair.”* When they receive a bounty they become arrogant forgetting that it is God who bestowed His bounty on them and when they are faced with adversity they despair because they lost their contact with God so they have no hope in His mercy. The believers on the other hand are grateful to God when they receive His bounty; and they seek His mercy when they face adversity. Each behaves according to his own disposition, *“Say, ‘Everyone acts according to his own disposition. But your Lord knows best who it is that is best guided on the way.’”*

The Quran provided direct and simple answers to the questions people asked the Prophet (PBUH). However, some questions were beyond the level of human understanding, *“They ask you concerning the Spirit. Say, ‘The Spirit is of the affairs of my Lord. And you have not been given of knowledge except a little.’”* This answer did not place a ban on the curiosity of human mind but simply indicated that there are areas of knowledge that are beyond human understanding.

“If We had willed, We could take away that which We have revealed to you, then you would find no guardian for you against Us. Except (We have left it with you) as mercy from your Lord.”

Indeed, the grace He bestowed on you is great.” The revelation which the Prophet (PBUH) has received is a bounty from God. God could continue His revelation or could stop it anytime He wants.

God composed this Quran. No one can compose a similar book. Even if all humans and all jinn collaborated together, they cannot compose a similar book, *“If the whole of humankind and jinn were to gather together to produce the like of this Quran, they could not produce the like thereof, even if they backed up each other with help and support.”* The jinn and the humans represent the unseen and seen creatures of God. Only God knows the secrets of the Quran and the Spirit.

In addition to its miraculous linguistic composition, the Quran presents a complete, comprehensive, and consistent way of life; a way of life that addresses the needs of the individual as well as the community. It provides for all contingencies that can be encountered in the life of the individual and the community. Its rules and injunctions show deep understanding of the human initial natural dispositions and the community dynamics.

“And We have explained to the people, in this Quran, every kind of similitude, but most people persist in disbelieving. They say, ‘We shall not believe in you, until you cause a spring to gush forth for us from the ground, or (until) you have a garden of date trees and vines, and cause rivers to gush forth in their midst, carrying abundant water; or you cause the sky to fall in pieces on us, as you claimed will happen; or you bring God and the angels before (us) face to face; or you have a house adorned with gold; or you ascend into the skies. No, we shall not even believe in your ascension until you send down to us a book that we could read.’ Say, ‘Glory to my Lord, was I ever but a human messenger.’” They failed to appreciate the miracle of the Quran, so they requested a number of physical miracles. They requested the Prophet (PBUH) to cause a spring to gush out from the ground, to produce a garden with rivers flowing through it, to make pieces from the sky to fall down on them, to ask God and the angels to come face to face with them, to have a house adorned with gold, or to ascend into the sky; even then they will not believe unless he brings them a book that they can read. These were requests that reflected their immaturity and obstinacy. They failed to appreciate the real challenge that was posed to them in the Quran. They were challenged to compose a book similar to the Quran.

“What prevented people from believing when the guidance came to them save that they said, ‘Has God sent a mortal as (His) messenger?’” People thought that God should send an angel to deliver His message. They thought it is farfetched that God would send a human being as a messenger. They underestimated the value of their humanity. They did not understand that God has honored humankind and gave him a status higher than many of His creation. They also did not understand the nature of the angels. The angels were not created to live on earth, *“Say, ‘If there were on the earth angels walking securely, We would have sent down for them from heaven an angel as a messenger.’”* Had God willed the angels to live on earth, He would have given them the form of human beings, because this is the form that is suitable for life on earth, *“And if We had made him an angel, We would certainly have made him a man.”* (6: 9) God has the power to do what He pleases but He created laws to govern His creation. These laws do not change. At this point, the Prophet (PBUH) was commanded to end the argument by referring the

whole matter to God, “Say, ‘God suffices as a witness between me and you. Indeed, He is Totally-Aware and All-Seeing of His servants.’” The statement embodies an implicit warning. The consequences of the actions of those who reject faith is explained, “It is he whom God guides, that is on true guidance; but he whom He leaves to go astray, you will find no protecting guardians besides Him. On the Day of Judgment, We shall gather them together, on their faces, blind, dumb and deaf; their habitation will be Hell. Whenever it subsides, We increase its flame for them. That is their recompense, because they rejected Our signs, and said, ‘When we are reduced to bones and broken dust, shall we really be raised up (to be) a new creation?’ Have they not seen that God who created the heavens and the earth is able to create the like of them, and has appointed for them a term about which there is no doubt? But the wrongdoers persist in disbelieving.” God has decreed that those who seek guidance should follow a specified route. Those who do not follow the route that God has specified for achieving guidance will be misguided. Humankind was created with equal propensity for good and evil and they were given the freedom to choose the route they want to take. Those who seek guidance and embark on the route that God has specified for guidance will be helped in their endeavor by God. Those are the truly guided. Those who chose to turn their back to the route of guidance will have no one to support them and on the Day of Judgment they will be ushered to Hell fire in a humiliating way. This is a bad ending but that was their choice. They found it hard to believe that there will be resurrection after death. Did they not realize that God who created the heavens and earth is able to raise them after death?

Those who asked the Prophet (PBUH) to bring them physical miracles were in actual fact stingy. Even if God were to give them His treasures, they would not have entertained the desire to spend out of their wealth, “Say, ‘If you had control of the treasures of the mercy of my Lord, you would have kept them back, for fear of spending them. Humankind is indeed stingy.’” In spite of the fact that the treasures of the mercy of God are limitless, they would still be unable to spend.

The Sura started with a reference to Prophet Moses (PBUH) and the Children of Israel and ends with a reference to their story and the story of the demise of Pharaoh, “And verily We gave Moses nine clear signs. Do ask the Children of Israel when he came to them, then Pharaoh said to him, ‘Moses, I think you are bewitched.’” The nine signs that were given to Moses’ (PBUH) included the miracles of turning his hand to become illuminated without a disease, and transforming his staff to become a serpent. They also included the punishments which God inflicted on the Egyptians. These were the draught, the scarcity of crops, the flood, the locusts, the lice, the frogs, and the blood. Pharaoh, the tyrant accused Moses (PBUH) of sorcery because he did not tolerate Moses’ (PBUH) call to the truth and the worship of God. Moses (PBUH) stood in the face of the tyrant because he was assured of God’s help, “Moses said, ‘You know well that these things have been sent down by none but the Lord of the heavens and the earth as eye-opening evidence. Pharaoh, I believe you are indeed doomed to destruction.’”

Pharaoh tried to use his material power to punish Moses (PBUH) and his people but God was ever watching, “And he wished to scare them away from the land, but We drowned him and those with him, all together.” The tyrant was drowned and the meek inherited the land, “And We said to the Children of Israel after him, ‘Dwell in the land; but when the promise of the

Hereafter comes to pass We shall bring you as a crowd gathered out of various nations.’”
Everyone will be called upon on the Day of Judgment to account for their deeds.

The Quran was revealed with the truth; it is an everlasting sign for people to heed the truth. It has been revealed in parts so it can be recited over a long period of time, *“We sent down the (Quran) in truth, and in truth has it descended. And We did not send you except as a bearer of glad tidings and a warner. (It is) a Quran which We have divided in parts, in order that you recite it to the people over a long period of time. We have revealed it in stages.”* The Quran embodied the details of a way of life to be followed by a nation of believers. This nation was commanded to present this way of life to the whole humanity. The Quran was revealed over a long period of time to use practical life situations to teach the nation God’s way of life. It provided a meticulously designed program to be implemented over a specified time plan. The first generation of Muslims listened to the Quran as it was revealed, they understood it, and they implemented it in their daily life. Ibn Mas’ood (RA) said, *“We used to read ten verses at a time, we do not move to the next ten verses until we have understood the first ten and implemented them in our daily life.”*

This Quran was revealed with the truth to establish the truth; its contents are the truth and its objective is to establish the truth. The Prophet (PBUH) was commanded to call the people to submit to the truth but to leave to them the choice whether they believe in it or not. They should be willing to face the consequences of their choice, *“Say, ‘Whether you believe in it or not, it is true that those who were given knowledge beforehand, when it is recited to them, fall down prostrate on their faces. And they say, ‘Glory to our Lord, verily the promise of our Lord has been fulfilled.’ They fall down on their faces in tears, and it increases their humility.”* These are verses which paint a scene that moves the inner self of the human being, the scene of those who were given the knowledge before the revelation of the Quran. When they listened to the Quran they could not control their feelings; they fell down prostrating, their eyes flowing with tears. They recognized the truth of the Quran and they realized that the promise of God has been fulfilled.

The verses turn again to the idolaters of Mecca telling them to call upon God using any of His beautiful names. They should not follow the myth of the idol worship which prohibited them from calling God Al-Rahman, *“Say, ‘Call upon God, or call upon Al-Rahman. By whatever name you call upon Him, for to Him belong the Most Beautiful Names. Do not raise your voice in your prayer, nor say it in a low voice, but seek a middle course in between.’”* The rules regarding the level of voice which Muslims should use during the prayer were set.

The Sura is concluded as it was started, by praising God and stating His uniqueness and His independence. *Say, “Praise be to God, who begat no son, and has no associate in (His) dominion. He is not weak as to need any protector. Magnify Him for His greatness and glory.”*