

Sura 29: Al-‘Ankabut (The Spider)

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

Verses 1 to 13:

1. *Alif. Lam. Mim.*
2. *Do people think that they will be left (at ease) because they say, “We believe,” and will not be tested with affliction?*
3. *We tested those who were before them. Thus, God knows those who are truthful, and knows those who are liars.*
4. *Or do the evil-doers think that they will escape Us? Evil is that what they judge.*
5. *Whoever hopes to meet with God, God's appointed time is bound to come. He is the All-Hearing, the Omniscient.*
6. *And whosoever strives, strives only for himself. God is altogether free of all needs from (His) creation.*
7. *Those who believe and do good deeds, We will certainly absolve them of their evil deeds, and We shall reward them according to the best of their deeds.*
8. *We have enjoined on the humankind to be kind to his parents, but if they (either of them) strive (to force) you to associate with Me (in worship) anything of which you have no knowledge, obey them not. You will (all) return to Me, and I will tell you all that you did.*
9. *And those who believe and do good deeds, We shall admit them into the ranks of the righteous.*
10. *Then, there are those people who say, “We believe in God”; but when they suffer affliction in (the cause of) God, they treat people's oppression as if it were the torment of God. And if help comes (to you) from your Lord, they are sure to say, "We have (always) been with you." Does not God know best all that is in the hearts of (His) creatures?*
11. *And God most certainly knows those who believe, and those who are hypocrites.*
12. *And the disbelievers say to those who believe, “Follow our path, and we will bear (the consequences) of your sins.” Never in the least will they bear their sins. In fact, they are liars.*
13. *They will bear their own burdens, and (other) burdens along with their own, and on the Day of Resurrection they will be called to account for that which they used to fabricate. (29: 1 -13)*

This Sura was revealed in Mecca. It has been narrated that the first eleven verses were revealed in Medina, because they refer to the issues of Jihad (strive) and the hypocrites. However, it was narrated that the eighth verse refers to the adoption of Islam by S’ad bin Abi Waqas (RA) and this certainly took place in Mecca. The verses refer to the need to strive against human weakness during times of affliction and adversity. Its reference to the hypocrites is in the context of exploring different types of human beings.

The Sura has one theme from the beginning to the end: the essence of faith and the tests that human beings are subjected to in life. Faith is not mere words to be uttered but it involves perseverance in times of adversity and hardships.

The Sura starts with three letters from the Alphabet to point out that this Book has been composed using the letters of the Alphabet, “*Alif. Lam. Mim.*” We have mentioned before that the Suras that start with these letters include a reference to the Quran either in the verses immediately following the first verse or later in the Sura as is the case with this Sura (verses 45, 47, and 48).

The following verse discusses the essence of faith and the trials that people will be subjected to as a test for the strength of their faith, “*Do people think that they will be left (at ease) because they say, ‘We believe,’ and will not be tested with affliction?*” Faith is not mere words to be uttered but it is an endeavor that requires hard work and involves undertaking responsibilities. It requires striving and perseverance. All believers have to be tested, “*We tested those who were before them. Thus, God knows those who are truthful, and knows those who are liars.*” God knows beforehand what people will do when they are put to the test but God will not hold anyone accountable until they have committed the act. This is God’s mercy and God’s justice. It is out of God’s mercy, that He has decreed that He will not judge people according to His knowledge; He will judge people on the basis of their actions.

Faith is an undertaking that the believer pledges to fulfill. It is a covenant between the believer and God. Only those who are qualified and are able to assume the responsibility are allowed to carry this responsibility. It requires patience, perseverance, devotion, and hard work.

Trials take different forms. Believers may become victims to mistreatment or oppression because of their faith and find no helper or supporter. Friends and relatives of believers may be mistreated or oppressed because of their faith. Family and friends may appeal to the believers to spare them the difficult conditions by abandoning the struggle for their faith. Believers may find it difficult to suffer while disbelievers enjoy the pleasures and comfort of this life. Believers may find themselves isolated and abandoned in their own country. Believers may be tested when they see whole societies completely engrossed in the lowly worldly pleasures, with no place for God in their lives, yet they provide environments where human dignity is preserved and human beings are respected. The believer is a human being who is continuously tested by the temptation to satisfy lowly human lusts, the lust for sex, greed, power, or even the desire to feel secure and safe. These are elements of the everlasting battle between the believer and Satan.

The time for trials may be long. God does not want to torture the believers, nor does He want them to suffer unnecessarily, but trials are important tools for preparing the believers for their major undertaking: being God’s true vicegerents on earth. These trials are necessary to purify the souls and to strengthen the will of the believers. God promised that the truth will prevail at the end. No believer should doubt the fulfillment of God’s promise even if the waiting period for God’s victory became longer than expected. God knows best the best timing for His victory. The believers should understand that they were chosen by God for their mission. These trials are part of the training they need to help them accomplish their mission. The Messenger (PBUH) has been quoted to have said, “*Prophets are subjected to the most sever trials in life, and the severity of the trials to which the believers are subjected to is commensurate with their degree of righteousness, (the more righteous is tested more).*”

Those who oppress the believers and commit evil deeds will not escape God's punishment. If they really think that they can get away with their evil deeds, then they have truly made a bad judgment, *"Or do the evil-doers think that they will escape Us? Evil is that what they judge."* The message embodied in the earlier verses is that trials are part of the divine project to prepare the believers for their role in life. This verse embodies another message; it is also a component of the divine project that the evildoers get their punishment in due time. The third message is a message of comfort and security to the believers, *"Whoever hopes to meet with God, God's appointed time is bound to come. He is the All-Hearing, Omniscient."* The believers whose hearts yearn to God's mercy should be reassured of God's victory. He hears their prayers and knows their conditions. The fourth message is for the striving believers, reassuring them that they will reap the benefits of their hard work, *"And whosoever strives, strives only for himself. God is altogether free of all needs from (His) creation."* The believers should be reassured of God's blessings which will be bestowed on them, *"Those who believe and do good deeds, We will certainly absolve them of their evil deeds, and We shall reward them according to the best of their deeds."*

It was mentioned before that one of the types of trials that the believers may be subjected to is related to their family and friends. The following verse sets the limits on how far believers can go in accommodating their parents, *"We have enjoined on the humankind to be kind to his parents, but if they (either of them) strive (to force) you to associate with Me (in worship) anything of which you have no knowledge, obey them not. You will (all) return to Me, and I will tell you all that you did."* The parents are the most deserving of one's love, mercy, and respect. It is the duty of the person to take good care of his/her parents. However, when a choice has to be made between worshipping God and obeying one's parents, one should choose to obey God. Relationships based on faith are more important than blood relationships. Relationships based on faith represent the firmest ring. Even parents who associate partners with God deserve to be looked after and treated kindly. However, when it comes to the issue of associating partners with God, they should not be obeyed. At the end, everyone will return to God to find out what have they done. Those who believed and did good deeds will join the ranks of the righteous, *"And those who believe and do good deeds, We shall admit them into the ranks of the righteous."*

It has been narrated by Al-Tirmidhi that this verse dealt with a situation which S'ad bin Abi Waqass (RA) found himself in. When S'ad (RA) adopted Islam, his mother threatened to fast until he had relinquished his newly adopted religion and returned back to idolatry. Although S'ad (RA) loved his mother dearly, but he did not obey her and persisted in his faith. Eventually she came back to her senses and quit fasting. Faith claimed victory over blood relationship.

"Then there are those people who say, 'We believe in God'; but when they suffer affliction in (the cause of) God, they treat people's oppression as if it were the torment of God." The verse describes a kind of people who claim they are believers when times are good, but whenever they face the slightest persecution because of their faith they become terror-stricken. They think that their suffering is beyond their ability to persevere. However, the same people seem to forget their behavior at the time of adversity when help from God is received and the conditions of life became agreeable again, *"And if help comes (to you) from your Lord, they are sure to say, 'We*

have (always) been with you. ' Does not God know best all that is in the hearts of (His) creatures?' These trials are part of the plan to discriminate between the true believers and the hypocrites, "And God most certainly knows those who believe, and those who are hypocrites."

The following verse establishes a fundamental principle: faith is a personal responsibility. People will be recompensed according to their own individual deeds. Every human being is accountable for his/her own deeds, "*And the disbelievers say to those who believe, 'Follow our path, and we will bear (the consequences) of your sins.' Never in the least will they bear their sins. In fact, they are liars.*" No one is responsible for another's deeds. Those who disbelieved carry the burden of their sins and the sin of leading others astray, "*They will bear their own burdens, and (other) burdens along with their own, and on the Day of Resurrection they will be called to account for that which they used to fabricate.*"

Verses 14 to 45:

14. *And verily we sent Noah (as Our messenger) to his people, and he remained among them for a thousand years save fifty years; and the flood engulfed them, while they were wrongdoers.*
15. *And We saved him and those with him in the ship, and made it a sign for all peoples.*
16. *And (We sent) Abraham; and he said to his people, "Serve God and be conscious of Him; this is best for you, if you did but know.*
17. *You only worship idols besides God; and you invent falsehood. The things that you worship besides God have no power to give you sustenance. Seek sustenance from God, worship Him, and be grateful to Him. To Him will be your return."*
18. *And if you deny (the Message), so did generations before you; and the duty of the messenger is only to deliver the message clearly.*
19. *Do they not see how God originates creation, then repeats it? Verily that is easy for God.*
20. *Say, "Travel in the land and see how did God originated creation; so will God produce a later creation; for God has power over all things."*
21. *He torments whom He pleases, and He grants mercy to whom He pleases, and to Him you will be returned.*
22. *You cannot escape Him on earth or in heaven; and you have no protecting guardian beside God.*
23. *Those who disbelieve in the revelations of God and in (their) meeting with Him, have no hope of My mercy; and they will have painful torment.*
24. *But the answer of his people was only that they said, "Kill him, or burn him." Then God saved him from the fire. In this, there are indeed signs for people who believe.*
25. *He (Abraham) said, "You have chosen only idols instead of God. The affection between you is only in the life of the world. Then on the Day of Resurrection you will deny each other and curse each other, and your refuge will be the Fire, and you will have no helpers."*
26. *And Lut believed him, and said, "I am fleeing to my Lord, surely He is the Eminent, the Wise."*

27. *And We gave (Abraham) Isaac and Jacob, and ordained among his progeny Prophethood and the Scripture. We granted him his reward in this life; and in the Hereafter he will verily be among the righteous.*
28. *And (remember) Lut when he said to his people, "You commit such immorality, which none of the peoples has ever done before you."*
29. *How can you lust after men, you cut off the way, and you commit abominations in your meetings? But the answer of his people was only that they said, "Bring God's torment upon us if you are truthful."*
30. *He said, "My Lord, help me against the people who spread corruption."*
31. *When Our messengers came to Abraham with the good news, they said, "We are indeed going to destroy the people of this township, for truly they are wrongdoers."*
32. *He said, "But Lut is there." They said, "We are well aware who is there. We will certainly save him and his family, except his wife. She is of those who will remain behind."*
33. *And when Our messengers came to Lut, he was troubled on their account, for he could not protect them; but they said, "Fear not, nor grieve; we are to deliver you and your family, except your wife, who is of those who will remain behind."*
34. *We are about to bring down upon the people of this town a scourge from heaven, because they transgressed."*
35. *And verily We left behind a clear sign (from it) for people who understand.*
36. *To the people of Madyan (We sent) their brother Shu'aib. He said, "My people, worship God, and look forward to the Last Day, and do not spread corruption in the land."*
37. *But they denied him, so the tremor overtook them, and they became motionless bodies in their homes.*
38. *And (the tribes of) 'Ad and Thamud. (Their fate) is clear to you from their (ruined and deserted) dwellings. Satan made their deeds seem fair to them and so debarred them from the path, though they were endowed with perception.*
39. *(Remember also) Qaroun, Pharaoh, and Haman. Moses came to them with clear signs, but they behaved arrogantly in the land; yet they could not escape (Our punishment).*
40. *Each one of them We seized for his crime. On some, We sent a violent tornado; others were caught by a (mighty) blast; some We caused the earth to swallow up; and some We drowned. It was not God who wronged them, but they wronged themselves.*
41. *The example of those who take protecting guardians other than God is that like the spider, who builds (to itself) a house; but truly the flimsiest of houses is the spider's house; if they but knew.*
42. *Verily God knows whatever they invoke besides Him. He is the Eminent, the Wise.*
43. *And such similitudes We coin for people, but only those who have knowledge understand them.*
44. *God created the heavens and the earth with truth. Therein is indeed a sign for the believers.*
45. *Recite what has been revealed to you of the Book, and establish regular prayer. Prayer prohibits immorality and evil. And remembrance of God is greater. And God knows what you do. (29: 14 – 45)*

The following verses describe the trials that different Prophets were subjected to. Starting with Noah (PBUH), *“And verily we sent Noah (as Our messenger) to his people, and he remained among them for a thousand years save fifty years; and the flood engulfed them, while they were wrongdoers.”* Noah (PBUH) spent nine hundred and fifty years of his life, calling people to the belief in the Oneness of God. Noah (PBUH) must have lived longer than the time he spent in calling his people to believe in God. Noah’s (PBUH) life seems to be longer than normal lives that we are accustomed to. However, we believe in the truthful account of the Quran. Maybe the earlier generations of humanity lived longer than we live these days. In spite of this long career only few people believed in Noah (PBUH) who tried hard to convince his people of the truth. Those who rejected him were drowned while those who believed in him were saved in the ship, *“And We saved him and those with him in the ship, and made it a sign for all peoples.”*

The second story is the story of Prophet Abraham (PBUH). Prophet Abraham’s (PBUH) methodology was well thought of. It started with a simple and clear invitation, *“And (We sent) Abraham; and he said to his people, ‘Serve God and be conscious of Him;’”* The second step was to stress that this call is beneficial to them, *“this is best for you, if you did but know,”* This might have been an incentive for them to show that they knew what was good for themselves and to accept his call. It was also the truth. The third step of his methodology was to show them the futility of their belief in idols made out of wood. He also pointed out that they have no evidence that these idols deserved to be worshipped, *“You only worship idols besides God; and you invent falsehood.”* He explained that the idols had no control over their sustenance, *“The things that you worship besides God have no power to give you sustenance.”* The fourth step in his strategy was to point out to them that it is God that they should seek their sustenance from, *“Seek sustenance from God, worship Him, and be grateful to Him. To Him will be your return.”* Finally, he pointed out that there was no escape for them and that they will return to God; if they reject faith then it would be their loss, *“And if you deny (the Message), so did generations before you; and the duty of the messenger is only to deliver the message clearly.”*

“Do they not see how God originates creation; then repeats it. Verily that is easy for God.” Those who disbelieve in God see every day how God starts the creation. They see it in the growing plant; they see it in the hatching egg; and they see it in the developing fetus. If all people came together to create life they would not be able to create life, only God creates life. He who starts the creation can repeat it. This is easy for God. The verse then invites people to walk in the land, *“Say, ‘Travel in the land and see how did God originated creation; so will God produce a later creation; for God has power over all things.’”* Traveling in the land opens the eyes to new facts that they have not seen before. When people stay in one place they get used to it and they do not pay attention to the beauty or the remarkable features of the scenes around them. Travel opens the eyes and the hearts to discover the remarkable things in life. God is capable of starting life and repeating the creation. He has power over everything. He only says, “Be,” and it is.

He also has the power to punish whomsoever He wills and forgives whomsoever He wills, *“He torments whom He pleases, and He grants Mercy to whom He pleases, and to Him you will be returned. You cannot escape Him on earth or in heaven; and you have no protecting guardian*

beside God.” Punishment and forgiveness are decreed by God’s will. He gave humankind the ability to choose between guidance and misguidance and He showed him the two paths of guidance and misguidance. Humankind was created with equal propensity to the two ways. God has decreed that He will help those who choose to follow the path of guidance. Those who refuse to follow the path of guidance have chosen to sever their ties with God and will end up on the path to falsehood. Every group will have earned their share of God’s mercy or punishment. No one will be able to escape. There is no power on earth that will be able to provide protection against God.

Those who chose the path of misguidance have lost all hope in God’s mercy, *“Those who disbelieve in the revelations of God and in (their) meeting with Him, have no hope of My mercy; and they will have painful torment.”*

After this brief digression, the verses go back to the story of Abraham (PBUH). Their response to his call was, *“But the answer of his people was only that they said, ‘Kill him, or burn him.’ Then God saved him from the fire. In this there are indeed signs for people who believe.”* He argued with them in a rational way and their answer was to use their power and might to silence him. Abraham (PBUH) stood as a single man, unarmed facing tyranny. But God saved him. This was in itself a miracle that should have convinced his people of his truthfulness, but they refused to heed the lesson. There were signs in this for the believers. The first sign is the fact that Abraham (PBUH) was not harmed by the fire. The second sign is the fact that his people with all their might were unable to inflict harm on him. The third sign is the fact that the people did not reflect on the scene of Abraham (PBUH) walking out of the fire unharmed. Their hearts were sealed, and they were not able to perceive the meaning of the miracle.

“He (Abraham) said, ‘You have chosen only idols instead of God. The affection between you is only in the life of the world. Then on the Day of Resurrection you will deny each other and curse each other, and your refuge will be the Fire, and you will have no helpers.’” Prophet Abraham (PBUH) confronted them with the reality that they only worshiped these idols because of peer pressure. They were not really convinced that these idols deserve to be worshipped. They cared about each other more than they cared about finding the truth. But on the Day of Resurrection all these values will vanish. The ties of friendship among them will no longer exist; nor will they care about each other; on the contrary they will curse each other for what they have done to themselves. They will all end up in Hell and there will be no one to save them.

Only one person, in addition to his wife, believed in Abraham (PBUH), *“And Lut believed him, and said, ‘I am fleeing to my Lord, surely He is the Eminent, the Wise.’”* Let us stop for a second to reflect on Lut’s (PBUH) words, *“I am fleeing to my Lord.”* He did not flee to save himself or to make a worldly gain, but he left his home land to reach for God. He migrated from his country to be able to freely and sincerely serve his Lord.

God compensated Abraham (PBUH) for the loss of his country, his people, and his family. God gave him a progeny that will carry God’s message till the end of time. All God’s prophets who

came after Abraham (PBUH) were his progeny, *“And We gave (Abraham) Isaac and Jacob, and ordained among his progeny Prophet-hood and the Scripture. We granted him his reward in this life; and in the Hereafter he will verily be among the righteous.”* God bestowed his great bounty on the man who represents the epitome of submission to God.

The following verses tell the story of Prophet Lut (PBUH). Prophet Lut (PBUH) moved with Prophet Abraham (PBUH) to the valley of Jordan. Lut (PBUH) moved to live with a tribe that lived in the town of Sodom on the coast of the Dead Sea. Lut (PBUH) became a member of this tribe by virtue of marriage. Then homosexuality spread in the tribe. The Quran mentions that they were the first human beings to practice homosexuality, *“And (remember) Lut when he said to his people, ‘You commit such immorality, which none of the peoples has ever done before you. How can you lust after men, you cut off the way, and you commit abominations in your meetings?’”* Quran considers homosexuality to be a deviation from the initial natural disposition of human beings. The sexual desire between males and females is aligned with the requirement for the continuation of the human race. God created males and females to enjoy this relationship as an incentive for the continuation of the process of procreation. Lut’s (PBUH) people were also bandits. They assaulted people passing by and engaged in armed robbery. They performed evil deeds in public without shame. They had the audacity to respond to Lut’s (PBUH) advice with a challenge, *“Bring God's torment upon us if you are truthful.”*

Lut’s (PBUH) only recourse was to pray to God, *“He said, ‘My Lord, help me against the people who spread corruption.’”* God answered his prayer, *“When Our messengers came to Abraham with the good news, they said, ‘We are indeed going to destroy the people of this township, for truly they are wrongdoers.’”* The verse describes very briefly the encounter between Abraham (PBUH) and the angels. This same scene has been described in more details elsewhere. Prophet Abraham (PBUH) was concerned about the welfare of Lut’s (PBUH), so he reminded the angels, *“He said, ‘But Lut is there.’”* But the angels reassured him of Lut’s (PBUH) safety, *“They said, ‘We are well aware who is there. We will certainly save him and his family, except his wife. She is of those who will remain behind.’”* It was decided that Lut’s (PBUH) wife would be punished with the others because she did approve of their behavior.

The following verses describe the scene when the angels came to visit Lut (PBUH). They came in the form of young, handsome men. He was worried that his people would attack his guests, *“And when Our messengers came to Lut, he was troubled on their account, for he could not protect them;”* But they reassured him, revealed their identity to him, and told him the purpose of their visit, *“but they said, ‘Fear not, nor grieve; we are to deliver you and your family, except your wife, who is of those who will remain behind. We are about to bring down upon the people of this town a scourge from heaven, because they transgressed.’”* The verse describes the scene of destruction that has been inflicted on the town and its population except Lut (PBUH) and those who believed with him. The remains of the town were left as a sign for those who can understand, *“And verily We left behind a clear sign for people who understand.”*

The next story is the story of Prophet Shu'aib (PBUH), *"To the people of Madyan (We sent) their brother Shu'aib. He said, 'My people, worship God, and look forward to the Last Day, and do not spread corruption in the land.'"* The verse confirms the oneness of the message and its essence, *"Worship God, and look forward to the Last Day."* Serving God alone is the corner stone of the doctrine of Islam and looking forward to the Last Day is an incentive for them to become honest business people and to abandon fraudulent business practices. But they rejected the message and earned the decreed punishment, *"But they denied him, so the tremor overtook them, and they became motionless bodies in their homes."*

Then a brief reference to the punishment of 'Ad and Thamud, *"And (the tribes of) 'Ad and Thamud. (Their fate) is clear to you from their (ruined and deserted) dwellings. Satan made their deeds seem fair to them and so debarred them from the path, though they were endowed with perception."* The dwellings of 'Ad used to be in the southern part of the Arabian Peninsula near Hadhramout while Thamud used to live in the northern part of the peninsula. 'Ad was destroyed by a wave of strong cold wind while Thamud was destroyed by the mighty blast. The yearly summer caravans going from Mecca to Syria in the north and the yearly winter caravans going from Mecca to Yemen in the south used to pass by the remains of their dwellings. The Arabs knew that these were the remains of the dwellings of 'Ad and Thamud. Although 'Ad and Thamud were bright, *"endowed with perception,"* and had many achievements; but Satan found a way to delude them and drive them away from the straight path.

The next reference was made to Qaroun, Pharaoh, and Haman, *"(Remember also) Qaroun, Pharaoh, and Haman. Moses came to them with clear signs, but they behaved arrogantly in the land; yet they could not escape (Our punishment)."* Qaroun was a very rich and knowledgeable person from the people of Moses (PBUH). He oppressed his people. He did not heed the advice which some of his people gave to him: do not behave arrogantly and do good. Pharaoh was a tyrant. He committed heinous crimes. He enslaved people and created divisions among them. Haman was Pharaoh's minister who helped him in making and executing his evil plans. They rejected Moses' (PBUH) message so they were doomed.

God seized all the tyrants who spread corruption in the land, *"Each one of them We seized for his crime. On some, We sent a violent tornado; others were caught by a (mighty) blast; some We caused the earth to swallow up; and some We drowned. It was not God who wronged them, but they wronged themselves."*

The similitude between those tyrants and the spider is given, *"The example of those who take protecting guardians other than God is that like the spider, who builds (to itself) a house; but truly the flimsiest of houses is the spider's house; if they but knew."* It is an amazing example which reflects the real truth. The example of the people who are impressed by the wealthy and powerful, thinking that they can help them, is like a spider seeking security in its nest. The spider's nest is so flimsy it does not provide any security for the spider. Similarly, the rich and powerful in this life do not have real power and cannot provide any real support for the people who seek their help. People should realize that the only real support is the support of God. God knows the truth about the limitations of those who are being invoked beside Him, *"Verily God*

knows whatever they invoke besides Him. He is the Eminent, the Wise.” God cites these similitudes to help those who understand become aware of the truth, “And such similitudes We coin for people, but only those who have knowledge understand them.”

The following verse is a reminder of the Creator of heavens and earth, “*God created the heavens and the earth with truth. Therein is indeed a sign for the believers.*” The believers’ hearts are open to sense the beauty and the miracle of the creation. This is followed by a reminder of connection between the truth of the creation and the Quran, “*Recite what has been revealed to you of the Book, and establish regular prayer. Prayer prohibits immorality and evil. And remembrance of God is greater. And God knows what you do.*”

Verses 46 to 69:

46. *And do not argue with the People of the Scripture except in the best manner, except those who are wrongdoers among them. And say, “We believe in that which has been revealed to us and that which has been revealed to you; our God and your God is One, and to Him we submit.”*
47. *And thus We have revealed to you the Book. Those to whom We gave the Scripture before will believe in it; and some of these (people of Mecca) believe in it. And none reject Our revelations except the disbelievers.*
48. *And you did not recite before it any book, nor did you transcribe one with your right hand; otherwise those who utter falsehood may have had a reason for doubt.*
49. *But it is clear revelations in the hearts of those who have been given knowledge, and none reject Our revelations except the wrongdoers.*
50. *And they say, “Why no signs were sent down on him from his Lord?” Say, “Indeed the signs are with God, and I am only a plain warner.”*
51. *Is it not enough for them that we have sent down to you the Book which is recited to them? Verily, in it is mercy and a reminder to those who believe.*
52. *Say (Muhammad), “God is sufficient as a witness between me and you. He knows whatever is in the heavens and the earth. And those who believe in falsehood and disbelieve in God, they are the losers.*
53. *They ask you to hasten on the torment. Had not a term been appointed, the torment would certainly have come to them; but it will certainly come to them suddenly, while they are unaware.*
54. *They ask you to hasten on the torment; but certainly Hell will encompass the disbelievers.*
55. *On the day when the torment shall cover them from above them and from below them, and it will be said, “Taste (the fruits) of what you used to do.”*
56. *My servants who believe, truly My earth is spacious. Therefore, worship Me alone.*
57. *Every soul shall have a taste of death. Then to Us you shall be brought back.*
58. *And those who believe and do good deeds, We shall house them in lofty dwellings in heaven, under which rivers will flow. They will remain there forever, an excellent reward for those who toil;*
59. *Those who persevere and put their trust in their Lord.*

60. *How many an animal who does not carry its provision, but God provides for it and for you. He is the All- Hearing, the Omniscient.*
61. *If indeed you ask them who has created the heavens and the earth and subjected the sun and the moon (to his Law), they will certainly reply, "God". How are they then deluded away (from the truth)?*
62. *God makes the provision abundant for whom He wills of His servants, and straitens it for whom (He wills). Indeed, God is Cognizant of all things.*
63. *And if indeed you ask them who it is that sends down rain from the sky, and gives life therewith to the earth after its death, they will certainly reply, "God." Say, "Praise be to God." But most of them do not understand.*
64. *The life of this world is only diversion and amusement? But verily the home in the Hereafter is indeed the life, if they only knew.*
65. *And when they embark on a ship, they call on God, making their devotion sincerely (and exclusively) to Him; but when He has delivered them safely to land, behold, they associate others (with Him);*
66. *Let them disbelieve in that which We have given them, and let them take their enjoyment. But they will come to know.*
67. *Have they not seen that We have made a secure sanctuary, while people are being snatched away all around them? Do they then believe in falsehood and reject the blessings of God?*
68. *And who does greater wrong than he who fabricates a lie concerning God, or denies the truth when it comes to him? Is not there an abode in Hell for the disbelievers?*
69. *And those who strive in Our (cause), We will certainly guide them to our paths. Verily God is with those who do good. (29: 46 – 69)*

“And do not argue with the People of the Scripture except in the best manner, except those who are wrongdoers among them. And say, ‘We believe in that which has been revealed to us and that which has been revealed to you; our God and your God is One, and to Him we submit.’”

The verse emphasizes that all the messengers of God starting with Noah (PBUH) and ending with Muhammad (PBUH) came with a single message. The message came from One God and had one objective: to guide all people to the path of God. The believers who received the message through different messengers belong to one brotherhood. The human race was divided over the centuries into two groups: those who believe in God and those who followed Satan and rejected faith. The statement that this verse reiterates is the single major truth that forms the foundation of Islam. The belief in the one single message brings the believers under one family. The relationships between the members of this family is stronger than blood, tribal, race, or national relationships. They all hold tight to the secure knot that binds them together in the belief in One God. Muslims are commanded to communicate the new message to the people of the Scripture in the best way they can; and to explain the rationale behind the revelation of the last stage in God’s message. Muslims are also commanded to explain the points of agreements between this stage of the message and the previous stages, saying, *“our God and your God is One, and to Him we submit.”* However, there are always those who wrong themselves and adamantly refuse to accept any argument.

“And thus We have revealed to you the Book. Those to whom We gave the Scripture before will believe in it; and some of these (people of Mecca) believe in it. And none reject Our revelations except the disbelievers.” The Book which was revealed to Muhammad (PBUH) followed the same pattern and the same method of revelation that the previous Scriptures followed. People will be divided into two groups, those who believe in it and those who will reject it. Those who reject the Book are indeed disbelievers. The signs that were given to them are clear and logical. Only those whose souls are covered will not be able to see these signs. The word, “*disbelief*” in Arabic means to cover. Thus, the disbelievers are those who cover their eyes and hearts so that their eyes cannot see the truth and their hearts cannot be touched by it.

“And you did not recite before it any book, nor did you transcribe one with your right hand; otherwise those who utter falsehood may have had a reason for doubt.” This verse refutes the claim of the idolaters of Mecca that Muhammad (PBUH) concocted this Quran. It is a naïve claim, nevertheless the Quran addresses it, explaining that they have known the Prophet (PBUH) all his life and they never have seen him write a book before. We label their claim as “naïve,” because even if the Prophet (PBUH) was known to have written books before the Quran, the Quran embodies the proof that it could not have been written by a human being. It is beyond the ability of a human being to compose such a text because, *“But it is clear revelations in the hearts of those who have been given knowledge, and none reject Our revelations except the wrongdoers.”* Those whom God bestowed knowledge upon can see the clear signs in the Quran, but those who do not see the signs are indeed wrongdoers.

“And they say, ‘Why no signs were sent down on him from his Lord?’ Say, ‘Indeed the signs are with God, and I am only a plain warner.’” The idolaters wanted the Prophet (PBUH) to perform physical miracles similar to the miracles that were performed by previous messengers. But physical miracles are only good for those who see them. But the Quran is the eternal miracle. It is the everlasting miracle for every generation to see, touch, and read. However, God’s miracles are performed at His command and according to His timing. The Prophet (PBUH) could not suggest to God which miracle to reveal and when He should reveal it. The Prophet’s (PBUH) only task is to warn people. The verse outlines the role and limitations of God’s messengers. Those who request physical miracles ignore the blessings of God embodied in the Quranic revelations, *“Is it not enough for them that we have sent down to you the Book which is recited to them?”* Their request only reflects their ingratitude for God’s blessings. But the hearts of those who believe are touched by God’s mercy. They appreciate God’s bounty and generosity which invite them to God’s presence. The Quran opens up for them new horizons of knowledge that fill their hearts with mercy and light, *“Verily, in it is mercy and a reminder to those who believe.”*

Those who are unable to open their hearts to the treasures of the Quran, *“Say (Muhammad), ‘God is sufficient as a witness between me and you. He knows whatever is in the heavens and the earth. And those who believe in falsehood and disbelieve in God, they are the losers.’”* God is the ultimate witness in this dispute and those who believe in falsehood are the losers. They are losers in this life and they will be losers in the Hereafter. They have lost themselves; they have lost guidance; and they have lost security. Faith is itself a gain for the believers. It provides

security for the hearts knowing that God is their protector. It provides support for the believers to stay on the path and to persevere in face of adversity. These are the things that the disbelievers will lose.

“They ask you to hasten on the torment. Had not a term been appointed, the torment would certainly have come to them; but it will certainly come to them suddenly, while they are unaware. They ask you to hasten on the torment; but certainly Hell will encompass the disbelievers. On the day when the torment shall cover them from above them and from below them, and it will be said, ‘Taste (the fruits) of what you used to do.’” The Prophet (PBUH) warned the idolaters of Mecca, but they did not understand why the warning did not materialize. They challenged the Prophet (PBUH) to bring about this punishment which he promised. God may delay punishment because He wants to give the disbelievers time to confirm their guilt. He may delay the punishment because He wants to test the believers so that they persevere and mature; and those who fail the test can be eliminated. God may delay the punishment to give those who failed a second chance to join the ranks of the believers. But the disbelievers were oblivious to the divine will. They used to challenge the Prophet (PBUH) to hasten the punishment. But God had decreed a specific time for the promised punishment. They will get it when they least expect it. Not only they will be punished in this life but they will also be destined to Hell in the Hereafter. The torment in Hell will overwhelm them; it will come to them from all sides.

The narrative moves to another group of people: the believers, those who were persecuted and harassed by the disbelievers to force them to abandon their faith. God addresses them in an endearing way, commanding them to flee the persecution and to escape with their faith, *“My servants who believe, truly My earth is spacious. Therefore, worship Me alone.”* God calls the believers, *“My servants,”* so that they feel the honor of belonging to God. Then He tells them that, *“My earth is spacious,”* wherever they go they are travelling in God’s land. Here is a wide opportunity for you to escape from the persecution, be near God through your faith, and enjoy the bounty of God, which He placed in His wide land. Two fears are usually lurking in the minds of those who contemplate the migration away from their homeland. The first is the fear of loneliness and the second is the fear of the loss of the means of sustenance. The verse addresses these two fears. First, it assures the believers that they are God’s servants and He will not abandon them. Then, it tells them that God’s land is everywhere and He is the One who guarantees and controls the means of sustenance. Another fear that faced the believers who were contemplating to migrate from Mecca was the fear of being discovered and executed. God reassured them by stating the ultimate fact of life: death is inevitable. Everyone will die eventually and will return to God, *“Every soul shall have a taste of death. Then to Us you shall be brought back.”* Not only they will return to God, but they were also promised a great reward, *“But those who believe and do good deeds, We shall house them in lofty dwellings in heaven, under which rivers will flow. They will remain there forever, an excellent reward for those who toil, those who persevere and put their trust in their Lord.”*

The narrative returns again to address the fear of losing the means of sustenance, *“How many an animal who does not carry its provision? But God provides for it and for you. He is the All-*

Hearing, the Omniscient.” God is He who provides for every one of His creatures. So there is no need to fear losing one’s means of sustenance.

The following verses point out to the contradiction in the logic of the idolaters of Mecca. They believe that God is the Creator. He created the universe, the heaven and the earth. They seek the help of God when they are facing a dire situation but in the mean time they associate partners with Him and they persecute the believers, *“If indeed you ask them who has created the heavens and the earth and subjected the sun and the moon (to his Law), they will certainly reply, ‘God.’ How are they then deluded away (from the truth)? God makes the provision abundant for whom He wills of His servants, and straitens it for whom (He wills). Indeed, God is Cognizant of all things.*

And if indeed you ask them who it is that sends down rain from the sky, and gives life therewith to the earth after its death, they will certainly reply, ‘God.’ Say, ‘Praise be to God.’ But most of them do not understand.” These verses describe the doctrine of the religion that the Arabs believed in at that time. It was rooted in the belief of Oneness of God because it came initially from the message that Prophets Abraham (PBUH) and Ishmael (PBUH) brought to Arabia. But it was later distorted and corrupted by idolatry and associating partners with God. The Quran uses the cosmic signs of God as a proof for God’s Oneness and exhorts people to contemplate and reflect on these signs.

The life of this world is merely a diversion and amusement when you compare it with the everlasting life in the Hereafter, *“The life of this world is only diversion and amusement? But verily the home in the Hereafter is indeed the life, if they only knew.”* One should not consider the life of this world as the ultimate abode. The real life is the life in the Hereafter. That does not mean that one should live an ascetic life in this world but a balance should be maintained between the enjoyment of this life and the work for the Hereafter. People should not live a hedonistic life enslaved by their lusts and desires.

Another evidence of their contradictory attitude is displayed by their behavior when facing dangers, *“And when they embark on a ship, they call on God, making their devotion sincerely (and exclusively) to Him; but when He has delivered them safely to land, behold, they associate others (with Him).”* They will realize the consequences of their deeds, *“Let them disbelieve in that which We have given them, and let them take their enjoyment. But they will come to know.”*

God then reminded them of the bounties that He bestowed on them, *“Have they not seen that We have made a secure sanctuary, while people are being snatched away all around them? Do they then believe in falsehood and reject the blessings of God?”* The people of Mecca used to live a secure and safe life while the tribes around them were engaged in fights and disputes. They did not appreciate God’s blessings and they used this secure and sacred place to worship idols, *“And who does greater wrong than he who fabricates a lie concerning God, or denies the truth when it comes to him? Is not there a home in Hell for the disbelievers?”*

The Sura ends by commending the believers and assuring them of God’s rewards, *“And those who strive in Our (cause), We will certainly guide them to our paths. Verily God is with those who do good.”*