



CHAPTER 53

Al-Najm: The Star

(REVEALED AT MAKKAH: 3 sections; 62 verses)

The word *Star*, which gives its name to this chapter, occurs in the first verse. The last chapter deals with the success of the faithful and the destruction of their enemies and this speaks of the eminence to which the Holy Prophet would rise. The first section states that the Prophet does not err, and would rise to the highest eminence to which man can rise. The second section states that nothing can avail against Truth, while the third refers to Allāh's power as manifested in the destruction of falsehood. The date of the revelation of this chapter may be assigned to the fifth year of the call.

SECTION 1: Eminence to be attained by the Prophet

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

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ ۝

1 By the star when it sets!^a

وَالنَّجْمِ اِذَا هَوٰی ۝

1a. The words may be interpreted variously, according to the meaning of *najm* and *hawā* that is adopted. The best-known significance of *najm* is *star*, and when used as a proper noun it signifies *the Pleiades*, and *hawā* may signify, *going down low* (R). The Arabs believed that when *al-Najm* (the Pleiades) rose in the morning, disasters and calamities came to an end. Thus we have under the word *najm*: "The Arabs believed that between its rising in the morning and its disappearance there are diseases and plagues and calamities for men and camels and fruits" (R). In the setting of the star the opponents are warned of the calamities which would soon overtake them; their star of fortune was about to set.

There is, however, a less-known significance of the word *najm*. It sometimes means *a portion of the Qur'ān* (Bd, Rz, Kf). Kf says: "*Or najm indicates one of the portions of the Qur'ān, and it was revealed in portions, during twenty years. Hawā means when it descends or is revealed*". R gives the following interpretation: "*And it is said that by this (i.e., najm) is meant the Qur'ān as revealed in portions, one part after another. And by His saying hawā is meant its revelation; and the same interpretation must be adopted in His saying bi-mawāqī'l-nujūm*" (56:75). The meaning is that every portion of the Qur'ān when it is revealed is an evidence that the Prophet errs not — he is in the right. Thus there is a reference here to the internal evidence which is offered in every portion of the Qur'ān that it is the Truth.

- 2 Your companion errs not, nor does he deviate.^a مَا ضَلَّ صَاحِبُكُمْ وَمَا غَوَى ۝
- 3 Nor does he speak out of desire. وَمَا يَنْطِقُ عَنِ الْهَوَى ۝
- 4 It is naught but revelation that is revealed^a — إِنَّ هُوَ إِلَّا وَحْيٌ يُوحَى ۝
- 5 One Mighty in Power has taught him,^a عَلَّمَهُ شَدِيدُ الْقُوَى ۝
- 6 The Lord of Strength. So he attained to perfection,^a ذُو مِرَّةٍ ۖ فَاسْتَوَى ۝
- 7 And he is in the highest part of the horizon.^a وَهُوَ بِالْأُفُقِ الْأَعْلَى ۝
- 8 Then he drew near, drew nearer yet,^a ثُمَّ دَنَا فَتَدَلَّى ۝
- 9 So he was the measure of two bows or closer still.^a فَكَانَ قَابَ قَوْسَيْنِ أَوْ أَدْنَى ۝

2a. By *your companion* is meant *the Prophet*, who had led among this very people a life of unblemished purity. There are two statements made here; erring on his part is negated in the first to show that he had a true knowledge or he did not err in theory, and *deviation* from the right course is negated in the second to show that he acted according to that knowledge, or his practice accorded with the theory. This verse is a conclusive proof that according to the Holy Qur’ān the Prophet was perfectly sinless.

4a. The personal pronoun *huwa* (*it*) occurring here refers to the *najm* or portion of the Qur’ān spoken of in the first verse. The Qur’ān was not his word, for he spoke not of his own desire; it was the word of God.

5a. It is not correct to take the *One Mighty in Power* as meaning Gabriel. The One Who taught him was God Himself as plainly stated elsewhere: “The Beneficent (has) taught the Qur’ān” (55:1, 2).

6a. *Istawā* means *he became full-grown and mature in body and intellect, or he attained the completion of his make and intellect* (LL). There is no mention of Gabriel; the personal pronoun, therefore, does not refer to him. It is the Holy Prophet that is spoken of here as having attained to perfection because the Almighty Himself was his Teacher.

7a. The Prophet’s being in the highest part of the horizon is in reference to the resplendence of his light, which was to illuminate all corners of the world — a prophecy, in fact, that he will shine out in the full brilliance of his light as the midday sun.

8a. *Tadallā* signifies *he was lowly or humble* (LL), but it also means *al-dunuww* or *being near* (R). According to LA, the meaning is *zāda fi-l-qurb*, *he increased in nearness*. The verse points out that the Prophet attained the utmost nearness unto God which it is possible for man to attain.

9a. The *qāb* of a *qaus* is *the portion of a bow that is between the part that is grasped by the hand and the curved extremity* (LL). According to Qatādah, its meaning is *from one extremity of the bow to the other extremity* (AH). According to Ḥasan and Mujāhid, the *qāb* is *from the chord to the middle of the bow near the place grasped by the hand* (AH). N and LA favour *measure* (*qadr*) as the meaning of *qāb*, and the latter

10 So He revealed to His servant what He revealed.^a

فَأَوْحَىٰ إِلَىٰ عَبْدِهِ مَا أَوْحَىٰ ۝١٠

11 The heart was not untrue in seeing what he saw.

مَا كَذَّبَ الْفُؤَادُ مَا سَأَىٰ ۝١١

12 Do you then dispute with him as to what he saw?^a

أَفْتَسْتَدْرِكُهُ عَلَىٰ مَا يَرَىٰ ۝١٢

13 And certainly he saw Him in another descent,

وَلَقَدْ رَآهُ نَزْلَةً أُخْرَىٰ ۝١٣

14 At the farthest lote-tree.^a

عِنْدَ سِدْرَةِ الْمُنْتَهَىٰ ۝١٤

15 Near it is the Garden of Abode.

عِنْدَهَا جَنَّةُ الْمَأْوَىٰ ۝١٥

16 When that which covers covered the lote-tree;

إِذْ يَغْشَىٰ السِّدْرَةَ مَا يَغْشَىٰ ۝١٦

17 The eye turned not aside, nor did it exceed the limit.

مَا تَرَآءُ الْبَصَرُ وَمَا طَغَىٰ ۝١٧

18 Certainly he saw of the greatest signs of his Lord.

لَقَدْ رَآىٰ مِنْ آيَاتِ رَبِّهِ الْكُبْرَىٰ ۝١٨

quotes the Arab proverb *baina-humā qāba qausain*, i.e., *between them two is the measure of a bow*, which is a proverb to indicate close relationship between two persons. There is another proverb, *ramau-nā ‘an qaus-in wāḥid-in*, meaning *they shot at us from one bow*, denoting *agreement* (LL). Whatever significance of the word *qāb* may be adopted, the mention of a single *qāb* for two bows indicates *close union*. The two bows seem to indicate the Holy Prophet’s twofold perfection, i.e., his nearness to the Divine Being and his humility in his relations with men. The commentators generally understand the phrase as only indicating *the distance of two bows*.

10a. The *mā* (*what*) in *mā auḥā* (i.e., *what He revealed*) is according to all commentators for the purpose of *tafkīhīm*, i.e., to indicate that a mighty revelation was given to him.

12a. That is, what he saw was a certain truth and not an imaginary picture.

14a. The *sidrah*, or the lote-tree, is, in Arabia, the tree in the shade of which people alight and rest (LL), or in the shade of which people gather together (Bd). The word occurs elsewhere in the Qur’ān as indicating a tree in paradise (56:28), and R thus explains the word: “And the shade of it is sought, and thus it is made to serve as a parable for the shade of paradise and its blessings in the words *fi sidr-in makhḍūd-in* on account of the ampleness of its shadow”. As for its meaning in this verse, the same authority takes it either as meaning a place in which the Holy Prophet (may peace and the blessings of Allāh be upon him!) was chosen for Divine favours and great blessings, or as signifying the tree under which the companions of the Holy Prophet took the pledge at Hudaibiyah to defend him with their lives, the mention in the latter case being prophetic. The qualification of *sidrah* by the word *al-muntahā* shows that it is a place beyond which human knowledge does not go, one of the explanations given by Kf being, “the knowledge of angels and others ends there, and no one knows what is beyond it”. Hence the significance conveyed by the words is that the Prophet’s knowledge of things Divine was the utmost which could be vouchsafed to man. According to some it conveys the same significance as *‘illiyūn* in 83:18 (LL), for which see 83:18a.

19 Have you then considered Lāt and ‘Uzzā,

أَفَرَأَيْتُمُ اللَّاتَ وَالْعُزَّىٰ ﴿١٩﴾

20 And another, the third, Manāt?

وَمَنْوَةَ الثَّالِثَةِ الْاٰحْرٰى ﴿٢٠﴾

21 Are the males for you and for Him the females?^a

اَلَكُمُ الذَّكَرُ وَاَلَهُ الْاُنثٰى ﴿٢١﴾

22 This indeed is an unjust division!

تِلْكَ اِذَا قِسْمَةٌ ضِيزٰى ﴿٢٢﴾

23 They are naught but names which you have named, you and your fathers — Allāh has sent no authority for them. They follow but conjecture and what (their) souls desire. And certainly the guidance has come to them from their Lord.

اِنَّ هٰى اِلَّا اَسْمَاءٌ سَنِيْمُوْهَا اَنْتُمْ وَاٰبَاؤُكُمْ مَّا اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ بِهَا مِنْ سُلْطٰنٍ اِنَّ يَتَّبِعُوْنَ اِلَّا الظَّنَّ وَمَا تَهْوٰى اِلَّا نَفْسٌ وَّلَقَدْ جَاءَهُمْ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ الْهُدٰى ﴿٢٣﴾

21a. Verses 19–21 are made the basis of the false story of what is called the “Lapse of Muḥammad” or “Compromise with idolatry” by Christian writers. Certain reports narrated by Wāqidi and Ṭabarī are the sole authority for this charge against that incessant preacher against idolatry, every incident of whose life condemns it as a bare falsehood. Muir asserts that “Pious Muhammadans of after-days, scandalized at the lapse of their Prophet into so flagrant a concession, would reject the whole story,” as if the earlier Muslims were not as pious as the latter. The fact is that the story was quite unknown to the earlier Muslims. There is not a single trustworthy ḥadīth that lends support to this story. Muḥammad ibn Ishāq, who died as early as 151 A.H., does not mention the incident, while Muir’s earliest authority, Wāqidi, was born more than forty years later. It is stated in the *Bahrain* that when questioned about it, Ibn Ishāq called it a fabrication of the *zindeeqs*. And the famous Bukhārī, the most trustworthy authority on the sayings of the Holy Prophet, was Wāqidi’s contemporary, and his collection of sayings contains no mention of the story. As regards Wāqidi, all competent authorities entertain a very low opinion of his trustworthiness. The *Mizān al-ʿIṭidāl*, a critical work on the lives and characters of the reporters of Ḥadīth, speaks of Wāqidi as unreliable and even as a fabricator of reports. As regards Ṭabarī, Muir himself represents him as guilty of “indiscriminate reception”. As against these two unreliable authorities, “those who reject this story are highly learned men” (*Rūḥ al-Maʿānī*). The six collections of reports known as the *Ṣiḥāḥ Siṭṭah* (or the *Six Reliable Works*) do not mention it at all, and contain instead a report which essentially contradicts the story of the so-called *compromise*. Internal evidence, too, is wholly against the story. We are told that instead of v. 21 the Prophet read the words: *Tilk al-gharāniq al-ʿulā wa inna shafāʾata-hunna la-turtajā*, i.e., “These are exalted females whose intercession is to be sought”. But the insertion of these few words in a chapter which is wholly directed against idolatry is quite out of place: v. 23 condemns idols; v. 26 denies their intercession; v. 28 condemns the giving of names of female deities to angels, and so on. It is further asserted that 22:52 was revealed in connection with this change, but it should be noted that a period of at least eight years must have elapsed between the revelation of this verse and that of 22:52. Moreover, if the Prophet had made any such compromise, it could not have been a sudden event, and traces of it would have been met with in other chapters revealed about the same time. But a perusal of these shows clearly that the Qurʾān’s condemnation of idolatry was never marked by the slightest change. See further 62a.

24 Or shall man have what he wishes?

أَمْ لِلْإِنْسَانِ مَا تَمَنَّى ﴿٢٤﴾

25 But for Allāh is the Hereafter and the former (life).

فَلِلَّهِ الْآخِرَةُ وَالْأُولَىٰ ﴿٢٥﴾

SECTION 2: Nothing avails against Truth

26 And how many angels are in the heavens, whose intercession avails naught except after Allāh gives permission to whom He pleases and chooses.

وَكَمُ مَن فِي السَّمَوَاتِ لَا يُغْنِي
شَفَاعَتُهُمْ شَيْئًا إِلَّا مِن بَعْدِ أَن
يَأْذَنَ اللَّهُ لِمَن يَشَاءُ وَيَرْضَىٰ ﴿٢٦﴾

27 Surely those who believe not in the Hereafter name the angels with female names.^a

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ
لَيَسْمُونَ الْمَلَائِكَةَ تَسْمِيَةً الْأُنثَىٰ ﴿٢٧﴾

28 And they have no knowledge of it. They follow but conjecture, and surely conjecture avails naught against Truth.

وَمَا لَهُمْ بِهِ مِنْ عِلْمٍ إِن يَتَّبِعُونَ
إِلَّا الظَّنَّ وَإِنَّ الظَّنَّ لَا يُغْنِي مِنَ
الْحَقِّ شَيْئًا ﴿٢٨﴾

29 So shun him who turns his back upon Our Reminder, and desires nothing but this world's life.

فَاعْرِضْ عَنْ مَن تَوَلَّىٰ ۖ هُوَ ۖ عَنِ ذِكْرِنَا
وَكَم يُرَدُّ إِلَّا الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا ﴿٢٩﴾

30 That is their goal of knowledge. Surely thy Lord knows best him who strays from His path and He knows best him who goes aright.

ذَٰلِكَ مَبْلَغُهُمْ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ ۗ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ
هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَن ضَلَّٰ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ ۗ
وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَن اهْتَدَىٰ ﴿٣٠﴾

31 And Allāh's is whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth, that He may reward those who do evil for that which they do, and reward those who do good with goodness.

وَاللَّهُ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ
لِيَجْزِيَ الَّذِينَ أَسَاءُوا بِمَا عَمِلُوا
وَيَجْزِيَ الَّذِينَ أَحْسَنُوا بِالْحُسْنَىٰ ﴿٣١﴾

32 Those who avoid the great sins and the indecencies, but the passing idea^a — surely thy Lord is Liberal in Forgiving. He knows you best when

الَّذِينَ يَجْتَنِبُونَ كَبِيرَ الْإِثْمِ
وَالْفَوَاحِشَ إِلَّا اللَّمَمَ ۗ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ
وَاسِعُ الْمَغْفِرَةِ ۗ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِكُمْ إِذْ

27a. The Arabs called the angels daughters of Allāh.

32a. *Lamam* is from *almamtu bi-kadhā*, meaning *I alighted at it and approached it without falling into it* (R). Hence I render the word as a *passing idea* which leaves no impression on the mind. Such an idea is forgiven, for a mortal cannot be proof against it. But this by no means amounts to an intention or an attempt to commit a sin.

He brings you forth from the earth and when you are embryos in the wombs of your mothers; so ascribe not purity to yourselves. He knows him best who guards against evil.

أَنْشَأَكُمْ مِنَ الْأَرْضِ وَإِذْ أَنْتُمْ أَجِنَّةٌ فِي بُطُونِ أُمَّهَاتِكُمْ فَلَا تُزَكُّوْا أَنْفُسَكُمْ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنِ اتَّقَى ۖ

SECTION 3: Allāh's Power manifested in destruction of Falsehood

33 Seest thou him who turns back,

أَكَرَّعَيْتَ الَّذِي تَوَلَّى ۖ

34 And gives a little, then withholds?

وَ أَعْطَى قَلِيلًا وَ أَكْدَى ۖ

35 Has he the knowledge of the unseen so that he can see?

أَعْنَدَهُ عِلْمُ الْغَيْبِ فَهُوَ يَرَى ۖ

36 Or has he not been informed of what is in the scriptures of Moses,

أَمْ لَمْ يُنَبَّأْ بِمَا فِي صُحُفِ مُوسَى ۖ

37 And (of) Abraham who fulfilled (commandments)?

وَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ الَّذِي وَفَّى ۖ

38 That no bearer of burden bears another's burden:

أَلَا تَرَىٰ وَازِرَةً وَّ زِرًّا أُخْرَى ۖ

39 And that man can have nothing but what he strives for:

وَ أَنْ لَيْسَ لِلْإِنْسَانِ إِلَّا مَا سَعَى ۖ

40 And that his striving will soon be seen.

وَ أَنْ سَعْيَهُ سَوْفَ يَرَى ۖ

41 Then he will be rewarded for it with the fullest reward:

ثُمَّ يُجْزَاهُ الْجَزَاءَ الْأَوْفَى ۖ

42 And that to thy Lord is the goal:

وَ أَنَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ الْمُنْتَهَى ۖ

43 And that He it is Who makes (men) laugh and makes (them) weep:

وَ أَنَّ هُوَ أَضْحَكَ وَ أَبْكَى ۖ

44 And that He it is Who causes death and gives life:

وَ أَنَّ هُوَ أَمَاتَ وَ أَحْيَا ۖ

45 And that He creates pairs, the male and the female:

وَ أَنَّ هُوَ خَلَقَ الذَّكَرَ

وَ الْأُنثَى ۖ

46 From the small life-germ when it is adapted:^a

مِنْ نُطْفَةٍ إِذَا نُمِي ۖ

46a. *Tumnā* means, according to R, *tuqaddaru*, i.e., *adapted to circumstances*. And according to LL, *manā* is also synonymous with *qadr*.

47 And that He has ordained the second bringing forth:

وَأَنَّ عَلَيْهِ النَّشَأَ الْأُخْرَى ۝

48 And that He it is Who gives wealth and contentment:

وَأَنَّ هُوَ آغْنِي وَآفِي ۝

49 And that He is the Lord of Sirius:

وَأَنَّ هُوَ رَبُّ الشُّعْرَى ۝

50 And that He destroyed the first 'Ād:^a

وَأَنَّ أَهْلَكَ عَادًا الْأُولَى ۝

51 And Thamūd, so He spared not:

وَتَمُودًا فَمَا آفَغَى ۝

52 And the people of Noah before. Surely they were most iniquitous and inordinate.

وَقَوْمَ نُوحٍ مِّن قَبْلُ لَأَنَّهُمْ كَانُوا هُمْ أَظْلَمَ وَأَطْغَى ۝

53 And the overthrown cities, He hurled down:

وَالْمُؤْتَفِكَةَ أَهْوَى ۝

54 So there covered them that which covered.

فَغَشَّيْهَا مَا غَشَّى ۝

55 Which, then, of thy Lord's benefits wilt thou dispute?

فَيَأْتِي الْآءَ رَبِّكَ تَتَمَارَى ۝

56 This is a warner of the warners of old.

هَذَا نَذِيرٌ مِّنَ النَّذِيرِ الْأُولَى ۝

57 The near Event draws nigh.^a

أَزَلَّتِ الْإِزْفَةُ ۝

58 There is none besides Allāh to remove it.

لَيْسَ لَهَا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ كَاشِفَةٌ ۝

59 Wonder you then at this announcement?

أَفَسِنُ هَذَا الْحَدِيثَ تَعْجَبُونَ ۝

60 And do you laugh and not weep,

وَتَضْحَكُونَ وَلَا تَبْكُونَ ۝

61 While you sport?

وَأَنْتُمْ سِيدُونَ ۝

62 So bow down in prostration before Allāh and serve (Him).^a

Prostration

فَاسْجُدُوا لِلَّهِ وَاعْبُدُوا ۝

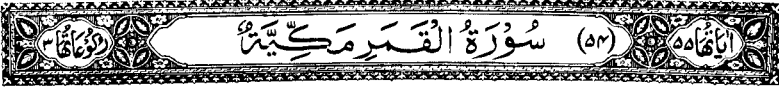
50a. The tribe of 'Ād is sometimes referred to as the *first* 'Ād, in contrast with *Thamūd*, who are called the second 'Ād.

57a. The near Event is the doom of the Quraish, the overthrow of their power, which was now being utilized against Islām.

62a. Here is a command to prostrate oneself, which is literally obeyed by all Muslims when reciting the Qur'an or hearing it recited; see 7:206a. This chapter, when first revealed, was read in a large assembly, containing Muslims as well as disbelievers. When

the Holy Prophet prostrated himself in obedience to the command, not only did the Muslims prostrate themselves, but even the idolaters were so overawed that they also prostrated themselves, with the exception only of Umayyah ibn Khalf, who raised some gravel to his forehead. This man was afterwards killed, dying a disbeliever, says the report, evidently implying that all the others were gradually converted to Islām (B. 17:1). It should be further borne in mind that the idolaters did not deny the existence of God the Supreme, Whom they believed to be above their idols, who were recognized only as minor deities, and therefore there is nothing strange in their joining the Muslims in their prostration.

It is this simple incident which is connected with the story of the so-called “lapse” and is adduced as proof of its truth. But it will be seen that the prostration was made in obedience to the direct Divine command of prostration and had nothing to do with the worship of idols. The incidents narrated before it, relating to the grandeur and majesty of Allāh and to the destruction of the wicked, are so impressive that the idolaters could not resist prostrating themselves. It is possible that the story of the prostration reached the Abyssinian exiles, some of whom might have returned under the impression that the disbelievers no longer opposed the movement.



CHAPTER 54

Al-Qamar: The Moon

(REVEALED AT MAKKAH: 3 sections; 55 verses)

The Moon — the word occurring in the first verse and giving its title to this chapter — was a symbol of the power of the Arabs. As the chapter deals with the destruction of the opponents of Truth, its title is appropriately taken from the miracle of the rending asunder of the moon, which indicated the overthrow of the power of the Quraish; see 1a. The first section, after warning the opponents of the Holy Prophet, contains mention of Noah and ‘Ād, the second of Ṭhamūd and Lot’s people. The third, after a brief reference to Pharaoh and his hosts, contains a prophetic reference to the battle of Badr, which was to humble the power of the Quraish. It is undoubtedly an early Makkan revelation.

SECTION 1: Judgment to overtake opponents

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

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

1 The hour drew nigh and the moon
was rent asunder.^a

إِن تَرَىٰٓ إِفْتِرَافَ السَّاعَةِ وَانْشَقَّ الْقَمَرُ ۝

1a. The “rending asunder of the moon” in the time of the Holy Prophet is an incident related by a number of his companions; and the reports of this incident are classed as *mashhūr* (well-known) (Rz), and are accepted as correct by Bukhārī and Muslim. Ibn Athīr says: “The incident is narrated in *mutawātir* (successively repeated) ḥadīth with *ṣaḥīḥ isnād* (sound transmission)”. While the main fact is thus undisputed, there are some differences as to details. IMsd says that he saw the peak of Mount Ḥirā’ interposing between the two parts. I’Ab says that one of the two parts remained, while the other disappeared (Kf). Answering the objection to the possibility of such an unusual incident, Rz concludes from the different versions of the report that it was a kind of lunar eclipse, and the appearance of something in the form of half the moon in the firmament. The best authorities, however, agree that there is no reason to doubt the trustworthiness of the report, and that the same incident is referred to here. In the whole history of miracles, this is the only miracle of which a contemporaneous record exists. It thus stands unique even among the miracles of the Holy Prophet.

Some commentators are, however, of opinion that the verse under discussion refers to the rending asunder of the moon at the approach of the day of Judgment. There is also

2 And if they see a sign, they turn away and say: Strong enchantment!^a

3 And they deny and follow their low desires; and every affair is settled.^a

4 And certainly narratives have come to them, which should deter^a—

5 Consummate wisdom — but warnings avail not;

6 So turn away from them. On the day when the Inviter invites them to a hard task —

7 Their eyes cast down, they will go forth from their graves as if they were scattered locusts,

8 Hastening to the Inviter. The disbelievers will say: This is a hard day!^a

وَأَنْ يَّرَوْا آيَةً يُعْرِضُوا وَيَقُولُوا
سِحْرٌ مُّسْتَمِرٌّ ①

وَكَذَّبُوا وَاتَّبَعُوا أَهْوَاءَهُمْ وَكُلُّ
أَمْرٍ مُّسْتَقَرٌّ ②

وَلَقَدْ جَاءَهُمْ مِنَ الْأَنْبَاءِ مَا فِيهِ
مُزْدَجَرٌ ③

حِكْمَةٌ بَالِغَةٌ فَمَا تُغْنِ التُّدْمِرُ ④
فَتَوَلَّوْا عَنْهُمْ يَوْمَ يَدْعُ الدَّاعِ إِلَى
شَيْءٍ نَّكِرٍ ⑤

خَشَعًا أَبْصَارُهُمْ يَخْرُجُونَ مِنَ
الْأَجْدَاثِ كَأَنَّهُمْ جَرَادٌ مُّنتَشِرُونَ ⑥
مُهْطِعِينَ إِلَى الدَّاعِ يَقُولُ الْكٰفِرُونَ
هَذَا يَوْمٌ عَسِرٌ ⑦

a suggestion that *inshaaqqa-l-qamaru* means *the matter has become manifest*, the reason given being that the Arabs used to set forth the example of the moon for an affair becoming manifest, as the morning is spoken of as *falaq*, literally a *split, fissure*, or *cleft* (AH). R explains the phrase under the root *shaqq* as bearing any of the following three significances: “One explanation of the phrase is that the moon was rent asunder in the Holy Prophet’s time; another, that the rending would be brought about at the approach of the Judgment day; and a third, that the meaning is that the affair became manifest”.

It may, thus, have been a particular kind of lunar eclipse, the moon appearing as if it were cloven into two, a part remaining bright and the other part darkening, this being the meaning of one part disappearing and the other remaining, or some great commotion might have taken place in the moon or some other unusual phenomenon may have occurred, which might have been made apparent to the naked eye through the strong visionary power of the Prophet.

2a. By calling it *strong enchantment*, they meant to indicate that it was a strong magical illusion, not an actual occurrence. But the word *mustamirr*, which is here translated as *strong*, may also mean *transient*, i.e., a thing which has occurred and passed away, or *continuous* in the sense that such things have been taking place of old.

3a. According to Qatādah the meaning is *those who deserve good will meet with good, and those who deserve evil will meet with evil*; or the meaning is that *the truth will be established, and become manifest, and falsehood will pass away* (AH). Or, the words mean that *every affair must draw to an end*, the reference being to the opposition which was being offered to the Prophet.

4a. The fate of the ancients, of whom narratives are recited, should have prevented the opponents of Truth from following in their footsteps.

8a. The commentators make all verses of this description apply to the life after death, but comparison with the fate of other people, whose stories are narrated by way of illustration, shows clearly that the punishment of this life is also meant. The *hard day* of trouble overtakes the opponents of Truth in this life as well, and the Hereafter only brings it in a

9 Before them the people of Noah rejected — they rejected Our servant and called (him) mad, and he was driven away.

10 So he called upon his Lord: I am overcome, so do Thou help.

11 Then We opened the gates of heaven with water pouring down,

12 And made water to flow forth in the land in springs, so the water gathered together according to a measure already ordained.

13 And We bore him on that which was made of planks and nails,

14 Floating on, before Our eyes — a reward for him who was denied.^a

15 And certainly We left it as a sign, but is there any that will mind?^a

16 How (terrible) was then My chastisement and My warning!

17 And certainly We have made the Qur'ān easy to remember, but is there any one who will mind?

18 'Ād denied, so how terrible was My chastisement and My warning!

19 Surely We sent on them a furious wind in a day of bitter ill-luck,

كَذَّبَتْ قَبْلَهُمْ قَوْمُ نُوحٍ فَكَذَّبُوا
عَبْدَنَا وَقَالُوا مُجْنُونٌ ۝۳

فَدَعَا رَبَّهُ أَنِّي مَغْلُوبٌ فَانْتَصِرْ ۝۴

فَفَتَحْنَا أَبْوَابَ السَّمَاءِ بِمَاءٍ مُنْهَرٍ ۝۵

وَوَجَعْنَا الْأَرْضَ عُيُونًا فَالْتَفَى الْمَاءُ
عَلَى أَمْرٍ قَدِ فُئِدِرًا ۝۶

وَحَمَلْنَاهُ عَلَى ذَاتِ الْأَوَّاجِ ۝۷ وَدُسِّرُ ۝۸

تَجْرِي بِأَعْيُنِنَا جَزَاءً لِّمَن
كَانَ كُفِرًا ۝۹

وَلَقَدْ شَرَكْنَاهَا آيَةً فَهَلْ مِنْ مُدَكِّرٍ ۝۱۰

فَكَيْفَ كَانَ عَدَابِي ۝۱۱ وَنُدِيرُ ۝۱۲

وَلَقَدْ يَسَّرْنَا الْقُرْآنَ لِلذِّكْرِ ۝۱۳

فَهَلْ مِنْ مُدَكِّرٍ ۝۱۴

كَذَّبَتْ عَادٌ فَكَيْفَ كَانَ عَدَابِي ۝۱۵

وَنُدِيرُ ۝۱۶

إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ رِيحًا صَرْصَرًا ۝۱۷

فِي يَوْمٍ نَحْسٍ مُسْتَمِيرٍ ۝۱۸

more palpable, and therefore more terrible, form. The Inviter is the Prophet, who invites them to truth, and the graves as applying to this life may signify their homes because they were spiritually dead.

14a. The boat in which Noah and his companions were saved — spoken of in the previous verse as a thing made of ordinary planks and nails — is here described as floating on *before Our eyes*, meaning that it was the mercy of God that saved the boat.

15a. The fate of Noah's people is a sign to the deniers of the Holy Prophet. Compare 51:37–46, where a sign is said to be left in the people of Noah, in Moses' enemies, in 'Ād and in Thamūd. Of late, reports have been published in certain newspapers that parts of Noah's ark have been discovered in the snowy regions of a certain mountain, but it is difficult to say what truth there is in these reports.

20 Tearing men away as if they were the trunks of palm-trees torn up.

تَذْرِعُ النَّاسَ كَمَا تَهْمُ أَعْجَائِرُ
نَخْلٍ مُنْقَعِرٍ ①

21 How (terrible) was then My chastisement and My warning!

فَكَيْفَ كَانَ عَذَابِي وَنَذِيرِي ②

22 And certainly We have made the Qur'ān easy to remember, but is there any one who will mind?

وَلَقَدْ يَسَّرْنَا الْقُرْآنَ لِلذِّكْرِ
فَهَلْ مِنْ مُدَكِّرٍ ③

SECTION 2: Thamūd and Lot's People

23 Thamūd rejected the warning.

كَذَّبَتْ شَمُودَ بِالنُّذُرِ ④

24 So they said: What! A single mortal from among us! Shall we follow him? We shall then be in sure error and distress.

فَقَالُوا أَبَشْرًا مِمَّنَّا وَاجِدًا لِنَتَّبِعُهُ
إِنَّا إِذَا لَفِئَةٌ وَّسَعِيرٌ ⑤

25 Has the reminder been sent to him from among us? Nay, he is an insolent liar!

ءَأُنْفِئَ الذِّكْرُ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ بَيْنِنَا
بَلْ هُوَ كَذَّابٌ أَشْرٌ ⑥

26 Tomorrow they will know who is the liar, the insolent one.

سَيَعْلَمُونَ غَدًا مَنِ الْكَذَّابُ الْأَشْرُ ⑦

27 Surely We are going to send the she-camel as a trial for them; so watch them and have patience.

إِنَّا مُرْسِلُوا النَّاقَةَ فِتْنَةً لَهُمْ
فَارْتَبِعْهُمْ وَأَصْطَبِرْ ⑧

28 And inform them that the water is shared between them; every share of the water shall be attended.^a

وَنَبِّئْهُمْ أَنَّ الْمَاءَ قِسْمَةٌ بَيْنَهُمْ
كُلٌّ شَرْبٌ مُمْتَصِرٌ ⑨

29 But they called their companion, so he took (a sword) and hamstrung (her).

فَتَادُوا صَاحِبَهُمْ فَتَعَاطَى فَعَقَرَ ⑩

30 How (terrible) was then My chastisement and My warning!

فَكَيْفَ كَانَ عَذَابِي وَنَذِيرِي ⑪

28a. Water is here said to be shared between them, i.e., *between the people themselves*, as the word *baina-hum* shows, and not between the people and the she-camel. The concluding statement signifies that "every share of the water shall be attended" by the she-camel, i.e., the water shall not be withheld from her on account of its division. These words, therefore, do not show that the she-camel had a whole day to herself, during which the people could not have a drink.

31 Surely We sent upon them a single cry, so they were like the dry fragments of trees, which the maker of an enclosure collects.^a

إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ صَيْحَةً وَاحِدَةً
فَكَانُوا كَهَشِيمِ الْمُحْتَظِرِ ﴿٣١﴾

32 And certainly We have made the Qur'ān easy to remember, but is there any one who will mind?

وَلَقَدْ يَسَّرْنَا الْقُرْآنَ لِلذِّكْرِ
فَهَلْ مِنْ مُدَّاكِرٍ ﴿٣٢﴾

33 The people of Lot treated the warning as a lie.

كَذَّبَتْ قَوْمُ لُوطٍ بِالذُّرِّ ﴿٣٣﴾

34 Surely We sent upon them a stone-storm,^a except Lot's followers; We saved them a little before day-break —

إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ حَاصِبًا إِلَّا آلَ
لُوطٍ نَجَّيْنَاهُمْ بِسَحَرٍ ﴿٣٤﴾

35 A favour from Us. Thus do We reward him who gives thanks.

بِعَمَةٍ مِّنْ عِنْدِنَا ط كَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي
مَنْ شَكَرَ ﴿٣٥﴾

36 And certainly he warned them of Our violent seizure, but they disputed the warning.

وَلَقَدْ أَنْذَرَهُمْ بَطْشَتَنَا فَتَمَارَوْا
بِالذُّرِّ ﴿٣٦﴾

37 And certainly they endeavoured to turn him from his guests, but We blinded their eyes; so taste My chastisement and My warning.^a

وَلَقَدْ رَاوَدُوهُ عَنْ ضَيْفِهِ فَطَمَسْنَا
أَعْيُنَهُمْ فَذُوقُوا عَذَابِي وَذُورٍ ﴿٣٧﴾

38 And certainly a lasting chastisement overtook them in the morning.

وَلَقَدْ صَبَّحَهُمْ بُكْرَةً عَذَابٌ مُّسْتَقِرٌّ ﴿٣٨﴾

39 So taste My chastisement and My warning.

فَذُوقُوا عَذَابِي وَذُورٍ ﴿٣٩﴾

31a. The punishment which overtook Thamūd is called sometimes *rajfah*, i.e., the earthquake (7:78), sometimes *ṣā'iqah*, i.e., the scourge or punishment (41:13; 51:44), sometimes *ṣaiḥah* as here, i.e., the cry, or the rumbling before an earthquake, and sometimes *iāghiyah* (69:5), which is synonymous with *ṣā'iqah*; but its description here, as also in 27:52, shows that it was a severe earthquake, which destroyed the men and their houses. *Muḥtaṣir* is the maker of a *ḥaḥīrah*, which signifies an enclosure made of dry canes, etc., to confine and protect sheep or camels, etc. (LL). *Haṣhīm* signifies the dry fragments of wood.

34a. *Hāṣib* signifies a thrower or a peltet of stones (T, LL), that being its primary significance; hence it also comes to signify a storm raining pebbles. As other occasions on which details of the punishment are given show that it was a volcanic eruption, I render the word as meaning *stone-storm*, because stones mixed with ashes were rained upon them.

37a. They endeavoured to prevent him taking his guests into his house, but were unable to see their way to it.

40 And certainly We have made the Qur'ān easy to remember, but is there any one who will mind?

وَلَقَدْ يَسَّرْنَا الْقُرْآنَ لِلذِّكْرِ
فَهَلْ مِنْ مُدَكِّرٍ ۝

SECTION 3: Pharaoh and the Prophet's Opponents

41 And certainly the warning came to Pharaoh's people.

وَلَقَدْ جَاءَ آلَ فِرْعَوْنَ النُّذُرُ ۝

42 They rejected all Our signs, so We overtook them with the seizing of the Mighty, the Powerful.

كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا كُلِّهَا فَأَخَذْنَا لَهُمْ
أَخْذًا عَزِيزًا مُقْتَدِرًا ۝

43 Are your disbelievers better than these, or have you an immunity in the scriptures?

أَكْفَأُكُمْ خَيْرٌ مِنْ أُولَئِكَ أَمْ
لَكُمْ بَرَاءَةٌ فِي الزُّبُرِ ۝

44 Or say they: We are a host allied together to help each other?

أَمْ يَقُولُونَ نَحْنُ جَمِيعٌ مُنْتَصِرُونَ ۝

45 Soon shall the hosts be routed, and they will show (their) backs.^a

سَيَهْرَمُ الْجَمْعُ وَيُوَلُّونَ الدُّبُرَ ۝

46 Nay, the Hour is their promised time, and the Hour is most grievous and bitter.^a

بَلِ السَّاعَةُ مَوْعِدُهُمْ وَالسَّاعَةُ
أَذَىٰ وَأَمْرٌ ۝

47 Surely the guilty are in error and distress.

إِنَّ الْمُجْرِمِينَ فِي ضَلَالٍ وَسُعُرٍ ۝

48 On the day when they are dragged into the Fire upon their faces: Taste the touch of hell.^a

يَوْمَ يُسْحَبُونَ فِي النَّارِ عَلَىٰ وُجُوهِهِمْ
ذُوقُوا مَسَّ سَقَرَ ۝

45a. It is related by Ibn 'Abbās that the Holy Prophet prayed within his tent on the day of Badr, saying: "O Lord, I beseech Thee according to Thy covenant and Thy promise; O Lord, if such is Thy will, Thou mayest not be served after this day". Abū Bakr took his hand and said: "Allāh is sufficient for thee, O Messenger of Allāh". So he went out and he recited: "Soon shall the hosts be routed, and they will show their backs; nay, the Hour is their promised time, and the Hour is most grievous and bitter" (B. 56:89). This shows how the Prophet and his companions read prophecies of the vanishment of the opponents in words relating apparently to the Hereafter.

46a. See the last note, which shows that the Holy Prophet understood the Hour to mean the hour or time of the discomfiture of the Quraish, and looked upon the battle of Badr as fulfilling this prophecy.

48a. The Quraish who were slain at Badr were removed to a pit for burial, and the Prophet is reported as having addressed them thus: "Surely we have found true what our Lord promised us: have you too found true what your Lord promised you?" (Ibn Hishām). The punishment of this life is called here a touch of hell.

- 49 Surely We have created everything according to a measure.^a إِنَّا كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلَقْنَاهُ بِقَدَرٍ ﴿٤٩﴾
- 50 And Our command is but once, as the twinkling of an eye. وَمَا أَمْرُنَا إِلَّا وَاحِدَةٌ كَلَمْحٍ بِالْبَصَرِ ﴿٥٠﴾
- 51 And certainly We destroyed your fellows, but is there anyone who will mind? وَلَقَدْ أَهْلَكْنَا أَشْيَاعَكُمْ فَهَلْ مِنْ مُدَّكِرٍ ﴿٥١﴾
- 52 And everything they do is in the writings. وَكُلُّ شَيْءٍ فَعَلُوهُ فِي الذُّبُرِ ﴿٥٢﴾
- 53 And everything small and great is written down. وَكُلُّ صَغِيرٍ وَكَبِيرٍ مُسْتَظَرٌ ﴿٥٣﴾
- 54 Surely the dutiful will be among Gardens and rivers, إِنَّ الْمُتَّقِينَ فِي جَنَّاتٍ وَنَهَرٍ ﴿٥٤﴾
- 55 In the seat of truth, with a most Powerful King. فِي مَقْعَدٍ صِدْقٍ عِنْدَ مَلِيكٍ مُّقْتَدِرٍ ﴿٥٥﴾

49a. So that even nations and people cannot go beyond a certain limit.