

## Surah 17. Al-Israa

17.1 LIMITLESS in His glory is He who transported His servant by night from the Inviolable House of Worship [at Mecca] to the Remote House of Worship [at Jerusalem] - the environs of which We had blessed<sup>1</sup> - so that We might show him some of Our symbols: for, verily, He alone is all-hearing, all-seeing<sup>2</sup>.

17.2 And [thus, too,] We vouchsafed revelation unto Moses,<sup>3</sup> and made it a [source of] guidance for the children of Israel, [commanding them:] "Do not ascribe to any but Me the power to determine your fate,<sup>4</sup>

17.3 O you descendants of those whom We caused to be borne [in the ark] with Noah! Behold, he was a most grateful servant [of Ours]!"

17.4 And we made [this] known to the children of Israel through revelation:<sup>5</sup> "Twice, indeed, will you spread corruption on earth and will indeed become grossly overbearing!"<sup>6</sup>

17.5 Hence, when the prediction of the first of those two [periods of iniquity] came true, We sent against you some of Our bondmen of terrible prowess in war, and they wrought havoc throughout the land: and so the prediction was fulfilled.<sup>7</sup>

17.6 And after a time We allowed you to prevail against them once again,<sup>8</sup> and aided you with wealth and offspring, and made you more numerous [than ever].

17.7 [And We said:] "If you persevere in doing good, you will but be doing good to yourselves; and if you do evil, it will be [done] to yourselves. "And so, when the prediction of the second [period of your iniquity] came true, [We raised new enemies against you, and allowed them] to disgrace you utterly,<sup>9</sup> and to enter the Temple as [their forerunners] had entered it once before, and to destroy with utter destruction all that they had conquered.

17.8 Your Sustainer may well show mercy unto you; but if you revert [to sinning], We shall revert [to chastising you]. And [remember this:] We have ordained that [in the hereafter] hell shall close upon all who deny the truth.

17.9 VERILY, this Qur'an shows the way to all that is most upright,<sup>10</sup> and gives the believers who do good deeds the glad tiding that theirs will be a great reward;

17.10 and [it announces, too,] that We have readied grievous suffering for those who will not believe in the life to come.

17.11 As it is<sup>11</sup> man [often] prays for things that are bad as if he were praying for something that is good:<sup>12</sup> for man is prone to be hasty [in his judgments].

17.12 And We have established the night and the day as two symbols;<sup>13</sup> and thereupon We have effaced the symbol of night and set up [in its place] the light-giving symbol of day,<sup>14</sup> so that you might seek to obtain your Sustainer's bounty and be aware of the passing years<sup>15</sup> and of the reckoning [that is bound to come]. For clearly, have We spelt out everything!<sup>16</sup>

17.13 And every human being's destiny have We tied to his neck;<sup>17</sup> and on the Day of Resurrection We shall bring forth for him a record which he will find wide open;

17.14 [and he will be told:] "Read this thy record! Sufficient is thine own self today to make out thine account!"<sup>18</sup>

17.15 Whoever chooses to follow the right path, follows it but for his own good; and whoever goes astray, goes but astray to his own hurt; and no bearer, of burdens shall be made to bear another's burden.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, We would never chastise [any community for the wrong they may do] ere We have sent, an apostle [to them].<sup>20</sup>

17.16 But when [this has been done, and] it is Our will to destroy a community, We convey Our last warning<sup>21</sup> to those of its people who have lost themselves entirely in the pursuit of pleasures;<sup>22</sup> and [if] they [continue to] act sinfully, the sentence [of doom] passed on the community takes effect, and We break it to smithereens.

17.17 And how many a generation have We [thus] destroyed after [the time of] Noah! For, none has the like of thy Sustainer's awareness and insight into His creatures' sins.

17.18 Unto him who cares for [no more than the enjoyment of] this fleeting life We readily grant thereof as much as We please, [giving] to whomever it is Our will [to give]; but in the end We consign him to [the suffering of] hell,<sup>23</sup> which he will have to endure disgraced and disowned!

17.19 But as for those who care for the [good of the] life to come, and strive for it as it ought to be striven for, and are [true] believers withal<sup>24</sup> - they are the ones whose striving finds favour [with God]!

17.20 All [of them] - these as well as those - do We freely endow with some of thy Sustainer's gifts, since thy Sustainer's giving is never confined [to one kind of man].

17.21 Behold how We bestow [on earth] more bounty on some of them than on others: but [remember that] the life to come will be far higher in degree and far greater in merit and bounty.<sup>25</sup>

17.22 DO NOT set up any other deity side by side with God, lest thou find thyself disgraced and forsaken:

17.23 for thy Sustainer has ordained that you shall worship none but Him. And do good unto [thy] parents.<sup>26</sup> Should one of them, or both, attain to old age in thy care, never say "Ugh"<sup>27</sup> to them or scold them, but [always] speak unto them with reverent speech,

17.24 and spread over humbly the wings of thy tenderness,<sup>28</sup> and say: "O my Sustainer! Bestow Thy grace upon them, even as they cherished and reared me when I was a child!"

17.25 Your Sustainer is fully aware of what is in your hearts. If you are righteous, [He will forgive you your errors]:<sup>29</sup> for, behold, He is much-forgiving to those who turn unto Him again and again.

17.26 And give his due to the near of kin,<sup>30</sup> as well as to the needy and the wayfarer,<sup>31</sup> but do not squander [thy substance] senselessly.<sup>32</sup>

17.27 Behold, the squanderers are, indeed, of the ilk of the satans - inasmuch as Satan has indeed proved most ungrateful to his Sustainer.<sup>33</sup>

17.28 And if thou [must] turn aside from those [that are in want, because thou thyself art] seeking to obtain thy Sustainer's grace and hoping for,<sup>34</sup> at least speak unto them with gentle speech.

17.29 And neither allow thy hand to remain shackled to thy neck,<sup>35</sup> nor stretch it forth to the utmost limit [of thy capacity], lest thou find thyself blamed [by thy dependents], or even destitute.

17.30 Behold, thy Sustainer grants abundant sustenance, or gives it in scant measure, unto whomever He wills: verily, fully aware is He of [the needs of] His creatures, and sees them all.

17.31 Hence, do not kill your children for fear of poverty:<sup>36</sup> it is We who shall provide sustenance for them as well as for you. Verily, killing them is a great sin.

17.32 And do not commit adultery<sup>37</sup> - for, behold, it is an abomination and an evil way.

17.33 And do not take any human being's life - [the life] which God has willed to be sacred - otherwise than in [the pursuit of] justice.<sup>38</sup> Hence, if anyone has been slain wrongfully, We have empowered the defender of his rights [to exact a just retribution];<sup>39</sup> but even so, let him not exceed the bounds of equity in [retributive] killing.<sup>40</sup> [And as for him who has been slain wrongfully -] behold, he is indeed succoured [by God]!<sup>41</sup>

17.34 And do not touch the substance of an orphan, save to improve it, before he comes of age.<sup>42</sup> And be true to every promise - for, verily, [on Judgment Day] you will be called to account for every promise which you have made!<sup>43</sup>

17.35 And give full measure whenever you measure, and weigh with a balance that is true:<sup>44</sup> this will be [for your own] good, and best in the end.

17.36 And never concern thyself with anything of which thou hast no knowledge:<sup>45</sup> verily, [thy] hearing and sight and heart - all of them - will be called to account for it [on Judgment Day]!

17.37 And walk not on earth with haughty self-conceit for, verily thou canst never rend the earth asunder, nor canst thou ever grow as tall as the mountains!

17.38 The evil of all this is odious in thy Sustainer's sight:<sup>46</sup>

17.39 this is part of that knowledge of right and wrong with which thy Sustainer has inspired thee.<sup>47</sup> Hence, do not set up any other deity side by side with God,<sup>48</sup> lest thou be cast into hell, blamed [by thyself] and rejected [by Him]!

17.40 HAS, THEN, your Sustainer distinguished you by [giving you] sons, and taken unto Himself daughters in the guise of angels?<sup>49</sup> Verily, you are uttering a dreadful saying!

17.41 And, indeed, many facets have We given [to Our message] in this Qur'an, so that they [who deny the truth] might take it to heart: but all this only increases their aversion.

17.42 Say: "If there were - as some people assert - [other] deities side by side with Him, surely [even] they would have to strive to find a way unto Him who is enthroned on His almightiness?"<sup>50</sup>

17.43 Limitless is He in His glory, and sublimely, immeasurably exalted above anything that men may say [about Him]!<sup>51</sup>

17.44 The seven heavens<sup>52</sup> extol His limitless glory, and the earth, and all that they contain; and there is not a single thing but extols His limitless glory and praise: but you [O men] fail to grasp the manner of their glorifying Him!<sup>53</sup> Verily, He is forbearing, much-forgiving!

17.45 But [thus it is:]<sup>54</sup> whenever thou recitest the Qur'an, We place an invisible barrier between thee and those who will not believe in the life to come:

17.46 for, over their hearts We have laid veils which prevent them from grasping its purport, and into their ears, deafness.<sup>55</sup> And so, whenever thou dost mention, while reciting the Qur'an, thy Sustainer as the one and only Divine Being,<sup>56</sup> they turn their backs [upon thee] in aversion.

17.47 We are fully aware of what they are listening for when they listen to thee:<sup>57</sup> for when they are secluded among themselves, lo! these wrongdoers say [unto one another], "If you were to follow [Muhammad, you would follow] only a man bewitched!"

17.48 See to what they liken thee, [O Prophet, simply] because they have gone astray and are now unable to find a way [to the truth]!

17.49 And [thus, too,] they say, "After we will have become bones and dust, shall we, forsooth, be raised from the dead in a new act of creation?"

17.50 Say: "[You will be raised from the dead even though] you be stones or iron

17.51 or any [other] substance which, to your minds, appears yet farther removed [from life]!"<sup>58</sup> And [if] thereupon they ask, "Who is it that will bring us back [to life]?" - say thou: "He who has brought you into being in the first instance." And [if] thereupon they shake their heads at thee [in disbelief] and ask, "When shall this be?" - say thou: "It may well be soon,

17.52 on a Day when He will call you, and you will answer by praising Him, thinking all the while that you have tarried [on earth] but a little while."<sup>59</sup>

17.53 AND TELL My servants that they should speak in the most kindly manner [unto those who do not share their beliefs]:<sup>60</sup> verily, Satan is always ready to stir up discord between men<sup>61</sup> - for, verily, Satan is man's open foe!

17.54 Your Sustainer is fully aware of what you are [and what you deserve]: if He so wills, he will bestow [His] grace upon you; and if He so wills, He will chastise you. Hence, We have not sent thee [unto men, O Prophet,] with the power to determine their fate,<sup>62</sup>

17.55 seeing that thy Sustainer is fully aware of [what is in the minds of] all beings that are in the heavens and on earth. But, indeed, We did endow some of the prophets more highly than others<sup>63</sup> - just as We bestowed upon David a book of divine wisdom [in token of Our grace]<sup>64</sup>.

17.56 SAY:<sup>65</sup> "Call upon those [beings] whom you imagine [to be endowed with divine powers] beside Him<sup>66</sup> - and [you will find that] they have it not in their power to remove any affliction from you, or to shift it [elsewhere]."<sup>67</sup>

17.57 Those [saintly beings] whom they invoke are themselves striving to obtain their Sustainer's favour - [even] those among them who are closest [to Him]<sup>68</sup> - hoping for His grace and dreading His chastisement: for, verily, thy Sustainer's chastisement is something to beware of!

17.58 And [bear in mind:] there is no community which We will not destroy before the Day of Resurrection,<sup>69</sup> or chastise [even earlier, if it proves sinful,] with suffering severe: all this is laid down in Our decree.<sup>70</sup>

17.59 And nothing has prevented Us from sending [this message, like the earlier ones,] with miraculous signs [in its wake], save [Our knowledge] that the people of olden times [only too often] gave the lie to them:<sup>71</sup> thus, We provided for [the tribe of] Thamud the she-camel as a light-giving portent, and they sinned against it.<sup>72</sup> And never did We send those signs for any other purpose than to convey a warning.

17.60 And lo! We said unto thee, [O Prophet:] "Behold, thy Sustainer encompasses all mankind [within His knowledge and might]: and so We have ordained that the vision which We have shown thee<sup>73</sup> - as also the tree [of hell,] cursed in this Qur'an - shall be but a trial for men."<sup>74</sup> Now [by Our mentioning hell] We convey

a warning to them: but [if they are bent on denying the truth,] this [warning] only increases their gross, overweening arrogance."

17.61 AND LO! We said unto the angels, "Prostrate yourselves before Adam" - whereupon they all prostrated themselves, save Iblis.<sup>75</sup> Said he: "Shall I prostrate myself before one whom Thou hast created out of clay?"

17.62 [And] he added: "Tell me, is this [foolish being] the one whom Thou hast exalted above me? Indeed, if Thou wilt but allow me a respite till the Day of Resurrection, I shall most certainly cause his descendants - all but a few - to obey me blindly!"<sup>76</sup>

17.63 [God] answered: "Go [the way thou hast chosen]! But as for such of them as shall follow thee - behold, hell will be the recompense of you [all], a recompense most ample!

17.64 Entice, then, with thy voice such of them as thou canst, and bear upon them with all thy horses and all thy men,<sup>77</sup> and be their partner in [all sins relating to] worldly goods and children,<sup>78</sup> and hold out [all manner of] promises to them: and [they will not know that] whatever Satan promises them is but meant to delude the mind.<sup>79</sup>

17.65 "[And yet,] behold, thou shalt have no power over [such of] My servants [as place their trust in Me]:<sup>80</sup> for none is as worthy of trust as thy Sustainer."

17.66 YOUR SUSTAINER is He who causes ships to move onward for you through the sea, so that you might go about in quest of some of His bounty: verily, a dispenser of grace is He unto you.

17.67 And whenever danger befalls you at sea, all those [powers] that you are wont to invoke forsake you, [and nothing remains for you] save Him: but as soon as He has brought you safe ashore, you turn aside [and forget Him] - for, indeed, bereft of all gratitude is man!

17.68 Can you, then, ever feel sure that He will not cause a tract of dry land to swallow you up, or let loose upon you a deadly stormwind,<sup>81</sup> whereupon you would find none to be your protector?

17.69 Or can you, perchance, feel sure that He will not make you put back to sea<sup>82</sup> once again, and then let loose upon you a raging tempest and cause you to drown in requital of your ingratitude - whereupon you would find none to uphold you against Us?

17.70 NOW, INDEED, We have conferred dignity on the children of Adam,<sup>83</sup> and borne them over land and sea, and provided for them sustenance out of the good things of life, and favoured them far above most of Our creation:

17.71 [but] one Day We shall summon all human beings [and judge them] according to the conscious disposition which governed their deeds [in life].<sup>84</sup> whereupon they whose record shall be placed in their right hand<sup>85</sup> - it is they who will read their record [with happiness]. Yet none shall be wronged by as much as a hair's breadth.<sup>86</sup>

17.72 for whoever is blind [of heart] in this [world] will be blind in the life to come [as well], and still farther astray from the path [of truth].<sup>87</sup>

17.73 AND, behold, they [who have gone astray] endeavour to tempt thee away from all [the truth] with which We have inspired thee, [O Prophet,] with a view to making thee invent something else in Our name - in which case they would surely have made thee their friend!<sup>88</sup>

17.74 And had We not made thee firm [in faith], thou might have inclined to them a little<sup>89</sup> -

17.75 in which case We would indeed have made thee taste double [chastisement] in life and double [chastisement] after death,<sup>90</sup> and thou wouldst have found none to succour thee against Us!

17.76 And [since they see that they cannot persuade thee,] they endeavour to estrange thee from the land [of thy birth]<sup>91</sup> with a view to driving thee away from it - but, then, after thou wilt have left,<sup>92</sup> they themselves will not remain [in it] for more than a little while.<sup>93</sup>

17.77 [such has been Our] way with all of Our apostles whom We sent before thy time;<sup>94</sup> and no change wilt thou find in Our ways.

17.78 BE CONSTANT in [thy] prayer from the time when the sun has passed its zenith till the darkness of night, and [be ever mindful of its] recitation at dawn.<sup>95</sup> for, behold, the recitation [of prayer] at dawn is indeed witnessed [by all that is holy].<sup>96</sup>

17.79 And rise from thy sleep and pray during part of the night [as well], as a free offering from thee,<sup>97</sup> and thy Sustainer may well raise thee to a glorious station [in the life to come].

17.80 And say [in thy prayer]: "O my Sustainer! Cause me to enter [upon whatever I may do] in a manner true and sincere, and cause me to leave [it] in a manner true and sincere, and grant me, out of Thy grace, sustaining strength!"

17.81 And say: "The truth has now come [to light], and falsehood has withered away: for, behold, all falsehood is bound to wither away!"

17.82 THUS, step by step, We bestow from on high through this Qur'an all that gives health [to the spirit] and is a grace unto those who believe [in Us], the while it only adds to the ruin of evildoers:<sup>98</sup>

17.83 for [it often happens that] when We bestow Our blessings upon man, he turns away and arrogantly keeps aloof [from any thought of Us]; and when evil fortune touches him, he abandons all hope.<sup>99</sup>

17.84 Say: "Everyone acts in a manner peculiar to himself - and your Sustainer is fully aware as to who has chosen the best path."

17.85 AND THEY will ask thee about [the nature of] divine inspiration. Say: "This inspiration [comes] at my Sustainer's behest; and [you cannot understand its nature, O men, since] you have been granted very little of [real] knowledge."

17.86 And if We so willed, We could indeed take away whatever We have revealed unto thee, and in that [state of need] thou wouldst find none to plead in thy behalf before Us.<sup>102</sup>

17.87 [Thou art spared] only by thy Sustainer's grace: behold, His favour towards thee is great indeed!

17.88 Say: "If all mankind and all invisible beings<sup>103</sup> would come together with a view to producing the like of this Qur'an, they could not produce its like even though they were exert all their strength in aiding one another!"

17.89 For, indeed, many facets have We given in this Qur'an to every kind of lesson [designed] for [the benefit of] mankind!<sup>104</sup> However, most men are unwilling to accept anything but blasphemy<sup>105</sup> -

17.90 and so they say: "[O Muhammad,] we shall not believe thee till thou cause a spring to gush forth for us from the earth,<sup>106</sup>

17.91 or thou have a garden of date-palms and vines and cause rivers to gush forth in their midst in a sudden rush,<sup>107</sup>

17.92 or thou cause the skies to fall down upon us in smithereens, as thou hast threatened,<sup>108</sup> or [till] thou bring God and the angels face to face before us,

17.93 or thou have a house [made] of gold, or thou ascend to heaven - but nay, we would not [even] believe in thy ascension unless thou bring down to us [from heaven] a writing which we [ourselves] could read!"<sup>109</sup> Say thou, [O Prophet:] Limitless in His glory is my Sustainer!<sup>110</sup> Am I, then, aught but a mortal man, an apostle?"

17.94 Yet whenever [God's] guidance came to them [through a prophet,] nothing has ever kept people from believing [in him] save this their objection:<sup>111</sup> "Would God have sent a [mere] mortal man as His apostle?"

17.95 Say: "If angels were walking about on earth as their natural abode, We would indeed have sent down unto them an angel out of heaven as Our apostle."

17.96 Say: "None can bear witness between me and you as God does: verily, fully aware is He of His creatures, and He sees all [that is in their hearts]."

17.97 And he whom God guides, he alone has found the right way; whereas for those whom He lets go astray thou canst never find anyone to protect them from Him: and [so, when] We shall gather them together on the Day of Resurrection, [they will lie] prone upon their faces, blind and dumb and deaf, with hell as their goal; [and] every time [the fire] abates, We shall increase for them [its] blazing flame.<sup>112</sup>

17.98 Such will be their requital for having rejected Our messages and having said, "After we will have become bones and dust, shall we, forsooth, be raised from the dead in a new act of creation?"<sup>113</sup>

17.99 Are they, then, not aware that God, who has created the heavens and the earth, has the power to create them anew in their own likeness,<sup>114</sup> having, beyond any doubt, set a term for their resurrection?<sup>115</sup> However, all [such] evildoers are unwilling to accept anything but blasphemy!<sup>116</sup>

17.100 Say: "If you were to own all the treasure-houses of my Sustainer's bounty,<sup>117</sup> lo! you would still try to hold on [to them] tightly for fear of spending [too much]: for man has always been avaricious whereas God is limitless in His bounty."<sup>118</sup>

17.101 AND, INDEED, We gave unto Moses nine clear<sup>119</sup> messages. Ask, then, the children of Israel<sup>120</sup> [to tell thee what happened] when he came unto them, [and appealed to Pharaoh,<sup>121</sup> ] and Pharaoh said unto him, "Verily, O Moses, I think that thou art full of sorcery!"<sup>122</sup>

17.102 Answered [Moses]: "Thou knowest well that none but the Sustainer of the heavens and the earth has bestowed these [miraculous signs] from on high, as a means of insight [for thee];<sup>123</sup> and, verily, O

Pharaoh, [since thou hast chosen to reject them,] I think that thou art utterly lost!"

17.103 And then Pharaoh resolved to wipe them off [the face of] the earth - whereupon We caused him and all who were with him to drown [in the sea].<sup>124</sup>

17.104 And after that We said unto the children of Israel: "Dwell now securely on earth - but [remember that] when the promise of the Last Day shall come to pass, We will bring you forth as [parts of] a motley crowd!"<sup>125</sup>

17.105 AND AS a guide towards the truth<sup>126</sup> have We bestowed this [revelation] from on high; with this [very] truth has it come down [unto thee, O Prophet]:<sup>127</sup> for We have sent thee but as a herald of glad tidings and a warner,

17.106 [bearing] a discourse which We have gradually unfolded,<sup>128</sup> so that thou might read it out to mankind by stages, seeing that We have bestowed it from on high step by step, as [one] revelation.<sup>129</sup>

17.107 Say: "Believe in it or do not believe." Behold, those who are already<sup>130</sup> endowed with [innate] knowledge fall down upon their faces in prostration as soon as this [divine writ] is conveyed unto them,

17.108 and say, "Limitless in His glory is our Sustainer! Verily, our Sustainer's promise has been fulfilled!"<sup>131</sup>

17.109 And so they fall down upon their faces, weeping, and [their consciousness of God's grace] increases their humility.

17.110 Say: "Invoke God, or invoke the Most Gracious: by whichever name you invoke Him, [He is always the One - for] His are all the attributes of perfection."<sup>132</sup> And [pray unto Him; yet] be not too loud in thy prayer nor speak it in too low a voice, but follow a way in-between;

17.111 and say: "All praise is due to God, who begets no offspring,<sup>133</sup> and has no partner in His dominion, and has no weakness, and therefore no need of any aid"<sup>134</sup> - and [thus] extol His limitless greatness.

## Author Comments

1 - The above short reference to the Prophet's mystic experience of the "Night Journey" (al-isra') to Jerusalem and the subsequent "Ascension" (mi'raj) to heaven is fully discussed in Appendix IV at the end of this work. - "The Inviolable House of Worship" (al-masjid al-haram) is one of the designations given in the Qur'an to the Temple of the Ka'bah, the prototype of which owed its origin to Abraham (see surah {2}, note [102]) and was "the first Temple set up for mankind" (3:96), i.e., the first ever built for the worship of the One God. "The Remote [lit., "farthest"] House of Worship", on the other hand, denotes the ancient Temple of Solomon - or, rather, its site - which symbolizes here the long line of Hebrew prophets who preceded the advent of Muhammad and are alluded to by the phrase "the environs of which We had blessed". The juxtaposition of these two sacred temples is meant to show that the Qur'an does not inaugurate a "new" religion but represents a continuation and the ultimate development of the same divine message which was preached by the prophets of old.

2 - Although the term ayah is most frequently used in the Qur'an in the sense of "[divine] message", we must remember that, primarily, it denotes "a sign [or "token"] by which a thing is known" (Qamus). As defined by Raghib, it signifies any perceivable phenomenon (irrespective of whether it is apparent to the senses or only to the intellect) connected with a thing that is not, by itself, similarly perceivable: in brief, a "symbol". Hence, the expression min ayatina may be suitably rendered as "some of Our symbols", i.e., insight, through symbols, into some of the ultimate truths.



3 - The conjunctive particle "And" which introduces this verse is meant to show that the mystic Night Journey - and, by implication, the subsequent Ascension as well - were experiences of the same high order of divine grace as the revelation bestowed upon Moses. The Qur'an mentions [4:164](#) that "God spoke His word unto Moses", i.e., directly (takliman); see also {7:143-144}, and especially verse {144}, in which God says to Moses, "I have raised thee above all people...by virtue of My speaking [unto thee]". A similar directness of experience is alluded to in the opening words of this surah, "Limitless in His Glory is He who transported His servant [Muhammad] by night...so that We might show him some of Our symbols" (see note [2] above; also, Appendix IV). Apart from this, the reference, in this and many other places in the Qur'an, to the religious history of the Hebrews is due to the fact that the revelations granted to their prophets represent the earliest formulation of monotheism, which makes it ideologically important for its later development.

4 - The term wakil denotes "one who is entrusted with the management of [another person's] affairs", or "is responsible for [another person's] conduct". When applied to God, it is sometimes used in the sense of "guardian" (e.g., in [3:173](#)), or "defender" (e.g., in [4:109](#)), or - in combination with the phrase cald kulli shay'in (as, e.g., in [6:102](#) or [11:12](#)) - in the sense of "the One who has everything in His care". In the present instance (as well as in [39:62](#)) the term evidently alludes to God's exclusive power to determine the fate of any created being or thing.

5 - Lit., "in the revelation" - here evidently used in the generic sense of the word, and probably applying to predictions contained in the Torah (Leviticus xxvi, 14-39 and Deuteronomy xxviii, 15-68) as well as the prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah, John and Jesus.

6 - Since both the Bible and the Qur'an mention that the children of Israel rebelled against the law of God on many occasions, there is every reason to assume that the expression "twice" (marratayn) does not refer to two single instances but, rather, to two distinct, extended periods of their history.

7 - The term ibad, rendered by me above as "bondmen", denotes every kind of "created beings" (in this case, obviously human beings) inasmuch as all of them are, willingly or unwillingly, subservient to God's will (cf. [13:15](#) and the corresponding note [33]). It is probable that the phrase "Our bondmen of terrible prowess in war" relates to the Assyrians who overran Palestine in the seventh century B.C. and caused the disappearance of the greater part of the Hebrew nation (the ten "lost tribes"), and to the Babylonians who, about one hundred years later, destroyed Solomon's Temple and carried off the remainder of the children of Israel into captivity, or to both, thus comprising all these events within one "period" (see foregoing note). - God's "sending" tribulations upon reprobate sinners is here, as elsewhere in the Qur'~n, a metonym for the natural law of cause and effect to which, in the long run, the life of man - and particularly the corporate life of nations and communities - is subject.

8 - Lit., "We gave back to you the turn against them" - apparently a reference to the return of the Jews from the Babylonian captivity in the last quarter of the sixth century B.C., the partial re-establishment of their state, and the building of a new temple in the place of the one that had been destroyed.

9 - Lit., "to bring evil to your faces". Inasmuch as the face is the most prominent and expressive part of the human body, it is often used as a metonym for one's whole being; hence, the "evil done to one's face" is synonymous with "utter disgrace". Most probably, this passage relates to the destruction of the Second Temple and of Jewish statehood by Titus in the year 70 of the Christian era.

10 - I.e., conformable to ethical rectitude and beneficial to man's individual and social life. Thus, after showing that sinning is synonymous with denying the truth, the discourse returns to the fundamental theme of the Qur'~n, already alluded to in verse {2} of this surah: namely, the statement that God always offers guidance to man through the revelations which He bestows upon His prophets.

11 - This, to my mind, is the meaning of the conjunctive particle wa in the above context.

12 - Cf. {2: 216}- "it may well be that you hate a thing the while it is good for you, and it may well be that you love a thing the while it is bad for you: and God knows, whereas you do not know~~: in other words, divine guidance is the only objective criterion as to what is good and what is bad.

13 - Regarding the primary meaning of the term dyah, see note [2] above. In the present context, the expression ayatayn ("two symbols") refers - as the subsequent clause shows - to the symbols of spiritual darkness and light.

14 - I.e., the message of the Qur'in, which is meant to lead man out of spiritual ignorance and error into the light of faith and reason.

15 - Lit., "the count ('adad) of years". Since, as the Qamus points out, this phrase denotes also "the years of [a person's] life, which he counts", it obviously implies here a call to spiritual self-criticism in view of the ephemeral nature of one's worldly life.

16 - I.e., everything that man may be in need of in the domain of ethics and religion.

17 - The word ta'ir literally signifies a "bird" or, more properly, a "flying creature". Since the pre-Islamic Arabs often endeavoured to establish a good or bad omen and, in general, to foretell the future from the manner and direction in which birds would fly, the term ta'ir came to be tropically used in the sense of "fortune", both good and evil, or "destiny". (See in this connection surah {3}, note [37], and surah {7}, note [95].) It should, however, be borne in mind that the Qur'anic concept of "destiny" relates not so much to the external circumstances of and events in man's life as, rather, to the direction which this life takes in result of one's moral choices: in other words, it relates to man's spiritual fate-and this, in its turn, depends-as the Qur'an so often points out-on a person's inclinations, attitudes and conscious actions (including self-restraint from morally bad actions or, alternatively, a deliberate omission of good actions). Hence, man's spiritual fate depends on himself and is inseparably linked with the whole tenor of his personality; and since it is God who has made man responsible for his behaviour on earth, He speaks of Himself as having "tied every human being's destiny to his neck".

18 - The "record" and the subsequent "account" represent man's total comprehension, on Judgment Day, of all his past life (Razi). This allegory occurs in the Qur'an in many formulations, e.g., in [37:19](#) or [39:68](#), and perhaps most incisively in {50: 22}- "now We have lifted from thee thy veil, and sharp is thy sight today!"

19 - See [6:164](#), [35:18](#) and [39:7](#), as well as the corresponding notes, also [53:38](#), which represents the earliest Qur'anic statement of this fundamental principle of ethics.

20 - Sc., "so that they might fully understand the meaning of right and wrong": cf. {6:131-132} and the corresponding note [117], as well as [28:59](#) (which, in the chronology of revelation, immediately precedes the present surah).

21 - Lit., "Our command", i.e., to mend their ways. The term qaryah (lit., "town") denotes usually- though not always -a "community" or "people of a community".

22 - I.e., to the exclusion of all moral considerations. (For the above rendering of the expression mutraf, see surah {11}, note [147].) The people referred to here are those who, by virtue of their wealth and social position, embody the real leadership of their community and are, therefore, morally responsible for the behaviours of their followers.

23 - Lit., "We assign [or "shall assign"] hell to him".

24 - Since caring and striving for the good of the hereafter presupposes belief in God and in man's responsibility before Him, it is obvious that the term "believer" relates, in this context, to a cognition of God's absolute oneness and uniqueness as well as to a willing acceptance of the guidance offered to man through prophetic revelation. - In the original, the whole preceding sentence has the singular form ("he who cares...and strives...and is a believer"); but in view of the next clause, which is expressed in the plural, it is preferable to render these pronouns, agreeably with Arabic usage, uniformly in the plural.

25 - Lit., "greater in degrees and greater in the bestowal of bounty (tafdilan)"-but since the latter term obviously comprises, in this instance, the concept of "merit" as well, a composite rendering would seem to be indicated.

26 - Whereas God is the real, ultimate cause of man's coming to life, his parents are its outward immediate cause: and so the preceding call to God is followed by the injunction to honour and cherish one's parents. Beyond this, the whole of the present passage-up to and including verse {39} - is meant to show that kindness and just dealings between man and man are an integral part of the concept of "striving for the good of the life to come".

27 - In Arabic. uff- a word or sound indicative of contempt, dislike or disgust.

28 - Lit., "lower for them the wing of humility, out of tenderness (rahmah)" - a metonymical expression evocative of a bird that lovingly spreads its wings over its offspring in the nest.

29 - This interpolation gives the meaning of the above elliptic sentence (Tabari, Baghawi, Zamakhshari, Razi).

30 - In this instance, "his due" evidently refers to the loving consideration due to one's relatives (Zamakhshari and Razi); those of them who are in a state of want are included in the subsequent mention of "the needy" (al-miskin).

31 - Regarding this expression, see surah {2}, note [145].

32 - Lit., "with [utter] squandering" (tabdhiran) i.e., senselessly and to no good purpose. It is to be borne in mind that the term tabdhir does not relate to the quantity but, rather, to the purpose of one's spending. Thus, Ibn'Abbas and Ibn Mas'ud (both of them quoted by Tabari) defined tabdhir as "spending without a righteous purpose" or "in a frivolous (basil) cause": and Mujahid is reported (ibid.) to have said, "If a man were to spend all that he possesses in a righteous cause, it could not be termed squandering; but if he spends even a small amount in a frivolous cause, it is squandering."

33 - Since squandering-in the sense explained in the preceding note-implies an utter lack of gratitude for the gift of sustenance bestowed by God upon man, the squanderers are described as being "of the ilk [lit., "brethren"] of the satans". Regarding the deeper meaning of the terms "satans" and "satanic", see surah {15}, note [16].

34 - I.e., "because thou art thyself in want, and therefore unable to help others".

35 - A metaphor signifying miserliness and, in particular, unwillingness to help others (cf. a similar expression in [5:64](#)).

36 - Historically, this may be a reference to the pre-Islamic Arabian custom of burying unwanted female children alive (see note [4] on {81:8-9}, as well as to the occasional - though much rarer - sacrifices of male children to some of their gods (see Zamakhshari's comments on [6:137](#)). Beyond this, however, the above prohibition has a timeless validity inasmuch as it relates also to abortions undertaken "for fear of poverty", i.e., on purely economic grounds.

37 - Lit., "do not come near adultery", thus intensifying the prohibition. It is to be noted that the term zina signifies all sexual intercourse between a man and a woman who are not husband and wife, irrespective of whether either of them is married to another partner or not; hence, it denotes both "adultery" and "fornication" in the English senses of these terms.

38 - I.e., in the execution of a legal sentence or in a just war (see {2: 190} and the corresponding note [167]), or in individual, legitimate self-defence.

39 - This refers to the legal punishment for homicide, termed qisas ("just retribution") and explained in {2: 178} and the corresponding notes. In the present context, the term wali ("protector" or "defender of [one's] rights") is usually taken to mean the heir or next of kin of the victim. Zamakhshari, however, observes that it may also apply to the government (as-sultan): an interpretation which is obviously based on the concept of the government as the "protector" or "defender of the rights" of all its citizens. As regards the expression qutila mazluman ("slain wrongfully"), it is obvious that it refers only to cases of willful homicide, since the concept of zulm applies in the Qur'an exclusively to intentional and never to accidental wrongdoing.

40 - Thus, the defender of the victim's rights (in this case, a court of justice) is not only not entitled to impose a capital sentence on any but the actual murderer or murderers, but may also, if the case warrants it, concede mitigating circumstances and refrain from capital punishment altogether.

41 - I.e., he is avenged in this world by the retribution exacted from his murderer, and in the life to come, blessed by the special grace which God bestows on all who have been slain without any legal or moral justification (Razi). Some of the commentators, however, relate the pronoun "he" to the defender of the victim's rights, respectively, to the latter's heir or next of kin, and explain the above phrase as meaning "he is sufficiently helped by the law of just retribution (qi,sa,s) and should not, therefore, demand any punishment in excess of what is equitable".

42 - See surah {6}, note [149].

43 - Lit., "every promise shall be asked about" or "investigated".

44 - Lit., "straight" (mustaqim)-a term which in the Qur'an has invariably a spiritual or moral connotation. Hence, as in the similar phrase in {6: 152}, the above injunction applies not merely to commercial transactions but to all dealings between man and man.

45 - Or: "do not follow [or "pursue"] anything...", etc. This would seem to relate to groundless assertions about events or people (and hence to slander or false testimony), to statements based on guesswork unsupported by evidence, or to interfering in social situations which one is unable to evaluate correctly.

46 - According to some commentators, this condemnation refers to what has been mentioned in the preceding two verses; more probably, however, it extends to the subject-matter of all the prohibitions-whether enunciated as such or merely implied-in verses {22-37}.

47 - Or: "which thy Sustainer has revealed to thee". It is to be noted that the noun ,hikmah, usually signifying "wisdom", is derived from the verb ,hakama ("he prevented" or "restrained [him or it]", i.e., from acting in an undesirable manner). Hence, the primary meaning of hikmah is "that which prevents one from evil or ignorant behaviour" (cf. Lane II, 617); in its positive sense, it signifies "[conscious] insight into that which is most excellent" (Lisan al-'Arab, Taj al-'Arus). Inasmuch as this term refers here, in particular, to what is "odious in God's sight", it implies moral discrimination (or "the knowledge of right and wrong") on

the part of men; and this, in its turn, presupposes the existence of an absolute, God-willed standard of moral values.

48 - Since there is no basis for an acceptance of absolute moral values-i.e., values that are independent of time and social circumstances - without a belief in God and His ultimate judgment, the passage ends, as it began, with a call to a cognition of God's oneness and uniqueness.

49 - Lit., "and taken unto Himself, out of the angels, females": an allusion to the pre-Islamic Arabian belief that the angels - conceived of as a kind of female sub-deities - were God's "daughters", and this despite the pagan Arabs' contempt for female offspring (cf. {16: 57-59} and the corresponding notes). In its wider implication, this rhetorical question is meant to bring out the absurdity of the supposition that God's divinity could be projected into, or shared by, any other being (cf. {6 :100-101}).

50 - The term 'arsh (lit., "throne" or, more properly, "seat of power") is used in the Qur'an to denote God's absolute sway over all that exists; hence, the expression dhu 'l-'arsh may be suitably rendered as "He who is enthroned in His almightiness". Beyond this, the commentators are not entirely agreed as to the purport of the above sentence. Some take it to mean that "had there been other deities apart from God, they would endeavour to deprive Him of some or all of His power, and would thus create chaos in the universe". Others - and most prominently among them Tabari and Ibn Kathir - have a far better, though somewhat more complicated explanation to offer. Starting from the legitimate assumption that those who believe in the existence of other deities or divine powers apart from God regard them as no more than mediators between man and Him, the argument runs thus: If those alleged divine or semi-divine "mediators" would really exist, then it is obvious that, being no more than mediators, even they would have to recognize Him as the Supreme Being - which would amount to admitting that they have no power of their own but are, in the last resort, entirely dependent on and subject to Him: and this unavoidable conclusion implies a negation of any divinity in those imaginary "mediators". This being so, is it not far more reasonable for man to turn directly to God, who is almighty, all-seeing, all-hearing, and has therefore no need of any mediator?

51 - See surah {6}, note [88].

52 - For an explanation of this expression, see surah {2}, note [20].



53 - I.e., although everything in creation bears witness to the existence of a conscious Creative Will, man is only too often blind and deaf to this overwhelming evidence of God's ever-present almightiness.

54 - This passage connects with verse {41} above.

55 - Cf. {6: 25}. See also [2:7](#) and the corresponding note.

56 - Lit., "whenever thou dost mention in the Qur'an thy Sustainer alone".

57 - I.e., to find fault with the message of the Qur'an.

58 - Lit., "or any created matter which, in your hearts, appears yet more difficult" - i.e., even less susceptible of having or receiving life.

59 - Man's life on earth will appear to him "but as a little while" in comparison with the unlimited duration of the life in the hereafter (Tabari, Zamakhshari). A further implication is that man's concept of "time" is earthbound and, hence, has no meaning in the context of ultimate reality. The preceding reference to the erstwhile deniers of the possibility of resurrection as "answering God's call by praising Him" implies that as soon as they are resurrected they will become fully aware of His existence and almightiness.

60 - Cf. {16: 125} (and the corresponding note [149]) as well as [29:46](#).

61 - Lit., "Satan stirs up discord between them".

62 - For my rendering of the term wakil, in this context, as "one who has the power to determine the fate [of another being]", see note [4] on verse {2} of this surah. An alternative, equally acceptable rendering of the above phrase would be, "We have not sent thee charged with responsibility for their conduct."

63 - This seems to be an allusion to the role of Muhammad as the Last Prophet (Zamakhshari, Baydawi): despite his personal inability to "determine the fate" of the people to whom he conveyed God's message, that message is destined to remain alive forever.

64 - I.e., just as David's "book of divine wisdom" (the Psalms) had outlived the glory of his earthly kingdom, so will Muhammad's message, the Qur'an, outlive all the changing fortunes of his followers.

65 - Sc., "to those who believe in the existence of any divine power apart from God".

66 - As the sequence shows, this relates to the worship of saints or angels.

67 - I.e., to transfer it unto themselves: obviously an allusion to the Christian doctrine of "vicarious atonement".

68 - I.e., the greatest of the prophets, as well as the angels.

69 - I.e., since everything in this world is ephemeral and bound to perish, man ought to be conscious of the

life to come.

70 - Lit., "in the decree" - i.e., in accordance with the immutable laws which God has laid down for His creation.

71 - This highly elliptic sentence has a fundamental bearing on the purport of the Qur'an as a whole. In many places the Qur'an stresses the fact that the Prophet Muhammad, despite his being the last and greatest of God's apostles, was not empowered to perform miracles similar to those with which the earlier prophets are said to have reinforced their verbal messages. His only miracle was and is the Qur'an itself - a message perfect in its lucidity and ethical comprehensiveness, destined for all times and all stages of human development, addressed not merely to the feelings but also to the minds of men, open to everyone, whatever his race or social environment, and bound to remain unchanged forever. Since the earlier prophets invariably appealed to their own community and their own time alone, their teachings were, of necessity, circumscribed by the social and intellectual conditions of that particular community and time; and since the people to whom they addressed themselves had not yet reached the stage of independent thinking, those prophets stood in need of symbolic portents or miracles (see surah {6}, note [94]) in order to make the people concerned realize the inner truth of their mission. The message of the Qur'an, on the other hand, was revealed at a time when mankind (and, in particular, that part of it which inhabited the regions marked by the earlier, Judaeo-Christian religious development) had reached a degree of maturity which henceforth enabled it to grasp an ideology as such without the aid of those persuasive portents and miraculous demonstrations which in the past, as the above verse points out, only too often gave rise to new, grave misconceptions.

72 - See the second paragraph of [7:73](#) and the corresponding note [57]. Although there is absolutely no indication in the Qur'an that the she-camel referred to was of miraculous origin, it was meant to be a test for the people of Thamud (cf. [54:27](#)), and thus a "light-giving portent" (mubsirah).

73 - The vision (ru'ya) mentioned here is the Prophet's experience of the Ascension, preceded by the Night Journey (see Appendix IV). Inasmuch as this experience was and is open to most conflicting interpretations and, hence, may give rise to doubts regarding its objective reality, it becomes - as stated in the sequence - "a trial for men": the weak of faith and the superficial are shaken in their belief in Muhammad's veracity and, thus, in his prophethood; whereas those who firmly believe in God see in it an extraordinary evidence of the spiritual grace which He bestows on His chosen ones, and are, therefore, strengthened in their faith in the message of the Qur'an.

74 - As regards "the tree cursed in this Qur'an", there is no doubt that it is the "tree of deadly fruit" (shajarat az-zaqqim) spoken of in [37:62](#) ff. and [44:43](#) ff. as one of the manifestations of hell (see {37:62-63} and the corresponding notes [22] and [23], the latter of which explains why this "tree" has become "a trial for men"). In the above context it is described as "cursed" because it obviously symbolizes hell itself. The reason why only "hell" - and no other manifestation of the hereafter - is specifically alluded to here becomes evident in the subsequent statement that it is meant to convey a warning.

75 - For an explanation of the allegory of Adam and the angels, see {2:30-34}, {7:11-18} and {15:26-41}, as well as the corresponding notes. In the present instance, as in Al-A'raf and Al-Hijr, the accent is on the contempt of Iblis for Adam (which is obviously a metonym for the whole human race): hence, this passage apparently connects with the end of verse {53} above-"verily, Satan is man's open foe!" The stress on man's dignity - expressed in God's commandment to the angels to "prostrate themselves before Adam" - links this allegory with verses {70-72}.

76 - Cf. {7:16-17}. The verb hanaka denotes, literally, "he put a rope around the lower jaw (hanak) [of a horse]", i.e., in order to lead it; hence, the form ihtanaka means "he made [another being] follow him submissively" or "obey him blindly".

77 - This is an idiomatically established metaphor, signifying "with all thy might".

78 - An allusion to possessions acquired by sinful means or spent on sinful purposes, and to the begetting of children through fornication or adultery. (It must, however, be pointed out that in the ethics and the canon law of Islam no moral stigma and no legal disability whatever attaches to the child thus begotten.)

79 - Cf. [4:120](#) and the corresponding note [142].

80 - I.e., "thou shalt have no real power over them", as brought out in [14:22](#) and [15:42](#).

81 - Lit., "a stormwind that raises stones" (Taj al-'Arus, art. hasaba).

82 - Lit., "therein".

83 - I.e., by bestowing upon them the faculty of conceptual thinking (cf. [2:31](#) and the corresponding note [23]), which makes them superior in this respect to all other animate beings, and even to the angels. By stressing here this unique distinction of man, the present passage connects with, and continues the theme of, verse {61} above.

84 - Thus Razi interprets the phrase nad'u kulla unasin bi-imamihim (lit., "We shall summon all human beings by [mentioning] their leaders" or "guides"). In his opinion, the expression imam (lit., "leader" or "guide") has in this context an abstract connotation, signifying the conscious disposition, good or bad, which governs a person's behaviour and provides the motives for his deeds. This interpretation is most convincing, and particularly so in view of the fundamental hadith quoted in my note [32] on [53:39](#).

85 - A symbolic image, often used in the Qur'an, denoting an acknowledgement of righteousness in the spiritual sense, just as the "left hand" indicates its opposite (cf. [69:19](#) and {25}, as well as [84:7](#)).

86 - This last clause obviously applies to both the righteous and the unrighteous. (For my above rendering of fatil, see surah {4}, note [67].)

87 - Cf. {20:124-125}. This passage shows that man's life in the hereafter is not merely conditioned by the manner of his life on earth, but is also an organic extension of the latter, manifested in a natural development and intensification of previously-existing tendencies.

88 - This relates to an offer of "compromise" made by the pagan Quraysh: they demanded of the Prophet

that he give some sort of recognition to their tribal deities and attribute this recognition to God; in return, they promised to recognize him as a prophet and to make him their leader. Naturally, the Prophet rejected this offer.

89 - The implication is that the Prophet's deep faith made it impossible for him to consider anything of this kind.

90 - I.e., "for having gone astray despite the revelation bestowed on thee by God, and for having, by thy example, led thy followers astray as well". The purport of the above passage goes, however, beyond the historical event or events to which it relates: it expresses the idea that any conscious offence against a fundamental truth is an unforgivable sin.

91 - It must be borne in mind that this is a Meccan surah, revealed at a time when the persecution, both physical and moral, which the Prophet and his followers had to suffer at the hands of the pagan Quraysh reached the peak of its intensity.

92 - Lit., "after thee".

93 - This prophecy was fulfilled a little over two years later, in the month of Ramadan, 2 H., when those same leaders of the Quraysh were killed in the battle of Badr.

94 - I.e., the people who drove them away were invariably punished with destruction.

95 - As is evidenced by the practice (sunnah) of the Prophet, this verse fully circumscribes the five daily prayers laid down in Islam as obligatory for every adult man and woman: at dawn (fajr), shortly after the sun passes its zenith (zuhr), in the middle of the afternoon ('asr), immediately after sunset (maghrib), and after the night has fully set in ('isha'). Although parts of the Qur'an should be recited in every prayer, the

early morning prayer is metonymically singled out as the "recitation (qur'an) at dawn" because the Prophet, under divine inspiration, used to lengthen his recitation while praying at that time, thus stressing the special significance of this particular prayer. (See next note.)

96 - Most of the classical commentators take this to mean "witnessed by the angels of night as well as those of day", since dawn is the time between night and day. Razi, however, is of the opinion that the "witness" to which the Qur'an refers here is the spark of God-given illumination in man's own soul-the heightening of his inner perception at the time when the darkness and stillness of night begins to give way to the life-giving light of day, so that prayer becomes a means of attaining to deeper insight into the realm of spiritual truths and, thus, of achieving communion with all that is holy.

97 - Lit., "as a deed beyond that which is incumbent on thee" (nafalatan laka) - i.e., in addition to the five obligatory prayers. Hence, the above is not an injunction but a recommendation, although the Prophet himself invariably spent the greater part of the night in prayer.

98 - By "evildoers" are meant people who, out of self-conceit or an excessive "love of this world", reject out of hand any suggestion of divine guidance - and, with it, any belief in the existence of absolute moral values - and in the end, as the sequence shows, fall prey to spiritual nihilism.

99 - Cf. {11: 9-10} and the corresponding notes.

102 - Lit., "to be thy guardian against [or "before"] Us" - i.e., "to provide thee with other means of guidance": an allusion to the fact that divine guidance is the only source of ethics in the absolute sense of this word. The "taking away" of revelation denotes its alienation from the hearts and the memory of men, as well as its disappearance in written form.

103 - See Appendix III.

104 - According to Raghīb, the noun *mathal* (lit., "similitude", "parable" or "example") is here more or less synonymous with *wasf* ("description by means of a comparison", i.e., "definition"). In its broadest sense, this term signifies "a lesson".

105 - I.e., they are unwilling to accept any idea which runs counter to their own, blasphemous inclinations.

106 - I.e., like Moses (cf. [2:60](#)).

107 - This seems to be a derisory allusion to the allegory of paradise so often mentioned in the Qur'an.

108 - Lit., "claimed": possibly a reference to the warning expressed in {34: 9}, which was revealed somewhat earlier than the present surah.

110 - I.e., "miracles are in the power of God alone" (cf. [6:109](#) and the corresponding note [94]).

111 - Lit., "save that they said". The verb *qala* (as also the noun *qawl*) is often used tropically in the sense of holding or asserting an opinion or a belief; in the above case it obviously implies a conceptual objection.

113 - Implying that this denial of God's power to resurrect the dead (mentioned in exactly the same phrasing in verse {49} of this surah) is equivalent to a denial of His almightiness and, hence, of His Being - all of which is characterized by the words "blind and deaf and dumb" in the preceding verse.



114 - Lit., "to create the like of them" - i.e., to resurrect them individually, each of them having the same identity (or "likeness") which he or she had before death.

115 - Lit., "a term (ajal) for them". Since ajal denotes, primarily, "a specified term [at which something falls due]", it obviously relates here to the inescapable fact of resurrection.

116 - See notes [98] and [105] above.

117 - Lit., "grace" (rahmah).

118 - I.e., since man is, by his very nature, dependent on material possessions, he instinctively tries to hold on to them; God, on the other hand, is self-sufficient and, therefore, above all need of placing any limits on His bestowal of bounty (hence my interpolation). This implied reference to God's grace and bounty is necessitated by the emphasis, in the preceding as well as in the subsequent passages, on the fact that He has never ceased to guide man, through His prophets, towards the good life.

119 - Some of the commentators assume that this is an allusion to the miracles performed by Moses, while others (relying on a Tradition quoted in the compilations of Nasa'i, Ibn Hanbal, Bayhaqi, Ibn Majah and Tabarani) see in it a reference to nine specific commandments or ethical principles, the foremost of them being a stress on God's oneness and uniqueness. In my opinion, however, the number "nine" may be no more than a metonym for "several", just as the numbers "seven" and "seventy" are often used in classical Arabic to denote "several" or "many"

120 - I.e., of the present time. The whole phrase has this meaning: "Ask them about what the Qur'an tells us in this respect, and they will be bound to confirm it on the basis of their own scriptures." This "confirmation" apparently relates to what is said in verse {104}, explaining why the story of Moses and Pharaoh has been mentioned in the present context. (The story as such appears in greater detail in {7:103-137} and {20:49-79}.)

121 - Cf. {7: 105}-"let the children of Israel go with me!"

122 - Or: "that thou art bewitched". However, my rendering is based on Tabari's interpretation of the passive participle mashur, which I consider preferable in view of the subsequent reference to the miraculous signs granted by God to Moses.

123 - See surah {6}, note [94].

124 - See surah {7}, note [100].

125 - According to Razi, the expression lafif denotes a human crowd composed of innumerable heterogeneous elements, good and bad, strong and weak, fortunate and unfortunate: in short, it characterizes mankind in all its aspects. It is obviously used here to refute, once again, the idea that the children of Israel are a "chosen people" by virtue of their Abrahamic descent and, therefore, a priori and invariably destined for God's grace. The Qur'an rejects this claim by stating that on Resurrection Day all mankind will be judged, and none will have a privileged position.

126 - Lit., "with truth" or "in truth".

127 - I.e., it has come down to man, through the Prophet, without any alteration, omission or addition.

128 - Lit., "which We have divided into [consecutive] parts" or, according to some authorities (quoted by Razi), "set forth with clarity". The rendering adopted by me allows for both these meanings.

129 - The above verse alludes both to the historical fact that the process of the revelation of the Qur'an was gradual, extending over the twenty-three years of the Prophet's ministry, and to the fact that it is nevertheless one integral whole and can, therefore, be properly understood only if it is considered in its entirety - that is to say, if each of its passages is read in the light of all the other passages which it contains. (See also [20:114](#) and the corresponding note [101].)

130 - Lit., "before it"-i.e., before the Qur'an as such has come within their ken.

131 - This may be an allusion to the many Biblical predictions of the advent of the Prophet Muhammad, especially to Deuteronomy xviii, 15 and 18 (cf. surah {2}, note [33]). In its wider sense, however, the "fulfilment of God's promise" relates to His bestowal of a definitive revelation, the Qur'an, henceforth destined to guide man at all stages of his spiritual, cultural and social development.

132 - For an explanation of the expression al-asma' al-husna (lit., "the most perfect [or "most goodly"] names"), see surah {7}, note [145]. The epithet ar-rahman - rendered by me throughout as "the Most Gracious"- has an intensive significance, denoting the unconditional, all-embracing quality and exercise of grace and mercy, and is applied exclusively to God, "who has willed upon Himself the law of grace and mercy" ({6 :12} and {54}).

133 - Lit., "who has not taken unto Himself [or "begotten"] a son" - i.e., who is free of the imperfection inherent in the concept of begetting a child as an extension of one's own being. Since this statement not merely refutes the Christian doctrine of Jesus as "the son of God" but, beyond that, stresses the logical impossibility of connecting such a concept with God, the clause is best rendered in the present tense, and the noun walad in its primary sense of "offspring", which applies to a child of either sex.

134 - Lit., "and has no protector [to aid Him] on account of any [supposed] weakness [on His part]".

