

Surah 26. Ash-Shu'araa

26.1 Ta. Sin. Mim.¹

26.2 THESE ARE MESSAGES of the divine writ, clear in itself and clearly showing the truth²

26.3 Wouldst thou, perhaps, torment thyself to death [with grief] because they [who live around thee] refuse to believe [in it]?³

26.4 Had We so willed, We could have sent down unto them a message from the skies, so that their necks would lbe forced tol bown down before it in humility.⁴

26.5 [But We have not willed it:] and so, whenever there comes unto them any fresh reminder from the Most Gracious, they [who are blind of heart] always turn their backs upon it:

26.6 thus, indeed, have they given the lie [to this message as well]. But [in time] they will come to understand what it was that they were wont to deride!⁵

26.7 Have they, then, never considered the earth-how much of every noble kind [of life] We have caused to grow thereon?

26.8 In this, behold, there is a message [unto men], even though most of them will not believe [in it].

26.9 But, verily, thy Sustainer- He alone - is almighty, a dispenser of grace!⁶

26.10 HENCE, [remember how it was] when thy Sustainer summoned Moses: "Go unto those evildoing people,

26.11 the people of Pharaoh, who refuse to be conscious of Me!"⁷

26.12 He answered: "O my Sustainer! Behold, I fear that they will give me the lie,

26.13 and then my breast will be straitened and my tongue will not be free: send, then, [this Thy command] to Aaron."⁸

26.14 Moreover, they keep a grave charge [pending] against me, and I fear that they will slay me."⁹

26.15 Said He: "Not so, indeed! Go forth, then, both of you, with Our messages: verily, We shall be with you, listening [to your call]!

26.16 And go, both of you, unto Pharaoh and say, 'Behold, we bear a message from the Sustainer of all the worlds:

26.17 Let the children of Israel go with us!' "

26.18 [But when Moses had delivered his message, Pharaoh] said: "Did we not bring thee up among us when thou wert a child? And didst thou not spend among us years of thy [later] life?

26.19 And yet thou didst commit that [heinous] deed of thine,¹⁰ and [hast thus shown that] thou art one of the ingrate!"

26.20 Replied [Moses!]: "I committed it while I was still going astray;

26.21 and I fled from you because I feared you. But [since] then my Sustainer has endowed me with the ability to judge [between right and wrong],¹¹ and has made me one of [His] message-bearers.

26.22 And [as for] that favour of which thou so tauntingly remindest me-[was it not] due to thy having enslaved the children of Israel?"¹²

26.23 Said Pharaoh: "And what [and who] is that 'Sustainer of all the worlds?'"¹³

26.24 [Moses] answered: "[He is] the Sustainer of the heavens and the earth and all that is between them: if you would but [allow yourselves to] be convinced ! " ¹⁴

26.25 Said [Pharaoh] unto those around him: "Did you hear [what he said]?"¹⁵

26.26 [And Moses] continued: "[He is] your Sus-tainer, [too,] as well as the Sustainer of your fore-fathers of old!"

26.27 [Pharaoh] exclaimed: "Behold, [this] your 'apostle' who [claims that he] has been sent unto you is mad indeed!"

26.28 [But Moses] went on: "[He of whom I speak is] the Sustainer of the east and the west and of all that is between the two¹⁶ - [as you would know] if you would but use your reason!"

26.29 Said [Pharaoh]: "Indeed, if thou choose to worship any deity other than me, I shall most certainly throw thee into prison!"¹⁷

26.30 Said he: "Even if I should bring about before thee something that clearly shows the truth?"¹⁸

26.31 [Pharaoh] answered: "Produce it, then, if thou art a man of truth!"

26.32 Thereupon [Moses] threw down his staff - and lo! it was a serpent, plainly visible;

26.33 and he drew forth his hand - and lo! it appeared [shining] white the heholders.¹⁹

26.34 Said [Pharaoh] unto the great ones around him "Verily, this is indeed a sorcerer of great knowledge

26.35 who wants to drive you out of your land by his sorcery.²⁰ What, then, do you advise?"

26.36 They answered: "Let him and his brother wait a while, and send unto all cities heralds

26.37 who shall assemble before thee all sorcerers of great knowledge."

26.38 And so the sorcerers were assembled at a set time on a certain day,

26.39 and the people were asked: "Are you all present,

26.40 so that we might follow [in the footsteps of] the sorcerers if it is they who prevail?" ²¹

26.41 Now when the sorcerers came, they said unto Pharaoh: "Verily, we ought to have a great reward if it is we who prevail."²²

26.42 Answered he: "Yea-and, verily, in that case you shall be among those who are near unto me."

26.43 [And] Moses said unto them: "Throw whatever you are going to throw!"

26.44 Thereupon they threw their [magic] ropes and their staves, and said: "By Pharaoh's might, behold, it is we indeed who have prevailed!"²³

26.45 [But] then Moses threw his staff-and lo! it swallowed up all their deceptions.²⁴

26.46 And down fell the sorcerers, prostrating them-selves in adoration,

26.47 [and] exclaimed: "We have come to believe in the Sustainer of all the worlds,

26.48 the Sustainer of Moses and Aaron!"

26.49 Said [Pharaoh]: "Have you come to believe in him²⁵ ere I have given you permission? Verily, he must be your master who has taught you magic!²⁶ But in time you shall come to know [my revenge]: most certainly shall I cut off your hands and your feet great numbers, because of [your] perverseness, and shall most certainly crucify you in great numbers, all together!"²⁷

26.50 They answered: "No harm [canst thou do to us]: verily, unto our Sustainer do we turn!

26.51 Behold, we [but] ardently desire that our Sustainer forgive us our faults in return for our having been foremost among the believers!"

26.52 AND [there came a time²⁸ when] We inspired Moses thus: "Go forth with My servants by night: for, behold, you will be pursued!"

26.53 And Pharaoh sent heralds unto all cities,

26.54 [bidding them to call out his troops and to proclaim:] "Behold, these [children of Israel] are but a contemptible band;²⁹

26.55 but they are indeed filled with hatred of us

26.56 seeing that we are, verily, a nation united, fully prepared against danger³⁰ -

26.57 and so we have [rightly] driven them out of [their] gardens and springs,

26.58 and [deprived them of their erstwhile] station of honour!"³¹

26.59 Thus it was: but [in the course of time] We were to bestow all these [things] as a heritage on the children of Israel.³²

26.60 And so [the Egyptians] caught up with them at sunrise;

26.61 and as soon as the two hosts came in sight of one another, the followers of Moses exclaimed: "Behold, we shall certainly be overtaken [and defeated]!"

26.62 He replied: "Nay indeed! My Sustainer is with me, [and] He will guide me!"

26.63 Thereupon We inspired Moses thus: "Strike the sea with thy staff!" - whereupon it parted, and each part appeared like a mountain vast.³³

26.64 And We caused the pursuers³⁴ to draw nea unto that place:

26.65 and We saved Moses and all who were with him,

26.66 and then We caused the others to drown.³⁵

26.67 In this [story], behold, there is a message [unto all men], even though most of them will not believe [in it].

26.68 And yet, verily, thy Sustainer - He alone - is almighty, a dispenser of grace!³⁶

26.69 AND CONVEY unto them³⁷ the story of Abraham

26.70 [how it was] when he asked his father and his people, "What is it that you worship?"

26.71 They answered: "We worship idols, and we remain ever devoted to them."

26.72 Said he: "Do [you really think that] they hear you when you invoke them,

26.73 or benefit you or do you harm?"

26.74 They exclaimed: "But we found our fore-fathers doing the same!"³⁸

26.75 Said [Abraham]: "Have you, then, ever con-sidered what it is that you have been worshipping-

26.76 you and those ancient forebears of yours?

26.77 "Now [as for me, I know that,] verily, these [false deities] are my enemies, [and that none is my helper] save the Sustainer of all the worlds,

26.78 who has created me and is the One who guides me,

26.79 and is the One who gives me to eat and to drink,

26.80 and when I fall ill, is the One who restores me to health,

26.81 and who will cause me to die and then will bring me back to life-

26.82 and who, I hope, will forgive me my faults on Judgment Day!

26.83 "O my Sustainer! Endow me with the ability to judge [between right and wrong], and make me one with the righteous,

26.84 and grant me the power to convey the truth unto those who will come after me,³⁹

26.85 and place me among those who shall inherit the garden of bliss!

26.86 "And forgive my father - for, verily, he is among those who have gone astray⁴⁰ -

26.87 and do not put me to shame on the Day when all shall be raised from the dead:⁴¹

26.88 the Day on which neither wealth will be of any use, nor children,

26.89 [and when] only he [will be happy] who comes before God with a heart free of evil!"

26.90 For, [on that Day,] paradise will be brought within sight of the God-conscious,

26.91 whereas the blazing fire witi be laid open before those who had been lost in grievous error;

26.92 and they will be asked: "Where now is all that you were wont to worship

26.93 instead of God?⁴² Can these [things and beings] be of any help to you or to themselves?"

26.94 Thereupon they will be hurled into hell⁴³ - they, as well as all [others] who had been lost in grievous error,

26.95 and the hosts of Iblis - all together.⁴⁴

26.96 And there and then, blaming one another,⁴⁵ they [who had grievously sinned in life] will exclaim:

26.97 "By God, we were most obviously astray

26.98 when we deemed you [false deities] equal to the Sustainer of all the worlds-

26.99 yet they who have seduced us [into believing in you] are the truly guilty ones!⁴⁶

26.100 And now we have none to intercede for us,

26.101 nor any loving friend.

26.102 Would that we had a second chance [in life],⁴⁷ so that we could be among the believers!"

26.103 In all this, behold, there is a message [unto men], even though most of them will not believe [in it].

26.104 But, verily, thy Sustainer - He alone - is almighty, a dispenser of grace!⁴⁸

26.105 THE PEOPLE of Noah [too] gave the lie to [one of God's] message-bearers

26.106 when their brother Noah said unto them: "Will you not be conscious of God?

26.107 Behold, I am an apostle [sent by Him] to you, [and therefore] worthy of your trust:

26.108 be, then, conscious of God, and pay heed unto me!

26.109 "And no reward whatever do I ask of you for it: my reward rests with none but the Sustainer of all the worlds.

26.110 Hence, remain conscious of God. and pay heed unto me!"

26.111 They answered: "Shall we place our faith in thee, even though [only] the most abject [of people] follow thee?"⁴⁹

26.112 Said he: "And what knowledge could I have as to what they were doing [before they came to me]?

26.113 Their reckoning rests with none but my Sustainer: if you could but understand [this]!⁵⁰

26.114 Hence, I shall not drive away [any of] those [who profess to be] believers;

26.115 I am nothing but a plain warner."

26.116 Said they: "Indeed, if thou desist not, O Noah, thou wilt surely be stoned to death!"⁵¹

26.117 [Whereupon] he prayed: "O my Sustainer! Behold, my people have given me the lie:

26.118 hence, lay Thou wide open the truth between me and them,⁵² and save me and those of the believers who are with me!"

26.119 And so We saved him and those [who were] with him in the fully-laden ark,

26.120 and then We caused those who stayed behind to drown.⁵³

26.121 In this [story], behold, there is a message [unto men],⁵⁴ even though most of them will not believe [in it].

26.122 But, verily, thy Sustainer - He alone-is almighty, a dispenser of grace!

26.123 [AND the tribe of] Ad gave the lie to [one of God's] message-bearers

26.124 when their brother Hud⁵⁵ said unto them: "Will you not be conscious of God?

26.125 Behold, I am an apostle [sent by Him] to you, [and therefore] worthy of your trust:

26.126 be, then, conscious of God, and pay heed unto me!

26.127 "And no reward whatever do I ask of you for it: my reward rests with none but the Sustainer of all the worlds.

26.128 "Will you, in your wanton folly, build [idolatrous] altars on every height,⁵⁶

26.129 and make for yourselves mighty castles, [hoping] that you might become immortal?⁵⁷

26.130 And will you [always], whenever you lay hand [on others], lay hand [on them] cruelly, without any restraint?⁵⁸

26.131 "Be, then, conscious of God and pay heed unto me:

26.132 and [thus] be conscious of Him who has [so] amply provided you with all [the good] that you might think of⁵⁹ -

26.133 amply provided you with flocks, and children,

26.134 and gardens, and springs -:

26.135 for, verily, I fear lest suffering befall you on an awesome day!"

26.136 [But] they answered: "It is all one to us whether thou preaches" [something new] or art not of those who [like to] preach.

26.137 This [religion of ours] is none other than that to which our forebears clung,⁶⁰

26.138 and we are not going to be chastised [for adhering to it]!"

26.139 And so they gave him the lie: and thereupon We destroyed them. In this [story], behold, there is a message [unto men], even though most of them will not believe [in it].⁶¹

26.140 But, verily, thy Sustainer-He alone-is almighty. a dispenser of grace!

26.141 [AND the tribe of] Thamud gave the lie to [one of God's] message-bearers

26.142 when their brother Salih⁶² said unto them: "Will you not be conscious of God?"

26.143 Behold, I am an apostle [sent by Him] to you, [and therefore] worthy of your trust:

26.144 be, then, conscious of God, and pay heed unto me!

26.145 "And no reward whatever do I ask of you for it: my reward rests with none but the Sustainer of all the worlds.

26.146 "Do you think that you will be left secure [forever] in the midst of what you have here and now?⁶³ -

26.147 amidst [these] gardens and springs

26.148 and fields, and [these] palm-trees with slender spathes?-

26.149 and that you will [always be able to] hew dwellings out of the mountains with [the same] great skill?⁶⁴

26.150 "Be, then, conscious of God, and pay heed unto me,

26.151 and pay no heed to the counsel of those who are given to excesses-

26.152 those who spread corruption on earth instead of setting things to rights!"

26.153 Said they: "Thou art but one of the bewitched!

26.154 Thou art nothing but a mortal like ourselves! Come, then, forward with a token [of thy mission]⁶⁵ if thou art a man of truth!"

26.155 Replied he: "This she-camel⁶⁶ shall have a share of water, and you shall have a share of water, on the days appointed [therefor];⁶⁷

26.156 and do her no harm, lest suffering befall you on an awesome day!"

26.157 But they cruelly slaughtered her - and then they had cause to regret it.⁶⁸

26.158 for the suffering [predicted by Salih] befell them [then and there]. In this [story], behold, there is a message [unto men], even though most of them will not believe [in it].⁶⁹

26.159 But, verily, thy Sustainer - He alone - is almighty, a dispenser of grace!

26.160 [AND] the people of Lot⁷⁰ gave the lie to [one of God's] message-bearers

26.161 when their brother Lot said unto them: "Will you not be conscious of God?"

26.162 Behold, I am an apostle [sent by Him] to you, [and therefore] worthy of your trust:

26.163 be, then, conscious of God, and pay heed unto me!

26.164 "And no reward whatever do I ask of you for it: my reward rests with none but the Sustainer of all the worlds.

26.165 "Must you, of all people, [lustfully] approach men,

26.166 keeping yourselves aloof from all the [lawful] spouses whom your Sustainer has created for you? Nay, but you are people who transgress all bounds of what is right!"

26.167 Said they: "Indeed, if thou desist not, O Lot, thou wilt most certainly be expelled [from this township]!"

26.168 [Lot] exclaimed: "Behold, I am one of those who utterly abhor your doings!"

26.169 [And then he prayed:] "O my Sustainer! Save me and my household from all that they are doing!"

26.170 Thereupon We saved him and all his household -

26.171 all but an old woman, who was among those that stayed behind;⁷¹

26.172 and then We utterly destroyed the others,

26.173 and rained down upon them a rain [of destruction]:⁷² and dire is such rain upon all who let themselves be warned [to no avail]!⁷³

26.174 In this [story], behold, there is a message [unto men], even though most of them will not believe [in it].

26.175 But, verily, thy Sustainer - He alone - is almighty, a dispenser of grace!

26.176 [AND] the dwellers of the wooded dales [of Madyan] gave the lie to [one of God's] message-bearers

26.177 when their brother Shutayb⁷⁴ said unto them: "Will you not be conscious of God?"

26.178 Behold, I am an apostle [sent by Him] to you, [and therefore] worthy of your trust:

26.179 be, then, conscious of God, and pay heed unto me!

26.180 "And no reward whatever do I ask of you for it: my reward rests with none but the Sustainer of all the worlds.

26.181 "[Always] give full measure, and be not among those who [unjustly] cause loss [to others];

26.182 and [in all your dealings] weigh with a true balance,

26.183 and do not deprive people of what is rightfully theirs;⁷⁵ and do not act wickedly on earth by spreading corruption,

26.184 but be conscious of Him who has created you, just as [He created] those countless generations of old!"⁷⁶

26.185 Said they: "Thou art but one of the be-witched,

26.186 for thou art nothing but a mortal like ourselves! And. behold. we think that thou art a consummate liar!"⁷⁷

26.187 Cause, then, fragments of the sky to fall down upon us, if thou art a man of truth!"

26.188 Answered [Shu'ayb]: "My Sustainer knows fully well what you are doing."

26.189 But they gave him the lie. And thereupon suffering overtook them on a day dark with shadows.⁷⁸ and, verily, it was the suffering of an awesome day!

26.190 In this [story], behold, there is a message [unto men], even though most of them will not believe [in it].

26.191 But, verily, thy Sustainer - He alone - is almighty, a dispenser of grace!⁷⁹

26.192 NOW, BEHOLD, this [divine writ] has indeed been bestowed from on high by the Sustainer of all the worlds:⁸⁰

26.193 trustworthy divine inspiration has alighted with it from on high

26.194 upon thy heart, [O Muhammad,]⁸¹ so that thou mayest be among those who preach

26.195 in the clear Arabic tongue.⁸²

26.196 And, verily, [the essence of] this [revelation] is indeed found in the ancient books of divine wisdom [as well].⁸³

26.197 Is it not evidence enough for them⁸⁴ that [so many] learned men from among the children of Israel have recognized this [as true]?⁸⁵

26.198 But [even] had We bestowed it from on high upon any of the non-Arabs,

26.199 and had he recited it unto them [in his own tongue], they would not have believed in it.⁸⁶

26.200 Thus have We caused this [message] to pass [unheeded] through the hearts of those who are lost in sin:⁸⁷

26.201 they will not believe in it till they behold the grievous suffering

26.202 that will come upon them [on resurrection,] all of a sudden, without their being aware [of its approach];

26.203 and then they will exclaim, "Could we have a respite?"⁸⁸

26.204 Do they, then, [really] wish that Our chastisement be hastened on?⁸⁹

26.205 But hast thou ever considered [this]: If We do allow them to enjoy [this life] for some years,

26.206 and thereupon that [chastisement] which they were promised befalls them-

26.207 of what avail to them will be all their past enjoyments?

26.208 And withal, never have We destroyed any community unless it had been warned

26.209 and reminded:⁹⁰ for, never do We wrong [anyone].

26.210 And [this divine writ is such a reminder:] no evil spirits have brought it down:⁹¹

26.211 for, neither does it suit their ends, nor is it in their power [to impart it to man]:

26.212 verily, [even] from hearing it are they utterly debarred!

26.213 Hence, [O man,] do not invoke any other deity side by side with God, lest thou find thyself among those who are made to suffer [on Judgment Day].⁹²

26.214 And warn [whomever thou canst reach, beginning with] thy kinsfolk,⁹³

26.215 and spread the wings of thy tenderness over all of the believers who may follow thee;⁹⁴

26.216 but if they disobey thee, say, "I am free of responsibility for aught that you may do!"

26.217 and place thy trust in the Almighty, the Dispenser of Grace,

26.218 who sees thee when thou standest [alone],⁹⁵

26.219 and [sees] thy behaviour among those who prostrate themselves [before Him].⁹⁶

26.220 for, verily, He alone is all-hearing, all-knowing!

26.221 [And] shall I tell you upon whom it is that those evil spirits descend?

26.222 They descend upon all sinful self-deceivers⁹⁷

26.223 who readily lend ear [to every falsehood], and most of whom lie to others as well.⁹⁸

26.224 And as for the poets⁹⁹ - [they, too, are prone to deceive themselves: and so, only] those who are lost in grievous error would follow them.

26.225 Art thou not aware that they roam confusedly through all the valleys [of words and thoughts],¹⁰⁰

26.226 and that they [so often] say what they do not do [or feel]?

26.227 [Most of them are of this kind -] save those who have attained to faith, and do righteous deeds, and remember God unceasingly, and defend them-selves [only] after having been wronged,¹⁰¹ and [trust in God's promise that] those who are bent on wrong-doing will in time come to know how evil a turn their destinies are bound to take!¹⁰²

Author Comments

1 - The letters ta, sin and mim are among the mysterious, disjointed letter-symbols (al-muqatta'at) preceding some of the chapters of the Qur'an (see Appendix II).

2 - See surah {12}, note [2].

3 - See notes [3] and [4] on [18:6](#).

4 - Inasmuch as the spiritual value of man's faith depends on its being an outcome of free choice and not of compulsion, the visible or audible appearance of a "message from the skies" would, by its very obviousness, nullify the element of free choice and, therefore, deprive man's faith in that message of all its moral significance.

5 - See {6:4-5} and the corresponding note [4].

6 - The above two verses appear eight times in this surah. Apart from the present instance, they conclude, like a refrain, each of the subsequent seven stories of earlier prophets, which - by means of their, in places, almost identical phrasing - are meant to stress the essential identity of the ethical teachings of all the prophets, as well as to illustrate the statement, in verse {5}, that a rejection of God's messages is a recurrent phenomenon in the history of mankind despite the fact that His existence is clearly manifested in all living creation.

7 - Lit., "Will they not be [or "become"] conscious [of me]?" Zamakhshari and Razi understand this rhetorical question in the sense apparent in my rendering, namely, as a statement of fact.

8 - Cf. {20:25-34} and the corresponding notes. In the present context, stress is laid on the deep humility of Moses, who considered himself incapable of fulfilling the task for which he had been chosen, and asked God to entrust it to Aaron instead.

9 - Sc., "and thus frustrate my mission". This is a reference to Moses' killing of the Egyptian which was the cause of his subsequent flight from his native land (cf. [28:15](#) ff.)

10 - Lit., "thou didst commit thy deed which thou hast committed" - a construction meant to express the speaker's utter condemnation of the deed referred to: hence, my interpolation of the word "heinous". As regards the above allusions to Moses' childhood and youth at Pharaoh's court, the manslaughter committed by him, and his flight from Egypt, see {28:4-22}.

11 - As is shown in {28:15-16}, after having killed the Egyptian, Moses suddenly realized that he had committed a grievous sin (see also note [15] on the last two sentences of [28:15](#)).

12 - See {28:4-5}.

13 - A reference to the terms in which Moses was to - and apparently did - announce his mission (see verse {16} above).

14 - Sc., "by the evidence of His creative will in all that exists": this proposition being, I believe, the main reason for a repetition of the story of Moses in the present surah. (Cf. also verse {28} above.)

15 - Lit., "Do you not hear?" - a rhetorical question meant to convey astonishment, indignation or derision, which may be idiomatically rendered in translation as above.

16 - Cf. {2:1-15}.

17 - In the religion of ancient Egypt, the king (or "Pharaoh", as each of the rulers was styled) represented an incarnation of the divine principle, and was considered to be a god in his own right. Hence, a challenge to his divinity implied a challenge to the prevalent religious system as a whole.

18 - For this rendering of the term mubin, see note [2] on [12:1](#).

19 - See {7:107-108} and the corresponding note [85], as well as [20:22](#), [27:12](#) and [28:32](#).

20 - Cf. {7:109-110} and the corresponding note [86].

21 - There is no doubt that these "sorcerers" were priests of the official Amon cult, in which magic played an important role. Thus, their victory over Moses would constitute a public vindication of the state religion.

22 - See note [88] on [7:113](#).

23 - The reason for their premature sense of triumph is given in [7:116](#) ("they cast a spell upon the people's eyes, and struck them with awe") and {20:66-67} ("by virtue of their sorcery, their [magic] ropes and staffs seemed to him to be moving rapidly; and in his heart, Moses became apprehensive").

24 - See note [89] on [7:117](#).

25 - See note [91] on [7:123](#).

26 - I.e., "he is so superior a sorcerer that he could be your teacher".

27 - See notes [44] and [45] on {5: 33}, and note [92] on [7:124](#), which explain the repeated stress on "great numbers" in the above sentence.

28 - I.e., after the period of plagues with which the Egyptians were visited (cf. [7:130](#) ff.).

29 - Lit., "a small band": Zamakhshari, however, suggests that in this context the adjective qalilun is expressive of contempt, and does not necessarily denote "few in numbers".

30 - Thus the Qur'an illustrates the psychological truth that, as a rule, a dominant nation is unable really to understand the desire for liberty on the part of the group or groups which it oppresses, and therefore attributes their rebelliousness to no more than unreasonable hatred and blind envy of the strong.

31 - This is apparently an allusion to the honourable state and the prosperity which the children of Israel had enjoyed in Egypt for a few generations after the time of Joseph - i.e., before a new Egyptian dynasty dispossessed them of their wealth and reduced them to the bondage from which Moses was to free them. In the above passage, Pharaoh seeks to justify his persecution of the Israelites by emphasizing their dislike (real or alleged) of the Egyptians.

32 - This parenthetical sentence echoes the allusion, in [7:137](#), to the period of prosperity and honour which the children of Israel were to enjoy in Palestine after their sufferings in Egypt. The reference to "heritage" is, in this and in similar contexts, a metonym for God's bestowal on the oppressed of a life of well-being and dignity.

33 - See {20: 77} and the corresponding note [61]. Cf. also the Biblical account (Exodus xiv, 21), according to which "the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided".

34 - Lit., "the others".

35 - From various indications in the Bible (in particular, Exodus xiv, 2 and 9), it appears that the miracle of the crossing of the Red Sea took place at the north-western extremity of what is known today as the Gulf of Suez. In those ancient times it was not as deep as it is now, and in some respects may have resembled the shallow part of the North Sea between the mainland and the Frisian Islands, with its total ebbs which lay bare the sandbanks and make them temporarily passable, followed by sudden, violent tides which submerge them entirely.

36 - See note [6] on verses {8-9}.

37 - I.e., to the kind of people spoken of in verses {3-8} of this surah.

38 - The particle *bal* at the beginning of the sentence expresses astonishment. Thus, evading a direct answer to Abraham's criticism of idol-worship, his people merely stress its antiquity, forgetting - as Zamakhshari points out - that "ancient usage and precedence in time are no proof of [a concept's] soundness". Razi, for his part, states that the above verse represents "one of the strongest [Qur'anic] indications of the immorality (*fasad*) inherent in [the principle of] *taqlid*", i.e., the blind, unquestioning adoption of religious concepts or practices on the basis of one's uncritical faith in no more than the "authority" of a scholar or religious leader.

39 - Lit., "grant me a language of truth among the others" or "the later ones". For alternative interpretations of this phrase, see note [36] on [19:50](#).

40 - Cf. {19:47-48}.

41 - Sc., "by letting me see my father among the damned" (Zamakhshari).

42 - Or: "beside God". Whenever the relative pronoun ma ("that which" or "all that which") is used in the Qur'an with reference to false objects of worship, it indicates not merely inanimate things (like idols, fetishes, supposedly "holy" relics, etc.) or falsely deified saints, dead or alive, but also forces of nature, real or imaginary, as well as man's "worship" of wealth, power, social position, etc. (See also {10:28-29} and the corresponding notes.)

43 - Lit., "into it".

44 - Cf. {2: 24}- "the fire whose fuel is human beings and stones" - and the corresponding note [16]. The "hosts of Iblis" are the forces of evil ("satan ") frequently mentioned in the Qur'an in connection with man's sinning (see note [10] on [2:14](#), the first half of note [16] on {15: 17}, as well as note [52] on [19:68](#); also cf. [19:83](#) and the corresponding note [72]).

45 - Lit., "while they quarrel with one another".

46 - Lit., "yet none but those guilty ones (al-mujrimun) have led us astray": cf. [7:38](#), {33:67-68}, {38:60-61}

and the corresponding notes.

47 - Lit., "would that there were a return for us". See also {6:27-28} and the corresponding note.

48 - Sc., "and He may grant forgiveness to whomever He wills".

49 - See note [47] on [11:27](#).

50 - This is obviously a retort to the unbelievers' suggestion (elliptically implied here) that those "abject" followers of Noah had declared their faith in him, not out of conviction, but only in order to gain some material advantages. Noah's answer embodies a cardinal principle of Qur'anic ethics and, hence, of Islamic Law: No human being has the right to sit in judgment on another person's faith or hidden motives; whereas God knows what is in the hearts of men, society may judge only by external evidence (az-zahir), which comprises a person's words as well as deeds. Thus, if anyone says, "I am a believer", and does not act or speak in a manner contradicting his professed faith, the community must consider him a believer.

51 - Lit., "thou wilt surely be among those who are stoned [to death]".

52 - Or: "decide Thou with a [clear] decision between me and them". My choice of the primary significance of iftah ("lay open", i.e., the truth) has been explained in note [72] on the last sentence of [7:89](#)

53 - The story of Noah and his people, as well as of the Deluge, is given in greater detail in {11:25-48}.

54 - For the message specifically alluded to here, see verses {111-115}, as well as note [50] above.

55 - See [7:65](#) and the corresponding note [48].

56 - The noun ayah, which primarily denotes "a sign" or "a token", evidently refers here to the ancient Semitic custom of worshipping the tribal gods on hilltops, which were crowned to this end by sacrificial altars or monuments, each of them devoted to a particular deity: hence my rendering of ayah, in this particular context, as "altars" (in the plural).

57 - The meaning could be either "hoping that you might live in them forever", or "that you might gain immortal renown for having built them".

58 - The term jabbar, when applied to man, as a rule denotes one who is haughty, overbearing, exorbitant and cruel, and does not submit to any moral restraints in his dealings with those who are weaker than himself. Sometimes (as, e.g., in [11:59](#) or [14:15](#)) this term is used to describe a person's negative ethical attitude, and in that case it may be rendered as "enemy of the truth". In the present instance, however, stress is laid on the tyrannical behaviour of the tribe of 'Ad, evidently relating to their warlike conflicts with other people: and in this sense it expresses a Qur'anic prohibition, valid for all times, of all unnecessary cruelty in warfare, coupled with the positive, clearly-implied injunction to subordinate every act of war - as well as the decision to wage war as such - to moral considerations and restraints.

59 - Lit., "with all that you know" or "that you are [or "might be"] aware of".

60 - Lit., "the innate habit of the earlier people (al-awwalin)". The noun khuluq denotes one's "nature" in the sense of "innate disposition" (tabi'ah) or "moral character" (Taj al-'Arus); hence the use of this term to describe "that to which one clings", i.e., one's "innate habit" or "custom", and, in a specific sense, one's religion (ibid.).

61 - The message referred to here is contained in verses {128-130}, which point out the three cardinal sins resulting from man's inordinate striving for power: worship of anything apart from God, self-admiring search for "glory", and cruelty or harshness towards one's fellow-men.

62 - For the story of Salih and the tribe of Thamud, see [7:73](#) and the corresponding note [56]; also, the version appearing in {11:61-68}.

63 - Lit., "of what is here", i.e., on earth. In the original, this question has a direct form, thus: "Will you be left secure...?", etc. (See also note [69] below.)

64 - See note [59] on [7:74](#).

65 - Tabari: "...that is to say, 'with an indication (dalalah) and a proof that thou art to be trusted as regards thy claim that thou hast been sent to us by God'."

66 - Cf. the second paragraph of [7:73](#) - "This she-camel belonging to God shall be a token for you" - and the corresponding note [57], which explains that the "token" spoken of by Salih was to consist in the manner in which the tribe would treat the animal.

67 - Lit., "on a day appointed", which may mean either "each on a day appointed" (i.e., by turns), or, more probably - because more in consonance with the tribal customs of ancient Arabia - "on the days appointed for the watering of camels": implying that on those days the ownerless she-camel should receive a full share of water side by side with the herds and flocks belonging to the tribe.

68 - Lit., "they became regretful". For my rendering of 'aqaruha as "they cruelly slaughtered her", see note [61] on [7:77](#).

69 - In my opinion, the specific message alluded to here relates, in the first instance, to the individual person's emotional reluctance to visualize the limited, transitory character of his own life on earth (hinted at in verses {146-149} above) and, hence, the judgment that awaits everyone in the life to come; and, secondly, to the element of compassion for all other living beings as a basis of true morality.

70 - The story of Lot and the sinful people among whom he lived is narrated in greater detail in {11:69-83}.

71 - As is evident from [7:83](#), [11:81](#), [27:57](#) and {29:32-33}, the old woman was Lots' wife - a native of Sodom - who chose to remain with her own people instead of accompanying her husband, whom she thus betrayed (cf. also [66:10](#)).

72 - See [11:82](#) and the corresponding note [114].

73 - Or, in the past tense: "dire was the rain upon those who had been warned" - in which case this sentence would refer specifically to the sinful people of Sodom and Gomorrah. However, it is much more probable that its purport is general (see note [115] on the last sentence of [11:83](#)). Zamakhshari's interpretation of the above sentence is analogous to mine.

74 - See note [67] on the first sentence of [7:85](#). The story of Shu'ayb and the people of Madyan (the "wooded dales") is given in greater detail in {11:84-95}.

75 - Cf. sBrah {7}, note [68].

76 - An allusion to the ephemeral character of man's life on earth and, by implication, to God's judgment.

77 - Lit., "that thou art indeed one of the liars".

78 - This may refer either to the physical darkness which often accompanies volcanic eruptions and earthquakes (which, as shown in [7:91](#), overtook the people of Madyan), or to the spiritual darkness and gloom which comes in the wake of belated regrets.

79 - With this refrain ends the cycle of seven stories showing that spiritual truth in all its manifestations - whether it relates to an intellectual realization of God's existence, to a refusal to regard power, wealth or fame as real values, or to the virtues of compassion and kindness towards all that lives on earth - has at all times been unacceptable to the overwhelming majority of mankind, and has always been submerged under the average man's blindness and deafness of heart. The very repetition of phrases, sentences and situations in all of the above stories - or, rather, in the above versions of these oft-narrated stories - tends to bring home to us the fact that the human situation as such never really changes, and that, in consequence, those who preach the truth must always struggle against human greed, power-hunger and proneness to self-adulation.

80 - Thus the discourse returns to the theme enunciated at the beginning of this surah, namely, the phenomenon of divine revelation as exemplified in the Qur'an, and men's reactions to it.

81 - According to almost all the classical commentators, the expression ar-ruh al-amin (lit., "the faithful [or "trustworthy"] spirit") is a designation of Gabriel, the Angel of Revelation, who, by virtue of his purely spiritual, functional nature, is incapable of sinning and cannot, therefore, be other than utterly faithful to the trust reposed in him by God (cf. [16:50](#)). On the other hand, since the term ruh is often used in the Qur'an in the sense of "divine inspiration" (see surah {2}, note [71], and surah {16}, note [2]), it may have this latter meaning in the above context as well, especially in view of the statement that it had "alighted from on high upon the heart" of the Prophet.

82 - See [14:4](#) - "never have We sent forth any apostle otherwise than [with a message] in his own people's tongue" - and the corresponding note [3]. That the message of the Qur'an is, nevertheless,

universal has been stressed in many of its verses (e.g., in [7:158](#) or [25:1](#)). The other prophets mentioned in the Qur'an who "preached in the Arabic tongue" were Ishmael, Hud, Salih and Shu'ayb, all of them Arabians. In addition, if we bear in mind that Hebrew and Aramaic are but ancient Arabic dialects, all the Hebrew prophets may be included among "those who preached in the Arabic tongue".

83 - Lit., "in the scriptures (zabur, sing. zabor) of the ancients" (see surah {21}, note [101]). This interpretation of the above verse - advanced among others by Zamakhshari and Baydawi (and, according to the former, attributed to Imam Abu Hanifah as well) - is in full consonance with the oft-repeated Qur'anic doctrine that the basic teachings revealed to Muhammad are in their purport (ma'ani) identical with those preached by the earlier prophets. Another, more popular interpretation is, "...this [Qur'an] has been mentioned [or "foretold"] in the earlier scriptures" (see in this connection note [33] on [2:42](#) and - with particular reference to a prediction made by Jesus - note [6] on [61:6](#)).

84 - I.e., for those who disbelieve in the prophethood of Muhammad.

85 - Sc., "and in consequence have become Muslims": for instance, 'Abd Allah ibn Salam, Ka'b ibn Malik and other learned Jews of Medina in the lifetime of the Prophet, Ka'b al-Ahbar the Yemenite and a number of his compatriots during the reign of 'Umar, and countless others throughout the world who embraced Islam in the course of centuries. The reason why only learned Jews and not learned Christians as well are spoken of in this context lies in the fact that - contrary to the Torah, which still exists, albeit in a corrupted form - the original revelation granted to Jesus has been lost (see surah {3}, note [4]) and cannot, therefore, be cited in evidence of the basic identity of his teachings with those of the Qur'an.

86 - As the Qur'an points out in many places, most of the Meccan contemporaries of Muhammad refused in the beginning to believe in his prophethood on the ground that God could not have entrusted "a man from among themselves" with His message: and this in spite of the fact that the Qur'an was expressed "in the clear Arabic tongue", which they could fully understand: but (so the argument goes) if the Prophet had been a foreigner, and his message expressed in a non-Arabic tongue, they would have been even less prepared to accept it- for then they would have had the legitimate excuse that they were unable to understand it (cf. [41:44](#)).

87 - I.e., not to take root in their hearts, but to "go into one ear and out of the other". As regards Clod's "causing" this to happen, see surah {2}, note [7], and surah {14}, note [4].

88 - I.e., a second chance in life.

89 - For this sarcastic demand of the unbelievers, see [6:57](#) and [8:32](#), as well as the corresponding notes; also verse {187} of the present surah.

90 - Lit., "unless it had its warners by way of a reminder": see [6:131](#), [15:4](#), [20:134](#), and the corresponding notes.

91 - During the early years of his prophetic mission, some of Muhammad's Meccan opponents tried to explain the rhetorical beauty and persuasiveness of the Qur'an by insinuating that he was a soothsayer (kahin) in communion with all manner of dark forces and evil spirits (shayatin).

92 - The conjunctive particle fa at the beginning of this sentence (rendered here as "hence") evidently connects with verse {208} above. As shown in note [94] below, the whole of the present passage is addressed to man in general.

93 - A believer is morally obliged to preach the truth to all whom he can reach, but obviously he must begin with those who are nearest to him, and especially those who recognize his authority.

94 - For an explanation of the metaphorical expression "lower thy wing"-rendered by me as "spread the wings of thy tenderness" - see [17:24](#) and the corresponding note [28]. The phrase "all of the believers who follow thee" shows that (contrary to the assumption of most of the commentators) the above passage is not addressed to the Prophet - since all who believe in him are, by definition, his followers, and vice versa - but to everyone who chooses to be guided by the Qur'an, and who is herewith called upon to extend his loving kindness and care to all believers who may "follow" him, i.e., who may regard him as spiritually or intellectually superior or more experienced. This interpretation also explains verse {213} above: for whereas the exhortation contained in that verse is meaningful with regard to all who may listen to or read the Qur'an, it would be meaningless with reference to its Prophet, for whom the principle of God's oneness and uniqueness was the unquestionable beginning and end of all truth.

95 - According to Mujahid (as quoted by Tabari), this means "wherever thou mayest be". Other commentators take it to mean "when thou standest up for prayer", but this seems to be too narrow an interpretation.

96 - I.e., among the believers, as contrasted with those who "disobey thee" (see verse {216} above).

97 - The term affak, which literally denotes "a great [or "habitual"] liar", has here the meaning of "one who lies to himself": this is brought out in the next verse, which stresses the psychological fact that most of such self-deceivers readily lie to others as well.

98 - Lit., "most of them are lying".

99 - An allusion to the fact that some of the pagan Arabs regarded the Qur'an as a product of Muhammad's supposedly poetic mind. (See also [36:69](#) and the corresponding notes [38] and [39].)

100 - The idiomatic phrase hama fi widyan (lit., "he wandered [or "roamed"] through valleys") is used, as most of the commentators point out, to describe a confused or aimless - and often self-contradictory - play with words and thoughts. In this context it is meant to stress the difference between the precision of the Qur'an, which is free from all inner contradictions (cf. note [97] on [4:82](#)), and the vagueness often inherent in poetry.

101 - Thus the Qur'an makes it clear that a true believer may fight only in self-defence: cf. {22:39-40}, the earliest reference to war as such, and {2:190-194}, where the circumstances making war fully justified are further elaborated.

102 - Lit., "by what [kind of] turning they will turn".

[View Page](#)

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