

B. PROCLAMATION AND SUBSEQUENT EVENTS

5.4 SÚRA AL-A'RÁF

ثم بعثنا من بعدهم موسى بآياتنا إلى فرعون و ملائه فظلموا بها فانظر كيف كان عاقبة
المفسدين (١٠٣)

"Then We sent after them Músá with Our signs to the Pharaoh and his chiefs, but they unjustly rejected them, so look what was the end of those who rebelled" [Qur'án 7:103].

This elaborate súra discusses one prophet after another starting with Núḥ and terminating with Músá bin 'Imrán as the sixth prophet. The others discussed in between include Húd, Sálīḥ, Lúṭ and Shu'ayb [peace be upon them all].

The من بعدهم in هم is a reference to the afore-mentioned prophets from the beginning of this súra right to the present verses. The emphasis of this particular story is of شرح و تفصيل - "elucidation and detail" [al-Rází n.d:14/189]. The intensity of prophet Músá's struggle against an ignorant and foolish people is best exemplified by "...they unjustly rejected them {Our signs}."

فكفروا بآياتنا أجرى الظلم مجرى الكفر لأنهما من واد واحد

Wrongdoing and infidelity are put on equal terms as are polytheism and infidelity. In this way polytheism is viewed to be a great wrongdoing ان الشرك [al-Zamakhsharí 1966:2/100]. This is substantiated by al-Ṭabarí's interpretation:

فظلموا بها، بمعنى: كفروا بها، لأنَّ الظلم: وضع الشيء في غير موضعه..

It would be appropriate to say كفروا بها means فظلموا بها because {in this instance}

الظلم means placing a thing in the wrong position [al-Ṭabarí 1968:9/13].

According to al-Rází [n.d:14/190] the Pharaoh and his allies substituted denial in place of acknowledgement and infidelity in place of faith.

"So look what was the end of those who rebelled" [7:103].

يقول جل ثناؤه لنبيه محمد صلى الله عليه و سلم: فانظر يا محمد بعين قلبك كيف كان عاقبة هؤلاء الذين أفسدوا في الأرض.

Allah Almighty says to His Messenger Muhammad [p.b.u.h]: "Look! O Muhammad with the eye of your heart (i.e. your soul) what was the result of those who rebelled on earth" [al-Tabarí 1968:9/13].

This is a reference to ruin and destruction which will be the fate of a corrupter associated with "polytheism, infidelity and disobedience" [al-Jazá'irí 1987:2/60].

Prophet Músá's proclamation as a messenger and the subsequent statement justifying his status evince interesting insights from our selected commentators.

و قال موسى يفرعون إني رسول من رب العالمين (١٠٤) حقيق على أن لا أقول¹⁰⁹
على الله إلا الحقّ قد جئكم ببينة من ربكم فأرسل معي بنى إسرائيل (١٠٥) قال إن كنت
جئت بأية فأت بها إن كنت من الصادقين (١٠٦)

[And] Músá said: " 'O Pharaoh! I am a messenger from the Lord of the Worlds. Proper it is for me that I say nothing about my Lord, but the truth. I have come to you with clear proof from your Lord. So let the Children of Israel depart with me.' He [i.e. Pharaoh] said: 'If you have come with a sign, bring it forth if you are sincere' " [Qur'án 7:104-7].

It appears that the above statement is placed in systematic order of speech in which the prophet says "I am a messenger of Allah and a messenger of Allah does

109. Reciters differ in the recitation of الله لا أقول على . The most prominent recitations are those of Náfí, 'Abd Allah and 'Ubayy [al-Zamakhsharí 1966:2/101].

not speak, but the truth." The first premise **قد جئكم بيينة من ربكم** is a mystery whereas the command **فأرسل معى بنى إسرائيل** is obvious. There is no evidence to suggest the veracity of the first statement, however the order is evident in **فأرسل معى بنى إسرائيل**¹¹⁰.

The authenticity of prophet Músá's statement is based on the following premises:

- the existence of the deity;
- the fact that he was sent to show the miracle in accordance with his call;
- fulfilling the command would prove his honesty and sincerity.

If one can assume that the Pharaoh had not challenged Músá [p.b.u.h] on any one of these premises, except in requesting a miracle, this would be a grave error on his part and would contribute to the veracity of the above-mentioned premises.

Pharaoh's awareness of Allah is mentioned in Súra **٢٤ Há**¹¹¹ as well. If the display of the miracle indicates Allah's existence at first and then verifies Músá's authenticity as the messenger, then Pharaoh's ignorance is justified. But the fact that he first requested a demonstration and evidence of the above-mentioned factors leads to the conclusion about his awareness of Allah [al-Rází n.d:14/191].

قَأَلَى عَصَاه فِإَذَا هَى ثَعْبَان مَبِين (١٠٧) وَ نَزَع¹¹² يَدَه فِإَذَا هَى بِيضَاءَ لِلنَّظَرِين (١٠٨) قَالَ
 الْمَأْ مِنْ قَوْمِ فِرْعَوْنَ إِنَّ هَذَا لَسِحْرٌ عَلِيمٌ (١٠٩) يَرِيدُ أَنْ يَخْرِجَكُم مِّنْ أَرْضِكُمْ فَمَاذَا
 تَأْمُرُونَ (١١٠)

110."Leave them until they depart with me, we will then return to the holy land which is their homeland and that of their fathers." Similarly on the death of Yúsuf [p.b.u.h] the Asbát dispersed and became extinct as they were enslaved by the Pharaoh [al-Zamakhsharí 1966:2/101].

111. Sources reveal that he was aware of Allah's existence, but it was his obstinacy and pride that marred him from accepting the truth.

112. The term 'naza'a' in terminology is an expression indicating removal of a thing from its {original} position.

Then he cast his rod and it was a manifest serpent! And he drew out his hand, it was white for the onlookers. The leaders among the Pharaoh's people said: " 'Indeed this is a well-versed sorcerer.' 'He wants to drive you out from your land, so what do you advise?' " [Qur'án 7:107-10].

This transformation has been denied by the naturalists who assume that the change increases reliance on a priori knowledge, which {they consider} to be groundless ما يفضى إلى الباطل فهو باطل for what leads to falsehood is inevitably false. In al-Rází's [n.d:14/192-3] opinion if this transformation necessitates such reliance then we would agree that the huge serpent developed from the small rod. Similarly if we concur that a human, has emerged as a phenomenon at one stroke and not from two parents then by opening ourselves to these changes we subject ourselves to ridicule by the rationalists. Factors which nullify a priori knowledge draw one into sophism which in itself is futile.

This extraordinary transformation has been discussed by the following:

- ❑ The *Ash'arites* endorse the idea that humans, animals and plants develop all at once without previous constituents. They also maintain that the atom is characterised by knowledge, intelligence and power.
- ❑ *Mu'tazilites* oppose this by denying that atoms are characterised by knowledge and life.
- ❑ Philosophers refute the *Ash'arite* view entirely, alleging that it is not possible for things to occur and penetrate existence, except by a special and determined method.

Al-Rází [n.d:14/196] poses the following question:

One miracle was sufficient, would a combination of the two seem futile?

Most of the evidence is designated to increase certainty and eliminate doubt.

Heretics view both miracles as being one. In a sense this was a proof of prophet Músá's strength and also a nullification of the view of the opposition.

The hand was endowed with transcendent luminosity in token of his prophethood and not "leprous as snow"¹¹³ [Asad 1980:219].

"Indeed this is a well-versed sorcerer" [7:109].

Al-Ṭabarí [1968:9/16] compares sorcery to the rain of the earth. When rain pours heavily it uproots the plants and turns the earth upside-down causing confusion. Sorcery is similar as it deludes one from perceiving a situation from what it actually is.

Al-Zamakhsharí [1966:2/102] states that these words can be traced to the pharaoh in *súra Shu'ará'*:

قاله إبتداء فتلقنه منه الملاً فقالوه لأعقابهم

He said it at the beginning so the leaders learnt from him and related it to their successors.

"He wants to drive you out from your land, so what do you advise?" [7:110].

Al-Jazá'irí in *Súra Baqara* (2:61) and *Súra Shu'ará'* (3:302) interprets this as Pharaoh "levelling a charge" against the prophet. He is employing diplomatic delusion to agitate the people against Músá [p.b.u.h] creating a scenario in which Músá wants to occupy his land and cause the expulsion of his people.

This question was set forward by the Pharaoh as a response to the leaders' statement يريد أن يخرجكم, with the address in the plural form. Had this statement been from the people they would not have referred to him in the plural unless they were emphasising his importance or were referring to a group of senior members in his service. That this was a continuation of their speech is highly unlikely which is substantiated by al-Ṭabarí's [1968:9/16] view: the subject refers to the Pharaoh without direct mention of him.

قالوا أرجه و أخاه و أرسل فى المدائن حشرين (١١١) يأتوك بكل سحر عليم (١١٢) و جاء
السحرة فرعون قالوا إن لنا لأجرا إن كنا نحن الغالبين (١١٣) قال نعم و إنكم لمن
المقربين (١١٤)

113. This is stated in the Bible (Exodus iv:6).

They said, " 'Delay him and his brother, and send crowds to the cities, that they bring to you well-versed sorcerers.'¹¹⁴ And so the sorcerers came to the Pharaoh. They said: 'Indeed there will be a reward for us if we are the victors.' He [i.e. the pharaoh] said, 'Yes and you will be of those who will be close {to me}' " [Qur'án 7:111-14].

أرجه - its connotations are أخره and أحبس. According to researches this connotation is weak: in language إرجاء is تأخير and not الحبس [al-Rází:14/198-9]. Reciters differ in the recitation: Madinan and Iraqi¹¹⁵ reciters read it as أرجه, Kufans as أرجه and Basrans as أرجئه. The delay has been reiterated in súra *Shu'ará'* and is interpreted as a ploy for alleviating suspicion¹¹⁶ among the people as well as hindering Músá [p.b.u.h] from providing any proof. The sorcerers should emerge from the Egyptian areas.

و جاء السحرة فرعون قالوا إن لنا لأجرا إن كنا نحن الغالبين (١١٣)
 في الكلام محذوف اكتفى بدلالة من إظهاره، و هو: فأرسل في المدائن حاشرين يحشرون
 السحرة، فجاء السحرة فرعون....

In this statement there is elision whose manifestation with proof suffices, and that is: he sent people into the cities to gather the sorcerers, so the sorcerers came to the Pharaoh... [al-Tabarí 1968:9/18].

114. There were seventy sorcerers [primarily from Upper Egypt], excluding the chief sorcerer. The one responsible for teaching them the art of sorcery was a Magian from the people of Naynawi- the town of prophet Yúnus [p.b.u.h] in the proximity of Mosul. This verse also refers to Allah's having made miracles available to every prophet of a category that was generally applicable to the people at the time e.g. during the Músá [p.b.u.h] era his miracle was similar to sorcery, though totally divergent from it [al-Rází n.d:14/200].

115. This is the reading preferred by al-Tabarí [1968:9/17], although other readings are permissible.

116. The pharaoh's intention was to kill prophet Músá [p.b.u.h] and this would arouse suspicion among the people.

قالوا إن لنا لأجرا إن كنا نحن الغالبين

Their speech reflects great certainty and confidence. "The preceding *la* indicates emphasis which gives to this combination the meaning of a 'great reward' " [Asad 1980:219].

و انكم لمن المقربين

Its co-ordination is to an omitted particle which is replaced by a particle of affirmation. To illustrate this al-Zamakhsharí [1966:2/102] renders the following:

أراد انى لا أقتصر بكم على الثواب وحده، و ان لكم ما يقل معه الثواب و هو التقريب و التعظيم ...

"I will not confine you to recompense solely, but what is connected to it and that is closeness and honour..." [al-Zamakhsharí 1966:2/102].

Al-Rází [n.d:14/201] argues that this reward would elevate the pharaoh's status as well.

قالوا يموسى إِمَّا أن تلقى و إِمَّا أن نكون نحن الملقين (١١٥) قال ألقوا فلما ألقوا سحروا أعين الناس و استرهبوهم¹¹⁷ و جآءوا بسحر عظيم (١١٦)

They said: " 'O Músá! Cast or will we be the [first] to cast?' He said: 'Cast!' " and when they cast they bewitched the people's eyes and frightened them and produced a great spell [Qur'án 7:115-17].

The above reflects their observance of Músá [p.b.u.h]'s refined character when he accorded them the right to cast first. According to mystics when they observed this there was no question that Allah had granted them faith. It was not their intention to begin casting their rods.

117. The *سين* is for emphasis.

وإِذَا أَنْ نَكُونُ نَحْنُ الْمَلْقِينَ

لأنهم ذكروا الضمير المتصل و أكدوه بالضمير المنفصل و جعلوا الخبر معرفة لا نكرة .

They mention their hesitation by means of the pronominal suffix and emphasise it with a detached pronoun, thus making the predicate definite [al-Zamakhsharí 1966:2/103].

The sorcerers displayed cordiality, humility and openmindedness in their interaction at this point, but Músá [p.b.u.h] was aware that once they had exhausted their strength the miracle would gain mastery [al- Zamakhsharí 1966:2/543].

The relevance of prophet Músá's permitting them to cast their rods whilst knowing that it was much the same as infidelity has been discussed in Súrát Tá há as well. The underlying reasons reflected in both súras are as ff:

- ❑ they should be aware that what he was going to do was real;
- ❑ he wanted to prove that it was sorcery as opposed to the miracle he was about to present and thus eliminate doubt.

"When they cast they bewitched the people's eyes" [7:116].

This sorcery was an incitement to distortion. Clearly, they had distorted the situation by staining the ropes with mercury. And when the sun's rays touched them there was a spontaneous movement and the onlookers were disillusioned [al-Rází n.d:14/203].

و أوحيناً إلى موسى أن ألق عصاك فإذا هي تلقف ما يأفكون (١١٧) فوق الحق و بطل ما

كانوا يعملون (١١٨) فغلبوا هنالك وانقلبوا صغرين (١١٩)

And We inspired Músá saying: "Cast your rod and it swallowed up what they had been lying." The truth was confirmed and that which they were doing was to no avail. Thus they were defeated there and disparaged [Qur'án 7:117-19].

In throwing the rod the only fear was on account of the delay in demonstrating the proof.

118 ما يأفكون (أفك) - تلقف in language is similar to distortion. The implication is that Músá's miracle was genuine as opposed to the sorcerers make-believe feat.

"The truth was confirmed and that which they were doing was to no avail" [7:118].

قال اهل المعانى: الوقوع : ظهور الشيء بوجوده نازلا الى مستقره...

قال القاضى قوله (فوق الحق) يفيد قوة الثبوت و الظهور بحيث لا يصح فيه البطلان...

Lexicographers define وقوع as the appearance of a thing by virtue of its existence which descends to its place of rest...

Al-Qadí 'Abd al-Jabbár says فوق الحق highlights the intense certainty and manifestation in which there is no space for falsehood... [al-Rází n.d:14/205].

و ألقى السحرة ساجدين (١٢٠) قالوا آمنا برب العالمين (١٢١) رب موسى

و هرون (١٢٢)

And down fell the sorcerers prostrating. They said: "We believe in the Lord of the worlds. The Lord of Músá and Hárún" [Qur'án 7:120-22].

The above verses constitute an unconventional feature of the sorcerers and the subsequent strained conversation between them and the Pharaoh.

Their immediate prostration and the declaration of faith is interpreted as follows:

قال بعض السحرة لبعض هذا خارج عن السحر

Some of the sorcerers said to others: "This is beyond sorcery."

118. The term is read with the tasheed on the قاف, in contrast to its readings in both tá há and shu'ará'.

قال أصحابنا: دلت هذه الآية على أن غيرهم ألقاهم ساجدين ، و ما ذاك إلا الله رب العالمين

Our Companions say: "This verse indicates that some one else had thrust them into prostration, it was none other than the Lord of the worlds."

قالت المعتزلة: أنهم لما شاهدوا الآية العظيمة والمعجزات القاهرة. لم يتمالكوا أن وقعوا ساجدين ، فصار كأن ملقيا ألقاهم.

The *Mu'tazilite* say: "The fact that they had witnessed the great signs and the cogent miracles was such that they could not refrain from going down to prostration, it appeared as though they were cast into that position" [al-Rází n.d:14/206].

Al-Rází [n.d:22/86]¹¹⁹ states that they remained in that position until they caught a glimpse of paradise which would be their abode. But al-Qádí 'Abd al-Jabbár opposes this view as they would not ask for refuge if they knew their fate.

Co-extensive with the above is al-Rází's concern of the sequence of the verses

قالوا آمنا برب العالمين and و ألقى السحرة ساجدين

The declaration of faith should precede the actual act of prostration. But the sorcerers were so overwhelmed and grateful that their immediate reaction was going down into prostration [al-Rází n.d:14/206].

They declared their faith in Allah by آمنا برب العالمين and completed it by رب

موسى و هرون. Prophets Músá and Hárún were distinguished in terms of honour

as in Allah's statement [al-Rází n.d:14/207]. They

wanted to eliminate the deception and so they chose this expression رب موسى و

119. This interpretation is discussed in súra tá há.

هرون. In *súra há há* there is a reversal of the name order "Lord of Hárún and Músá" [20:70].

قال فرعون آمنتم به قبل أن آذن لكم إنَّ هذا لمكر مكرتموه في المدينة لتخرجوا منها أهلها فسوف تعلمون (١٢٣) لأقطعن أيديكم و أرجلكم من خلاف ثم لأصلبنكم أجمعين(١٢٤)

Pharaoh said: "Have you come to believe in him before I give you permission. Indeed this is a plot which you have deceitfully contrived in the city to drive out its inhabitants. Soon you will know! Certainly I will cut off your hands and your legs from opposite sides and then I will crucify you all!" [Qur'án 7:123-24].

The Pharaoh instilled doubts in the minds of the people in two ways:

(١) ان هذا لمكر مكرتموه في المدينة

(٢) لتخرجوا منها أهلها

- 1) Their faith in Prophet Músá [p.b.u.h] was on account of the strength of the evidence;
- 2) he is playing on the people's emotions as departure from their homeland distressed them.

The Pharaoh's threat has been mentioned in *súras há há* and *shu'ará'* as well. The fact that he would cut off the hands and feet is self explanatory, but how the task would be executed is speculative. There is no indication to suggest that he would carry out either of the two tasks [this includes the crucifixion]. According to sources the following two statements *ربنا وأتذر موسى و قومه ليفسدوا في الأرض* and *أفرغ علينا صبرا* verify that he did pursue them to a certain extent.

According to Asad [1980:220] the grammatical forms of *لأقطعن* and *لأصلبنكم* indicates that the repentant sorcerers were many or they had a large following

among the Egyptian people. The latter assumption seems to be corroborated by the Biblical reference [Exodus 12:38] to the fact that many Egyptians joined the Israelites in their exodus from Egypt.

قالوا إِنَّا إِلَى رَبِّنا مُنْقَلِبُونَ (١٢٥) و ما تَنْقَمُ مِنَّا إِلَّا أَنْ آمَنَّا بِآيَاتِ رَبِّنا لَمَّا جاءَ تَنّا رَبِّنا

أَفْرَغَ عَلَيْنا صَبِرا و تَوَفَّنا مُسْلِمِينَ (١٢٦)

They said: "Verily unto our Lord we do return. And you do not avenge us except that we believe in our Lord's signs as soon as they came to us. Our Lord shower us with patience and make us die as those who have surrendered themselves to you!" [Qur'án 7:125-26].

They adopt this nonchalant attitude towards death *إِنَّا إِلَى رَبِّنا مُنْقَلِبُونَ* as their primary concern was liberation from the Pharaoh [al-Zamakhsharí 1966:2/104].

According to al-Qádí 'Abd al-Jabbár [al-Rází n.d:14/209] they asked Allah for benevolence which would lead them to steadfastness and patience.

هَبْ لَنا صَبِرا و اسعِ أَكْثَرَهْ عَلَيْنا حَتَّى يَفِيضَ عَلَيْنا و يَغْمُرْنا كَمَا يَفْرغُ المَاءُ أَفْرَاغًا

"Shower upon us abundance of patience until it is in surplus as the outpouring of rain" [al-Zamakhsharí 1966:2/104].

The term *مُسْلِمِينَ* is interpreted as follows:

- ❑ for the *Ash'arites Imán* and *Islám* cannot be acquired, except when produced by Allah,
- ❑ for al-Qádí 'Abd al-Jabbár this verse suggests that *Islám* and *Imán* are one.

This is substantiated by their first statement *رَبِّنا آمَنَّا بِآيَاتِ رَبِّنا* followed by *و تَوَفَّنا*

مُسْلِمِينَ [al-Rází 1n.d:14/210].

By morning they were sorcerers and by the end of the day believers [al-Tabarí 1968:9/24].

و قال المأ من قوم فرعون أذر موسى و قومه ليفسدوا فى الأرض و يذرك و آلهتك قال
سنقتل أبناءهم و نستحي نساءهم و إنا فوقهم قاهرون (١٢٧)

The leaders of Pharaoh's people said: " 'Do you want Músá and his people to spread corruption on earth and forsake you and your gods?' He said: 'I will kill their sons and spare their women and we will be the conquerors over them' " [Qur'án 7:127].

يذرك is linked to يفسدوا signifying the Pharaoh's leniency towards Músá and his people in abandoning both him and his gods.

و إنا فوقهم قاهرون is the pharaoh's threat to Músá and his people and a means of displaying his courage and strength. Commentators are of the opinion that he did what he was doing at the time of Músá's birth [i.e slaying of children] [al-Rází n.d:14/212].

قال موسى لقومه استعينوا بالله و اصبروا إن الأرض لله يورثها من يشاء من عباده
والعاقبة للمتقين (١٢٨) قالوا أؤذينا من قبل أن تأتينا و من بعد ما جئتنا قال عسى ربكم أن
يهلك عدوكم و يستخلفكم فى الأرض فينظر كيف تعملون (١٢٩)

Músá said to his people: " 'Turn to Allah and have forbearance. Indeed the earth belongs to Allah. He gives it as a heritage to whom He wills of His servants, and the end belongs to the godfearing.' They [i.e. the Children of Israel] said: 'We have been hurt before you came to us and since you came to us.' He said: 'Perhaps your Lord will destroy your enemy and appoint you to inherit the earth, and He will look how you act' " [Qur'án 7:128-29].

Prophet Músa had commanded them to turn to Allah for assistance and warned them of two things inheritance¹²⁰ of the earth and punishment of the enemy. It is the land of Egypt that is alluded to here.

قالوا أؤذينا من قبل أن تأتينا - "This is the first hint of the inconstancy and weakness of faith for which the Qur'án so often blames the children of Israel" [Asad 1980:221].

فيينظر كيف تعملون is a reference to Músa's assistance to them in terms of moral weakness, yet it serves as a warning as well [Asad 1980:221].

و لقد أخذنا آل فرعون بالسنين و نقص من الثمرات¹²¹ لعلهم يذكرون (١٣٠) فاذا جاءتهم الحسنة قالوا لنا هذه و إن تصبهم سيئة يطيروا بموسى و من معه ألا إنما طائرهم عند الله و لكن أكثرهم لا يعلمون (١٣١)

And We overwhelmed Pharaoh's people with drought and scarcity of fruit, so that they may heed. But whenever benefaction alighted upon them, they would say: "This is surely ours," and whenever affliction befell them they would see it as an evil misfortune from Músa and those who followed him. Oh, verily their [evil] misfortune had not been decreed by Allah, but most of them do not know it [Qur'án 7:130-31].

لعلهم يتذكرون - the purpose of this verse is for them to heed, not to display their infidelity [al-Qádí 'Abd al-Jabbár].

Al-Wáhidí adds that the fact that trials and tests are mentioned in the Qur'án does

120. It was prophet Músa's desire for his people to inherit the earth after Pharaoh's destruction.

الارث، هو جعل الشيء للخلف بعد السلف.

The heritage: it is making a thing available for posterity after progeny.

Punishment includes the affairs of this world and the hereafter.

121. There was a period when there was a scarcity of date palms [al-Tabarí 1968:9/28].

not imply that Allah had subjected them to these trials, but He had treated them in a manner comparable to these trials [al-Rází n.d:14/215].

إن تصبهم سيئة يطيروا بموسى

The Jews in Madina levelled a similar charge against the Prophet of Islám on his arrival, pertaining to revenues and paucity of rain.

كيف قيل فإذا جاءتهم الحسنة فإذا و تعريف الحسنة و إن تصبهم سيئة بإن و تنكير السيئة ؟

قلت: لأن جنس الحسنة وقوعه كالواجب لكثرتة و التساعه، و أما السيئة فلا تقع

إلا فى الندرة ..

How could it be said that "إذا" is linked to the definite form of "good" while "إن" is linked to the indefinite form of "evil?". Because the species of good and its occurrence is obligatory on account of its abundance and pervasiveness. But evil only occurs rarely [al-Zamakhsharí 1966:2/106].

سبب خيرهم و شرهم عند الله و هو حكمه و مشيئته

"The reason for their good and bad is from Allah as He decrees it and wills it..." [al-Zamakhsharí 1966:2/106].

There are two factors associated with (طائر) :

1. it is synonymous with شؤم - Arabs attach significance to it as an augur

caused by the flight of birds¹²²;

2. it is read as يتطيروا - the تاء is assimilated to the طاء as both are enunciated from the edge of the tongue.

122. It is based on an arab pre-Islamic custom of divining the future or establishing an omen from the flight of birds. The noun tá'ir (lit. "a flying creature") is often used in classical Arabic to denote "destiny" or "fortune", both good and evil [Asad 1980:221].

"But most of them do not know" [7:131].

كل من الله فاسنادها إلى غير الله يكون جهلا بكمال الله تعالى

"Everything is from Allah and by attributing it to any other than Allah would tantamount to ignorance of His perfection" [al-Rází n.d:14/216].

و قالوا مهما¹²³ تأتينا به من آية لتسحرنا بها فما نحن لك بمؤمنين (١٣٢)

And they said to Músá: "Whatever sign you may produce in order to enchant us we will not believe in you" [Qur'án 7:132].

The sorcerers use two very contradictory terms in the above verse. They are "sign" and "enchant" and the interpretation is as follows:

ما سموها آية لاعتقادهم أنها آية و إنما سموها اعتبارا لتسمية موسى و قصدوا بذلك الاستهزاء و التهلى

"They did not refer to it as a sign in which they believed it to be such, but {instead} they referred to it with a view to calling Músá and their aim was to ridicule and rejoice" [al-Zamakhsharí 1966:2/107].

فأرسلنا عليهم الطوفان و الجراد و القمل و الضفادع و الدم آيات مفصلات فاستكبروا و كانوا قوما مجرمين (١٣٣) و لما وقع عليهم الرجز قالوا يموسى ادع لنا ربك بما عهد عندك لئن كشفت عنا الرجز لنؤمنن لك و لنرسلن معك بنى إسرائيل (١٣٤) فلما كشفنا عنهم الرجز إلى أجل هم بلغوه إذا هم ينكتون (١٣٥)

Then We sent upon them the floods, locusts, lice, frogs and blood as detailed signs, but they were proud, for they were a people lost in sin. And whenever punishment befell them, they would say: "O Músá, pray for us to your Lord on

123. مهما - the ما is implied, it is ماما in which the ما refers to the reward and the ما attached to it refers to the certainty of that reward.

account of the covenant [of prophethood] which He has made with you. If you remove this punishment from us, we will believe in you and let the Children of Israel go with you." But when We removed from them the punishment for a term which they must reach, they broke their covenant [Qur'án 7:133-35].

About الطوفان, Hazrat 'Á'isha [R.A] is reported to have said that the Prophet of Islám said: "الطوفان الموت" in which he is referring to mass deaths [al-Tabarí 1968:9/31]. This statement is vague, if the floods produced death, then sending the other calamities would be futile, but by transposing the expression of death to the causes of death such as the violent rain one can grasp the meaning of the prophetic saying.

آيات مفصلات is the accusative state. مفصلات are explanations not constituted in the intellect because they are not possessed by any person except Him and serve as examples to people.

And whenever punishment befell them... [7:134].

الرجز constitutes the five types of punishment mentioned above. It is synonymous with الطاعون. Each time they would call for assistance and revert to their former ways, thereby contradicting themselves. The ما is مصدرية, meaning by His promise to you and that is a reference to the prophethood. The باء is attached to ادع لنا ربك as ادع لنا is a request to Músá [p.b.u.h] بعهدك عندك. The باء also includes a promise لنؤمنن لك and a response و لنرسلن معك بنى اسرَائيل [al-Zamakhshari 1966:2/108-9].

فانتقمنا¹²⁴ منهم فأغرقناهم فى اليم بأنهم كذبوا بآياتنا و كانوا عنها غافلين (١٣٦) و اورثنا القوم الذين كانوا يستضعفون مشارق¹²⁵ الأرض و مغاربها التى باركنا فيها و تمت كلمة ربك الحسنى على بنى اسرائيل بما صبروا و دمرنا ما كان يصنع فرعون و قومه و ما كانوا يعرشون (١٣٧)

We took vengeance on them, then We drowned them in the sea because they denied Our signs, and were mindless of them. And We caused the people who were weak to inherit the eastern parts of the land, and the Western parts which We had blessed¹²⁶. And the sincere word of your Lord was fulfilled for the Children of Israel because of their endurance, and We annihilated what Pharaoh and his people had done, and what they had constructed¹²⁷ [Qur'án 7:136-37].

و جاوزنا بنى اسرائيل البحر فأتوا على قوم يعكفون على أصنام لهم قالوا يموسى اجعل لنا إلهة كمالهم آلهة قال انكم قوم تجهلون (١٣٨) إن هؤلاء متبر ما هم فيه و باطل ما كانوا يعملون (١٣٩) قال اغير الله ابغىكم الها و هو فضلكم على العالمين (١٤٠)

And We passed over the Children of Israel across the sea, and they came unto a people who were devoted to idols which they had. They said: " 'O Músá! Make for us a god as they have gods.' He said: 'You are a people who are ignorant.' As for

124. انتقام in language is deprivation of blessings for punishment [al-Rází n.d:14/220].

125. مشارق is a reference to Syria and مغارب to Egypt.

126. Palestine is spoken of as "blessed" because it was the land in which Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had lived, and because so many other prophets were to appear there [Asad 1980:222].

127. The suffering of the Israelites, their bondage in Egypt, their deliverance through Músá, their crossing of the Red Sea [today known as the Gulf of Suez] and the destruction of the Pharaoh is mentioned in detail in the Bible (Exodus i-xiv). The Qur'án does not give a consecutive narrative: for historical narrative as such is never its purpose. Whenever the Qur'án refers to past events- whether recorded in the Bible or alive in Arabian tradition- it does so exclusively with a view to bringing out elements that are relevant to the ethical teachings which it propounds [Asad 1980:222].

these their way will be destroyed and all that they are doing is in vain¹²⁸. He said: 'Shall I seek to attain for you a god other than Allah when He has favoured you above all creatures?' " [Qur'án 7:138-40].

The people were from the tribe of Lakhm or from Canaan and the idols they were worshipping were in the shape of cows [al-Rází n.d:14/223].

أجعل لنا إلهًا كما لهم آلهة, whether this statement emerged from all of the Baní Isrá'íl or some of them has been explained by al-Rází [n.d:14/223] that seventy of them were in the company of Músá [p.b.u.h] and many among them had remained aloof from posing such a baseless question.

قوم تجهلون, here Músá [p.b.u.h] is expressing his amazement at their total ignorance.

ان هؤلاء متبر ما فيه و باطل ما كانوا يعملون

Al-Zamakhsharí [1966:2/110] uses the terms - "it is dwindling falsehood and they will not benefit by it" to describe their actions.

قال أغير الله أبغىكم الها

معنى الهمزة الإنكار والتعجب من طلبتهم...

"The meaning of the hamza is denial and surprise at their request ... [al-Zamakhsharí 1966:2/111].

أن الاله ليس شيئاً يطلب و يلتمس و يتخذ

"The deity is not a thing that can be requested, searched for or adopted" [al-Rází n.d:14/224].

128. بطلان - refers to a lack of something, either a lack of His essence or His intention/design.

"He has favoured you above all creatures".....[7:140].

Allah had selected them with cogent signs which had not been acquired by any other worldly creatures.

و اذ أنجيناكم من آل فرعون يسومونكم سوء العذاب يقتلون أبناءكم و يستحيون نساءكم و
فى ذلكم بلاء من ربكم عظيم (١٤١) و واعدنا موسى ثلاثين ليلة و أتمناها بعشر فتم
مِقات¹²⁹ ربه أربعين ليلة و قال موسى لأخيه هرون اخلفنى فى قومى و أصلح و لا تتبع
سبيل المفسدين (١٤٢)

And (remember) when We rescued you from the Pharaoh's people who were imposing upon you with dreadful torment, slaughtering your sons and sparing your women and therein was a gruesome trial from your Lord. And We appointed Músá for thirty nights and added to them ten, and he completed the time appointed by his Lord of forty nights, and Músá said to his brother Hárún: "Take my place among my people. Do right, and do not follow the way of the corrupt" [Qur'án 7:141-42].

Al-Zamakhsharí [1966:2/111] indicates that the function of يسومونكم is possibly a state of the people addressed or a reference to Pharaoh's people.

ذلكم refers to the deliverance or the punishment;

بلاء refers to the blessings or the tribulations.

Prophet Músá [p.b.u.h] had promised the Children of Israel the destruction of the enemy as well as his return with the book from Allah. After their disastrous fate he requested the book, for which he was commanded to fast for a period of thirty days. It was the month of *Dhu 'l Qa'da*. On completion the angels requested:

129. The difference between مِقات and وقت is that the latter is decreed, the former is not.

كنا نشم من فيك رائحة المسك فأفسدته بالسواك

"We have smelled the fragrance of musk from you, so you spoilt it with brushing of your teeth with a miswaak"¹³⁰ [al-Zamakhsharí 1966:2/111]. This is substantiated by Allah's statement :

....خلوف فم الصائم أطيب عندى من ريح المسك

"The smell of the mouth of a fasting person is better to Me than the fragrance of musk" [al-Zamakhsharí 1966:2/111].

This is why he was commanded to fast for a further ten days and on the tenth of Dhu 'l-Hijja, the Torah was revealed.

أربعين ليلة is an accusative of state, meaning complete this number with no mistakes and هرون is an explanatory apposition to the word أخوه. If Hárún [p.b.u.h] was a partner in the prophethood of Músá then his appointment as a successor would reduce his rank, however what needs to be realised is that Músá [p.b.u.h] was the original source of prophethood and thus recognised as such [al-Razi n.d:14/227].

و لما جاء موسى لميقاتنا و كلمه ربه قال رب أرنى أنظر إليك قال لن ترانى و لكن انظر إلى الجبل فان استقر مكانه فسوف ترانى فلما تجلى ربه للجبل جعله دكا و خر موسى صعقا فلما أفاق قال سبحانك تبت إليك و أنا أول المؤمنين (١٤٣)

And when Músá came to Our appointed meeting and his Lord spoke to him, he said: " 'My Lord! Show me Yourself that I may glance at You.' He said: 'You will not see Me, but glance at the mountain! If it is firmly embedded in its place, then you will see Me.' And when his Lord revealed His Brilliance at the mountain He brought it down crashing. And Músá lost consciousness. And when he awoke he said: 'Praise unto You! I turn unto You in repentance, and I am the first of true believers' " [Qur'án 7:143].

130. It is a twig.

There are differences in opinion as to the actual speech. Some say it consisted of methodical sounds, others say:

كلامه صفة حقيقة مغايرة للحروف و الأصوات

"His speech is a true quality which differs from letters and sounds" [al-Rází n.d:14/228].

It can be established by way of supposition that Allah's speech consisted of pure letters and sounds. Al-Máturídí maintains that like all other attributes His speech is also eternal; this is the view of the *Ash'arites* as well.

He also spoke to Músá [p.b.u.h] alone,¹³¹ but the seventy selected people heard the speech as well because the objective was for them to inform the others as to what had transpired at the time [al-Qádí 'Abd al-Jabbár as quoted by al-Rází n.d:14/229].

5.4.1 Vision of Allah

On the question of vision the *Ash'arites* once again faced the extreme *Mu'tazilite* views who denied the possibility of seeing Allah as this would imply His bodily existence which is absurd. The former believed it possible to see Allah for Músá [p.b.u.h] would not have said " رب أرني أنظر اليك " had it been impossible.

The *Mu'tazilites* furthermore contend that Músá [p.b.u.h] was not unreasonable to his people nor was he committed to them in any way, but the request for something of such a magnitude seemed excessive.

Al-Zamakhsharí [1966:2/113] substantiates that Músá [p.b.u.h] would not have requested a "vision" but the people were still in doubt as is evident in **لن نؤمن لك** حتى نرى الله جهرة¹³² - he therefore had to eliminate this doubt.

131. This is validated by **و كلمته ربه** and Músá [p.b.u.h] was accredited with this honour.

132. They had heard Allah speak to Músá [p.b.u.h] and they wished to supplement this with a view of Him as well.

'You will not see Me, but glance at the mountain! If it is firmly embedded in its place, then you will see Me' [7:143].

The "لن" is for emphasis of prohibition. "No mortal human would be able to endure having a view of Me in this world" [al-Ṭabarí 1968:9/50].

If the antecedent i.e the firm embedding of the mountain is possible then the consequent i.e vision of Allah must also be possible [al-Rází n.d:14/228-30].

However **و لكن انظر إلى الجبل** is related to the preceding statement because a vision of Allah is not possible and Músá should divert his glance to the mountain. "The Arabic construction expresses the impossibility of man's seeing Allah" [Asad 1980:223].

ترانى فسوف would depend on the presence of the vision, a presence which would be aided by the stipulation that the mountain remains firmly embedded in its place [al-Zamakhsharí 1966:2/114].

And when his Lord revealed His Brilliance at the mountain He brought it down crashing [7:143].

Only the size of the little finger of His appeared and the mountain sunk [al-Ṭabarí 1968:9/53].

"Músá lost consciousness" [7:143].

This was out of fear of what he had seen and he fell to the ground as though he was dead [al-Zamakhsharí 1966:2/115].

فلما أفاق قال سبحانك تبت إليك و أنا أول المؤمنين

Músá [p.b.u.h] requested the vision whilst not fully in his senses, but yet he repented for it. His request was on his own accord, but the sequence of events that ensued reflect the glory of Allah. He did not offend nor deny Him in any way, but Músá exalted his Lord and sought refuge with Him and his repentance was linked to this rather than to what he had requested [al-Zamakhsharí 1966:2/115].

The *Ash'arites* maintain that a vision was possible, but because Músá [p.b.u.h] had requested it without consent and the reverence that was required, his repentance was linked to this rather than to the actual request [al-Rází n.d:14/234].

قال ياموسى إني اصطفيتك على الناس برسالاتى و بكلامى فخذ ما آتيتك و كن من الشاكرين (١٤٤) و كتبنا له فى الألواح من كل شىء موعظة و تفصيلا لكل شىء فخذها بقوة وأمر قومك يأخذوا بأحسنها سأريكم دار الفاسقين (١٤٥)

He said: "O Músá! I have preferred you above mankind with My messages and My speaking [to you]. So take what I have given you, and be grateful. And We wrote for him on the tablets¹³³ the exhortations to be drawn from all things, and the explanation of all things. Hold onto it with vigour and command your people (saying): Take the better course therein, I will show you the abode of sinners" [Qur'án 7:144-45].

اصطفيتك على الناس singles out Músá [p.b.u.h] in particular, when in fact Hárún [p.b.u.h] was chosen and also given the title of prophet. It must be realised that he was a helper and a minister, but Músá was the addressee and the conveyer of the message.

الخلق is not substituted with الناس because the angels had heard the speech of Allah without any mediator as was the case of Músá [p.b.u.h] [al-Rází n.d:14/236].

موعظة و تفصيلا و كتبنا and من كل شىء is in the place of the accusative as the object of كتبنا and موعظة و تفصيلا is a badal for it [al-Zamakhsharí 1966:2/116].

133. The tablets were of emerald, brought by the angel Jibríl [p.b.u.h]. According to al-Hasan they were of wood and send down from the sky, containing the Torah [al-Rází n.d:14/236].

موعظة و تفصيلا لكل شيء is a kind of explanation for the clause that has preceded من كل شيء, that is why Allah has divided it into two categories:

1. موعظة refers to principles which would encompass doing good and abstaining from evil; and
2. تفصيلا is an explanation of all things [al-Rází n.d:14/237].

Denying this would land one in دار الفاسقين, which is hell.

Asad [1980:224] says "Some commentators are of the opinion that the sentence concludes Allah's admonition to Músá, but the plural object of 'I will show you' makes it possible that it is the beginning of a parenthetic passage.

سأصرف عن آياتي الذين يتكبرون في الأرض بغير الحق وإن يروا كل آية¹³⁴ لا يؤمنوا بها و إن يروا سبيل الرشـد¹³⁵ لا يتخذوه سبيلا و إن يروا سبيل الغى يتخذوه سبيلا ذلك بأنهم كذبوا بآياتنا و كانوا عنها غافلين (١٤٦)

"I will turn away from My signs those who display arrogance on earth without right, and if they see every sign they do not believe in it, and if they see the way of righteousness they do not choose it as a path, and if they see the way of error they choose it as a path. That is because they deny Our signs and are heedless of them" [Qur'án 7:146].

Allah will deprive them of an understanding of the Qur'án and turn them away from His signs which are not only applicable to Músá [p.b.u.h]'s people, but to people of all times [al-Tabarí 1968:9/60].

134. Referring to the proof of Allah pertaining to His oneness and his deity.

135. Madinan, Makkan and Basran reciters read الرشـد with damma on the راء, whilst Kufan reciters and some Makkans read it with fatha on the راء and the شين. The term is equivalent to سبيل الهدى - the path of right guidance and the true religion. سبيل الغى is the path of ruin which they would inevitably pursue.

The *Ash'arites* suggest that Allah had denied them *Imán*. This is contrary to the *Mu'tazilite* view of people like al-Jubbá'í who states that Allah had not turned them away from His signs because the *سين* indicates a future action and they had already denied and rejected the signs prior to that [al-Rází n.d:15/2].

The Prophet of Islám is reported to have said:

"إذا عظمت أمتى الدنيا نزع عنها هيبة الإسلام، و إذا تركوا الأمر بالمعروف و النهى عن المنكر حرمت بركة الوحي "

"When my people glorify the world, the prestige of Islám is removed from them, and when they abandon ordering virtue and forbidding evil the blessings of inspiration are denied" [al Zamakhsharí 1966:2/117].

يتكبرون فى الأرض are a people who think that their judgement as to what constitutes right and wrong is the only valid one and they refuse to submit to the criterion of absolute moral standards [Asad 1980:224]. The meaning of *يتكبرون* is that they perceived themselves to be the 'best of creation' [al-Rází n.d:15/3].

بغير الحق is a condition: meaning they were arrogant without justification because justifiable glorification is for Allah alone or it is co-ordinated to the verb *تكبر* [al-Zamakhsharí 1966:2/117].

ذلك بأنهم كذبوا بآياتنا و كانوا عنها غافلين

It is possible that the sinners disputed the level of punishment that would be meted out to them for there were amongst them those who did some good. Allah erases this doubt by elucidating the situation of all of them, except the arrogant, the humble or those endowed with good or even those bereft of it [al-Rází n.d:15/4].

The insertion of "ذلك" in the text is a replacement of the nominative or the

accusative, meaning that the 'turning away' is the reason for their denial [al-Zamakhsharí 1966:2/117].

و الذين كذبوا بآياتنا و لقاء الآخرة حبطت أعمالهم هل يجزون إلا ما كانوا
يعملون (١٤٧)

Those who deny Our signs and the meeting of the final day, their works are futile. Are they requited with anything except what they used to do? [Qur'án 7:147].

In لقاء الآخرة و it is possible that the verbal noun stands as object [meaning they deny their meeting in the hereafter] or that it stands in relation to the place, meaning the meeting of which they had been promised by Allah [al-Zamakhsharí 1966:2/117].

هل يجزون إلا ما كانوا يعملون - This marks the end of the parenthetical passage beginning with سأوريكم دار الفسقين .

5.4.2 Story of the cow

و اتخذ قوم موسى من بعده من حليهم عجلا جسدا له خوار الم يروا أنه لا يكلمهم
و لا يهديهم سبيلا اتخذوه و كانوا ظالمين (١٣٨) ولما سقط¹³⁶ في أيديهم و رأوا أنه قد
ضلوا قالوا لئن لم يرحمنا ربنا و يغفر لنا لنكونن من الخاسرين (١٣٩)

And in his absence the people of Músá, had adopted the effigy of a calf [for worship] made out of their trinkets which gave a lowing sound¹³⁷. Could they not

136. This is an expression denoting the descending of a thing from its highest to its lowest position.

137. The golden calf of the Israelites was a result of centuries-old Egyptian influences. The Egyptians worshipped at Memphis the bull Apis which they believed to be an incarnation of the god Ptah. A new Apis was born the instance the old one died. The lowing sound which the calf emitted was caused by wind effects [Asad 1980:224].

see that it did not speak to them, nor did it guide them in any way? They chose it and became wrongdoers. And when they would smite their hands in remorse and saw that they had gone astray, they would say: "Indeed unless our Lord have mercy on us and grant us forgiveness we will most certainly be among the lost!" [Qur'án 7:148-49].

And in his absence the people of Músá, had adopted the effigy of a calf [7:148].

According to al-Zamakhsharí [1966:2/117-8] Allah has attributed the act of worshipping the calf to all the people and they all followed in its worship as though they were unanimous in the decision.

All of Músá [p.b.u.h]'s people worshipped the calf with the exception of Hárún [p.b.u.h], this is substantiated by *رب اغفرلى و لأخى*.

الم يروا أنه لا يكلمهم و لا يهديهم سبيلا اتخذوه و كانوا ظالمين

The *Ash'arite-Mu'tazilite* views are rendered as follows:

According to the former one who cannot speak nor guide cannot be a deity, for a deity is one who can command or prohibit and that cannot be attained if it is incapable of speech. The "calf" is powerless and thus cannot be a deity. The *Mu'tazilite* contend that a precondition for a deity is that it guides to the true righteous way and one who misguides from such a path cannot be a deity [al-Rází n.d:15/16-7].

"And when they would smite their hands in remorse" [7:149] is an idiomatic phrase denoting intense remorse.

Regretting intensely and biting one's hand in sorrow and *سقط فى أيديهم* is an example of *كناية* or vague expression. The purpose of *يد* in this verse is to highlight a person's ability to "take", "hold" and "retain" things and the remorse was to try and rectify their wrong ways [al-Rází n.d:15/8].

They realised their errors as though they could literally see them with their eyes

[al-Zamakhsharí 1966:2/118]. According to al-Qádí ‘Abd al-Jabbár [al-Rází n.d:15/8-9] the latter should precede because the 'remorse' and the 'confusion' should occur after the knowledge as though it should be stated as follows: ولما رأو

أنهم قد ضلوا سقط في أيديهم

"Indeed unless our Lord have mercy on us and grant us forgiveness we will most certainly be among the lost!" [7:149].

These words are acknowledged with great importance as to the repentance and the request for forgiveness in which they confirm that they will absolve themselves from a sense of loss if Allah forgives them. This remorse and pardoning emerged after the return of Músá [p.b.u.h] [al-Rází n.d:15/9].

و لما رجع موسى إلى قومه غضبان أسفا¹³⁸ قال بئسما خلفتموني من بعدى أعجلتم أمر ربكم و ألقى الألواح و أخذ برأس أخيه يجره إليه قال ابن أم أن القوم استضعفوني و كادوا يقتلونني فلا تشمت بي الأعداء و لا تجعلني مع القوم الظالمين (١٥٠) قال رب اغفر لي ولأخي و أدخلنا في رحمتك و أنت أرحم الراحمين (١٥١)

And when Músá returned to his people, enraged and grieved, he exclaimed: "Wretched is the cause which you have followed in my absence! Have you hastened your Lord's command?' And he threw down the tablets and seized his brother's head, dragging him towards himself. Cried Hárún: "O my Mother's son! The people deemed me weak and almost killed me, so do not let my enemies rejoice at my misfortune and do not place me among the evil doing people.' He said: 'My Lord! Forgive my brother and I and let us in Your Mercy, for You are most Compassionate!' " [Qur'án 7:150-51].

Prophet Músá was not taken by surprise on his return to his people as he was aware of the situation {though differences of opinion do exist}.

138. Its grading surpasses that of anger expressing the intensity of his emotion at the time.

This sūra indicates that Músá [p.b.u.h] was aware of the situation prior to meeting his people, whereas sūra há há suggests that he became conscious of it at the time of meeting them [al-Rází n.d:15/10]. The importance of **من بعدى** after **خلفتمونى** signifies Prophet Músá's already having showed them the Oneness of Allah as well as his transformation of the Baní Isrá'íl. This includes their prevention from cow worship as well.

Have you hastened your Lord's command? [7:150].

They wanted Músá [p.b.u.h] to return promptly even though it was Allah's command that he should return at the appointed time. Also they were impatient for the meeting with Allah. They believed that Músá had passed away as they were misinformed by the Sámirí.

And he threw down the tablets and seized his brother's head, dragging him towards himself. Cried Hárún: "O my Mother's son! The people deemed me weak and almost killed me, so do not let my enemies rejoice at my misfortune and do not place me among the evil doing people' [7:150].

He hurled the tablets as he was overcome with surprise and displeasure. There is no evidence to suggest that they broke on impact.

The reference to 'my mother's son' is to instill compassion and tenderness [al-Zamakhsharí 1966:2/119].

"The people deemed me weak" means he could not prevent them either by admonition or warning and should he exert his strength against their antagonism they would have killed him.

Músá selected himself and his brother for this particular invocation and excluded those who were indifferent to them [al-Rází n.d:15/6].

5.5 SÚRA YÚNUS

ثم بعثنا من بعدهم موسى و هرون إلى فرعون و ملائجه بآياتنا فاستكبروا و كانوا قوما
مجرمين (٧٥) فلما جاءهم الحق من عندنا قالوا إن هذا لسحر مبين (٧٦) قال موسى
أتقولون للحق لَمَا جَاءكم أسحر هذا و لا يفلح الساحرون (٧٧)

" 'Then We sent after them Músá and his brother to the Pharaoh and his people with Our signs, but they were arrogant and a people [immersed] in sin¹³⁹. When the truth came from Us', they said: 'This is a manifest sorcerer Músá said: 'Do you say of the truth when it has come to you, this is sorcery?'¹⁴⁰ And the sorcerers will not prosper' " [Qur'án 10:75-77].

This súra as well as súra Tá há¹⁴¹ commence with Allah's directive to both prophets Músá and Hárún [p.b.u.t] to proclaim the message to the Pharaoh.

Prophet Músá's actual departure to the Pharaoh with Hárún [p.b.u.h] can dispense without a tafsír. The substantial question posed by Músá [p.b.u.h] in response to the indiscreet statement by the Pharaoh's supporters is of particular importance. Would it be correct to assume that Músá [p.b.u.h] had said **أ سحر هذا** as a means of interrogation? It appears as though he said **أ تقولون ما تقولون** - "Are you saying that which you are saying", - in this construction the [main object] has been eliminated¹⁴² which is **ان هذا لسحر مبين**¹⁴³ is a means of

139. Allah has depicted them as **مجرمين** as they had distorted minds and hearts, shed blood and oppressed the weak [al-Jazá'irí 1987:2/299].

140. Similar objections and accusations were raised against Prophet Muhammad [p.b.u.h].

141. **اذهب أنت و أخوتك بآياتي و لاتنبا في ذكرى (٤٢)**

142. According to al-Tabarí [1968:11/145]- elimination serves to highlight the meaning of [certain] terms.

143. Proponents of the Arabic language differ in the insertion of the **أنف** of inquiry . Some

expressing disapproval [al-Zamakhsharí 1966:2/247 & al-Rází n.d:17/141].

"and the sorcerers will not prosper" [10:77].

The implication is that sorcery cannot achieve more than ephemeral phenomena lacking any spiritual content...the sorcerers' conversion is told in greater detail in *al-A'raf* and *hájá há* both of which were revealed before the present *súra* [Asad 1980:304].

قالوا أجيئنا لتلفتنا عمّا وجدنا عليه آباءنا و تكون لكما الكبرياء في الأرض و ما نحن
لكما بمؤمنين (٧٨) و قال فرعون ائتوني بكل سحر عليم (٧٩) فلما جاء السحرة قال
لهم موسى ألقوا ما أنتم ملقون (٨٠) فلما ألقوا قال موسى ما جيئتم به السحر إن الله
سيبطله إن الله لا يصلح عمل المفسدين (٨١) و يحق الله الحق بكلماته و لو كره
المجرمون (٨٢)

They said: " 'Have you have come to turn us away from that which we found our fathers [following] and that you two will have glory on earth, but we will not believe you.' The Pharaoh said: 'Bring to me every well-versed sorcerer.'

When the sorcerers came, Músá said to them: 'Cast what you want to cast!' When they cast Músá said: 'What you have brought is sorcery, Allah will make it untenable, indeed Allah will not prosper the deeds of the corrupt.' And Allah will establish and make apparent the truth by His Words, however much the criminals may hate it' " [Qur'án 10:78-82].

When Músá [p.b.u.h] silenced them with proof they said cunningly, "You have come to turn us away ¹⁴⁴ لتلفتنا from that which our fathers believed and you are arrogant on earth and we will not believe you."

Basrans indicate that it is included as a means of relating what they had said. Kufan grammarians say it is read without the أنف [al-Tabarí 1968:11/145].

144. According to al-Wáhidí انفت in Arabic usage is a diversion from a command.

This refusal to accept is based on two factors:

- 1) They would not renounce the religion of their forefathers and they adhered to blind imitation;
- 2) Prophets Músá and Hárún [p.b.u.t] were censured for seeking power:

لكما الملك و العز في أرض مصر ("for you is dominion and glory in the land of Egypt") was addressed to both brothers. A king is synonymous with كبرياء pride as he conducts the affairs of the world. Similarly a prophet once acknowledged by his people for his truthfulness becomes the key figure in their affairs [al-Rází n.d:17/142].

فأتوا بالسحرة، فلما جاء السحرة، و لكن اكتفى بدلالة قوله (فلما جاء السحرة) was Prophet Músá's response to the gathering, but to judge it as being tantamount to infidelity and sorcery is unfounded.

It was a means to determine their unscrupulous attitudes. According to al-Tabarí [1968:11/147] certain words have been eliminated which are as follows:

فأتوا بالسحرة، فلما جاء السحرة، و لكن اكتفى بدلالة قوله (فلما جاء السحرة)

[Indication of "when the sorcerers came" suffices to explain the omitted text].

فلما ألقوا قال موسى ما جئتم به، السحر

The ما is an indefinite relative pronoun and its predicate is السحر. It assumes the definite form, for when an indefinite noun returns [in the form of a reply], it assumes definiteness [al-Zamakhsharí 1966:2/247-48 & al-Rází n.d:17/143].

"And Allah will establish and make apparent the Truth by His words, however much the criminals may hate {it}" [10:82].

(و يحق الله الحق) و معنى احقاق الحق اظهاره و تقويته . و قوله (بكلماته) أى بوعدده موسى .

و قيل بما سبق من قضائه و قدره ، و فى كلمات الله أبحاث غامضة عميقة عالية ...

"And Allah causes the truth to prevail" meaning He manifests and strengthens it.

As for بكلماته it is His promise to Músá [p.b.u.h], it's been said with His preceding

decrees. Regarding "the words of Allah" cryptic, in-depth and sublime researches have been done [al-Rází n.d:17/142].

فمآءامن لموسى الآ ذرية من قومه على خوف من فرعون و ملائهم أن يفتنهم و إنّ فرعون لعال فى الأرض و إته لمن المسرفين (٨٣) و قال موسى يقوم إن كنتم ءامنتم بالله فعليه توكلوا إن كنتم مسلمين (٨٤) فقالوا على الله توكلنا ربنا لا تجعلنا فتنة للقوم الظالمين (٨٥)

None believed in Músá, except a small group of his people out of fear of the Pharaoh and their great ones, unless they should persecute them, for Pharaoh was arrogant on the earth and among the unrestrained. And Músá said: " 'O People! If you believe in Allah, then place your trust in Him if you are Muslims.' They said: 'In Allah we place our trust, do not make us a trial for an unjust people' " [Qur'án 10:83-85].

The transformation of the staff is not mentioned here [directly], but Allah has elucidated that what had transpired was among the great miracles. This statement serves as a consolation to the Prophet [p.b.u.h] as well as a model example for other prophets.

The term ذرية is interpreted as follows:

- ❑ It refers to people few in number. It is used with قوم as a means of belittlement [Ibn 'Abbás as quoted by al-Tabarí 1968:11/149].
- ❑ They were a people whose fathers were Coptics and mothers of the Baní Isrá'íl [al-Rází n.d:17/144]. The Qur'án mentions in súra *al-A'ráf* [v.120-6] that some Egyptians too believed in Músá's message, so then by "his people" is meant both Israelites and Egyptians. This assumption is strengthened by the reference in the next clause "to their great ones" [Asad 1980:304].

The fear that the people harboured was on account of the following:

- they feared the Pharaoh due to his strength and cruelty;
- **ملائهم** refers solely to the Pharaoh with the use of a plural expression for glorification. Asad [1980:304] adopts this rendering and also indicates that because of the fear of the Pharaoh the majority did not declare their faith openly.

و قال موسى يقوم إن كنتم ءامنتم بالله فعليه توكلوا إن كنتم مسلمين

The reward depends on two conditions: one that precedes and one that succeeds. Jurists suggest that the one that succeeds should precede and vice versa. Their being Muslims is a precondition [i.e. the succeeding statement] as Músá [p.b.u.h] says to them that if you believe in Allah then place your trust in Him [i.e. the preceding statement] because Islám is equivalent to surrender and this is indicative of compliance to the pronounced commandment of Allah; it denotes humility and relinquishes disobedience. Imán relies on the development of the spirit. When one has attained these two conditions then he or she commits all his or her affairs to Allah. Prophet Músá [p.b.u.h] says **توكلوا عليه** and not **توكلوا** because the former comprises a self contained meaning in which they are commanded to place their trust in Allah. The command is such that Allah has mastery over everything and all is at His disposal. This logic prevents one from trusting any except Allah. This is why the words are expressed thus. A stipulation of **توكل**¹⁴⁵ is total submission to Allah [al-Rází n.d:17/145 & al-Zamakhsharí 1966:2/249].

فقالوا على الله توكلنا ربنا لا تجعلنا فتنة للقوم الظالمين (٨٥)

The implication of this prayer is: "If You give them authority over us they will be deserving of a severe punishment in the hereafter and that will be a trial for them" [al-Rází n.d:17/146].

145. Prophet Núh [p.b.u.h] said: "In Allah I place my trust." This draws the distinction between the two prophets, because Núh [p.b.u.h] associated himself with trust in Allah and Músá [p.b.u.h] ordered his people to do so, whereas the former had attained perfection, the latter was above perfection.

5.6 SÚRA TÁ HÁ

The focal point of this piece of Qur'ánic narrative is the human being's conceited nature and the subsequent results which culminate from this unyielding behaviour. The proclamation commences with Allah's command to prophets Músá and Hárún [p.b.u.t] about approaching the Pharaoh coupled with guidance on how to conduct themselves when they do so.

أذهب أنت و أخوك بايتى و لا تنيا¹⁴⁶ فى ذكرى (٤٢) إذهباً إلى فرعون إنّه طغى (٤٣) فقولا
له قولا لينا لعله يتذكر أو يخشى (٤٤) قالا ربنا إنّنا نخاف أن يفرط علينا او ان يطغى (٤٥)

" 'Go forth you and your brother with Our signs and do not slacken in My remembrance! Go to the Pharaoh, indeed he is oppressive. Speak to him in gentle words so that he may take heed or fear.' They said: 'Our Lord, we fear that he will be insolent with us or oppress us' " [Qur'án 20:42-45].

"

A lucid starting point is the term *áyát* and its appearance in the plural form when it is in essence a referral to two signs:

The transformation of the staff into a creature, its varying magnitude and its movement as a serpent together with its subsequent transformation into wood all represent distinct miracles. Similarly, the brightness of the hand, its rays and its disappearance after attaining the desired purpose also represent unique signs.¹⁴⁷

The purpose of *idhab* after *idhab anta wa-akuka* is according to al-Qaffál [al-Rází n.d:22/58] a means of reiterating the command - [at first they were addressed individually]. Notwithstanding, a command to both brothers was

146. It is read with the kasra as a particle of similarity for phonetic corroboration. The wisdom encompassed here is that the one who remembers Allah fears none. Consequently his heart is strengthened and he does not slacken in his desired intention [al-Zamakhsharí 1966:2/538].

147. The staff's many signs have far-reaching implications, e.g, its transformation is suggestive of Allah's existent mastery of the whole world, Músá's prophethood and the conceivability of the Last Day.

highly improbable as Hárún was not present at the time, it was a means of honouring him during his absence. An example of such veneration is Prophet Músá's acknowledgement of fear "our Lord we fear" as a response to Allah's command "speak to him in gentle words."

Allah ordered Músá [p.b.u.h] to be lenient towards the Pharaoh because:

- 1) the Pharaoh had brought him up and should be accorded the rights of a parent;
- 2) to subdue the tyrant, for harshness would only increase his intolerance [al-Rází n.d:22/58].

يتذكر أو يخشى indicates that the primary aim was to remove him from a state of denial to one of acknowledgement.

According to Asad [1980:474] every Qur'anic narrative aims to elucidate eternal truth or a universal principle of human behaviour so it is evident that Allah's command to Músá to speak to one particular sinner retains its validity for all times.

They said: 'Our Lord, we fear that he will be insolent with us or oppress us' [20:44].

Prophet Músá [p.b.u.h] was still embodied by fear after Allah had expanded his breast and eased his task. The expansion of the chest was to strengthen it for the accomplishment of tasks, whilst not subjecting it to distortion and change which could impede the elimination of fear [al-Rází n.d:22/60].

Prophet Músá's reluctance to approach the Pharaoh does not make him disobedient, because Allah had not asked him to carry out the task with immediate effect [al-Rází n.d:22/60].

قال لا تخافاً إننى معكما أسمع و أرى (٤٦) فأتياه فقولا إنا رسولا ربك فأرسل معنا بنى اسرّائيل و لا تعذبهم قد جئناك بأية من ربك و السّلام على من اتبع الهدى (٤٧) إنا قد أوحى

إِلَيْنَا أَنْ الْعَذَابَ عَلَىٰ مَنْ كَذَبَ وَ تَوَلَّىٰ (٤٨)

He said: "Do not fear, I am with you two, Hearing and Seeing. Go then you two to him and say, we are messengers of your Lord, so send the Children of Israel with us and do not torture them. We have come to you with a message from your Lord and peace will be on those who follow guidance. It has been revealed to us that punishment will come to those who delude the [truth] and turn away from it " [Qur'án 20:46-48].

إِنِّي مَعَكُمْ is equivalent to protection and security which is further intensified by the assurance of أَرَىٰ وَ أَسْمَعُ. It is as though Allah is saying:

أَنَا حَافِظٌ لَكُمْ وَ نَاصِرٌ لَكُمْ سَامِعٌ مُبْصِرٌ، وَ إِذَا كَانَ الْحَافِظُ وَ النَّاصِرُ كَذَلِكَ تَمَّ الْحِفْظُ وَ صَحَّتِ النَّصْرَةُ وَ زَهَبَتِ الْمُبَالَاتَةُ بِالْعَدُوِّ

"I am a Protector and a Helper of you two seeing and hearing. And when the protector and the helper is like this, protection is complete and help is actualised. Concerns for the enemy are eliminated" [al-Zamakhsharí 1966:2/539].

Al-Jazá'irí [1987:3/54] substantiates that this is a reassurance from Allah to the two brothers that they should "not be doubtful" for Allah will assist them.

(قَدْ جِئْنَاكَ بِبَيِّنَاتٍ مِنْ رَبِّكَ) - وَ هِيَ إِتْنَا رَسُولًا مِنْ رَبِّكَ - مَجْرَى الْبَيِّنَاتِ وَ التَّفْسِيرُ، لِأَنَّ دَعْوَى الرِّسَالَةِ لَا تَثْبُتُ إِلَّا بِبَيِّنَاتٍ الَّتِي هِيَ الْمَجِيءُ بِالْآيَةِ

In relation to the first statement, i.e "we are messengers from your Lord", it is a clarification and an explanation because the call to the message could not be verified except by evidence which could emerge by means of a sign... [al-Zamakhsharí 1966:2/539].

Co-extensive to al-Zamakhsharí's view al-Rází [n.d:22/59] questions the logic behind being mellow at first and then being harsh. The reason is that when a

person is obstinate adopting a harsh attitude is {often} necessary.

The dialogue between Prophet Músá [p.b.u.h] and the Pharaoh.

قال فمن ربكما يموسى (٤٩) قال ربنا الذى أعطى كل شىء خلقه ثم هدى (٥٠) قال فما بال

القرون الأولى (٥١) قال علمها عند ربى فى كتاب لا يضل ربى و لا ينسى (٥٢)

He said: " 'Who is your Lord, O Músá?' 'Our Lord is He Who gave His creation everything, then He guided'. He said: 'What of the previous generations?' 'Knowledge of it is in a book, my Lord neither leads astray nor does He forget' " [Qur'án 20:49-52].

قال فمن ربكما is similar to ما رب العالمين. In this súra Pharaoh is enquiring about the qualities of Allah and in súra *Shu'ará'* more about the nature of Allah.

خلقه is an object of أعطى: Allah gave His creation everything that was essential and that could be utilised. The distinctive features and shapes of things corresponds to their usefulness, e.g the eye has a particular form which facilitates sight - these usages are applicable to animals as well [al-Zamakhsharí 1966:2/539].

"All things are distinguished according to their distinct characteristics and Allah gives to all of His creatures sustenance in various ways" [al-Jazá'irí 1987:3/56].

"This sentence appears in the past tense ("has given" and "has guided")¹⁴⁸, but as it obviously relates to the continuous process of God's creation, it is independent of the concept of time and denotes, as in so many other places of the Qur'án, an unceasing presence" [Asad 1980:474].

قال فما بال القرون corresponds to the above-mentioned verse in the following two ways:

- ❑ fearing that Músá was going to show convincing evidence, the Pharaoh interrupted him;
- ❑ Pharaoh wanted to occupy him by posing other questions. [Al-Jazá'irí 1987:3/56] states that he enquired about the people of Núḥ, Húd,

148. Asad's translation in "The Message of the Qur'án."

Salih but Músá [p.b.u.h] was aware that اللعين - "the Cursed one" was trying to divert him from the truth.

علمها عند ربي refers to knowledge which rests solely with Allah and this knowledge of Allah characterises Him.

ينسى and يضل - According to some authorities the two terms يضل and ينسى are synonymous. Al-Qaffál indicates that the former refers to Allah's existence as the Possessor of all knowledge whilst the latter is the eternal continuation of that knowledge [al-Rází n.d:22/67].

الذى جعل¹⁴⁹ لكم الأرض مهذا و سلك لكم فيها سبلا و أنزل من السماء ماء فأخرجنا به أزواجا من نبات شتى¹⁵⁰ (٥٣) كلوا وارعوا أنعامكم إن في ذلك لآيات لأولى النهى (٥٤) منها خلقنكم و فيها نعيدكم و منها نخرجكم تارة أخرى (٥٥)

" 'It is He who has made the earth a cradle for you and has made you to walk in it by paths and who sends down waters from the sky.' 'And We bring forth various kinds of plants dispersed. Eat and pasture your cattle. In all this, there are signs for those who are endowed with reason. Out of the earth We have created you and into it will We return you and from it We will bring you forth once again' " [Qur'án 20:53-55].

جعل لكم الأرض means that Allah has made the world comfortable to enable humans to move freely and continue their daily activities. Prophet Músá's speech {temporarily} stops at و أنزلنا من السماء ماء and Allah's continues¹⁵¹.

149. It is an independent attribute of "my Lord."

150. The plural is شتيت which is possibly a description of نبات.

It is a shift from a narration to an address in which Allah describes His bounties to His creation [al-Zamakhsharí 1966:2/540].

This statement from Allah is a continuation of Músá [p.b.u.h]'s speech and is a reminder to the Makkan people who were ignorant of the Oneness of Allah [al-Jazá'irí 1987:3/56].

"Eat then of the produce of the soil....." [20:54].

"From it We have created you....." [20:55].

These words were not uttered by Músá [p.b.u.h] because it was not within his capacity to produce them, for example Allah has produced various kinds of vegetation, some of it for eating and others as livestock for cattle. He also mentions the uses of the earth, the sky and soil¹⁵² as Adam was created from it and its significance is illustrated by the Prophet of Islám:

بروا بالأرض فانها بكم برة

"Show reverence to the earth, it will show reverence to you" [al-Rází n.d:22/70].

The reference to a "people of discernment" is explained by al-Tabarí [1968:16/175] as "people of understanding and reasoning." The plural is "نهيية" as the plural of كشي is كشيية. Abú Ja'far says: كشي is a piece of fat in the belly of a lizard which bears resemblance to the umbilical cord. Allah specifies it because in it are signs for a people who understand.

نخرجكم تارة أخرى refers to the scattered limbs that are combined with soil and then returned to a state of life.

This return signifies the "dissolution of this body, after death, into the elementary organic and inorganic substances of which it was composed" [Asad 1980:475].

151. According to al-Rází [n.d:22/68] the dialogue between Músá [p.b.u.h] and the Pharaoh stops here and verses 53-5 represent a direct discourse addressed to man in general.

152. A person's sustenance, his time of death and the ground in which he is to be buried are recorded by angels, the soil is extracted from that ground, smeared on the sperm and placed in the womb [ibn Mas'úd in al-Rází n.d.22/70].

Reward or punishment will be in accordance with one's deeds [al-Jazá'irí 1987:3/57].

و لقد أرينه آياتنا كلها فكذب و أبقى (٥٦) قال أجيئنا لتخرجنا من أرضنا بسحرك يموسى

(٥٧) فلنأتينك بسحر مثله فاجعل بيننا و بينك موعدا لا نخلفه نحن و لا أنت مكانا سوى (٥٨)

"And indeed We showed him all of Our Signs, but he denied and refused. He said: 'Have you come to drive us out of our land by your sorcery, O Músá? Then we will produce sorcery like it! Make an appointment for a meeting between us and you in which we will not break our promise nor you in an equal place' " [Qur'án 20:56-58].

According to some authorities آيات is associated with monotheism [Oneness of Allah] or to prophethood [referring to the nine signs¹⁵³].

قد أراه آيته و عدد عليه ما أوتيه غيره من الأنبياء من آياتهم و معجزاتهم

He (Allah) had already showed him His signs and enumerated that what had come to him was different to that which had come to other prophets in terms of their signs and miracles [al-Zamakhsharí 1966:2/541].

As regards the statement لتخرجنا من أرضنا, it signifies pharaoh's fear as he was trembling dreadfully as to what was going to be produced for "the truth when it wills can steer mountains to a point of submission" [al-Zamakhsharí 1966:2/541]. Al-Rází [n.d:22/71] considers this as a ruse by the Pharaoh to cause dissension among the people.

فاجعل بيننا و بينك موعدا

It can be interpreted as a time or a place. If one views it as a time then it is in harmony with the statement موعدكم يوم الزينة. If interpreted as a place it corresponds to مكانا سوى .

153. The nine signs include the rod, the hand, splitting of the sea, stones, locusts, lice, frogs, blood and and the crashing of the mountain.

قال موعدكم¹⁵⁴ يوم الزينة و أن يحشر الناس ضحى (٥٩) فتولى فرعون فجمع كيده ثم أتى¹⁵⁵ (٦٠) قال لهم موسى ويلكم لا تفتروا على الله كذبا فيسحتكم بعذاب و قد خاب من افترى (٦١) فتنزعوا أمرهم بينهم و أسروا النجوى (٦٢)

"He (i.e. Músá) said: 'Your appointed meeting will be the day of the Festival and let the people assemble when the sun is risen high.' The Pharaoh turned away and contrived a plot, then he came. Músá said to them: 'Shame on you, do not invent lies against Allah, for fear that He will destroy you with punishment, for he who fabricates [such a lie] has already failed.' " So they disputed with one another as to what they should do and kept their conversation secret [Qur'án 20:59-62].

There is a difference of opinion as to who had proposed the time and place of the appointed meeting. The following reflects the views of al-Qádí 'Abd al-Jabbár in contrast to that of al-Rází [n.d:22/72]:

According to the former the words were issued by the Pharaoh, whereas al-Rází views it as Prophet Músá's statement and cites the following reasons:

- 1) it is a response to the Pharaoh's statement فاجعل بيننا و بينك موعدا
- 2) the address was in plural form and had the Pharaoh uttered it he would be showing reverence to them which was not expected of him. So the addresser was the prophet.

ياء and تاء is read with ان يحشر الناس.

Allah had ordained destruction upon them, ويلكم لا تفتروا على الله كذبا

The affliction is read as إسحت in the Hijází dialect and as إسحات in the Najdi dialect.

154. A Coptic festive day on which they would adorn themselves; a Persian New Year's Day or the tenth day of Muharram.

155. He arrived with seventy-two sorcerers, each equipped with ropes and rods. They formed a dome shaped edifice for him of a length of 70m.

So they disputed with one another as to what they should do and kept their conversation secret [20:62].

They argued with some claiming that it was the speech of a magician, whilst others thought it to be that of a prophet.

قالوا إن هذين لسحرن يريدن أن يخرجكم من أرضكم بسحرهما و يذهبا بطريقتكم

المثلى (٦٣) فأجمعوا كيدكم ثم ائتوا صفا¹⁵⁶ و قد أفلح اليوم من استعلى (٦٤)

They said: " 'These two are sorcerers intent on driving you from your land by their sorcery and on doing away with your most distinguished nobility.' [O sorcerers of Egypt] decide upon which scheme you will pursue, and then come forward in one single body, for indeed he who prevails today will prosper indeed" [Qur'án 20:63-64].

إن هذين لساحران - Ibn Kathír and Hafs read it as ان هذا لساحران, the لام is the particle which distinguishes between the conditional ان and the abbreviated form of ان. Other readings are ان هذان ساحران and ان هذا لساحران. It is human nature that when one does not believe in a thing he does not adhere to it rigidly as is evident in the sorcerers' declaration in which they said to Músá [p.b.u.h] that they will not follow him in religion or principle. This is further corroborated by طريقتكم المثلى, a reference to the noble men who served as model examples consisting primarily of the Baní Isrá'íl (evidence of this is Prophet Músá's statement: (أرسل معنا بنى إسرائيل).

Al-Tabarí's [1968:16/184] preferred reading of فاجمعوا كيدكم is: hamza on the ألف in اجمع. This was contrary to the Basran reading which omitted the hamza.

156. Close together.

"He who prevails today will prosper indeed" [20:64] is a reference to the "challenge": meaning the one who succeeds will be the ultimate victor [al-Zamakhsharí 1966:2/543].

قالوا يموسى إما أن تلقى و إما أن نكون أول من ألقى (٦٥) قال بل ألقوا فإذا حبالهم
و عصيهم يخيل إليه من سحرهم أنها تسعى (٦٦) فأوجس فى نفسه خيفة موسى (٦٧)
قلنا لا تخف إنك أنت الأعلى¹⁵⁷ (٦٨)

They said: " 'O Músá, either you cast or let us be the first to cast! He said: 'No, you cast [first].' And Behold! their ropes and rods by their magic appeared to him as though they moved fast"¹⁵⁸. And in his heart Músá became apprehensive. We said: 'Do not fear, it is you who will prevail' " [Qur'án 20: 65-8].

The implication of "fear" is that the feat of the sorcerers was based on "mass-hallucination" and Músá too had succumbed to this for a while [Asad 1980:476].

و ألق ما فى يمينك تلقف¹⁵⁹ ما صنعوا إنما صنعوا كيد سحر و لا يفلح الساحر حيث
أتى¹⁶⁰ (٦٩) فألقى السحرة سجدا قالوا أمنا برب هرون و موسى (٧٠) قال آمنتم له قبل أن
ءاذن لكم إنه لكبيركم الذى علمكم السحر فلاقطعن أيديكم و أرجلكم من خلاف و
لأصلبنكم فى جذوع النخل و لتعلمن أينما أشد عذابا و أبقى (٧١)

" 'And cast what is in your right hand! - it will swallow up quickly what they have fabricated, that which they have fabricated is a sorcerer's artifice, and the sorcerer

157. These are words of extremity: words of assurance, repetition of the personal pronoun and the definite ال.

158. The text has been discussed in *súra al-A'ráf*.

159. It is read with a final vowelless letter.

160. The implication here is a categorical condemnation of all endeavours which fall under the heading of "magic" irrespective of what the aim of the person who devotes himself to it may be [Asad 1980:476].

will never prosper at whatever he may produce.' And down fell the sorcerers prostrating [themselves] and they said: 'We have come to believe in the Lord of Hárún and Músá.' He [i.e. the pharaoh] said: 'Have you come to believe in him before I have given you permission? Verily, he must be your senior who has taught you magic! But I will most certainly sever your hands and legs¹⁶¹ on opposite sides, and I will most certainly crucify you on trunks of palm trees, so that you might come to know as to which of us can inflict a more severe chastisement, and which is the more abiding¹⁶² ' ' [Qur'án 20:69-71].

"And throw what is in your right hand" [20:69].

(ما فى يمينك) و لم يقل عصاك جائز أن يكون تصغيرا لها: أى لا تبال بكثرة حبالهم و عصيهم، و ألق العويد الفرد الصغير الجرم الذى فى يمينك فإنه بقدرة الله يتلقفها ... و جائز أن يكون تعظيما لها: أى لا تحتفل بهذه الأجرام الكبيرة الكثيرة فإن فى يمينك شيئا أعظم منها
كلها ...

عصاك would possibly belittle it, meaning do not be concerned with the abundance of their ropes and rods, throw the small sized single piece of wood which is in your hand for by the power of Allah it will snatch [all their lies]. So do not be concerned with these huge pieces of wood, for what is in your right hand is greater than all of this... [al-Zamakhsharí 1966:2/544-5].

Allah had asked Músá [p.b.u.h] - **و ما تلك بيمينك** - [20:17] and this was the appropriate time to display the wonder of the rod.

161. Refer to [7:124].

162. Referring to the Lord of Músá [p.b.u.h] or to the pharaoh himself [al-Jazá'irí 1987:3/62].

"We believe in the Lord of Hárún and Músá" [20:70].

The Pharaoh had declared his divinity by *أنا ربكم الأعلى* and by *ما علمت لكم من إله غيري*. Had the sorcerers said "Lord of the worlds" they would be accused of believing in the pharaoh, that is why they chose this expression.

The reasons for the reversal of the two names are Pharaoh's undue claims to divinity. This was based on his having raised Músá [p.b.u.h]. The sorcerers were aware of the pharaoh's pretences [al-Rází n.d:22/87].

"Have you come to believe in him before I have given you permission?" [20:71].

آمنتكم له - their declaration of faith was not intentional.

The Pharaoh accuses Músá [p.b.u.h] of teaching the sorcerers the art of sorcery as this is evident in "Verily, he must be your senior who has taught you magic!"

'I will most certainly crucify you on trunks of palm trees' [20:71] -

This served as a form of exemplary punishment [al-Jazá'irí 1987:3/62].

قالوا لن نؤثرك على ما جاءنا من البينات و الذى فطرنا فاقض ما أنت قاض إنما تقضى هذه الحياة الدنيا (٧٢) إنا آمننا بربنا ليغفر لنا خطايانا و ما أكرهتنا عليه من السحر و اللّٰه خير و أبقى (٧٣) إته من يأت ربه مجرماً فإنّ له جهنم لا يموت فيها و لا يحيى (٧٤) و من يأتته مؤمناً قد عمل الصالحات فأولئك لهم الدرجات العلى (٧٥) جنات عدن تجري من تحتها الأنهار خالدين فيها و ذلك جزاء من تزكى (٧٦)

They said: " 'We do not prefer you over what has come to us from the proof and to Him who has created us. So decree what you want to decree, as you can only decree what pertains to the present world. We believe in our Lord that He may forgive our faults and from the sorcery which you coerced us.' " Surely, whoever comes to his Lord as an evildoer for him is hell, he will not die in it nor will he live. Whoever comes to Him as a believer and has done pious deeds for them are

the highest of ranks. Perpetual Gardens beneath which rivers flow, therein they will [live] eternally and that is the reward of those who are righteous [Qur'án 20:72-76].

The sorcerers outline the pharaoh's shortcomings in which he only conducts issues relevant to the world in contrast to the hereafter.

على ما جاءنا و الذى فطرنا is coordinated to

So decree what you want to decree, as you can only decree what pertains to the present world [20:73].

The above-mentioned words are stated to display their firm resolve in adhering to their faith despite the pharaoh's threats [al-Rází n.d:22/89].

Al-Jazá'irí [1987:3/64] interprets this as an unwavering disposition on the pharaoh's part to eliminate them by killing and crucifixion. His dominance is only applicable to the present world, but in the hereafter he will experience a humiliating punishment.

'We believe in our Lord that He may forgive our faults and from the sorcery which you coerced us' [20:74].

It was common practice for the rulers at the time to compel their subjects to learn and cultivate the art of sorcery [al-Rází n.d:22/89]. The pharaoh was considered to be the "god-king" and thus the embodiment of the Egyptian religion in which occult practices played a major role, thus each of his subjects was duty-bound to accept magic as part of their lives [Asad 1980:477]. They were sent to al-Farámá.¹⁶³

163. A fort on the shore of Egypt between al-'Arish [a town in northern Egypt] and al-Fustát [an ancient Islámic city south of present day Cairo].

و الله خير و أبقى

The above statement is a response to the Pharaoh's *و لتعلمن أينا أشد عذابا و أبقى*

إنّ من يأت ربه مجرما فإنّ له جهنم لا يموت فيها و لا يحيى

The *Mu'tazilite* differ in the promise made to the *أصحاب الكبائر* (major sinners). A great sinner is an evildoer and every evildoer's abode is hell. *إنه من يأت ربه مجرما* informs people in general of those who are excluded from punishment and those who are not. [A right action is rewarded and a wrong one is punished]. Some of the *Ash'arites* oppose this indicating that they do not submit to the view that the great sinner is [necessarily] an evildoer, that Allah has made the evildoer in opposition to the believer is unquestionable but this is beneficial if it can be affirmed that the great sinner is a believer.

Another view is about the physical existence of Allah as though He were at a particular site. Allah had made His commitment to them in the place of the promise. The physical existence of Allah is metaphorical as Ibráhím [p.b.u.h] had said: *إني ذاهب إلى ربي سيهدين*: "I am going to my Lord for guidance."

و من يآته مؤمنا قد عمل الصالحات فأولئك لهم الدرجات العلى

Note the antithesis of the term *مجرم*¹⁶⁴ with that of *مؤمن* [al-Rází n.d:22/90].

A *مؤمن* is one who does righteous deeds and has faith. al-Jazá'irí [1987:3/64] describes a *مؤمن* as one who executes his religious duties and refrains from that which is forbidden for which his reward is increased faith.

164. Asad's [1980:477] translation is 'one who is lost in sin.'

جَنَاتٍ عَدْنٍ تَجْرَى مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا وَ ذَلِكَ جَزَاءُ مَنْ تَزَكَّى (٧٦)

This verse highlights the acquisition of forgiveness for the major sinners as well because Allah has made the highest ranks of paradise for those endowed with faith.

The righteous are those who say لا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ - there is no god, except Allah [al-Zamakhshari 1966:2/546].

بعد أن نجى الله تعالى بنى إسرائيل من فرعون و ملائته حيث اجتاز بهم موسى البحر و أغرق الله فرعون و جنوده أخبرهم موسى أن ربه تعالى قد أمره أن يأتيه ببني إسرائيل و هم فى طريقهم إلى أرض المعاد جبل الطور ليؤتيهم التوراة فيها شريعتهم و نظام حياتهم دنيا و دينا و أنه واعدهم جانب الطور الأيمن، و استعجل موسى فى المسير إلى الموعد فاستخلف أخاه هارون على بنى إسرائيل ليسير بهم وراء موسى ببطء حتى يلحقوا به عند جبل الطور ، و حدث أن بنى إسرائيل فتنهم السامرى بصنع العجل و دعوتهم إلى عبادته و ترك المسير وراء موسى عليه السلام فقوله تعالى :

After Allah had rescued the Baní Isrá'íl from the Pharaoh and his people, Músá [p.b.u.h] traversed with them across the sea and Allah caused the Pharaoh and his army to drown. Músá had notified them that his Lord had commanded him to bring the Baní Isrá'íl as he was on his way to the appointed meeting at Mount ٱúr in order to give them the Torah which would contain laws and how to conduct their lives and religion and He had promised them this at the right side of ٱúr. Músá hurried en route for the appointed meeting. He had left his brother Hárún with the Baní Isrá'íl to travel slowly with them until they caught up with Músá at Mount ٱúr. It happened that the Baní Isrá'íl had been enticed by the Sámirí to mould the calf and worship him and to discontinue the journey behind Músá and Allah said the following [al-Jazá'irí 1987:3/69]:

The following refers to Músá's ascent of Mount Sinai

و ما أعجلك عن قومك يموسى (٨٣) قال هم أولآء على أترى و عجلت إليك رب لترضى (٨٤)
قال فإنا قد فتننا قومك من بعدك و أضلهم السامرى (٨٥) فرجع موسى إلى قومه غضبين
أسفا¹⁶⁵ قال يقوم ألم يعدكم ربكم وعدا حسنا أفعال عليكم العهد أم أردتم أن يحل عليكم
غضب من ربكم فأخلفتم موعدى (٨٦) قالوا ماأخلفنا موعداك بملكنا و لكننا حملنا أوزارا من
زينة القوم فقذفناها فكذلك ألقى السامرى (٨٧) فأخرج لهم عجلا جسدا له خوار فقالوا هذا
إلهم و إله موسى فنسى (٨٨) أفلا يرون ألا يرجع إليهم قولا ولا يملك لهم ضرا ولا نفعا(٨٩)

" 'And what made you hasten from your people, O Músá?' He said: 'They are following me and I hastened to you my Lord, so that You may be pleased.' He said: 'We have already tried your people in your absence and Sámirí has led them astray.' Músá returned to his people angered and regretful, he said: 'O my people did your Lord not promise you a fair promise? Was the promise long in coming or did you wish that the anger of your Lord descend upon you as you broke your promise to me?' They said: 'We did not break our promise to you on our own accord, but we had to carry the heavy burden of the ornaments of the people, then we cast them and Sámirí did likewise.' Then [they told Músá¹⁶⁶] he took out for them the effigy of a calf which was mooing, then they said: 'This is your Lord and the Lord of Músá,' but he has forgotten. Could they not see that it did not return a word, nor could it harm or benefit them? [Qur'án 20:83-89].

و ما أعجلك عن قومك يموسى

The above is a disapproval in the form of an inquiry which encompasses two important issues:

- it is a disapproval of the haste itself;
- is an inquiry into the reason for advancing at this stage. The second issue is

165. Refer to 7:17

166. According to Asad [1980:479] this interpolation is necessary due to the change from direct to indirect speech.

of relevance as Músa [p.b.u.h] is presenting an excuse and forwarding a reason for his advancement - وعجلت إليك رب لترضى - Músa [p.b.u.h] feared that he was going to be reproached by Allah, so he tried to create a diversion from the response by being consistent within the limits of the speech [al-Zamakhsharí 1966:2/549].

قوم is a reference to the seventy leaders selected by Allah to accompany Músa [p.b.u.h] to Mount Tur or they are in general the Baní Isrá'íl whom Músa [p.b.u.h] had left under the supervision of Hárún [p.b.u.h].

He should not have left his people without his guidance at so early a stage in their freedom. In this elliptic manner the Qur'án alludes to the psychological fact that a community which attains to political and social freedom after centuries of bondage remains for a long time subject to the demoralising influences of its past and cannot all at once develop a spiritual and social discipline of its own [Asad 1980:478].

قال هم أولاء على أثرى و عجلت إليك رب لترضى

The classical commentators understand this in a physical sense of literally following him, Asad [1980:478-49] is of the opinion that his answer has a tropical sense. Músa [p.b.u.h] was expressing his assumption that the children of Israel would follow his guidance even in his absence, but this assumption proved erroneous.

'We have already tried¹⁶⁷ your people in your absence and Sámirí has led them astray' [20:85].

Allah had informed Músa [p.b.u.h] of what his people had done during his absence.

The *Mu'tazilites* ascertain the impossibility of Allah's having created infidelity

167. فتنة is a trial in a sense that once they realised that the calf would not fulfil the requirements of a deity this worship would place an intense burden on them [al-Rází n.d:22/100].

amongst them based on the following:

- ❑ rational evidence indicates that this is not possible of Allah;
- ❑ Allah's statement *و أضلهم السامرى* would be false which is impossible of Allah and
- ❑ on Músá's questioning as to the reason for the disorder they would have cited Allah having created infidelity amongst them, but they did not [al-Rází n.d:22/100].

Sámirí is ascribed to a tribe of the Baní Isrá'íl called the Sámirah [a Jewish clan, some of whom still live in Nablus, in Palestine]. This tribe did not exist during the time of Músá [p.b.u.h] and it is possible that the individual in question was one of the many Egyptians who had converted to the faith of Músá [p.b.u.h] and joined the Israelites on their exodus from Egypt [Asad 1980: 479].

Músá returned¹⁶⁸ to his people angered and regretful and said: 'O my people did your Lord not promise you a fair promise? Was the promise long in coming or did you wish that the anger of your Lord descend upon you¹⁶⁹ as you broke your promise to me?' [20:86].

The promise of Allah is a reference to the Torah which includes guidance for mankind as there could be no better and more proficient promise than that. This includes benefits of religion and rewards in the hereafter. The other promise is that of worldly benefits in which they were promised land and homes prior to the destruction of the pharaoh [al-Rází n.d:22/102].

The term *عهد* can be designated with time or a covenant.

The promise was long in coming as Músá [p.b.u.h] has promised them thirty nights, but Allah had increased it by a further ten.

The 'promise' was on Músá's behalf to the people that they would join him and

168. This was after the completion of the thirty days of *Dhu 'l-Qa'da* and the ten days of *Dhu 'l-hijja* [al-Zamakhsharí 1966:2/549].

169. "Are you determined to disregard the consequences of your doings?" [Asad 1980:479].

carry out his religion on his return from Mount Sinai [al-Rází n.d:22/102].

They said: 'We did not break our promise with you on our own accord, but we had to carry the heavy burden of the ornaments of the people, then we cast¹⁷⁰ them and Sámirí did likewise [20:87].

They did not violate the promise freely, but were powerless as they feared they would cause further division and disturbance amongst the people [al-Rází n.d:22/102-3].

The ornaments were those of the pharaoh's people [Egyptian Coptics] which they had borrowed from them on their departure from Egypt. Prophet Músá [p.b.u.h] had already hurried off to Mount Sinai which gave Sámirí ample opportunity to cause havoc. He convinced the women of the Baní Isrá'íl that the jewels were of no use to them and by using them as easy prey he moulded the calf [al-Jazá'irí 1987:3/70].

Then he took out for them the effigy of a calf which was mooing, then they said: 'This is your Lord and the Lord of Músá,' but he has forgotten [20:88].

This is a complex statement based on the idea that the people through their sheer ignorance believed that the calf produced at the particular time was the creator of the heavens and the earth. Al-Rází [n.d:22/104] postulates it is possible that they were pantheists¹⁷¹ by believing that the deity is an incarnation manifesting itself in that particular body.

The dust brought about life in the dead. Allah produced it by the miracle of the Holy Spirit and this was displayed by the dust under the horse's hoofs. When it came into contact with the inanimate body Allah created the animal. Miracles such as these include the creation of the Messiah without a father [al-Zamakhsharí 1966:2/550].

"but he has forgotten" [20:88], is Allah's statement referring to Sámirí having forgotten of the proof required for the occurrence of such bodies. Allah then

170. Into the pit of the fire or in a place which Sámirí had suggested.

171. Pantheism is a doctrine that the whole universe is God or that every part of the universe is a manifestation of God.

mocks at Sámirí with the following statement:

Could they not see that it did not return a word, nor could it harm or benefit them? [20:89].

This is adequate proof that their deity was nonexistent as Allah states in the story of prophet Ibráhím [p.b.u.h] - لم تعبد ما لا يسمع و لا يبصر و لا يغنى عنك شيئاً

"Why do you worship that which can neither see nor hear, nor can it avail you anything?" [19:42].

و لقد قال لهم هرون من قبل يقوم إنما فتنتم به و إن ربكم الرحمن فاتبعوني و أطيعوا أمرى (٩٠) قالوا لن نبرح عليه عكفين حتى يرجع إلينا موسى (٩١) قال يهرون مامنك إذ رأيتهم ضلوا (٩٢) ألا تتبعن أفعصيت أمرى (٩٣) قال يبنؤم لا تأخذ بلحيتى و لا برأسى إنى خشيت أن تقول فرقت بين بنى إسرائيل و لم ترقب قولى (٩٤)

And Hárún had said to them before [the return of Músá], " 'O my people, you are being tried by this and surely your Lord is the Most Gracious, so follow me and obey my command.' They said: 'We will not stop devotion to it until Músá returns to us.' He (i.e. Músá) said: 'What prevented you when you saw them astray? Did you not follow me, have you defied my command?' He said: 'O son of my mother, do not seize me by my beard, nor by my head for I have feared that you would say: 'You have caused division among the Children of Israel and you have not respected my word ' " [Qur'án 20:90-94].

And Hárún had said to them before [the return of Músá], " 'O my people, you are being tried by this and surely your Lord is the Most Gracious¹⁷², so follow me and obey my command.' They said: 'We will not stop devotion to it until Músá returns¹⁷³ to us.' [20:90-91].

172. This particular name of Allah الرحمن has been selected on account of His infinite Mercy on accepting their repentance.

Hárún [p.b.u.h] endeavoured to restrain them from falsehood firstly by reminding them that Allah had subjected them to a test in terms of their faith **انما** **فنتنم به** and in this way He would distinguish those endowed with faith as opposed to those devoid of it; then he requested them to acknowledge Allah **وإن ربكم الرحمن**, then to recognise his prophethood **فاتبعوني** and finally to take cognisance of rightful laws. This is an excellent method of eliminating doubt [al-Rází n.d:22/106].

He (i.e. Músá) said: 'What prevented you when you saw them astray? Did you not follow me, have you defied my command?' [20:92-93].

There is no exaggeration, meaning what prevented you from following me whilst knowing the anger of Allah and the intense prevention against infidelity. al-Rází [n.d:22/107-8] concludes that disobedience is not characteristic of prophets.

أف عصيت أمرى is an inquiry intended as a means of disapproval [al-Rází n.d:22/107].

He said: 'O son of my mother, do not seize me by my beard, nor by my head¹⁷⁴ for I have feared that you would say: 'You have caused division among the Children of Israel and you have not respected my word ' [20:94].

Fearing that the Baní Isrá'íl had misunderstood him and they would not assist him against the anger of Músá [p.b.u.h] he elaborated as follows:

173. They would not abandon the calf and would continue in its worship until Músá's return [al-Tabarí 1968:16/202].

174. Refer to [7:150] . Note also the elision in this particular rendering, i.e Músá's having approached his brother by seizing his beard and dragging him towards himself [al-Tabarí 1968: 16/203]. Prophet Músá's anger against his people was directed towards his brother.

إتّى خشيت أن تقول فرقت بين بنى إسرائيل و لم ترقب قولى

Here Hárún [p.b.u.h] is expressing his fear of causing dissension among the Children of Israel and being disobedient to Músá [p.b.u.h]. According to ibn 'Abbás : "Hárún was respectful and obedient to Músá" [al-Ṭabarí 1968:16/204].

قال فما خطبك يسامرى (٩٥) قال بصرت بما لم يبصروا به فقبضت قبضة من أثر

الرسول فنبتتها و كذلك سولت لى نفسى (٩٦) قال فاذهب فإن لك فى الحيوّة أن تقول لا

مساس و إنّ لك موعدا لن تخلفه و انظر إلى إلهك الذى ظلت عليه عاكفا لنحرقنه ثم

لننسفنه فى اليم نسفا (٩٧) إنّما إلهكم الله الذى لا إله إلا هو وسع كل شىء علما (٩٨)

He (i.e. Músá) said: " 'What is the matter¹⁷⁵ with you, O Sámirí?' He responded: 'I see what they have been unable to see, so I took a handful of the messenger's print and cast it, thus has my mental attitude enticed me.' He said : 'Go! It will be upon you to say throughout your life, "Do not touch me!" and for you there will be an appointment for which there will be no substitute. And look at your deity which you have become so obsessed by, we will burn it and scatter it in the sea. Indeed your deity is Allah of which there is none other, He embraces all things with His knowledge!' " [Qur'án 20:95-98].

'I see what they have been unable to see' [20:96].

The Sámirí is referring to Jibríl's horse [al-Ṭabarí 1968:16/205] or he is saying "I know what your people do not know [al-Jazá'irí 1987:3/73].

بصر has a tropical significance of 'he perceived [something] mentally' or 'he gained insight' or 'he understood' [Asad 1980:480].

There are several interpretations to this particular statement, but the most adequate interpretation is that of Abú Muslim al-Isfahání who renders it as follows: I realised that which they did not, and that is some of your beliefs are not correct [al-Rází n.d:22/111].

175. It is an imperative as he is requesting a response from him.

It would appear that the Samaritan objected to the idea of a transcendental, imperceivable God and aspired for something more tangible [Asad 1980:480].

'I took a handful of the messenger's print and cast it, thus has my mental attitude enticed me' [20:96].

From under the hoof of Jibríl's horse, Sámirí then threw what was in his hand on the Baní Isrá'íl's ornaments which were molded in the shape of a calf. It made a bellowing sound [al-Tabarí 1968:16/205].

يكون المراد بالرسول موسى عليه السلام و بأثره سنته و رسمه

What is intended by رسول is Músá [p.b.u.h] and his practices, sayings and his decrees [Abú Muslim al-Isfahání in al-Rází n.d:23/111].

Sámirí mentions the messenger without referring to Jibríl and the Holy Spirit because at the time of the appointed meeting at Sinai Allah had sent the angel Jibríl riding on a horse to Músá [p.b.u.h]. Músá [p.b.u.h] queried this with Sámirí to which he responded that on the day he witnessed this and took a handful of the print of the sender's horse. Perhaps he was not aware that it was Jibríl¹⁷⁶ [al-Zamakhsharí 1966:2/551].

Asad [1980:481] considers Sámirí's rejection of Moses' teachings to explain the 'subconscious tendency underlying all forms of idolatry and of the attribution of divine qualities to things or beings other than God,' this is a futile hope of bringing the 'Unperceivable closer to one's limited perception by creating a tangible image of the Divine Being.' These endeavours 'destroy the misguided devotee's spiritual potential' and this he believes is the purport of the story of the golden calf as portrayed in the Qur'án.

He said : 'Go! It will be upon you to say throughout your life, "Do not touch me!" and for you there will be an appointment for which there will be no substitute [20:97].

176. Some of the commentators are of the opinion that 'messenger' is a reference to Jibríl, they also dispute about Sámirí's awareness as to who was there on the day of the parting of the sea [al-Rází n.d:23/110-11].

Músá [p.b.u.h] ordered the Baní Isrá'íl not to eat with him, nor associate with him or acknowledge him [al-Ṭabarí 1968:16/206].

"Do not touch me!" is a metaphorical description of the loneliness and the social ostracism in which he would find himself [Asad 1980:481].

His life will be full of fury, for when anyone touches him he will be ignited like an electrical wire [al-Jazá'irí 1987:3/74].

'for you there will be an appointment for which there will be no substitute' [20:97].

You will not be absent from it [al-Ṭabarí 1968:16/207].

Allah will not fail in His promise to you of the appointed meeting and as for your polytheism and corruption on the earth, He will implement [punishment] in the hereafter after your punishment in the world [al-Zamakhsharí 1966:2/551].

And look at your deity which you have become so obsessed by; we will burn it and scatter it in the sea [20:97].

It will be burnt and made into sawdust and blown away into the sea until there is no trace of it [al-Jazá'irí 1987:3/74].

'Indeed your deity is Allah of which there is none other, He embraces all things with His knowledge!' [20:98].

5.7 *SÚRA SHU'ARÁ'*

و اذ نادى ربك موسى أن ائت القوم الظالمين (١٠) قوم فرعون ألا يتقون ¹⁷⁷ (١١)

And when your Lord called upon Músá, "Go to the tyrannical people, the people of Pharaoh, who do not fear Me" [Qur'án 26:10-11].

This *súra* commences with the *Sunní-Mu'tazilite* discrepancy which is so characteristic of al-Rází's commentary. The point of dispute is the Voice heard by Músá [p.b.u.h]: was it eternal speech or a conglomeration of sounds? Abú

177. Al-Zamakhsharí [1966:2/106] and al-Rází [n.d:24/4] understand this rhetorical question in the sense which is apparent in Asad's [1980:561] rendering, i.e as a statement of fact.

al-Hasan al-Ash'arí considers it eternal speech which is determined and does not bear semblance to anything else. Al-Maturídí views it as sounds and letters and this was with Músá [p.b.u.h]'s knowledge [al-Rází n.d:24/121].

[This súra serves as another example to the Prophet of Islám].

For al-Tabarí [1968:19/64], the accusative قوم in the second statement verifies the قوم in the first. For al-Zamakhsharí [1966:3/106], قوم فرعون is the explicative clarification to القوم الظالمين, meaning it is the explicative clarifier of القوم الظالمين Both phrases render one meaning.

قال رب إني أخاف أن يكذبون (١٢) و يضيق صدري و لا ينطلق لساني فأرسل إلى هرون
(١٣) و لهم على ذنب فأخاف أن يقتلون (١٤)

He said: "My Lord I fear they will deny me. My breast straitens and I am not fluent [in speech], so send for Hárún. And they have levelled a charge against me, for I fear they will kill me" [Qur'án 26:12-14].

Músá [p.b.u.h] requested that his brother accompany him for the following reasons:

- 1) Pharaoh's denial which would cause straitening of his breast and an impediment in his speech;
- 2) Hárún's presence would serve as a barrier against any unfortunate incident with the Pharaoh [al-Rází n.d:24/122].

According to Asad [1980:561] stress is laid on the deep humility of Músá [p.b.u.h].

Al-Zamakhsharí [1966:3/106] says of Músá [p.b.u.h]'s plea to Allah:

هذا كلام مختصر و قد بسطه في غير هذا الموضع و قد أحسن في الاختصار حيث قال -
فأرسل إلى هرون - فجاء بما يتضمن معنى الاستنباء ، و مثله تقصير الطويلة...

This speech is in condensed form as it has already been expounded upon in

another place. It is best delivered in this form, i.e. when he said: "send for Hárún." It comes forth in such a {way} that the significance of appointing to prophethood is included, and this is an example of abridgement....

Prophet Músá [p.b.u.h] was hesitant in executing the command of Allah, knowing that Allah was with him. He had however conformed and accepted, but requested urgently from his Lord that his brother should strengthen him by executing the command, "he asked for assistance by means of consent, not by excuse" [al-Zamakhsharí 1966:3/107].

There was no prior contact between the two brothers and their union was not based simply on approaching the pharaoh, it was more so for the realisation of goals. Some are of the opinion that he was aware of the situation for Allah does not burden His servants with tasks that they are not capable of executing [al-Rází n.d:24/123].

قال كلاًّ فآذهبنا بآياتنا إنّنا معكم مستمعون (١٥) فأتيا فرعون فقولا إنّنا رسول رب العالمين (١٦) أن أرسل معنا بنى إسرائيل (١٧)

He said: "No! Go you {two} with Our Signs, We are with you listening. Go to the Pharaoh, say we are messengers of the Lord of the Worlds. Send with us the Children of Israel " [Qur'án 26:15-17].

كلاًّ is an assurance against any harm to the two brothers;

فآذهبنا shows that the request for Hárúns accompanying him was granted. This is verified by the فاء whose attachment to the verb is a means of boosting his confidence, e.g- "You will be prevented from that which you think, so go you and your brother" [al-Zamakhsharí 1966:3/107].

"I am with you Listening and Seeing" [26:15].

This is a figurative expression signifying Allah's presence and support to the

prophet [al-Rází.n.d:24/124].

"We are messengers of the Lord of the Worlds" [26:16].

إِنَّا رَسُولَا رَبِّكَ

- ❑ the noun is dual;
- ❑ it is a noun of quality;
- ❑ it renders itself as meaning مرسل (sender) and رسالة (message).

They are united on account of being brothers, as though they are one messenger [al-Rází n.d:24/124].

قال ألم نربك فينا وليداً و لبثت فينا من عمرك سنين (١٨) و فعلت فعلتك التي فعلت
و أنت من الكافرين (١٩)

He said: " Did we not bring you up among us as a child and you stayed with us many years¹⁷⁸ of your life. And you did your deed which you did, while you were one of the ingrates " [Qur'án 26:18-19].

The feature of abridgement is portrayed in the above verses, i.e. their actual advancement to the pharaoh.

The crime committed was the killing of the Coptic and فعله indicates that it was one blow which was the cause for the killing. Asad's [1980:561] interpolation of the term "heinous" expresses the speaker's utter condemnation of the deed referred to above.

Al-Tabarí's [1968:19/66] preferred opinion of أنت من الكافرين is that expressed by Ibn 'Abbás and Zayd ibn Aslam as "one who denies favours."

قال فعلتها إذا و أنا من الضالّين (٢٠) ففرت منكم لما خفتكم فوهب لي ربي حكماً و جعلني
من المرسلين (٢١) و تلك نعمة تمنها عليّ أن عبدت بني إسرائيل (٢٢)

178. Commentators are unanimous that he stayed for a period of thirty years.

Músá said: "I did it then when I was astray. So I fled from you when I feared you, but my Lord has granted me wisdom and made me one of the messengers. And this is the favour which you grant me - that you enslaved the Children of Israel " [Qur'án 26:20-22].

جاهلين is synonymous to ضالين and according to Ibn Mas'úd's reading (الفاعين) encompasses (جهل) and (سفه) are acts of ignorance and foolishness as prophet Yúsuf [p.b.u.h] said to his brothers:

هل علمتم ما فعلتم بيوسف و أخيه إذ أنتم جاهلون

"Do you know what you did with Yúsuf and his brother when you were ignorant?" [12:89] or المخطئين refers to those who kill unintentionally.

This act was a means of disciplinary punishment.

The plural pronoun in منكم and خفتكم are opposed to the singular تمنها and عبت - because the fear was not of the Pharaoh only but of his leaders¹⁷⁹ as well [al-Zamakhsharí 1966:2/109].

قال فرعون و ما رب العلمين (٢٣) قال رب السموت و الأرض و ما بينهما إن كنتم موقنين
(٢٤) قال لمن حولة ألا تستمعون (٢٥) قال ربكم و رب ءابآئكم الأولين (٢٦) قال إن
رسولكم الذى ارسل إليكم لمجنون (٢٧) قال رب المشرق و المغرب و ما بينهما إن كنتم
تعقلون (٢٨) قال لئن اتخذت إلها غيرى لأجعلنك من المسجونين (٢٩) قال أو لو جئتك
بشئء مبين (٣٠) قال فأت به إن كنت من الصادقين (٣١)

Pharaoh said: " 'And what is the lord of the Worlds? He said: 'Lord of the Heavens and the Earth and what is between them, if you need assurance.'Pharaoh said to

179. This is expressed in sūra [28:20]:

إن الملا يأترون بك ليقتلوك

those around: 'Do you not hear [what he says]?'¹⁸⁰ Músá said: 'Your Lord and the Lord of your ancient fathers.' Pharaoh said: 'Indeed, your messenger who has been sent to you is a madman! Músá said: 'Lord of the east and the west, and what is between them, if you do understand.' He said: 'If you take a deity other than me, I will place you amongst the prisoners.' He said: 'Even if I bring to you something evident?' He said: 'Bring it, if you are sincere.' " [Qur'án 26:23-31].

"What is the Lord of the Worlds?" [26:23].

This is not an isolated question but one which penetrates a wider spectrum that cannot be observed and known by virtue of other bodies or contingents. The question delves into a search as to the essence of a thing. A thing is defined by the *Ash'arites* as that which is existent. This existence, whether necessary or contingent is the thing or the essence of the thing and not a quality as defined by the *Mu'tazilites*. The thing itself is the object of knowledge and is thus an existent thing or a body. Everything that exists in the world has a contingent existence and is either a substance or a quality, therefore Allah cannot be a thing [al-Zamakhsharí 1966:2/109 & al-Rází n.d:24/128].

رب السموت و الأرض -[the heavens and the earth], embraces the entire creation, and the reason for mentioning their fathers with the subsequent referral to the east and the west is as follows:

قد عمم أولاً ثم خصص من العام للبيان أنفسهم و آباءهم لأن أقرب المنظور فيه من العاقل نفسه و من ولد منه و ما شاهد و عاين من الدلائل على الصانع و الناقل من هيئة إلى هيئة و حال إلى حال من وقت ميلاده الى وقت وفاته. ثم خصص المشرق و المغرب لأن طلوع الشمس من أحد الخافقين و غروبها في الآخر على تقدير مستقيم...

At first he generalises, then he specifies from the general in order to shed light upon themselves and their fathers because the closest perspective of a rational

180. "This is a rhetorical question meant to convey astonishment, indignation or derision" [Asad 1980:562].

being is himself and his offspring. And what he witnesses and observes constitute proofs for the Creator and one who transfers things from situation to situation and condition to condition from the time of his birth to the time of his death. Then [Músá] specifies the east and the west because the sun rises in one hemisphere and sets in the other according to a proper calculation... [al-Zamakhsharí 1966:2/110].

The Pharaoh was alarmed at Músá [p.b.u.h]'s response:

انا أطلب منه الماهية و خصوصية الحقيقة ، و هو يجيبني بالفاعلية و المؤثرية .

"I queried from him about the essential nature and the special essence, but he responded to me with effectiveness and impact" [al-Rází n.d:24/129].

Prophet Músá [p.b.u.h] says, "if you believe," and then, "if you understand" because at first he was lenient but their unyielding resistance and the subsequent statement *لَمَجْنُونٍ* prompted him to say, "if you do understand."

Al-Rází [n.d:24/129] feels that the prophet is insinuating that this is not a response to the question, but to their request requiring specification of His essence.

لَأَجْعَلَنَّكَ مِنَ الْمَسْجُونِينَ can serve as an abridgement for *لَأَسْجِنَنَّكَ*, but it cannot produce a significant result because as al-Zamakhsharí [1966:24/130] interprets it: "I will make you one of those who will know his condition in my captivity" [al-Zamakhsharí 1966:2/110]. It was customary for the pharaoh to capture whom he pleased by imprisonment and hurling him into an abyss.

Al-Rází [n.d:24/130-1] asserts that abridgement is not possible, because by saying *لَأَسْجِنَنَّكَ* no real benefit is derived except declaring the outcome which is imprisonment.

فَألقى عصاه فإذا هي ثعبان مبين (٣٢) و نزع يده فإذا هي بيضاء للنظرين (٣٣)

قال للملا حوله إنَّ هذا لسحر عليم (٣٤) يريد أن يخرجكم من أرضكم بسحره فما ذا

تأمرون (٣٥) قالوا أرجه و أخاه وابعث فى المدائن حشرين (٣٦) يأتوك بكل سحّار
عليم (٣٧)

So he threw his rod and it was a manifest snake. And he drew forth his hand, and lo! it appeared [shining] to the beholders. [Pharaoh] said to the great ones around him: " 'Verily, this is a sorcerer of great knowledge who wants to drive you out of your land by his sorcery. What then do you advise?' They answered: 'Let him and his brother wait a while, and send into all cities heralds' " [Qur'án 26:32-37].

The transformation of the rod has been described as "ثعبان مبین" , "فإذا هى حية" , "كأنّها جان" and "تسعى".

The Pharaoh intended to obscure the proof by mentioning:

إِنَّ هَذَا لَسِحْرٌ مُّبِينٌ during a period when sorcery was a common practice. Pharaoh's aim was to show that Músá [p.b.u.h] had attained the level of proficiency to the farthest limit.

يريد أن يخرجكم من أرضكم بسحره here the Pharaoh is once again inciting the people with emotive terms such as يخرجكم (estrangement) and من أرضكم (departure from their homeland) - [Qur'án 26:32-37].

By complying and yielding to what they had to say as evident in فماذا تأمرون he was trying to captivate their hearts [al-Rází n.d:24/132].

من المؤامرة و هى المشاورة ، أو من الأمر الذى هو ضد النهى، جعل العبيد أمّرين و ربهم
مأمورا لما استولى عليه من فرط الدهش و الحيرة .

This word is from مؤامرة which is consultation, or it is an order which is contrary to a prohibition. He made the slaves commanders and their lord the commanded being on account of excessive astonishment and confusion he possessed [al-Zamakhsharí 1966:2/111].

"If you kill him you will instill suspicion among the people, but by delaying him and his brother till the appointed time he will not be able to provide any proof" [al-Rází n.d:24/132].

There is a difference between **بكل سحر** and **إن هذا لساحر عليم**

فجاءوا بكلمة الإحاطة و صفة المبالغة ليطمأنوا من نفسه و يسكنوا بعض قلقه.

"They used a comprehensive word denoting excessive quality in order to pacify him and to remit some of his fear" [al-Zamakhsharí 1966:2/112].

فجمع السحرة لميقات يوم معلوم (٣٨) و قيل للناس هل أنتم مجتمعون (٣٩) لعلنا نتبع

السحرة إن كانوا هو الغلبين (٤٠) فلما جاء السحرة قالوا لفرعون أئن لنا لأجرا إن كنا

نحن الغلبين (٤١) قال نعم و إنكم اذا لمن المقربين (٤٢)

So the sorcerers were gathered at an appointed time on a fixed day. And it was said to the people: " 'Are you [too] going to gather? That we may follow the sorcerers if they are the victors.' " So when the sorcerers arrived, they said to the Pharaoh: "Will there really be a reward for us if we are the victors?"

He said: 'Yes, and you will be of those who will be close me' " [Qur'án 26:38-42].

The pharaoh goaded them and motivated them to which they responded: **لعلنا نتبع**.

أى فى دينهم إن غلبوا موسى و لا نتبع موسى فى دينه و ليس غرضهم باتباع السحرة و إنما

الغرض الكلى أن لا يتبعوا موسى فسايقوا الكلام مساق الكناية لأنهم اذا اتبعوهم لم يكونوا

متبعين لموسى عليه السلام .

"Perhaps we will follow", meaning in their belief if they defeated Músá [p.b.u.h], "nor would we follow Músá in his faith" for it was not their intention for following the sorcerers {either}. Their total aim was not to follow Músá, so they continued the speech with an indirect declaration because if they followed them they would not be following Músá [p.b.u.h]" [al-Zamakhsharí 1966:2/112].

Al-Jazá'irí [1987:3/303] says: "We will adhere to our faith and will not follow Músá and his brother in their new religion."

قال لهم موسى القوا ما أنتم ملقون (٤٣) فألقوا حبالهم و عصيهم و قالوا بعزة فرعون
إنا لنحن الغلبون (٤٤) فألقى موسى عصاه فإذا هي تلقف ما يأفكون (٤٥) فألقى السحرة
سجدين (٤٦) قالوا آمناً برب العلمين (٤٧) رب موسى و هرون (٤٨) قال ءامنتم له قبل
أن اذن لكم إنه لكبيركم الذى علمكم السحر فلسوف تعلمون لأقطعن أيديكم و
أرجلكم من خلاف و لأصلبنكم أجمعين (٤٩) قالوا لا ضير إنا إلى ربنا منقلبون (٥٠)
إنا نطمع أن يغفر لنا ربنا خطايانا أن كنا أول المؤمنين (٥١)

Músá said to them: " 'Cast what you are going to cast!' So, they cast their ropes and their rods, and said: 'By the power¹⁸¹ of Pharaoh, it is we who will certainly be victorious.' Then Músá cast his staff, and consequently it swallowed up quickly what they had been lying¹⁸². And the sorcerers fell down prostrate. They said: 'We believe in the Lord of the Worlds, the Lord of Músá and Hárún.' He [i.e. pharaoh] said: 'You believe in him before I give you permission, truly he is your senior who has taught you sorcery, soon you will know. I will sever your hands and your legs¹⁸³ from opposite sides and I will crucify you all.' They said: 'No harm! We will return to our Lord. We seek that our Lord forgive our faults, as we are the first of believers' " [Qur'án 26:43-51].

"Cast what you are going to cast" [26:43].

The above-mentioned statement and its legitimacy are interpreted by [al-Rází n.d:24/134] as a means of eliminating doubt as well as a form of intimidation to establish the truth.

181. This is the belief of ignorance, as the Prophet of Islám has said the following: "Do not swear by your fathers, nor your mothers or by idols and do not swear by any except Allah" [al-Zamakhsharí 1966:2/112].

182. Refer to [7:117].

183. Refer to [7:124].

"By the power of Pharaoh, it is we who will certainly be victorious" [26:44].

The reason for this premature sense of triumph is in [7:116] "and when they cast they bewitched the people's eyes and frightened them and produced a great spell" as well as in [20:66-7] where "their ropes and rods by their magic appeared to him as though they moved fast, and in his heart Músa became apprehensive" [Asad 1980:563].

And the sorcerers fell down prostrate [26:47].

They were astonished and overwhelmed at the truth [al-Jazá'irí 1987:3/304]. They declared their faith in "the Lord of Músa and Hárún" [26:48] which is an explicative apposition to رب العالمين because Pharaoh proclaimed divinity and they intended to isolate him.

You believe in him before I give you permission [26:49] is simply an exposed trick on the pharaoh's part to reveal their submissiveness to him [al-Jazá'irí 1987:3/304].

'No harm! We will return to our Lord. We seek that our Lord forgive our faults¹⁸⁴, as we are the first of believers' [26:50-1].

They had already acquired the love of Allah and desired nothing, except Allah's pleasure and absorption into the brightness of His knowledge and that is the highest rank of sincerity [al-Rází n.d:24/136].

"The first of believers" is a reference to either those present at the gathering among the sorcerers in particular as well as the pharaoh's subjects, or those living during that era [al-Rází n.d:24/136].

184. Included within their ranks were infidels, sorcerers and other categories of disbelievers.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

A work of such a nature is bound to be marred by shortcomings, but tireless research has developed into what I hope to be viewed as a work of scholarly stature. The conclusions I have drawn from this exhaustive study of the views of selected commentators on repeated verses of the Qur'án are as ff:

- ❑ the views of commentators reflect certain similarities as well as differences;
- ❑ their lives and influences have a definite bearing on their views;
- ❑ commentators tend to be somewhat detailed in their explanations which makes comprehension difficult;
- ❑ various religious schools of thought that influenced the commentators is flagrantly evident in their renditions; and
- ❑ the schools of thought and their own opinions reflect a certain incomparability which has made their works unique.

In this research I have attempted to and I hope that I have succeeded in this endeavour to select the most authentic and consistent body of literature as a helping hand in the accomplishment of this task.

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