

Sura 13: Al-Ra'd (The Thunder)

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

According to al-Asas, there is a difference in opinion where this Sura has been revealed. The most general opinion is that it was revealed in Mecca, except for the verses (8-13). All the verses of the Sura have a single rhyme. It takes the human being around the universe, speaking of different physical phenomena. Al-Asas is of the opinion that this Sura elaborates on the verses 26 and 27 of Surat al-Baqarah.

Verses 1 to 18:

1. *Alif. Lam. Mim. Ra. These are verses of the Book. That which is revealed to you from your Lord is the Truth, but most of humankind do not believe.*
2. *God is He who raised the heavens without any visible supports; then He established Himself on the Throne. He has subjected the sun and the moon each one runs (its course) for an appointed term. He regulates all affairs and explains the signs in detail so that you may believe with certainty in the meeting with your Lord.*
3. *And it is He who spread out the earth, and set thereon mountains standing firm and (flowing) rivers, and fruit of every kind He made in pairs, two and two. He draws the night as a veil over the day. Verily in these things there are signs for those who reflect.*
4. *And in the earth are tracts side by side, vineyards and ploughed lands, and date-palms, like and unlike, which are watered using the same water. And we have made some of them taste better than others. Herein verily are signs for people who have sense.*
5. *If you do marvel (at their want of faith), strange is their saying, "When we are (actually) dust, shall we then (be raised) in a new creation?" Such are they who disbelieve in their Lord; such have chains on their necks; such are the rightful owners of the Fire, they will abide therein forever.*
6. *They ask you to hasten on the evil rather than the good, when exemplary punishments have indeed occurred before them. But your Lord is the Lord of forgiveness to people, notwithstanding their injustice; and most surely your Lord is severe in punishment.*
7. *And the disbelievers say, "Why is not a sign sent down to him from his Lord?" But you are indeed a warner, and to every people (We sent) a guide.*
8. *God knows what every female (womb) bears, and by how much the wombs fall short (of their time or number) or do exceed. And everything with Him is measured.*
9. *He is the Knower of the unseen and the seen, the Great, the Most High.*
10. *It is the same (to Him) whether any of you conceal his speech or declare it openly; whether he is hidden by night or walk forth freely by day.*
11. *For each (such person) there are angels ranged before him and behind him, who guard him by God's command. God does not change the condition of a people until they (first) change that which is in their hearts; and if God wills misfortune for a people there is none that can repel it, nor have they a protector beside Him.*
12. *It is He who shows you the lightning (causing) fear and hope. It is He who raises up the clouds, heavy (with rain).*

13. *The thunder sings His praise, and so do the angels in awe. He launches the thunderbolts, and smites with them whomsoever He wills, while they dispute, and He is mighty in wrath.*
14. *For Him (alone) is prayer in truth. And those on whom they call upon besides Him hear them no more than a one who stretches forth his hands toward water (asking) that it may come into his mouth, and it will never reach it. The prayer of the disbelievers goes (far) astray.*
15. *Whatever beings there are in the heavens and the earth do prostrate themselves to God, willingly or unwillingly, as do their shadows in the morning and the evening hours.*
16. *Say, "Who is the Lord of the heavens and the earth?" Say, "(It is) God." Say, "Do you then take (for worship) patrons other than Him, such as have no power either for good or for harm to themselves?" Say, "Is the blind equivalent to the seeing? Or is darkness equivalent to light?" Or do they assign to God partners who created the like of His creation so that the creation (which they made and His creation) seemed alike to them? Say, "God is the Creator of all things, and He is the One, the Dominator."*
17. *He sends down water from the skies, so that the valleys flow according to their measure, and the flood bears (on its surface) swelling foam. And from that which they smelt in the fire in order to make ornaments and tools rises foam like it. Thus, God compares the truth and the falsehood. Then, as for the foam, it passes away as scum upon the banks, while, as for that which benefits the people, it remains in the earth. Thus, God coins parables.*
18. *For those who answered God's call is bliss; and for those who did not answer His call, if they had all that is in the earth, and the like thereof, they would certainly offer it as a ransom. (As for) those, an evil reckoning shall be theirs and their abode is hell, and evil is the resting-place. (13: 1 – 18)*

The Sura starts with a fundamental principle of the principles of creed: the principle that this Book is a divine revelation which has been revealed by God. This principle is the foundation of the remaining components of the creed. These include the belief in the oneness of God, the belief in the resurrection, and the necessity of doing good deeds in this life. The validity of these components is contingent on the belief that this Book is a true revelation from God and therefore it embodies God's commandments.

"Alif. Lam. Mim. Ra. These are verses of the Book." The verses of the Quran are signs which indicate that this Book is a divine revelation. The fact that the Book has been composed using the known Alphabetical letters is an evidence that it has not been composed by a human being but it is a divine revelation. *"That which is revealed to you from your Lord is the Truth."* It is the truth and nothing but the truth, *"but most of mankind do not believe."* They do not believe that this Book is a divine revelation and consequently they do not believe in the consequences of this belief. These consequences include the absolute submission to God and the belief in the resurrection after death.

This opening summarizes the whole Sura and points to the issues that the Sura deals with. The succeeding verses review the cosmic signs which show the extent of the power of the Creator, His ability to control the universe, and His wisdom in managing the universe. A consequence of God's wisdom is that he decreed that people should be given a divine revelation to open up their

eyes on the realities of life and the fact that they will stand one day in front of God to account for their deeds in life.

The miracle brush starts to paint an image of gigantic cosmic scenes, a touch on heaven and another on earth and the secrets of life, *“God is He Who raised the heavens without any visible supports;”* Regardless of how people perceive the sky, it is there and everyone sees it. One should reflect on the statement, *“without any visible supports.”* Then, *“He established Himself on the Throne.”* High above everything is the Throne. The verse moves from the physical elevation of the sky to the absolute (metaphorical) elevation of the Throne. Then the verses move from the elevation to the control, *“He has subjected the sun and the moon each one runs (its course) for an appointed term. He regulates all affairs and explains the signs in detail so that you may believe with certainty in the meeting with your Lord.”* Everything runs according to God’s law. Every physical phenomenon is managed by God’s power. Part of this management is making its details known to people at appointed times so they can understand the secrets of the creation and realize that they will one day meet their Lord.

The next verse paints an image for the miracles on earth, *“And it is He who spread out the earth, and set thereon mountains standing firm and (flowing) rivers, and fruit of every kind He made in pairs, two and two. He draws the night as a veil over the Day. Verily in these things there are signs for those who reflect.”* The earth is extended in front of us, we may think of it as a wide flat land even though its true shape is otherwise. The mountains are standing firm and the rivers are flowing. Then two general phenomena are mentioned. The fruits were made in pairs: male and female. The male and female components may exist in different plants or they may be combined in the same plant. This is a true fact that was not known to people until very recently, a phenomenon to reflect upon. Then the perpetual cycle of the day and night is mentioned. It is a marvelous phenomenon that calls for reflection for those who reflect.

Let us stop a moment here to think about the artistic style which juxtaposes the fixed mountains versus the flowing rivers, the male plant versus the female plant, the day versus the night, and the earth versus the heavens in one gigantic cosmic scene.

The following verses continue to paint an image of the amazing scene of the earth. Many of us pass by these scenes and do not pay attention to it. *“And in the earth are tracts side by side,”* Pieces of land, side by side but different in nature. Some are fertile, some are infertile, and some are rocky. The same land may have different plants, *“vineyards and ploughed lands, and date-palms, like and unlike, which are watered using the same water,”* even the same plant may have different types and forms. All these different plants are watered with the same water. Although it is the same soil and the same water but it produces fruits having different taste, *“And we have made some of them taste better than others. Herein verily are signs for people who have sense.”* Who of us did not find that fruits from the same plant could have different taste? How many of us reflected on this simple fact that the Quran asks us to pay attention to? The Quran has these scenes which explore the universe and the soul and motivate the mind of the human being. This is a limitless resource for reflection.

The verses move on to another theme, *“If you do marvel (at their want of faith), strange is their saying, ‘When we are (actually) dust, shall we then (be raised) in a new creation?’ Such are they who disbelieve in their Lord; such have chains on their necks; such are rightful owners of the Fire; they will abide therein forever.”* The Creator who created this magnificent universe has the power to bring people to life after they die once more. It is the shackles that bind the minds and the hearts of the disbelievers that prevent them from reflecting on God’s creation. Since they chose to place their minds under the shackles of disbelief, their necks will be bound by shackles as well and they will end up in Hell fire. They ask you to hasten the punishment, *“They ask you to hasten on the evil rather than the good, when exemplary punishments have indeed occurred before them. But your Lord is the Lord of forgiveness to people, notwithstanding their injustice; and most surely your Lord is severe in punishment.”* Although they asked the Prophet (PBUH) to hasten the punishment before guidance, the verse cites God’s forgiveness before God’s punishment to show the contrast between the goodness that God wants for them and the evil they want for themselves.

“And the disbelievers say, ‘Why is not a sign sent down to him from his Lord?’ But you are indeed a warner, and to every people (We sent) a guide.” The disbelievers asked the Messenger of God (PBUH) to bring forth a miracle in order for them to believe in him. The Quran tells them that it is not for the Messenger to bring forth a miracle. It is only God who decides when and how a miracle is delivered. The Messenger’s (PBUH) task is to warn and guide people to the right path.

“God knows what every female (womb) bears, and by how much the wombs fall short (of their time or number) or do exceed. And everything with Him is measured.” How many females live in this universe? God knows what each and every one of them bears in her womb. He knows each and every change that occurs in each womb. He knows what is hidden and what is seen, *“He is the Knower of the unseen and the seen, the Great, the Most High.”* He knows what everyone says whether the words were uttered loudly or were uttered in whisper, *“It is the same (to Him) whether any of you conceal his speech or declare it openly; whether he is hidden by night or walks forth freely by day.”*

The keepers (angels) follow each human being and they record everything a human being does, *“For each (such person) there are angels ranged before him and behind him, who guard him by God’s command.”* The Quran did not give any details on the nature or form of these keepers. We should not speculate on such matters. God follows people through the keepers to watch the changes they seek to accomplish, then He deals with them accordingly. Although God knows beforehand what people will do but His actions are based on their actual deeds.

“God does not change the condition of a people until they (first) change that which is in their hearts; and if God wills misfortune for a people there is none that can repel it, nor have they a protector beside Him.” This verse places a heavy responsibility on people because it states that God’s will is to recompense people according to their deeds. The verse also shows the honor that God bestowed on humankind. People’s deeds are an expression of the will of God.

Another theme is then explored, *“It is He who shows you the lightning (causing) fear and hope. It is He who raises up the clouds, heavy (with rain).”* Lightning and thunder are well known

phenomena. They result because of the nature of the universe which God created. These phenomena are awe-inspiring whether we understand the physics behind them or not. The feelings of fear and hope fill the human heart when a person sees lightning, fear of the destruction that may accompany lightning and hope in the rain that revives the earth and fills the rivers. God raises the clouds to bring down rain. Thunder is another consequence of the way God created the universe. The perfection of its creation is an expression of the glory of the Creator. The apparent meaning of the text indicates that the sound of thunder is in a way an expression of how the nature sings the praise of the Creator. This adds dynamics to the scene and allows the cosmic phenomena to join the angels in painting a lively scene. The awesome scene is completed by adding the occurrence of the horrific scene of thunderbolts, *“The thunder sings His praise, and so do the angels, with awe. He launches the thunder-bolts, and smites with them whomsoever He wills, while they dispute, and He is mighty in wrath.”*

It is surprising that in the midst of this dynamic scene - in which the horrific atmosphere generated by the lightning, thunder and thunderbolts overlaps the atmosphere of spirituality created by the angels praising the glory of their Lord - we find people who argue about God, *“For Him (alone) is prayer in truth. And those on whom they call upon besides Him hear them no more than a one who stretches forth his hands toward water (asking) that it may come into his mouth, and it will never reach it. The prayer of the disbelievers goes (far) astray.”* They associate partners with God instead of calling upon the true God. Only He is the Truth and anything else is falsehood. They call in vain upon those whom they associate as partners with God. Their weak voices will be overshadowed by the truth from God. They call upon others beside God while all the other creatures prostrate themselves to God, *“Whatever beings there are in the heavens and the earth do prostrate themselves to God, willingly or unwillingly, as do their shadows in the morning and the evening hours.”* The verses refer to the most profound form of worship – prostration. Not only the beings in heavens and earth do prostrate themselves to God but also their shadows do prostrate.

Rhetorical questions were then posed, *“Say, ‘Who is the Lord of the heavens and the earth? Say, (It is) God.’ Say, ‘Do you then take (for worship) patrons other than Him, such as have no power either for good or for harm to themselves?’ Say, ‘Is the blind equivalent to the seeing? Or is darkness equivalent to light?’ Or do they assign to God partners who created the like of His creation so that the creation (which they made and His creation) seemed alike to them? Say, ‘God is the Creator of all things, and He is the One, the Dominator.’”* The questions were posed and the answers were given to be heard by those who associated partners with God. The contrast between the blind and the seeing is clear, similarly the contrast between darkness and light is clear. The verse uses the terms blind and seeing to allude to the disbelievers and the believers and it uses the terms darkness and light to allude to the conditions of the disbelievers and the believers. Blindness and darkness are barriers which prevent the disbelievers from seeing the truth.

Did those, whom they associated with God, create creatures similar to the creatures created by God? Did that confuse them? If this were true then they would be justified in worshipping them side by side with God. But this is not true, *“God is the Creator of all things, and He is the One,*

the Dominator.” God is unique in His creation and He is unique in His power.

The verses then give a parable to juxtapose the truth against the falsehood, *“He sends down water from the skies, so that the valleys flow according to their measure, and the flood bears (on its surface) swelling foam. And from that which they smelt in the fire in order to make ornaments and tools rises foam like it. Thus God compares the truth and the falsehood. Then, as for the foam, it passes away as scum upon the banks, while, as for that which benefits the people, it remains in the earth. Thus God coins parables.”* The coming down of rain is part of the image that was given before for the lighting and thunder. It is also a sign of the power of God. Water flows in each valley according to a measure decided by God. As water flows through the valley, it carries foam which floats on the water surface. Sometimes this foam is plenty to the extent that it covers the quite flow of water underneath. This is similar to the process of melting metals. The foam surfaces on top of the molten metal but when it is removed it leaves behind the pure and useful metal. This is the parable of truth and falsehood. Falsehood rises to the top and may cover the truth for a while but eventually it is removed and leaves behind the truth which benefits people.

Those who respond to God’s call will get the best reward but those who did not respond, they will be destined to bad reckoning. It is so bad a reckoning that they would wish they could ransom themselves, even if the ransom is all what is on the earth, *“For those who answered God’s call is bliss; and for those who did not answer His call, if they had all that is in the earth, and the like thereof, they would certainly offer it as a ransom. (As for) those, an evil reckoning shall be theirs and their abode is hell, and evil is the resting-place.”*

Verses 19 to 43:

19. *Is he who does know that which has been revealed to you from your Lord is the Truth, like him who is blind? But it is only people of understanding who heed (the reminder).*
20. *Those who fulfill the covenant of God and do not break the covenant;*
21. *Those who join together those things which God has commanded to be joined, hold their Lord in awe, and fear the terrible reckoning;*
22. *Those who patiently persevere, seeking the countenance of their Lord; establish regular prayers; spend out of (the gifts) We have bestowed for their sustenance, secretly and openly; and repel evil with good; theirs will be the sequel of the (heavenly) Home;*
23. *Gardens of Eden which they enter, along with all who do right of their fathers and their spouses and their offspring. The angels will enter upon them from every gate,*
24. *(Saying), "Peace be on you because you persevered. And excellent is the final home.*
25. *But those who break the covenant of God, after ratifying it, and sever that which God has commanded to be joined, and make mischief in the land, on them is the curse; for them is the terrible abode.*
26. *God extends provision for whom He wills and restricts (it); and they rejoice in the life of the world, whereas the life of the world is but a brief comfort as compared with the Hereafter.*

27. *The disbelievers say, "Why is not a sign sent down to him from his Lord?" Say, "Truly God leaves, to stray, whom He wills. And He guides to Himself those who turn to Him in penitence;*
28. *Those who believe, and whose hearts find assurance in the remembrance of God. Verily in the remembrance of God hearts are assured.*
29. *For those who believe and do righteous deeds, is (every) blessedness, and a beautiful place of (final) return.*
30. *Thus, have We sent you (Muhammad) to a people before whom (long since) have (other) peoples (gone and) passed away; in order that you recite to them what We revealed to you; yet they reject (Him), the Lord of Mercy. Say, "He is my Lord. There is no deity but He. In Him, I put my trust, and to Him do I turn."*
31. *Had it been possible for a Quran to cause the mountains to move, or the earth to be torn asunder, or the dead to speak, (this Quran would have done so); but to God belongs the affair entirely. Do not those who believe know that, had God willed, He could have guided all humankind? As for those who disbelieve, disaster will not cease to strike them because of what they do, or it dwells near their home until the threat of God comes to pass. Indeed, God does not fail in keeping His promise.*
32. *And verily messengers (of God) were mocked before you, but I gave respite to those who disbelieved, then I seized them, and how (awful) was My punishment.*
33. *Is He who is a sustainer of every soul, (knowing) what it has earned? Yet they ascribe partners to God. Say, "Name them. Or do you inform Him of something which He does not know in the earth? Or of what is apparent in speech?" Their contrivance has been made attractive to those who disbelieve and they have been averted from the road. He whom God sends astray, for him there is no guide.*
34. *For them is torment in the life of this world, and verily the doom of the Hereafter is more painful, and they have no protector from God.*
35. *The similitude of the Garden which is promised to those who are conscious of God, underneath it rivers flow, its food is everlasting, and its shade. This is the reward of those who remain conscious of God, while the reward of the disbelievers is the Fire.*
36. *Those to whom We have given the Scripture rejoice at what has been revealed to you; but there are among the clans those who reject a part thereof. Say, "I am commanded to worship God, and not to join partners with Him. To Him I invite, and to Him is my return."*
37. *And thus We have revealed it, a true judgment in Arabic. Were you to follow their (vain) desires after the knowledge which has reached you, then you would find neither patron nor protector against God.*
38. *We did send messengers before you, and appointed for them wives and children. It was not (given) to any messenger that he should bring a sign save by God's leave. For everything there is an appointed time.*
39. *God does blot out or confirm what He pleases, and with Him is the Mother of the Book.*
40. *Whether We shall show you (within your life-time) part of what We promised them or take to Ourselves your soul (before it is all accomplished), your duty is the conveying (of the Message) and Ours is the reckoning.*
41. *Have they not seen that We set upon the land, reducing it from its borders? And God decides; there is no adjuster of His decision. And He is swift in reckoning.*

42. *Those before them did (also) devise plots; but to God belongs the plan entirely. He knows what every soul earns, and the disbelievers will know who gets the final home.*
43. *The disbelievers say, "You are not a messenger." Say, "God is sufficient as a witness between me and you, and whoever has knowledge of the Book (is also a witness)." (13: 19 – 43)*

The verses come back to deal with the issue of the revelation, *"Is he who does know that which has been revealed to you from your Lord is the Truth, like him who is blind? But it is only people of understanding who heed (the reminder)."* The one who knows that what has been revealed to the Prophet (PBUH) is the truth is juxtaposed against the blind. This is an amazing style in building an argument that touches the hearts. In the meantime, there is no exaggeration. Being ignorant of such an obvious fact can only happen if the person is completely blind. People in this regard can be classified into two groups: a seeing group who know the truth, and a blind group of people who do not know the truth. Blindness here refers to insights that have been lost, hearts that have been sealed, senses that have been rendered useless, and knowledge that does not exist. Only those who have understanding will heed the reminder, *"Those who fulfill the covenant of God and do not break the covenant;"* The covenant of God encompasses all covenants. The major covenant with God is the covenant to believe in the Oneness of God. The covenant to believe in God is an old covenant but it is being renewed. It is old in the sense that it has been implanted in the initial natural disposition of all people. It has been since renewed by the message which the messengers of God brought to guide humanity. In order to fulfill the covenant with God, one has to fulfill all covenants or pledges in which the human being ventures. This is one of the basic rules that form the foundation of the structure of the human society.

Another general rule that has to be fulfilled, *"Those who join together those things which God has commanded to be joined, hold their Lord in awe, and fear the terrible reckoning;"* One of the attributes of the believers is that they join everything God has commanded to be joined. The verse does not detail the things to be joined but it stated the general rule. This implicitly indicates that a believer has to be completely obedient to God and to follow the Prophet's (PBUH) tradition. This requires the believers to maintain a continuous connection to God and absolute adherence to the straight path. This is motivated by the fact that the believers, *"hold their Lord in awe, and fear the terrible reckoning."* They are the ones who, *"patiently persevere, seeking the countenance of their Lord."* There are many categories of perseverance. These include: enduring the difficulties involved in trying to maintain God's covenant, persevering in times of ease and in times of difficulty, and enduring the hurt people some time inflict on the believer. They persevere and endure all these difficulties for the sake of pleasing their Lord and not because they are interested in the praise of people or because they want to avoid people's criticism. Their perseverance is not motivated by the interest in a worldly gain or the avoidance of a worldly loss. They persevere because they submit to the will of God and they are content with whatever God decrees.

They, *"establish regular prayers."* Although, establishing prayer is a part of the fulfillment of God's covenant but it has been mentioned explicitly in this verse because it is a fundamental component of this covenant. It is a symbol of complete submission and devotion to God. Prayer represents a true portrayal of the relationship between the believer and God.

And they, *“spend out of (the gifts) We have bestowed for their sustenance, secretly and openly.”* This is also a part of the fulfillment of God’s covenant and joining what God has commanded to be joined but it has been mentioned explicitly because spending represents an important aspect of the relationship between the people. It purifies the souls of the one who gives and the one who receives. It removes the stinginess from the heart of the one who gives and the hatred from the heart of the one who receives. It allows a healthy environment to prevail in the Muslim society. There are two types of spending and each has its own advantage: spending in secret preserves the dignity of people; while spending in the open provides an example for others to follow.

They, *“repel evil with good.”* They treat people graciously in their daily dealings. They do not only forgive people’s transgression against their persons but they also respond kindly to the transgression of the others. This applies only to situations when repelling evil with good will not be construed as a weakness and thus encourages the aggressor to continue in his/her aggression. Also, this applies only in the areas of human interactions and daily dealings which do not break God’s law.

“Theirs will be the sequel of the (heavenly) Home, Gardens of Eden which they enter, along with all who do right of their fathers and their spouses and their offspring. The angels will enter upon them from every gate, (Saying), ‘Peace be on you because you persevered. And excellent is the final home.’” They will be admitted to the Gardens of Eden to settle and live there with their righteous fathers, spouses, and offspring. Each will be admitted as a reward for his/her righteous deeds however, they will enjoy the company of their righteous families as an extra reward from God.

On the other side are those who lost their understanding so they became heedless and lost their vision so they became blind to the straight path, *“But those who break the covenant of God, after ratifying it, and sever that which God has commanded to be joined, and make mischief in the land, on them is the curse; for them is the terrible abode.”* They broke their covenant with God, the covenant that God implanted in their initial natural dispositions. Consequently, they break every covenant or pledge they make. Those who break their covenant with God cannot respect other covenants. They sever that which God commands to be joined and they spread mischief in the land. In short, their behavior is contrary to the behavior of those who have understanding in all aspects.

They were happy with the worldly gain that they received in their life and forgot that the pleasure of this life is only transient, while the everlasting pleasure is in the provision of the Hereafter, *“God extends provision for whom He wills and restricts (it); and they rejoice in the life of the world, whereas the life of the world is but a brief comfort as compared with the Hereafter.”*

The disbelievers asked the Prophet (PBUH) to show them a miracle, *“The disbelievers say, ‘Why is not a sign sent down to him from his Lord?’”* The answer to their request is that miracles do not lead people to become believers. The road to faith starts from within, and the choice to become a believer is an individual determination, *“Say, ‘Truly God leaves, to stray, whom He*

wills. And He guides to Himself those who turn to Him in penitence, ’’ God guides those who turn to God in penitence. They humble themselves to God and God reciprocates by guiding them. Those who do not humble themselves to God do not deserve to be guided.

Those who believe enjoy security and peace, *“Those who believe, and whose hearts find assurance in the remembrance of God. Verily in the remembrance of God hearts are assured.”* Living in the nearness of God provides them with a limitless source of happiness, security and safety. They are reassured by the feeling that they are under God’s protection. Their provision is guaranteed by God. They are content with whatever God decrees.

No one is more miserable than those who are deprived of the feeling of being near to God. Those have no way to connect with the universe and they live a lonely life. The remembrance of God provides a continuous flow of reassurance and security. Those who continuously remember God will receive a great reward in the Hereafter, *“For those who believe and do righteous deeds, is (every) blessedness, and a beautiful place of (final) return.”*

The verses address the Prophet (PBUH) telling him that the security of faith had not touched the hearts of those who requested that he should bring them a miracle. However, this is not the first time that a messenger had faced this situation. God sent many messengers before you (Muhammad), *“Thus have We sent you (Muhammad) to a people before whom (long since) have (other) peoples (gone and) passed away; in order that you recite to them what We revealed to you; yet they reject (Him), the Lord of Mercy. Say, ‘He is my Lord. There is no deity but He. In Him, I put my trust, and to Him do I turn.’”* It is surprising that these people rejected the belief in the Lord of Mercy whose remembrance brings security and happiness to the hearts. The command issued to the Prophet (PBUH), was that: your task is to recite to them what has been revealed to you. If they turn away, then declare to them that it is God that you put your trust in, and to Him is your return.

God says, We have sent you only to recite the Quran. The function of this Quran is not to bring about material miracles like moving mountains or talking to the dead but it came to address people who are alive, *“Had it been possible for a Quran to cause the mountains to move, or the earth to be torn asunder, or the dead to speak, (this Quran would have done so); but to God belongs the affair entirely. Do not those who believe know that, had God willed, He could have guided all humankind? As for those who disbelieve, disaster will not cease to strike them because of what they do, or it dwells near their home until the threat of God comes to pass. Indeed, God does not fail in keeping His promise.”* This Quran has changed people who received and accepted it more than moving mountains, tearing the earth asunder, or making the dead speak would have done. The Quran has special powers that affect the souls of those who are able to receive it, and live according to its injunctions. There is no doubt that God’s promise will be fulfilled.

The verse then poses a rhetorical statement, *“And verily messengers (of God) were mocked before you, but I gave respite to those who disbelieved, then I seized them, and how (awful) was*

My punishment.”

The second issue that this Sura intended to deal with is the issue of associating partners with God. The following verse raises this issue in a sarcastic way, *“Is He who is a sustainer of every soul, (knowing) what it has earned? Yet they ascribe partners to God. Say, ‘Name them. Or do you inform Him of something which He does not know in the earth? Or of what is apparent in speech?’ Their contrivance has been made attractive to those who disbelieve and they have been averted from the road. He whom God sends astray, for him there is no guide.”* The verse juxtaposes God who is the Sustainer of each and every soul against the helpless associates. The verse also implies that the Sustainer is ever watching over people. The thought that God is watching every move we make sends a shiver throughout our spines. Would any one dare then to associate partners with God? If they do, then they should name them because they are not known. The verse asks sarcastically, *“do you inform Him of something which He does not know in the earth?”* The torment that awaits those who associate partners with God is then reiterated, *“For them is torment in the life of this world, and verily the doom of the Hereafter is more painful, and they have no protector from God.”*

On the other hand, the felicity that awaits the believers is detailed and juxtaposed against the fate that awaits the disbelievers, *“The similitude of the Garden which is promised to those who are conscious of God, underneath it rivers flow, its food is everlasting, and its shade. This is the reward of those who remain conscious of God, while the reward of the disbelievers is the Fire.”*

The verses continue to discuss the issues of the revelation and the belief in the Oneness of God. The verses address the response of the people of the Book to the Message which Muhammad (PBUH) brought, and refers to the previous revelations, *“Those to whom We have given the Scripture rejoice at what has been revealed to you;”* Those who are true believers from the people of the Scripture were happy with the agreement they found between their religion and the new revelation. They appreciated that the Quran refers to, accepts, and respects the previous Scriptures. Imagine the link that unites all those who believe in God together. It is a link that spreads happiness in the pure hearts. This is happiness that emanates from being united around the true belief in God and the fact that the new Book strengthens that belief.

However, there is a party from the disbelievers and some of the people of the Scripture who reject some parts of the new Book, *“but there are among the clans those who reject a part thereof.”* The verse does not name the parts that were rejected but the response to that rejection is given, *“Say, ‘I am commanded to worship God, and not to join partners with Him. To Him I invite, and to Him is my return.’”* Only God is worthy of being worshipped and to Him we will all return. The Prophet (PBUH) was commanded to declare that he believes in the Book as a whole, whether the others agreed or not. This is the final message from God, revealed in an Arabic language, *“And thus We have revealed it as a true judgment in Arabic. Were you to follow their (vain) desires after the knowledge which has reached you, then you would find neither patron nor protector against God.”* What you have been given is the truth and what the clans have is only conjecture. The verse also states a fundamental principle: God does not allow anyone to change the Book which He revealed. Whoever does that is doomed.

“We did send messengers before you, and appointed for them wives and children. It was not (given) to any messenger that he should bring a sign save by God's leave. For everything there is an appointed time.” This is a statement of the fact that the Prophet (PBUH) was a human being. It was not within his power to bring about miracles except by the leave of God.

It is only natural that some differences exist between the new and the previous revelations because they were revealed at different times, *“God does blot out or confirm what He pleases, and with Him is the Mother of the Book.”* God has the power to change whatever He wills.

“Whether We shall show you (within your life-time) part of what we promised them or take to ourselves your soul (before it is all accomplished), your duty is the conveying (of the Message) and ours is the reckoning.” This is an important and a fundamental principle. The Messenger's only task is to deliver the message. Reckoning is for God.

The remnants of previous civilizations are a proof of how the strong hand of God destroyed ancient powerful states when they transgressed; and reduced their power, wealth, status, and land. Whatever God wills will take effect, *“Have they not seen that We set upon the land, reducing it from its borders? And God decides; there is no adjuster of His decision. And He is swift in account. Those before them did (also) devise plots; but to God belongs the plan entirely. He knows what every soul earns, and the disbelievers will know who gets the final home.”*

The Sura began by providing proofs of the truth of the Message and it ends by addressing the disbelievers' rejection of the Message, *“The disbelievers say, ‘You are not a messenger.’ Say, ‘God is sufficient as a witness between me and you, and whoever has knowledge of the Book (is also a witness.)’* There different interpretations that explain who is he who, *“knowledge of the Book (is also a witness.)”* Some scholars are of the opinion that this refers to God, who has all knowledge. Others, are of the opinion that it refers to people of the Book who embraced Islam. They have knowledge of the Quran from their Books.