

Sura14: Ibrahim (Abraham)

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

This Sura was revealed in Mecca. It deals, like other Meccan Suras, with the fundamentals of the doctrine: the revelation, the message, the belief in the Oneness of God, and the accountability of human beings. However, its style differs from other Meccan Suras. The attributes of Prophet Abraham (PBUH) the father of the prophets - the blessed, the grateful, the repentant - cast their shadow on this Sura. The emphasis of the Sura is on two fundamental issues: the oneness of the message and the bounty of God which He bestowed on His creation. However, there are other issues which the Sura has touched upon.

Verses 1 to 27:

1. *Alif. Lam. Ra. A Book which We have revealed to you (Muhammad), in order that you may lead people out of the depths of darkness into light - by the leave of their Lord - to the path of the Eminent, the Praised.*
2. *God, to whom belongs whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth, and woe to the disbelievers from an awful torment.*
3. *Those who love the life of this world more than the Hereafter, who hinder (people) from the path of God, and would have it crooked; these have gone far astray.*
4. *And We have never sent a messenger who did not speak the language of his people, so that he might make (the message) clear for them. Then God leaves whom He wills to go astray and guides whom He wills. He is the Eminent, the Wise.*
5. *We verily sent Moses with Our revelations, saying, "Bring your people forth from darkness to light. And remind them of the days of God." Certainly, there are signs in this for each perseverant, thankful person.*
6. *And (remind them) how Moses said to his people, "Remember God's blessings on you when He delivered you from Pharaoh's people who were afflicting you with dreadful torment, and were slaying your sons and sparing your women; that was a tremendous trial from your Lord."*
7. *And when your Lord proclaimed, "If you give thanks, I will give you more; but if you are thankless, My torment is dire."*
8. *And Moses said, "If you show ingratitude, you together and all those on earth, indeed God is Self-sufficient, Praised."*
9. *Has not the story of those before you reached you: the people of Noah, and (the tribes of) 'Ad and Thamud, and those after them? None save God knows them. Their messengers came to them with clear proofs, but they thrust their hands into their mouths, and said, "We disbelieve in that which you have been sent with, and we are in grave doubt concerning that which you call us to."*
10. *Their messengers said, "Is there a doubt about God, The Creator of the heavens and the earth? It is He who invites you, in order that He may forgive you your sins and give you respite for an appointed term." They said, "You are no more than human, like us. You wish to turn us away from that which our fathers used to worship. Then bring us some clear authority."*

11. *Their messengers said to them, "True, we are human like you, but God bestows His grace on whomever of his servants as He pleases. It is not for us to bring you an authority except as God permits. And in God let the believers put their trust.*
12. *How should we not put our trust in God when He has shown us our ways? We surely will persevere and endure the hurt you inflict on us. In God let the trusting put their trust.*
13. *And the disbelievers said to their messengers, "Verily we will drive you out from our land, unless you return to our religion." Then, their Lord inspired them, (saying), "Verily We shall destroy the wrongdoers.*
14. *And verily We will settle you in the land after them. This is for him who fears My Majesty and fears My threats."*
15. *And they sought victory and decision (from their Lord), and frustration was the lot of every powerful obstinate transgressor.*
16. *Hell is before him, and he is made to drink festering water.*
17. *In gulps will he sip it, but will be hardly able to swallow it, and death comes to him from every side while yet he cannot die, and before him is a harsh torment.*
18. *The example of those who reject their Lord: their deeds are like ashes which are blown away by strong wind on a stormy day. They have no control of anything that they have earned. That is the extreme misguidance.*
19. *Do you not see that God created the heavens and the earth with truth? If He wills, He can remove you and bring (in) some new creation;*
20. *And that is not difficult for God.*
21. *They will all come forth in front of their Lord. Then those who were weak will say to those who were arrogant, "We were your followers, will you then avert from us some of God's torment? They will say, "Had God guided us, we would have guided you. It is all the same for us whether we rage or persevere; we have no place to escape to.*
22. *And Satan will say when the matter has been decided, "It was God who gave you the true promise. I too promised, but I failed you. I had no authority over you except to call you and you responded to me: then do not blame me, but blame yourselves. I cannot help you, nor can you help me. I reject the way you associated me with God before. A painful torment awaits the wrongdoers."*
23. *And those who believed and did good deeds will be admitted to Gardens underneath which rivers flow, they will abide in it eternally by the permission of their Lord, their greeting therein is "Peace."*
24. *Have you not seen how God sets forth examples? A good word like a good tree, whose root is firmly fixed, and its branches (reach) to the heavens;*
25. *Yielding its fruits at all times, by the leave of its Lord. So God sets forth examples for people, in order that they may be mindful.*
26. *And the example of an evil word is that of an evil tree, uprooted from upon the earth, possessing no stability.*
27. *God will confirm those who believe, with the firm word in this world and in the Hereafter; but God will leave the wrongdoers to go astray. God does what He pleases.*
(14: 1-27)

"Alif. Lam. Ra. A Book which We have revealed to you (Muhammad)," This is a Book written using the letters of the Alphabet. You did not write it yourself, but God did. We have revealed this Book to you, "in order that you may lead people out of the depths of darkness into light - by

the leave of their Lord - to the path of the Eminent, the Praised.” You (Muhammad) received this Book so that you lead people out from the darkness of the myth and fairy tales, the darkness of old traditions, and the darkness of the confusion created by polytheism. You should lead people from this darkness to the light of the belief in the One God. This is the light that makes the human being who was created from mud to shine. The light of guidance and the spirit of God which He breathed into the body made out of mud transform this body into a human being. Both humankind and animals were created from mud but humankind became different because of the spirit of God.

The belief in God is a shining light which clears the path to equality, brotherhood, knowledge, and peace. The belief in God, the Creator is an internal light which illuminates the road to God through the clouds of myth, fairytales, desires, and greed. The belief in God is a light; it is the light of justice, the light of freedom, and the light of knowledge. It is a light that emanates from the feeling of the nearness of God and fills the human soul with security and safety. The Prophet’s (PBUH) task was only to deliver the message. The end is achieved only by, *“the leave of their Lord.”* The light guides to God’s path. God’s path is His law which governs the universe and His rules which govern life. The two attributes of God which are used to end this verse imply a warning to the disbelievers to avoid the wrath of God the Eminent, and a reminder to the believers to be grateful to God the Praised.

The verse is followed by a reminder that God is the owner of the kingdom of heavens and earth, *“God, to whom belongs whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth,”* and a warning to the disbelievers of God’s wrath, *“and woe to the disbelievers from an awful torment.”*

The following verse discloses the secret behind the resistance of the disbelievers to the blessing that God sent His Messenger (PBUH) with, *“Those who love the life of this world more than the Hereafter, who hinder (people) from the path of God, and would have it crooked; these have gone far astray.”* The love of this world makes it difficult for them to fulfill the responsibilities that come with the belief in God. The believers who love the Hereafter more than they love this world find it easy to fulfill their obligations. Islam does not require people to forfeit the enjoyment of this world for the sake of the Hereafter. Islam implores people to work to establish good life on this earth. That includes enjoying this life. However, life on earth should be based on justice, truth, and good character as dictated by God’s guidance. Those who love this world more than the Hereafter have no scruples. They do not refrain from using any means good or bad to satisfy their desires. Not only they follow crooked paths to achieve their goals but they hinder others to follow the straight path.

“And We have never sent a messenger who did not speak the language of his people, so that he might make (the message) clear for them.” It is a blessing for all people to receive God’s guidance in their own language. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was sent as a messenger to the whole world. However, the message was revealed in Arabic so that the Arabs will carry the task of disseminating the message to the whole world. As a human being, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) could not have delivered the message to the whole world in his limited lifetime. The messenger’s duty is fulfilled once he had delivered the message then, *“God leaves whom He*

wills to go astray and guides whom He wills. He is the Eminent, the Wise.”

Likewise, Moses (PBUH) was given a message in the language of his people, *“We verily sent Moses with Our revelations, saying, ‘Bring your people forth from darkness to light. And remind them of the days of God.’ Certainly, there are signs in this for each perseverant, thankful person.”* The same command was issued to both Muhammad (PBUH) and Moses (PBUH). The only difference is that the command for Muhammad (PBUH) was to lead the, *“people”* out of the depths of darkness into light, while the command to Moses (PBUH) was to bring, *“his people,”* forth from darkness to light. Muhammad’s (PBUH) message was for the whole humanity, while Moses’ (PBUH) message was for his own people.

All days are God’s days but the expression, *“days of God,”* refers to days when major events occur. Some of these events are difficult and some are happy. Difficult days require steadfastness while happy days call for gratitude. Moses (PBUH) did what he was commanded to do. *“Moses said to his people, ‘Remember God’s blessings on you when He delivered you from Pharaoh’s people who were afflicting you with dreadful torment, and were slaying your sons and sparing your women; that was a tremendous trial from your Lord.’”* He reminded his people of the bounty of God when He saved them from the persecution inflicted upon them by Pharaoh and his people. The Egyptians killed the new born males and let the new born females live. This was certainly a great trial. The trial had two sides, the persecution which required perseverance and the deliverance which called for gratitude.

Moses (PBUH) explained what will be the reward for gratitude and the punishment for ingratitude, *“And when your Lord proclaimed, ‘If you give thanks, I will give you more; but if you are thankless, My torment is dire.’”* This is a true promise from God. Gratitude reflects the mindset of a normal person who responds with gratitude to a blessing bestowed on him/her. A normal person also recognizes that the source of all blessings is God. A normal person uses the blessings bestowed on him/her for the benefit of people. This purifies the soul and entices it to do good deeds and to work hard which in turn causes these blessings to grow. Ingratitude can be the result of thinking that God is not the source of the blessing, or that God does not deserve to be thanked.

God does not need our gratitude and He is not hurt by ingratitude, *“And Moses said, ‘If you show ingratitude, you together and all those on earth, indeed God is Self-sufficient, Praised.’”*

Moses continued to remind his people, *“Has not the story of those before you reached you: the people of Noah, and (the tribes of) ‘Ad and Thamud, and those after them? None save God knows them. Their messengers came to them with clear proofs, but they thrust their hands into their mouths, and said, ‘We disbelieve in that which you have been sent with, and we are in grave doubt concerning that which you call us to.’”* The style of the narrative changes, Moses (PBUH) is taken out of the narrative and the verses continued to narrate the experience of previous messengers. Messengers were sent to many people before you with guidance, but the people expressed their doubts about the truth of the message. Their messengers responded, *“Is there a doubt about God, the Creator of the heavens and the earth? It is He who invites you, in*

order that He may forgive you your sins and give you respite for an appointed term” They said, “You are no more than human, like us. You wish to turn us away that which our fathers used to worship. Then, bring us some clear authority.” Although the messengers called their people to believe in God, the verse refers to God’s invitation for forgiveness to emphasize God’s mercy and grace. It is surprising that people would refuse an invitation to be forgiven. The verse cites another of the blessings of God. God will, *“give you respite for an appointed term.”* Instead of accepting the generous invitation, they raise another ignorant objection, *“You are no more than human, like us. You wish to turn us away from that which our fathers used to worship.”* Instead of feeling proud that God has favored one of them to deliver His Message; they reject this bounty expressing their doubts as to the authenticity of the Message. They accused their messengers that they only want to turn them away from the false gods they were worshipping. They did not stop to ask why the messengers would want to turn them away from their old traditions. Instead of evaluating the new message, they asked for a material proof, *“bring us some clear authority.”*

The messengers did not deny that they were human beings. They even went a step further by emphasizing this, but they explained to their people that God has the power to bestow His grace on whomsoever He pleases, *“Their messengers said to them, ‘True, we are human like you but God does bestow His grace to whomever of his servants as He pleases.’”* Being selected to deliver God’s Message is a blessing from God, and being chosen to receive His guidance is a blessing from God as well.

Only God can bring about miracles, *“It is not for us to bring you an authority except as God permits. And in God let the believers put their trust.”* There should be no confusion between the limitless power of God and the limited power of the messengers. The messengers reiterated the fact that only in God one should put his trust.

The messengers remained steadfast in face of the tyranny of the disbelievers and reiterated their trust in God, *“How should we not put our trust in God when He has shown us our ways?”* This is a statement that can only be made by a believer who is sure of his way, his belief, and the ultimate support of God. The heart that feels it is being led by God is a heart which is connected to God. This feeling leaves no room for hesitation in pursuing the road that God has chosen regardless of the obstacles and the tyranny that may try to hinder the progress. It is then appropriate here to make the connection between the feelings of the messengers that they have been guided by God and their reliance on God. Only those who are moving on God’s road feel that connection. This connection strengthens the messengers and supports them in the face of persecution and temptation, *“We surely will persevere and endure the hurt you inflict on us. In God let the trusting put their trust.”*

The tyrants did not try to understand or reflect on what the messengers said. The answers only enhanced their stubbornness, *“And the disbelievers said to their messengers, ‘Verily we will drive you out from our land, unless you return to our religion.’”* This statement highlights the nature of the battle between Islam and the societies living in ignorance. Such societies do not espouse the concept of freedom of religion. Not only they request that the messengers stop inviting people to Islam but they also wanted them to abandon Islam completely and go back to

the old religion of their people. However, God interfered to settle the dispute between the tyrants and the messengers, *“Then their Lord inspired them, (saying), ‘Verily, We shall destroy the wrongdoers.’”* We need to understand that God does not interfere until the messengers had done their duties and exhausted all the ways of convincing their people to the truth of the message. God will destroy the tyrants and will settle the believers in the land and will make them the heirs of the earth. This is God’s true promise for, *“him who fears My Majesty and fears My threats.”*

Thus, a small group of believers stood in the face of tyranny and persecution. However, the believers had God on their side. Each side sought victory, *“And they sought victory and decision (from their Lord), and frustration was the lot of every powerful obstinate transgressor.”* But tyranny only brings disappointment to the tyrant. The transgressor will be frustrated on earth but in the background there is also Hell fire. One can see the image of the transgressor in Hell fire where, *“he is made to drink festering water. In gulps will he sip it, but will be hardly able to swallow it, and death comes to him from every side while yet he cannot die, and before him is a harsh torment.”*

The scene of dust blown away by wind on a windy day is familiar. The image is drawn to describe in a dramatic way how bad deeds will be lost as if they were dust blown away by wind, *“the example of those who reject their Lord: their deeds are like ashes which are blown away by strong wind on a stormy day. They have no control of anything that they have earned. That is the extreme misguidance.”* The image shows the disbelievers trying in vain to protect the dust from being dispersed by the wind. The verse describes how the deeds which are not based on a foundation of faith are like dust. Deeds are mechanical actions; they get their value from the intention that motivated them. Good deeds are bound by the strong links which connect the deed to the intention and connects the intention to God.

The text then moves from the discussion of the issues of the message, faith, and the messengers to a discussion of heavens and earth. Such jump is an inherent feature of the style of the Quran. There is a secret language between the initial natural disposition of humankind and the universe. When the human being makes the effort to understand the universe, the secrets of this language will be disclosed and harmony will occur, *“Do you not see that God created the heavens and the earth with truth? If He wills, He can remove you and bring (in) some new creation; and that is not difficult for God.”* The verse uses the word *“with truth.”* The “truth” has the connotations of power and stability, the limitless power of God and the stability of the universe.

The narrative then moves to another level of God’s power. The verse describes the situation that the disbelievers will encounter on the Day of Judgment, *“They will all come forth in front of their Lord. Then those who were weak will say to those who were arrogant, ‘We were your followers, will you then avert from us some of God’s torment?’ They will say, ‘Had God guided us, we would have guided you. It is all the same for us whether we rage or persevere; we have no place to escape to.’”* All the disbelievers and their weak followers will come forth in front of God. No cover will protect them. The followers will call upon those who led them in life asking them to avert even a small portion of the torment. Those who were weak, were weak because

they gave up the most precious attribute that God gave the human being. They gave up their freedom to think and choose and they followed the tyrants blindly. They refused to be God's servants and chose to be servants to the tyrants. Being weak is not an excuse for their bad choice but it is their sin because God does not want human beings to be weak. God wants human beings to be proud by seeking God's protection. Seeking the tyrant's protection deprived them of their status as free human beings. The tyrants cannot force people to change their beliefs. They may be able to control the body with torture and persecution but they cannot control the mind, the spirit, or the conscious. They were weak because they chose to be weak.

The dialogue between these two groups of people shows the lowliness of the weak and the evasiveness of the arrogant. Those who were arrogant will make excuses saying, "*Had God guided us, we would have guided you.*" On that Day, they will recognize the extent of God's power, the same power they denied in life. But God does not command misguidance, "*God does not enjoin immorality.*" (7:28). Those who were arrogant will implicitly rebuke those who were weak pointing to the fact that there is no escape of the fate that God had decreed. There is no use of exchanging the blame, "*It is all the same for us whether we rage or persevere; we have no place to escape to.*"

Satan, the top seducer, then appears on the scene tantalizing both those who were weak and those who were arrogant, "*And Satan will say when the matter has been decided, 'It was God who gave you the true promise. I too promised, but I failed you.'*" Satan who whispered to people to disobey, seduced people to commit sin, and lured people away from guidance will tell them on the Day of Judgment that they should not have listened to him. God's promise is the true promise. He will also remind them, "*I had no authority over you except to call you and you responded to me: then do not blame me, but blame yourselves. I cannot help you, nor can you help me. I reject the way you associated me with God before. A painful torment awaits the wrongdoers.*" Satan will clearly say to the two groups that they have only themselves to blame. He had no power over them in life and now he cannot help them and they cannot help him. He then delivers the last bit of news, "*A painful torment awaits the wrongdoers.*"

On the other side, "*those who believed and did good deeds will be admitted to Gardens underneath which rivers flow, they will abide in it eternally by the permission of their Lord; their greeting therein is 'Peace.'*" What a difference between the fates of the believers and the tyrants?

The narrative moves to another theme, "*Have you not seen how God sets forth examples? A good word like a good tree, whose root is firmly fixed, and its branches (reach) to the heavens, yielding its fruits at all times, by the leave of its Lord. So God sets forth examples for people, in order that they may be mindful. And the example of an evil word is that of an evil tree, uprooted from upon the earth, possessing no stability.*" The juxtaposition of the good tree which is firmly rooted and the bad tree which has been uprooted from upon the earth symbolizes the contrast between the fates of the prophets and the tyrants. The similarity between the good tree and the tree of prophet-hood which started by Prophet Abraham (PBUH) and continued to yield its fruits, one prophet after another, is quite clear. However, the example of the good tree given in the verse has many more dimensions than the one we mentioned.

The good word, the word of truth, is like a good tree. It is firmly rooted, continuously yielding its fruits. The good word stands firm in face of the winds of the persecution of the tyrants. The bad tree may grow big and may seem strong, but in fact its roots are very shallow. Not only it does not yield any fruit but it is shaky and will quickly vanish from the face of the earth. It is a true fact that goodness does not fade out while evil does not last.

God confirms the believers with a strong faith which rests deep in their hearts. God confirms the believers with His words and the words of His Messenger (PBUH). God confirms the believers with His promise that they will prevail in this life and will be successful in the Hereafter, “*God will confirm those who believe, with the firm word in this world and in the Hereafter;*” On the other hand God will leave the wrongdoers to go astray. Their wrongdoing will become a barrier between them and the light of guidance. They will be lost in the darkness of associating partners with God and the confusion of myths, traditions, and desires, “*but God will leave the wrongdoers to go astray. God does what He pleases.*” God has total control of the all laws. He changes whatever law He wishes to change and keeps whatever law He wishes to keep.

Verses 28 to 52:

28. *Have you not seen those who exchanged God’s blessings with ingratitude and led their people down to the abode of ruin;*
29. *Into Hell? They will burn therein, an evil place to stay in.*
30. *And they set up (idols) as equal to God, to mislead (people) from His path. Say, “Enjoy yourselves, for indeed your journey's end will be the Fire.”*
31. *Tell My servants who believe to establish prayer and to spend of that which We have provided them, secretly and publicly, before a day comes wherein there will be neither trading nor friendship.*
32. *God is He who created the heavens and the earth, and sent down water from the sky, thereby producing fruits as provision for you, and made the ships to be of service for you, that they may run upon the sea at His command, and has made the rivers of service to you;*
33. *And He has made the sun and the moon, constant in their courses, to be of service for you, and has made the night and the day of service for you.*
34. *And He has given you of all that you ask for. But if you count the blessings of God, never will you be able to enumerate them. Verily, humankind is a wrongdoer, ungrateful.*
35. *And when Abraham said, “My Lord, make this town secure, and save me and my sons from worshipping idols.*
36. *My Lord, they have led many people astray. But whoso follows me, he verily is of me. And whoso disobeys me, You are All-Forgiving, Giver of Mercy.*
37. *Our Lord, I have settled some of my offspring in an uncultivated valley near Your Holy House, our Lord, so that they may establish prayer; make the hearts of some people incline to them and provide them with fruits in order that they may be thankful.*
38. *Our Lord, You certainly know what we conceal and what we reveal. Nothing in the earth or in the heaven is hidden from God.*
39. *Praise be to God who has given me, in my old age, Ishmael and Isaac. My Lord is indeed All-Hearing of prayer.*

40. *My Lord, make me to establish prayer, and some of my offspring (also). Our Lord, accept my prayer.*
41. *Our Lord, forgive me and my parents and the believers on the Day of Reckoning.”*
42. *And do not think that God is unaware of what the wrongdoers do; He only gives them respite until a day on which the eyes stare (in horror.)*
43. *They will be running forward with necks outstretched, their heads uplifted, their gaze does not return towards them, and their hearts a (gaping) void.*
44. *And warn people of a day when the torment will come upon them, and those who did wrong will say, “Our Lord, delay us for a little while. We will obey Your call and will follow the messengers. (It will be answered), “Did you not swear before that there would be no end for you?*
45. *And you dwelt in the dwellings of the people who wronged themselves. You were clearly shown how We dealt with them; and We put forth (many) examples for you.”*
46. *Verily they have plotted their plot, and their plot is with God, though their plot was one whereby the mountains could be moved.*
47. *Do not think that God would fail to keep His promise to His messengers. Indeed, God is Eminent, avenger of evil.*
48. *On the day when the earth will be changed to other than the earth, and the heavens (also will be changed) and they will come forth to God, the One, the Dominator,*
49. *You will see the guilty on that day linked together in chains,*
50. *Their garments of liquid pitch, and their faces covered with Fire;*
51. *That God may recompense each soul what it had earned. God is swift in reckoning.*
52. *This is a clear message for people in order that they may be warned thereby, and that they may know that He is only One God, and that those who are possessors of intellect may become mindful. (14: 28-52)*

“Have you not seen those who exchanged God’s blessings with ingratitude and led their people down to the abode of ruin into Hell? They will burn therein, an evil place to stay in.” Do you not wonder (Muhammad) at those people who were blessed by God who sent them a messenger to guide them to the right path, to be forgiven by God, and to be admitted to paradise, and they reject all of this? Those are the chiefs of your community (Muhammad.) They did exactly like many leaders before them did; they led their people to a fate of doom. They rejected God and worshipped idols, *“And they set up (idols) as equal to God, to mislead (people) from His path.”* The verse implies that these leaders were determined to sway their people away from the path of God by associating idols with God. The belief in the Oneness of God frees people from the tyranny of their leaders. It is easy to control people when they turn away from the belief in the One God. When people turn away from the belief in the Oneness of God and submit to their human rulers they lose their freedom and identity. Tell them (Prophet) that the enjoyment that you have indulged yourself in, is not going to last, *“Say, ‘Enjoy yourselves, for indeed your journey’s end will be the Fire.’”*

Turn away (Prophet) from those people to My servants who will listen to your admonition. These are the people who accept gratefully God’s blessings and grace. Teach them how they can show their gratitude to God, *“Tell My servants who believe to establish prayer and to spend of that which We have provided them, secretly and publicly, before a day comes wherein there will be*

neither trading nor friendship.” Establishing prayer is one of the most sincere ways of expressing gratitude to God. Another way for expressing gratitude to God is by giving the poor either in secret or openly. Giving in secret is more honorable for the poor; however, sometimes giving openly fulfills the purpose of providing a role model.

The following verses open up the book of the universe so people can appreciate the blessings of the Creator, *“God is He who created the heavens and the earth, and sent down water from the sky, thereby producing fruits as provision for you, and made the ships to be of service for you, that they may run upon the sea at His command, and has made the rivers of service to you;”* One of the miracles of this Book is how it relates the signs of the universe to the belief in the Oneness of God. God *“sent down water from the sky, thereby producing fruits as provision for you.”* The plants are an important source of food. It is one of the signs of the blessing of God. Growing plants is part of God’s plan. The rules that govern the universe were made to establish harmonious relationships between the different parts of the universe.

When people hear the word “provision,” they only think money. But the word “provision” has a much wider and deeper meaning than only money. Think of the effort that is needed to bring all the components of the universe to work harmoniously together so that we can exist. God made us understand how to build and operate ships, and how to benefit from the running rivers. The sun and the moon provide sources of energy that is necessary for life, *“And He has made the sun and the moon, constant in their courses, to be of service for you, and has made the night and the day of service for you.”* Even the cycle of the day and night is essential for life.

“And He has given you of all that you ask for. But if you count the blessings of God, never will you be able to enumerate them. Verily, man is a wrongdoer, ungrateful.” No one can enumerate God’s favors.

The following few verses describe the scene of Abraham (PBUH) standing in humble prayer in front of God’s Sacred House, *“And when Abraham said, ‘My Lord, make this town secure, and save me and my sons from worshipping idols.’”* Security is one of the basic needs of human beings. The verse reminds people living in this place that security is a blessing from God; God responded favorably to Abraham’s (PBUH) prayer and made this place secure. Instead of following the example of Prophet Abraham (PBUH), they followed a different path, they rejected God’s blessing and associated partners with Him. Abraham’s (PBUH) second prayer reflects his total submission to God. He asked God to save him and his offspring from worshipping idols, seeking God’s help and guidance, and expressing his gratitude for another blessing of the blessings of God. This is the blessing of guidance which moves the heart of the believer from the darkness of disbelief to the light of faith, from the confusion and loss to the knowledge and security, and from the humiliating worship of idols to being a proud worshipper of the Lord of people. Abraham (PBUH) said this prayer because he saw how people lost their way as a result of idol worship, *“My Lord, they have led many people astray. But whoso follows me, he verily is of me. And whoso disobeys me, You are All-Forgiving, Giver of Mercy.”* The last statement shows Abraham’s (PBUH) characters of kindness and mercy. He did not ask God to destroy those, from among his offspring, who rejected him nor he asked God to hasten their

punishment but he suggested politely that God's mercy and forgiveness may be exercised if God wills.

Abraham's (PBUH) prayer continued stating that the purpose for which he settled some of his offspring in this empty barren land was to establish prayer, *"Our Lord, I have settled some of my offspring in an uncultivated valley near Your Holy House, our Lord, so that they may establish prayer;"* He then asked God to make people yearn to come to that place and provide for them so they may be thankful, *"make the hearts of some people incline to them and provide them with fruits in order that they may be thankful."*

The object of settling Abraham's (PBUH) offspring near the Sacred House is mentioned explicitly in these verses. The object is to establish proper worship of God and to express gratitude to God for His blessings of provision and the yearning of hearts which incline to the House. These verses carry an implicit rebuke to the people of Mecca who did not fulfill these objectives.

Abraham's (PBUH) prayer continued, *"Our Lord, You certainly know what we conceal and what we reveal. Nothing in the earth or in the heaven is hidden from God."* Then he expressed his gratitude to God, *"Praise be to God who has given me, in my old age, Ishmael and Isaac. My Lord is indeed All-Hearing of Prayer."* Having offspring is a great bounty from God. Abraham (PBUH) continued his prayer requesting God to keep him and his offspring among those who establish prayer, *"My Lord, make me to establish prayer, and some of my offspring (also). Our Lord, accept my prayer."* The prayer ends with a request of God's forgiveness, *"Our Lord, forgive me and my parents and the believers on the Day of Reckoning."*

This prayer shows Abraham (PBUH) as the model of the righteous grateful servant of God who continuously remembers his Lord. One should note the use of "My Lord" and "Our Lord" in the prayer of Prophet Abraham (PBUH). The use of "Our Lord" instead of "Our God" stresses the acceptance of leading a life according to God's laws. The word God expresses the majestic attributes of the Creator while the word Lord expresses the attributes which deals with the daily life of human beings. One has to believe in both. Those who believe in God as the Creator but refuse to live by the rules that the Lord has decreed do not fulfill the requirements of faith.

The verses continue to describe the fate of the disbelievers in scenes from the Day of Judgement, *"And do not think that God is unaware of what the wrongdoers do; He only gives them respite until a day on which the eyes stare (in horror.)"* The Messenger (PBUH) knew that God was aware of what the wrongdoers were doing. This message is for those who may think wrongly that the wrongdoers will continue to enjoy the pleasures of this life. The wrongdoers will be punished on that difficult day when the eyes will be forced to stare in horror. People will, *"They will be running forward with necks outstretched, their heads uplifted, their gaze does not return towards them, and their hearts a (gaping) void."* The verse paints an image of people who are terrified. They keep running in confusion trying to find an escape from the overwhelming torment. Their hearts are void of feelings and their eyes are gazing but not seeing. This is the day

which they will meet after the period of temporary reprieve that God granted them. So, warn them (Prophet) before that day comes, *“And warn people of a day when the torment will come upon them, and those who did wrong will say, ‘Our Lord, delay us for a little while. We will obey Your call and will follow the messengers.’”* Now they call upon God saying, *“Our Lord.”* Have they not rejected Him before? One should note that the style of the narrative has changed from a story telling mode to a dialogue mode, as if they were there praying God for a second chance. However, they will be answered, *“Did you not swear before that there would be no end for you? And you dwelt in the dwellings of the people who wronged themselves. You were clearly shown how We dealt with them; and We put forth (many) examples for you.”* You have seen how the wrongdoers before you were destroyed and you settled in their houses but you never thought that you will meet the same fate.

The scene changes from the events of the Day of Judgment to the events taking place at the time of the Prophet (PBUH), describing the activities of the idolaters of Mecca, *“Verily they have plotted their plot, and their plot is with God, though their plot was one whereby the mountains could be moved.”* God is aware of their conspiracy and He will deal with it. They may think it is well contrived plot but God has the power to deal with it. No matter how strong their plotting is, God will not fail His messengers, *“Do not think that God would fail to keep His promise to His messengers, Indeed God is Eminent, avenger of evil.”* God is Almighty and will execute His punishment on the wrongdoers and the plotters. Justice will be done and the crime of the wrongdoers and the plotters will be avenged. This will happen, *“On the day when the earth will be changed to other than the earth, and the heavens (also will be changed) and they will come forth to God, the One, the Dominator,”* We do not know how these changes will happen nor we know what will be the nature of the new earth and heaven. The verse clearly expresses the limitless bounds of God’s power.

On that day, *“You will see the guilty on that day linked together in chains, their garments of liquid pitch, and their faces covered with Fire;”* It will be a humiliating scene; the scene of the chained wrongdoers marching in rows. They will be dressed in flammable dirty black garments and their faces will be covered with fire. This will be the reward that awaits them. They will be humiliated because they bargained for conniving and wrongdoing, *“That God may recompense each soul what it had earned. God is swift in reckoning.”*

The Sura ends, as it started, with a proclamation to people, *“This is a clear message for people in order that they may be warned thereby, and that they may know that He is only One God, and that those who are possessors of intellect may become mindful.”* The proclamation acknowledges the fact that God is One. This is the corner stone of God’s religion on which the way of life ordained by God is established. The intent of the proclamation is not only for people to acknowledge this fact but also to establish a way of life that is based on this acknowledgment. God’s way of life is a comprehensive program that includes all aspects of life: faith, rituals, ethics, manners, values, and standards. The political, economic, and social systems that govern the society should be based on this acknowledgement.