

Sura 27: Al-Naml (The Ants)

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

Verses 1 to 6:

1. *Ta, Sin. These are verses of the Quran and the Book that makes (things) clear;*
2. *Guidance and glad tidings for the believers,*
3. *Those who establish regular prayers and pay the poor-due and who have certitude in the Hereafter.*
4. *Those who do not believe in the Hereafter, We have indeed made their deeds seem pleasing to them; and so they wander blindly.*
5. *Those are they, for whom is the worst of torment, and in the Hereafter they will be the greatest losers.*
6. *You certainly receive the Quran from the One who is Wise, Omniscient. (27: 1 - 6)*

This is a Meccan Sura, it was revealed after Surat Al-Shu'ara (Chapter 26). Both of them have the same style. The Sura starts with an introduction which outlines the theme of the Sura and ends with an appropriate conclusion. Between the introduction and the conclusion, stories are narrated which elaborate on the theme and explain the similarities between the people in the stories and the people of Mecca. The main theme of the Sura is the doctrine: the belief in the Oneness of God, the inevitability of the Hereafter, the belief in God's revelations, the belief in the unseen, and the belief in the unbounded power of God.

"Ta, Sin." The Sura starts with letters of the Arabic alphabet to draw the attention to the fact that the Quran was composed using these letters. Then, the Quran is mentioned, *"These are verses of the Quran and the Book that makes (things) clear."* The Book is itself the Quran. The Quran is described as guidance and glad tidings, *"Guidance and glad tidings for the believers."* So the Quran itself is guidance, it provides guidance to the believers in all matters. It also brings glad tidings to the believers about this life and the Hereafter. This Quran is guidance to the believers because it addresses the heart. Hearts which are open to the belief in God will be able to benefit from the Quran and enjoy its beauty. But hard hearts which are not ready to receive faith will not be able to benefit from it. The Quran embodies great treasures of knowledge which can only be accessed by those who believe. Belief is the key which will open these treasures and allow people to benefit from it.

The verses go on to outline the characteristics of the believers, *"Those who establish regular prayers and pay the poor-due and who have certitude in the Hereafter."* They establish prayers; they do it in the best way they can. When they pray they are fully devoted to God; feeling the sanctity of the moment when they are in the presence of God. They pay the poor-due. Paying the poor-due purifies their souls from stinginess. They help their brothers and they contribute to the welfare of their community. They are certain of the inevitability of the Hereafter. They are mindful of the Day of Reckoning and that deters them from committing evil deeds. On the other hand, there are those who do not fit this description, *"Those who do not believe in the Hereafter, We have indeed made their deeds seem pleasing to them; and so they wander blindly. Those are they for whom is the worst of torment, and in the Hereafter they will be the greatest losers."* The belief in the Hereafter is the bridle which reins in the whims and desires of the human being; and allows the human being to live a well-balanced life. Those who do not believe in the Hereafter will not control their whims and desires. They will live a hedonistic life. They will find their pleasures in satisfying their physical desires. This is the course which will be followed by those

who are not guided. God created humankind with equal propensity for good and evil. God will guide those whose senses are open for receiving guidance but those who block their senses and refuse to receive guidance are left to wander blindly in this life. The end for them is known, *“and in the Hereafter they will be the greatest losers.”*

The introduction to the Sura ends by stating the source of Quran, *“You certainly receive the Quran from the One who is Wise, Omniscient.”* The Arabic text implies that the Quran is a gift from God who is Wise and Omniscient. His wisdom and omniscience are clearly reflected on the Quran, its style, its commands, its guidance, and its methodology.

Verses 7 to 14:

7. *(Remember) when Moses said to his family, “I see a fire; I will bring you from it some news, or I will bring to you from it a burning brand so that you may warm yourselves.*
8. *But when he came to the (fire), he was called, “Blessed is whoever in the fire and whoever is round about it. And Glory be to God, the Lord of the Worlds.*
9. *Moses, I am God, the Eminent, the Wise.*
10. *And throw your staff. But when he saw it moving (of its own accord) as if it were a demon, he turned to flee headlong; (but it was said to him), “Moses, fear not. The Messengers shall not fear in My presence,*
11. *I am truly All-Forgiving and Giver of Mercy to those who do wrong and then replace their evil with good.*
12. *And put your hand into the bosom of your robe, it will come forth white but unharmed. (This will be one) among nine signs to Pharaoh and his people. They were ever transgressing people.”*
13. *But when Our signs came to them, that should have opened their eyes, they said, “This is clear magic.”*
14. *And they rejected these signs in iniquity and arrogance, even though their souls were convinced of their truth. Then see the consequence of those who spread corruption. (27: 7-14)*

The following verses narrate an episode from the story of Prophet Moses (PBUH), *“(Remember) when Moses said to his family, “I see a fire; I will bring you from it some news, or I will bring to you from it a burning brand so that you may warm yourselves.”* This verse tells about Moses’ (PBUH) trip to Egypt with his family. He lost his way in the desert in a dark cold night. He saw a fire near the mountain. People used to light fires to guide the travelers and to provide a place where they can rest. When Moses (PBUH) saw the fire he felt reassured. He was hopeful that he would get directions for the road at the fire, or he would get a burning stick to start a fire for his family in order that they become warm. Moses (PBUH) went towards the fire, *“But when he came to the (fire), he was called, ‘Blessed is whoever in the fire and whoever is round about it. And Glory be to God, the Lord of the Worlds. Moses, I am God, the Eminent, the Wise.’”* The passive voice is used to add majesty to the situation, *“he was called.”* Then the voice said, *“Blessed is whoever in the fire and whoever is round about it.”* So who was in the fire and who was round about it? Most probably that was not a fire like any fire that we are familiar with. It must have been a fire that emanated from the Higher Host, a fire that was lit by the pure spirits of God’s angels. This must have been the fire of guidance. The blessings of God were showered on the angels, *“‘Blessed is whoever in the fire,”* and on Moses (PBUH), *“‘whoever is round about it.”* The universe echoed the rest of the verse, *“I am God, the Eminent, the Wise.”* God declared Himself to His servant as the Eminent the Wise. Moses (PBUH) found the, “news” he was

looking for; and what kind of news? And he got the warmth he was looking for, but it was the warmth of guidance to the straight path. The call was made to announce that Moses (PBUH) was chosen to carry the responsibility of the message to the worst tyrant on earth.

Moses (PBUH) had to be trained for the task, *“And throw your staff. But when he saw it moving (of its own accord) as if it were a demon, he turned to flee headlong;”* When Moses (PBUH) threw his staff it became a serpent, full of life. Moses (PBUH) was taken by surprise and he became apprehensive and started running away from the serpent. God called him back, *“Moses, fear not. The Messengers shall not fear in My presence,”* God told him that you are a Messenger and Messengers should not experience fear in the presence of their Lord. Only those who commit wrong should experience fear. But even for those who do wrong but repent and replace the wrong they did with good deeds, God is certainly All-Forgiving, Giver of Mercy, *“I am truly All-Forgiving and Giver of Mercy to those who do wrong and then replace their evil with good.”*

God then revealed to Moses (PBUH) the second miracle, *“And put your hand into the bosom of your robe, it will come forth white but unharmed.”* Moses (PBUH) placed his hand into the bosom of his robe and when he took it out he saw that it became white. The hand did not suffer any ailment, so the change was one of the miracles that God gave him to support his message to Pharaoh and his people, *“(This will be one) among nine signs to Pharaoh and his people. They were ever transgressing people.”* The narrative here does not mention the other seven miracles. They are mentioned in Surat Al-A’raf (Chapter 7). These were the years of famine, the diminishing harvest, the flood, the locusts, the lice, the frogs, and the blood. The focus here is on the strength and clarity of the miracles not on their description. One of the objectives of these verses is to stress the absurdity of the denial of Pharaoh and his people to the clear signs of God, *“But when Our signs came to them, that should have opened their eyes, they said, ‘This is clear magic.’”* They dismissed these miracles as magic.

They recognized the strength of the proof but they chose not to believe. They denied the truth, in spite of the fact that they were certain of the veracity of the message, *“And they rejected these signs in iniquity and arrogance, even though their souls were convinced of their truth. Then see the consequence of those who spread corruption.”* This was exactly the response of the chiefs of Quraish. They knew that the Quran is the truth but they rejected it because they were arrogant. They were afraid that submitting to God will deprive them of the status, the interests, and the pleasures they were enjoying.

Verses 15 to 44:

15. *And We verily gave David and Solomon knowledge and they said, “Praise be to God, Who has favored us above many of His believing servants.”*
16. *And Solomon became David’s heir. He said, “People, we have been taught the language of the birds, and we have been given (abundance) of all things. This surely is an evident grace (from God).*
17. *And Solomon’s armies of the jinn and humankind, and of the birds, were marshaled in ordered ranks before him;*
18. *Till, when they reached the valley of the ants, an ant said, “Ants, enter your dwellings lest Solomon and his armies unwittingly crush you.”*
19. *And (Solomon) smiled, laughing at her speech, and said, “My Lord, enable me to be thankful for Your blessing which You have bestowed on me and on my parents, and to do*

good that shall be pleasing to You, and include me by Your mercy among Your righteous servants."

20. *And he took a muster of the birds; and he said, "Why do not I see the hoopoe? Or is he among the absentees?"*
21. *I will certainly punish him with a severe torment, or I will execute him, unless he brings me a valid excuse."*
22. *But the hoopoe tarried not far. He (came up and) said, "I have learnt something that you do not know, and I have come to you from Sheba with confirmed information.*
23. *I found a woman ruling over them, and she has been given (abundance) of all things, and hers is a mighty throne.*
24. *I found her and her people worshipping the sun besides God. Satan has made their deeds seem pleasing to them, and has kept them away from the straight path, so they became misguided.*
25. *So that they do not worship God, who brings forth the hidden in the heavens and the earth, and who knows what you hide and what you declare.*
26. *God, there is no deity save Him, the Lord of the great Throne."*
27. *(Solomon) said, "Soon we shall see whether you are telling the truth or you are lying.*
28. *Go with this letter of mine and throw it down to them; then turn away and see what (answer) they return.*
29. *The Queen of Sheba (when she received the letter) said, "Chiefs, a noble letter has been delivered to me.*
30. *It is from Solomon, and it is (as follows), 'In the name of God, the Lord of Mercy, the Giver of Mercy;*
31. *Do not be haughty with me but come to me in submission (to God).'"*
32. *She said, "Chiefs, advise me in my affair; I would not make a decision except in your presence."*
33. *They said, "We are people of might and great power, but the decision is yours, so consider what you will command."*
34. *She said, "Indeed kings, when they enter a country, they corrupt it, and humiliate its dignified people. And thus do they behave.*
35. *But I am going to send them a present, and (wait) to see with what (answer) the messengers will return."*
36. *So when (the messengers) came to Solomon, he said, "What! Are you offering me wealth? What God has given me is better than that which He has given you. It is you (and not I) who rejoice in your gift.*
37. *Return to them. We shall verily come upon them with hosts that they cannot resist, and we shall drive them out from their land humiliated, and they will be subdued."*
38. *He said (to his own men), "Chiefs, which of you can bring me her throne before they come to me in submission?"*
39. *A powerful one from among the jinn said, "I will bring it to you before you rise from your place; indeed, I am strong and trustworthy."*
40. *The one who had knowledge of the Book said, "I will bring it to you within the twinkling of an eye." Then when (Solomon) saw it placed firmly before him, he said, "This is by the Grace of my Lord to test me whether I am grateful or ungrateful; and if any is grateful, truly his gratitude is for his own soul; but if any is ungrateful, truly my Lord is Self-Sufficient, Generous."*

41. *He said, "Disguise her throne for her that we may see whether she will be guided or remains one of the misguided."*
42. *So when she arrived, she was asked, "Is this your throne?" She said, "It is as though it were the very one." And (Solomon said), "We were given the knowledge before her and we had submitted (to God)."*
43. *And what she worshipped besides God prevented her, surely she was of one of people who disbelieve.*
44. *It was said to her, "Enter the hall." And when she saw it she thought it was a pool and bared her legs. (Solomon) said, "It is a hall, paved with smooth glass." She said, "My Lord, I have wronged myself, and I submit with Solomon to God, the Lord of the Worlds." (27: 15 - 44)*

The following verses talk about Prophets David and Solomon (PBUH). They were both prophets who were sent to the Children of Israel. The verses narrate a story about Prophet Solomon (PBUH) in detail. The story is about his encounter with the Queen of Sheba. The story starts with a verse about the most important blessing that God showered on his Prophets David and Solomon (PBUH), *"And We verily gave David and Solomon knowledge and they said, 'Praise be to God, Who has favored us above many of His believing servants.'"* They recognized God's blessings and expressed their gratitude to God. The verse does not detail which kind of knowledge God gave David and Solomon (PBUH) to emphasize the value of knowledge as a whole and that it is a blessing from God. All knowledge comes from God. Those whom God bless with knowledge should recognize that God is the source of all knowledge and they should express gratitude to Him. They should use this knowledge in a way that pleases God, for the benefit of humanity. Knowledge should lead its owner to God.

The following verses focus on the story of Solomon (PBUH), *"And Solomon became David's heir. He said, 'People, we have been taught the language of the birds, and we have been given (abundance) of all things. This surely is an evident grace (from God)."* Solomon (PBUH) expressed his gratitude to God that he gave him the knowledge and the ability to understand the language of the other creatures of God. The Quran tells us, *"And there is no animal that walks on the ground nor a bird that flies with its two wings but (they are) communities like yourselves;"* (6: 38) Members of a community need a language so that they can communicate with each other. Each one of the communities of birds, animals and insects has its own language; which they use in communicating with each other. God gave Solomon (PBUH) the ability to understand these languages. This was one of the miracles that God bestowed on Solomon (PBUH). Another miracle that was bestowed on Solomon (PBUH) was the ability to control and use the jinn and the birds and to perform certain tasks.

"And Solomon's armies of the jinn and humankind, and of the birds, were marshaled in ordered ranks before him." Solomon's (PBUH) army consisted of jinn, humankind, and birds. We do not know much about jinn. The Quran told us that jinn were created from fire. They are able to see human beings but human beings cannot see them. The army went forward until they reached the valley of the ants, *"Till, when they reached the valley of the ants, an ant said, 'Ants, enter your dwellings lest Solomon and his armies unwittingly crush you.'"* Solomon (PBUH) heard, understood what the ant said, and smiled. He remembered the grace of God and he expressed his gratitude. He prayed that God would give him the power to continually express his gratitude with all his body and all his senses. He also prayed that God directs him to do good deeds and

admits him among the righteous of His servants, *“And (Solomon) smiled, laughing at her speech, and said, ‘My Lord, enable me to be thankful for Your blessing which You have bestowed on me and on my parents, and to do good that shall be pleasing to You, and include me by Your mercy among Your righteous servants.’”*

There are two miracles that need to be noted here. The first is Solomon’s (PBUH) ability to understand what the ant said. The second is the fact that the ant recognized that it was Solomon’s (PBUH) army that was marching towards them.

The following verses narrate the story of Solomon (PBUH), his hoopoe, and the Queen of Sheba, *“And he took a muster of the birds; and he said, ‘Why do not I see the hoopoe? Or is he among the absentees?’”* This is the first scene in the story, Solomon (PBUH) inspecting his army and finding the hoopoe missing. It must have been a special hoopoe that is why his absence was conspicuous. The verse also illustrates one of Solomon’s (PBUH) traits. He was very observant and firm with his soldiers. The hoopoe was missing; since it had left without permission, it should be punished. But Solomon (PBUH) was a prophet and he was not a tyrant so he deferred his final judgment until he had heard from the hoopoe itself, *“I will certainly punish him with a severe torment, or I will execute him, unless he brings me a valid excuse.”* But the hoopoe came back with surprising news, *“But the hoopoe tarried not far. He (came up and) said, ‘I have learnt something that you do not know, and I have come to you from Sheba with confirmed information. I found a woman ruling over them, and she has been given (abundance) of all things, and hers is a mighty throne. I found her and her people worshipping the sun besides God. Satan has made their deeds seem pleasing to them, and has kept them away from the straight path, so they became misguided. So that they do not worship God, who brings forth the hidden in the heavens and the earth, and who knows what you hide and what you declare. God, there is no deity save Him, the Lord of the great Throne.’”* The hoopoe responded to the king with a bold statement, *“I have learnt something that you do not know.”* This bold statement must have been intended to capture the king’s attention. The hoopoe then continued to tell the details of its discovery. The hoopoe told the king about the woman who reigns over a people in South Yemen in a kingdom with the name of Sheba. She was given an abundance of everything and she had a great throne. But they were worshipping the sun. The hoopoe deduced that the devil must have lured them away from the straight path. We find ourselves in front of an astonishing bird. The verses depict an intelligent bird who understands and expresses itself in an eloquent way, and a bird who believes in God and knows what is right and what is wrong.

Solomon (PBUH) wanted first to ascertain the truth regarding what he had heard, *“(Solomon) said, ‘Soon we shall see whether you are telling the truth or you are lying. Go with this letter of mine and throw it down to them; then turn away and see what (answer) they return.’”* The contents of the letter were not disclosed at this point. The following verse depicts another scene, the scene of the Queen’s court. The Queen was asking her counselors, *“The Queen of Sheba (when she received the letter) said, ‘Chiefs, a noble letter has been delivered to me. It is from Solomon, and it is (as follows), ‘In the name of God, the Lord of Mercy, the Giver of Mercy; do not be haughty with me but come to me in submission (to God).’”* She told them that she received a letter, however she did not know how was the letter delivered. But she described the letter as, *“a noble letter.”* There must have been something about the letter that made her make this statement. In addition, Solomon (PBUH) must have been well known to her and her people. The letter itself was a simple letter. It had only one request, *“Do not be haughty with me but come to me in submission (to God).”* They should not behave arrogantly and they should go to him in

submission to God, whose name was at the top of the letter.

Having told them about the contents, she continued to seek their advice, *“She said, ‘Chiefs, advise me in my affair; I would not make a decision except in your presence.’”* This showed her wisdom in handling the situation. Her counselors responded, *“We are people of might and great power, but the decision is yours, so consider what you will command.”* Her response reflected her aversion to violence, *“Indeed kings, when they enter a country, they corrupt it, and humiliate its dignified people. And thus do they behave. But I am going to send them a present, and (wait) to see with what (answer) the messengers will return.”* She knew the devastation that a country would suffer as a result of war and wanted to avoid this. Furthermore, she wanted to extend a hand for peace. She decided to send Solomon (PBUH) a gift. It was also a way to test what kind of a man Solomon (PBUH) is. Is he after wealth, or is he a man of principle?

The narrative moves to describe the scene when the messengers brought Solomon (PBUH) the queen’s gift, *“(the King) said, ‘What! Are you offering me wealth? What God has given me is better than that which He has given you. It is you (and not I) who rejoice in your gift.’”* Solomon (PBUH) expressed his dismay that the queen did not understand the intent of his call. He declared it loud and clear that he is not after money. His main interest was to guide them to the worship of God alone. He then followed by issuing a dire threat, *“Return to them. We shall verily come upon them with hosts that they cannot resist, and we shall drive them out from their land humiliated, and they will be subdued.”*

The verses do not detail what happened after that, what was her response and how it was relayed to Solomon (PBUH). But we understand from the text that Solomon (PBUH) knew that the queen and her entourage accepted his invitation and were on their way to meet him. He may have also anticipated this from the way she handled the situation and guessed at her intention to avoid war. The following verses describe the deliberations between Solomon (PBUH) and his court about the way to bring her throne to him before she arrives, *“He said (to his own men), ‘Chiefs, which of you can bring me her throne before they come to me in submission?’ A powerful one from among the jinn said, ‘I will bring it to you before you rise from your place; indeed, I am strong and trustworthy.’ The one who had knowledge of the Book said, ‘I will bring it to you within the twinkling of an eye.’”* Why did Solomon (PBUH) want to bring her throne before she arrived? Most probably that was his way of impressing her with his power and resources. One of the jinn offered to bring the throne to him before he had finished his meeting, but the one who had knowledge of the Book said that he could bring it in a twinkling of an eye. The verses do not explain who was that who had the knowledge, nor did they specify which Book that had this knowledge. But we understand that he was a believer and that was given extraordinary powers as a gift from God.

When Solomon (PBUH) saw the throne in front of him, he expressed his gratitude to God, *“Then when (Solomon) saw it placed firmly before him, he said, ‘This is by the Grace of my Lord to test me whether I am grateful or ungrateful; and if any is grateful, truly his gratitude is for his own soul; but if any is ungrateful, truly my Lord is Self-Sufficient, Generous’”* Solomon (PBUH) realized the responsibility of being blessed by God and responded by expressing his gratitude. It is a great trial when God bestows His blessings on people. They should recognize the source of the blessings and they should be grateful to Him. Showing gratitude benefits the people themselves, though God does not need it.

Solomon (PBUH) wanted to surprise the queen, *“He said, ‘Disguise her throne for her that we may see whether she will be guided or remains one of the misguided.’”* It may have been also a way to test the perspicacity of the queen when she was faced with such a surprise. She was quite witty in her response, *“So when she arrived, she was asked, ‘Is this your throne?’ She said, ‘It is as though it were the very one.’ And (Solomon said), ‘We were given the knowledge before her and we had submitted (to God).’”*

The verses explain why she did not believe before this encounter with Solomon (PBUH), *“And what she worshipped besides God prevented her, surely she was of one of people who disbelieve.”*

Yet, there was another surprise that Solomon (PBUH) had for her, *“It was said to her, ‘Enter the hall.’ And when she saw it she thought it was a pool and bared her legs. (Solomon) said, ‘It is a hall, paved with smooth glass.’ She said, ‘My Lord, I have wronged myself, and I submit with Solomon to God, the Lord of the Worlds.’”* When she saw the water through the crystal floor of the hall she thought that she is entering into a shallow pool. She raised her dress so that it would not get wet. Solomon (PBUH) then explained to her that the hall had a crystal floor. She then realized that Solomon (PBUH) was given extraordinary powers and she submitted herself to God. She understood that submission is to God alone and that whatever powers Solomon (PBUH) had were bestowed by God on him; so she submitted with him to the Lord of the Worlds.

Verses 45 to 53:

45. *And We verily sent to Thamud their brother Salih, saying, “Worship God.” And they then became two parties quarrelling.*
46. *He said, “My people, why do you hasten on the evil rather than the good? Why do not you ask pardon of God, that you may receive mercy.”*
47. *They said, “We consider you and those who are with you a bad omen.” He said, “Your omen is with God; you are a people who are being tested.”*
48. *There were nine men in the city who spread corruption in the land, and would not reform.*
49. *They said, “Swear one to another by God, that we will attack him and his family by night, and afterward we will surely say to his next of kin, ‘We did not witness the destruction of his family. And we are indeed telling the truth.’”*
50. *So they plotted a plot; and We plotted a plot, while they perceive it not.*
51. *Then see the consequence of their plotting: We destroyed them and their people, every one.*
52. *Here are their homes in ruin because they practiced wrongdoing. Verily in this is a sign for people who have knowledge.*
53. *And We saved those who believed and were conscious of God. (27: 45 – 53)*

“And We verily sent to Thamud their brother Salih, saying, ‘Worship God.’ And they then became two parties quarrelling. The verse summarized the Message that Salih (PBUH) brought his people; it has one objective, *“Worship God.”* This is the fundamental principle on which the divine message is based. His people became divided, one group believed in him while the other rejected him. Those who believed were in the minority. Those who disbelieved challenged Salih (PBUH) to bring about the punishment he promised them if they do not believe. His response

was, *“He said, ‘My people, why do you hasten on the evil rather than the good? Why do not you ask pardon of God, that you may receive mercy.’”* Rather than seeking guidance and appreciating the message, they said to Salih (PBUH), *“We consider you and those who are with you a bad omen.”* The belief in bad and good omens is an old tradition and a superstition. This particular expression described a practice that people in old communities used to follow. Whenever someone wanted to embark on a new venture, a person would hold a bird in his hand, then would let it go, allowing it to fly. If the bird flew to the right, then this would be considered to be a good omen. They would then go ahead with their venture. But if the bird flew to the left, they would consider this a bad omen and quit that venture. Salih (PBUH) tried to point out to them that birds do not know the unseen. Depending on the bird to tell them the future is sheer stupidity. Their future is in the hands of God, *“He said, ‘Your omen is with God; you are a people who are being tested.’”* God decides the future. This was a test from God to give them the choice between guidance and misguidance.

“There were nine men in the city who spread corruption in the land, and would not reform. They said, ‘Swear one to another by God that we will attack him and his family by night, and afterward we will surely say to his next of kin, ‘We did not witness the destruction of his family. And we are indeed telling the truth.’” These nine people were bent on destruction, corruption, and violence. They decided to kill Salih (PBUH). It is amazing that, as they were deliberating how to kill Salih (PBUH), they would swear by God whom Salih (PBUH) is inviting them to worship. They decided to lie to his next of kin (the one who is responsible for executing his will and avenging his death) saying that they did not see him when he perished, thinking that since they will kill him in the dark they can say we did not see him being killed. This plot reflects a twisted superficial way of thinking. But they can plot all they want because God’s plot is perfect, *“So they plotted a plot; and We plotted a plot, while they perceive it not. Then see the consequence of their plotting: We destroyed them and their people, every one. Here are their homes in ruin because they practiced wrongdoing.”* They were destroyed in a blink of an eye. They perished and their houses became empty.

There is indeed a sign in this, *“Verily in this is a sign for people who have knowledge.”* Knowledge is one of the themes of this Sura. God saved the believers, *“And We saved those who believed and were conscious of God.”*

Verses 54 to 58:

- 54. *(We also sent) Lut (as a messenger), He said to his people, "Will you practice immorality knowingly?"*
- 55. *Do you lust after men instead of women? You are truly ignorant people."*
- 56. *The only answer his people gave was, "Drive out the followers of Lut from your city; these are indeed people who want to be clean and pure."*
- 57. *But We saved him and his family, except his wife; We destined her to be of those who stayed behind.*
- 58. *And We rained down on them a shower (of brimstone); and evil was the shower on those who have been warned. (27: 54 – 58)*

Lut (PBUH) lived in a community in which homosexuality was prevalent. It was an acceptable practice for people. The following verses expressed Lut’s (PBUH) criticism of such practice, *“He said to his people, ‘Will you practice immorality knowingly? Do you lust after men instead of women? You are truly ignorant people.’”* Their response was to expel Lut (PBUH) and those

who believed in him (his family) from their city, *“The only answer his people gave was, ‘Drive out the followers of Lut from your city; these are indeed people who want to be clean and pure.’”* It may be that they wanted to be sarcastic when they described Lut (PBUH) and his people as, *“people who want to be clean and pure.”* But God saved Lut (PBUH) and his family except his wife, *“But We saved him and his family, except his wife; We destined her to be of those who stayed behind. And We rained down on them a shower (of brimstone); and evil was the shower on those who have been warned.”*

Verses 59 to 93:

59. Say, *“Praise be to God, and peace on his servants whom He has chosen. Who is better? God or the false gods they associate (with Him)?”*
60. *Is not He (best) who created the heavens and the earth, and sends down for you water from the sky? With it We produce gardens of joyful beauty, whose trees you could not have grown yourselves. Is there a deity beside God? No, but they are people who ascribe equals (to Him).*
61. *Is not He (best) who made the earth a stable abode, and made rivers flow through it, and set firm mountains on it, and has set a barrier between the two seas? Is there any deity beside God? No, but most of them do not know.*
62. *Is not He (best) who answers the one in need when he calls upon Him and removes the evil, and has made you viceroys on the earth? Is there a deity beside God? Little are you mindful?*
63. *Is not He (best) who guides you in the darkness of the land and the sea, He who sends the winds as heralds of His mercy? Is there a deity beside God? High exalted be God above all that they associate (with Him).*
64. *Is not He (best) who originates the creation, then reproduces it, and who provides for you from the heaven and the earth? Is there a deity beside God? Say, “Bring your proof, if you are truthful.”*
65. Say (Muhammad), *“None in the heavens and the earth knows the unseen save God; and they do not perceive when they will be raised (again).”*
66. *Their knowledge cannot comprehend the Hereafter. They are in doubt concerning it. They are quite blind to it.*
67. *Yet those who disbelieve say, “When we have become dust like our fathers, shall we verily be brought to life again?”*
68. *We were promised this, we and our fathers. These are only ancient fables.”*
69. Say (to them, Muhammad), *“Travel in the land and see how was the end of the guilty.”*
70. *And grieve you not for them, nor be in distress because of what they plot (against you).*
71. *And they say, “When (will) this promise (be fulfilled), if you are truthful?”*
72. Say, *“It may be that a part of which you seek to hasten is close behind you.”*
73. *And indeed, your Lord’s grace for people is limitless, but most of them are not grateful.*
74. *And indeed, your Lord knows all that their bosoms do hide, and all that they proclaim.*
75. *And there is nothing hidden in the heaven or the earth but it is in a clear Record.*
76. *Indeed, this Quran narrates to the Children of Israel most of that which they differ about.*
77. *And it certainly is guidance and a mercy to those who believe.*
78. *Verily your Lord will judge between them in His wisdom, and He is the Eminent, the Omniscient.*
79. *So put your trust in God, indeed you are on (the path of) the manifest truth.*

80. *You cannot make the dead to hear; nor can you make the deaf to hear the call if they turn to flee.*
81. *Nor can you lead the blind out of their error. You can make none to hear, save those who believe in Our revelations and they have submitted.*
82. *And when the word (i.e. the decree) is fulfilled concerning them, We shall bring forth a beast from the earth to speak to them about how the people did not have certitude in Our signs.*
83. *One day We shall gather together from every people a group of those who denied our revelations, and they shall be kept in ranks.*
84. *Until, when they come (before their Lord), He will say, "Did you deny My revelations when you could not encompass them in knowledge, or what was it that you did?"*
85. *And the Word will be fulfilled concerning them because they have done wrong, and they will not speak.*
86. *Have they not seen, how We have made the night that they may rest therein, and the day a time for them to see? Indeed, in that are signs for a people who believe.*
87. *On the Day, when the Trumpet will be blown and all who are in the heavens and the earth will be terrified, save him whom God wills. And all will come to Him in humility.*
88. *You see the mountains and think them firmly fixed but they pass away as the clouds pass away. This is the work of God, who disposes of all things in perfect order; for He is Totally-Aware of all that you do.*
89. *Whoso brings a good deed will have better than its worth; and they are safe from the fear of that Day.*
90. *And whoso brings an ill-deed, they will be flung down on their faces in the Fire. Are you recompensed except for what you used to do?*
91. *I (Muhammad) am commanded only to serve the Lord of this land which He has hallowed, and to whom belong all things. And I am commanded to be of those who submit (to Him),*
92. *And to recite the Quran. And whoso becomes guided, becomes guided only for (the good of) his own soul; and as for him who goes astray, (to him) say, "I am only a warner."*
93. *And say, "Praise be to God who will show you His signs so that you shall know them. And your Lord is not unaware of what you do." (27: 59 – 93)*

"Say, 'Praise be to God, and peace on his servants whom He has chosen.'"

God commanded His Messenger to say the word with which all believers should start and end their talk, dialogue, or discourse. God is worthy of all praise from His servants for all His blessings. The first of these blessings is His guidance. This verse is followed by a number of rhetorical questions. All these questions have only one answer. It starts with a question, *"Who is better? God or the false gods they associate (with Him)?"* There is no comparison between God and these false gods. This is a sarcastic question that was meant to rebuke those who associate partners with God. Then the questions continue, *"Is not He (best) who created the heavens and the earth, and sends down for you water from the sky? With it We produce gardens of joyful beauty, whose trees you could not have grown yourselves. Is there a deity beside God? No, but they are people who ascribe equals (to Him)."* The existence of the heavens and the earth are facts that cannot be disputed by anyone. No one can claim that they were created by the idols, the angels, the devils, the moon, or the sun. The rain that comes down from the sky is a fact that could not be explained except by the existence of God who created the laws that allow the rain to fall down. The rain is the reason for the growth of beautiful gardens with trees and flowers. No one knows how these plants

spring to life. There can only be One God.

Then comes another question, *“Is not He (best) who made the earth a stable abode, and made rivers flow through it, and set firm mountains on it, and has set a barrier between the two seas? Is there any deity beside God? No, but most of them do not know.”* The verse talks about the way the earth had been fashioned by God. God made the earth a suitable place for people to live on. The existence of the earth and its ability to provide a *“stable abode”* for humanity is controlled with a number of delicate laws which were created by God. Any disturbance that happens to these laws could render life on earth impossible. God created rivers. Rivers are the veins of life for earth. They run in different directions to carry irrigation water to different places for plants to grow and crops to be reaped. The mountains are essential for the stability of the earth. Usually, moving rivers start at the feet of a fixed mountain. God made a natural barrier between the salty sea and fresh water river so that their waters do not mix. This is the work of God but many people do not know.

“Is not He (best) who answers the one in need when he calls upon Him and removes the evil, and has made you viceroys on the earth? Is there a deity beside God? Little are you mindful?” This verse touches upon the people’s hearts when they are reminded of their inner feelings. A person in distress has no one to call upon except God. When all powers fail and all help is useless and all support is lost; the only One left to turn to is God. When we call upon Him He responds and removes our distress and saves us from evil. We tend to forget this when we are enjoying good times so we seek help and support from mortals like us. We forget that the support, the help, and the power of mortals are transient. They all disappear when an adversity strikes. Only God is eternal. He made humankind a viceroy on earth. God created humankind in such a way that they are able to carry this responsibility. God created the cosmic laws that enabled humankind to live on earth and to fulfill their obligations which they were entrusted with. God created life and death and decreed succession of generations so that human life continues to flourish on earth. One generation replaces another so that the struggle between generations does not hamper the growth of life on earth. Each generation pushes the wheel of progress forward. But humankind forgets these facts.

“Is not He (best) who guides you in the darkness of the land and the sea, He who sends the winds as heralds of His mercy? Is there a deity beside God? High exalted be God above all that they associate (with Him).” Sailors (some of whom were present at the time of the revelation of the Quran) learn the secrets of navigation through the sea and earn the experience of handling ships at sea. Who enabled them to gain this knowledge? Who enabled their initial natural disposition to discover the natural laws of the universe and discover its secrets? Is not God who taught them? Who created the laws that control the movements of the wind? Is not God who created the laws which control the wind?

“Is not He (best) who originates the creation, then reproduces it, and who provides for you from the heaven and the earth? Is there a deity beside God? Say, ‘Bring your proof, if you are truthful.’” The beginning of the creation is a fact that no one can deny. No one can explain how the creation could have begun without the existence of God. People may argue about resurrection, but having accepted the fact that God is the One who started the creation then it is easy to accept the fact that He can also resurrect people after death. The creation and maintenance of the universe require an enormous amount of planning, management, and control. It makes sense that part of the plan is for people to be resurrected to be held accountable for what

they have done during their lives. God provides for people from the heaven and earth. God's provision for people on earth takes different forms: the plants, the animals, air, water, and the mineral resources whether underground or under the sea. The provision from heaven has many forms: light, heat, rain, and other sources of energy and power. In addition, there is the provision in the Hereafter, which only God knows. The provision is closely related to the creation and the recreation. The provision from the earth is necessary for the beginning and continuation of life. The provision from the heaven is also necessary for the continuation of life on earth and it is closely related to the recompense in the Hereafter. In the Hereafter people will be held accountable for the way they spent the provision that God gave them.

"Say (Muhammad), 'None in the heavens and the earth knows the unseen save God; and they do not perceive when they will be raised (again).'" The belief in the resurrection; the belief in the gathering on the Day of Judgment; and the belief in the accountability of human beings are integral components of the doctrine. The belief in the Day of Judgment is an incentive for people to do good deeds in this life because on that Day people will be recompensed for their deeds. The different generations of the human race have always had difficulty in the belief in resurrection after death. The miracle of the beginning of a new life should have been proof enough for them to believe in the inevitability of resurrection. The verse states that the unseen is only known to God. People's knowledge stops at the realm of what they can see or touch. Humankind were not the only creatures who were deprived of the knowledge of the unseen but also the jinn and the angels are equally deprived of this knowledge, *"None in the heavens and the earth knows the unseen save God,"* a clear and unequivocal statement. They also do not know when they will be resurrected. Their knowledge cannot encompass the Hereafter, and they also harbor doubts regarding it. They are quite blind to it, *"Their knowledge cannot comprehend the Hereafter. They are in doubt concerning it. They are quite blind to it."*

So the disbelievers ask, *"When we have become dust like our fathers, shall we verily be brought to life again?"* People always wondered about resurrection, how can they be brought back to life after their bodies became dust? They forget that they were created before from nothing. No one knows how the cells that formed their original bodies came from. They remember that previous messengers came with the same promise before, *"We were promised this, we and our fathers. These are only ancient fables."* But they never thought that these promises will materialize one day. They should take a lesson from the fate of previous generations, *"Say (to them, Muhammad), 'Travel in the land and see how was the end of the guilty.'" Travel and see what happened to those who disbelieved before. Natural laws never change.*

The Messenger (PBUH) is then commanded to leave them to their fate; he has done his duty and should not be annoyed with what will happen to them, *"And grieve you not for them, nor be in distress because of what they plot (against you)."*

The disbelievers continued to challenge the Messenger (PBUH), *"And they say, 'When (will) this promise (be fulfilled), if you are truthful?'"* The response came to settle their doubts and to throw fear in their hearts. The fulfillment of the promise may be nearer than what they thought, *"Say, 'It may be that a part of which you seek to hasten is close behind you.'" God's bounty is abundant. He delayed the punishment to give them a chance to repent but they continued to be ungrateful, "And indeed, your Lord's grace for people is limitless, but most of them are not grateful."* God gave them respite in spite of the fact that He knows what they harbor in their

hearts, *“And indeed, your Lord knows all that their bosoms do hide, and all that they proclaim. And there is nothing hidden in the heaven or the earth but it is in a clear Record.”*

“Indeed, this Quran narrates to the Children of Israel most of that which they differ about.” The Quran came with clear verses which established the truth about many of the issues that the Children of Israel differed about. It is also a guidance and mercy for the believers, *“And it certainly is guidance and a mercy to those who believe.”* The Quran unites the believers around the Islamic project and protects them from going astray. It is a mercy that clears their doubts and provides a link to God. The Islamic project is a unique program that trains the spirits to live in harmony with the natural laws that controls this universe. This fills the spirits with peace and security. The Messenger was reassured that God will settle the dispute between him and his people, *“Verily your Lord will judge between them in His wisdom, and He is the Eminent, the Omniscient.”* The Messenger (PBUH) was commanded to put his trust in God. God has decreed that the truth will prevail, *“So put your trust in God, indeed you are on (the path of) the manifest truth.”*

The verses continued to comfort the Messenger (PBUH) telling him that he did his best but he could not let the dead hear his call, *“You cannot make the dead to hear; nor can you make the deaf to hear the call if they turn to flee. Nor can you lead the blind out of their error. You can make none to hear, save those who believe in Our revelations and they have submitted.”* The Quran paints a lively dynamic image for the psyche of the disbeliever. The image portrays their rigid hearts, their numb spirits, and their lack of feelings. These are all characteristics of the dead. Those who listen to God’s words are the truly living, *“save those who believe in Our revelations and they have submitted.”* Only those whose hearts are open to receive guidance can hear the Messenger (PBUH). They are alive so they can hear and feel.

The following verses take us on a tour of the signs of the approaching Day of Judgment, *“And when the word (i.e. the decree) is fulfilled concerning them, We shall bring forth a beast from the earth to speak to them about how the people did not have certitude in Our signs.”* The story of this beast was mentioned in several prophetic traditions some of them are sound and others are weak. The sound traditions do not mention the characteristics of the beast. So, we will not discuss the shape and form of this beast. The things that are important and relevant is the fact that the coming of the beast is one of the signs that will herald the approaching Day of Judgment. At that time the opportunity for repentance will have passed. The beast will be one of God’s miracles because it will be able to communicate with people and they will be able to understand what it will say.

A description of some of the images on the Day of Judgment follows, *“One day We shall gather together from every people a group of those who denied our revelations, and they shall be kept in ranks.”* The verse depicts the disbelievers as a powerless flock being herded, they will not have a say as to where they will be driven. They will then be questioned, *“Until, when they come (before their Lord), He will say, ‘Did you deny My revelations when you could not encompass them in knowledge, or what was it that you did?’”* They will be rebuked in a sarcastic way. They will be speechless and will have no answers to the questions being asked, *“And the Word will be fulfilled concerning them because they have done wrong, and they will not speak.”* They will receive their judgment for the wrong they did before and they will be speechless.

The narrative then moves to another theme, scenes from the worldly life, *“Have they not seen how We have made the night that they may rest therein, and the day a time for them to see? Indeed, in that are signs for a people who believe.”* The day and night are cosmic phenomena which evoke religious feelings in the hearts of people, feelings which entice those with open hearts to guidance to seek the pleasure of being close to God who moves the night and day around. Without a day and a night no life would be able to continue on earth. The day and night were created in just balance to maintain life on earth. The heat of a longer day would burn plants and animals. The cold of a longer night would cause everything to freeze. Then the scene moves rapidly to the Day of Judgment again, *“On the Day when the Trumpet will be blown, and all who are in the heavens and the earth will be terrified, save him whom God wills. And all will come to Him in humility.”* The trumpet will be blown once, and fear will fill all those who are in the heaven and the earth except those whom God chose not be frightened; it is said that those are the martyrs. Everyone will perish. Then the trumpet will be blown again and people will be resurrected. The third blow will gather people together in humility.

God’s creation is wonderful, *“You see the mountains and think them firmly fixed but they pass away as the clouds pass away. This is the work of God, who disposes of all things in perfect order; for He is Totally-Aware of all that you do.”*

“Whoso brings a good deed will have better than its worth; and they are safe from the fear of that Day.” The believers will be rewarded. What better reward than being safe from the fear of the Day of Judgment? Those who disbelieved will have their recompense as well, *“And whoso brings an ill-deed, they will be flung down on their faces in the Fire. Are you recompensed except for what you used to do?”*

In the conclusion, the Messenger (PBUH) summarizes his Message and his approach in calling people to the Message, *“I (Muhammad) am commanded only to serve the Lord of this land which He has hallowed, and to whom belong all things. And I am commanded to be of those who submit (to Him), and to recite the Quran.”* The idolaters of Mecca recognized the sanctity of their city and the holiness of the House of God. However, they did not believe in the Oneness of God who made this place holy. The verses state the fundamental components of faith. He was commanded to worship God alone; the Lord of this city is the Lord of the universe. He was commanded to submit to God alone. These are the fundamentals of the faith. The methodology of maintaining this faith is then outlined. First, He was commanded to recite the Quran. The Quran is the Book of this faith and its constitution. It is the tool that the believers should use in their struggle against the disbelievers. It is the tool that the believers should use in their struggle against temptation.

The verses state the individual responsibility in the belief in the Oneness of God, *“And whoso becomes guided, becomes guided only for (the good of) his own soul; and as for him who goes astray, (to him) say, ‘I am only a warner.’”* Everyone is responsible for his own deeds. The way to guidance is only through the Quran. The task of the Messenger (PBUH) is only to warn. *And say, ‘Praise be to God who will show you His signs so that you shall know them. And your Lord is not unaware of what you do.’* God’s signs are all around us. Every day a new sign is revealed. The Sura ends with the unequivocal statement. God is Totally-Aware of all what we do.