

(And when it is said to them: "Do not make mischief on the earth," they say: "We are only peacemakers.") means, "We seek to make amends between the believers and the People of the Book. " Allah said,

(أَلَا إِنَّهُمْ هُمُ الْمُفْسِدُونَ وَلَكِن لَّا يَشْعُرُونَ)

(Verily, they are the ones who make mischief, but they perceive not.). This Ayah means that the hypocrites' behavior, and their claim that it is for peace, is itself mischief, although in their ignorance, they do not see it to be mischief.

(وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ ءَامِنُوا كَمَا ءَامَنَ النَّاسُ قَالُوا أَنُؤْمِنُ كَمَا آمَنَ السُّفَهَاءُ أَلَا إِنَّهُمْ هُمُ السُّفَهَاءُ وَلَكِن لَّا يَعْلَمُونَ)

(13. And when it is said to them: Believe as the people believe," They say: "Shall we believe as the fools have believed" Verily, they are the fools, but they do not know.)

Allah said that if the hypocrites are told,

(ءَامِنُوا كَمَا ءَامَنَ النَّاسُ)

("Believe as the people believe,"), meaning, ` Believe just as the believers believe in Allah, His angels, His Books, His Messengers, Resurrection after death, Paradise and Hellfire, etc. And obey Allah and His Messenger by heeding the commandments and avoiding the prohibitions.' Yet the hypocrites answer by saying,

(قَالُوا أَنُؤْمِنُ كَمَا آمَنَ السُّفَهَاءُ)

("Shall we believe as the fools have believed") they meant (may Allah curse the hypocrites) the Companions of the Messenger of Allah . This is the same Tafsir given by Abu Al-`Aliyah and As-Suddi in his Tafsir, with a chain of narration to Ibn `Abbas, Ibn Mas`ud and other Companions. This is also the Tafsir of Ar-Rabi` bin Anas and `Abdur-Rahman bin Zayd bin Aslam. The hypocrites said, "Us and them having the same status, following the same path, while they are fools!" `The fool' is the ignorant, simple-minded person who has little knowledge in areas of benefit and harm. This is why, according to the majority of the scholars, Allah used the term foolish to include children, when He said,

وَلَا تُؤْتُوا السُّفَهَاءَ أَمْوَالَكُمُ الَّتِي جَعَلَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ
قِيَمًا

(And do not give your property, which Allah has made a means of support for you, to the foolish) (4:5).

Allah answered the hypocrites in all of these instances. For instance, Allah said here,

(أَلَا إِنَّهُمْ هُمُ السُّفَهَاءُ)

(Verily, they are the fools). Allah thus affirmed that the hypocrites are indeed the fools, yet,

(وَلَكِنْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ)

(But they know not). Since they are so thoroughly ignorant, the hypocrites are unaware of their degree of deviation and ignorance, and such situation is more dangerous, a severer case of blindness, and further from the truth than one who is aware.

وَإِذَا لَقُوا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا قَالُوا ءَامَنَّا وَإِذَا خَلَوْا
إِلَىٰ شَيْطَانِهِمْ قَالُوا إِنَّا مَعَكُمْ إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ
مُسْتَهْزِءُونَ - اللَّهُ يَسْتَهْزِئُ بِهِمْ وَيَمُدُّهُمْ فِي
طُغْيَانِهِمْ يَعْمَهُونَ)

(14. And when they meet those who believe, they say: "We believe," but when they are alone with their Shayatin (devils), they say: "Truly, we are with you; verily, we were but mocking.")
(15. Allah mocks at them and leaves them increasing in their deviation to wander blindly.)

The Hypocrites' Cunning and Deceit

Allah said that when the hypocrites meet the believers, they proclaim their faith and pretend to be believers, loyalists and friends. They do this to misdirect, mislead and deceive the believers. The hypocrites also want to have a share of the benefits and gains that the believers might possibly acquire. Yet,

(وَإِذَا خَلَوْا إِلَىٰ شَيْطَانِهِمْ)

(But when they are alone with their Shayatin), meaning, if they are alone with their devils, such as their leaders and masters among the rabbis of the Jews, hypocrites and idolators.

Human and Jinn Devils

Ibn Jarir said, "The devils of every creation are the mischievous among them. There are both human devils and Jinn devils. Allah said,

(وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَا لِكُلِّ نَبِيٍّ عَدُوًّا شَيَاطِينَ الْإِنْسِ
وَالْجِنِّ يُوحِي بَعْضُهُمْ إِلَى بَعْضٍ زُخْرُفَ الْقَوْلِ
غُرُورًا)

(And so We have appointed for every Prophet enemies Shayatin (devils) among mankind and Jinn, inspiring one another with adorned speech as a delusion (or by way of deception)) (6:112).

The Meaning of ` Mocking

Allah said,

(قَالُوا إِنَّا مَعَكُمْ)

(They say: "Truly, we are with you"). Muhammad bin Ishaq reported that Ibn ` Abbas said that the Ayah means, "We are with you,

(إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ مُسْتَهْزَءُونَ)

(Verily, we were but mocking), meaning, we only mock people (the believers) and deceive them." Ad-Dahhak said that Ibn ` Abbas said that the Ayah,

(إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ مُسْتَهْزَءُونَ)

(Verily, we were but mocking), means, "We (meaning the hypocrites) were mocking the Companions of Muhammad." Also, Ar-Rabi` bin Anas and Qatadah said similarly. Allah's statement,

(اللَّهُ يَسْتَهْزِئُ بِهِمْ وَيَمُدُّهُمْ فِي طُغْيَانِهِمْ
يَعْمَهُونَ)

(Allah mocks at them and leaves them increasing in their deviation to wander blindly) answers the hypocrites and punishes them for their behavior. Ibn Jarir commented, "Allah mentioned what He will do to them on the Day of Resurrection, when He said,

(يَوْمَ يَقُولُ الْمُنْفِقُونَ وَالْمُنْفِقَاتُ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا
انظرونا نقتبس من نوركم قيل ارجعوا وراءكم
فالتمسوا نورا فضرب بينهم بسور له باب
باطنه فيه الرحمة وظهره من قبله العذاب)

(On the Day when the hypocrites men and women will say to the believers: "Wait for us! Let us get something from your light!" It will be said: "Go back to your rear! Then seek a light!" So a wall will be put up between them, with a gate therein. Inside it will be mercy, and outside it will be torment.) (57:13), and,

(وَلَا يَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَنَّمَا نُؤَخِّرُهُمْ
لَأَنفُسِهِمْ إِنَّمَا نُؤَخِّرُهُمْ لِيُزِدُوا إِثْمًا)

(And let not the disbelievers think that Our postponing of their punishment is good for them. We postpone the punishment only so that they may increase in sinfulness.) (3:178)."

He then said, "This, and its like, is Allah's mockery of the hypocrites and the people of Shirk."

The Hypocrites suffering for their Plots

Allah stated that He will punish the hypocrites for their mockery, using the same terms to describe both the deed and its punishment, although the meaning is different. Similarly, Allah said,

(وَجَزَاءُ سَيِّئَةٍ سَيِّئَةٌ مِّثْلُهَا فَمَنْ عَفَا وَأَصْلَحَ
فَأَجْرُهُ عَلَى اللَّهِ)

(The recompense for an offense is an offense equal to it; but whoever forgives and makes reconciliation, his reward is with Allah) (42:40), and,

(فَمَنْ اعْتَدَىٰ عَلَيْكُمْ فَاعْتَدُوا عَلَيْهِ)

(Then whoever transgresses (the prohibition) against you, transgress likewise against him) (2:194).

The first act is an act of injustice, while the second act is an act of justice. So both actions carry the same name, while being different in reality. This is how the scholars explain deceit, cunning and mocking when attributed to Allah in the Qur'an. Surely, Allah exacts revenge for certain evil acts with a punishment that is similar in nature to the act itself. We should affirm here that Allah does not do these things out of joyful play, according to the consensus of the scholars, but as a just form of punishment for certain evil acts.

Meaning of ` Leaves them increasing in their deviation to wander blindly

Allah said,

(وَيَمُدُّهُمْ فِي طُغْيَانِهِمْ يَعْمَهُونَ)

(Allah mocks at them and leaves them increasing in their deviation to wander blindly). As-Suddi reported that Ibn `Abbas, Ibn Mas`ud and several other Companions of the Messenger of Allah said that,

(وَيَمُدُّهُمْ)

(and leaves them increasing) means, He gives them respite. Also, Mujahid said, "He (causes their deviation) to increase." Allah said;

(أَيَحْسَبُونَ أَنَّمَا نُضَاعِفُهُمْ بِهِ مِنْ مَّالٍ وَبَنِينَ -
نُسَارِعُ لَهُمْ فِي الْخَيْرَاتِ بَلْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ)

(Do they think that by the wealth and the children with which We augment them. (That) We hasten to give them with good things. Nay, but they perceive not.) (23:55-56).

Ibn Jarir commented, "The correct meaning of this Ayah is `We give them increase from the view of giving them respite and leaving them in their deviation and rebellion.' Similarly, Allah said,

وَنُقَلِّبُ أَقْصِدَتَهُمْ وَأَبْصِرَهُمْ كَمَا لَمْ يُؤْمِنُوا بِهِ
أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ وَنَذَرُهُمْ فِي طُغْيَانِهِمْ يَعْمَهُونَ)

(And We shall turn their hearts and their eyes away (from guidance), as they refused to believe in it the first time, and We shall leave them in their trespass to wander blindly). " (6:110).

Tughyan used in this Ayah means to transgress the limits, just as Allah said in another Ayah,

إِنَّا لَمَّا طَغَا الْمَاءُ حَمَلْنَاكُمْ فِي الْجَارِيَةِ)

(Verily, when the water Tagha (rose) beyond its limits, We carried you in the ship) (69:11).

Also, Ibn Jarir said that the term `Amah, in the Ayah means, `deviation'. He also said about Allah's statement,

(فِي طُغْيَانِهِمْ يَعْمَهُونَ)

(in their deviation to wander), "In the misguidance and disbelief that has encompassed them, causing them to be confused and unable to find a way out of it. This is because Allah has stamped their hearts, sealed them, and blinded their vision. Therefore, they do not recognize guidance or find the way out of their deviation."

(أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ اشْتَرُوا الضَّلَّةَ بِالْهُدَىٰ فَمَا
رَبِحَتْ تَجَرَّتُهُمْ وَمَا كَانُوا مُهْتَدِينَ)

(16. These are they who have purchased error with guidance, so their commerce was profitless. And they were not guided.)

In his Tafsir, As-Suddi reported that Ibn `Abbas and Ibn Mas`ud commented on;

(أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ اشْتَرُوا الضَّلَّةَ بِالْهُدَىٰ)

(These are they who have purchased error with guidance) saying it means, "They pursued misguidance and abandoned guidance. " Mujahid said, "They believed and then disbelieved," while Qatadah said, "They preferred deviation to guidance." Qatadah's statement is similar in meaning to Allah's statement about Thamud,

وَأَمَّا ثَمُودُ فَهَدَيْنَاهُمْ فَاسْتَحَبُّوا الْعَمَىٰ عَلَى
الهُدَىٰ

(And as for Thamud, We granted them guidance, but they preferred blindness to guidance) (41:17).

In summary, the statements that we have mentioned from the scholars of Tafsir indicate that the hypocrites deviate from the true guidance and prefer misguidance, substituting wickedness in place of righteousness. This meaning explains Allah's statement,

أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ اشْتَرُوا الضَّلَالَةَ بِالْهُدَىٰ

(These are they who have purchased error with guidance), meaning, they exchanged guidance to buy misguidance. This meaning includes those who first believed, then later disbelieved, whom Allah described,

ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ ءَامَنُوا ثُمَّ كَفَرُوا فَطُبِعَ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِمْ

(That is because they believed, and then disbelieved; therefore their hearts are sealed) (63:3).

The Ayah also includes those who preferred deviation over guidance. The hypocrites fall into several categories. This is why Allah said,

فَمَا رِيحَتُ تُجَرَّتُهُمْ وَمَا كَانُوا مُهْتَدِينَ

(So their commerce was profitless. And they were not guided), meaning their trade did not succeed nor were they righteous or rightly guided throughout all this. In addition, Ibn Jarir narrated that Qatadah commented on the Ayah,

فَمَا رِيحَتُ تُجَرَّتُهُمْ وَمَا كَانُوا مُهْتَدِينَ

(So their commerce was profitless. And they were not guided), "By Allah! I have seen them leaving guidance for deviation, leaving the Jama`ah (the community of the believers) for the sects, leaving safety for fear, and the Sunnah for innovation." Ibn Abi Hatim also reported other similar statements.

(مَثَلُهُمْ كَمَثَلِ الَّذِي اسْتَوْقَدَ نَارًا فَلَمَّا أَضَاءَتْ مَا حَوْلَهُ ذَهَبَ اللَّهُ بِنُورِهِمْ وَتَرَكَهُمْ فِي ظُلُمَاتٍ لَا يُبْصِرُونَ - صُمُّ بَكْمٌ عُمَى فَهُمْ لَا يَرْجِعُونَ)

(17. Their likeness is as the likeness of one who kindled a fire; then, when it illuminated all around him, Allah removed their light and left them in darkness. (So) they could not see). (18. They are deaf, dumb, and blind, so they return not (to the right path).)

The Example of the Hypocrites

Allah likened the hypocrites when they bought deviation with guidance, thus acquiring utter blindness, to the example of a person who started a fire. When the fire was lit, and illuminated the surrounding area, the person benefited from it and felt safe. Then the fire was suddenly extinguished. Therefore, total darkness covered this person, and he became unable to see anything or find his way out of it. Further, this person could not hear or speak and became so blind that even if there were light, he would not be able to see. This is why he cannot return to the state that he was in before this happened to him. Such is the case with the hypocrites who preferred misguidance over guidance, deviation over righteousness. This parable indicates that the hypocrites first believed, then disbelieved, just as Allah stated in other parts of the Qur'an.

Allah's statement,

(ذَهَبَ اللَّهُ بِنُورِهِمْ)

(Allah removed their light) means, Allah removed what benefits them, and this is the light, and He left them with what harms them, that is, the darkness and smoke. Allah said,

(وَتَرَكَهُمْ فِي ظُلُمَاتٍ)

(And left them in darkness), that is their doubts, disbelief and hypocrisy.

(لَا يُبْصِرُونَ)

((So) they could not see) meaning, they are unable to find the correct path or find its direction. In addition, they are,

(صُمُّ)

(deaf) and thus cannot hear the guidance,

(بُكْمٌ)

(dumb) and cannot utter the words that might benefit them,

(عَمَى)

(and blind) in total darkness and deviation. Similarly, Allah said,

(فَإِنَّهَا لَا تَعْمَى الْأَبْصَارُ وَلَكِنْ تَعْمَى الْقُلُوبُ
الَّتِي فِي الصُّدُورِ)

(Verily, it is not the eyes that grow blind, but it is the hearts which are in the breasts that grow blind) (22:46) and this why they cannot get back to the state of guidance that they were in, since they sold it for misguidance.

(أَوْ كَصَيِّبٍ مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ فِيهِ ظُلُمَاتٌ وَرَعْدٌ وَبَرْقٌ
يَجْعَلُونَ أَصْبِعَهُمْ فِي آذَانِهِمْ مِّنَ الصَّوَاعِقِ
حَذَرَ الْمَوْتِ وَاللَّهُ مُحِيطٌ بِالْكَافِرِينَ - يَكَادُ الْبَرْقُ
يَخْطِفُ أَبْصَرَهُمْ كُلَّمَا أَضَاءَ لَهُمْ مَّشَوْا فِيهِ وَإِذَا
أَظْلَمَ عَلَيْهِمْ قَامُوا وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَذَهَبَ بِسَمْعِهِمْ
وَأَبْصَرِهِمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ)

(19. Or like a rainstorm in the sky, bringing darkness, thunder, and lightning. They thrust their fingers in their ears to keep out the stunning thunderclap for fear of death. But Allah ever encompasses the disbelievers.) (20. The lightning almost snatches away their sight, whenever it flashes for them, they walk therein, and when darkness covers them, they stand still. And if Allah willed, He could have taken away their hearing and their sight. Certainly, Allah has power over all things.)

Another Parable of the Hypocrites

This is another parable which Allah gave about the hypocrites who sometimes know the truth and doubt it at other times. When they suffer from doubt, confusion and disbelief, their hearts are,

(كَصَيِّبٍ)

(Like a Sayyib), meaning, "The rain", as Ibn Mas`ud, Ibn `Abbas, and several other Companions have confirmed as well as Abu Al-`Aliyah, Mujahid, Sa`id bin Jubayr, `Ata', Al-Hasan Al-Basri, Qatadah, `Atiyah Al-`Awfi, `Ata' Al-Khurasani, As-Suddi and Ar-Rabi` bin Anas. Ad-Dahhak said "It is the clouds." However, the most accepted opinion is that it means the rain that comes down during,

(ظَلَمَتِ)

(darkness), meaning, here, the doubts, disbelief and hypocrisy.

(وَرَعْدٌ)

(thunder) that shocks the hearts with fear. The hypocrites are usually full of fear and anxiety, just as Allah described them,

(يَحْسِبُونَ كُلَّ صَيْحَةٍ عَلَيْهِمْ)

(They think that every cry is against them) (63: 4), and,

(وَيَحْلِفُونَ بِاللَّهِ إِنَّهُمْ لَمِنْكُمْ وَمَا هُمْ مِنْكُمْ وَلَكِنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ يَفْرَقُونَ - لَوْ يَجِدُونَ مَلْجَأً أَوْ مَغْرَاتٍ أَوْ مُدْخَلًا لَوَلَّوْا إِلَيْهِ وَهُمْ يَجْمَحُونَ)

(They swear by Allah that they are truly of you while they are not of you, but they are a people who are afraid. Should they find refuge, or caves, or a place of concealment, they would turn straightway thereto in a swift rush) (9:56-57).

(الْبَرْقِ)

(The lightning), is in reference to the light of faith that is sometimes felt in the hearts of the hypocrites,

يَجْعَلُونَ أَصْبِعَهُمْ فِي آذَانِهِمْ مِنَ الصَّوَعِقِ
حَذَرَ الْمَوْتِ وَاللَّهُ مُحِيطٌ بِالْكَافِرِينَ

(They thrust their fingers in their ears to keep out the stunning thunderclap for fear of death. But Allah ever encompasses the disbelievers), meaning, their cautiousness does not benefit them because they are bound by Allah's all-encompassing will and decision. Similarly, Allah said,

هَلْ أَتَاكَ حَدِيثُ الْجُنُودِ - فِرْعَوْنَ وَثَمُودَ - بَلِ
الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فِي تَكْذِيبٍ - وَاللَّهُ مِنْ وَّرَائِهِمْ
مُّحِيطٌ

(Has the story reached you of two hosts. Of Fir`awn (Pharaoh) and Thamud Nay! The disbelievers (persisted) in denying. And Allah encompasses them from behind!) (85:17-20).

Allah then said,

يَكَادُ الْبَرْقُ يَخْطَفُ أَبْصَرَهِمْ

(The lightning almost snatches away their sight) meaning, because the lightning is strong itself, and because their comprehension is weak and does not allow them to embrace the faith. Also, `Ali bin Abi Talhah reported that Ibn `Abbas commented on the Ayah,

يَكَادُ الْبَرْقُ يَخْطَفُ أَبْصَرَهِمْ

(The lightning almost snatches away their sight), "The Qur'an mentioned almost all of the secrets of the hypocrites." `Ali bin Abi Talhah also narrated that Ibn `Abbas said,

كُلَّمَا أَضَاءَ لَهُمْ مَشَوْا فِيهِ

(Whenever it flashes for them, they walk therein), "Whenever the hypocrites acquire a share in the victories of Islam, they are content with this share. Whenever Islam suffers a calamity, they are ready to revert to disbelief.". Similarly, Allah said,

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَعْبُدُ اللَّهَ عَلَى حَرْفٍ فَإِنْ
أَصَابَهُ خَيْرٌ اطمأنَّ بِهِ

(And among mankind is he who worships Allah on the edge: If good befalls him, he is content with that.) (22:11). Also, Muhammad bin Ishaq reported that Ibn ` Abbas said,

(كَلَّمَا أَضَاءَ لَهُمْ مَشَوْا فِيهِ وَإِذَا أَظْلَمَ عَلَيْهِمْ
قَامُوا)

(Whenever it flashes for them, they walk therein, and when darkness covers them, they stand still), "They recognize the truth and speak about it. So their speech is upright, but when they revert to disbelief, they again fall into confusion." This was also said by Abu Al-`Aliyah, Al-Hasan Al-Basri, Qatadah, Ar-Rabi` bin Anas and As-Siddi, who narrated it from the Companions, and it is the most obvious and most correct view, and Allah knows best.

Consequently, on the Day of Judgment, the believers will be given a light according to the degree of their faith. Some of them will gain light that illuminates over a distance of several miles, some more, some less. Some people's light will glow sometimes and be extinguished at other times. They will, therefore, walk on the Srat (the bridge over the Fire) in the light, stopping when it is extinguished. Some people will have no light at all, these are the hypocrites whom Allah described when He said,

(يَوْمَ يَقُولُ الْمُنْفِقُونَ وَالْمُنْفِقَاتُ لِلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا
انظرونا نقتبس من نوركم قيل ارجعوا وراءكم
فالتمسوا نوراً)

(On the Day when the hypocrites men and women will say to the believers: "Wait for us! Let us get something from your light!" It will be said to them; "Go back to your rear! Then seek a light!") (57:13).

Allah described the believers,

يَوْمَ تَرَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ يَسْعَى نُورُهُمْ
بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَبِأَيْمَانِهِمْ بُشْرَاكُمُ الْيَوْمَ جَنَّاتٌ تَجْرِي
مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ

(On the Day you shall see the believing men and the believing women their light running forward before them and by their right hands. Glad tidings for you this Day! Gardens under which rivers flow (Paradise)) (57:12), and,

يَوْمَ لَا يُخْزِي اللَّهُ النَّبِيَّ وَالَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا مَعَهُ
نُورُهُمْ يَسْعَى بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَبِأَيْمَانِهِمْ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا
أَتْمِمْ لَنَا نُورَنَا وَاغْفِرْ لَنَا إِنَّكَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ
قَدِيرٌ

(The Day that Allah will not disgrace the Prophet (Muhammad) and those who believe with him. Their Light will run forward before them and (with their Records Books of deeds) in their right hands. They will say: "Our Lord! Keep perfect our Light for us and do not put it off till we cross over the Srat (a slippery bridge over the Hell) safely and grant us forgiveness. Verily, You are Able to do all things") (66:8).

Ibn Abi Hatim narrated that `Abdullah bin Mas`ud commented on,

(نُورُهُمْ يَسْعَى بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ)

(Their Light will run forward before them), "They will pass on the Srat. according to their deeds. The light that some people have will be as big as a mountain, while the light of others will be as big as a date tree. The people who will have the least light are those whose index fingers will sometimes be lit and extinguished at other times." Ibn Abi Hatim also reported that Ibn `Abbas said, "Every person among the people of Tawhid (Islamic Monotheism) will gain a light on the Day of Resurrection. As for the hypocrite, his light will be extinguished. When the believers witness the hypocrite's light being extinguished, they will feel anxious. Hence, they will supplicate,

(رَبَّنَا أَتْمِمْ لَنَا نُورَنَا)

(Our Lord! Keep perfect our Light for us)." Ad-Dahhak bin Muzahim said, "On the Day of Resurrection, everyone who has embraced the faith will be given a light. When they arrive at

the light of the hypocrites will be extinguished. When the believers see this, they will feel anxious and supplicate,

(رَبَّنَا أَتْمِمْ لَنَا نُورَنَا)

(Our Lord! Keep perfect our Light for us)."

Types of Believers and Types of Disbelievers

Consequently, there are several types of people. There are the believers whom the first four Ayat (2:2-5) in Surat Al-Baqarah describe. There are the disbelievers who were described in the next two Ayat. And there are two categories of hypocrites: the complete hypocrites who were mentioned in the parable of the fire, and the hesitant hypocrites, whose light of faith is sometimes lit and sometimes extinguished. The parable of the rain was revealed about this category, which is not as evil as the first category.

This is similar to the parables that were given in Surat An-Nur (chapter 24). Like the example of the believer and the faith that Allah put in his heart, compared to a brightly illuminated lamp, just like a rising star. This is the believer, whose heart is built on faith and receiving its support from the divine legislation that was revealed to it, without any impurities or imperfections, as we will come to know, Allah willing.

Allah gave a parable of the disbelievers who think that they have something, while in reality they have nothing; such people are those who have compounded ignorance. Allah said,

(وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَعْمَلُهُمْ كَسَرَابٍ بِقِيَعٍ يَحْسَبُهُ
الظَّمَانُ مَاءً حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءَهُ لَمْ يَجِدْهُ شَيْئًا)

(As for those who disbelieved, their deeds are like a mirage in a desert. The thirsty one thinks it to be water, until he comes up to it, he finds it to be nothing) (24:39).

Allah then gave the example of ignorant disbelievers, simple in their ignorance. He said;

(أَوْ كَظُلُمَاتٍ فِي بَحْرٍ لُّجِّيٍّ يَعْشُهُ مَوْجٌ مِّنْ فَوْقِهِ
مَوْجٌ مِّنْ فَوْقِهِ سَحَابٌ ظَلَمَتْ بَعْضُهَا فَوْقَ
بَعْضٍ إِذَا أُخْرِجَ يَدُهُ لَمْ يَكَدْ يَرَاهَا وَمَنْ لَّمْ يَجْعَلِ
اللَّهُ لَهُ نُورًا فَمَا لَهُ مِنْ نُورٍ)

(Or (the state of a disbeliever) is like the darkness in a vast deep sea, overwhelmed by waves, topped by dark clouds, (layers of) darkness upon darkness: if a man stretches out his hand, he can hardly see it! And he for whom Allah has not appointed light, for him there is no light) (24:40).

Therefore, Allah divided the camp of the disbelievers into two groups, advocates and followers. Allah mentioned these two groups in the beginning of Surat Al-Hajj,

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يُجَادِلُ فِي اللَّهِ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ وَيَتَّبِعُ
كُلَّ شَيْطَانٍ مَّرِيدٍ)

(And among mankind is he who disputes about Allah, without knowledge, and follows every rebellious (disobedient to Allah) Shaytan (devil) (devoid of every kind of good)) (22:3), and,

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يُجَادِلُ فِي اللَّهِ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ وَلَا
هُدًى وَلَا كِتَابٍ مُنِيرٍ)

(And among men is he who disputes about Allah, without knowledge or guidance, or a Book giving light (from Allah)) (22:8).

Furthermore, Allah has divided the group of the believers in the beginning of Surat Al-Waqi`ah (56) and at the end. He also divided them in Surat Al-Insan (76) into two groups, the Sabiqun (those who preceded), they are the "near ones" (Muqaribun) and Ashab Al-Yamin (the companions of the right), and they are righteous (Abrar).

In summary, these Ayat divide the believers into two categories, the near ones and righteous. Also, the disbelievers are of two types, advocates and followers. In addition, the hypocrites are divided into two types, pure hypocrites and those who have some hypocrisy in them. The Two Sahih records that `Abdullah bin `Amr said that the Prophet said,

«ثَلَاثٌ مَنْ كُنَّ فِيهِ كَانَتْ مُنَافِقًا خَالِصًا، وَمَنْ
كَانَتْ فِيهِ وَاحِدَةٌ مِنْهُنَّ كَانَتْ فِيهِ خَصْلَةٌ مِنْ
النِّفَاقِ حَتَّى يَدْعَاهَا: مَنْ إِذَا حَدَّثَ كَذَبَ، وَإِذَا
وَعَدَ أَخْلَفَ، وَإِذَا انْتُمِنَ خَانَ»

(Whoever has the following three (characteristics) will be a pure hypocrite, and whoever has one of the following three characteristics will have one characteristic of hypocrisy, unless and

until he gives it up. Whenever he speaks, he tells a lie. Whenever he makes a covenant, he proves treacherous. Whenever he is entrusted, he breaches the trust)

Hence, man might have both a part of faith and a part of hypocrisy, whether in deed, as this Hadith stipulates, or in the creed, as the Ayah (2:20) stipulates.

Types of Hearts

Imam Ahmad recorded Abu Sa`id saying that the Messenger of Allah said

«الْقُلُوبُ أَرْبَعَةٌ: قَلْبٌ أُجْرَدُ فِيهِ مِثْلُ السَّرَاجِ
يَزْهَرُ وَقَلْبٌ أُغْلَفُ مَرْبُوطٌ عَلَى غِلَافِهِ وَقَلْبٌ
مَنْكُوسٌ وَقَلْبٌ مُصْفَحٌ، فَأَمَّا الْقَلْبُ الْأَجْرَدُ فَقَلْبُ
الْمُؤْمِنِ فَسِرَاجُهُ فِيهِ نُورُهُ، وَأَمَّا الْقَلْبُ الْأُغْلَفُ
فَقَلْبُ الْكَافِرِ، وَأَمَّا الْقَلْبُ الْمَنْكُوسُ فَقَلْبُ الْمُنَافِقِ
الْخَالِصِ عَرَفَ ثُمَّ أَنْكَرَ وَأَمَّا الْقَلْبُ الْمُصْفَحُ
فَقَلْبٌ فِيهِ إِيْمَانٌ وَنِفَاقٌ وَمِثْلُ الْإِيْمَانِ فِيهِ كَمَثَلُ
الْبَقْلَةِ يَمُدُّهَا الْمَاءُ الطَّيِّبُ وَمِثْلُ النِّفَاقِ فِيهِ كَمَثَلُ
الْفَرْحَةِ يَمُدُّهَا الْقَيْحُ وَالِدَّمُ فَأَيُّ الْمَادَّتَيْنِ غَلَبَتْ
عَلَى الْأُخْرَى غَلَبَتْ عَلَيْهِ»

(The hearts are four (types): polished as shiny as the radiating lamp, a sealed heart with a knot tied around its seal, a heart that is turned upside down and a wrapped heart. As for the polished heart, it is the heart of the believer and the lamp is the light of faith. The sealed heart is the heart of the disbeliever. The heart that is turned upside down is the heart of the pure hypocrite, because he had knowledge but denied it. As for the wrapped heart, it is a heart that contains belief and hypocrisy. The example of faith in this heart, is the example of the herb that is sustained by pure water. The example of hypocrisy in it, is the example of an ulcer that thrives on puss and blood. Whichever of the two substances has the upper hand, it will have the upper hand on that heart). This Hadith has a Jayid Hasan (good) chain of narration.

Allah said,

(وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَذَهَبَ بِسَمْعِهِمْ وَأَبْصَرِهِمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ
عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ)

(And if Allah willed, He would have taken away their hearing and their sight. Certainly, Allah has power over all things). Muhammad bin Ishaq reported that Ibn `Abbas commented on Allah's statement,

(وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَذَهَبَ بِسَمْعِهِمْ وَأَبْصَرِهِمْ)

(And if Allah willed, He would have taken away their hearing and their sight), "Because they abandoned the truth after they had knowledge in it."

(إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ)

(Certainly, Allah has power over all things). Ibn `Abbas said, "Allah is able to punish or pardon His servants as He wills." Ibn Jarir commented, "Allah only described Himself with the ability to do everything in this Ayah as a warning to the hypocrites of His control over everything, and to inform them that His ability completely encompasses them and that He is able to take away their hearing and sight."

Ibn Jarir and several other scholars of Tafsir stated that these two parables are about the same kind of hypocrite. So the `or' mentioned in,

(أَوْ كَصَيْبٍ مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ)

(Or like a rainstorm from the sky) means `and', just as the Ayah,

(وَلَا تُطِعْ مِنْهُمْ ءَاثِمًا أَوْ كَفُورًا)

(And obey neither a sinner or a disbeliever among them). Therefore, `or' in the Ayah includes a choice of using either example for the hypocrites. Also, Al-Qurtubi said that `or' means, "To show compatibility of the two choices, just as when one says, `St with Al-Hasan or Ibn Srin.' According to the view of Az-Zamakhshari, `so it means each of these persons is the same as the other, so you may sit with either one of them.' The meaning of `or' thus becomes `either.' Allah gave these two examples of the hypocrites, because they both perfectly describe them."

I (Ibn Kathir) say, these descriptions are related to the type of hypocrite, because there is a difference between them as we stated. For instance, Allah mentioned these types in Surat Bara'ah (chapter 9) when He repeated the statement, "And among them" three times, describing their types, characteristics, statements and deeds. So the two examples mentioned here describe two types of hypocrites whose characteristics are similar. For instance, Allah

gave two examples in Surat An-Nur, one for the advocates of disbelief and one for the followers of disbelief, He said,

(وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَعْمَلُهُمْ كَسَرَابٍ بِقِيعَةٍ)

(As for those who disbelieved, their deeds are like a mirage in a desert) (24:39), until,

(أَوْ كَظُلُمَاتٍ فِي بَحْرٍ لُجِّيٍّ)

(Or (the state of a disbeliever) is like the darkness in a vast deep sea) (24:40).

The first example is of the advocates of disbelief who have complex ignorance, while the second is about the followers who have simple ignorance. Allah knows best.

(يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اعْبُدُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ
مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ - الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْأَرْضَ
فِرَاشًا وَالسَّمَاءَ بِنَاءً وَأَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً
فَأَخْرَجَ بِهِ مِنَ الثَّمَرَاتِ رِزْقًا لَكُمْ فَلَا تَجْعَلُوا لِلَّهِ
أَنْدَادًا وَأَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ)

(21. O mankind! Worship your Lord (Allah), Who created you and those who were before you so that you may acquire Taqwa.) (22. Who has made the earth a resting place for you, and the sky as a canopy, and sent down water (rain) from the sky and brought forth therewith fruits as a provision for you. Then do not set up rivals unto Allah (in worship) while you know (that He alone has the right to be worshipped).)

Tawhid Al-Uluhiyyah

Allah next mentioned His Oneness in divinity and stated that He has favored His servants by bringing them to life after they did not exist. He also surrounded them with blessings, both hidden and apparent. He made the earth a resting place for them, just like the bed, stable with the firm mountains.

(وَالسَّمَاءَ بِنَاءً)

(And the sky as a canopy) meaning, `a ceiling'. Similarly, Allah said in another Ayah,

(وَجَعَلْنَا السَّمَاءَ سَقْفًا مَحْفُوظًا وَهُمْ عَنْ آيَاتِهَا
مُعْرِضُونَ)

(And We have made the heaven a roof, safe and well-guarded. Yet they turn away from its signs (i.e. sun, moon, winds, clouds)) (21:32).

(وَأَنْزَلَ لَكُمْ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً)

(And sends down for you water (rain) from the sky) meaning, through the clouds, when they need the rain. Hence, Allah caused the various types of vegetation and fruits to grow as a means of sustenance for people and their cattle. Allah reiterated this bounty in various parts of the Qur'an.

There is another Ayah that is similar to this Ayah (2:22), that is, Allah's statement,

(الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمْ الْأَرْضَ قَرَارًا وَالسَّمَاءَ بِنَاءً
وَصَوَّرَكُمْ فَأَحْسَنَ صُورَكُمْ وَرَزَقَكُمْ مِنَ
الطَّيِّبَاتِ ذَلِكَ اللَّهُ رَبُّكُمْ فَتَبَارَكَ اللَّهُ رَبُّ
الْعَالَمِينَ)

(It is He Who has made for you the earth as a dwelling place and the sky as a canopy, and has given you shape and made your shapes good (looking) and has provided you with good things. That is Allah, your Lord, so Blessed be Allah, the Lord of all that exists) (40:64).

The meaning that is reiterated here is that Allah is the Creator, the Sustainer, the Owner and Provider of this life, all that is in and on it. Hence, He alone deserves to be worshipped, and no one and nothing is to be associated with Him. This is why Allah said next,

(فَلَا تَجْعَلُوا لِلَّهِ أَنْدَادًا وَأَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ)

(Then do not set up rivals unto Allah (in worship) while you know (that He alone has the right to be worshipped)) (2:22).

The Two Sahihs record that Ibn Mas`ud said, "I said to the Messenger of Allah , `Which evil deed is the worst with Allah' He said,

«أَنْ تَجْعَلَ لِلَّهِ نِدًّا وَهُوَ خَلَقَكَ»

(To take an equal with Allah, while He alone created you.)"

Also, Mu`adh narrated the Prophet's statement,

«أَتَدْرِي مَا حَقُّ اللَّهِ عَلَى عِبَادِهِ؟ أَنْ يَعْبُدُوهُ وَلَا يُشْرِكُوا بِهِ شَيْئًا»

(Do you know Allah's right on His servants They must worship Him alone and refrain from associating anything with Him in worship.) Another Hadith states,

«لَا يَقُولَنَّ أَحَدُكُمْ مَا شَاءَ اللَّهُ وَشَاءَ فُلَانٌ، وَلَكِنْ لِيَقُلْ: مَا شَاءَ اللَّهُ ثُمَّ شَاءَ فُلَانٌ»

(None of you should say, `What Allah and so-and-so person wills. Rather, let him say, `What Allah wills, and then what so-and-so person wills.)

Hadith with the same Meaning Imam Ahmad narrated that Al-Harith Al-Ash`ari said that the Prophet of Allah said,

«إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزَّوَجَلَّ أَمَرَ يَحْيَى بْنَ زَكَرِيَّا عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ بِخَمْسِ كَلِمَاتٍ أَنْ يَعْمَلَ بِهِنَّ، وَأَنْ يَأْمُرَ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ أَنْ يَعْمَلُوا بِهِنَّ وَأَنَّهُ كَادَ أَنْ يُبْطِئَ بِهَا، فَقَالَ لَهُ عِيسَى عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ: إِنَّكَ قَدْ أَمَرْتَ بِخَمْسِ كَلِمَاتٍ أَنْ تَعْمَلَ بِهِنَّ وَتَأْمُرَ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ أَنْ يَعْمَلُوا بِهِنَّ فِيمَا أَنْ تُبَلِّغَهُمْ وَإِمَّا أَنْ أُبَلِّغَهُنَّ، فَقَالَ: يَا أَخِي إِنِّي أَخْشَى أَنْ سَبَقْتَنِي أَنْ

أَعَدَّ أَوْ يُخَسِّفَ بِي قَالَ: فَجَمَعَ يَحْيَى بْنُ
زَكَرِيَّا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ فِي بَيْتِ الْمَقْدِسِ حَتَّى امْتَلَأَ
الْمَسْجِدُ، فَقَعَدَ عَلَى الشَّرَفِ فَحَمِدَ اللَّهَ وَأَثْنَى
عَلَيْهِ ثُمَّ قَالَ: إِنَّ اللَّهَ أَمَرَنِي بِخَمْسِ كَلِمَاتٍ أَنْ
أَعْمَلَ بِهِنَّ وَأَمُرْكُمْ أَنْ تَعْمَلُوا بِهِنَّ أَوْلَهُنَّ: أَنْ
تَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَلَا تُشْرِكُوا بِهِ شَيْئًا، فَإِنَّ مَثَلَ ذَلِكَ
كَمَثَلِ رَجُلٍ اشْتَرَى عَبْدًا مِنْ خَالِصِ مَالِهِ يورق
أَوْ ذَهَبٍ فَجَعَلَ يَعْمَلُ وَيُؤَدِّي غَلَّتَهُ إِلَى غَيْرِ
سَيِّدِهِ، فَأَيُّكُمْ يَسُرُّهُ أَنْ يَكُونَ عَبْدُهُ كَذَلِكَ، وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ
خَلَقَكُمْ وَرَزَقَكُمْ فَأَعْبُدُوهُ وَلَا تُشْرِكُوا بِهِ شَيْئًا.
وَأَمُرْكُمْ بِالصَّلَاةِ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ يَنْصِبُ وَجْهَهُ لَوَجْهِ
عَبْدِهِ مَا لَمْ يَلْتَفِتْ فَإِذَا صَلَّيْتُمْ فَلَا تَلْتَفِتُوا. وَأَمُرْكُمْ
بِالصِّيَامِ فَإِنَّ مَثَلَ ذَلِكَ كَمَثَلِ رَجُلٍ مَعَهُ صُرَّةٌ
مِنْ مِسْكِ فِي عِصَابَةٍ كُلُّهُمْ يَجِدُ رِيحَ الْمِسْكِ وَإِنَّ
خُلُوفَ قَمِ الصَّائِمِ أَطْيَبُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ مِنْ رِيحِ
الْمِسْكِ. وَأَمُرْكُمْ بِالصَّدَقَةِ فَإِنَّ مَثَلَ ذَلِكَ كَمَثَلِ
رَجُلٍ أَسْرَهُ الْعَدُوَّ فَشَدُّوا يَدَيْهِ إِلَى عُنُقِهِ وَقَدَّمُوهُ
لِيَضْرِبُوا عُنُقَهُ فَقَالَ لَهُمْ: هَلْ لَكُمْ أَنْ أَقْتَدِيَ

نَفْسِي مِنْكُمْ فَجَعَلَ يَقْتَدِي نَفْسَهُ مِنْهُمْ بِالْقَلِيلِ
وَالكَثِيرِ حَتَّى فَكَّ نَفْسَهُ. وَأَمْرُكُمْ بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ كَثِيرًا
وَإِنَّ مَثَلَ ذَلِكَ كَمَثَلِ رَجُلٍ طَلَبَهُ الْعَدُوُّ سِرَاعًا فِي
أَثَرِهِ فَأَتَى حِصْنًا حَصِينًا فَتَحَصَّنَ فِيهِ وَإِنَّ
الْعَبْدَ أَحْصَنَ مَا يَكُونُ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ إِذَا كَانَ فِي
ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ»

(Allah commanded Yahya bin Zakariya to implement five commands and to order the Children of Israel to implement them, but Yahya was slow in carrying out these commands. `Isa said to Yahya, `You were ordered to implement five commands and to order the Children of Israel to implement them. So either order, or I will do it.' Yahya said, 'My brother! I fear that if you do it before me, I will be punished or the earth will be shaken under my feet.' Hence, Yahya bin Zakariya called the Children of Israel to Bayt Al-Maqdis (Jerusalem), until they filled the Masjid. He sat on the balcony, thanked Allah and praised him and then said, `Allah ordered me to implement five commandments and that I should order you to adhere to them. The first is that you worship Allah alone and not associate any with Him. The example of this command is the example of a man who bought a servant from his money with paper or gold. The servant started to work for the master, but was paying the profits to another person. Who among you would like his servant to do that Allah created you and sustains you. Therefore, worship Him alone and do not associate anything with Him. I also command you to pray, for Allah directs His Face towards His servant's face, as long as the servant does not turn away. So when you pray, do not turn your heads to and fro. I also command you to fast. The example of it is the example of a man in a group of men and he has some musk wrapped in a piece of cloth, and consequently, all of the group smells the scent of the wrapped musk. Verily, the odor of the mouth of a fasting person is better before Allah than the scent of musk. I also command you to give charity. The example of this is the example of a man who was captured by the enemy. They tied his hands to his neck and brought him forth to cut off his neck. He said to them, 'Can I pay a ransom for myself' He kept ransoming himself with small and large amounts until he liberated himself. I also command you to always remember Allah. The example of this deed is that of a man who the enemy is tirelessly pursuing. He takes refuge in a fortified fort. When the servant remembers Allah, he will be resorting to the best refuge from Satan.)

Al-Harith then narrated that the Messenger of Allah said,

«وَأَنَا أَمْرُكُمْ بِخَمْسِ اللَّهِ أَمْرَنِي بِهِنَّ: الْجَمَاعَةَ
وَالسَّمْعَ وَالطَّاعَةَ وَالْهَجْرَةَ وَالْجِهَادَ فِي سَبِيلِ
اللَّهِ. فَإِنَّهُ مَنْ خَرَجَ مِنَ الْجَمَاعَةِ قِيدَ شِبْرٍ فَقَدْ

خَلَعَ رِبْقَةَ الْإِسْلَامِ مِنْ عُنُقِهِ إِلَّا أَنْ يُرَاجِعَ وَمَنْ
دَعَا بِدَعْوَى جَاهِلِيَّةٍ فَهُوَ مِنْ جُتَى جَهَنَّمَ»

«وَإِنْ صَلَّى وَصَامَ وَزَعَمَ أَنَّهُ مُسْلِمٌ، فَأَدْعُوا
الْمُسْلِمِينَ بِأَسْمَائِهِمْ عَلَى مَا سَمَّاهُمُ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ
الْمُسْلِمِينَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ عِبَادَ اللَّهِ»

(And I order you with five commandments that Allah has ordered me. Stick to the Jama`ah (community of the faithful), listen and obey (your leaders) and perform Hijrah (migration) and Jihad for the sake of Allah. Whoever abandons the Jama`ah, even the distance of a hand span, will have removed the tie of Islam from his neck, unless he returns. Whoever uses the slogans of Jahiliyah (the pre-Islamic period of ignorance) he will be among those kneeling in Jahannam (Hellfire.) They said, "O Messenger of Allah! Even if he prays and fasts" He said, (Even if he prays, fasts and claims to be Muslim. So call the Muslims with their names that Allah has called them: `The Muslims, the believing servants of Allah.')

This is a Hasan Hadith, and it contains the statement, "Allah has created and sustains you, so worship Him and do not associate anything with Him in worship." This statement is relevant in the Ayat (2:21-22) we are discussing here and supports singling Allah in worship, without partners.

Several scholars of Tafsir, like Ar-Razi and others, used these Ayat as an argument for the existence of the Creator, and it is a most worthy method of argument. Indeed, whoever ponders over the things that exist, the higher and lower creatures, their various shapes, colors, behavior, benefits and ecological roles, then he will realize the ability, wisdom, knowledge, perfection and majesty of their Creator. Once a bedouin was asked about the evidence to Allah's existence, he responded, "All praise is due to Allah! The camel's dung testifies to the existence of the camel, and the track testifies to the fact that someone was walking. A sky that holds the giant stars, a land that has fairways and a sea that has waves, does not all of this testify that the Most Kind, Most Knowledgeable exists"

Hence, whoever gazes at the sky in its immensity, its expanse, and the various kinds of planets in it, some of which appear stationary in the sky - whoever gazes at the seas that surround the land from all sides, and the mountains that were placed on the earth to stabilize it, so that

whoever lives on land, whatever their shape and color, are able to live and thrive - whoever reads Allah's statement,

وَمِنَ الْجِبَالِ جُدَدٌ بَيضٌ وَحُمْرٌ مُّخْتَلِفٌ أَلْوَانُهَا
وَغَرَائِبٌ سُودٌ وَمِنَ النَّاسِ وَالْدَّوَابِّ وَالْأَنْعَامِ
مُخْتَلِفٌ أَلْوَانُهُ كَذَلِكَ إِنَّمَا يَخْشَى اللَّهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ
الْعُلَمَاءُ

(And among the mountains are streaks white and red, of varying colours and (others) very black. And likewise, men and Ad-Dawabb (moving (living) creatures, beasts) and cattle are of various colours. It is only those who have knowledge among His servants that fear Allah) (35: 27-28).

Whoever thinks about the running rivers that travel from area to area bringing benefit, whoever ponders over what Allah has created on earth; various animals and plants of different tastes, scents, shapes and colors that are a result of unity between land and water, whoever thinks about all of this then he will realize that these facts testify to the existence of the Creator, His perfect ability, wisdom, mercy, kindness, generosity and His overall compassion for His creation. There is no deity worthy of worship except Allah, nor is there a Lord besides Him, upon Him we rely and to Him we turn in repentance. There are numerous Ayat in the Qur'an on this subject.

وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِي رَيْبٍ مِّمَّا نَزَّلْنَا عَلَىٰ عَبْدِنَا فَأْتُوا
بِسُورَةٍ مِّن مِّثْلِهِ وَادْعُوا شُهَدَاءَكُمْ مِّن دُونِ اللَّهِ
إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ - فَإِنْ لَّمْ تَفْعَلُوا وَلَنْ تَفْعَلُوا
فَاتَّقُوا النَّارَ الَّتِي وَقُودُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ أُعِدَّتْ
لِلْكَافِرِينَ

(23. And if you (Arab pagans, Jews, and Christians) are in doubt concerning that which We have sent down (i.e. the Qur'an) to Our servant (Muhammad), then produce a Surah (chapter) of the like thereof and call your witnesses (supporters and helpers) besides Allah, if you are truthful).
(24. But if you do it not, and you can never do it, then fear the Fire (Hell) whose fuel is men and stones, prepared for the disbelievers.)

The Message of Messenger of Allah is True

Allah begins to prove the truth of prophethood after He stated that there is no deity worthy of worship except Him. Allah said to the disbelievers,

(وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِي رَيْبٍ مِّمَّا نَزَّلْنَا عَلَىٰ عَبْدِنَا)

(And if you (Arab pagans, Jews, and Christians) are in doubt concerning that which We have sent down (i.e. the Qur'an) to Our servant) meaning, Muhammad ,

(فَأْتُوا بِسُورَةٍ)

(then produce a Surah (chapter)) meaning, similar to what he brought to you. Hence, if you claim that what he was sent with did not come from Allah, then produce something similar to what he has brought to you, using the help of anyone you wish instead of Allah. However, you will not be able to succeed in this quest. Ibn `Abbas said that,

(شُهَدَاءَكُمْ)

(your witnesses) means "Aids." Also, As-Suddi reported that Abu Malik said the Ayah means, "Your partners, meaning, some other people to help you in that. Meaning then go and seek the help of your deities to support and aid you." Also, Mujahid said that,

(وَادْعُوا شُهَدَاءَكُمْ)

(and call your witnesses) means, "People, meaning, wise and eloquent men who will provide the testimony that you seek."

The Challenge

Allah challenged the disbelievers in various parts of the Qur'an. For instance, Allah said in Surat Al-Qasas (28:49),

(قُلْ فَأْتُوا بِكِتَابٍ مِّنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ هُوَ أَهْدَىٰ مِنْهُمَا
أَتَّبِعُهُ إِن كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ)

(Say (to them, O Muhammad): "Then bring a Book from Allah, which is a better guide than these two (the Tawrah (Torah) and the Qur'an), that I may follow it, if you are truthful"). Also, Allah said in Surat Al-Isra' (17:88),

قُلْ لَئِن اجْتَمَعَتِ الْإِنْسُ وَالْجِنُّ عَلَىٰ أَنْ يَأْتُوا
بِمِثْلِ هَذَا الْقُرْآنِ لَا يَأْتُونَ بِمِثْلِهِ وَلَوْ كَانَ
بَعْضُهُمْ لِبَعْضٍ ظَهِيرًا)

(Say: "If mankind and the Jinn were together to produce the like of this Qur'an, they could not produce the like thereof, even if they helped one another.") Allah said in Surat Hud (11:13),

أَمْ يَقُولُونَ اقْتَرَاهُ قُلْ فَأْتُوا بِعَشْرِ سُوْرٍ مِّثْلِهِ
مُفْتَرِيَاتٍ وَاذْعُوا مَنْ اسْتَطَعْتُمْ مِّنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنْ
كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ)

(Or they say, "He (Prophet Muhammad) forged it (the Qur'an)." Say: "Bring you then ten forged Surahs (chapters) like it, and call whomsoever you can, other than Allah (to your help), if you speak the truth!"), and in Surat Yunus (10:37-38),

وَمَا كَانَ هَذَا الْقُرْآنُ أَنْ يُفْتَرَىٰ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ
وَلَكِنْ تَصْدِيقَ الَّذِي بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَتَفْصِيلَ الْكِتَابِ
لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ مِنْ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ - أَمْ يَقُولُونَ اقْتَرَاهُ
قُلْ فَأْتُوا بِسُورَةٍ مِّثْلِهِ وَاذْعُوا مَنْ اسْتَطَعْتُمْ مِّنْ
دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ)

(And this Qur'an is not such as could ever be produced by other than Allah (Lord of the heavens and the earth), but it is a confirmation of (the revelation) which was before it (i.e. the Tawrah, and the Injil), and a full explanation of the Book (i.e. Laws decreed for mankind) wherein there is no doubt from the Lord of all that exists.) (Or do they say: "He (Muhammad) has forged it" Say: "Bring then a Surah (chapter) like it, and call upon whomsoever you can besides Allah, if you are truthful!"). All of these Ayat were revealed in Makkah.

Allah also challenged the disbelievers in the Ayat that were revealed in Al-Madinah. In this Ayah, Allah said,

(وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِي رَيْبٍ)

(And if you (Arab pagans, Jews, and Christians) are in Rayb) meaning, doubt.

(مِمَّا نَزَّلْنَا عَلَىٰ عَبْدِنَا)

(Concerning that which We have sent down (i.e. the Qur'an) to Our servant) meaning, Muhammad ,

(فَأْتُوا بِسُورَةٍ مِّثْلِهِ)

(then produce a Surah (chapter) the like thereof) meaning, similar to the Qur'an. This is the Tafsir of Mujahid, Qatadah, Ibn Jarir At-Tabari, Az-Zamakhshari and Ar-Razi. Ar-Razi said that this is the Tafsir of `Umar, Ibn Mas`ud, Ibn `Abbas, Al-Hasan Al-Basri and the majority of the scholars. And he gave preference to this view and mentioned the fact that Allah has challenged the disbelievers as individuals and as groups, whether literate or illiterate, thus making the challenge truly complete. This type of challenge is more daring than simply challenging the disbelievers who might not be literate or knowledgeable. This is why Allah said,

(فَأْتُوا بِعَشْرِ سُورٍ مِثْلِهِ)

(Bring you then ten forged Surahs (chapters) like it) (11:13), and,

(لَا يَأْتُونَ بِمِثْلِهِ)

(They could not produce the like thereof) (17:88).

Therefore, this is a general challenge to the Arab disbelievers, the most eloquent among all nations. Allah challenged the Arab disbelievers both in Makkah and Al-Madinah several times, especially since they had tremendous hatred and enmity for the Prophet and his religion. Yet, they were unable to succeed in answering the challenge, and this is why Allah said,

(فَإِنْ لَّمْ تَفْعَلُوا وَلَنْ تَفْعَلُوا)

(But if you do it not, and you can never do it), indicating that they will never be able to answer the challenge. This is another miracle, in that, Allah clearly stated without doubt that the Qur'an will never be opposed or challenged by anything similar to it, for eternity. This is a true statement that has not been changed until the present and shall never change. How can anyone be able to produce something like the Qur'an, when the Qur'an is the Word of Allah Who created everything How can the words of the created ever be similar to the Words of the Creator

Examples of the Miracle of the Qur'an

Whoever reads through the Qur'an will realize that it contains various levels of superiority through both the apparent and hidden meanings that it mentions. Allah said,

(الرِّكَتَبَ أَحْكَمَتْ ءَايَاتُهُ ثُمَّ فُصِّلَتْ مِنْ لَدُنْ حَكِيمٍ خَيْرٍ)

(Alif Lam Ra. (This is) a Book, the verses whereof are perfect (in every sphere of knowledge, etc.), and then explained in detail from One (Allah), Who is Wise and well-acquainted (with all things)) (11:1)

So the expressions in the Qur'an are perfect and its meanings are explained. Further, every word and meaning in the Qur'an is eloquent and cannot be surpassed. The Qur'an also mentioned the stories of the people of the past; and these accounts and stories occurred exactly as the Qur'an stated. Also, the Qur'an commanded every type of righteousness and forbade every type of evil, just as Allah stated,

(وَتَمَّتْ كَلِمَةُ رَبِّكَ صِدْقًا وَعَدْلًا)

(And the Word of your Lord has been fulfilled in truth and in justice) (6:115). meaning, true in the stories it narrates and just in its Laws. The Qur'an is true, just and full of guidance. It does not contain exaggerations, lies or falsehood, unlike Arabic and other types of poems that contained lies. These poems, conform with the popular statement, "The most eloquent speech is the one that contains the most lies!" Sometimes, one would find a long poem that mainly contains descriptions of women, horses or alcohol. Or, the poem might contain praise or the description of a certain person, horse, camel, war, incident, fear, lion, or other types of items and objects. Such praise or descriptions do not bring any benefit, except shed light on the poet's ability to clearly and eloquently describe such items. Yet, one will only be able to find one or two sentences in many long poems that elaborate on the main theme of the poem, while the rest of the poem contains insignificant descriptions and repetitions.

As for the Qur'an, it is entirely eloquent in the most perfect manner, as those who have knowledge in such matters and understand Arabic methods of speech and expressions concur. When one reads through the stories in the Qur'an, he will find them fruitful, whether they were in extended or short forms, repeated or not. The more these stories are repeated, the more fruitful and beautiful they become. The Qur'an does not become old when one repeats reciting it, nor do the scholars ever get bored with it. When the Qur'an mentions the subject of warning and promises, it presents truths that would make solid, firm mountains shake, so what about the comprehending, understanding hearts When the Qur'an promises, it opens the hearts and the ears, making them eager to attain the abode of peace - Paradise - and to be the neighbors of the Throne of the Most Beneficent. For instance, on the subject of promises and encouragement, the Qur'an said,

(فَلَا تَعْلَمُ نَفْسٌ مَّا أُخْفِيَ لَهُم مِّن قُرَّةِ أَعْيُنٍ جَزَاءً
بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ)

(No person knows what is kept hidden for them of joy as a reward for what they used to do) (32:17), and,

(وَفِيهَا مَا تَشْتَهِيهِ الْأَنْفُسُ وَتَلَذُّ الْأَعْيُنُ وَأَنْتُمْ فِيهَا
خَالِدُونَ)

((There will be) therein all that inner selves could desire, and all that eyes could delight in and you will abide therein forever) (43:71).

On the subject of warning and discouragement ;

(أَفَأَمِنْتُمْ أَنْ يَخْسِفَ بِكُمْ جَانِبَ الْبَرِّ)

(Do you then feel secure that He will not cause a side of the land to swallow you up) (17:68), and,

(أَعْمِنْتُمْ مِّنْ فِي السَّمَاءِ أَنْ يَخْسِفَ بِكُمْ الْأَرْضَ
فَإِذَا هِيَ تَمُورٌ - أَمْ أَمِنْتُمْ مِّنْ فِي السَّمَاءِ أَنْ
يُرْسِلَ عَلَيْكُمْ حَاصِبًا فَسَتَعْلَمُونَ كَيْفَ نَذِيرِ)

(Do you feel secure that He, Who is over the heaven (Allah), will not cause the earth to sink with you, and then it should quake Or do you feel secure that He, Who is over the heaven (Allah), will not send against you a violent whirlwind Then you shall know how (terrible) has been My warning) (67:16-17).

On the subject of threats, the Qur'an said,

(فَكُلًّا أَخَذْنَا بِذُنُوبِهِ)

(So We punished each (of them) for his sins) (29:40). Also, on the subject of soft advice, the Qur'an said,

(أَفَرَأَيْتَ إِنْ مَتَّعْنَاهُمْ سِنِينَ - ثُمَّ جَاءَهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يُوعَدُونَ - مَا أَغْنَىٰ عَنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يُمَتَّعُونَ)

(Tell Me, (even) if We do let them enjoy for years. And afterwards comes to them that (punishment) which they had been promised. All that with which they used to enjoy shall not avail them) (26:205-207).

There are many other examples of the eloquence, beauty, and benefits of the Qur'an.

When the Qur'an is discussing Laws, commandments and prohibitions, it commands every type of righteous, good, pleasing and beneficial act. It also forbids every type of evil, disliked and amoral act. Ibn Mas'ud and other scholars of the Salaf said, "When you hear what Allah said in the Qur'an, such as,

(يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا)

(O you who believe!), then listen with full attention, for it either contains a type of righteousness that Allah is enjoining, or an evil that He is forbidding." For instance, Allah said,

(يَأْمُرُهُمْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَاهُمْ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَيُحِلُّ لَهُمُ الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَيُحَرِّمُ عَلَيْهِمُ الْخَبَائِثَ وَيَضَعُ عَنْهُمْ إِصْرَهُمْ وَالْأَغْلَالَ الَّتِي كَانَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ)

(He (Muhammad) commands them for Al-Ma`ruf (i.e. Islamic Monotheism and all that Islam has ordained); and forbids them from Al-Munkar (i.e. disbelief, polytheism of all kinds, and all that Islam has forbidden); he allows them as lawful At-Tayyibat (i.e. all good and lawful things), and prohibits them as unlawful Al-Khaba'ith (i.e. all evil and unlawful things), he releases them from their heavy burdens and from the fetters (bindings) that were upon them) (7:157).

When the Ayat mention Resurrection and the horrors that will occur on that Day, and Paradise and the Fire and the joys and safe refuge that Allah prepared for His loyal friends, or torment and Hell for His enemies, these Ayat contain glad tidings or warnings. The Ayat then call to perform good deeds and avoid evil deeds, making the life of this world less favorable and the Hereafter more favorable. They also establish the correct methods and guide to Allah's straight path and just legislation, all the while ridding the hearts of the evil of the cursed devil.

The Qur'an is the Greatest Miracle given to the Prophet

The Two Sahihs record that Abu Hurayrah said that the Prophet said,

«مَا مِنْ نَبِيٍّ مِنَ الْأَنْبِيَاءِ إِلَّا قَدْ أُعْطِيَ مِنَ الْآيَاتِ
مَا آمَنَ عَلَىٰ مِثْلِهِ الْبَشَرُ، وَإِنَّمَا كَانَ الَّذِي أُوتِيَهُ
وَحْيًا أَوْحَاهُ اللَّهُ إِلَيَّ فَأَرْجُو أَنْ أَكُونَ أَكْثَرَهُمْ
تَابِعًا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ»

(Every Prophet was given a miracle, the type of which brings mankind to faith. What I was given is a revelation that Allah sent down to me. Yet, I hope that I will have the most following on the Day of Resurrection.)

This is the wording narrated by Muslim. The Prophet stated that among the Prophets he was given a revelation, meaning, he was especially entrusted with the miraculous Qur'an that challenged mankind to produce something similar to it. As for the rest of the divinely revealed Books, they were not miraculous according to many scholars. Allah knows best. The Prophet was also aided with innumerable signs and indications that testify to the truth of his prophethood and what he was sent with, all thanks and praise is due to Allah.

Meaning of `Stones

Allah said,

(فَاتَّقُوا النَّارَ الَّتِي وَقُودُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ
أُعِدَّتْ لِلْكَافِرِينَ)

(Then fear the Fire (Hell) whose fuel is men and stones, prepared for the disbelievers) (2:24).

`Fuel' is wood, or similar substances, used to start and feed a fire. Similarly, Allah said,

(وَأَمَّا الْقَاسِطُونَ فَكَانُوا لِجَهَنَّمَ حَطَبًا)

(And as for the Qasitun (disbelievers who deviated from the right path), they shall be firewood for Hell) (72:15), and,

(إِنَّكُمْ وَمَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ حَصَبُ جَهَنَّمَ
أَنْتُمْ لَهَا وَارِدُونَ)

(لَوْ كَانَ هَؤُلَاءِ آءَالِهَةً مَا وَرَدُّوَهَا وَكُلُّ فِيهَا
خَالِدُونَ)

(Certainly you (disbelievers) and that which you are worshipping now besides Allah, are (but) fuel for Hell! (Surely) you enter it. Had these (idols) been alihah (gods), they would not have entered there (Hell), and all of them will abide therein) (21:98-99).

The stones mentioned here are the giant, rotten, black, sulfuric stones that become the hottest when heated, may Allah save us from this evil end. It was also reported that the stones mentioned here are the idols and rivals that were worshipped instead of Allah, just as Allah said,

(إِنَّكُمْ وَمَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ حَصَبُ جَهَنَّمَ)

(Certainly you (disbelievers) and that which you are worshipping now besides Allah, are (but) fuel for Hell!) (21:28).

Allah's statement,

(أُعِدَّتْ لِلْكَافِرِينَ)

(prepared for the disbelievers)

It appears most obvious that it refers to the Fire that is fueled by men and stones, and it also may refer to the stones themselves. There is no contradiction between these two views, because they are dependent upon each other. `Prepared' means, it is `kept' and will surely touch those who disbelieve in Allah and His Messenger . Ibn Ishaq narrated that Muhammad said that `Ikrimah or Sa`id bin Jubayr said that Ibn `Abbas said,

(أُعِدَّتْ لِلْكَافِرِينَ)

(prepared for the disbelievers),

"For those who embrace the disbelief that you (disbelievers) have embraced."

Jahannam (Hellfire) exists now

Many of the Imams of the Sunnah used this Ayah to prove that the Fire exists now. This is because Allah said,

(أَعِدَّتْ)

(prepared) meaning, prepared and kept. There are many Hadiths on this subject. For instance, the Prophet said,

«تَحَاجَّتِ الْجَنَّةُ وَالنَّارُ»

(Paradise and the Fire had an argument..)

Also, the Prophet said,

«اسْتَأْذَنَتِ النَّارُ رَبَّهَا فَقَالَتْ: رَبِّ أَكَلَ بَعْضِي
بَعْضًا فَأَذِنَ لَهَا بِنَفْسَيْنِ: نَفْسٍ فِي الشِّتَاءِ وَنَفْسٍ
فِي الصَّيْفِ»

(The Fire sought the permission of her Lord. She said, 'O my Lord! Some parts of me consumed the other parts.' And Allah allowed her two periods to exhale, one in winter and one in summer.)

Also, there is a Hadith recorded from Ibn Mas'ud that the Companions heard the sound of a falling object. When they asked about it, the Messenger of Allah said,

«هَذَا حَجَرٌ أُلْقِيَ بِهِ مِنْ شَفِيرِ جَهَنَّمَ مِنْذُ سَبْعِينَ
سَنَةً، الْآنَ وَصَلَ إِلَى قَعْرِهَا»

(This is a stone that was thrown from the top of Jahannam seventy years ago, but only now reached its bottom.) This Hadith is in Sahih Muslim.

There are many Hadiths that are Mutawatir (narrated by many different chains of narrations) on this subject, such as the Hadiths about the eclipse prayer, the night of Isra' etc.

Allah's statements,

(فَأْتُوا بِسُورَةٍ مِّثْلِهِ)

(Then produce a Surah (chapter) of the like thereof) (2:23), and,

(بِسُورَةٍ مِّثْلِهِ)

(A Surah (chapter) like it) (10:38) this includes the short and long Surahs of the Qur'an. Therefore, the challenge to creation stands with regards to both the long and short Surahs, and there is no disagreement that I know of on this fact between the scholars of old and new. Before he became Muslim, `Amr bin Al-`As met Musaylimah the Liar who asked him, "What has recently been revealed to your fellow (meaning Muhammad) in Makkah" `Amr said, "A short, yet eloquent Surah." He asked, "What is it" He said,

(وَالْعَصْرُ - إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لَفِي خُسْرٍ)

(By Al-`Asr (the time). Verily, man is in loss,) (103:1-2)

Musaylimah thought for a while and said, "A similar Surah was also revealed to me." `Amr asked, "What is it" He said, "O Wabr, O Wabr (i.e. a wild cat), you are but two ears and a chest, and the rest of you is unworthy and thin." `Amr said, "By Allah! You know that I know that you are lying."

(وَبَشِّرِ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ أَنَّ لَهُمْ
جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ كُلَّمَا رُزِقُوا مِنْهَا
مِنْ ثَمَرَةٍ رِزْقًا قَالُوا هَذَا الَّذِي رُزِقْنَا مِنْ قَبْلُ
وَأَنُؤُوا بِهِ مُتَشَابِهًا وَلَهُمْ فِيهَا أَزْوَاجٌ مُطَهَّرَةٌ وَهُمْ
فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ)

(25. And give glad tidings to those who believe and do righteous good deeds, that for them will be Gardens under which rivers flow (Paradise). Every time they will be provided with a fruit therefrom, they will say: "This is what we were provided with before," and they will be given things in resemblance (i.e. in the same form but different in taste) and they shall have therein Azwajun Mutahharatun (purified mates or wives), and they will abide therein forever.)

Rewards of Righteous Believers

After mentioning the torment that Allah has prepared for His miserable enemies who disbelieve in Him and in His Messengers, He mentions the condition of His happy, loyal friends who believe in Him and in His Messengers, adhere to the faith and perform the good deeds. This is the reason why the Qur'an was called Mathani, based on the correct opinion of the scholars. We will elaborate upon this subject later. Mathani means to mention faith and then disbelief, or vice versa. Or, Allah mentions the miserable and then the happy, or vice versa. As for mentioning similar things, it is called Tashabbuh, as we will come to know, Allah willing. Allah said,

(وَبَشِّرِ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ أَنَّ لَهُمْ
جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ)

(And give glad tidings to those who believe and do righteous good deeds, that for them will be Gardens under which rivers flow (Paradise)). Consequently, Allah stated that Paradise has rivers that run beneath it, meaning, underneath its trees and rooms. From Hadiths it is learned that the rivers of Paradise do not run in valleys, and that the banks of Al-Kawthar (the Prophet's lake in Paradise) are made of domes of hollow pearls, the sand of Paradise is made of scented musk while its stones are made from pearls and jewels. We ask Allah to grant Paradise to us, for verily, He is the Most Beneficent, Most Gracious.

Ibn Abi Hatim reported that Abu Hurayrah said that the Messenger of Allah said,

«أَنْهَارُ الْجَنَّةِ تَفْجَرُ تَحْتَ تِلَالٍ أَوْ مِنْ تَحْتِ جِبَالِ
الْمِسْكِ»

(The rivers of Paradise spring from beneath hills, or mountains of musk.)

He also reported from Masruq that `Abdullah said, "The rivers of Paradise spring from beneath mountains of musk."

The similarity between the Fruits of Paradise

Allah said next,

(كُلَّمَا رُزِقُوا مِنْهَا مِنْ ثَمَرَةٍ رِزْقًا قَالُوا هَذَا
الَّذِي رُزِقْنَا مِنْ قَبْلُ)

(Every time they will be provided with a fruit therefrom, they will say: "This is what we were provided with before").

Ibn Abi Hatim reported that Yahya bin Abi Kathir said, "The grass of Paradise is made of saffron, its hills from musk and the boys of everlasting youth will serve the believers with fruits which they will eat. They will then be brought similar fruits, and the people of Paradise will comment, `This is the same as what you have just brought us.' The boys will say to them, `Eat, for the color is the same, but the taste is different. Hence Allah's statement,

(وَأَتُوا بِهِ مَثَبِيهَا)

(and they will be given things in resemblance). Abu Ja`far Ar-Razi narrated that Ar-Rabi` bin Anas said that Abu Al-`Aliyah said that,

(وَأَتُوا بِهِ مَثَبِيهَا)

(and they will be given things in resemblance) means, "They look like each other, but the taste is different." Also, `Ikrimah said,

(وَأَتُوا بِهِ مَثَبِيهَا)

(and they will be given things in resemblance) "They are similar to the fruits of this life, but the fruits of Paradise taste better. " Sufyan Ath-Thawri reported from Al-A`mash, from Abu Thubyan, that Ibn `Abbas said, "Nothing in Paradise resembles anything in the life of this world, except in name." In another narration, Ibn `Abbas said, "Only the names are similar between what is in this life and what is in Paradise."

The Wives of the People of Paradise are Pure

Allah said,

(وَلَهُمْ فِيهَا أَزْوَاجٌ مُّطَهَّرَةٌ)

(and they shall have therein Azwajun Mutahharatun). Ibn Abi Talhah reported that Ibn `Abbas said, "Purified from filth and impurity." Also, Mujahid said, "From menstruation, relieving the call of nature, urine, spit, semen and pregnancies." Also, Qatadah said, "Purified from impurity and sin." In another narration, he said, "From menstruation and pregnancies." Further, `Ata', Al-Hasan, Ad-Dahhak, Abu Salih, `Atiyah and As-Suddi were reported to have said similarly.

Allah's statement,

(وَهُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ)

(and they will abide therein forever) meaning ultimate happiness, for the believers will enjoy everlasting delight, safe from death and disruption of their bliss, for it never ends or ceases.

We ask Allah to make us among these believers, for He is the Most Generous, Most Kind and Most merciful.

(إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَسْتَحْي أَن يَضْرِبَ مَثَلًا مَّا بَعُوضَةٌ
فَمَا فَوْقَهَا فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا فَيَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ
مِن رَّبِّهِمْ وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَيَقُولُونَ مَاذَا أَرَادَ
اللَّهُ بِهَذَا مَثَلًا يُضِلُّ بِهِ كَثِيرًا وَيَهْدِي بِهِ كَثِيرًا
وَمَا يُضِلُّ بِهِ إِلَّا الْفَاسِقِينَ - الَّذِينَ يَنْقُضُونَ عَهْدَ
اللَّهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مِيثَاقِهِ وَيَقْطَعُونَ مَا أَمَرَ اللَّهُ بِهِ أَن
يُوصَلَ وَيُفْسِدُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ
الْخَاسِرُونَ)

(26. Verily, Allah is not ashamed to set forth a parable even of a mosquito or so much more when it is bigger (or less when it is smaller) than it. And as for those who believe, they know that it is the truth from their Lord, but as for those who disbelieve, they say: "What did Allah intend by this parable" By it He misleads many, and many He guides thereby. And He misleads thereby only the Fasiqin (the rebellious, disobedient to Allah). (27. Those who break Allah's covenant after ratifying it, and sever what Allah has ordered to be joined and do mischief on earth, it is they who are the losers.)

In his Tafsir, As-Suddi reported that Ibn ` Abbas, Ibn Mas` ud, and some Companions said; "When Allah gave these two examples of the hypocrites" meaning Allah's statements,

(مَثَلُهُمْ كَمَثَلِ الَّذِي اسْتَوْقَدَ نَارًا)

(Their likeness is as the likeness of one who kindled a fire), and,

(أَوْ كَصَيْبٍ مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ)

(Or like a rainstorm from the sky), "The hypocrites said, `Allah's far more exalted than for Him to make such examples.' So Allah revealed these Ayat (2:26-27) up to:

(هُمُ الْخَسِرُونَ)

(Who are the losers)". Sa`id said that Qatadah said, "Allah does not shy away from the truth when He mentions a matter as a parable, whether this matter is significant or not. When Allah mentioned the flies and the spider in His Book, the people of misguidance said, `Why did Allah mention these things.' So Allah revealed;

(إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَسْتَحْي أَن يَضْرِبَ مَثَلًا مَّا بَعُوضَةٌ
فَمَا فَوْقَهَا)

(Verily, Allah is not ashamed to set forth a parable even of a mosquito or so much more when it is bigger (or less when it is smaller) than it)."

A Parable about the Life of This World

Abu Ja`far Ar-Razi reported that Ar-Rabi` bin Anas commented on this Ayah (2:26); "This is an example that Allah has given for the life of this world. The mosquito lives as long as it needs food, but when it gets fat, it dies. This is also the example of people whom Allah mentioned in the Qur'an: when they acquire (and collect the delights of) the life of this world, Allah then takes them away." Afterwards, he recited,

(فَلَمَّا نَسُوا مَا دُكِّرُوا بِهِ فَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِمُ أَبْوَابَ كُلِّ
شَيْءٍ)

(So, when they forgot (the warning) with which they had been reminded, We opened for them the gates of every (pleasant) thing) (6:44)

In this Ayah (2:26) Allah stated that He does not shy away or hesitate in making an example or parable of anything, whether the example involves a significant or an insignificant matter.

Allah's statement,

(فَمَا فَوْقَهَا)

(Or so much more when it is bigger than it) Fama fawqaha means, something bigger than the mosquito, which is one of the most insignificant and tiniest of creatures. Muslim narrated that Aishah said that the Messenger of Allah said,

«مَا مِنْ مُسْلِمٍ يُشَاكُ شَوْكَةً فَمَا فَوْقَهَا إِلَّا كُتِبَتْ
لَهُ بِهَا دَرَجَةٌ، وَمُحِيتَ عَنْهُ بِهَا خَطِيئَةٌ»

(No Muslim is harmed by a thorn, Fama fawqaha (or something larger), but a good deed will be written for him and an evil deed will be erased from his record.)

So Allah has informed us that there is no matter that is too small that is exempt from being used as an example, even if it was as insignificant as a mosquito or a spider. Allah said,

(يَأْيُّهَا النَّاسُ ضُرِبَ مَثَلٌ فَاسْتَمِعُوا لَهُ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ
تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ لَنْ يَخْلُقُوا ذُبَابًا وَلَوْ
اجْتَمَعُوا لَهُ وَإِنْ يَسْلُبْهُمُ الذُّبَابُ شَيْئًا لَا يَسْتَنْقِذُوهُ
مِنْهُ ضَعْفَ الطَّالِبِ وَالْمَطْلُوبِ)

(O mankind! A similitude has been coined, so listen to it (carefully): Verily, those on whom you call besides Allah, cannot create (even) a fly, even though they combine together for the purpose. And if the fly snatches away a thing from them, they will have no power to release it from the fly. So weak are (both) the seeker and the sought.) (22:73),

(مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ أَوْلِيَاءَ كَمَثَلِ
العَنْكَبُوتِ اتَّخَذَتْ بَيْتًا وَإِنَّ أَوْهَنَ الْبُيُوتِ لَبَيْتُ
العَنْكَبُوتِ لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ)

(The likeness of those who take (false deities as) Awliya' (protectors, helpers) other than Allah is the likeness of a spider who builds (for itself) a house; but verily, the frailest (weakest) of houses is the spider's house if they but knew.) (29:41), and,

(أَلَمْ تَرَ كَيْفَ ضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا كَلِمَةً طَيِّبَةً
كَشَجَرَةٍ طَيِّبَةٍ أَصْلُهَا ثَابِتٌ وَفَرْعُهَا فِي السَّمَاءِ -
تُؤْتِي أُكْلَهَا كُلَّ حِينٍ بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهَا وَيَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ

الأمثال للناس لعلهم يتذكرون - ومثل كلمة
 خبيثة كشجرة خبيثة اجتثت من فوق الأرض ما
 لها من قرار - يُثبّت الله الذين ءامنوا بالقول
 الثابت في الحياة الدنيا وفي الآخرة ويضلّ الله
 الظالمين ويفعل الله ما يشاء)

(See you not how Allah sets forth a parable A goodly word as a goodly tree, whose root is firmly fixed, and its branches (reach) to the sky (i.e. very high). Giving its fruit at all times, by the leave of its Lord, and Allah sets forth parables for mankind in order that they may remember. And the parable of an evil word is that of an evil tree uprooted from the surface of earth, having no stability. Allah will keep firm those who believe, with the word that stands firm in life of this world (i.e. they will keep on worshipping Allah alone and none else), and in the Hereafter. And Allah will cause the Zalimin (polytheists and wrongdoers) to go astray those and Allah does what He wills.) (14:24-27). Allah said,

(ضرب الله مثلا عبدا مملوكا لا يقدر على
 شيء)

(Allah puts forward the example of (two men a believer and a disbeliever); a servant under the possession of another, he has no power of any sort) (16:75). He then said,

(وضرب الله مثلا رجلا رجلا أحمدا مملوكا لا يقدر
 على شيء وهو كل على مولاه أينما يوجهه لا
 يأت بخير هل يستوى هو ومن يأمر بالعدل)

(And Allah puts forward (another) example of two men, one of them dumb, who has no power over anything, and he is a burden on his master; whichever way he directs him, he brings no good. Is such a man equal to one who commands justice) (16:76). Also, Allah said,

(ضَرْبَ لَكُمْ مَثَلًا مِّنْ أَنفُسِكُمْ هَلْ لَّكُمْ مِّنْ مَّا
مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ مِّنْ شُرَكَاءَ فِي مَّا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ)

(He sets forth for you a parable from your own selves: Do you have partners among those whom your right hands possess (i. e. your servants) to share as equals in the wealth we have bestowed on you) (30:28).

Mujahid commented on Allah's statement,

(إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَسْتَحْيَى أَنْ يَضْرِبَ مَثَلًا مَّا بَعُوضَةً
فَمَا فَوْقَهَا)

(Verily, Allah is not ashamed to set forth a parable even of a mosquito or so much more when it is bigger than it.) "The believers believe in these parables, whether they involve large matters or small, because they know that they are the truth from their Lord, and Allah guides the believers by these parables."

In his Tafsir, As-Suddi reported that Ibn `Abbas, Ibn Mas`ud and other people among the Companions said,

(يُضِلُّ بِهِ كَثِيرًا)

(By it He misleads many), "Meaning the hypocrites. Allah guides the believers with these parables, and the straying of the hypocrites increases when they reject the parables that Allah mentioned for them which they know are true. This is how Allah misleads them."

(وَيَهْدِي بِهِ)

(And He guides thereby) meaning, with the parables,

(كَثِيرًا)

(many) from among the people of faith and conviction. Allah adds guidance to their guidance, and faith to their faith, because they firmly believe in what they know to be true, that is, the parables that Allah has mentioned. This is guidance that Allah grants them;

(وَمَا يُضِلُّ بِهِ إِلَّا الْفَاسِقِينَ)

(And He misleads thereby only the Fasiqin (the rebellious, disobedient to Allah)), meaning, the hypocrites. The Arabs say that the date has Fasaqat, when it comes out of its skin, and they call the mouse a Fuwaysiqah, because it leaves its den to cause mischief. The Two Sahihs recorded `A'ishah saying that the Messenger of Allah said,

«خَمْسٌ فَوَاسِقٌ يُقْتَلْنَ فِي الْحِلِّ وَالْحَرَمِ: الْعُرَابُ
وَالْحِدَاةُ وَالْعَقْرَبُ وَالْفَأْرَةُ وَالْكَلْبُ الْعَقُورُ»

(Five animals are Fawasiq, and they must be killed during Ihram and otherwise: the crow, the kite, the scorpion, the mouse and the rabid dog.) eFasiq, includes the disbeliever and the disobedient. However, the Fisq of the disbeliever is worse, and this is the type of Fasiq that the Ayah is describing here, because Allah described them as,

(الَّذِينَ يَنْقُضُونَ عَهْدَ اللَّهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مِيثَاقِهِ
وَيَقْطَعُونَ مَا أَمَرَ اللَّهُ بِهِ أَنْ يُوصَلَ وَيُفْسِدُونَ
فِي الْأَرْضِ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ)

(Those who break Allah's covenant after ratifying it, and sever what Allah has ordered to be joined and do mischief on earth, it is they who are the losers.)

These are the characteristics of the disbelievers and they contradict the qualities of the believers. Similarly, Allah said in Surat Ar-Ra`d,

(أَفَمَنْ يَعْلَمُ أَنَّ مَا أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ الْحَقُّ كَمَنْ
هُوَ أَعْمَى إِنَّمَا يَتَذَكَّرُ أَوْلُوا الْأَلْبَابِ - الَّذِينَ
يُوفُونَ بِعَهْدِ اللَّهِ وَلَا يَنْقُضُونَ الْمِيثَاقَ - وَالَّذِينَ
يَصِلُونَ مَا أَمَرَ اللَّهُ بِهِ أَنْ يُوصَلَ وَيَخْشَوْنَ
رَبَّهُمْ وَيَخَافُونَ سُوءَ الْحِسَابِ)

(Shall he then, who knows that what has been revealed unto you (O Muhammad) from your Lord is the truth, be like him who is blind But it is only the men of understanding that pay heed. Those who fulfill the covenant of Allah and break not the Mithaq (bond, treaty, covenant). And those who join that which Allah has commanded to be joined (i.e. they are

good to their relatives and do not sever the bond of kinship), and fear their Lord, and dread the terrible reckoning.) (13:19-21)) until,

(وَالَّذِينَ يَنْقُضُونَ عَهْدَ اللَّهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مِيثَاقِهِ
وَيَقْطَعُونَ مَا أَمَرَ اللَّهُ بِهِ أَنْ يُوصَلَ وَيُفْسِدُونَ
فِي الْأَرْضِ أُولَئِكَ لَهُمُ اللَّعْنَةُ وَلَهُمْ سُوءُ الدَّارِ)

(And those who break the covenant of Allah, after its ratification, and sever that which Allah has commanded to be joined (i.e. they sever the bond of kinship and are not good to their relatives), and work mischief in the land, on them is the curse (i.e. they will be far away from Allah's mercy), and for them is the unhappy (evil) home (i.e. Hell).) (13:25)

The covenant that these deviant people broke is Allah's covenant with His creation, that is, to obey Him and avoid the sins that He prohibited. This covenant was reiterated in Allah's Books and by the words of His Messengers. Ignoring this covenant constitutes breaking it. It was said that the Ayah (2:27) is about the disbelievers and the hypocrites among the People of the Book. In this case, the covenant that they broke is the pledge that Allah took from them in the Tawrah to follow Muhammad when he is sent as a Prophet, and to believe in him, and in what he was sent with. Breaking Allah's covenant in this case occurred when the People of the Book rejected the Prophet after they knew the truth about him, and they hid this truth from people, even though they swore to Allah that they would do otherwise. Allah informed us that they threw the covenant behind their backs and sold it for a miserable price.

It was also reported that the Ayah (2:27) refers to all disbelievers, idol worshippers and hypocrites. Allah took their pledge to believe in His Oneness, showing them the signs that testify to His Lordship. He also took a covenant from them to obey His commands and refrain from His prohibitions, knowing that His Messengers would bring proofs and miracles that none among the creation could ever produce. These miracles testified to the truth of Allah's Messengers. The covenant was broken when the disbelievers denied what was proven to them to be authentic and rejected Allah's Prophets and Books, although they knew that they were the truth. This Tafsir was reported from Muqatil bin Hayyan, and it is very good. It is also the view that Az-Zamakhshari held.

Allah's statement next,

(وَيَقْطَعُونَ مَا أَمَرَ اللَّهُ بِهِ أَنْ يُوصَلَ)

(And sever what Allah has ordered to be joined) is in reference to keeping the relations with the relatives, as Qatadah asserted. This Ayah is similar to Allah's statement,

(فَهَلْ عَسَيْتُمْ إِنْ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ أَنْ تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ
وَتُقَطِّعُوا أَرْحَامَكُمْ)

(Would you then, if you were given the authority, do mischief in the land, and sever your ties of kinship) (47:22)

Ibn Jarir At-Tabari preferred this opinion. However, it has been said that the meaning of the Ayah (2:27) here is more general. Hence, everything that Allah has commanded to nurture, and the people severed, is included in its meaning.

The Meaning of ` Loss

Muqatil bin Hayyan commented on Allah's statement,

(أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْخَسِرُونَ)

(It is they who are the losers) "In the Hereafter." Similarly, Allah said,

(أُولَئِكَ لَهُمُ اللَّعْنَةُ وَلَهُمْ سُوءُ الدَّارِ)

(On them is the curse (i.e. they will be far away from Allah's mercy), and for them is the unhappy (evil) home (i.e. Hell)) (13:25).

Also, Ad-Dahhak said that Ibn `Abbas said, "Every characteristic that Allah describes those other than the people of Islam - such as being losers - then it refers to disbelief. However, when they are attributed to the people of Islam, then these terms refer to sin." Ibn Jarir commented on Allah's statement,

(أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْخَسِرُونَ)

(It is they who are the losers,) "Losers is plural for loser, this word refers to whoever decreased his own share of Allah's mercy by disobeying Him, just as the merchant loses in his trade by sustaining capital loss. Such is the case with the hypocrite and the disbeliever who lose their share of the mercy that Allah has in store for His servants on the Day of Resurrection. And that is when the disbeliever and the hypocrite most desperately need Allah's mercy."

(كَيْفَ تَكْفُرُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَكُنْتُمْ أَمْوَاتًا فَأَحْيَاكُمْ ثُمَّ يُمَيِّتُكُمْ ثُمَّ يُحْيِيكُمْ ثُمَّ إِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ)

(28. How can you disbelieve in Allah seeing that you were dead and He gave you life Then He will give you death, then again will bring you to life (on the Day of Resurrection) and then unto Him you will return.)

Allah testifies to the fact that He exists and that He is the Creator and the Sustainer Who has full authority over His servants,

(كَيْفَ تَكْفُرُونَ بِاللَّهِ)

(How can you disbelieve in Allah)

How can anyone deny Allah's existence or worship others with Him while;

(وَكُنْتُمْ أَمْوَاتًا فَأَحْيَاكُمْ)

(You were dead and He gave you life) meaning, He brought them from the state of non-existence to life. Similarly, Allah said,

(أَمْ خُلِقُوا مِنْ غَيْرِ شَيْءٍ أَمْ هُمُ الْخَالِقُونَ - أَمْ خَلَقُوا السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ بَلْ لَا يُوقِنُونَ)

(Were they created by nothing Or were they themselves the creators Or did they create the heavens and the earth Nay, but they have no firm belief) (52:35-36) and,

(هَلْ أَتَى عَلَى الْإِنْسَانِ حِينٌ مِّنَ الدَّهْرِ لَمْ يَكُن شَيْئًا مَّذْكُورًا)

(Has there not been over man a period of time, when he was not a thing worth mentioning) (76:1).

There are many other Ayat on this subject. Ibn Jarir reported from `Ata' that Ibn `Abbas said that,

(وَكُنْتُمْ أَمْوَاتًا فَأَحْيَاكُمْ)

(Seeing that you were dead and He gave you life) means, "You did not exist beforehand. You were nothing until Allah created you; He will bring death to you and then bring you back to life during Resurrection." Ibn `Abbas then said, "This is similar to Allah's statement;

(قَالُوا رَبَّنَا أَمَنَّاتْنَا وَأَحْيَيْتَنَا ائْتَيْنَا)

(They will say: "Our Lord! You have made us to die twice and You have given us life twice.") (40:11)"

(هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مَا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا ثُمَّ
اسْتَوَىٰ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ فَسَوَّاهُنَّ سَبْعَ سَمَوَاتٍ وَهُوَ
بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ)

(29. He it is Who created for you all that is on earth. Then He Istawa ila the heaven and made them seven heavens and He is the Knower of everything.)

Evidence of Allah's Ability

After Allah mentioned the proofs of His creating them, and what they can witness in themselves as proof of that, He mentioned another proof that they can witness, that is, the creation of the heavens and earth. Allah said,

(هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مَا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا ثُمَّ
اسْتَوَىٰ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ فَسَوَّاهُنَّ سَبْعَ سَمَوَاتٍ)

(He it is Who created for you all that is on earth. Then He Istawa ila the heaven and made them seven heavens) meaning, He turned towards the heaven,

(فَسَوَّاهُنَّ)

(And made them) meaning, that He made the heaven, seven heavens. Allah said,

(فَسَوَّاهُنَّ سَبْعَ سَمَوَاتٍ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ)

(And made them seven heavens and He is the Knower of everything) meaning, His knowledge encompasses all His creation, just as He said in another Ayah,

(أَلَا يَعْلَمُ مَنْ خَلَقَ)

(Should not He Who has created know) (67:14).

The Beginning of the Creation

This Ayah (2:29) is explained in detail in Surat As-Sajdah where Allah said;

(قُلْ أَعْيُنكُمْ لَتَكْفُرُونَّ بِالَّذِي خَلَقَ الْأَرْضَ فِي
يَوْمَيْنِ وَتَجْعَلُونَ لَهُ أُنْدَادًا ذَلِكَ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ -
وَجَعَلَ فِيهَا رَوَاسِي مِّنْ فَوْقِهَا وَبَرَكَ فِيهَا وَقَدَّرَ
فِيهَا أَقْوَتَهَا فِي أَرْبَعَةِ أَيَّامٍ سَوَاءً لِّلسَّائِلِينَ - ثُمَّ
اسْتَوَى إِلَى السَّمَاءِ وَهِيَ دُخَانٌ فَقَالَ لَهَا
وَلِلْأَرْضِ ائْتِيَا طَوْعًا أَوْ كَرْهًا قَالَتَا أَتَيْنَا طَائِعِينَ
- فَقَضَاهُنَّ سَبْعَ سَمَوَاتٍ فِي يَوْمَيْنِ وَأَوْحَى فِي
كُلِّ سَمَاءٍ أَمْرَهَا وَزَيَّنَّا السَّمَاءَ الدُّنْيَا بِمَصَابِيحَ
وَحِفْظًا ذَلِكَ تَقْدِيرُ الْعَزِيزِ الْعَلِيمِ)

(Say (O Muhammad): "Do you verily disbelieve in Him Who created the earth in two Days And you set up rivals (in worship) with Him That is the Lord of all that exists. He placed therein (i.e. the earth) firm mountains from above it, and He blessed it, and measured therein its sustenance (for its dwellers) in four Days equal (i.e. all these four `days' were equal in the length of time) for all those who ask (about its creation). Then He Istawa ila the heaven when it was smoke, and said to it and to the earth: "Come both of you willingly or unwillingly." They both said: "We come willingly." Then He finished them (as) seven heavens in two Days and He made in each heaven its affair. And We adorned the nearest (lowest) heaven with lamps (stars) to be an adornment as well as to guard (from the devils by using them as missiles against the devils). Such is the decree of the Almighty, the Knower) (41:9-12).

These Ayat indicate that Allah started creation by creating earth, then He made heaven into seven heavens. This is how building usually starts, with the lower floors first and then the top floors, as the scholars of Tafsir reiterated, as we will come to know, Allah willing. Allah also said,

(أَعْنَتُمْ أَشَدُّ خَلْقًا أَمِ السَّمَاءُ بَنَاهَا - رَفَعَ سَمَكَهَا
فَسَوَّاهَا - وَأَغْطَشَ لَيْلَهَا وَأَخْرَجَ ضُحَاهَا -
وَالْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ دَحَاهَا - أَخْرَجَ مِنْهَا مَاءَهَا

وَمَرَعَهَا - وَالْجِبَالَ أَرْسَاهَا - مَتَّعًا لَكُمْ
وَلَا نُنْعِمُكُمْ)

(Are you more difficult to create or is the heaven that He constructed He raised its height, and has perfected it. Its night He covers with darkness and its forenoon He brings out (with light). And the earth, after that, He spread it out. And brought forth therefrom its water and its pasture. And the mountains He has fixed firmly. (To be) a provision and benefit for you and your cattle) (79:27-33).

It is said that "Then" in the Ayah (2:29) relates only to the order of reciting the information being given, it does not relate to the order that the events being mentioned took place, this was reported from Ibn ` Abbas by ` Ali bin Abi Talhah.

The Earth was created before Heaven

Mujahid commented on Allah's statement,

(هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مَّا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا)

(He it is Who created for you all that is on earth) "Allah created the earth before heaven, and when He created the earth, smoke burst out of it. This is why Allah said,

(ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ وَهِيَ دُخَانٌ)

(Then He Istawa ila (turned towards) the heaven when it was smoke.) (41:11)

(فَسَوَّاهُنَّ سَبْعَ سَمَوَاتٍ)

(And made them seven heavens) means, one above the other, while the `seven earths' means, one below the other."

This Ayah testifies to the fact that the earth was created before heaven, as Allah has indicated in the Ayat in Surat As-Sajdah.

Spreading the Earth out after the Heavens were created

Sahih Al-Bukhari records that when Ibn ` Abbas was question about this matter, he said that the earth was created before heaven, and the earth was spread out only after the creation of the heaven. Several Tafsir scholars of old and recent times also said similarly, as we have elaborated on in the Tafsir of Surat An-Nazi`at (chapter 79). The result of that discussion is

that the word Daha (translated above as "spread") is mentioned and explained in Allah's statement,

(وَالْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ دَحَاهَا - أَخْرَجَ مِنْهَا مَاءَهَا
وَمَرْعَاهَا - وَالْجِبَالَ أَرْسَاهَا)

(And the earth, after that, He spread it out. And brought forth therefrom its water and its pasture. And the mountains He has fixed firmly.) (79:30-32)

Therefore, Daha means that the earth's treasures were brought to its surface after finishing the job of creating whatever will reside on earth and heaven. When the earth became Daha, the water burst out to its surface and the various types, colors, shapes and kinds of plants grew. The stars started rotating along with the planets that rotate around them. And Allah knows best.

(وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ اِنِّيْ جَاعِلٌ فِى الْاَرْضِ
خَلِيْفَةً قَالُوْا اَتَجْعَلُ فِيْهَا مَنْ يُفْسِدُ فِيْهَا وَيَسْفِكُ
الدِّمَآءَ وَنَحْنُ نُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِكَ وَنُقَدِّسُ لَكَ قَالَ اِنِّيْ
اَعْلَمُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ)

(30. And (remember) when your Lord said to the angels: "Verily, I am going to place (mankind) generations after generations on earth." They said: "Will You place therein those who will make mischief therein and shed blood, while we glorify You with praises and thanks and sanctify You." He (Allah) said: "I know that which you do not know.")

Adam and His Children inhabited the Earth, Generation after Generation

Allah reiterated His favor on the Children of Adam when He stated that He mentioned them in the highest of heights before He created them. Allah said,

(وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ)

(And (remember) when your Lord said to the angels.)

This Ayah means, "O Muhammad ! Mention to your people what Allah said to the angels,

(إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً)

(Verily, I am going to place a Khalifah on earth).

Meaning people reproducing generation after generation, century after century, just as Allah said,

(وَهُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَكُمْ خَلِيفَةً فِي الْأَرْضِ)

(And it is He Who has made you (Khala'if) generations coming after generations, replacing each other on the earth) (6:165),

(وَيَجْعَلُكُمْ خُلَفَاءَ الْأَرْضِ)

(And makes you (Khulafa') inheritors of the earth) (27:62),

(وَلَوْ نَشَاءُ لَجَعَلْنَا مِنْكُمْ مَلَائِكَةً فِي الْأَرْضِ
يَخْلُقُونَ)

(And if it were Our will, We would have (destroyed you (mankind all, and) made angels to replace you (Yakhlufun) on the earth.) (43: 60) and,

(فَخَلَفَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ خَلْفٌ)

(Then after them succeeded an (evil) generation (Khalf)) (7:169). It appears that Allah was not referring to Adam specifically as Khalifah, otherwise he would not have allowed the angels' statement,

(أَتَجْعَلُ فِيهَا مَنْ يُفْسِدُ فِيهَا وَيَسْفِكُ الدِّمَاءَ)

(Will You place therein those who will make mischief therein and shed blood).

The angels meant that this type of creature usually commits the atrocities they mentioned. The angels knew of this fact, according to their understanding of human nature, for Allah stated that He would create man from clay. Or, the angels understood this fact from the word Khalifah, which also means the person who judges disputes that occur between people, forbidding them from injustice and sin, as Al-Qurtubi said.