

## CHAPTER IV

### THE INJUNCTION TO FULFILL THE COVENANT AND CHILDREN OF ISRAEL'S RESPONSES TO THE COVENANT

#### A. Breaking and Keeping Covenant in the Qur'ān

##### 1. The Injunction to Fulfill the Covenant in the Qur'ān

Muslim exegetes identify a number of Qur'ānic verses which require that covenants not be broken, the Qur'ān warn against breaking covenants in the Qur'ān *sūrah* an-Naḥl 16/070:91

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَوْفُوا بِالْعُقُوبِ إِنَّهُ كَانَ حَلِيمًا غَدِيرًا﴾  
(سورة النحل/91:16)

This verse is interpreted by many exegetes as referring to particular events in the life of the Prophet. According to Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210), Q., s. an-Naḥl 16/070:91 is related to Q., s. al-Mā'idah 5/112:7<sup>1</sup> and the covenant made between the Prophet and the *anṣār* at 'Aqaba.<sup>2</sup> Another verse is Q., s. al-Mu'minūn 23/074:8

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَوْفُوا بِالْعُقُوبِ إِنَّهُ كَانَ حَلِيمًا غَدِيرًا﴾  
(سورة المؤمنون/74:8)

In his exegesis of Q., s. al-Mu'minūn 23/074:8, al-Qurṭubī (d. 671/1272) repeats this comprehensive understanding when he remarks that keeping trusts

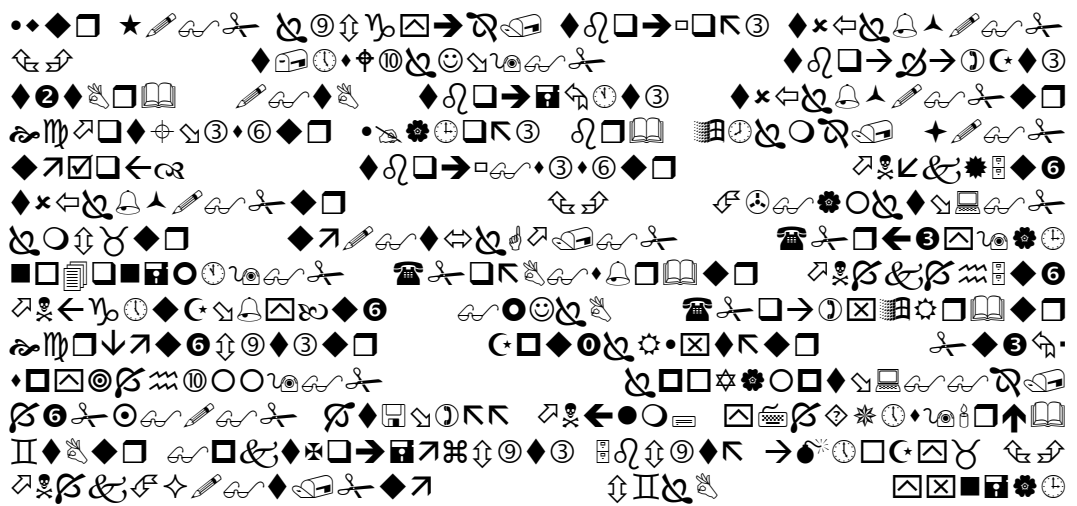
<sup>1</sup>“O ye who believe fulfill (all) obligations. Lawful unto you (for food) are all four-footed animals, with the exceptions named: But animals of the chase are forbidden while ye are in the sacred precincts or in pilgrim garb: for Allah doth command according to His will and plan”. See. Q., s. Al-Mā'idah 112/5:1, ‘Abdullah Yūsuf ‘Ali, *The Holy Qur'an, Text Translation and Commentary*, (Beirut: Dār al-‘Arabiyyah, 1968), p. 238.

<sup>2</sup>Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1995-1415), vol. 10, p. 109.

and covenants includes all that for which people are responsible in the matters of religion and in matters of this world, in both speech and deed.<sup>3</sup>

God concluded an ‘ahd with Moses<sup>4</sup> and voided his ‘ahd for Abraham’s progeny when they betrayed it<sup>5</sup> and summoned the Children of Israel to fulfill the covenant so that he, God, might fulfill it (*wa-awfū bi-’ahdī ūfī bi-’ahdikum*) Q., s. al-Baqarah 2/087:40. Ibn Kathīr (d.774/1377) interprets in this verse, Allah commands the Children of Israel to embrace Islam and to follow Muḥammad.<sup>6</sup>

Moving on to other Qur’ānic references, Q., s. ar-Ra’d 13/096:20; it seems to contain a slight variation on the Qur’ānic understanding of keeping covenant. In this verse fulfilling the covenant and not breaking the pact are listed along with other attributes of the people who will enter the gardens of paradise, thus providing a positive obverse to the judgment scenarios already mentioned.




<sup>3</sup>Abi ‘Abdullah Muḥammad Ibn Aḥmad Al-Qurṭubī, *Al-Jāmi’ li-Aḥkām al-Qur’ān*, (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1995-1415), vol. 6, p. 100.

<sup>4</sup>See e.g. Q., s. al-A’rāf 039/7:134; and., s. al-Zukhruf 063/43:49.

<sup>5</sup>See e.g. Q., s. al-Baqarah 087/2:124.


<sup>6</sup>Abu al-Fidā ‘Ismā‘īl Ibn ‘Umar Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-Azīm*, (Beirut: Dār al Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 2006 1993-1414), vol. 1, p. 151.


  
 (سورة الرعد/13: 20-23)

Keeping covenants and trusts is also listed in the context of the attributes given in Q., s. al-Mu'minūn 23/074:1-11 and Q., s. al-Ma'ārij 70/079:22-35 of those who will enter paradise. Note also that there are structural parallels among the three lists in Q., s. ar-Ra'd 13/096:19-23, s. al-Mu'minūn 23/074:1-11, and s. al-Ma'ārij 70/079:22-35.

Each list includes a ritual obligation or contract with God such as the requirement to pray or give alms.<sup>7</sup> Each list includes marriage and family obligations including the restriction of sex to properly contracted contexts.<sup>8</sup> At least two of the lists have reference to giving upright testimony (Q., s. al-Ma'ārij 70/079:33) and not engaging in idle talk (Q., s. al-Mu'minūn 23/074:3). Q., s. ar-Ra'd 13/096:22 mentions repelling evil with good in this context.

In commenting upon these lists, Ibn Kathīr (d.774/1377) reports that the connection between these social and religious contracts and the requirement of keeping such obligations reflects the obligation arising from the “trust” (*amānah*) accepted by Adam from God in Q., s. al-Aḥzāb 33/090:72.


  
 (سورة الأحزاب/33:72)

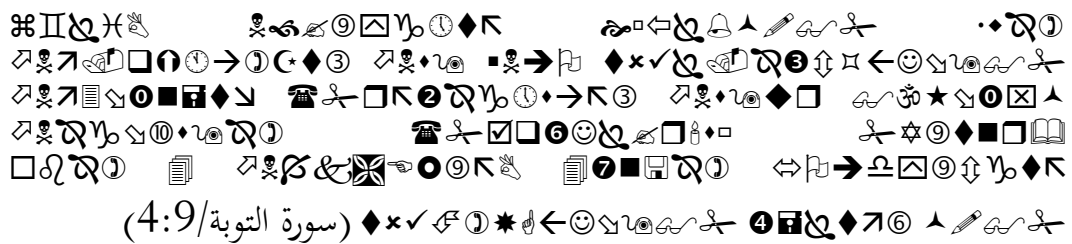
<sup>7</sup>See Q., s ar-Ra'd 096/ 13:22; s. al-Mu'minūn 074/23:2, 4, 9; s. al-Ma'ārij 079/70:34.

<sup>8</sup>See Q., s ar-Ra'd 096 13:21-2; s. al-Mu'minūn 074 23:5-7; s. al-Ma'ārij 079/70:29-31.



According to Zayd b. Aslam, (Q., s. al-Mā'idah 5/112:1) includes keeping all contracts of marriage, partnership, sales, oaths, covenants and treaties. al-Zajjāj (d. 311/923) says Q., s. al-Mā'idah/5:1 commands keeping all contracts made between God and humanity.<sup>12</sup>

The most general opinion is that of al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923), who reports that the order to fulfill all contracts entails fulfilling all obligations (*farā'id*) incumbent on Muslims.<sup>13</sup> The Qur'ān also warns against breaking covenant in *sūrah* al-Tawbah 9/113 verse 4.



According to al-Zamakhsharī (d. 538/1144), Q., s. al-Tawbah 9/113:4 refers to an incident in which the Quraysh broke their pact with the Prophet by backing their clients, the Banū Bakr, against the clients of the Prophet, the Banū Khuzā'a.<sup>14</sup> Qur'ānic exegetes ordinarily claim that the Prophet's breaking of his contract in this case is a justifiable exception because the unbelievers with whom he had contracted did not uphold their end of the contract.

## 2. Fulfilling Covenant and the Pious

<sup>12</sup>Ibn al-'Arabī, *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, nd.), vol. 2, p. 5.

<sup>13</sup>Abi Ja'far Muḥammad Ibn Jār al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl āy al-Qur'ān*, (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1995-1415), vol. 4, p. 63.

<sup>14</sup>Abu al-Qāsim Jār Allāh Maḥmūd Ibn 'Umar Al-Zamakhshārī, *Al-Kashāf 'an Ḥaqā'iq at-Tanzīl wa 'uyūn al-Aqāwīl*, (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1426-1427), vol. 2, p. 175.

The order to fulfill the covenant is associated with “the pious” (*muttaqūn*),<sup>15</sup> *taqwā* is a means by which a believer performs righteous deeds and *taqwā* causes the righteous deed to be accepted by Allah. In the Qur’ān, those who have *taqwā*, the *muttaqūn*, or *alladzīna ttaqū*, are mentioned among the future dwellers of paradise Q., s. al-Qalam 68/002:34.

﴿قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَدَّبْتُ الْقَلَمَ﴾ (سورة القلم/34:68) ﴿قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَدَّبْتُ الْقَلَمَ﴾

Ibn Rajab says the essence of *taqwā* is to make shield which guards against Allah’s anger and punishment, that shield is to obey his commandments and abstain from his punishment.<sup>16</sup> Al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923), glosses the Qur’ānic expression, “they practiced *taqwā* (*ittaqaw*),” in the following way:

“*khāfū ‘iqābahu fa-aṭā’ūhu bi-adā’i farā’i-dīhi wa-tajannabu ma’āṣīhi*”

“They feared the punishment [of God] and thus obeyed him by fulfilling the obligatory duties [he imposes], and they eschewed acts of disobedience against him”.<sup>17</sup>

The ending of (Q., s. al-Baqarah 2/087:177) mentions the *muttaqūn*, refers to them as those who fulfill all the duties presented in the first part of the verse, is even clearer about the similitude between fulfill some righteous duties and *taqwā*.

<sup>15</sup>See e.g. Q., s. Āli ‘Imrān 089/3:76.

<sup>16</sup>Abd ar-Raḥman Ibn Aḥmad Ibn Rajab, *Jāmi’ al-‘Ulūm wa al-Ḥikam*, (Beirut: Dār al-Ma’rifah, 1408), p. 190-191.

<sup>17</sup>Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi’ al-Bayān ‘an Ta’wīl āy al-Qur’ān*, vol. 2, p. 399.

Izutsu describes *taqwā* as “the very heart and pivot” of Qur’ānic teaching, and even goes so far as to equate *taqwā* with *īmān* itself.<sup>18</sup>

Al-Bayḍāwī (d. 716/1316-7) further articulates the link between “fear” and devotion in his enumeration of three different “degrees” (*marātib*) of *taqwā*, each degree presumably indicating the relative moral and spiritual state of the individual. He also locates the scriptural support for the existence of each of these three degrees in three specific Qur’ānic proof-texts.

Al-Bayḍāwī’s (d. 716/1316-7) first degree of *taqwā* consists of “guarding against eternal punishment by ridding oneself of ascribing partners to God (*shirk*),” supported by Q., s. al-Faḥ 48/111:26. The second degree of *taqwā* entails “avoiding everything sinful, in deed or omission, even what would generally be considered minor offenses,” supported by Q., s. al-A’rāf 7/039:96. Finally, the third degree of *taqwā* involves “being far removed from whatever would distract the innermost self from the real (i.e. God), and renouncing the world, devoting one’s entire life to him,” supported by Q., s. Āli ‘Imrān 3/089:102.<sup>19</sup> We see therefore, that covenant fulfilling also in close association with other righteous deeds.

### 3. Breaking Covenant and the Hypocrites

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<sup>18</sup>Toshihiko Izutsu, *Ethico Religious Concepts in the Qur’an*, translated by Agus Fahri Husayn entitled, *Konsep-Konsep Etika Religijs dalam al-Qur’an*, (Yogyakarta: Tiara Wacana Yogya, 1993), p. 251.

<sup>19</sup>Abī Sa‘īd ‘Abdullah Ibn ‘Umar Ibn Muḥammad Al-Shayrazi al-Bayḍāwī, *Anwār Al-Tanzīl wa Asrār al-Ta’wīl*, (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, nd.), vol. 1, p. 48.

In the *ḥadīth* literature breaking covenant is associated with the hypocrites (*munāfiqūn*), Abū Hurayrah reported that the prophet (P.B.U.H.),<sup>20</sup> said:

مِنْ عِلَامَاتِ الْمُنَافِقِ ثَلَاثَةٌ إِذَا حَدَّثَ كَذَبَ وَإِذَا وَعَدَ أَخْلَفَ وَإِذَا اتُّمِّنَ خَانَ (مُتَّفَقٌ عَلَيْهِ)

The concepts of hypocrites (*munāfiqūn*), as well as various verbal forms of *n-f-q*, are mentioned in thirty verses,<sup>21</sup> moreover, the insincere believers are frequently discussed without explicit use of this terminology. Thus Q., s al-Baqarah 2/087:8-20 is considered by most commentators classical and medieval, al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923), al-Ṭūsī (d. 460/1067), al-Ṭabarsī (d. 518/1153), al-Zamakhsharī (d. 583/1144), al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210), al-Qurṭubī (d. 671/1272), Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1373), al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505), Sayyid Quṭb (d. 1966), al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī (d. 1982), to be a description of the hypocrites, though some such Muḥammad 'Abduh take it to refer to the Jews of Medina, who were their allies. Since this is apparently the first reference to the hypocrites, many exegetes use this opportunity to expound their views on the issue and to define the phenomenon.<sup>22</sup>

Other apparent references to the hypocrites are Q., s. al-Anfāl 8/088:49-55; s. Āli 'Imrān 3/089:118-20, 152-8, 176-9; and Q., s. al-Tawbah 9/113:107-10.

<sup>20</sup>Muḥyi ad-Dīn Zakariyya Yahya Ibn Sharaf al-Nawāwī, *Riyāḍ al-Ṣāliḥīn min Kalām Sayyid al-Mursalīn*, (Beirut: Dār al-Khayr, 1999/1420), p. 187, no. 02.

<sup>21</sup>See e.g.. Q., s. Āli 'Imrān 089/3:167; s. an-Nisā' 092/4:61, 88, 138, 140, 142, 145; s. al-An'ām 055/6:35; s. al-Anfāl 088/8:49; s. al-Tawbah 113/9:64, 67, 68, 73, 77, 97, 101; s. al-'Ankabūt 085/29:11; s. al-Aḥzāb 090/33:1, 12, 24, 48, 60, 73; s. al-Faṭḥ 111/48:6; s. al-Ḥadīd 094/57:13; s. al-Ḥashr 101/59:11; s. Al-Munāfiqūn 104/63:1, 7, 8; s. at-Taḥrīm 107/66:9.

<sup>22</sup>See e.g. for the lengthy exposé in Fakhruddīn ar-Razī, *Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, vol. 1, p. 65-85, Others reserve this for their discussion of Q., s al-Munāfiqūn 104/63. See also Ayatollah Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī, *Al-Mīzān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, (np.: Ismā'īliyyāni, 1973/1393), 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed., vol. 19, p. 287-290



Traditionally, all passages referring to the hypocrites have been considered Medinan, both by Muslim commentators and by modern scholars. Accordingly both groups identify them as the Muslim opponents of Muḥammad in Medina, those who only half-heartedly accepted him and his message, and did so for worldly gain and in order to safeguard their position in the community, which they would otherwise have lost. When their expectations were not met, they turned against Muḥammad.

According to Fazlur Rahman, however, hypocrisy was a feature already present among Muḥammad's adherents in Mecca: contrary to the commonly held view, he believes that Q., s. al-Muddaththir 74/004:31; s. al-ʿAnkabūt 085/29:1-10; and s. al-Ḥajj 22/103:53-4 date from the period before the emigration (*hijrah*) from Mecca to Medina. In Rahman's view, the hypocrites of Mecca were weak and fickle minded people who succumbed to the pressure exerted by their pagan relatives and townsmen to abandon Islam.<sup>23</sup>

The accepted opinion, however, is that the term hypocrites did not include Muslims from Mecca, since they were all sincere and had no wealth or power to gain from joining Muḥammad.<sup>24</sup> The Qur'ān does not mention any names, but a long list of Muslim hypocrites and their Jewish patrons and allies may be found in the biography of the Prophet.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>Fazlur Rahman, *Major Themes of the Quran*, (United State: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1989). 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., p. 160-161.

<sup>24</sup>Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Azīm*, vol. 1, p. 47

<sup>25</sup>A. Guillame, *The life of Muḥammad, a Translation of Ishāq, Sīrah Rasūl Allah*, (Pakistan: Oxford University press, 1970), p. 242-247.

Here, the undisputed leader of the Medinan dissenters is identified as ‘Abd Allāh b. Ubayy b. Salūl whose political ambitions were thwarted by the arrival of Muḥammad.<sup>26</sup> Ibn Ubayy was not only thought to have been involved in the slanderous accusations (apparently alluded to in Q., s. an-Nūr 24/102:23-6) that almost ruined the reputation of the Prophet’s wife.<sup>27</sup> He also sided with the Jews of Medina and the Meccan opponents of Muḥammad. According to the history (*sīrah*) literature, Ibn Ubayy promised to come to the aid of the Jews of Naḍīr if Muḥammad were to confront them, but he subsequently abandoned them in their hour of need. Q., s. al-Ḥaṣhr 59/101:11-2 is taken as a reference.<sup>28</sup>

The hypocrites are described in the Qur’ān as follows: they pretend to believe in God’s revelations but turn to the false deities they were ordered to abjure. When invited by Muḥammad to accept God and his messenger they turn away from him with aversion. But God knows what is in their hearts. They should be opposed and admonished (Q., s. an-Nisā’ 4/092:60-3). For them will be a painful doom. They seek to lead the believers astray. They attempt to beguile God, but it is he who will beguile them. They perform their prayer languidly and more in order to be seen by others than to worship God. They will go to hell, along with the unbelievers, and will be in the deepest fire (Q., s. an-Nisā’ 4/092:145).

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<sup>26</sup>A. Guillame, *The life of Muḥammad*, p. 277-279.

<sup>27</sup>A. Guillame, *The life of Muḥammad*, p.493-499.

<sup>28</sup>A. Guillame, *The life of Muḥammad*, p. 437

﴿إِنَّمَا يَتَّبِعُ الَّذِينَ يُحِبُّونَ الظَّالِمِينَ وَيَكْرَهُونَ الْمُقْسِمِينَ﴾ (سورة النساء/145:4)

An inclusive understanding finds additional confirmation in the *ḥadīth* literature. It is reported in several of the standard collections of prophetic *ḥadīth* that all people who act treacherously, i.e. not keeping their covenants, will be held accountable for this on the Day of Judgment.<sup>29</sup>

إِذَا جَمَعَ اللَّهُ الْأَوَّلِينَ وَالْآخِرِينَ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ يُرْفَعُ لِكُلِّ غَادِرٍ لِيَوَاءٍ فَقِيلَ هَذِهِ غَدْرُهُ فَلَانَ بَنٍ  
فُلَانٍ (رواه مسلم عن ابن عمر)

The hypocrites are sometimes called “those in whose hearts is a disease”. At times these terms appear together (as in Q., s. al-Aḥzāb 33/090:12, 60), though often only the second epithet is mentioned; in such cases, many take the verse in question as an additional reference to the hypocrites.<sup>30</sup> The hypocrites do not believe, yet they are afraid that Muḥammad will receive a revelation concerning them, in which their true feelings will be uncovered (Q., s. al-Tawbah 9/113:64).

## B. Children of Israel’s Responses to the Covenant

### 1. Children of Israel as Believers

The image of the Qur’ānic Children of Israel is far from uniform which, as an aside, is true concerning almost any other Qur’ānic theme, and the attitude towards them is ambivalent. On the one hand, they are described as true believers,

<sup>29</sup>Abī al-Ḥusayn Muslim al-Ḥajjaj, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1414/1993), p. 133, no. 1735.

<sup>30</sup>See Jalāl al-Dīn al-Maḥallī, Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-Azīm*, p. 5 see also in the Qur’ān sūrah s. al-Mā’idah 112/5:52, p. 91, s. al-Tawbah 113/9:125, 150 s. al-Aḥzāb 090/33:32, p. 304 and s. Muḥammad 095/47:20, p. 365.

while on the other, they are presented as infidels. Nurcholish madjid says, actually all adherents of Allah’s religion is monovalent. But in history process the doctrine of truth comes to deviation.<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless, the Qur’ān recognized that some of Children of Israel still practice and firm handhold to their religious doctrine.<sup>32</sup>

Children of Israel are described as an “upright community, reciting the signs of God (i.e. the Qur’ān) at the drawing on of night, prostrating themselves, believing in God and the last day. And strive with one another in hastening to good deeds.” Elsewhere it is asserted that these believers will be rewarded twice over, thanks to their belief in their own revealed scriptures as well as in (Q., s. al-Qaṣaṣ 28/049:52-54).

﴿قَدْ آتَيْنَا آلَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ إِيمَانًا لَمَّا قَالَ يَا أَبَتِ اتَّبِعِ الْآيَاتَ الْبَارِئَاتِ ۖ اتَّبِعْنِي أَتَّبِعْكَ وَأَطِيعُوا أَمْرًا بَارِئًا ۚ اتَّبِعُوا مَا أَوْحَىٰ إِلَيْكُمْ كِتَابَ الْإِنشَانِ الْكَلِيمِ ۗ﴾  
(سورة القصص/28:54-52) ﴿قَدْ آتَيْنَا آلَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ إِيمَانًا لَمَّا قَالَ يَا أَبَتِ اتَّبِعِ الْآيَاتَ الْبَارِئَاتِ ۖ اتَّبِعْنِي أَتَّبِعْكَ وَأَطِيعُوا أَمْرًا بَارِئًا ۚ اتَّبِعُوا مَا أَوْحَىٰ إِلَيْكُمْ كِتَابَ الْإِنشَانِ الْكَلِيمِ ۗ﴾


The skeptic listeners of the Qur’ānic Prophet are invited to consult them and learn that God indeed may send a mortal messenger as he did in the past. Even the Qur’ānic Prophet himself is requested in Q., s. Yūnus 10/051:94

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الْمَثَلِيُّ جَعَلَ الْكُفْرَ كَالْحَنظَلِ ۗ يَخْتَلِفُ أَلْوَانُهُ كَمَا يَخْتَلِفُ أَلْوَانُ السَّمَكِ ۗ﴾  
﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الْمَثَلِيُّ جَعَلَ الْكُفْرَ كَالْحَنظَلِ ۗ يَخْتَلِفُ أَلْوَانُهُ كَمَا يَخْتَلِفُ أَلْوَانُ السَّمَكِ ۗ﴾

<sup>31</sup>Nurcholish Madjid, *Islam Agama Peradaban*, (Jakarta: Paramadina, 1995), p. 72.

<sup>32</sup>Muhammad Galib. M., *Ahl al-Kitab Makna dan Cakupannya*, (Jakarta: Paramadina, 1998), p. 98.




  
 (سورة البقرة/2:62)

This verse was revealed about the monks with whom Salman al-Fārisī kept company. When Salman went to see the Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H), he informed him about their worship and striving. He said: ‘O Messenger of Allah! They used to pray and fast; they believed in you and bore witness that you will be sent as a prophet’. When Salman finished his praise of them, Allah’s Messenger (P.B.U.H), said: ‘O Salman! They are of the dwellers of hell fire. Allah then revealed this verse.’<sup>36</sup>

The divine reward is promised here to the Children of Israel as well as to the other monotheistic communities, provided they remain monotheists believing in God and his Messenger. Ibn ‘Abbās (d. 68/ 687) says the reward that is they shall have no fear will come upon them concerning torment in the future life nor will they grieve about anything they have left behind. And he also says that this means: they shall have no fear when death is slain and hell is closed.<sup>37</sup>

Al-Mawdūdī (d. 1400/1979) reports the context in which this verse shows that the Qur'an is not laying down here the details of the creed and righteous deeds, which one should believe and practice in order to earn salvation. These things have been described in their proper places. Here, the object is to refute the self-delusion of the Jews that salvation was their sole monopoly. They were suffering from the delusion that they had some special relationship with God; therefore whoever belonged to their race would go straight to Heaven, irrespective

<sup>36</sup>Al-Wahīdī, *Jāmi' Asbāb Nuzūl*, p. 14-15.

<sup>37</sup>Ibnū ‘Abbās, *Tanwīr al-Miqbās min Tafsīr Ibn ‘Abbās*, p. 12.

of his creed and deeds, and all other people were born to become fuel of Hell. To remove this misunderstanding of theirs Allah declares that salvation does not depend upon one's connection with any group but on one's right beliefs and good deeds. Whoever goes before Allah with these provisions will find his reward with Him, for Allah's judgment will be based on one's real worth and not on the census registers.<sup>38</sup>

According to al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī (d. 1889-1970), the context of this verse shows that the latter phrase refers to the real belief, the true *īmān*.<sup>39</sup> In some verses, the People of the Book are recognized as believers on the mere basis of their monotheism. Most explicit is Q., s. Āli 'Imrān 3/089:64:

وَمَا جَعَلَهُ اللَّهُ إِلَّا لِلْعَالَمِينَ قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ تَقَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ  
وَمَا جَعَلَهُ إِلَّا لِلْعَالَمِينَ قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ تَقَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ  
وَمَا جَعَلَهُ إِلَّا لِلْعَالَمِينَ قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ تَقَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ  
وَمَا جَعَلَهُ إِلَّا لِلْعَالَمِينَ قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ تَقَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ  
وَمَا جَعَلَهُ إِلَّا لِلْعَالَمِينَ قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ تَقَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ  
(سورة آل عمران 64:3)

The verse states that God has protected them from being pulled down. But other Qur'ānic passages using the label "People of the Book" distinguish between the believers and non-believers among them, the believers being those accepting the Qur'ānic message. For example, in Q., s. Āli 'Imrān 3/089:199 it is stated that

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ وَآمَنُوا بِمَا نُزِّلَ عَلَيْنَا مِنْ كِتَابِ رَبِّنَا وَأَسْلَمُوا  
وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ وَآمَنُوا بِمَا نُزِّلَ عَلَيْنَا مِنْ كِتَابِ رَبِّنَا وَأَسْلَمُوا  
وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ وَآمَنُوا بِمَا نُزِّلَ عَلَيْنَا مِنْ كِتَابِ رَبِّنَا وَأَسْلَمُوا  
وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ وَآمَنُوا بِمَا نُزِّلَ عَلَيْنَا مِنْ كِتَابِ رَبِّنَا وَأَسْلَمُوا  
وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ وَآمَنُوا بِمَا نُزِّلَ عَلَيْنَا مِنْ كِتَابِ رَبِّنَا وَأَسْلَمُوا

<sup>38</sup>Al-Mawdūdī, *Tafhīm al-Qur'ān*, <http://www.englishsirs.com/> last visited 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2011.

<sup>39</sup>Al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī, *Al-Mizān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, vol. 1, p. 193.





Wahb ibn Yahudha, both of them Jews, had said to them: Our religion is better than that to which you call us; and we are also more virtuous and better than you. And Allah revealed this verse as a response to them.<sup>42</sup>

Ibn ‘Abbās (d. 68/687) says the term *al-Fāsiqūn* here is unbelievers who break their pledges.<sup>43</sup> The believers among the People of the Book are described in Q., s al-Mā’idah 5/112:66 as a “just nation” (*umamah muqtaṣidah*) among a majority of evil-doers. Other passages provide vivid descriptions of the piety of the believers among the People of the Book and of their admiration for the Qur’anic revelation. In Q., s. Āli ‘Imrān 3/089:113-114

(سورة آل عمران / 3: 113-114)

One of narration (*riwāyah*) reported this verse revealed about the Jews who embraced Islam. Other opinion is that of Sa‘īd Ibn Mas‘ūd: “This was revealed regarding the nightfall prayer which is performed by the Muslims but not by the people of the Book.” Ibn Mas‘ūd said: “The Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H), delayed the time of the nightfall prayer. When he came out to lead the prayer, he found people waiting for the prayer. He said: ‘There is no one among the

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<sup>42</sup>Al-Wahidī, *Jāmi’ Asbāb Nuzūl*, p. 108.

<sup>43</sup>Ibn ‘Abbās, *Tanwīr al-Miqbās min Tafṣīr Ibn ‘Abbās*, p. 70.



سورة) المائدة/5:69

No automatic reward is mentioned here, which renders the message to the non-Muslim monotheists more reserved in comparison with the former passages. Other passages, however, recognize Children of Israel as believers only on the condition that they believe in the concrete Islamic message as represented in the Qurʻān.

Ibn Hishām (d. 762 A.H.) explains, in the first two verses, there is nothing difficult about the grammar, because the word *al-Ṣābiʿīn* follows the conjunction *waw* (and) is in agreement with the word *alladzīna* (those who); it is the noun of the particle *inna* (translated here as “verily”) and as such appears in the accusative form of the sound masculine plural, in accordance with the rules of Arabic grammar. Where the confusion arises is in the third verse quoted, from Sūrah al-Māʾidah, where the word appears in the same position with regard to word order, but appears in the nominative form. The grammarians and *mufasssirīn* explained this in several ways, and they mentioned several well-known similar usages in Arabic. It is sufficient here to quote just three of them, which are among the most well known.

The word order in the verse differs from everyday usage. Based on that, the meaning is that those who believe and those who are the Jews and the Christians, whosoever believed in Allah, on them shall be no fear, nor shall they

grieve, and the same applies to the Sabians. So the subject appears in the nominative, as is indicated by the *waw* of the sound masculine plural.

The word *al-Ṣābi'ūn* is the subject and the word *al-Naṣāra* (Christians) is in agreement with it. The phrase *man āmana bi-llaah* (whoever believed in Allah) is the predicate of *al-Ṣābi'ūn*. The predicate of *inna* is omitted here, as is indicated by the predicate of the subject *al-Ṣābi'ūn*. A similar usage in Arabic appears in the line of verse:

The word *al-Ṣābi'ūn* appears in conjunction with the word that takes the place of the noun of *inna*. If any of these particles *inna* and its “sisters” comes at the beginning of a nominal sentence that is composed of a subject and predicate, the noun of *inna* was originally nominative because it is the subject, before the word *inna* was introduced.<sup>45</sup>

## 2. Children of Israel as Sinners

Israel's deliverance from Pharaoh provides the clearest manifestation of God's *ni'ma*.<sup>46</sup> This event, as well as the journey of the Israelites to the holy land, is recounted in the Qur'ān in several parallel passages of varying length. A detailed version is provided in the Qur'ān sūrah al-A'rāf (7/039) verses 103-171. Here the story begins with Moses and Aaron and their encounters with Pharaoh, including the signs, i.e. the miracles they perform and the calamities they bring

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<sup>45</sup>See Ibn Hishām, *Awḍah al-Masālik*, with a commentary by Muhy al-Dīn and the *Tafsīr* al-Shawkāni wa al-Alūsi, on this verse, (Egypt: Maṭba'ah I'lāmiyyah, 1304) p. 352-366

<sup>46</sup>See e.g., Q., s. Ibrāhīm 072/14:6.

down upon Pharaoh.<sup>47</sup> This is followed by the departure of Israel from Egypt and the drowning of the troops of Pharaoh in the sea.<sup>48</sup> Then a short reference comes to Israelite settlement in the Promised Land.<sup>49</sup> This version of Pharaoh's story is one of a series of well-known Qur'ānic punishment stories that deal with nations which have been destroyed because of their disobedience. Sometimes Pharaoh's punishment story appears independently of the story of the Israelites.<sup>50</sup>

In the Q., s. al-A'rāf (7/039), the story about Pharaoh's punishment is followed by an account of the events that take place after the Children of Israel cross the sea. The plot now focuses on their sins, mainly on their fashioning the calf of gold which results in the breaking of the Tablets.<sup>51</sup> Other sins mentioned in this *sūra* are the refusal to say *hiṭṭa* (a word, or profession, of repentance), for which they are destroyed in a disaster (*rijz*) sent from heaven<sup>52</sup> and the violation of the *sabat*, for which they are turned into apes.<sup>53</sup> Elsewhere the Qur'ān recounts the sin of the Israelites when refusing to wage war on the mighty inhabitants of the Promised Land. As punishment they must wander in the wilderness for 40 years (till they perish).<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>47</sup>See e.g., Q., s. al-A'rāf 039/ 7:103-133.

<sup>48</sup>See e.g., Q., s. al-A'rāf 039 7:134-6.

<sup>49</sup>See e.g., Q., s. al-A'rāf 039 7:137.

<sup>50</sup>See e.g., Q., s. as-Syu'arā 047/26:10-68; s. an-Naml 048/ 27:7-14; s. al-Qaṣaṣ 049/28:3-47; s. al-Zukhruf 063/43:46-56; s. al-Dzāriyāt 067/51:38-40; s. an-Nāzi'āt 081/79:15-29.

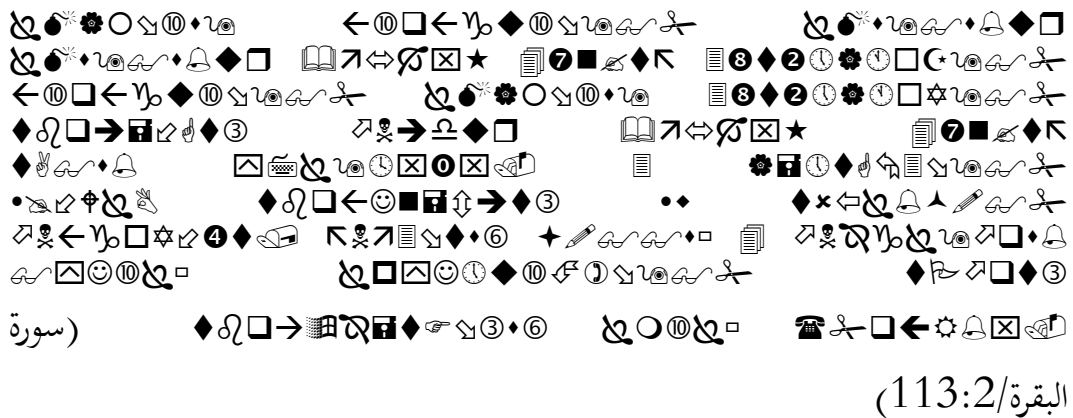
<sup>51</sup>See e.g., Q., s. al-A'rāf 039/7:138-51.

<sup>52</sup>See e.g., Q., s. al-A'rāf 039/7:161-2; see also Q., s. 2:58-9.

<sup>53</sup>See Q., s. al-Baqarah 087/2:65; cf. Q., s. al-A'rāf 039/7:163-7.

<sup>54</sup>See Q., s. al-Mā'idah 112/5:20-6.

The Qur'an imputes to them the blame of persecuting and killing their own prophets,<sup>55</sup> a sin that is usually mentioned with allusion to the Children of Israel.<sup>56</sup> The Christians, too, share some of the blame because they have rejected the prophets sent to the Jews. This is implied in Q., s. al-Baqarah 2/087:113 where the Jews and the Christians reject each other's religion as a false one.



In one of narration (*riwāyah*) this verse was revealed about the Jews of Medina and the Christians of Najran. When the delegation of Najran came to the Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H), the Jewish rabbis came to see them. They had a debate with each other and the debate got so heated up that they shouted at each other. The Jews said: “You are not following the true religion”, and declared their disbelief in Jesus and the Gospel. In response, the Christians said: “You are not following the true religion”, and declared their disbelief in Moses and the Torah. Allah therefore revealed this verse.<sup>57</sup>

Ibn Kathīr (d.774/1372) says, Allah made the confusion of the Jews and the Christians clear, since they claim that no one will enter Paradise, unless he is a

<sup>55</sup>See Q., s. Āli ‘Imrān 089/3:181, 183.

<sup>56</sup>See Q., s. al-Baqarah 087/2:61, 87, 91; s. an-Nisā 092/4:155; s. al-Mā'idah 112/5:70.

<sup>57</sup>Al-Wahidī, *Jāmi' Asbāb Nuzūl*, p. 22.

Jew or a Christian<sup>58</sup>. While al-Ṭabātabā'ī says Q., s. al-Baqarah 2/087:113 shows the true belief entails submitting one's self entirely to Allah; and "*al-Iḥsān*" (to do good) is synonymous to the good deeds.<sup>59</sup>

Nurcholish Madjid states, the verse above shows an exclusive statement, they each other claim as the only one who will be welfare or accessibly enter the paradise, and the other sides are misfortune. However, the Qur'ān declares that salvation does not depend on any but surrendering (*aslama*) on Allah and doing a kindness.<sup>60</sup>

The Qur'ān condemns unbelievers (*kāfirūn*) who have only believed in some prophets while rejecting others.<sup>61</sup> It seems that the rift between Jews and Christians is also referred to in Q., s. al-Mu'minūn 23/074:53, which condemns those who divide their religion into sects (*zūbur*). Ibn 'Abbās (d. 68/687) explains, they split among themselves with regard to religion into different groups: groups of Jews, Christians, idolaters and Magians, the adherents of each religion and sect being impressed with what they have.<sup>62</sup>

The Torah, it is said elsewhere, contains guidance and light by which the prophets and the rabbis judged the Jews, but those who do not judge by what God has revealed are unbelievers.<sup>63</sup> Elsewhere they are said to have believed only in

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<sup>58</sup>Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Azīm*, vol. 1, p. 153.

<sup>59</sup>Al-Ṭabātabā'ī, *Al-Mizān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, vol. 1, p. 258.

<sup>60</sup>Nurcholish Madjid, *Islam Agama Peradaban*, p.74.

<sup>61</sup>See in Q., s. an-Nisā' 092/4:151.

<sup>62</sup>Ibnu 'Abbās, *Tanwīr al-Miqbās min Tafsīr Ibn 'Abbās*, p. 362.

<sup>63</sup>See e.g. Q., s. al-Mā'idah 112/5:44.

parts of the book and to have disbelieved in its other parts (Q., s. al-Baqarah 2/087:85).

۞ ﴿مَنْ يُؤْتِكُمْ مِنْهُ خِزْفًا فَذَرُوهُ ۚ إِنَّهُ مُرْتَدِدٌ كَثِيرٌ ۙ أَكْثَرٌ ۖ قُلْ لَوْ كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ الْإِسْلَامَ كَمَا قَالْتُمْ فَلَوْلَا قَدْ أُوتِيَ قَوْمَكُمُ الْقُرْآنُ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ لَعَجَلْتُمْ فِي هَٰذَا قَلِيلًا ۖ أَلَمْ تَكُونُوا تُحَارِبُونَهُ أَذِلَّةَ مَذْذَبِينَ ۚ قُلْ إِنِّي خَشِيتُ الْمَوْلُودِ الَّذِي يُرْتَدُّ بِأُخْرَىٰ ۚ إِنَّكُمْ كُنْتُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ قَلِيلًا ۚ ﴿٨٥﴾  
 ﴿مَنْ يُؤْتِكُمْ مِنْهُ خِزْفًا فَذَرُوهُ ۚ إِنَّهُ مُرْتَدِدٌ كَثِيرٌ ۙ أَكْثَرٌ ۖ قُلْ لَوْ كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ الْإِسْلَامَ كَمَا قَالْتُمْ فَلَوْلَا قَدْ أُوتِيَ قَوْمَكُمُ الْقُرْآنُ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ لَعَجَلْتُمْ فِي هَٰذَا قَلِيلًا ۖ أَلَمْ تَكُونُوا تُحَارِبُونَهُ أَذِلَّةَ مَذْذَبِينَ ۚ قُلْ إِنِّي خَشِيتُ الْمَوْلُودِ الَّذِي يُرْتَدُّ بِأُخْرَىٰ ۚ إِنَّكُمْ كُنْتُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ قَلِيلًا ۚ ﴿٨٥﴾  
 ﴿مَنْ يُؤْتِكُمْ مِنْهُ خِزْفًا فَذَرُوهُ ۚ إِنَّهُ مُرْتَدِدٌ كَثِيرٌ ۙ أَكْثَرٌ ۖ قُلْ لَوْ كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ الْإِسْلَامَ كَمَا قَالْتُمْ فَلَوْلَا قَدْ أُوتِيَ قَوْمَكُمُ الْقُرْآنُ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ لَعَجَلْتُمْ فِي هَٰذَا قَلِيلًا ۖ أَلَمْ تَكُونُوا تُحَارِبُونَهُ أَذِلَّةَ مَذْذَبِينَ ۚ قُلْ إِنِّي خَشِيتُ الْمَوْلُودِ الَّذِي يُرْتَدُّ بِأُخْرَىٰ ۚ إِنَّكُمْ كُنْتُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ قَلِيلًا ۚ ﴿٨٥﴾  
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 ﴿مَنْ يُؤْتِكُمْ مِنْهُ خِزْفًا فَذَرُوهُ ۚ إِنَّهُ مُرْتَدِدٌ كَثِيرٌ ۙ أَكْثَرٌ ۖ قُلْ لَوْ كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ الْإِسْلَامَ كَمَا قَالْتُمْ فَلَوْلَا قَدْ أُوتِيَ قَوْمَكُمُ الْقُرْآنُ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ لَعَجَلْتُمْ فِي هَٰذَا قَلِيلًا ۖ أَلَمْ تَكُونُوا تُحَارِبُونَهُ أَذِلَّةَ مَذْذَبِينَ ۚ قُلْ إِنِّي خَشِيتُ الْمَوْلُودِ الَّذِي يُرْتَدُّ بِأُخْرَىٰ ۚ إِنَّكُمْ كُنْتُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ قَلِيلًا ۚ ﴿٨٥﴾  
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Al-Mawdūdī (d. 1400/1979) says, as a concrete example of this may be

cited the strange conduct of the different clans of the Jews, who lived in the neighborhood of Medina. Before the migration of the Holy Prophet, they had entered into alliances with the neighboring Arab clans, Aws and Khazraj. When one Arab clan went to war with the other clan, their respective Jewish allies also went to war against each other.<sup>64</sup>

The Christians, too, are suspected of ignoring their own law as is implied in the Qur‘ān,<sup>65</sup> in which the People of the Book are warned against failing to observe the Torah and the Gospel. In fact, a party of the People of the Book is accused of deliberate rejection of the scriptures given to them by their Prophets. They have cast them behind their backs, yet they expect to be praised for their

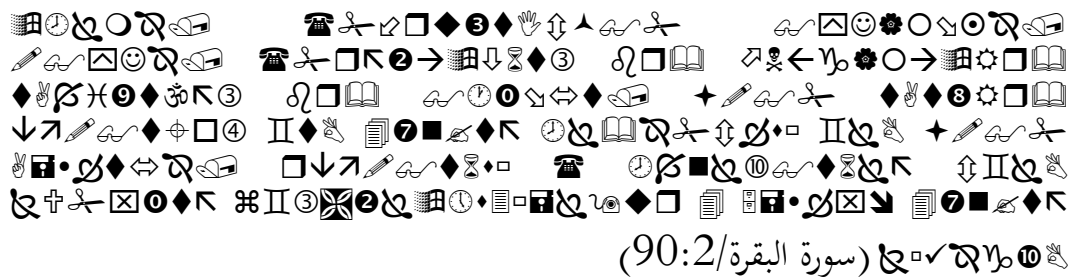
<sup>64</sup>Al-Mawdūdī, *Tafhīm al-Qur‘ān*, <http://www.englishtafsir.com/> last visited 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2011.

<sup>65</sup>See Q., s. al-Mā‘idah 112/5:68.



assumed devotion to the Torah.<sup>66</sup> But the Jews, or rather the People of the Book, were also offered a chance to be forgiven, on condition that they started observing the Torah and the Gospel and all of God’s revealed scriptures. If they had, God would have blessed them with an Abundance of food.<sup>67</sup>

The state of internal friction and discord, which divided the Jews into sects, was also seen as a sign of God’s vengeance.<sup>68</sup> The key term conveying the idea of God’s anger with the Jews is *ghaḍab*, “wrath”. It occurs in a passage (Q., s. al-Baqarah 2/087:90) dealing with the Children of Israel, in which it is stated that they “were laden with wrath upon wrath” for their disbelief.



Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1372) say that the meaning of, *bā’ū* is that they deserved and acquired multiplied anger, also Abū al-`Āliyah said, Allah became angry with children of Israel, because of their disbelief in the *Injīl* and `Isa and He became angry with them again, because they disbelieved in Muḥammad and the Qur'an.<sup>69</sup> Al-Mawdūdī (d. 1400/1979) reports, children of Israel wished that the Prophet should have been one of their own races; therefore, they refused to accept

<sup>66</sup>See Q., s. al-Baqarah 087/2:101; s. Āli ‘Imrān 089/3:187-8.

<sup>67</sup>See Q., s. al-Mā’idah 112/5:65-66.

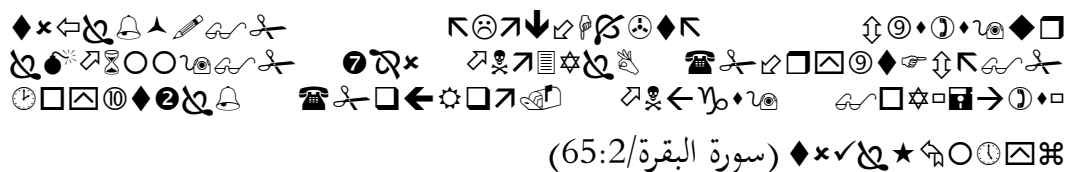
<sup>68</sup>See Q., s. al-Mā’idah 112/5:64.

<sup>69</sup>Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-Azīm*, vol. 1, p. 123-124.

him when he was raised among a race which they considered to be inferior to theirs.<sup>70</sup>

According to Al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī (d. 1889-1970) the verse says that they were partisans of the Prophet long before he was born; they prayed to Allah for victory by his name and his Book. When the Prophet was sent and the Qur'an was revealed, they very well recognized that he was the Prophet in whose name they used to pray for victory, and whose coming they awaited. But they were overwhelmed by envy and arrogance. No sooner did the Prophet begin his call then they denied his truth, and forgot all that they used to tell about the awaited prophet. It was not surprising as they had earlier disbelieved in Torah too. Thus they committed disbelief after disbelief, and invited the wrath of Allah upon themselves, not once but twice.<sup>71</sup>

In another verse, which is addressed to the People of the Book, allusion is made to those whom God has cursed and with whom he has been angry and turned into apes. Transformation into apes recurs elsewhere in the Qur'ān as a punishment inflicted on the Children of Israel for violating the Sabbath Q., s. al-Baqarah 2/087:65.



(سورة البقرة/65:2) ♦\*✓✎★🌀🕒☞

This incident has been described in detail in Q., s. al-A'rāf 7/039:166; there is a difference of opinion as to what actually happened. Some are of the

<sup>70</sup>Al-Mawdūdī, *Tafhīm al-Qur'ān*, <http://www.englishsafsir.com/> last visited 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2011.

<sup>71</sup>Al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī, *al-Mizān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, vol. 1, p. 222.

opinion that they were physically transformed into apes, while others hold the view that from that time onward they began to behave like apes. The words of the Qur'ān, however, indicate that it was not a moral but a physical metamorphosis.

According to al-Mawdūdī, their bodies were transformed into those of apes, but their human minds were left intact in order to subject them to extreme torture.<sup>72</sup> The similar opinion is that of Ibn Kathīr, Allah changed their bodies into those of monkeys and swines.<sup>73</sup> According to Sayyid Quṭb (1906-1966) Thus, deviously and flagrantly, they violated the Sabbath by trapping the fish when they came to the shore and waiting until the next day, when the Sabbath was over, to collect them. As a consequence, they were severely reprimanded and rated as no more than '*despicable apes*', since their mentality and behavior had sunk to utterly revolting depths.<sup>74</sup>

Apart from transformation into apes, the Jews are blamed for failing to keep the laws of their own Torah. In Q., s. al-Jumu'ah 110/62:5, those who have been given the Torah but do not act upon its stipulations are likened to an ass carrying books.


  
 (سورة الجمعة/5:62)

<sup>72</sup>Al-Mawdūdī, *Tafhīm al-Qur'ān*, <http://www.englishsafsir.com/> last visited 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2011.

<sup>73</sup>Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Azīm*, vol. 4, p. 364.

<sup>74</sup>Sayyid Quṭb, *Fī Zilāl al-Qur'ān*, (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 1994/1415), vol. 1, p. 77.

Al-Mawdūdī (d. 1400/1979) reports in this verse That is, they are even worse than a donkey, who is without sense and therefore excusable. But these people have intelligence they read and teach the Torah and are fully aware of its meaning yet they are turning away from its guidance and refusing willfully to acknowledge and believe in the Prophet who even according to the Torah teaches the truth. They are guilty not because of ignorance but because of denying Allah's Revelation deliberately.<sup>75</sup>

In other occasion Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1372) says this is the example of those who were entrusted with the Torah; they read its letter but did not understand its meanings nor abided by them. Rather, they even corrupted and changed the Torah. Therefore, they are worse than the donkey, because the donkey cannot understand. They, on the other hand, could have understood using their minds, but their minds were of no benefit.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>75</sup>Al-Mawdūdī, *Tafhīm al-Qur'ān*, <http://www.englishtafsir.com/> last visited 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2011.

<sup>76</sup>Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Azīm*, vol. 3, p. 336.