

Surah al-Shura, Chapter 42, Verses 1-26

(The Consultation)

Section (juz' 25)

Number of Verses: 53

General Overview of the Chapter

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

This Meccan Chapter has fifty three Verses and its title derives from the question of shura (“consultation”) referred to in Verse 38.

The Chapter treats of the basic tenets of the Islamic faith, e.g. Divine Unity, Resurrection, Prophethood, as well as ethical and social issues. From amongst the twenty-nine Chapters opening with detached letters, the longest series of detached letters is attested in the Chapter in question.

It is worthy of note that the Chapter unravels the mystery of detached letters, since they are followed by:

“Likewise Allah, the Omnipotent, the All-Wise sends Revelation unto you,”

i.e. the Revelation is sent down employing the Arabic letters of alphabet available to everyone whom are challenged to produce the like of it.

The Merits of Recitation of the Chapter

According to a tradition narrated from the Noble Prophet (S):

“One who recites Surah al-Shura is among those on whom angels send down Divine Mercy and for whom they ask forgiveness. 1

Surah al-Shura – Verses 1 – 3

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

ح

عسق

كَذَلِكَ يُوحِي إِلَيْكَ وَإِلَى الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ اللَّهُ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ

1. *HM.*

2. *‘A-S-Q.*

3. *Likewise Allah, the Omnipotent, the All-Wise sends Revelation unto you [O Muhammad] as [He sent Revelation to] those before you.*

The detached letters in Verse 2 allude to the Divine Beautiful Names: the All-Wise (hakim), the All-Glorious (majid), the Omniscient (‘alim), the All-Hearing (sami’), the Omnipotent (qadir) making reference to Divine Favors and Bounties bestowed upon His Messenger (S).

Detached letters are to be attested elsewhere in the Chapter. The ones mentioned in the first and the second Chapters, numbering five, are the most detailed of all. The detached letters HM open seven Qur’anic Chapters², but further detached letters, i.e. ‘A-S-Q, are found in the Chapter in question.

It was recurrently mentioned above that much has been said regarding the Qur’anic detached letters and exegetes have dealt with the subject in many a discussion.

According to the renowned Qur’anic exegete, Tabarsi, eleven interpretations have been provided for Qur’anic detached letters whose remarkable discussions were briefly treated in the opening sections of

Chapters 2, 3, 7, and 19.

Following detached letters, as usual, mention is made of Revelation and the Holy Qur'an, saying:

“Likewise Allah, the Omnipotent, the All-Wise sends Revelation unto you [O Muhammad] as [He sent Revelation to] those before you.”

The adverb

“likewise”

actually makes a reference to the contents of the Chapter and its exalted subject matter.

It is worthy of note that Divine Revelation springs from the same fountainhead – Divine Omniscience and Omnipotence and the contents of Revelation are in principle the same with regards to all Prophetic Calls, though there exist minor changes in terms of requisites of the time, evolution of man, and generalities.

It is noteworthy that mention is made of seven Divine Attributes each of which is in some way related to the question of Revelation, two instances of which are:

“the Omnipotent, the Omniscient.”

These two Attributes necessitate that Divine Revelation be wise and harmonious with human evolutionary requirements.

The verbal form:

yuha (“sends down Revelation”)

is in the present tense and indicates that sending down Divine Revelation has been an ongoing process from the creation of Adam to the time of the Seal of the Prophets (S).

The phrase:

qablaka (“before you”)

which is addressed to the Noble Prophet (S) is recurrent and indicates that he had predecessors in Prophethood.

The point is that

ba'daka (“after you”)

is not attested in the Holy Qur'an which indicates that the Noble Prophet of Islam (S) is the last Prophet. Despite the fact that the Noble Prophet of Islam (S) is the Seal of the Prophets, his name precedes

others which indicates his exalted state.

Divine Omnipotence, Omniscience, Wisdom, and Glory are all manifested in Divine Revelation, hence Divine Revelation and Word deserve further attention.

All Noble Prophets (as) are all related to the springhead of Divine Omnipotence and Glory; as a consequence of which whoever confronts them in opposition will tread the path to perdition.

It is one of the inimitabilities of the Holy Qur'an that clauses and expressions are made of common letters and words the like of which may not be produced by anyone. The system of making Laws, i.e. Revelation and Guidance, belongs to the Creator of the order of creation, e.g. that of the heavens and the earth, Who presides over the world of existence.

Surah al-Shura - Verse 4

لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَهُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْعَظِيمُ

4. To Him belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth, and He is the Most High, the Most Great.

The blessed Verse in question makes a reference to the fact that all Prophets and Messengers were appointed by God Almighty to guide mankind with the same word so that they worship God Almighty with His Divine Attributes of Glory, Beauty, Oneness, and Eternity.

They were also reminded of the fact that God Almighty is Omniscient, Omnipotent, All-Glorious, and Just and all the spheres of the heavens, the earth, and whatever exists between them are subject to His Omnipotence and He encompasses all the worlds through His Glory, Omnipotence and Omniscience and He is the Provider and the Fosterer of them all. He is Superior to all existent beings.

Surah al-Shura - Verse 5

تَكَادُ السَّمَاوَاتُ يَتَفَطَّرْنَ مِنْ فَوْقِهِنَّ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ يُسَبِّحُونَ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّهِمْ وَيَسْتَغْفِرُونَ
لِمَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ أَلَا إِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ

5. Nearly the heavens [through the Greatness of Revelation] might be rent asunder from above them and the angels glorify the praises of their Lord [with gratitude], and ask for forgiveness for those on the earth. Truly, Allah is the Oft-Forgiving, the Most Merciful.

The heavens are impressed by Divine Revelation. How is it that some people are not affected by it.

“The heavens being rent asunder from above them”

may refer to Divine Glory and Greatness that keep the heavens from being rent asunder.

It may also refer to polytheists’ groundless claims as to associating partners with Allah for which the heavens may be rent asunder and drive them to perdition, as the people of Moses (as) requested him to show God unto them and heard the reply:

“You shall not see Me.”

Consequently, Moses (as) was assigned to look at the mountain and if it stayed in its place, he would be able to see Him, but when His Lord manifested Himself, the mountain trembled and Moses (as) became unconscious and those people were destroyed by Divine Wrath.

The blessed Verse may also make a reference to Resurrection through which polytheists and disbelievers are warned that the heavens will be soon rent asunder and angels praise Divine Glory and invoke God Almighty to forgive the inhabitants of the earth.

It is thus confirmed when it is thus said unto His Messenger (S):

“Be Aware that God Almighty is Oft-Forgiving and Most Gracious such that He will grant His Mercy and Forgiveness upon believers rather than disbelievers when the heavens will be rent asunder.”

At that time, angels will invoke God Almighty to forgive believers as it is reflected in Surah al-Ghafir that invocations by angels as to Forgiving is solely for believers.

Surah al-Shura – Verse 6

وَالَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِهِ أَوْلِيَاءَ اللَّهُ حَفِيظٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَمَا أَنْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِوَكِيلٍ

6. And as for those who take as guardians others besides Him, Allah is Protector over them and you [O Muhammad] are not a guardian over them [to make them believe].

It is the Noble Prophet’s (S) duty to impart the Divine Message, but if people turn away from him, he will not be responsible for their disbelief. He is solely responsible for their guidance rather than for making them believe in God Almighty and embrace the Islamic faith.

The blessed Verse in question is a consolation to the Noble Prophet of Islam (S) to entertain no grief for polytheists’ disbelief in Divine Unity and associating partners with God Almighty, since their disbelief may

not affect them.

He is not a guardian over them, but his sole responsibility is to impart the Divine Message, whether they believe in God Almighty and tread the Path of Guidance or veer off the Path out of obduracy and fall into the abyss of error.

Surah al-Shura - Verse 7

وَكَذَلِكَ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا لِتُنذِرَ أُمَّ الْقُرَى وَمَنْ حَوْلَهَا وَتُنذِرَ يَوْمَ الْجَمْعِ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ فَرِيقٌ فِي الْجَنَّةِ وَفَرِيقٌ فِي السَّعِيرِ

7. And thus We have revealed unto you [O Muhammad], a Qur'an in Arabic that you may warn the Mother of the Town [Mecca] and all around it and warn [them] of the Day of Assembling [Resurrection] of which there is no doubt, when a party will be in Paradise and a party in the blazing Fire.

It is reported in traditions that Mecca is the Mother of the Town, since it was the first town which was dry following the Deluge. The Day of Assembling is one of the attributes of Resurrection whereon all people shall assemble in one place.

The clause:

“of which there is no doubt”

is attested eleven times for Resurrection, four times for the Holy Qur'an, and once for the time of death. In other words, noticing the manifestations of Resurrection in nature – rejuvenation in springtime and withering away in autumn – man is not supposed to entertain doubts as to raising of the dead on the Day of Resurrection.

Thus, the blessed Verse in question is saying that in like manner that upon Prophet Muhammad's (S) predecessors were sent Scriptures in the languages of their peoples, the Holy Qur'an is sent down upon him in the Arabic tongue such that Arabs may comprehend its contents.

“That you may warn the Mother of the Town [Mecca] and all around it”

intends to say that the Noble Prophet (S) was supposed to warn the people of Mecca and its vicinity that what was in store for former nations who denied their Prophets.

“And warn [them] of the Day of Assembling”

indicates that the Noble Prophet of Islam (S) was to inform his people of the Day of Resurrection on which God Almighty shall assemble all the inhabitants of the heavens and the earth as to which there is no doubt.

Then, God Almighty divides people on the Day of Resurrection into two groups:

“a party will be in Paradise and a party in the blazing Fire,”

in other words, a group will go to Paradise owing to their obedience to God Almighty and another group will go to Hell due to their sins and vicious deeds committed in this world.

Surah al-Shura – Verses 8 – 9

وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَجَعَلَهُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَلَكِنْ يُدْخِلُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ فِي رَحْمَتِهِ وَالظَّالِمُونَ مَا لَهُمْ مِنْ وَلِيٍّ وَلَا نَصِيرٍ

أَمْ اتَّخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِهِ أَوْلِيَاءَ فَاللَّهُ هُوَ الْوَلِيُّ وَهُوَ يُحْيِي الْمَوْتَى وَهُوَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

8. And if Allah had willed, He could have made them one nation, but [He provides them with free choice and] admits whom He wills to His Mercy. And the wrong doers will have neither a protector nor a helper [on that Day].

9. Or have they taken [for worship] guardians besides Him? But Allah, He Alone is the [True] Protector, and it is He Who gives life to the dead and He is Able to do all things.

God Almighty is All-Wise and all His Acts are done wisely, even if human thought fails to perceive His Wisdom.

Thus, when God Almighty says in the Holy Qur'an that He cherishes or denigrates whom He Wills indicates that those who deserve Guidance and exalted stations through their faith and doing righteous good deeds will be on the Path of Divine Mercy and Guidance through Divine Will, whereas those who hinder themselves from bliss through their disbelief, hypocrisy, and obduracy will not be helped by God Almighty.

Put the case that upon entering your home you notice that a thief is there. You would lock the door to confine him and report the house break to the police. You would lock the door but the thief has made you lock the door. God Almighty seals up some hearts and denigrates some or leads some astray, but

Divine Wrath is the consequence of people's disbelief and misdeeds.

Thus, the blessed Verse in question makes a reference to Divine Omnipotence as to making all mankind believe in Divine Unity and send all of them to Paradise, but Divine Will and Omniscience requires that each and every person is supposed to voluntarily find his way to happiness and tread the Path of Guidance and enjoy Divine Mercy and Favor due to his own righteous good deeds and proceed on the Path to Paradise.

Nonetheless, those who wrong themselves and voluntarily turn away from Divine Mercy, they will have neither friends nor helpers, since all beings are the friends of God's friends and enemies of God's enemies.

Verse 9 is saying that disbelievers selected objects of worship and guardians from amongst idols whereas God Almighty is the only Protector who possesses all gains and losses as well as life and death. How do polytheists and disbelievers select friends besides God Almighty, whereas God Almighty is your friend and guardian and their life and death are subject to His Will and Omnipotence? He is the Creator of all beings and they shall return unto Him.

He shall raise the dead, since He is Able to do anything. He brought everything from non-existence into existence and He is Able to raise the dead and bestow a new life to them.

Surah al-Shura - Verse 10

وَمَا اخْتَلَفْتُمْ فِيهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ فَحُكْمُهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ ذَلِكُمُ اللَّهُ رَبِّي عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ وَإِلَيْهِ أُنِيبُ

10. And in whatsoever you differ, the decision thereof is with Allah. Such is Allah, my Lord in Whom I put my trust and to Him I turn in repentance.

So long as man exists, there are differences of opinion which in turn necessitates Divine Laws and religion.

Thus, it may not be claimed that man is needless of religion. It is solely religion which not only provides solutions for not only ethical and doctrinal questions but also for economic, political, and the like issues. It is incumbent upon man to refer to God Almighty at the time of disputes and differences of opinion, to put one's trust in Him, to turn to Him in repentance.

Man is not supposed to entertain concerns as to Divine Decrees, since putting one's trust in God Almighty and turning to Him in repentance are the consequences of belief in His Lordship;

(“Such is Allah, my Lord in Whom I put my trust and to Him I turn in repentance”).

It is worthy of note that the blessed Verse in question resembles in terms of content to another Qur'anic Verse, saying:

“If you differ in anything amongst yourselves, refer it to Allah and His Messenger, if you believe in Allah and in the Last Day”³.

The relative pronoun **ma** in the clause:

ma akhtalaftum (“*in whatsoever you differ*”)

indicates generalization requiring believers to refer to Divine Decrees and Decisions in their differences in terms of religion, Qur'anic equivocal Verses, legal decrees and laws, sciences, and teachings.

It is incumbent upon believers to refer to the Noble Prophet of Islam (S) who may decide on behalf of God Almighty.

Surah al-Shura - Verse 11

فَاطِرُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ جَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا وَمِنَ الْأَنْعَامِ أَزْوَاجًا
يَذُرُّكُمْ فِيهِ لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ

11. The Creator of the heavens and the earth. He has made for you spouses from yourselves, and for the cattle [also] mates. By this means He creates you [in the wombs]. There is nothing like Him and He is the All-Hearer, the All-Seer.

The Arabic word fatir indicates creator of something unprecedented. Although nothing is like God Almighty, but there is a nexus between Him and all things. He is the All-Hearer and the All-Seer and sees all creatures.

Thus, the blessed Verse in question is saying that God Almighty to Whom are referred all decisions and He is the Lord of the Day of Recompense is also the Creator of the heavens and the earth.

He has made for you spouses from yourselves through His Omnipotence such that men may have mates. He has also made for cattle male and female mates. It is through His Perfect Wisdom that He has made mates for mankind and animals for procreation through which their genera may survive extinction.

The blessed Verse also says:

“There is nothing like Him,”

referring to the fact that nothing may be likened to His Essence. In other words, He is Unique in terms of Essential Truth and True Attributes. The expression is emphatic as it is said in common usage that nobody may do something as somebody else does.

Divine Essence is Unique in terms of His True Manifestations, but He has manifested some of His Attributes, e.g. hearing and vision, in His creatures such that they may recognize Him through such Attributes and praise His Glory.

Surah al-Shura - Verse 12

لَهُ مَقَالِيدُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَقْدِرُ إِنَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ

12. To Him belongs the keys of the heavens and the earth. He enlarges provision for whom He wills, and straitens [it for whom He wills]. Verily, He is the All-Knower of everything [and His enlarging and straitening the provisions are based on His Omniscience and Wisdom].

The Arabic word **maqalid** is the plural form of miqlid (“key”). In the same manner that one may use a key to lock or unlock something, One Who has the key to the heavens and the earth may enlarge or straiten provision.

The keys of existence are at times material means as intermediaries of Divine Bounties like rain that rejuvenates the earth and at times they are Divine Names as mentioned in the Prayer of Samat:

“O Lord! We call You by the Name that if It is called unto the closed gates of the heavens, they will be opened through Your Mercy.”

Although enlarging and straitening provision and sustenance are dependent upon Divine Will, but man is not supposed to desist from making endeavors.

It is said in the Holy Qur’an:

“Follow Divine Bounties,”

that is, make efforts to earn your living.

The keys to the heavens and the earth are subject to His Omnipotence and each and every person is granted his provision as ordained by Divine Decree as per His Wisdom and the order of the world. It is His Divine Will that He enlarges the provision of some people and straitens that of others.

“Verily, He is the All-Knower of everything”

refers to the fact that enlarging and straitening of provisions for different people are not haphazard but they all depend upon His Wisdom and Discretion as He is the Lord and Provider of all things and has preordained portions for everything and everyone.

The motif is elsewhere⁴ reflected in the Holy Qur'an:

“And there is nothing a thing, but with Us are the stores thereof. And We send it not down except in a known measure.”

It is worthy of note that some Qur'anic exegetes interpret:

“the stores of Allah (khaza'in Allah)”

as Divine Ordainments. In other words, everything is in the stores of Divine Omnipotence and He sends down whatever He wills.

However, some other Qur'anic exegetes maintain that the phrase:

“stores of Allah”

indicates all beings that exist in the world of existence and the material world.

Surah al-Shura – Verse 13

شَرَعَ لَكُمْ مِنَ الدِّينِ مَا وَصَّىٰ بِهِ نُوحًا وَالَّذِي أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ وَمَا وَصَّيْنَا بِهِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ
وَمُوسَىٰ وَعِيسَىٰ أَنْ أَقِيمُوا الدِّينَ وَلَا تَتَفَرَّقُوا فِيهِ كَبُرَ عَلَى الْمُشْرِكِينَ مَا تَدْعُوهُمْ
إِلَيْهِ اللَّهُ يَجْتَبِي إِلَيْهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَهْدِي إِلَيْهِ مَنْ يُنِيبُ

13. He has ordained [from amongst religious laws] for you the same religion which He ordained for Noah and that which We have revealed to you [O Muhammad (S)] and that which We ordained for Abraham (as), Moses (as), and Jesus (as) saying you should establish religion and make no divisions in it. Intolerable for the polytheists is that to which you [O Muhammad (S)] call them. Allah chooses for Himself whom He wills and guides unto Himself who turns to Him in repentance and in obedience.

The names of the five Arch-Prophets, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus (as) and the Noble Prophet of Islam (S), are attested in the blessed Verse in question. Prophetic Calls rest on the same basis, since all these eminent Prophets called people unto monotheism, Resurrection, fearing God Almighty, justice, establishing prayers, fasting, doing good to one's parents, and taking care of the needy.

The Arabic verbal form shara'a is a cognate of shari'a designating a tributary leading to larger rivers, e.g. Shari'a 'Alqama leading to Euphrates. The word connotes religious laws since they lead to perfection attributes and states.

The blessed Verse in question is saying that there is one true religion since the religious laws of the Noble Prophet of Islam (S) are consistent with those of former Arch-Prophets. The Verse addresses the followers of their religions that if they convert to the Islamic faith they merely follow all true Prophets.

The Noble Prophet of Islam (S) received Divine Revelation as it had been already revealed to Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Noah (as). They were recommended to establish the religion of Truth and make no division in it.

The blessed Verse refers to the fact that the religion and laws of all Prophets were on a par and they unanimously believed in Divine Unity, monotheism, steadfastness in beliefs, and abstention from division due to individual tastes and inclinations.

It is worthy of note that polytheists and disbelievers do not follow any religion, since all Prophets called people to worship the One God, but they associated idols and other objects of worship with God Almighty imagining that they could intercede on their behalf. Thus, they disfavored Prophets' unanimous call to monotheism.

The blessed Verse addresses the Noble Prophet of Islam (S) saying:

"O Muhammad! God Almighty to Whom you call them to worship chooses for Himself whom He wills and guides unto Himself who turns to Him in repentance and in obedience."

Divine Guidance is granted to one who turns away from people and turn to Truth wholeheartedly and indubitably God Almighty paves the Path for such person. Thus, it becomes evident that it is incumbent upon God's servant to turn to Truth voluntarily and God Almighty will guide him to the Straight Path.

Surah al-Shura - Verse 14

وَمَا تَفَرَّقُوا إِلَّا مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَهُمُ الْعِلْمُ بَغِيًّا بَيْنَهُمْ وَلَوْلَا كَلِمَةٌ سَبَقَتْ مِنْ رَبِّكَ إِلَى
أَجَلٍ مُسَمًّى لَفُضِّي بَيْنَهُمْ وَإِنَّ الَّذِينَ أُورِثُوا الْكِتَابَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ لَفِي شَكٍّ مِنْهُ
مُرِيبٍ

14. And they divided not [to turn away from the Prophets] till after knowledge [as to their true Calling] had come unto them, through the spirit of enmity and envy amongst themselves. And had it not been for a Word that went forth before from your Lord for an appointed term [respite

for disbelievers], the matter would have been settled amongst them [the the followers of falsehood would have perished]. And verily, those who were made to inherit the Scriptures after them are in grave doubt concerning it.

The clauses:

“after knowledge had come unto them”

and

“were made to inherit the Scriptures”

designate that despite their knowledge as to Truth and having inherited the Scriptures, they still tread the path of division.

Although the Prophets asked them to keep their solidarity, they were divided and the source of most of divisions is envy, wrong doing, and greed. God Almighty, because of His Lordship, provides man with respites such that he may enjoy the opportunity to reveal his essential character.

The blessed Verse is saying that differences of opinion concerning religious issues were merely due to rebellion and prejudice prevalent in the Age of Ignorance which, despite evident truth of the Islamic faith, led to denial of Islam and the Holy Qur'an.

However, God Almighty granted them respite and postponed their torment because of His Omniscience otherwise these disbelievers could have the same dire fate which had been in store for the peoples of 'Ad and Thamud.

It is worthy of note that followers of certain religions, such as Jews and Christians, were acquainted with the name and characteristics of the Seal of the Prophets (S) attested in their Scriptures; however, because of their bias and arrogance, they failed to seek the true religion and submit to the Will of Allah, as a consequence of which they have remained in doubt and suspicion.

They failed to comprehend the truth but still entertained doubts in their hearts.

Surah al-Shura - Verse 15

فَلِذَلِكَ فَادُعُ وَاسْتَقِمْ كَمَا أُمِرْتَ وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ وَقُلْ آمَنْتُ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ مِنْ
كِتَابٍ وَأُمِرْتُ لِأَعْدِلَ بَيْنَكُمُ اللَّهُ رَبُّنَا وَرَبُّكُمْ لَنَا أَعْمَالُنَا وَلَكُمْ أَعْمَالُكُمْ لَا حُجَّةَ
بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمُ اللَّهُ يَجْمَعُ بَيْنَنَا وَإِلَيْهِ الْمَصِيرُ

15. So unto this then invite [the people of the Book, O Muhammad! Since they are obdurate and stand in enmity against you] and stand firm as you are commanded, and follow not their desires but say: "I believe in whatsoever Allah has sent down of the Book and I am commanded to administer justice among you. Allah is our Lord and your Lord. For us our deeds and for you your deeds [i.e., we are not responsible for each other's deeds]. There is no dispute between us and you. Allah will assemble us and to Him is the final return.

Administration of justice is the consequence of belief in certain values, e.g. acknowledgement of the Path of Truth and the injunctions of the Messengers of God Almighty, turning away from lusts and vain desires, belief in standing at Divine Tribunal on the Day of Resurrection, and receiving recompense befitting one's deeds. Divine Injunction as to administration of justice and the aforesaid values are treated in the blessed Verse in question.

The leader of the Muslim community is supposed to stand firm as to the tenets of his call rather than submit to people's unlawful demands.

The blessed Verse is addressing the Noble Prophet (S) saying:

"O Muhammad! When the People of the Book entertain doubts as to the Divine source of the Revelation of the Holy Qur'an and your Divine Call owing to their illusions, do not desist from guiding them and propagation of the Islamic faith, but as per your Divine Call stand firm and strive hard on your way so that your doubts may turn into certainty. Do not follow their vain and concupiscent desires and speak according to their beliefs and ways."

It is quoted from Tibyan that Mughayra asked the Noble Prophet (S) to desist from his call and he would grant half of his property to him in return.

'Utba also asked the Noble Prophet (S) to desist from his call and he will marry his daughter to him. Thus, the blessed Verse was revealed. However, the blessed Verse is applicable in other issues as well.

God Almighty says unto His Messenger (S):

"Say that you are submitted to My Command and I shall act according to Qur'anic Injunctions since you are appointed to judge amongst them with justice."

The blessed Verse is apparently saying that the Noble Prophet (S) is appointed to establish harmony and consensus amongst people such that they all stand firm as to the true religion. Following imparting the Divine Message unto people and stood firm in imparting Divine Guidance and tolerated their wrong doing patiently but lost his hope in guiding them, he said:

"Your Lord and My Lord is Allah. We shall bear the consequences of our deeds as you shall bear yours. Now that you are provided with Divine decisive Argument, there remains no excuse for you in this world. There should exist neither enmity nor debates between us.

God Almighty shall assemble us on the Day of Resurrection and He shall judge between us and to Him shall return all things.”

Surah al-Shura – Verse 16

وَالَّذِينَ يُحَاجُّونَ فِي اللَّهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا اسْتَجِيبَ لَهُ حُجَّتُهُمْ دَاحِضَةٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ
وَعَلَيْهِمْ غَضَبٌ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ

16. And those who dispute concerning Allah, after they have accepted His Call, of no use is their dispute before their Lord and on them is Wrath, and for them will be a severe torment.

The Arabic word *muhaaja* deriving from h-j-j (“to intend”) indicates debate through which someone makes attempts at substantiating or refuting something.

When a certain path is substantiated and proven for someone, he is not supposed to desist from the same due to doubts and temptations. When one believes in someone, he is not supposed to be affected by rumors and let go of him.

When one perceives the path of intellection and Divine disposition, he is not supposed to engage in debates in that respect. The blessed Verse is a critique of those who enter into debates concerning the religion of God.

On the day of Covenant, man acknowledged His Lordship and he is not supposed to break his promise.

The other point is that those Jews and Christians who saw the attributes of the Seal of the Prophets (S) in their Scriptures and acknowledged the same but refuted his Divine Call afterwards may not produce Arguments as to the refutation of the Divine Call. Some of the People of the Book had converted to the Islamic faith but assumed that their former religions were better and said unto Muslims that their Scriptures and Prophets preceded the Holy Qur’an and the Noble Prophet of Islam (S) and claimed their precedence and superiority.

Having acknowledged the Prophetic Call of the Noble Prophet of Islam, their arguments may not be accepted by God Almighty but they shall be subject to Divine Wrath and severe torments in the Hereafter.

The blessed Verse might as well allude to those who had acknowledged the Prophetic Call after decisive arguments were produced before them, but they engaged in debates concerning the religion of God Almighty and manner of its injunctions.

Resorting to their limited intellect, they claimed that certain injunctions could have been different. Such

claims shall lead to Divine Wrath and excruciating torments.

Surah al-Shura – Verse 17

اللَّهُ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ وَالْمِيزَانَ وَمَا يُدْرِيكَ لَعَلَّ السَّاعَةَ قَرِيبٌ

17. It is Allah Who has sent down the Book in truth and the Balance. And what can make you know that perhaps the Hour is close at hand?

The Holy Qur'an has a very exalted Truth that aims at our happiness.

“The Hour”

is one of the attributes of Resurrection, since it shall arrive unexpectedly. The blessed Verse in question makes God Almighty known through His Book, the Holy Qur'an. It is Allah Who has revealed the Holy Qur'an in truth and has made its laws and injunctions according to the Balance.

Two attributes of the Holy Qur'an are also treated in this blessed Verse: the Truth of the Holy Qur'an and the fact that the Holy Qur'an is the Balance for assaying through which a distinction may be drawn between Truth and Falsehood.

Divine Names, Bounties, and Attributes are revealed through the Holy Qur'an and Qur'anic Verses indicate that it is revealed by Absolute Truth. In short, God Almighty gives further details about the Holy Qur'an since He reveals its inimitable Verses which are revealed by the Omniscient and All-Wise Lord.

On the other hand, the Holy Qur'an gives details about God Almighty, since it is known by Divine Beautiful Names and Attributes which are blessings through which we may have a name for truth and invoke and glorify Him by that Name.

“And what can make you know that perhaps the Hour is close at hand?”

The sentence is apparently a resumptive one reminding the Noble Prophet (S) that although he is the Messenger of Allah (S) and aware of the mysteries of creation, but the Hour of Resurrection is solely known by God Almighty.

In reply to disbelievers inquiring about the Hour of Resurrection, he is asked to say unto them that God Alone is aware of it and it may be close at hand.

Surah al-Shura - Verse 18

يَسْتَعْجِلُ بِهَا الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهَا وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مُشْفِقُونَ مِنْهَا وَيَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّهَا الْحَقُّ
أَلَا إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُمَارُونَ فِي السَّاعَةِ لَفِي ضَلَالٍ بَعِيدٍ

18. Those who believe not therein seek to hasten it, while those who believe are fearful of it, and know that it is the very truth. Verily, those who dispute concerning the Hour are certainly in error far away.

When those in error have not gone too far away, they may be found and saved, but if they are too far away from the Straight Path, it will be hard or impossible to find and save them from error. Disbelievers and polytheists were always hasty in their judgments concerning Prophets' warnings against Resurrection and asked when such torments happen and why they are not realized.

The Arabic verbal form **yumaruna** designates persistence in doubt and

mushfiq (“fearful”)

is cognate with shafaqat (“fear accompanied with precaution”).

The blessed Verse is saying that since disbelievers did not believe in Resurrection, they were apparently mocking and said unto the Noble Prophet (S):

“O Muhammad! When Resurrection against which you warn us will happen.”

However, believers were certain that Resurrection would happen as a consequence of which they always stood in awe as to its occurrence. Believers tread the path of vice and righteousness but those who doubt the happening of Resurrection are in error far away from the Straight Path and shall sink into the abyss of humility.

Surah al-Shura - Verse 19

اللَّهُ لَطِيفٌ بِعِبَادِهِ يَرْزُقُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَهُوَ الْقَوِيُّ الْعَزِيزُ

19. Allah is very Gracious and Kind to His servants. He gives provisions to whom He wills. And He is the All-Strong, the Omnipotent.

Grace embodies gentleness and consideration. Allah is Most Gracious, that is, He is All-Aware of the

minutest affairs and is the Omnipotent Lord Who does anything with facility.⁵

Divine Omnipotence and Grace guarantee provision of sustenance for God's servants. Divine Might is Invincible.

Latif ("the Gracious")

is one of the Most Beautiful Names of God Almighty which is cognate with lutf ("gentleness, grace, compassion, mercy"). Grace may indicate that God Almighty provides everyone with his daily sustenance in a manner unbeknown to him.

Divine Grace and Bounty is infinite and enlarging and straitening provision solely depends upon Divine Will. Divine provision is based on His Wisdom and consideration of common good and He is the Omnipotent, the Dominant, and the Victorious.

Surah al-Shura - Verse 20

مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ حَرْثَ الْآخِرَةِ نَزِدْ لَهُ فِي حَرْثِهِ وَمَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ حَرْثَ الدُّنْيَا نُؤْتِهِ مِنْهَا
وَمَا لَهُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِنْ نَصِيبٍ

20. Whosoever desires the reward of the Hereafter, We give him increase in his reward, and whosoever desires the reward of this world, We give him thereof, and he has no portion in the Hereafter.

The value of man's deeds depend upon his intentions as well as his long term and short term goals. All Rewards shall be granted by God Almighty. Such Rewards shall be granted proportionate to man's intention and choice.

The Arabic word harth indicates earning and acting as it is said fulanun yahrihu li-'ayalihi, i.e. so and so works to earn a living for his family. The agricultural land which is plowed for sowing is figuratively called harth, since benefits will be gained from working on it as farmers plow their land in autumn and sow the seeds such that they reap the crops in summer.

Act is likened to seeds, since they are supposed to be scattered onto the land, penetrate into it, remain there for some time, sprout through sunshine and irrigation, and grow and bear fruit and crops.

Likewise, righteous good deeds are sown in the farmland of man's soul and turn into permanent dispositions of mind through recurrently acting upon them and they will bear fruit in this world and/or the Hereafter. It should be known that any deed will bear fruit whose quality depends on intent and will of the agent.

One who sows the seeds of good deeds in the farmland of his heart and removes the weeds and impurities from it through the hoe of fearing God Almighty and irrigates it with the pure water of faith and devotion aspiring to reap the harvest in the Hereafter, he has done good deeds with perfect faith and devotion.

As God Almighty has said regarding expending in His Cause, He will reward him seven-hundredfold or more. To reap the crops of the good deeds in this world depends upon Divine Mercy and Grace, but it will entail being deprived of the portion of rewards to be granted by God Almighty in the Hereafter.

Surah al-Shura – Verse 21

أَمْ لَهُمْ شُرَكَاءُ شَرَعُوا لَهُمْ مِنَ الدِّينِ مَا لَمْ يَأْذَنْ بِهِ اللَّهُ وَلَوْلَا كَلِمَةُ الْفَصْلِ لَفُضِيَ
بَيْنَهُمْ وَإِنَّ الظَّالِمِينَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ

21. Or have they partners with Allah [false deities] who have instituted for them a religion which Allah has not ordained? And had it not been for a decisive Word [as to giving respite to sinners], the matter would have been judged between them [through causing their perdition]. And verily, for the wrong doers there is an excruciating torment.

Man is in need of Divine Laws and such need may solely be met by God Almighty rather than anyone else. Divine Laws are solely realized through Divine Permission without which it shall be devoid of legitimacy and lawfulness.

Addressing his son, Imam ‘Ali (as) says:

“Had your Lord had partners, messengers would have come to you from them.”

The blessed Verse in question imparts the same sense:

“Have the partners whom you have associated with God Almighty sent you any religion?”

Concerning Divine respites, Imam Zayn al-’Abidin (as) says:

“O Lord! My recompense for my first sin was Hellfire [but you granted me respite].”

The blessed Verse is a warning to disbelievers against institution of secular laws together with their satanic associates from amongst jinn and mankind without Divine Permission. Such act is so vicious that had there not been Divine Decree as to giving respites in this world and chastisement in the Hereafter, they would have afflicted Divine torments in this world as well.

There shall be excruciating torments for wrong doers who wrong their own selves and act upon laws besides Divine Laws. The blessed Verse may be applied to our own time in which some people legislate laws against Islamic laws and legislators should know that their wrong act shall entail painful torments.

Surah al-Shura – Verse 22

تَرَى الظَّالِمِينَ مُشْفِقِينَ مِمَّا كَسَبُوا وَهُوَ وَاقِعٌ بِهِمْ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا
الصَّالِحَاتِ فِي رَوْضَاتِ الْجَنَّاتِ لَهُمْ مَا يَشَاءُونَ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ ذَلِكَ هُوَ الْفَضْلُ
الْكَبِيرُ

22. You will see [on the Day of Resurrection] the wrong doers fearful of that which they have earned and it [chastisement] will surely befall them. But those who believe and do righteous deeds [will be] in the flowering meadows of the Gardens. They shall have whatsoever they desire with their Lord. That is the supreme Grace.

Resurrection is now invisible, but it is as if it is evident. Man's vicious deeds entail nothing other than Hellfire.

Although people of Paradise are believers and do righteous good deeds, but all those Favors are the consequences of Divine Bounties rather than the Rewards of their deeds.

The Arabic word rawda is applied to a place abounding in water and trees. Addressing the Noble Prophet of Islam (S), the blessed Verse says that the Prophet (S) sees wrong doers who are afraid of their acts and are aware of their the viciousness of their deeds, but they do not desist from committing evil deeds.

They are unaware of the fact that they will pay for the evil consequences of their evil deeds, as if their eyes and ears are filled with muddy water hindering them from perceiving the viciousness of their deeds.

“But those who believe and do righteous deeds [will be] in the flowering meadows of the Gardens. They shall have whatsoever they desire with their Lord.”

The blessed Verse is explicitly saying that wrong doers' hearts are darkened by the viciousness of their deeds and they pay for the consequences of their sins in this world and the Hereafter; au contraire, committing righteous good deeds has illuminated believers' hearts as if they stroll in the meadows of Paradise and whatever they desire will be provided by their Lord. It is the consequence of their faith and righteous good deeds, but they will be granted the true reward on the Day of Resurrection.

Surah al-Shura - Verse 23

ذَٰلِكَ الَّذِي يُبَشِّرُ اللَّهُ عِبَادَهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ قُلْ لَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ
أَجْرًا إِلَّا الْمَوَدَّةَ فِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَمَن يَقْتَرِفْ حَسَنَةً نَّزِدْ لَهُ فِيهَا حُسْنًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ
شَكُورٌ

23. That is [the great Bounty] whereof Allah gives glad tidings to His servants who believe and do righteous good deeds. Say [O Muhammad! Say unto people]: “No reward do I ask of you for this [Divine Call] except to be kind to my close relatives.” And whoever earns a good righteous deed, We shall give him an increase of good in respect thereof. Verily, Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Ready to appreciate [the deeds of those obedient to Him].

The preceding Verse treated of the Reward of beneficent believers, e.g. gardens in Paradise and attainment to all desires and Divine Bounties.

The blessed Verse in question is about the Reward of the Noble Prophet of Islam (S) who has guided hundreds of millions of people to these Gardens and Bounties. Giving a flower to someone as a gift requires a favor in return, delivering mankind requires a far greater Reward.

It is reflected in the Holy Qur’an that all Prophets said that they did not expect any reward from anyone besides God Almighty, their Lord.

“That” (dhalika)

is a reference to the preceding blessed Verse, saying that the great Bounty promised to God fearing believers is God’s glad tidings to His righteous servants as it is also reflected elsewhere⁶ in the Holy Qur’an:

“For them are glad tidings, in the life of this world and that of the Hereafter.”

In short, these Verses indicate that the perfect believer is happy in this world through the illuminations reflected on his heart at all times as if he is in Paradise.

The occasion of Revelation of the blessed Verses 23–26 is mentioned in Tafsir Majma’ al-Bayan as per which it is narrated from the Noble Prophet of Islam (S) that when he arrived in Medina, the pillars of the Islamic faith were fortified.

The Helpers (Ansar) said:

“We will go to the Noble Prophet (S) and will tell him if he has financial needs, our property will

unconditionally be at your disposal.”

When he was informed of their offer, the Verse:

“Tell them that I do not expect any remuneration but the love for my kith and kin”

was revealed.

The Noble Prophet (S) recited the blessed Verse to them and said:

“Love my relatives after my demise.”

They left his presence with satisfaction and happiness, but hypocrites accused him of attributing his own claims to God Almighty saying that he expects them to be responsible to his relatives following his demise.

Then the next Verse was revealed:

“Why do you say that he attributed false claims to Allah?”

The Noble Prophet sent for them and recited the Verse to them. Some of them regretted their false claim, grieved, and wept.

Then the third Verse was revealed:

“But He is the One Who accepts the repentance of His servants.”

The Noble Prophet (S) sent for them and bore them the glad tidings that their sincere repentance had been accepted by God Almighty.

To express the greatness of this Reward, the blessed Verse in question further adds:

“That is [the great Bounty] whereof Allah gives glad tidings to His servants who believe and do righteous good deeds.”

Such glad tidings aim at alleviating the pains of obedience to God Almighty, struggling against concupiscent desires, and jihad against enemies. They also encourage them to proceed with more vigor in vicissitudes and hardships in this life for the attainment of Divine Satisfaction.

Since imparting the Divine Call by the Noble Prophet of Islam (S) led some people to misunderstanding as to his expecting remunerations for the same, he is addressed thus:

“Say: ‘I do not expect any reward from you for imparting the Divine Call but to love my relatives.’”

As it will be discussed in details below, love for his relatives alludes to the question of the Divine

Guardianship and Leadership of the Infallible Imams (as) as descendants of the Noble Prophet of Islam (S).

It is actually the continuity of the Guardianship of the Noble Prophet (S) whose acknowledgement evidently leads to the happiness of mankind and they shall reap the rewards thereof.

It is worthy of note that Qur'anic exegetes raise many a discussion and interpretation regarding the blessed Verse.

Taking an objective glance at such discussions and interpretations reveals that owing to diverse motives they have deviated from the fundamental meaning of the Verse and have opted for possibilities inconsistent with the contextual meaning of the Verse and narrative and historical evidence. All in all, three well-known interpretations have been provided for the Verse in question:

As mentioned above, the term dhawi al-qurba indicates the relatives of the Noble Prophet (S) and love for them may serve as a means of acknowledging the Imamate and leadership of the Infallible Imams (as) as descendants of the Noble Prophet (S) and as a support for imparting the Divine Call.

Some of the earlier exegetes and all Shi'i ones have opted for the meaning in question and many a tradition have been narrated by Shi'i and Sunni scholars in this vein which will be mentioned below.

The blessed Verse intends to say that the Reward of Prophethood is to favor the affairs which call man unto nearness to God Almighty.

The interpretation opted by some of Sunni exegetes is by no means consistent with the literal meaning of the Verse since taking this interpretations into account, the Verse would mean:

"I ask you to love obedience to God Almighty and develop a liking for it,"

whereas it is supposed to say that I expect you to obey God Almighty rather than love for God.

Furthermore, there was not a single person among the audience of the Verse who did not want to come closer to God, even polytheists were interested to approach God and they principally regarded idolatry as a means of the same.

The Verse intends to say that you have your relatives as the reward of Prophethood. Take care of your blood relatives. This interpretation is quite inconsistent with the Prophetic Call and its Reward, since loving one's relatives has nothing to do with assisting the Noble Prophet (S) and it may not be regarded as the Reward for imparting his Prophetic Call.

Now, the best way to further familiarize ourselves with the true contextual meaning of the Verse is to take into account other Qur'anic Verses.

It is reflected in many a Qur'anic Verse that Prophets expected no remuneration from people for

imparting the Divine Message, but they solely expected God Almighty to Reward them. There are different interpretations about the Noble Prophet's (S) Reward. Mention is made of the Reward elsewhere in the Holy Qur'an, for instance,

“Say [O Muhammad!]: ‘Whatever reward I might have asked of you is ours. My Reward is from Allah only, and He is a Witness over all things’”⁷;

“Say [O Muhammad!]: ‘I expect no reward from you for imparting the Divine Call unless from those who want to take the Path toward their Lord’”;

“Say [O Muhammad!]: ‘No reward do I ask of you for this [the Prophetic Call], nor am I one of those who impose anything on you’”⁸.

Taking into account the three Verses and the One in question, we may easily make a conclusion: expectation of remuneration is totally negated in one of the Verses, but another says:

“unless from those who want to take the Path toward their Lord.”

The third Verse says:

“The reward which I have asked from you is for your own selves.”

Finally, the blessed Verse in question says:

“Loving [my] close relatives is the reward of my Prophetic Call,”

in other words, what he expects have the following characteristics: He is not supposed to reap the fruits of such love but such love paves their path toward God Almighty.

It is worthy of note that the blessed Verse in question makes a reference to the continuity of the Prophetic doctrine by the Divine Guardians who are his Infallible successors and descendants.

The question of loving them serves as the basis of the nexus which is explicitly mentioned in the Verse.

It would be of interest to say that besides the Verse in question, the word:

close relatives (qurba)

is attested fifteen times in the Holy Qur'an, but it is not known why some people insist that the word in this context designates “closeness to Allah” and thereby turn away from the denotative meaning as attested throughout the Holy Qur'an.

It is also noteworthy that the Verse further adds:

“And whoever earns a good righteous deed, We shall give him an increase of good in respect thereof. Verily, Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Ready to appreciate [the deeds of those obedient to

Him].”

The most exalted excellence for man is to obey Divine leaders, love them, proceed on their path, inquire about ambiguous issues and ask for their expositions, regard their deeds as the standards of his own, and set their manners as his models.

The aforesaid interpretation is substantiated by many a Prophetic tradition attested in Sunni and Shi'i sources which all indicate that the phrase

“close relatives”

is applied to his Ahl al-Bayt and his kith and kin, instances of which include:

In his Fada'il al-Sahaba, Ahmad narrates thus on the authority of Sa'id ibn Jubayr who in turn narrates from 'Amir:

“When the Verse

‘Say [O Muhammad! Say unto people]: ‘No reward do I ask of you for this [Divine Call] except to be kind to my close relatives’

was revealed, the Companions of the Prophet (S) said unto him:

‘O Messenger of Allah! Who are your relatives whose love is incumbent upon us?’

He replied:

‘Ali and Fatima and their two sons (as).’

*He reiterated the sentence thrice.”*⁹

It is narrated from Imam 'Ali ibn al-Husayn (as) in Mustadrak al-Sahihayn that when Imam 'Ali, the Commander of the Faithful (as), was martyred, Hasan ibn 'Ali delivered a sermon, in which he said:

“I am from a family whose love is incumbent upon all Muslims by God Almighty and He said unto His Prophet (as):

‘Say [O Muhammad! Say unto people]: ‘No reward do I ask of you for this [Divine Call] except to be kind to my close relatives.’

*Acquisition of the good is a reference to being kind to Ahl al-Bayt.”*¹⁰

In his Durr al-Manthur under the Verse in question, Suyuti narrates from Mujahid who in turn narrates from Ibn 'Abbas that the Noble Prophet was asked as to the interpretation of the Verse:

“No reward do I ask of you for this [Divine Call] except to be kind to my close relatives”

and he replied:

*“It means to say that preserve my right regarding my Ahl al-Bayt and be kind to them because of me.”*¹¹

Thus it becomes evident that what is narrated from Ibn ‘Abbas by others in a different manner as per which the Noble Prophet’s (S) safety had been due to his relation to different Arab tribes is not certain since as mentioned above, counter-traditions have been narrated from Ibn ‘Abbas.

In his Tafsir (“Exegesis”), Ibn Jarir Tabari narrates on the authorities of Sa’id ibn Jubayr and ‘Umar ibn Shu’ayb that the Verse in question indicates the relatives of the Prophet (S).¹²

Quoting Hakim Haskani’s (a well-known Sunni exeget and traditionist) Shawahid al-Tanzil, Tabarsi narrates from Abi Umama Bahili that the Noble Prophet of Islam (S) said:

“God Almighty created Prophets from different trees, but He has created me and ‘Ali (as) from the same tree. I am the trunk and ‘Ali is the branch of the tree and Fatima (as) causes the tree to thrive and Hasan and Husayn (as) are the fruits thereof and the Shi’i, our followers, are its leaves...”

Even if someone worships God Almighty between Safa and Marwa for three thousand years such that he will be likened to an old water skin but he fails to love us, God Almighty will cast him on his face onto the Fire.”

Then the Noble Prophet (S) recited the Verse:

“No reward do I ask of you for this [Divine Call] except to be kind to my close relatives.”

It is worthy of note that the tradition was so well-known that the famous poet, Kumayt, alludes to it:

*“We have found for you (the Family of the Noble Prophet) a Verse in HM Chapters which is interpreted by those who conceal their beliefs out of discretion in duress and it is explicitly expressed by those who evidently express their beliefs.”*¹³

Thus quotes Suyuti in al-Durr al-Manthur from Ibn Jarir who in his turn narrates on the authority of Abi Daylam:

“When ‘Ali ibn al-Husayn was captured and held at the gate of Damascus, a certain man from Sham said:

“God bless that He killed and eradicated you.”

‘Ali ibn Husayn replied:

“Have you read the Qur’an?”

He said:

“Yes.”

‘Ali ibn Husayn inquired:

“Have you read the Chapter HM?”

He said:

“No.”

‘Ali asked him:

“Have you not read the Verse:

‘No reward do I ask of you for this [Divine Call] except to be kind to my close relatives?’

The man asked:

“Are you the ones referred to in the Verse?”

‘Ali replied:

“Yes.”¹⁴

In his *Kashshaf*, Zamakhshari quotes a tradition which is also cited on his authority by Fakhr Razi and Qurtubi in their exegetic works. The tradition explicitly expresses the excellence of the family of the Prophet (S) and the significance of the love for them, saying:

“The Messenger of Allah (S) said:

“One who passes away with the love of the family of Muhammad (S) is a martyr. Beware that such person passes away with repentance.

Beware that he passes away as a perfect believer. Beware that when he dies, the angel of death bears glad tidings to the people of Paradise and the angels in charge of questioning the deceased in purgatory bear him glad tidings.

Beware that such person will be taken to Paradise with respect such that a bride is taken to the bridegroom. Beware that two gates will be opened in his grave to Paradise. Beware that his grave shall be the place of worship for the angels of Mercy.

Beware that such person passes away according to the practice of the Muslim community. Beware that one who passes away with enmity against the family of the Prophet (S) will enter the desert of

Resurrection with a sign on his forehead which reads:

'Disappointed from Divine Mercy.'

*Beware that one who passes away with a grudge against the family of the Prophet (S) dies as a disbeliever. Beware that such person will not smell the fragrance of Paradise."*¹⁵

It is worthy of note that that citing the tradition also quoted by the author of Kashshaf, Zamakhshari, Fakhr Razi further adds:

"The family of the Prophet (S) are those to whom they shall return, those people whose relationship is firmer and more perfect are regarded as the 'family' and it is evident that Fatima, 'Ali, Hasan, and Husayn (as) had the firmest relationship with the Messenger of Allah (S).

This fact is substantiated by consecutively transmitted traditions. Thus it is incumbent upon us to call them as the family of the Prophet (S). Some people have different opinions regarding the meaning of 'family' (al). Some regard them as the close relatives of the Prophet (S) and some maintain that they are the Noble Prophet's (S) community.

If we take the former meaning as preferable the term exclusively refers to them, but if we take it as indicating those who acknowledged his Prophetic Call, the close relatives of the Messenger of God (S) are still regarded as his family. Therefore, in any case, they are the family of the Prophet (S), but there are differences of opinion as to the inclusion of people other than them."

Then Fakhr Razi proceeds to quote from Zamakhshari's Kashshaf:

"When the Verse was revealed, the Noble Prophet (S) was asked:

'O Messenger of God! Who are your relatives whose love is incumbent upon us?'

He replied:

"Ali, Fatima, and their two sons (as).'

Now it is evident that these four persons are the Noble Prophet's (S) close relatives and it behoves Muslims to pay deed respect to them."

Fakhr Razi further adds that there are different arguments substantiating the question:

The aforesaid clause:

"except to be kind to my close relatives"

whose manner of argumentation was discussed above.

The Noble Prophet (S) indubitably loved Fatima (as) and regarding whom he said:

“Fatima is a part of my body, what hurts her, hurts me.”

According to consecutively transmitted traditions narrated from the Noble Prophet (S), he loved ‘Ali, Hasan, and Husayn (as) which makes it incumbent upon all Muslims to love them, since the following Qur’anic Verses explicitly indicate the same:

“Follow him so that you may be guided”¹⁶;

“And let those who oppose his commandments beware of Divine torment”¹⁷;

“Say [O Muhammad!]: “If you love Allah then follow me, Allah will love you and forgive you your sins”¹⁸;

“Verily in the Messenger of Allah (S) you have a good example to follow”¹⁹.

It would be a great honor to pray for the family (al), thereby the tashahhud part of daily prayers devoted to the invocation of Divine Presence closes with:

“O God! Bless Muhammad and his family, forgive Muhammad and his family.”

Such honor is unprecedented for people besides the Noble Prophet’s (S) family. Thus, the aforesaid arguments indicate that it is incumbent upon Muslims to love the Noble Prophet’s (S) family.

Finally, Fakhr Razi closes his discussion on the same with the well-known lines by Shafi’i:

O rider heading to pilgrimage to Mecca

I In a place close to Mina, the great centre for pilgrims’ assembly, where rocks are gathered for symbolic lapidation of Satan (ramy jamara)

I Stand and call unto all those praying at Khayf Mosque or are moving around,

I Cry out at daybreak when pilgrims depart from Mash’ar toward Mina and flow like an immense and roaring river into the land of Mina

*I Call unto them that if the love for the family of the Noble Prophet (S) is heresy and apostasy, all jinn and mankind will bear witness that I am a heretic and an apostate.*²⁰

Thus is the exalted state of the family of the Noble Prophet (S) whom we ask to intercede with God Almighty on our behalf and whom we regard as our leaders and guides in matters of religion in this world and as our models in life. We regard their Imamate as the continuity of the Prophetic Call.

It is worthy of note that in addition to the aforesaid traditions, there are many other traditions mentioned in Islamic sources concerning the same issue; however, owing to concision and making solely mention of exegetic dimensions, mention was made above of seven traditions.

It is also noteworthy that the tradition in question is attested in theological sources, e.g. Ihqaq al-Haqq and its detailed commentary and also in approximately fifty Sunni sources. Such attestation explicitly bears witness to the prevalence of the tradition in Sunni as well as Shi'i sources.

In terms of traditions, Shi'i and Sunni sources unanimously reveal that the blessed Verse in question is revealed concerning the Noble Prophet's (S) family (Ahl al-Bayt) loving them is obligatory and enmity against them is forbidden.

Now, mention will be made of the Sunni sources regarding the exegesis of the blessed Verse in question and the obligation of loving the Noble Prophet's (S) family: Bukhari's Sahih, section six concerning the exegesis of the blessed Verse in question; Muslim's Sahih, section five regarding the exegesis of the blessed Verse in question; Tirmidhi's Sahih, vol. 2, p. 308; Hilyat al-Awliya', vol. 3, p. 201; Kifayat al-Talib, chapter 11, p. 90; Musnad al-Sahaba, section 10, p. 71; Mu'jam al-Kabir, vol. 1, p. 125; Fada'il Ibn Hanbal, tradition 263; Ghayat al-Maram, chapter 5, p. 306; Ibn Maghazili's Manaqib, tradition 355; Majma' al-Zawa'id, vol. 9, p. 168; Tafsir Kashshaf, vol. 2, p. 339; Dhakha'ir al-'Uqba', p. 25; Sawa'q, p. 101; Ibn 'Asakir, no. 181, Ta'rikh Dimashq, vol. 37, p. 43; Lisan al-Mizan, vol. 4, p. 434; Ta'rikh Isbahan, vol. 2, p. 165; Kanz al-'Ummal, vol. 1, p. 208; Fara'id al-Simtayn, chapter 26, simt 2, tradition 425; Maqatil al-Talibiyin, p. 50; Tafsir Furat, p.70; Taysir al-Matalib, p. 120; Ansab al-Ashraf, vol. 2, p. 79; Tafsir Tabari, vol. 25, p. 25; Usd al-Ghaba, vol. 5, p. 367; Ta'rikh Baghdad, vol. 2, p. 146; al-Durr al-Manthur, under the blessed Verse in question; Majma' al-Zawa'id, vol. 9, p. 172; Kunuz al-Haqa'iq, vol. 5, Dhakha'ir al-'Uqba, p. 18; Nur al-Absar, p. 103.

To sum up, all Sunnis and Shi'is, friends and foes, are unanimous in saying that it is incumbent upon all Muslims to love and support the Noble Prophet's (S) family and his descendents.

Surah al-Shura - Verse 24

أَمْ يَقُولُونَ افْتَرَى عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا فَإِنْ يَشَاءِ اللَّهُ يَخْتِمْ عَلَى قَلْبِكَ وَيَمْحُ اللَّهُ الْبَاطِلَ
وَيُحِقُّ الْحَقَّ بِكَلِمَاتِهِ إِنَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ

24. Or say they: "He has invented a lie against Allah?" If Allah willed, He could have sealed up your heart. And Allah wipes out falsehood and establishes the truth by His Word. Verily, He knows well what [secrets] are in the breasts [of men].

Regarding the question of Prophetic Call disbelievers and heretics said that the Noble Prophet of the Islamic faith (S) was a man like them and his Prophetic Call was an accusation against God Almighty; likewise they voiced the same accusation regarding the question of Imamate.

Those who did not intend to regard the love for Ahl al-Bayt as a Prophetic Call said:

“Muhammad invents lies against God by saying that his reward is that people love his next of kin.”

The blessed Verse in question is saying had the Messenger (S) invented a lie against Allah, He would vent His Wrath upon him by sealing up his heart.

It is worthy of note that the blessed Verse in question resumes the subject matter of the preceding Verses concerning Prophetic Call and the Reward thereof, love for his next of kin and the Ahl al-Bayt.

In this vein, the blessed Verse is saying that they do not acknowledge Divine Revelation, but say that He invents lies against God and his words are the fruits of his imagination:

“If Allah willed, He could have sealed up your heart”.

The blessed Verse is in fact an allusion to the well-known logical argument as per which if someone claims to be the Prophet and works miracles and signs and is supported by God, but invents lies against Him, Divine Wisdom will necessitate that the miracles and His Support be taken away and he will be disgraced as it is reflected elsewhere in the Holy Qur’an²¹:

“And if he had forged a false saying concerning Us, We surely would have seized him by his right hand [and would have cut the vessel of his heart].”

It is also noteworthy that one of the false accusations made by disbelievers and polytheists was that they said that he had regarded the love for his kith and kin as the reward for his Prophetic Call and had thus forged a false saying concerning God. Taking into account the preceding Verses, the blessed Verse in question rejects such false claim.

However, the contextual meaning of the blessed Verse is not restricted to this sense, since the Holy Qur’an reveals that the enemies of the Noble Prophet (S) forged the same false claim as to the entirety of the Holy Qur’an as Divine Revelation, as it is reflected elsewhere in the Holy Qur’an²²:

“Or do they say: ‘He [Muhammad (S)] has forged it?’ Say: ‘Bring then a Chapter like unto it and call upon whomsoever you can besides Allah, if you are truthful.’”

The following Verse also puts further emphasis on the same:

“Allah effaces falsehood”²³.

It rests with God Almighty to disgrace falsehood and make truth appear. Thus, He never allows anyone to forge a lie against Him and render him assistance and allow him to make miracles at the same time.

It is not imaginable that the Noble Prophet (S) was able to forge a lie against God Almighty without His being Aware of the same, since:

“He is All-Aware of the secrets in breasts.”

As mentioned above under the exegesis of 35:38, the word dhat is not employed in the Arabic tongue in the sense of essence and truth of things, but it is a philosophical term.²⁴

The point is that the word is used in the sense of

“possessor, having.”

Thus, the meaning of the last Verse²⁵ is that God Almighty is All-Aware of the thoughts and beliefs predominating hearts since He is the Possessor of the same. It is a delicate allusion to predominance of thought over the hearts and souls of mankind.

Surah al-Shura – Verse 25

وَهُوَ الَّذِي يَقْبَلُ التَّوْبَةَ عَنْ عِبَادِهِ وَيَعْفُو عَنِ السَّيِّئَاتِ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا تَفْعَلُونَ

25. And He it is the One Who accepts repentance from His servants, and forgives sins, and He knows what you do.

It solely rests with God Almighty to accept the repentance of His servants and forgive their sins. There are no deadlocks in Islam and the path of return is open at all times.

God Almighty forgives all sins, but repentance is supposed to accompany change of words and attitudes unless it would be a kind of dissimulation and hypocrisy known by God Almighty.

Since God Almighty leaves the path of return open at all times to His servants, following reproaches as to sinners' and polytheists' vicious deeds, the Holy Qur'an repeatedly makes reference to the path of repentance at all times and adds:

“He is the One Who accepts repentance from His servants and forgives sins.”

The point is that if man pretends repentance but keeps on committing vicious deeds, he should know that nothing is concealed from Divine Omniscience, since

“He knows what you do.”

It was mentioned above that following the Revelation of the Verse of loving Prophet's (S) family, some hypocrites and those of frail faith said that Muhammad (S) had invented a lie against God intending to belittle them before his kith and kin following which the Verse:

“He has invented a lie against Allah?” If Allah willed, He could have sealed up your heart”

was revealed; as a consequence of which some of them regretted their words, grieved, and wept. Thus, the blessed Verse in question was revealed to bear them glad tidings that if they sincerely repent, God Almighty will forgive their sin.

Surah al-Shura – Verse 26

وَيَسْتَجِيبُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَيَزِيدُهُمْ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ وَالْكَافِرُونَ لَهُمْ
عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ

26. And He answers [the invocations of] those who believe and do righteous good deeds, and gives them increase of His Bounty. And as for the disbelievers, theirs will be a severe torment.

God Almighty answers the invocations of those who believe and do righteous good deeds. It is worthy of note, however, that answering their invocations depends upon faith and doing righteous good deeds.

Thus it is said in the blessed Verse in question:

“And He answers [the invocations of] those who believe and do righteous good deeds, and gives them increase of His Bounty. And as for the disbelievers, theirs will be a severe torment.”

Taking into account the blessed Verse

“Invoke Me and I shall answer your invocations”

encompassing all men, it becomes apparent that answering invocations is solely restricted to believers. One whose heart is enlightened through faith and monotheism and obeys Divine Commands, God Almighty turns to him and answers his prayers.

It is reflected in traditions that one who approaches God Almighty one span, He will approach him one cubit:

(“One who is for God, God is for him”).

Finally, mention will be made of two traditions. Regarding the invocation in question, Imam Baqir (as) says:

*“A believer’s invocation for his brother in faith shall be answered by God Almighty, since He will say that owing to his love for his brother in faith, the invoker and the one for who he invokes will be granted what they require.”*²⁶

It is narrated from Imam Sadiq (as) that:

“gives them increase of His Bounty”

makes a reference to the right of believers interceding with God Almighty on behalf of others.²⁷

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1. Majma' al-Bayan, opening of the Chapter in question.
 2. 40-46
 3. 4:59
 4. 15:21
 5. Tafsir al-Mizan.
 6. 10:64
 7. 34:47
 8. 38:86
 9. Ihqaq al-Haqq, vol. 3, p. 2. Qurtubi also cites the tradition under the Verse in question (vol. 8, p. 5843).
 10. Mustadrak al-Sahihayn, vol. 3, p. 2. Muhibb al-Din Óabari in Dhakha'ir (p. 37) and Ibn Hajar in his Sawa'iq (p. 101) have also cited the tradition.
 11. al-Durr al-Manthur, under the Verse in question, vol. 6, p. 7.
 12. Tafsir Óarabi, vol. 25, pp. 16-17.
 13. Majma' al-Bayan, vol. 9, p. 29.
 14. al-Durr al-Manthur, vol. 6, p. 7.
 15. Tafsir Kashshaf, vol. 4, pp. 220-221; Fakhr Razi, vol. 27, pp. 165-166; Tafsir Qurtubi, vol. 8, p. 5843. Tafsir Tha'labi, under the blessed Verse in question, apud al-Muraja'at, no. 19.
 16. 7:158
 17. 24:63
 18. 3:31
 19. 33:21
 20. The Tafsir by Fakhr Razi, vol. 27, p. 166.
 21. 69:44-46
 22. 10:38
 23. 17:11
 24. Raghíb's Mufradat.
 25. 35:38
 26. Tafsir Nur al-Thiqalayn, under the blessed Verse in question.
 27. Majma' al-Bayan; Nur al-Thiqalayn.

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