

مَوْجٌ مِّنْ فَوْقِهِ سَحَابٌ ۗ طُظِّلِمْتُ بَعْضُهَا فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ ۗ إِذَا أَخْرَجَ
يَدَهُ لَمْ يَكْذِبْ يَدَهَا ۗ وَمَنْ لَّمْ يَجْعَلِ اللَّهُ لَهُ نُورًا فَمَا لَهُ مِنْ نُّورٍ

﴿٤٠﴾

And indeed We have sent down to you enlightening verses and an exemplary description of those who passed away before you and a good counsel for the God-fearing. [34]

Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The example of His light is that of a niche in which there is a lamp; the lamp is in a glass - the glass looks like a brilliant star - it is lit by (the oil of) a blessed tree, the olive, which is neither eastern, nor western. Its oil is about to emit light even if fire has not touched it - (it is) light upon light. Allah guides to His light whomsoever He wills. And Allah describes examples for the people, and Allah knows everything well. [35]

(The guided people worship Allah) in the houses that Allah has permitted to be raised and where His name is recounted and His purity is pronounced, in the morning and in the evening, [36] by men whom no trade or sale makes neglectful of the remembrance of Allah, nor from establishing Ṣalāh and paying Zakāh; they are fearful of a day in which the hearts and the eyes will be overturned. [37] The fate (of such people) is that Allah will reward them for the best deeds they did and will give them more out of His grace. And Allah gives whom He wills without counting. [38]

As for those who disbelieve, their deeds are like a mirage in a desert plane which a thirsty person deems to be water, until when he comes to it, he finds it nothing, and finds (the decree of) Allah with him, so He pays him his account in full. And Allah is swift at reckoning. [39] Or (their deeds) are like layers of darkness in a vast deep sea overwhelmed by a wave, above which there is another wave, above which there are clouds - layers of darkness, one above the other. When one puts forth his hand, he can hardly see it. And

the one to whom Allah does not give light can have no light at all. [40]

Commentary

The scholars call this verse as the 'Verse of Radiance', because it describes in great detail the radiance of faith and the darkness of disbelief.

The definition of Nūr (Light)

Imām Ghazzālī رحمه الله تعالى has given the definition of Nūr (light) as الظاهر بنفسه والمظهر لغيره that is something which is bright and manifest on its own, and makes other things bright and evident. Tafsir Maḥzarī has explained that Nūr is in fact that condition which is initially perceived by man's sense of sight, and then through that perception he comprehends all those things which can be seen by eye, such as in the case of rays of sun and the moon, which on falling on a solid mass brightens it up, and then through the reflection from solid mass brightens other things. Hence, it is evident that the word Nūr cannot be used for Allah Ta'ālā in its literal or common meaning, because He is free from body and materiality. Therefore, there is consensus among the scholars that the use of word Nūr for Allah Ta'ālā in the verse under reference is purported for *Munawwir*, meaning the one who brightens, or may be the master of brightening is referred here as Nūr, in the same way as the possessor of grace is sometimes called Grace, or the possessor of justice is called the Justice. So, meaning of the verse is that Allah bestows Nūr to earth and the heaven, and to everything living there, and the Nūr is purported to be the Nūr of righteousness. Ibn Kathīr has reported the explanation put forward by Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ that : الله هادي اهل السموات والارض (that is, Allah is the Guide of all living in the heavens and the earth).

Nūr of the believer

مَثَلُ نُورِهِ كَمِشْكُوتٍ (The example of His light is that of a niche in which there is a lamp - 24:35). This is a nice example of Allah Ta'ālā's Nūr of guidance, which penetrates into the heart of the believer. Ibn Jarīr has reported its explanation put forward by Sayyidnā Ubayy b. Ka'b ؓ.

هو المؤمن الذي جعل الله الايمان والقران في صدره، فضرب الله مثله فقال: الله نور السموات والارض، فبدأ بنور نفسه ثم ذكر نور المؤمن، فقال: مثل نور من امن به، فكان ابي بن كعب يقرأها مثل نور من امن به. (ابن كثير)

It means that this is the example of the believer in whose heart Allah Ta'ālā has laid down the Nūr of faith and of the Qur'an. In this verse Allah Ta'ālā has first mentioned His own Nūr **اللَّهُ نُورُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ**, and then the Nūr of the believer's heart and the following example is for the one who believes in Him. Sayyidnā Ubayy Ibn Ka'b رضي الله عنه used to recite this verse as **مثل نور من آمن به** instead of **مثل نوره** (to explain this). Sa'īd Ibn Jubair رضي الله عنه has also reported the same meaning and recitation of the verse from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه. Ibn Kathīr has narrated all these explanations and then remarked that there are two view points among the jurists about the pronoun of **مِثْلُ نُورِهِ** (the example of *his* light). One, that this pronoun has reference toward Allah Ta'ālā, and thus the meaning of the verse is 'Allah's Nūr placed in the heart of believers naturally', and the example of that is **كَمِشْكُورَةٍ** (like a niche). This explanation is put forward by Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه. The other explanation is that the personal pronoun refers to the believers, who are presumed to have been referred to by the context. So, the example given in the verse can be explained as follows: The chest of a believer is like a niche, while the heart of the believer placed in the chest is like a lamp (placed in the niche). Then the transparent oil of olive is the example of the natural *nūr* (light) of guidance which is deposited in the nature of a believer and which has the inherent capability to accept the truth (which is indicated in the verse by the words 'Its oil is about to emit light even if fire has not touched it). Then as the olive oil produces brightness when caused to burn with the flame of fire, the same way natural Nūr of guidance which is placed in the heart of the believer, when joins the message and knowledge of Allah Ta'ālā, then it gets brightened and also brightens the world. When the companions and their pupils confined this example to the heart of a believer alone, they have most probably done so because it is only the believer who draws benefit from this Nūr. Otherwise the natural Nūr of guidance which is placed in the hearts of humans at the time of their creation, is not confined to believers, but is part of the nature and instinct of every human being. It is for this reason that one can see all around the world that there are people in every nook and corner, in all societies and religions, who believe in the existence of God and His Omnipotence, and do turn towards Him. No matter one may make all types of errors in the perception and understanding of God, yet every individual does believe by nature in His existence, with the exception of a few atheists, who have

lost their natural instinct.

A Ṣaḥīḥ *ḥadīth* endorses this view, which says, *كُلُّ مَوْلُودٍ يُوَلَّدُ عَلَى الْفِطْرَةِ* that is 'Every child is born with natural instinct'. Later, his parents put him on the wrong path. This natural instinct is the guidance of faith. The guidance of faith and its Nūr is bestowed to every individual at the time of his birth, and because of this Nūr of guidance, one possesses the ability to accept the truth. When they come to know about the revelations of Allah through His messengers and their deputies, they readily accept them, except those unfortunate people who have erased the Divine Nūr from their heart with their wrong doings. Perhaps this is the reason that in the beginning of the verse the bestowal of Nūr is said to be common to all, which includes every one on the earth and the heavens, without any difference between believers or disbelievers, but towards the end of the verse it is said *يَهْدِي اللَّهُ لِنُورِهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ*, that is 'Allah Ta'ālā guides to His light whomsoever He wills - 35'. Here the will of Allah is not pointing toward that Divine Nūr which is bestowed to all humans, but toward the Qur'ānic Nūr, which is not availed by every one, except those fortunate ones, to whom Divine help is granted. Otherwise even one's endeavor goes waste without Divine help, and sometimes becomes detrimental :

اذ لم يكن عون من الله للفتى فأول ما يجنى عليه اجتهاده

'If there is no help to man from Allah, then his striving puts him to trouble instead'.

The Nūr of the Holy Prophet ﷺ

Imām Baghawī رحمه الله تعالى has narrated that Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ once enquired from Ka'b al-Aḥbār as to how would he explain this verse *مِثْلُ نُورِهِ كَمِشْكَاةٍ*. Ka'b al-Aḥbār, who was a great Muslim scholar of Torah and Injīl, said that this example was meant for the heart of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Mishkāṭ (the niche) stands for his chest, Zujājah (glass) for his heart and Miṣbāḥ (lamp) for his prophethood. What was unique about this Nūr of prophethood was that even before the declaration of prophethood it had the illumination of light for the people. When the revelation from Allah is coupled with the Nūr of prophethood, then it turns into such radiance that the whole world is brightened.

Before the declaration of prophethood of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and even before his birth, some strange and amazing events had taken place

in the world, which were in fact advance notice of the incoming prophet, and are called *Irḥaṣāt* in the vocabulary of the scholars of *ḥadīth*. The difference between this word and miracle is that the latter is used for such unusual events which are bestowed by Allah Ta'ālā to his messengers for the endorsement of their prophethood, while *Irḥaṣāt* are those unusual events which happen before the declaration of prophethood. There are a number of unusual incidents which are recorded by several authentic narrations, and have been compiled by Shaikh Jalaluddīn Sayuṭī رحمه الله تعالى in his book (Khaṣāiṣ Kūbrā - خصائص كبرى) - and by Abū Nu'aim in his *Dalāil-un-Nubuwwah* - دلائل النبوة. Other scholars have also collected many such incidents in their books. Tafsīr Maḥzarī has reproduced a good number of these events.

Benefits of olive oil

شَجَرَةٌ مُبْرَكَةٌ رُزُقْنَا (A blessed tree, the olive - 35.). This is an endorsement that olive and its tree is blessed by Allah and is beneficial and useful. Scholars have commented that Allah Ta'ālā has instilled many a benefits in it. Olive oil is used in the burning of lamps. Its light is the brightest and clearest as against any other oil. It is eaten as a fruit and its oil is used in cooking. The interesting part is that there is no need of any machine for the extraction of its oil. When the fruit is ripe, the oil comes out automatically. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has asked to eat and massage the body with olive oil. (Baghawī - Maḥzarī)

فِي بُيُوتِ الَّذِينَ اللَّهُ أَنْ تَرْفَعَ وَيُذَكَّرَ فِيهَا اسْمُهُ، لَا يَسْبَحُ لَهُ، فِيهَا بِالْعُدُودِ وَالْأَصَالِ

(The guided people worship Allah) in the houses that Allah has permitted to be raised and where His name recounted and His purity is pronounced, in the morning and in the evening, - 36.

In the previous verse Allah Ta'ālā had given a unique example of placing His Nūr of guidance in the heart of believers. Toward the end of the verse it was clarified that only those draw benefit from this Nūr, whom Allah loves and grants Divine help. In the above verse those places and buildings are referred to where such believers spend most of their time, especially the five times of prayers. These are the buildings for which Allah Ta'ālā has instructed to keep them high in esteem, and where His name be remembered. The splendor of such buildings is that Allah's name is remembered there in the morning and evening. That is He is worshipped there all the time by the people, who's attributes will

follow soon.

The above explanation is based on the assumption that *فِي بُيُوتٍ* (in the houses) has an association with the sentence *يَهْدِي اللَّهُ لِنُورِهِ* (Allah guides to this light whomsoever He wills). (Ibn Kathīr etc.) Some others are of the opinion that it has a link with the word *يُسَبِّحُ* (His purity is pronounced), which is used later in the verse. But the first version appears more appropriate in the context of the subject. In that case the meaning of the verse would be that the Nūr of guidance referred to in the example of the previous verse can be found in the buildings and houses where He is remembered all the time. There is consensus among commentators that here the word 'houses' is purported for mosques.

Mosques are houses of Allah and their respect is obligatory

Qurṭubī has preferred the view that the word 'raised' used in the verse means to respect the mosques and has quoted the following *ḥadīth* of Sayyidnā 'Anas رضي الله عنه in support of his contention.

من أحبَّ الله عزَّوجلَّ فليحبَّني، ومن أحبَّني فليحبَّ اصحابي، ومن أحبَّ اصحابي فليحبَّ القرآن، ومن أحبَّ القرآن فليحبَّ المساجد، فانها افنية الله اذن الله في رفعها وبارك فيها ميمونة ميمون اهلها محفوظة محفوظ أهلهاهم في صلاتهم والله عزَّوجلَّ في حوائجهم هم في المساجد والله من ورائهم. (قرطبي)

The Holy Prophet ﷺ said "Whoever wishes to love Allah should love me, and whoever wishes to love me should love my companions, and whoever wishes to love my companions should love the Qur'ān, and whoever wishes to love Qur'ān should love the mosques, because they are Allah's houses. Allah has enjoined to 'raise' them, and has made them blessed. They are blessed and those who live there are also blessed. They are in the protection of Allah, and those who live there are also in the protection of Allah. Those who are busy there in their prayers, Allah get their works done and fulfill their needs. While they are in the mosques Allah protects their household during their absence". (Qurṭubī)

Meaning of raising of mosques

إِذْنُ (That Allah has permitted to be raised - 36). The word *إِذْنٌ* ('*idhn*'), which means to allow or give permission, and the word *تُرْفَعُ* (*turfa'a*) is derived from *رَفَعَ* (*raf'*), which means to raise, uplift or exalt. So, the meaning of this verse is that Allah

has allowed the raising of the mosques. Here 'allowed' means 'enjoined', and 'raising' means 'to venerate'. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ has explained that Allah Ta'ālā has prohibited Muslims from talking or doing anything absurd in the mosques. (Ibn Kathīr).

'Ikrimah and Mujāhid رَحِمَهُمُ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى, the two Imāms of Tafsīr, are of the opinion that raising of the mosques carries here the sense of building the mosques in the same way as Qur'ān says about the building of Ka'bah رَفَعْنَا لَكَ أُسْوَءَ الْقَوْمِ الْكَافِرِينَ وَإِذْ يَرْفَعُ إِبْرَاهِيمُ الْقَوَاعِدَ مِنَ الْبَيْتِ (And when Ibrahim was raising up the foundations of the House - 2:127). Here the raising of foundation is purported for building (construction) of foundation. Ḥasan Baṣrī رَحِمَهُ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى has given a different view that the word 'raised' is used here for respect and veneration of mosques, and to keep them clean from filthy and impure things, as narrated in a *ḥadīth* that, when an impure (*najis*) thing is brought in the mosque, it contracts itself in a similar manner as the human skin contracts from the fire. Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd Khudrī ؓ has reported that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said that whoever takes out dirty, impure and vexatious things from the mosque, Allah Ta'ālā will make a house for him in paradise. (Ibn Mājah). Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا has narrated that 'the Holy Prophet ﷺ instructed us to make mosques (special places for offering prayers) in our houses (as well), and keep them clean and pure'. (Qurṭubī).

As a matter of fact, the word تَرْفَعُ (to be raised) encompasses both the meanings of building and veneration of the mosques. It also signifies to keep them clean, which means to make them free of all types of filth and dirt. It is also part of cleanliness to keep them free of any foul smell. It is for this reason that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has prohibited to go in the mosques without cleaning the mouth after eating onions or garlic, which is reported in many books of *ḥadīth*. Cigarettes, cigars and all other preparations of tobacco also fall under the same instruction. Burning any oil which emits foul odor is also not permitted in the mosque.

Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim has recorded a narration from Sayyidnā 'Umar ؓ that he said 'I had seen that in case the Holy Prophet ﷺ noticed foul smell from someone's mouth, he used to turn him out from the mosque and send to Baqī', and would say that if someone has to eat onion and garlic, he should cook it properly, so that its odor is eliminated'. Scholars have drawn the conclusion from this *ḥadīth* that if someone is suffering

from such a disease that people feel discomfort standing next to him in prayers, then he too can be removed from the mosque. In such an eventuality he should himself restrain from going to mosque and offer his prayers at home until such time that he is recovered from that disease.

Exaltation of Mosques

The majority of companions and *tābi'īn* (the generation next to them) are of the opinion that exaltation of mosques means that mosques be built and be kept free of every thing evil. Some people have also included in it the outward appearance and grandeur of the buildings of the mosques, and have argued that Sayyidnā 'Uthmān Ghani رضي الله عنه had used hard wood in the building of the Prophet's mosque to give it an impressive look. Later, Sayyidnā 'Umar Ibn 'Abdul Azīz رحمه الله تعالى had the Prophet's mosque improved further both materially and by decoration. This was done during the lifetime of companions and their pupils, and no one objected to this. Later on, many a kings spent very lavishly on building of mosques. Walīd Ibn 'Abdul Mālik had spent during his caliphate three times the annual income from the entire Syria on the construction and decoration of the Grand Mosque of Damascus, which is still there even now. Imām Abū Ḥanīfah رحمه الله تعالى has ruled that if there is no element of ostentation and egotism, and the intent is to please Allah and veneration of His house, then there is no objection in the construction and decoration of majestic and grandiose mosques, rather one should expect a good reward for that act.

Some merits of Mosques

Abū Dāwūd has reported on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū 'Umamah رضي الله عنه that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم once said that whoever gets out of his house after ablution with the intent of offering obligatory prayer in the mosque, his reward is like the one who has got off from his house wearing *iḥrām* for performing Ḥajj, and whoever gets out of his house after ablution for the prayer of *Ishrāq* in the mosque, his reward is like the one of performing 'Umrah. A prayer after another prayer, provided one does not talk or do any work in between, is written in *'illiyyīn*. Further, it is reported on the authority of Sayyidnā Buraidah رضي الله عنه that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said that those who go to mosques in darkness, give them the good tiding of complete Nūr (light) on the Dooms Day. (Muslim)

Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim has reported on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū

Hurairah رضي الله عنه that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said that a man's offering of prayer in congregation is more than twenty times better than offering in the house or in the shop. It is because if someone sets out for the mosque after ablution with the intention of offering prayers and for no other purpose, then on every single step his status will improve by one degree and one sin will be forgiven until he reaches the mosque. Then as long as he will sit in the mosque waiting for the congregation to start, he will keep getting the reward of the prayers, and the angels will keep praying for him 'Ya Allah, Bestow Your grace on him, and forgive him, until he harms someone or his ablution is wasted'. Sayyidnā Ḥakam Ibn 'Umair رضي الله عنه has narrated that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم once said 'Live in this world like a guest and make mosques your abode, and make your hearts tender (be kind hearted) and ponder (over Allah's bounties) frequently, and weep (out of His fear) very often. Let not the mundane desires overcome you to make you change from this position, and you get involved in building houses unnecessarily, where you do not ever live, and get anxious to accumulate wealth more than your need, and desire for such things for the future which you cannot get'. Sayyidnā Abū Dardah رضي الله عنه advised his son "Mosque should be your abode, because I have heard from the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم that 'Mosques are the abodes of Muttaqui (the God fearing) people. Whoever makes the mosque his abode (through remembering Allah abundantly) Allah Ta'ālā becomes guarantor for his comfort and tranquility, and to make him pass through the bridge of Širāt with ease". Abū Šādiq 'Azdī wrote to Shu'aib b. Ḥabḥāb in a letter 'Get hold of mosques as a necessity, because I have learnt a tradition saying that mosques were the meeting places of messengers'.

In a *ḥadīth* it is reported that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said 'Towards the end there will be people who will sit in the mosques in circles, and will discuss worldly affairs and their love for mundane benefits. You do not sit with those people who come to the mosques for this, because Allah does not need such people to come to the mosques. 'Sayyidnā Sa'īd Ibn Musayyab رضي الله عنه said that the one who sits in the mosque is like he sits in the company of his Lord, so it is incumbent upon him not to say anything but good words (Qurṭubī).

Fifteen etiquettes of the mosques

Scholars have named fifteen items as etiquettes of the mosques. They

are:

On entering the mosque one should greet the people already sitting there, with *salām* and if there is no one then say *السلام علينا وعلى عباد الله* (But this is required when those present in the mosque are not offering their extra prayer or reciting Qur'ān. If they are busy in any of these acts, then he should not greet them.)

After getting in the mosque one should offer two Rak'ats as *tahiyyah tul-Masjid*. (This is required at a time when offering prayers is not prohibited, that is the time of sun rise, sun set or when sun is directly overhead)

Should not carry out any transactions of sale or purchase in the mosque.

Should not carry any weapons in the mosque.

Should not make an announcement for the search of any of his lost items.

Should not raise his voice in the mosque.

Should not discuss worldly affairs in the mosque.

Should not quarrel with any one in the mosque.

Should not try to force his way into a row where there is no room.

Should not cross over in front of someone offering prayer.

Should avoid spitting or blowing of nose in the mosque.

Should not crackle fingers in the mosque.

Should not play with any part of the body.

Should keep clean of any filth, and should not take a baby or an insane along in the mosque.

Should keep busy in remembrance of Allah abundantly.

After listing these fifteen etiquettes Qurtūbī has remarked that whoever has fulfilled these requirements has done justice with the mosque, and it has become a place of charm and security for him.

I have written a booklet on etiquettes and formalities of mosques

under the title "آداب المساجد" (in Urdu). Anyone interested in the subject can consult it.

Houses meant exclusively for remembrance of Allah and for learning Qur'an or religious education also have the status of mosques

Abū Ḥayān has explained in Tafsīr Baḥr ul-Muḥīṭ that the word **فِي بُيُوتٍ** "in the houses" used in Qur'ān has a general connotation. It includes not only the mosques but also those houses which are exclusive for teaching Qur'ān and related religious teachings, such as Madāris (religious schools) or Maktabs. They also fall under the same category, and their respect and veneration is also obligatory.

Special wisdom for using the word 'allowed' in the verse

Scholars are all unanimous that the word **أَذِنَ** *adhina* (allowed) is used here for command or order. But then the question is, what is the reason for using this word (instead of 'ordered' or 'enjoined')? Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī has described a subtle consideration in that the underlying objective is to train and induce the believers and the righteous to be ever ready to perform anything which is meant for pleasing Allah Ta'ālā, so much so that they need not be ordered to perform something for the pleasure of Allah, rather they should be waiting for the permission to perform it, and the moment they receive the go-ahead signal, they should hurry to carry it out.

يَذْكُرُ فِيهَا اسْمَهُ

Where His name is recounted - 36.

Here, the expression is 'recounting the name of Allah' encompasses all types of His remembrance, which include extra prayers, recitation of Qur'ān, learning of Islamic teachings, sermons, lectures on Shari'ah, etc.

رِجَالٌ لَا تُلْهِيهِمْ تِجَارَةٌ وَلَا بَيْعٌ عَنْ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ

By men whom no trade or sale makes neglectful of the remembrance of Allah - 37.

This verse describes special attributes of those believers who are the distinguished recipients of the Nūr of guidance and remain in the mosques. By the use of word *Rijāl* رِجَال (men) there is a hint that only men's presence is required in the mosques. For women it is better that

they offer their prayers at homes.

Musnad of Aḥmad and Baihaqī have related a *ḥadīth* of Sayyidah Umm Salmah رضى الله عنها that the Holy Prophet ﷺ once said خير مساجد النساء . 'The best mosques for women are the secluded corners of their homes'.

This verse describes that the involvement in trade and sales does not stop the righteous believers from the remembrance of Allah. Since 'sale' is included in the word 'trade', some commentators have preferred to assume trade for purchase only for the sake of comparison, while others have taken the trade in its common sense, that is transactions of sale and purchase, and have explained the wisdom of using the word 'sale' separately for the reason that trade transactions have a wide scope where profits and benefits are received after a long time. On the other hand by selling something one receives the money with profit immediately in cash. Hence, it is mentioned separately to stress that they do not bring into consideration even the most lucrative mundane benefit as against the prayers and remembrance of Allah Ta'ālā.

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umar رضى الله عنه has said that this verse was revealed in connection with the market people, and his son, Sayyidnā Sālīm, has related that one day his father was passing through the market and the time for prayers had come. Then he noticed that people started closing their shops and set out to go towards the mosque. On that Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umar رضى الله عنه said that it is for these persons that the Qur'an has said رَجَالٌ لَا تُلْهِهِمْ تِجَارَةٌ وَلَا بَيْعٌ عَنْ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ.

There were two companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ during his time, one was a general trader and the other a blacksmith who used to produce swords and sell them. It was the habit of the trader that when he would hear the call of the prayer while weighing something, he would leave every thing there and get up to go to the mosque for prayers. The other one who was the blacksmith, when he was busy hammering the hot iron and would hear the call of the prayer, he would stop his hand wherever it was and throw the hammer out of his hand to rush to the mosque for prayers, without even bothering to strike the raised hammer. This verse was revealed in their praise. (Qurtubī)

Most of the companions were traders

This verse also points out that most of the companions were either traders or manufacturers, that is in the professions involved with the market, because the quality mentioned in the verse can be attributed only to those who are in the profession of trade and sales and do not let their profession interfere in the remembrance of Allah Ta'ālā. Otherwise it is irrelevant. (Rūḥ)

يَخَافُونَ يَوْمًا تَتَقَلَّبُ فِيهِ الْقُلُوبُ وَالْأَبْصَارُ

They are fearful of a day in which the hearts and the eyes will be overturned - 37.

The last quality of those believers who are mentioned in the above verse is that despite being busy in Allah's obedience, remembrance and worshipping all the time, they do not become careless or free themselves from Allah's fear. Instead the fear of reckoning on the Day of Judgment is constantly in their mind, which is the fruit of Nūr of guidance granted to them by Allah Ta'ālā, mentioned in the earlier verse يَهْدِي اللَّهُ لِنُورِهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ . Toward the end of the verse their reward is described that they shall be graced with the best reward for their actions by Allah Ta'ālā, and then the verse says: وَيَزِيدُهُمْ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ (and will give them more out of His grace - 38). It means that their reward will not end with the recompense against the good actions, but some extra reward will also be given on His own اللَّهُ وَاللَّهُ يَرْزُقُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ (and Allah gives whom He wills without counting - 38), that is neither Allah is bound by any rule nor does His treasure gets depleted. He grants unlimited sustenance to whomever He likes.

So far the righteous believers were described whose chests are the niches for the Nūr of guidance and who readily accept the Nūr of guidance. In verses 39 and 40 those disbelievers are being described who were given in their nature the Nūr of guidance by Allah Ta'ālā, but when Allah's revelation reached them to lit them up, they turned away to reject it and lost the Nūr to stay in the darkness. Since the disbelievers and atheists are of two types, therefore, two examples are related here. One category is that of those disbelievers who believe in the Dooms Day and Hereafter, and have faith that some of their good acts, according to their own reckoning, will be rewarded in the Hereafter. The second category is that of atheists, who do not believe in the Hereafter and the Dooms Day.

The example of the deeds of the first category is that of a mirage, which is nothing but illusion of sight. In a level plain the shining sand creates the illusion of water from a distance, and as a thirsty person approaches near it, the illusion (mirage) disappears, leaving the thirsty completely exhausted, who ultimately dies of thirst. Similarly, a disbeliever's deeds are like a mirage which he considers of value and benefit, but in actual fact they are no better than an illusion, like mirage, and as a thirsty person discovers the illusion when it is too late, in the same way the disbelievers will find out their blunder in the Hereafter, when it will be of no avail.

The second category of deeds is that of atheists or infidels, for which the example of a deep ocean is given, which is completely dark. In the first place it is dark because of its depth, then it is covered by a big wave which is also enshrouded by another wave, and over that there is a mass of dark cloud. In short there is darkness over darkness, so much so that if someone takes out his hand, he cannot have even a glimpse of it. The inference to be drawn from this example is that those infidels who deny the coming of the Dooms Day, the Reckoning and the Hereafter are devoid of even the illusive Nūr, which the first category of disbelievers had. Although they too did not possess the useful Nūr of guidance, but at least they were under the illusion that they had done some good deeds which will help them in the Hereafter, but the latter category did not deem it necessary to work for the Hereafter, since they had no belief in it. Hence, they will have nothing but darkness and complete darkness with them on the Dooms Day.

After describing the two examples the next sentence says: وَمَنْ لَمْ يَجْعَلْ (And the one to whom Allah does not give light can have no light at all - 40).

This sentence about the disbelievers is like the one that appeared earlier for the believers: يَهْدِي اللَّهُ لِنُورِهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ (Allah guides to His light whomsoever He wills - 35). It describes the deprivation of disbelievers from the Nūr of guidance, which they lost by denying the injunctions of Allah, and when they have lost Allah's Nūr of guidance how can they get any other Nūr.

This verse also explains that no one can become a perspicacious

scholar merely by having resource of insight and knowledge, rather it is bestowed by the grace of Allah only. It is for this reason that those who are regarded naïve in mundane matters prove themselves very knowledgeable and scholarly in the cognizance of the Hereafter. And, vice versa, many who are regarded very intelligent and knowledgeable in worldly matters, prove themselves completely ignorant and foolish in the perception and comprehension of the Hereafter. (Maḥzarī)

Verses 41 - 45

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَسْبِغُ لَهٗ، مَنْ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالطَّيْرِ صَفَّتِ ط
 كُلُّ قَدْ عَلِمَ صَلَاتَهٗ، وَتَسْبِيحَهٗ، وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ، بِمَا يَفْعَلُونَ ﴿٤١﴾
 وَلِلَّهِ مُلْكُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَإِلَى اللَّهِ الْمَصِيرُ ﴿٤٢﴾ أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ
 اللَّهُ يُزْجِي سَحَابًا ثُمَّ يُؤَلِّفُ بَيْنَهُ، ثُمَّ يَجْعَلُهُ رُكَامًا فَتَرَى الْوَدْقَ
 يَخْرُجُ مِنْ خِلَالِهٖ ۚ وَيُنزِلُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مِنْ جِبَالٍ فِيهَا مِنْ، بَرَدٍ
 فَيُصِيبُ بِهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَصْرِفُهُ، عَنِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ ۗ يَكَادُ سَنَا بَرْقِهٖ
 يَذْهَبُ بِالْأَبْصَارِ ﴿٤٣﴾ يُقَلِّبُ اللَّهُ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ ۗ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَعِبْرَةً
 لِّأُولِي الْأَبْصَارِ ﴿٤٤﴾ وَاللَّهُ خَلَقَ كُلَّ دَابَّةٍ مِّن مَّاءٍ ۚ فَمِنْهُمْ مَّن
 يَمْشِي عَلَى بَطْنِهٖ ۗ وَ مِنْهُمْ مَّن يَمْشِي عَلَى رِجْلَيْنِ ۚ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّن
 يَمْشِي عَلَى أَرْبَعٍ ۗ يَخْلُقُ اللَّهُ مَا يَشَاءُ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ
 قَدِيرٌ ﴿٤٥﴾

Did you not realize that purity of Allah is proclaimed by all those in the heavens and the earth, and by the birds with their wings spread out? Everyone knows one's own (way of) praying (to Allah) and one's own (way of) proclaiming Allah's purity. And Allah knows well what they do. [41] And to Allah belongs the Kingdom of the heavens and the earth, and towards Allah is the final return. [42]

Do you not realize that Allah drives the clouds, then