

Natural Disasters or God's Wrath?

A Qur'anic reflection on calamity, corruption, repentance and mercy

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Introduction

All praise belongs to Allah, the Lord of all the worlds. We seek His forgiveness, ask for His protection and turn to Him in repentance. May His peace and blessings be upon our beloved Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, his family, his companions and all who follow his guidance.

Salam my dear brothers and sisters, my children and grandchildren

When severe storms strike our British Isles, leaving destruction and distress in their wake, we are reminded of how fragile human life can be. Powerful winds tear through towns, rivers overflow, and families are forced to leave their homes. A house may take years to build, yet become uninhabitable in moments. Possessions gathered over a lifetime may disappear in a single night.

Across the world, communities face the devastation of earthquakes, floods, fires, storms, landslides, avalanches and droughts. Behind every account of destruction are human beings: parents searching for their children, families mourning their loved ones, and survivors wondering how they will begin again.

In seeking explanations, some scientists point to environmental damage, pollution, deforestation and a changing climate. Others quickly declare that such suffering is Allah's punishment for wrongdoing. We must speak with care. Understanding the physical causes of a disaster is important; declaring Allah's purpose in a particular tragedy is a matter about which we must not speak without knowledge. Such declarations can deepen the anguish of those already suffering, especially when children and other innocent people are among the victims.

Our first response must be compassion. We pray for those who have lost loved ones, those awaiting rescue, those left without shelter, and those facing the long task of rebuilding their lives. May Allah comfort the bereaved, heal the injured, protect those in danger and strengthen everyone working to bring relief. Alongside our prayers, we must offer whatever practical help we can.

These events also call us to reflect. What should a believer learn when the familiar world suddenly becomes frightening? What does the Qur'an teach us about calamities, trials and divine punishment? Why were earlier nations destroyed? And how should we respond to the painful question of why innocent children suffer?

We must approach these questions with humility, listening carefully to the warnings of revelation while recognising the limits of our own understanding. Our reflections should awaken our conscience, deepen our compassion and bring us closer to Allah.

1. Understanding the causes and hearing the warning

Weather has physical causes. Winds, rainfall, rivers and the sea operate within the order Allah has established in His creation. Studying these processes, protecting the environment and improving flood defences are worthwhile responsibilities. Scientific investigation can help us understand hazards and reduce loss of life.

An explanation of how an event happens does not exhaust the believer's reflection upon its meaning. The Qur'an also asks us to consider our conduct, our dependence upon Allah and the consequences of corruption.

ظَهَرَ الْفَسَادُ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ أَيْدِي النَّاسِ لِيُذِيقَهُمْ بَعْضَ الَّذِي عَمِلُوا لَعَلَّهُمْ
يَرْجِعُونَ [41]

“Corruption has appeared throughout the land and sea because of what people's hands have earned, so that He may let them taste some of the consequences of their deeds, that perhaps they may return.”

Ar-Rūm 30:41

The word **ظَهَرَ** means ‘has appeared’ or ‘become manifest’. This invites us to reflect on how corruption can become widespread and even socially accepted.

may also mean “corruption became the norm and people accepted it”.

Notice the closing words: that perhaps they may return. They direct us towards repentance and reform. Human wrongdoing includes injustice, exploitation and abuse of the earth entrusted to us. This verse calls for moral reflection; it does not supply us with a scientific attribution of every disaster or knowledge of the guilt of its victims.

قُلْ سِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَانظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلُ ۚ كَانْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ مُشْرِكِينَ [42]

“Say, (O Muhammad): Travel through the earth and see how was the end of those before. Most of them associated partners with Allah.”

Ar-Rūm 30:42

People once lived among the ruins we visit today. They raised families, accumulated wealth and expected their power to endure. Their passing should awaken humility in those who come after them.

Different punishments and one principle of justice

Allah describes in verse 29:40, the different punishments that befell those earlier peoples:

فَكُلًّا أَخَذْنَا بِذَنْبِهِ فَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ أَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِ حَاصِبًا وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ أَخَذَتْهُ الصَّيْحَةُ وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ خَسَفْنَا بِهِ الْأَرْضَ وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ أَغْرَقْنَا وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيظْلِمَهُمْ وَلَكِنْ كَانُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ [40]

“Each of them We seized for their sin. Against some We sent a storm of stones; some were overtaken by the mighty blast; some We caused the earth to swallow; and some We drowned. Allah would never wrong them, but they were wronging themselves.”

Al-'Ankabūt 29:40

Notice the closing words: **Allah did not wrong them; they wronged themselves.** The warning calls us to examine our own conduct, repent and put right the harm we cause. These were peoples whose wrongdoing and punishment Allah explicitly identifies in revelation. We must therefore take their warning seriously without assuming that we possess the same knowledge about the victims of a disaster today.

2. Allah sends the winds and brings down the rain

The Qur'an repeatedly directs our attention to Allah as the One who sends winds, gathers clouds and brings rain. Recognising the physical processes of weather is compatible with recognising their Creator and Sustainer.

وَهُوَ الَّذِي يُرْسِلُ الرِّيَّاحَ بُشْرًا بَيْنَ يَدَيْ رَحْمَتِهِ ۖ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا أَقْلَّتْ سَحَابًا ثِقَالًا سُقْنَاهُ لِبَلَدٍ مَيِّتٍ فَأَنْزَلْنَا بِهِ الْمَاءَ فَأَخْرَجْنَا بِهِ مِنْ كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ ۚ كَذَٰلِكَ نُخْرِجُ الْمَوْتَىٰ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ [57]

“He is the One who sends the winds bearing good news ahead of His mercy. When they carry heavy clouds, We drive them towards a lifeless land, send down water through them and bring forth every kind of fruit. In the same way We bring forth the dead, so that you may take heed.”

Al-A'rāf 7:57

اللَّهُ الَّذِي يُرْسِلُ الرِّيَّاحَ فَتُثِيرُ سَحَابًا فَيَبْسُطُهُ فِي السَّمَاءِ كَيْفَ يَشَاءُ وَيَجْعَلُهُ كِسْفًا فَنَرَى الْوَدْقَ يَخْرُجُ مِنْ خِلَالِهِ ۖ فَإِذَا أَصَابَ بِهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ إِذَا هُمْ يَسْتَبْشِرُونَ [48]

“Allah is the One who sends the winds, which stir up clouds. He spreads them in the sky as He wills and makes them into fragments, and you see rain emerging from within them. When He causes it to fall upon whom He wills of His servants, they rejoice.”

Ar-Rūm 30:48

وَإِنْ كَانُوا مِنْ قَبْلُ أَنْ يَنْزَلَ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنَ قَبْلِهِ لَمُبْسِينَ [49]

“Although before it was sent down upon them, they had been in despair.”

Ar-Rūm 30:49

فَانْظُرْ إِلَى آثَارِ رَحْمَتِ اللَّهِ كَيْفَ يُحْيِي الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا إِنَّ ذَلِكَ لَمُحْيِي الْمَوْتَى وَهُوَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ [50]

“Look, then, at the effects of Allah’s mercy: how He gives life to the earth after its death. Surely He is the One who will give life to the dead, and He has power over all things.”

Ar-Rūm 30:50

Rain is a mercy that revives the land, nourishes crops and sustains living creatures. The Qur’an also turns this familiar renewal into a sign of resurrection. The One who brings life to the dead earth is able to raise us after death.

3. Revelation and the limits of our own judgment

When Allah tells us that a particular people were destroyed for their wrongdoing, we accept His account. Revelation identifies their sins and their punishment. We have no corresponding revelation identifying the divine purpose of a particular contemporary storm, earthquake or family tragedy.

We must therefore avoid declaring that particular victims were punished for particular sins. A calamity may be a trial, a warning or a means of spiritual elevation. We do not know all that Allah intends in an individual event.

كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ذَائِقَةُ الْمَوْتِ وَنَبْلُوكُم بِالشَّرِّ وَالْخَيْرِ فِتْنَةً وَإِلَيْنَا تُرْجَعُونَ [35]

“Every soul will taste death. We test you with hardship and prosperity as a trial, and to Us you will be returned.”

Al-Anbiyā’ 21:35

Suffering tests those afflicted, and it also tests those who watch: will they show compassion and provide help? Prosperity tests us too. Being spared a disaster does not prove that we are more righteous than those who suffered.

A believer may take a calamity as a warning to examine himself while withholding judgment about others. We may say: Let us repent and seek Allah’s mercy. We should not claim: I know why Allah allowed this child or this family to suffer.

4. The people of Nūḥ and the flood

The people of Nūḥ, Noah, عليه السلام persisted in idolatry and rejected their messenger. Influential people encouraged others to remain attached to their false gods.

وَقَالُوا لَا تَذَرُنَّ آلِهَتَكُمْ وَلَا تَذَرُنَّ وَدًّا وَلَا سُوَاعًا وَلَا يَغُوثَ وَيَعُوقَ وَنَسْرًا [23]

“They said: Do not abandon your gods; do not abandon Wadd, Suwā‘, Yaghūth, Ya‘ūq or Nasr.”

Nūḥ 71:23

Their wrongdoing included sustained rejection of their prophet and organised resistance to his call. Allah explicitly connects their drowning to their sins.

مِمَّا خَطِيئَاتِهِمْ أُغْرِقُوا فَأَذْخَلُوا نَارًا فَلَمْ يَجِدُوا لَهُمْ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ أَنْصَارًا [25]

“Because of their sins they were drowned, then made to enter a Fire; and they found no helpers against Allah.”

Nūḥ 71:25

فَفَتَحْنَا أَبْوَابَ السَّمَاءِ بِمَاءٍ مُنْهَمِرٍ [11]

“So We opened the gates of heaven with water pouring down.”

Al-Qamar 54:11

وَفَجَّرْنَا الْأَرْضَ عُيُونًا فَالْتَقَى الْمَاءُ عَلَى أَمْرٍ قَدْ قُدِرَ [12]

“And We caused the earth to burst forth with springs, so the waters met for a matter already decreed.”

Al-Qamar 54:12

Water, through which Allah sustains life, became the means of their destruction. Allah saved Nūḥ and those with him in the Ark. Repeated opportunities to listen and repent must never be treated as permission to persist indefinitely.

5. The people of ‘Ād and the devastating wind

Allah sent Hūd عليه السلام to ‘Ād, a people of exceptional strength and imposing achievements. The Qur’an introduces their greatness with a question that also draws our attention to their downfall:

أَلَمْ تَرَ كَيْفَ فَعَلَ رَبُّكَ بِعَادٍ [6]

إِرمَ ذَاتِ الْعِمَادِ [7]

الَّتِي لَمْ يُخْلَقْ مِثْلُهَا فِي الْبِلَادِ [8]

“Have you not considered how your Lord dealt with ‘Ād— Iram, possessors of lofty pillars, the like of whom had never been created in the lands?”

Al-Fajr 89:6–8.

Their strength became a source of arrogance, and they imagined themselves beyond defeat.

فَأَمَّا عَادٌ فَاسْتَكْبَرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ وَقَالُوا مَنْ أَشَدُّ مِنَّْا قُوَّةً ۖ أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّ اللَّهَ الَّذِي خَلَقَهُمْ هُوَ أَشَدُّ مِنْهُمْ قُوَّةً ۖ وَكَانُوا بِآيَاتِنَا يَجْحَدُونَ [15]

“As for ‘Ād, they behaved arrogantly in the land without right and said: Who is stronger than us? Did they not see that Allah, who created them, was stronger than them? Yet they continued to reject Our signs.”

Fuṣṣilat 41:15

How easily strength produces forgetfulness. Wealth, military power, technology and impressive buildings can persuade human beings that they have secured their future. The question of ‘Ād exposed their delusion: **Who is stronger than us?**

فَأَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ رِيحًا صَرْصَرًا فِي أَيَّامٍ نَحِسَاتٍ لِنُذِيقَهُمْ عَذَابَ الْخِزْيِ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا ۖ وَلَعَذَابُ الْآخِرَةِ أَخْزَىٰ ۖ وَهُمْ لَا يُنصَرُونَ [16]

“So We sent against them a fiercely roaring wind during days of calamity, to make them taste humiliating punishment in this worldly life. The punishment of the Hereafter is more humiliating, and they will not be helped.”

Fuṣṣilat 41:16

كَذَّبَتْ عَادٌ فَكَيْفَ كَانَ عَذَابِي وَنُذْرٍ [18]

“‘Ād rejected the truth. How dreadful were My punishment and warnings!”

Al-Qamar 54:18

إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ رِيحًا صَرْصَرًا فِي يَوْمٍ نَحْسٍ مُّسْتَمِرٍّ [19]

“We sent against them a fiercely roaring wind on a day of continuing calamity.”

Al-Qamar 54:19

تَنَزَّعُ النَّاسَ ۖ كَانَتْهُمْ أَعْجَازُ نَخْلٍ مَّنْقَعٍ [20]

“It tore people away as though they were trunks of uprooted palm trees.”

Al-Qamar 54:20

فَكَيْفَ كَانَ عَذَابِي وَنُذْرٍ [21]

“How dreadful were My punishment and warnings!”

Al-Qamar 54:21

وَأَمَّا عَادٌ فَأُهْلِكُوا بِرِيحٍ صَرْصَرٍ عَاتِيَةٍ [6]

“As for ‘Ād, they were destroyed by a fiercely roaring, overwhelming wind.”

Al-Hāqqah 69:6

سَخَّرَهَا عَلَيْهِمْ سَبْعَ لَيَالٍ وَثَمَانِيَةَ أَيَّامٍ حُسُومًا فَتَرَى الْقَوْمَ فِيهَا صَرْعَى كَأَنَّهُمْ أُعِجَازُ نَخْلٍ
خَاوِيَةٍ [7]

“He subjected them to it for seven nights and eight days without interruption, so that you would have seen the people lying fallen, like hollow trunks of palm trees.”

Al-Hāqqah 69:7

فَهَلْ تَرَى لَهُمْ مِنْ بَاقِيَةٍ [8]

“Do you see any remnant of them?”

Al-Hāqqah 69:8

Their strength should have inspired gratitude to the One who granted it. Instead, it became a source of arrogance. They behaved as though their power placed them beyond defeat and their achievements would protect them from the consequences of wrongdoing. They forgot that the Lord who had given them strength could also take it away.

Their story should trouble our consciences today. Whenever powerful nations exploit weaker peoples, humiliate them, deprive them of their rights or seize the natural resources Allah has bestowed upon their lands, we should recognise the same dangerous arrogance. Military strength and economic influence confer responsibility; they give no nation permission to oppress another.

This warning also reaches into our own lives. How do we use the power entrusted to us—as leaders, employers, parents or individuals? Do we protect those who depend upon us, or take advantage of their weakness? The account of ‘Ād calls every generation to remember that human power is temporary and that no oppressor is beyond accountability before Allah.

What people expect to bring relief may bring destruction

The same created elements can sustain life or become means of destruction. We have already heard of the flood of Nūḥ and the wind sent against ‘Ād. The Qur’an describes how ‘Ād misread what approached them. They welcomed the approaching cloud, expecting it to bring rain.

The Punishment came suddenly, and when they least expected it. They wanted rain, and they saw a cloud and rejoiced. Behold, it was coming towards their own tracts, winding through the hills. Their irrigation channels would be full, their fields would be green, and their season would be fruitful. But no! What is this? It is a tremendous hurricane, carrying destruction on its wings! A violent blast, with dust and sand! Its fury destroys everything in its wake! Lives lost! Fields covered with sand-hills! The morning dawns on a scene of desolation! Where were the men who boasted and defied their Lord! There are only the ruins of their houses to witness to the past.

فَلَمَّا رَأَوْهُ عَارِضًا مُسْتَقْبِلَ أَوْدِيَّتِهِمْ قَالُوا هَذَا عَارِضٌ مُمְطِرُنَا ۚ بَلْ هُوَ مَا اسْتَعْجَلْتُمْ بِهِ رِيحٌ فِيهَا
عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ [24]

*“When they saw it as a cloud approaching their valleys, they said: This is a cloud bringing us rain.
Rather, it was what you sought to hasten: a wind carrying painful punishment.”*

Al-Ahqāf 46:24

تُدْمِرُ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ بِأَمْرِ رَبِّهَا فَأَصْبَحُوا لَا يُرَىٰ إِلَّا مَسَاكِنُهُمْ ۚ كَذَٰلِكَ نَجْزِي الْقَوْمَ الْمُجْرِمِينَ [25]

*“Destroying everything by the command of its Lord. Then nothing could be seen except their dwellings.
In this way We recompense people given to wrongdoing.”*

Al-Ahqāf 46:25

Here the approaching cloud was associated with a destructive wind, not the welcome rain they expected. The flood of Nūḥ provides the clear example of descending water becoming a means of punishment. Thus wind and water may bring mercy or destruction by Allah’s decree. The appearance of a cloud alone does not reveal the full meaning of what is coming.

This should make us humble and prayerful. It does not authorise us to label every flood divine wrath. We ask for beneficial rain, protection from harm and mercy for all those affected.

6. The people of Thamūd and their defiance

Allah sent Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام to Thamūd, calling them to worship Him and seek His forgiveness.

وَالِىَ ثَمُودَ أَخَاهُمْ صَالِحًا ۚ قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِنْ إِلَٰهٍ غَيْرُهُ ۖ هُوَ أَنْشَأَكُمْ مِنَ الْأَرْضِ
وَاسْتَعْمَرَكُمْ فِيهَا فَاسْتَغْفِرُوهُ ثُمَّ تُوبُوا إِلَيْهِ ۚ إِنَّ رَبِّي قَرِيبٌ مُجِيبٌ [61]

*“And to Thamūd We sent their brother Ṣāliḥ. He said: My people, worship Allah; you have no god other
than Him. He brought you into being from the earth and settled you upon it. So seek His forgiveness,
then turn to Him in repentance. My Lord is near and responsive.”*

Hūd 11:61

They were given the she-camel as a sign and warned against harming her. Yet they killed her and challenged their messenger.

فَعَقَرُوا النَّاقَةَ وَعَتَوْا عَنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّهِمْ وَقَالُوا يَا صَالِحُ ائْتِنَا بِمَا تَعِدُنَا إِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ [77]

*“They hamstrung the she-camel, defied their Lord’s command and said: Ṣāliḥ, bring upon us what you
threaten us with, if you are truly one of the messengers.”*

Al-A’rāf 7:77

فَأَخَذَتْهُمُ الرَّجْفَةُ فَأَصْبَحُوا فِي دَارِهِمْ جَاثِمِينَ [78]

“Then the earthquake seized them, and they lay lifeless in their homes.”

Al-A’rāf 7:78

وَأَخَذَ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا الصَّيْحَةَ فَأَصْبَحُوا فِي دِيَارِهِمْ جَاثِمِينَ [67]

“The mighty blast seized those who had done wrong, and they lay lifeless in their homes.”

Hūd 11:67

The earthquake and the blast are descriptions of their punishment. Their wrongdoing included rejection of their messenger and deliberate violation of Allah’s command after warning. We should fear the hardening of the heart that turns advice into an object of ridicule.

7. The people of Lūṭ and entrenched transgression

Lūṭ, Lot, عليه السلام called his people away from grave indecency.

وَلَوْطًا إِذْ قَالَ لِقَوْمِهِ أَتَأْتُونَ الْفَاحِشَةَ مَا سَبَقَكُمْ بِهَا مِنْ أَحَدٍ مِنَ الْعَالَمِينَ [80]

“And remember Lūṭ, when he said to his people: Do you commit an indecency in which no people before you have preceded you?”

Al-A’rāf 7:80

إِنَّكُمْ لَتَأْتُونَ الرِّجَالَ شَهْوَةً مِنْ دُونِ النِّسَاءِ ۚ بَلْ أَنْتُمْ قَوْمٌ مُسْرِفُونَ [81]

“You approach men with desire instead of women. Indeed, you are a people exceeding all bounds.”

Al-A’rāf 7:81

وَمَا كَانَ جَوَابَ قَوْمِهِ إِلَّا أَنْ قَالُوا أَخْرِجُوهُمْ مِنْ قَرْيَتِكُمْ ۖ إِنَّهُمْ أَنْوَاسٌ يَتَطَهَّرُونَ [82]

“His people’s only answer was to say: Drive them out of your town! They are people who seek to keep themselves pure.”

Al-A’rāf 7:82

The Qur’an also mentions their obstruction of travellers and wrongdoing in their gatherings in 29:29. The account portrays a community entrenched in transgression and hostility towards its messenger. Allah saved Lūṭ and the faithful members of his household; his wife remained among those overtaken.

فَلَمَّا جَاءَ أَمْرُنَا جَعَلْنَا عَالِيَهَا سَافِلَهَا وَأَمْطَرْنَا عَلَيْهَا حِجَارَةً مِنْ سِجِّيلٍ مَنْضُودٍ [82]

“When Our command came, We turned the towns upside down and rained upon them stones of baked clay, one after another.”

Hūd 11:82

مُسَوَّمَةً عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ وَمَا هِيَ مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ بِبَعِيدٍ [83]

“Marked by your Lord; and they are not far from the wrongdoers.”

Hūd 11:83

We must convey this account faithfully and remember our obligations to speak with wisdom, uphold human dignity and refrain from abuse or violence. This account gives no person permission to harm others or pronounce a particular contemporary disaster a punishment for their conduct.

8. The people of Madyan and economic injustice

Allah sent Shu'ayb عليه السلام to Madyan. His message joined worship of Allah with honesty in everyday dealings.

وَالِى مَدْيَنَ أَخَاهُمْ شُعَيْبًا قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِنْ إِلَهٍ غَيْرُهُ قَدْ جَاءَتْكُمْ بَيِّنَةٌ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ
فَأَوْفُوا الْكَيْلَ وَالْمِيزَانَ وَلَا تَبْخَسُوا النَّاسَ أَشْيَاءَهُمْ وَلَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ بَعْدَ إِصْلَاحِهَا ذَلِكُمْ
خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ [85]

“And to Madyan We sent their brother Shu'ayb. He said: My people, worship Allah; you have no god other than Him. Clear evidence has come to you from your Lord. Give full measure and weight, do not deprive people of what is theirs, and do not spread corruption in the land after it has been set right. That is better for you, if you are believers.”

Al-A'raf 7:85

Their corruption included cheating, depriving people of their rights, intimidation and opposition to faith.

فَأَخَذَتْهُمُ الرَّجْفَةُ فَأَصْبَحُوا فِي دَارِهِمْ جَاثِمِينَ [91]

“Then the earthquake seized them, and they lay lifeless in their homes.”

Al-A'raf 7:91

Hūd 11:94 also describes the mighty blast that overtook the wrongdoers while Allah saved Shu'ayb and the believers. Their account brings our attention to matters sometimes dismissed as ordinary business. Are workers paid fairly? Are customers deceived? Are debts withheld? Are charitable funds handled honestly?

The message of Shu'ayb belongs wherever money changes hands. We cannot sincerely ask Allah to remove corruption while continuing to benefit from it ourselves.

9. Pharaoh and the warnings he rejected

Pharaoh's wrongdoing included tyranny, persecution of the Children of Israel, arrogance and rejection of the signs brought by Mūsā عليه السلام. His people received repeated warnings and opportunities to reconsider.

Hardship and the refusal to take heed

وَلَقَدْ أَخَذْنَا آلَ فِرْعَوْنَ بِالسِّنِينَ وَنَقْصٍ مِنَ الثَّمَرَاتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَذْكُرُونَ [130]

“We afflicted Pharaoh's people with years of hardship and a shortage of crops, so that they might take heed.”

Al-A'raf 7:130

فَإِذَا جَاءَتْهُمْ الْحَسَنَةُ قَالُوا لَنَا هَذِهِ وَإِنْ تُصِيبْهُمْ سَيِّئَةٌ يَطَّيَّرُوا بِمُوسَىٰ وَمَنْ مَعَهُ ۗ أَلَا إِنَّمَا طَائِرُهُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ [131]

“When prosperity came, they said: This is ours. But when hardship struck them, they attributed an evil omen to Mūsā and those with him. Their fate was with Allah, but most of them did not know.”

Al-A'rāf 7:131

وَقَالُوا مَهْمَا تَأْتِنَا بِهِ مِنْ آيَةٍ لِّتَسْحَرَنَا بِهَا فَمَا نَحْنُ لَكَ بِمُؤْمِنِينَ [132]

“They said: Whatever sign you bring to bewitch us, we will never believe you.”

Al-A'rāf 7:132

Further signs and broken promises

فَأَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمُ الطُّوفَانَ وَالْجَرَادَ وَالْقُمَّلَ وَالضَّفَادِعَ وَالدَّمَ آيَاتٍ مُّفَصَّلَاتٍ فَاسْتَكْبَرُوا وَكَانُوا قَوْمًا مُّجْرِمِينَ [133]

“So We sent against them the flood, locusts, lice, frogs and blood as distinct signs. Yet they remained arrogant and were a people given to wrongdoing.”

Al-A'rāf 7:133

وَلَمَّا وَقَعَ عَلَيْهِمُ الرِّجْزُ قَالُوا يَا مُوسَىٰ ادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ بِمَا عَهِدَ عِنْدَكَ ۖ لَئِنْ كَشَفْتَ عَنَّا الرِّجْزَ لَنُؤْمِنَنَّ لَكَ وَلَنُرْسِلَنَّ مَعَكَ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ [134]

“When the affliction fell upon them, they said: Mūsā, call upon your Lord for us by the covenant He has made with you. If you remove this affliction from us, we will surely believe you and let the Children of Israel go with you.”

Al-A'rāf 7:134

فَلَمَّا كَشَفْنَا عَنْهُمْ الرِّجْزَ إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ هُمْ بِالْعُودِ إِذَا هُمْ يَنْكُثُونَ [135]

“But when We removed the affliction from them until an appointed time, they immediately broke their promise.”

Al-A'rāf 7:135

فَأَنْتَقَمْنَا مِنْهُمْ فَأَغْرَقْنَاهُمْ فِي الْيَمِّ بِأَنَّهُمْ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا وَكَانُوا عَنْهَا غَافِلِينَ [136]

“So We took retribution from them and drowned them in the sea, because they rejected Our signs and were heedless of them.”

Al-A'rāf 7:136

Do we recognise something of this pattern in ourselves? We make promises during illness, fear or distress. Relief arrives, and the promises fade. The account of Pharaoh should make us examine the sincerity of our own return to Allah.

10. Allah's justice, warnings and call to reform

The accounts of earlier peoples show that Allah's judgment is neither arbitrary nor uninformed. His knowledge includes every person's understanding, intentions and opportunities. These verses call us to accountability while leaving the judgment of particular people to Him.

10.1 Guidance comes before punishment

وَمَا كُنَّا مُعَذِّبِينَ حَتَّىٰ نَبْعَثَ رَسُولًا [15]

"We do not punish until We have sent a messenger."

Al-Isrā' 17:15 excerpt

ذَٰلِكَ أَن لَّمْ يَكُن رَّبُّكَ مُهْلِكَ الْقُرَىٰ بِظُلْمٍ وَأَهْلُهَا غَافِلُونَ [131]

"That is because your Lord would not destroy communities unjustly while their people were unaware."

Al-An'am 6:131

The preceding verse, 6:130, speaks of messengers conveying Allah's signs and warnings. Guidance and accountability belong together. We must never imagine that Allah condemns people through ignorance or imperfect knowledge, as human beings sometimes do.

10.2 Hardship and prosperity can both call us back

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا فِي قَرْيَةٍ مِّن نَّبِيٍّ إِلَّا أَخَذْنَا أَهْلَهَا بِالْبَأْسَاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَضُرَّعُونَ [94]

"We never sent a prophet to a town without afflicting its people with hardship and distress, so that they might humble themselves."

Al-A'raf 7:94

ثُمَّ بَدَّلْنَا مَكَانَ السَّيِّئَةِ الْحَسَنَةَ حَتَّىٰ عَفَوْا وَقَالُوا قَدْ مَسَّ آبَاءَنَا الضَّرَّاءُ وَالسَّرَّاءُ فَأَخَذْنَاهُمْ بَغْتَةً وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ [95]

"Then We replaced hardship with prosperity until they increased and said: Hardship and prosperity also touched our forefathers. So We seized them suddenly while they were unaware."

Al-A'raf 7:95

They treated changing circumstances as events from which there was nothing to learn. Their error was heedlessness. Understanding physical causes is valuable; refusing all moral reflection is a different matter. Relief should awaken gratitude and lasting change.

10.3 Faith and reverence open the way to blessing

وَلَوْ أَنَّ أَهْلَ الْقُرَىٰ آمَنُوا وَاتَّقَوْا لَفَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِم بَرَكَاتٍ مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَلَٰكِن كَذَّبُوا
فَأَخَذْنَا هُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ [96]

“If the people of the towns had believed and been mindful of Allah, We would have opened for them blessings from heaven and earth. But they rejected the truth, so We seized them for what they had earned.”

Al-A'raf 7:96

وَلَوْ أَنَّ أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ آمَنُوا وَاتَّقَوْا لَكَفَرْنَا عَنْهُمْ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ وَلَأَدْخَلْنَا هُمْ جَنَّاتِ النَّعِيمِ [65]

“If the People of the Book had believed and been mindful of Allah, We would have removed their misdeeds and admitted them into Gardens of Bliss.”

Al-Mā'idah 5:65

وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ أَقَامُوا التَّوْرَةَ وَالْإِنْجِيلَ وَمَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْهِمْ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ لَأَكُلُوا مِنْ فَوْقِهِمْ وَمِنْ تَحْتِ أَرْجُلِهِمْ
مِّنْهُمْ أُمَّةٌ مُّقْتَصِدَةٌ وَكَثِيرٌ مِّنْهُمْ سَاءَ مَا يَعْمَلُونَ [66]

“If they had upheld the Torah, the Gospel and what was sent down to them from their Lord, they would have eaten from above them and from beneath their feet. Among them is a community following a moderate course, but many of them do evil deeds.”

Al-Mā'idah 5:66

These verses address the People of the Book and distinguish among them rather than condemning everyone indiscriminately. They connect fidelity to revelation with forgiveness and blessing. We should first apply their moral challenge to ourselves: are we living by the guidance we profess to honour?

These promises are not a formula by which we can rank nations or individuals according to wealth or weather. Prophets and righteous believers also endure hardship, as the Qur'an makes clear. Material prosperity alone is no proof of divine approval.

10.4 Security and provision must not produce ingratitude

وَضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا قَرْيَةً كَانَتْ آمِنَةً مُّطْمَئِنَّةً يَأْتِيهَا رِزْقُهَا رَغَدًا مِنْ كُلِّ مَكَانٍ فَكَفَرَتْ بِأَنْعُمِ اللَّهِ
فَأَذَاقَهَا اللَّهُ لِبَاسَ الْجُوعِ وَالْخَوْفِ بِمَا كَانُوا يَصْنَعُونَ [112]

“Allah sets forth the example of a town that was safe and secure, receiving its provision abundantly from every place. But it denied Allah's favours, so Allah made it taste the enveloping affliction of hunger and fear because of what its people had been doing.”

An-Nahl 16:112

وَلَقَدْ جَاءَهُمْ رَسُولٌ مِنْهُمْ فَكَذَّبُوهُ فَأَخَذَهُمُ الْعَذَابُ وَهُمْ ظَالِمُونَ [113]

“A messenger from among themselves had certainly come to them, but they rejected him. So punishment overtook them while they were doing wrong.”

An-Nahl 16:113

Food on our tables and peace in our homes are blessings that can become so familiar that we cease to notice them. Gratitude includes obedience to Allah and care for those who lack the security we enjoy.

10.5 Privilege carries responsibility

وَإِذَا أَرَدْنَا أَنْ نُهْلِكَ قَرْيَةً أَمَرْنَا مُتْرَفِيهَا فَفَسَقُوا فِيهَا فَحَقَّ عَلَيْهَا الْقَوْلُ فَدَمَّرْنَاهَا تَدْمِيرًا [16]

“When We intend to destroy a town, We command its affluent people to obey, but they act defiantly within it. Then the sentence against it becomes deserved, and We destroy it completely.”

Al-Isrā’ 17:16

The words to obey in this rendering explain the command; they are not a separate phrase in the Arabic. This verse must not be read as saying that Allah commands people to sin. The Qur’an expressly states that Allah does not command indecency in 7:28. Those who possess wealth and influence are responsible for how they use it.

وَكَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا مِنَ الْقُرُونِ مِنْ بَعْدِ نُوحٍ وَكَفَىٰ بِرَبِّكَ بِذُنُوبِ عِبَادِهِ خَبِيرًا بَصِيرًا [17]

“How many generations We have destroyed after Nūḥ! Your Lord is sufficient as the One fully aware of and seeing the sins of His servants.”

Al-Isrā’ 17:17

10.6 Earlier communities are warnings for those who follow

وَكَمْ قَصَمْنَا مِنْ قَرْيَةٍ كَانَتْ ظَالِمَةً وَأَنْشَأْنَا بَعْدَهَا قَوْمًا آخَرِينَ [11]

“How many a town that was doing wrong We shattered, and after it brought other people into being!”

Al-Anbiyā’ 21:11

وَكَأَيِّنْ مِنْ قَرْيَةٍ عَتَتْ عَنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّهَا وَرُسُلِهِ فَحَاسِبْنَاهَا حِسَابًا شَدِيدًا وَعَذَّبْنَاهَا عَذَابًا نَكِرًا [8]

“How many a town defiantly resisted the command of its Lord and His messengers! We called it to a severe account and punished it with a dreadful punishment.”

Aṭ-Ṭalāq 65:8

وَأِنْ مِنْ قَرْيَةٍ إِلَّا نَحْنُ مُهْلِكُوهَا قَبْلَ يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ أَوْ مُعَذِّبُوهَا عَذَابًا شَدِيدًا ؕ كَانَ ذَلِكَ فِي الْكِتَابِ
مَسْطُورًا [58]

“There is no town that We will not destroy before the Day of Resurrection or punish with a severe punishment. That stands written in the Record.”

Al-Isrā’ 17:58

This is a solemn warning about the end of earthly communities and Allah’s decree. It gives us no knowledge of the date or manner of a particular town’s end, and no authority to condemn particular victims. It must be read alongside the Qur’an’s insistence upon divine justice and individual accountability.

10.7 Human beings are vulnerable from above and below

قُلْ هُوَ الْقَادِرُ عَلَىٰ أَنْ يَبْعَثَ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابًا مِّنْ فَوْقِكُمْ أَوْ مِّنْ تَحْتِ أَرْجُلِكُمْ أَوْ يَلْبَسَكُمْ شِيعًا وَيُذِيقَ
بَعْضُكُم بَأْسَ بَعْضٍ ۚ إِنَّظِرْ كَيْفَ نُصَرِّفُ الْآيَاتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَفْقَهُونَ [65]

“Say: He has the power to send punishment upon you from above you or from beneath your feet, or to divide you into opposing factions and make some of you taste the violence of others. See how We explain the signs in varied ways, so that they may understand.”

Al-An’ām 6:65

The verse warns of vulnerability from above and below, and of the devastation human beings inflict upon one another. Its scope should not be reduced to a modern list of weather or geological events. It reminds us that our safety is never entirely within our own control.

10.8 False security should give way to humility

أَفَأَمِنَ أَهْلُ الْقُرَىٰ أَنْ يَأْتِيَهُمْ بَأْسُنَا بَيَاتًا وَهُمْ نَائِمُونَ [97]

“Did the people of the towns feel secure that Our punishment would not come upon them at night while they slept?”

Al-A’rāf 7:97

وَأَمِنَ أَهْلُ الْقُرَىٰ أَنْ يَأْتِيَهُمْ بَأْسُنَا ضُحًى وَهُمْ يُلْعَبُونَ [98]

“Or did the people of the towns feel secure that Our punishment would not come upon them in broad daylight while they were at play?”

Al-A’rāf 7:98

أَفَأَمِنُوا مَكْرَ اللَّهِ ۚ فَلَا يَأْمَنُ مَكْرَ اللَّهِ إِلَّا الْقَوْمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ [99]

“Did they feel secure against Allah’s plan? None feels secure against Allah’s plan except the people who are losers.”

Al-A’rāf 7:99

We should not confuse Allah's patience with approval of everything we do. These warnings address complacency and deliberate rejection. They should awaken repentance rather than produce despair in a sincere person seeking mercy.

10.9 Repentance and active reform

وَمَا كَانَ رَبُّكَ لِيُهْلِكَ الْقُرَىٰ بِظُلْمٍ وَأَهْلِهَا مُصْلِحُونَ [117]

“Your Lord would not destroy communities unjustly while their people were putting things right.”

Hūd 11:117

The word *muṣliḥūn* مُصْلِحُونَ directs our attention to people who work for reform. They are the righteous reformers in a community which might be doing something wrong. We should repair what is wrong: reconcile families, protect the vulnerable, oppose exploitation and restore people's rights. Personal devotion should bear fruit in public conduct.

وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيُعَذِّبَهُمْ وَأَنْتَ فِيهِمْ ۚ وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ مُعَذِّبَهُمْ وَهُمْ يَسْتَغْفِرُونَ [33]

“Allah would not punish them while you were among them, nor would Allah punish them while they were seeking forgiveness.”

Al-Anfāl 8:33

This verse addresses a particular setting involving the Prophet ﷺ and his people, while reminding us of the importance of seeking forgiveness. It is not a promise that repentant people will never experience illness, storms or other trials. We seek protection and forgiveness while accepting that earthly life includes adversity.

11. The Prophet's response to threatening weather

‘Ā'ishah رضي الله عنها described the concern of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ when wind and dark clouds gathered. He feared that an affliction might come upon his community and rejoiced when rain brought mercy. This is reported in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 899a.

His example teaches reverence before Allah, concern for others and gratitude for mercy. We should meet threatening weather with prayer and sensible action: prepare, heed warnings, avoid unnecessary danger and help those who need assistance. Faith should deepen our care for human life.

12. Allah's justice and the suffering of innocent children

At this point someone may ask: If Allah controls the wind, rain and earth, why does He allow storms, landslides, avalanches, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions to kill innocent people, including children? Is that fair?

This is a serious question. Believers may ask it in grief as well as people who do not believe. We should answer respectfully and never treat a parent's anguish as a debating opportunity. The death of a child is a real tragedy, and tears do not contradict faith.

12.1 A child does not carry another person's guilt

وَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ أُخْرَىٰ [164]

“No bearer of burdens bears the burden of another.”

Al-An‘ām 6:164 excerpt

A child does not become guilty of the wrongdoing of parents, neighbours or society. The Prophet ﷺ taught that moral accountability is lifted from a child until puberty, as part of the report in Sunan Abī Dāwūd 4403, graded ṣaḥīḥ by al-Albānī. We must never tell bereaved parents that their child deserved death because of someone else's sins.

12.2 Sharing an earthly event does not mean sharing guilt

We inhabit a common physical world. The same flood can affect people with very different lives and intentions. Physical exposure is not a verdict upon a person's spiritual standing. A child's death in a calamity does not establish that Allah was punishing that child.

A particularly clear illustration comes from a conversation between the Prophet ﷺ and ‘Ā’ishah رضي الله عنها:

«يَغْزُو جَيْشُ الْكُفَّةِ، فَإِذَا كَانُوا بِبَيْدَاءٍ مِنَ الْأَرْضِ يُخْسَفُ بِأَوَّلِهِمْ وَآخِرِهِمْ». قَالَتْ: قُلْتُ: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، كَيْفَ يُخْسَفُ بِأَوَّلِهِمْ وَآخِرِهِمْ، وَفِيهِمْ أَسْوَاقُهُمْ وَمَنْ لَيْسَ مِنْهُمْ؟ قَالَ: «يُخْسَفُ بِأَوَّلِهِمْ وَآخِرِهِمْ، ثُمَّ يُبْعَثُونَ عَلَى نِيَّاتِهِمْ».

“An army will attack the Ka‘bah. When they reach an open stretch of land, they will be swallowed up, from the first of them to the last.” ‘Ā’ishah asked: “O Messenger of Allah, how will they all be swallowed up when among them are their traders and people who do not belong to them?” He replied: “They will be swallowed up, from the first of them to the last; then they will be resurrected according to their intentions.”

Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, 2118;

‘Ā’ishah's question draws attention to those present who do not share the army's purpose. The Prophet's ﷺ answer distinguishes their shared earthly fate from their individual judgment before Allah: they will be resurrected according to their intentions.

We must therefore avoid assuming that everyone who dies in the same calamity shares the same guilt or the same eternal outcome. We know neither every person's inward state nor the full divine wisdom behind what has occurred. This prophecy also gives us no authority to declare a particular contemporary disaster a punishment from Allah.

Our responsibility towards those afflicted is compassion, assistance and prayer. Their final judgment belongs to Allah, whose knowledge is complete and whose justice never fails.

12.3 Allah wrongs no one

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَظْلِمُ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ وَإِنْ تَكَ حَسَنَةً يُّضَاعِفْهَا وَيُؤْتِ مِنْ لَدُنْهُ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا [40]

“Allah does not wrong anyone by an atom’s weight. If there is a good deed, He multiplies it and grants from Himself a tremendous reward.”

An-Nisā’ 4:40

Islam affirms that Allah’s knowledge and justice are complete. Our knowledge is partial. That does not make a child’s suffering unreal or make it right for us to dismiss grief. It means that the visible event is not the whole account of that child’s existence.

12.4 The Hereafter belongs within the answer

If death were the absolute end, the sufferings and inequalities of this world would remain unresolved. Islamic belief includes resurrection, judgment and an everlasting life in which no one is overlooked or wronged. A short earthly life is not, in itself, proof of rejection by Allah.

Allah declares concerning the Day of Judgment:

الْيَوْمَ تُجْزَىٰ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ ۖ لَا ظُلْمَ الْيَوْمَ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ [17]

“Today every soul will be recompensed for what it has earned. There will be no injustice today. Indeed, Allah is swift in reckoning.”

Ghāfir 40:17;

“There will be no injustice today.” These words belong at the heart of our answer. Our understanding of an earthly tragedy is limited, but Allah’s knowledge and justice are complete. No person’s suffering escapes His knowledge, and no one will be judged unjustly.

Concerning children, Samurah ibn Jundub رضي الله عنه narrated the Prophet’s ﷺ account of a dream in which he saw Ibrāhīm عليه السلام surrounded by children in a garden. In the explanation of what he had seen, he was told:

«وَأَمَّا الرَّجُلُ الطَّوِيلُ الَّذِي فِي الرَّوْضَةِ فَإِنَّهُ إِبْرَاهِيمُ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ، وَأَمَّا الْوِلْدَانُ الَّذِينَ حَوْلَهُ فَعُلَّ مَوْلُودٌ مَاتَ عَلَى الْفِطْرَةِ». قَالَ فَقَالَ بَعْضُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، وَأَوْلَادُ الْمُشْرِكِينَ؟ فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: «وَأَوْلَادُ الْمُشْرِكِينَ».

“As for the tall man in the garden, he is Ibrāhīm; and the children around him are all those who died upon the natural disposition.” Some Muslims asked: “O Messenger of Allah, and the children of the polytheists?” The Messenger of Allah ﷺ replied: “And the children of the polytheists.”

Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, 7047; excerpt.

This is a deeply reassuring picture of children beyond death. They are not portrayed as bearing the guilt of their parents’ unbelief. While scholars have discussed the broader details of children’s fate, this report gives us profound grounds for hope in Allah’s care and mercy.

The Prophet ﷺ also described how completely the blessing of Paradise can overwhelm earthly suffering. Anas ibn Mālik رضى الله عنه reported that he said:

«وَيُؤْتِي بِأَشَدِّ النَّاسِ بُؤْسًا فِي الدُّنْيَا مِنْ أَهْلِ الْجَنَّةِ، فَيَصْبُغُ صَبْغَةً فِي الْجَنَّةِ، فَيَقَالُ لَهُ: يَا ابْنَ آدَمَ، هَلْ رَأَيْتَ بُؤْسًا قَطُّ؟ هَلْ مَرَّ بِكَ شِدَّةٌ قَطُّ؟ فَيَقُولُ: لَا وَاللَّهِ يَا رَبِّ، مَا مَرَّ بِي بُؤْسٌ قَطُّ، وَلَا رَأَيْتُ شِدَّةً قَطُّ».

“The person who suffered the greatest misery in this world, among the people of Paradise, will be brought and dipped once into Paradise. Then he will be asked: ‘Son of Adam, have you ever experienced misery? Has any hardship ever come upon you?’ He will reply: ‘No, by Allah, my Lord! No misery has ever come upon me, nor have I ever experienced hardship.’”

Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, 2807; excerpt.

We should offer this promise gently to those who are grieving. Their pain deserves to be heard, their tears deserve compassion, and their immediate needs deserve our help. Faith in the Hereafter gives us hope while strengthening our responsibility to care for one another now.

A bereaved parent may carry an empty place in the heart for the rest of life. We should never speak as though that loss were small. Yet we may remind one another, with tenderness, that this earthly separation is not the whole story. Beyond what we can see stands the promise of resurrection, perfect justice and a mercy greater than we can comprehend.

The grave is not the end of the account. Allah has promised: “There will be no injustice today.”

12.5 We do not know why every particular tragedy was allowed

Someone may still ask: “Why did Allah not prevent this particular child’s pain?” We should answer honestly: we do not know the full reason for this particular event. General teachings about trial, human responsibility and the Hereafter do not amount to an explanation of every individual death.

The account of Mūsā عليه السلام and al-Khiḍr in Sūrah al-Kahf offers an important insight into the limits of human understanding. When al-Khiḍr killed a boy, Mūsā objected strongly to the taking of an innocent life (18:74). Later, al-Khiḍr explained:

وَأَمَّا الْغُلَامُ فَكَانَ أَبَوَاهُ مُؤْمِنَيْنِ فَخَشِينَا أَنْ يُرْهِقَهُمَا طُغْيَانًا وَكُفْرًا [80]

“As for the boy, his parents were believers, and we feared that he would overwhelm them with rebellion and disbelief.”

فَأَرَدْنَا أَنْ يُبَدِّلَهُمَا رَبُّهُمَا خَيْرًا مِنْهُ زَكَاءً وَأَقْرَبَ رَحْمًا [81]

“So we intended that their Lord should grant them in his place one purer and more compassionate.”

Al-Kahf 18:80–81; translation of the meaning.

Al-Khiḍr also made clear that he had not acted on his own initiative (18:82). This was an exceptional event whose hidden purpose was disclosed through divine instruction. It gives no one permission to harm another person on the basis of supposed knowledge of their future.

The account illustrates that what we can see of an event may not reveal its full meaning. Even Mūsā, a great messenger of Allah, did not initially know the explanation. Yet we must not turn this particular explanation into a claim about every child who dies. We have no authority to tell grieving parents that their child would have become wicked, or that this was why Allah allowed their loss.

Why did Allah not make the boy righteous and spare his parents their grief?

A further question arises: “If the boy’s parents were believers, why did Allah not make their son righteous and allow them to keep him?”

We should begin by acknowledging that Allah certainly had the power to do so. The Qur’an says:

وَلَوْ شَاءَ رَبُّكَ لَأَمَنَّ مَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ كُلَّهُمْ جَمِيعًا ۚ أَفَأَنْتَ تُكْرِهُ النَّاسَ حَتَّىٰ يَكُونُوا مُؤْمِنِينَ [99]

“Had your Lord willed, everyone on earth would have believed, all together. Would you then compel people to become believers?”

Yūnus 10:99; translation of the meaning.

Yet Allah has made this earthly life a trial in which our response to His guidance matters. Righteous parents can teach, love, pray and set a good example, but their faith does not automatically determine their child’s choices. Allah’s knowledge of what someone would choose is not the same as compelling that person to choose it.

In the boy’s case, the explanation revealed to al-Khidr points to rebellion and disbelief that would have overwhelmed his believing parents. We understand this in the light of Allah’s perfect knowledge of the future, including what the boy would have chosen had he lived. This does not mean that his parents had failed in their duty.

Allah warns:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ لَا يَهْدِيهِمُ اللَّهُ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ [104]

“Those who believe not in the Signs of Allah,—Allah will not guide them, and theirs will be a grievous Penalty.”

An-Naḥl 16:104, Abdullah Yusuf Ali.

This is a solemn warning against rejecting Allah’s revelations. It should not be understood as closing the door of guidance to everyone who is presently an unbeliever. People do turn from unbelief to faith through Allah’s guidance. We should therefore avoid saying, without qualification, that Allah guides only those who already believe.

Nevertheless, human choice explains only part of the question. Someone may still ask: “Why did Allah choose this particular outcome rather than guide the boy through some other means?”

Here we must return to the humility at the heart of this section: **Allah disclosed a particular wisdom behind this event, but He did not disclose every reason for choosing it over all other possibilities.**

The account does not claim that Allah lacked another way to protect the parents. Nor does it provide a complete explanation of the relationship between divine decree, guidance and human choice.

We therefore should not present our explanation as though it removes every difficulty. We affirm Allah's power, His perfect knowledge and His justice, while acknowledging the limits of our understanding. Above all, this exceptional account gives us no authority to suggest that a child who dies today would otherwise have become wicked.

Trust, humility and compassion

For the believer, an ordered and mortal world, the reality of trials and the promise of final justice form part of the answer. These beliefs give grounds for trust in Allah without giving us access to every detail of His wisdom. Someone who does not yet share belief in Allah or the Hereafter may not find that answer sufficient; we should acknowledge the difference respectfully and continue the conversation without pretending that grief has been solved by an argument.

We can say with conviction that Allah is just and that innocent children are not guilty of others' sins. We should say with humility that we cannot explain why this child died here and another survived elsewhere.

Before a grieving parent, that humility must be accompanied by compassion. Their child was someone they held, loved and imagined growing older. An explanation, however carefully expressed, cannot take the place of that child or remove the ache of their absence.

We may not know why their child was taken, but we can sit beside them, listen to their sorrow and help carry the burdens that follow. We can remind them gently of Allah's mercy and the hope of reunion in the Hereafter, without demanding that they stop weeping or conceal their pain.

Trust in Allah leaves room for tears, unanswered questions and a heart that needs time to heal.

12.6 Belief in decree increases our duty to protect life

Natural hazards do not release human beings from responsibility. Unsafe construction, neglected warnings, reckless development or failed rescue arrangements can increase harm. Where there is evidence of negligence, it must be investigated and addressed. Belief in Allah's decree is never an excuse to ignore preventable suffering.

We should support rescue work, sound construction, early warnings and care for the vulnerable. We should protect children with every lawful means available. Our response to a bereaved family should begin with presence, help and compassion. Explanation can wait until it is wanted.

The answer of faith is therefore accompanied by action. We trust that no child is lost to Allah's knowledge or mercy, and we work to prevent another family from enduring such loss.

13. What we must do today

First, repent sincerely. Examine our worship, speech, business dealings and treatment of others. Abandon wrongdoing, and where another person has been harmed, seek to restore their rights. Repentance must move beyond words.

Second, challenge corruption with wisdom and lawful action. Dishonesty, cruelty and exploitation do not become acceptable because they are widespread. Those with authority must use it to protect people rather than themselves.

Third, care responsibly for the earth. Polluting water, wasting resources and exposing others to avoidable danger are moral concerns. Learning about the environment should strengthen our stewardship.

Fourth, help people affected by disaster without making their religion, nationality or presumed righteousness a condition of compassion. A frightened child needs reassurance. An elderly person may need help leaving a flooded home. Someone who has lost everything needs practical support.

Finally, remember that comfort is a test too. A dry home, a secure income and a peaceful night should make us grateful and generous. They do not place us beyond accountability.

14. Returning to Allah while we have time

My dear brothers and sisters, the peoples described in the Qur'an had homes, families and expectations. Many assumed that tomorrow would resemble yesterday. Then the warnings they had dismissed became realities they could no longer resist.

We read their accounts while the opportunity to change remains before us. Whose rights have I withheld? Whom have I hurt? What wrongdoing have I excused? What promise to Allah have I postponed?

Let us fear a heart that hears every warning yet feels no need to change. Let us also remember the mercy of the One who calls us back. These reminders should awaken repentance, compassion and hope.

We do not know why a particular family has suffered. We do know that Allah commands us to act justly, seek His forgiveness and show mercy. Perhaps someone listening today has lost a home or is carrying grief that no one else can see. May this reminder bring you closer to Allah without adding to your burden. Your suffering does not entitle others to condemn you.

When we see a parent searching for a child, let us pray for that family and help them. When we return to our own children in safety, let us thank Allah with tenderness and generosity. The families who suffered loved their children as deeply as we love ours.

O Allah, You know every child whose voice has fallen silent, every parent whose arms feel empty and every person still waiting for news. We cannot reach everyone who suffers, but none is beyond Your knowledge. Grant them mercy, bring them help and make us willing instruments of that help.

O Allah, we are weak, and You are strong. We have wronged ourselves, and Your mercy is greater than our sins. Give us hearts that respond to Your guidance and hands that bring help to Your creation.

قَالَا رَبَّنَا ظَلَمْنَا أَنْفُسَنَا وَإِنْ لَمْ تَغْفِرْ لَنَا وَتَرْحَمْنَا لَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ [23]

“Our Lord, we have wronged ourselves. If You do not forgive us and have mercy upon us, we will surely be among the losers.”

Al-A'rāf 7:23

We ask in our own words in the following composed supplication:

**اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لَنَا وَارْحَمْنَا، وَاحْفَظْنَا وَاحْفَظْ أَهْلَنَا وَبِلَادَنَا مِنْ كُلِّ سُوءٍ. اللَّهُمَّ ارْحَمِ الْمُنْكَوبِينَ،
وَآوِ الْمُسْتَرْدِّينَ، وَاشْفِ الْمُصَابِينَ، وَاجْبُرْ قُلُوبَ الْمَحْزُونِينَ، وَوَفِّقْنَا لِلتَّوْبَةِ الصَّادِقَةِ وَإِصْلَاحِ
مَا أَفْسَدْنَا.**

“O Allah, forgive us and have mercy upon us. Protect us, our families and our countries from every harm. Have mercy on those afflicted by disaster, shelter those displaced, heal the injured and mend grieving hearts. Guide us to sincere repentance and to repairing the wrong we have done.”

Āmīn.

