

Surah 41. Ha-Mim

41.1 Ha. Mim.¹

41.2 THE BESTOWAL from on high [of this revelation] issues from the Most Gracious, the Dispenser of Grace:

41.3 a divine writ, the messages whereof have been clearly spelled out as a discourse in the Arabic tongue² for people of [innate] knowledge,

41.4 to be a herald of glad tidings as well as a warning. And yet, [whenever this divine writ is offered to men,] most of them turn away, so that they cannot hear [its message];³

41.5 and so they say, [as it were:] "Our hearts are veiled from whatever thou callest us to, [O Muhammad,] and in our ears is deafness, and between us and thee is a barrier.⁴ Do, then, [whatever thou wilt, whereas,] behold, we shall do [as we have always done]!"

41.6 Say thou, [O Prophet:] "I am but a mortal like you.⁵ It has been revealed to me that your God is the One God: go, then, straight towards Him and seek His forgiveness!" And woe unto those who ascribe divinity to aught beside Him,

41.7 [and] those who do not spend in charity: for it is they, they who [thus] deny the truth of the life to come!⁶

41.8 [But,] verily, they who have attained to faith and do good works shall have a reward unending!

41.9 SAY: "Would you indeed deny Him who has created the earth in two aeons?⁷ And do you claim that there is any power that could rival Him,⁸ the Sustainer of all the worlds?"

41.10 For He [it is who, after creating the earth,] placed firm mountains on it, [towering] above its surface, and bestowed [so many] blessings on it, and equitably apportioned⁹ its means of subsistence to all who would seek it: [and all this He created] in four aeons.¹⁰

41.11 And¹¹ He [it is who] applied His design to the skies, which were [yet but] smoke;¹² and He [it is who] said to them and to the earth, "Come [into being], both of you, willingly or unwillingly!" - to which both responded, "We do come in obedience."¹³

41.12 And He [it is who] decreed that they become seven heavens¹⁴ in two aeons, and imparted unto each heaven its function. And We adorned the skies nearest to the earth with lights, and made them secure:¹⁵ such is the ordaining of the Almighty, the All-Knowing.

41.13 BUT IF they turn away,¹⁶ say: "I warn you of [the coming of] a thunderbolt of punishment¹⁷ like the thunderbolt [that fell upon the tribes] of 'Ad and Thamud!"¹⁸

41.14 Lo! There came unto them [God's] apostles, speaking of what lay open before them and what was [still] beyond their ken,¹⁹ [and calling unto them,] "Worship none but God!" They answered: "If our Sustainer had willed [us to believe in what you say], He would have sent down angels [as His message-bearers].²⁰ As it is, behold, we deny that there is any truth in what you [claim to] have been sent with!"

41.15 Now as for [the tribe of] 'Ad, they walked arrogantly on earth, [offending] against all right, and saying, "Who could have a power greater than ours?" Why - were they, then, not aware that God, who created them, had a power greater than theirs? But they went on rejecting Our messages;

41.16 and thereupon We let loose upon them a stormwind raging through days of misfortune,²¹ so as to give them, in the life of this world, a foretaste of suffering through humiliation: but [their] suffering in the life to come will be far more humiliating, and they will have none to succour them.

41.17 And as for [the tribe of] Thamud, We offered them guidance, but they chose blindness in preference to guidance: and so the thunderbolt of shameful suffering fell upon them as an outcome of all [the evil] that they had wrought;

41.18 and We saved [only] those who had attained to faith and were conscious of Us.

41.19 Hence, [warn all men of] the Day when the enemies of God shall be gathered together before the fire, and then shall be driven onward,

41.20 till, when they come close to it, their hearing and their sight and their [very] skins will bear witness against them, speaking of what they were doing [on earth].

41.21 And they will ask their skins, "Why did you bear witness against us?" - [and] these will reply: "God, who gives speech to all things, has given speech to us [as well]: for He [it is who] has created you in the first instance - and unto Him you are [now] brought back.

41.22 And you did not try to hide [your sins] lest your hearing or your sight or your skins bear witness against you: nay, but you thought that God did not know much of what you were doing

41.23 and that very thought which you thought about your Sustainer has brought you to perdition, and so now you find yourselves among the lost!"

41.24 And then, [even] if they endure [their lot] in patience, the fire will still be their abode,²² and if they pray to be allowed to make amends, they will not be allowed to do so:²³

41.25 for [when they became oblivious of Us,] We assigned to them [their own evil impulses as their] other selves,²⁴ and these made appear goodly to them whatever lay open before them and whatever was beyond their ken.²⁵ And so, the sentence [of doom] will have fallen due upon them together with the [other sinful] communities of invisible beings²⁶ and humans that passed away before their time: verily, they [all] will indeed be lost!

41.26 NOW THOSE who are bent on denying the truth say [unto one another]: "Do not listen to this Qur'an, but rather talk frivolously about it, so that you might gain the upper hand!"²⁷

41.27 But We shall most certainly give those who are [thus] bent on denying the truth a taste of suffering severe, and We shall most certainly requite them according to the worst of their deeds!

41.28 That requital of God's enemies will be the fire [of the hereafter]: in it will they have an abode of unmeasurable duration as an outcome of their having knowingly rejected Our messages.²⁸

41.29 And they who [in their life on earth] were bent on denying the truth will [thereupon] exclaim: "O our Sustainer! Show us those of the invisible beings and humans that have led us astray: ²⁹ we shall trample them underfoot, so that they shall be the lowest of all!"³⁰

41.30 [But,] behold, as for those who say, "Our Sustainer is God," and then steadfastly pursue the right way - upon them do angels often descend, [saying:] "Fear not and grieve not, but receive the glad tiding of that paradise which has been promised to you!

41.31 We are close unto you in the life of this world and [will be so] in the life to come; and in that [life to come] you shall have all that your souls may desire, and in it you shall have all that you ever prayed for,

41.32 as a ready welcome from Him who is much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace!"

41.33 And who could be better of speech than he who calls [his fellow-men] unto God, and does what is just and right, and says, "Verily, I am of those who have surrendered themselves to God"?

41.34 But [since] good and evil cannot be equal, repel thou [evil] with something that is better³¹ - and lo! he between whom and thyself was enmity [may then become] as though he had [always] been close [unto thee], a true friend!

41.35 Yet [to achieve] this is not given to any but those who are wont to be patient in adversity: it is not given to any but those endowed with the greatest good fortune!

41.36 Hence, if it should happen that a prompting from Satan stirs thee up [to blind anger], seek refuge with God: behold, He alone is all-hearing, all-knowing!³²

41.37 Now among His signs are the night and the day, as well as the sun and the moon: [hence,] adore not the sun or the moon, but prostrate yourselves in adoration before God, who has created them - if it is Him whom you [really] worship.³³

41.38 And though some be too proud [to listen to this call], they who [in their hearts] are with thy Sustainer extol His limitless glory by night and by day, and never grow weary [thereof].

41.39 For among His signs is this: thou seest the earth lying desolate - and lo! when We send down water upon it, it stirs and swells [with life]! Verily, He who brings it to life can surely give life to the dead [of heart as well]: for, behold, He has the power to will anything.³⁴

41.40 VERILY, they who distort the meaning of Our messages are not hidden from Us: hence, which [of the two] will be in a better state - he that is [destined to be] cast into the fire, or he that shall come secure [before Us] on Resurrection Day? Do what you will: verily, He sees all that you do.

41.41 Verily, they who are bent on denying the truth of this reminder as soon as it comes to them - [they are the losers]: for, behold, it is a sublime divine writ:

41.42 no falsehood can ever attain to it openly, and neither in a stealthy manner,³⁵ [since it is] bestowed from on high by One who is truly wise, ever to be praised.

41.43 [And as for thee, O Prophet,] nothing is being said to thee but what was said to all [of God's] apostles before thy time.³⁶ Behold, thy Sustainer is indeed full of forgiveness - but He has also the power to requite most grievously!

41.44 Now if We had willed this [divine writ] to be a discourse in a non-Arabic tongue, they [who now reject it] would surely have said, "Why is it that its messages have not been spelled out clearly?³⁷ Why [a message in] a non-Arabic tongue, and [its bearer] an Arab?" Say: "Unto all who have attained to faith, this [divine writ] is a guidance and a source of health; but as for those who will not believe - in their ears is deafness, and so it remains obscure to them: they are [like people who are] being called from too far away."³⁸

41.45 Thus, too, have We vouchsafed revelation unto Moses aforetime, and thereupon disputes arose about it.³⁹ And [then, as now,] had it not been for a decree that had already gone forth from thy Sustainer, all would indeed have been decided between them [from the outset].⁴⁰ As it is, behold, they [who will not believe in this divine writ] are in grave doubt, amounting to suspicion, about what it portends.⁴¹

41.46 WHOEVER does what is just and right, does so for his own good; and whoever does evil, does so to his own hurt: and never does God do the least wrong to His creatures.

41.47 In Him alone is vested the knowledge of when the Last Hour will come. And no fruit bursts forth from its calyx, and no female ever conceives, nor ever gives birth, save with His knowledge. And so, on the Day when He shall call out to them, "Where, now, are those [alleged] partners of Mine?" - they will [surely] answer, "We confess unto Thee that none of us can bear witness [to anyone's having a share in Thy divinity]!"

41.48 And so, all that they were wont to invoke aforetime will have forsaken them; and they shall know for certain that there is no escape for them.

41.49 MAN NEVER TIRES of asking for the good [things of life]; and if evil fortune touches him, he abandons all hope,⁴² giving himself up to despair.

41.50 Yet whenever We let him taste some of Our grace after hardship has visited him, he is sure to say, "This is but my due!" - and, "I do not think that the Last Hour will ever come:⁴³ but if [it should come, and] I should indeed be brought back unto my Sustainer, then, behold, the ultimate good awaits me with Him!⁴⁴ But [on the Day of Judgment] We shall most certainly give those who were bent on denying the truth⁴⁵ full understanding of all that they ever did, and shall most certainly give them [thereby] a taste of suffering severe."⁴⁶

41.51 And, too, when We bestow Our blessings upon man, he tends to turn aside and keep aloof [from remembering Us]; but as soon as evil fortune touches him he is full of wordy prayers!⁴⁷

41.52 HAVE YOU given thought [to how you will fare] if this be truly [a revelation] from God, the while you deny its truth? Who could be more astray than one who places himself [so] deeply in the wrong?⁴⁸

41.53 In time We shall make them fully understand⁴⁹ Our messages [through what they perceive] in the utmost horizons [of the universe] and within themselves,⁵⁰ so that it will become clear unto them that this [revelation] is indeed the truth. [Still,] is it not enough [for them to know] that thy Sustainer is witness unto everything?⁵¹

41.54 Oh, verily, they are in doubt as to whether they will meet their Sustainer [on Judgment Day]! Oh, verily, He encompasses everything!

Author Comments

2 - See [12:2](#) and the corresponding note [3].

3 - The "people of [innate] knowledge" mentioned in the preceding verse are obviously those who understand the spiritual purport of this divine writ and, therefore, submit to its guidance: hence, it cannot be "most of them" who are referred to in the above phrase and in the next verse, but, on the contrary, people who are devoid of such knowledge and to whom, in consequence, the Qur'an is meaningless. This elliptically implied differentiation - overlooked by almost all of the commentators (with perhaps the sole exception of Ibn Kathir) - can only be brought out by means of an interpolation at the beginning of the sentence.

4 - For this rendering of the term hijab, see note [36] on the first sentence of [7:46](#). See also [6:25](#). The "saying" of those who turn away from the message of the Qur'an is, of course, figurative, describing only their attitude.

5 - Cf. [6:50](#) and the corresponding note [38].

6 - Belief in God's oneness and charitableness towards one's fellow-men are two cardinal demands of Islam. Conversely, a deliberate offence against either of these two demands amounts to a denial of man's responsibility before God and hence, by implication, of a continuation of life in the hereafter. (For my rendering of zakah, in this context, as "charity", see surah {2}, note [34]. It is to be borne in mind that the application of this term to the obligatory tax incumbent on Muslims dates from the Medina period, whereas the present surah is a Meccan revelation.)

7 - For the above rendering of the term yawm (lit., "day"), as "aeon", see last third of note [43] on [7:54](#). As in so many verses of the Qur'an which relate to cosmic events, the repeated mention of the "six aeons" during which the universe was created - "two" of which, according to the above verse, were taken by the evolution of the inorganic universe, including the earth - has a purely allegorical import: in this case, I believe, an indication that the universe did not exist "eternally" but had a definite beginning in time, and that it required a definite time-lapse to evolve to its present condition.

8 - Lit., "do you give Him compeers (andad)?" For an explanation, see note [13] on [2:22](#).

9 - I.e., in accordance with divine justice, and not with human concepts of "equity" or "need".

10 - Almost all the classical commentators agree in that these "four aeons" include the "two" mentioned in the preceding verse: hence my interpolation of the words "and all this He created". Together with the "two aeons" of verse 12, the entire allegorical number comes to six.

11 - Whenever the particle thumma is used, as in the above instance, to link parallel statements - statements not necessarily indicating a sequence in time - it has the function of a simple conjunction, and may be rendered as "and".

12 - I.e., a gas - evidently hydrogen gas, which physicists regard as the primal element from which all material particles of the universe have evolved and still evolve. For the meaning of the term sama' ("sky" or "skies" or "heaven") in its cosmic connotation, see note [20] on [2:29](#).

13 - Explaining this passage, Zamakhshari observes: "The meaning of God's command to the skies and the earth to 'come', and their submission [to His command] is this: He willed their coming into being, and so they came to be as He willed them to be...: and this is the kind of metaphor (majaz) which is called 'allegory' (tamthil)... Thus, the purport [of this passage] is but an illustration (taswir) of the effect of His almighty power on all that is willed [by Him], and nothing else..." (It is obvious that Zamakhshari's reasoning is based on the oft-repeated Qur'anic statement, "When God wills a thing to be, He but says unto it, 'Be' - and it is.") Concluding his interpretation of the above passage, Zamakhshari adds: "If I am asked about the meaning of [the words] 'willingly or unwillingly', I say that it is a figurative expression (mathal) indicating that His almighty will must inevitably take effect."

14 - I.e., a multiplicity of cosmic systems (cf. note [20] on [2:29](#)).

15 - Cf. {15:16-18} and the corresponding notes [16] and [17]; also [37:6](#) ff.

16 - This connects with the opening sentence of verse {9} above: "Would you indeed deny Him who has created...", etc.

17 - See note [40] on [2:55](#).

18 - For the story of these two ancient tribes, see {7:65-79} and the corresponding notes, in particular [48] and [56]; also {26:123-158}.

19 - Lit.. "from between their hands and from behind them": i.e., reminding them of something that was known to them - namely, what happened to sinners like themselves who lived before their time - and warning them of what was bound to happen in the future to them, too, if they persisted in their denial of the truth (Al-Hasan al-Basri, as quoted by Zamakhshari). However, it is possible to understand the above phrase (which has been explained in note [247] on [2:255](#)) in yet another, more direct way: God's message-bearers pointed out to those sinning communities something that should have been obvious to them (lit., "between their hands")- namely, their patently wrong attitude in their worldly, social concerns and moral concepts - as well as the unreasonableness of their denying something that was still beyond their ken (lit., "behind them"): namely, life after death and God's ultimate judgment.

20 - Cf. {6:8-9} and [15:7](#).

21 - See {69:6-8}.

22 - Sc., "unless God wills to relieve them": see the last paragraph of [6:128](#) and the corresponding note

[114]; also the hadith quoted in note [10] on [40:12](#).

23 - Lit., "they will not be of those who are allowed to make amends": an allusion to the request of the doomed, on the Day of Judgment, to be granted a "second chance" on earth, and to God's refusal of this request (cf. {6:27-28} and [32:12](#)).

24 - Or: "soul-mates" (cf. [4:38](#)). The verb qarana, from which the noun qarin is derived, signifies "he linked" or "intimately associated" or "yoked together [one thing with another]". Cf. [43:36](#) - "as for anyone who chooses to remain blind to the remembrance of the Most Gracious, to him We assign an [enduring] evil impulse [lit., "a satan"], to become his other self".

25 - Lit., "that which was between their hands and that which was behind them": i.e., their own evil impulses (which had become their "other selves", as it were) made alluring to them the unrestrained enjoyment, without any moral discrimination, of all the worldly attractions which lay open before them, causing them, at the same time, to dismiss as an illusion the idea of resurrection and of God's judgment - thus giving them a false sense of security with regard to something that was beyond their ken.

26 - For this rendering - and the meaning - of the term jinn, see Appendix III.

27 - This is an allusion to efforts aimed at discrediting the Qur'an by describing it as "invented" by Muhammad for his own - personal and political - ends, as a series of "misunderstood quotations" from earlier scriptures, as the result of "hallucinations", and so forth: all of which implies that the opponents of the Qur'anic message instinctively feel its force, realizing at the same time that it endangers their self-complacent, materialistic outlook on life and ought, therefore, to be combatted. This explains the statement, at the end of verse {28}, that they "knowingly reject" God's messages.

28 - For the above rendering of the verb jahada, see surah {29}, note [45].

29 - See [6:112](#) - "against every prophet We have set up as enemies the evil forces (shayatin) from among humans as well as from among invisible beings" - and the corresponding note [98].

30 - Cf. [7:38](#).

31 - See note [44] on [13:22](#). In the present instance, the injunction to "repel [evil] with something that is better" relates to scurrilous objections to, and hostile criticism of, the Qur'an. The whole of this passage (verses {33} ff.) connects with verse {26}.

32 - I.e., He alone sees what is in the hearts of men, and He alone understands the innermost motivations, of which they themselves are unconscious, of those who criticize the Qur'an adversely. - See {7:199-200} and the corresponding notes, especially note [164].

33 - This, according to Razi, connects with the phrase "calling [one's fellow-men] unto God" in verse {33} above. God is the sole cause and source of all that exists; and whatever exists is but a wondrous sign of His creative power. Hence, it is a blasphemy - apart from being unreasonable to ascribe real power (which is the meaning of "adoration" in this context) to anything created, whether it be a concrete phenomenon, or an abstract force of nature, or a set of circumstances, or even an idea.

34 - Although the allusion to the reviving earth often occurs in the Qur'an as a parable of man's ultimate resurrection, in the present context (and in tune with the entire passage comprising verses {33-39}) it appears to be an illustration of God's power to bestow spiritual life upon hearts that have hitherto remained closed to the truth of His existence and omnipotence. Hence, it implies a call to the believer never to abandon the hope that "those who deny the truth" may one day grasp the truth of the Qur'anic message.

35 - Lit., "neither from between its hands, nor from behind it", i.e., it cannot be openly changed by means of additions or omissions (Razi), and neither surreptitiously, by hostile or deliberately confusing interpretations. The above is one of the Qur'anic passages on which the great commentator Abu Muslim al-Isfahani (as quoted by Razi) bases his absolute rejection of the theory of "abrogation" (for which see note [87] on [2:106](#)). Since the "abrogation" of any Qur'an verse would have amounted to its ibtal - that is, to an

open or implied declaration that it was henceforth to be regarded as null and void - the verse in question would have to be considered "false" (batil) in the context of the Qur'an as it is before us: and this, as Abu Muslim points out, would clearly contradict the above statement that "no falsehood (batil) can ever attain to it".

36 - This is an allusion to the allegation of the Prophet's opponents that he himself was the "author" of what he claimed to be a divine revelation, as well as to their demand that he should "prove" the truth of his prophetic mission by producing a miracle: a scornful attitude with which all the earlier prophets had been confronted at one time or another, and which is epitomized in the "saying" of the unbelievers mentioned in verse {5} of this surah.

37 - Sc., "in a tongue which we can understand". Since the Prophet was an Arab and lived in an Arabian environment, his message had to be expressed in the Arabic language, which the people to whom it was addressed in the first instance could understand: see in this connection note [72] on the first sentence of [13:37](#), as well as the first half of [14:4](#) - "never have We sent forth any apostle otherwise than [with a message] in his own people's tongue, so that he might make [the truth] clear unto them". Had the message of the Qur'an been formulated in a language other than Arabic, the opponents of the Prophet would have been justified in saying, "between us and thee is a barrier" (verse {5} of this surah)

38 - Lit, "from a far-off place": i.e., they only hear the sound of the words, but cannot understand their meaning.

39 - As was and is the case with the Qur'an, some people accepted the divine message revealed to Moses, and some rejected it (Zamakhshari, Razii), while others disagreed about the import and application of its tenets (Tabari).

40 - For an explanation of this passage, as well as of the above parallel between men's attitudes towards the earlier scriptures and the Qur'an, see the second sentence of [10:19](#) and the corresponding note [29].

41 - Lit., "about it", i.e., doubts as to whether the Qur'anic approach to problems of man's spirit and body - and, in particular, its stress on the essential unity of these twin aspects of human life (cf. note [118] on the

first sentence of [2:143](#)) - is justified or not. In a wider sense, these doubts of the deniers of the truth relate to the question of whether religion as such is "beneficial" or "injurious" to human society - a question which is posed and answered by them with a strong bias against all religious faith.

42 - See note [17] on [11:9](#).

43 - I.e., man is, as a rule, so blinded by his love of this world that he cannot imagine its ever coming to an end. Implied in this statement is a doubt as to whether there will really be an afterlife, and whether man will really be judged by God on resurrection.

44 - Being fully convinced of his own merit (as expressed in the words, "This is but my due"), he is confident that - in case there should really be a life after death - his own flattering view of himself will be confirmed by God.

45 - I.e., the truth of resurrection and of God's judgment.

46 - I.e., the realization of the spiritual blindness in which they spent their life will in itself be a source of their suffering in the hereafter: cf. [17:72](#) - "whoever is blind [of heart] in this [world] will be blind in the life to come [as well]".

47 - Lit., "wide [i.e., prolonged or diffuse] prayers".

48 - According to Razii, this is an implied allusion to the attitude of people who - as mentioned in verses {4} and {5} of this surah - "turn away" from the message of the Qur'an, saying, as it were: "Our hearts are veiled from whatever thou callest us to, [O Muhammad,] and in our ears is deafness, and between us and thee is a barrier."

49 - Lit., "We will show them" or "make them see".

50 - I.e., through a progressive deepening and widening of their insight into the wonders of the universe as well as through a deeper understanding of man's own psyche - all of which points to the existence of a conscious Creator.

51 - I.e., that He is almighty and all-seeing: a fundamental truth which, by itself, should be enough to remind man of his responsibility before Him.

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