

TAFSIR AS-S'ADI

[Surah Fatihah & Juz-30]

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Tafsir of Surah al Fatihah - The Opening (Surah 1)

- 1) In the Name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Most Merciful.
- 2) All praise (and thanks) are for Allah, the Lord of the worlds.
- 3) The All-Merciful, the Most Merciful.
- 4) Master of the Day of Judgement.
- 5) You alone we worship and You alone we ask for help.
- 6) Guide us (to and on) the Straight Path.
- 7) The Path of those You have blessed, not of those who have incurred anger, nor of those astray.

1) “In the Name of Allah,” meaning: I begin with every Name belonging to Allah, Most High. This is because the word Name is singular and in the genitive form; therefore it subsumes all of Allah’s Beautiful and Perfect Names. “Allah,” He is the God who is worshipped: the one deserving worship to the exclusion of everything else because of His qualities of divinity, attributes, all of which are perfect. “The All-Merciful, the Most Merciful,” these are two Names proving that He, Most High, is one who possesses a great and all-encompassing mercy that includes everything and embraces every living being. He has decreed it for those who fear Allah, those who follow His Prophets and Messengers: these have unrestricted mercy; anyone else only has a portion of this mercy.

Know that one of the principles agreed upon by the Salaf and their Imams is to have faith in Allah and His Attributes, and in the rules determining how they are to be received. So, for example, they believe that he is Rahman and Rahim, possessing the quality of mercy which is extended to its recipients. Therefore, all blessings are one of the resultant effects of this mercy. This principle holds true for all of His Names. It is said concerning the Name, All-Knowing: He is All-Knowing, possessing the quality of knowledge by which He knows everything. He is All-Powerful, possessing the quality of power which makes Him omnipotent etc.

2) “All praise (and thanks) are due to Allah,” this verse eulogises Allah through His perfect Attributes and His actions, all of which are based upon beneficence and justice. To Him belongs perfect and complete praise in every sense. “Lord of the worlds,” the Lord is the One who nourishes and sustains the whole of the creation, meaning everything besides Allah, by the very fact of His creating them, His granting them favour after favour, and His gracing them with immense blessings, the absence of which would preclude any possibility of creation surviving. Every blessing they possess is from Him, Most High.

His sustaining creation is of two types: general and specific. The general refers to His creating the creation, providing for them, and guiding them to all that they need in order to have them survive in this worldly life. The specific refers to His sustaining His friends (awliya^ˆ) with faith, allowing them conform to it, perfecting and completing it for them, repressing all that would make them turn away from it, and curbing any barriers that may be set up between them and Him. The reality of this can be expressed as, ‘Granting them the divine accord to every good and safe-guarding them against all evil.’ Perhaps it was due to this that most of the supplications made by the Prophets employed the word ‘Lord’: all they wanted and asked for was covered by His specific lordship.

His saying, “Lord of the worlds” proves that He alone is the Creator and that all affairs are regulated by Him as is the provision of blessings. It also proves that He is completely Rich Beyond Need and that creation is in total and dire need of Him alone in every sense and in every possible way.

3) “The All-Merciful, the Most Merciful.”

4) “Master of the Day of Judgement,” a master is a person who has the quality of ownership, from the consequences of which is the ability to command and prohibit, reward and punish, and to dispose of his subjects and possessions in any way he wishes. In this verse, mastery has been appended to the Day of Judgement, the Day of Rising, the Day on which man will be judged for his actions – the good and the bad. This is because on that Day the completeness and perfection of His mastery, justice and wisdom will be made clear to all. Moreover, man will realize that any mastery of created beings has ended, so much so that kings, ministers, slaves and the free-born will all be the same: all of them yielding to His greatness, rendered in complete submission before His magnificence, expectant of His recompense, hoping for His reward and fearing His punishment. The point of mentioning His mastery in this context is to emphasize it, otherwise He is Master of the Day of Judgement and all other days.

5) “You Alone we worship and You Alone we ask for help,” meaning that we single You out Alone for worship and seeking help. This is because mentioning the object at the head of a verb is a method of constraint (hasr), i.e. affirming what is mentioned in the sentence and negating it for anything that falls outside. Therefore, it is as if the person has said, ‘We worship You and we do not worship anything else. We ask You for help and we do not turn to anyone else for help.’

Mentioning worship before asking for help is by way of mentioning the general before the specific, and to show that attention should be given to His right over the right of His servant. “Worship” is a collective noun that subsumes all actions and sayings,

outward and inward, that Allah loves and is pleased with. Seeking help, isti`ana, is to depend upon Allah, Most High, in acquiring that which would benefit and repressing that which would harm, along with having the certainty that He will actually assist the petitioner.

Living the worship of Allah and seeking His help are the means to everlasting happiness and security from all evil; there is no path to victory except by meeting the requirements of these two pillars. Worship can only be considered to be true worship when done in the way taught by the Messenger (SAW) seeking thereby only Allah's face. These two conditions have to be present for the action to be considered worship.

Seeking help has been mentioned after worship even though it is a part of worship because the servant is always in need of Allah's help in all acts of worship: if Allah does not Help him, he will not achieve the goals he hopes to attain by enacting the obligations and avoiding the proscriptions.

6) "Guide us (to and on) the Straight Path," show us and direct us to it, grant us the divine grace to traverse it. The Straight Path is the clear path that leads to Allah and His Paradise: it is the cognizance of truth and acting by it. Therefore, the verse means: guide us to the Path and guide us in the Path. Guidance to the Path means to come to Islam and abandon all other religions. Guidance in the Path means guidance towards all of the details of Islam in terms of knowledge and action. Hence, this supplication is one of the most comprehensive and most beneficial supplications, and this is why it is obligatory to supplicate to Allah with it in every rak`ah of prayer, especially since the servant is in continuous need of it.

7) This Straight Path is "the Path of those You have blessed" who are the Prophets, the Sincerely Truthful, the Martyrs and the Righteous "not" the path "of those who have incurred anger," who knew the truth but abandoned it such as the Jews and others, "nor" the path "of those astray," who abandoned the truth out of ignorance and misguidance such as the Christians.

This chapter, despite its brevity, has covered what no other chapter of the Qur'an has. It mentions the three types of Tawhid: Tawhid al-Rububiyah, Unity of Lordship, gleaned from His saying, "Lord of all the worlds"; Tawhid al-Ilahiyyah, Unity of Divinity, which is to single out Allah Alone for worship, gleaned from the word "Allah" and from His saying, "You Alone we worship and You Alone we ask for help"; and Tawhid al-Asma' wa'l-Sifat, Unity of the Names & Attributes, which is to affirm the Attributes of Perfection for Allah, Most High, which He has affirmed for Himself and His Messenger has affirmed for Him, without ta`til (denying the Attributes), or tamthil and tashbih (likening the Attributes to creation) as is proven by His saying, "all praise (and thanks)" as already mentioned.

It also affirms Prophethood in His saying, “guide us (to and on) the Straight Path” because this guidance is not possible without a message. It affirms recompense for ones actions in His saying, “Master of the Day of Judgement” and it affirms that this recompense shall be established upon justice, this is because the meaning of ‘din’ is recompense founded upon justice.

It affirms Qadr (the divine decree) and that the servant is the true performer of his actions contravening the stances of the Qadariyyah and Jabariyyah.

In fact this surah refutes all the people of innovation and misguidance in His saying, “Guide us (to and on) the Straight Path” because this is cognizance of the truth and enacting it, and every innovator and misguided person contradicts this.

It enjoins making the religion sincerely for Allah in terms of worship and seeking help in His saying, “You Alone we worship and You Alone we ask for help.”

All praise and thanks are for Allah, Lord of all the worlds.

Tafsir of Surah al Naba - The Tidings (Surah 78)

1) What are they asking one another about? 2) About the Grave Tidings, 3) concerning which they are in disagreement: 4) no indeed, but they will soon know! 5) Again, no indeed, but they will soon know!

“What are they” those who deny the Signs of Allah “asking one another about?” The answer follows, “About the Grave Tidings,” the momentous news “concerning which they are in disagreement” about which they had lengthy debate, held widely disparate views and the discord of which had spread far and wide. This is because they denied the news and met it with incredulity. However, this news is not something that is subject to uncertainty and does not admit any doubt. Therefore, the reality is that those who deny the meeting with their Lord will never believe, even if every Sign comes to them, until they themselves see the Painful Punishment. “No indeed, but they will soon know! Again, no indeed, but they will soon know!” they will soon know what they used to deny when the punishment descends upon them, when they are “flung (disdainfully) into the Fire of Hell,”^[1] and they will be told, “This is the Fire which you used to deny!”^[2]

6) Have We not made the earth a level expanse, 7) and the mountains pegs? 8) We created you in pairs, 9) We appointed your sleep as a time of rest,* 10) We appointed night as a garment, 11) and We appointed day for livelihood. 12) We built seven mighty [heavens] above you, 13) and We fixed a blazing lamp [there]. 14) We sent down cascading water from rain-laden clouds** 15) that We may bring forth grain and vegetation with it, 16) and gardens thick with entwined growth.

Then Allah, Most High, mentions His blessings and the evidences pointing to the truth of His Messengers. He says, “Have We not made the earth a level expanse,” have we not granted you magnificent blessings such as leveling the earth and making it subservient to you? Have we not subjected it to you that you may extract crops from it, build residences and roadways for your own benefit? “And the mountains as pegs,” making the earth firm so that it does not shake and sway under you. “We have created you in pairs,” male and female, of the same type, that one may find rest with the other, that love and mercy may ensue as a result of which offspring are born; the pleasure in the act of marital relations being yet another blessing. “We have appointed your sleep as a time of rest,” a cessation of your activities and a repose for you. “We have appointed night as a garment,” man would be harmed were his activity perpetual and unceasing, so Allah appointed the night and sleep as a means to cover him such that his motions, which would end up harming him, may find stillness and that he may find repose. “We have appointed day for livelihood. We built seven mighty [heavens] above you,” i.e. seven heavens, mighty, firm and unshakable. Allah holds them up by His power, making them like a roof for the earth. They contain many benefits, amongst which is the sun: “and We fixed a blazing lamp [there],” referring to it as “blazing” to highlight its quality of light which is necessary for the existence of man and as a “lamp” to highlight its heat which is also beneficial for man. “We sent down cascading water from the rain-laden clouds that We may bring forth grain” such as wheat, barley, rice and other edible produce, “and vegetation with it,” all types of plants which Allah has made fodder for animals. “And gardens thick with entwined growth,” intertwined growth containing every type of delicious fruit.

How can you disbelieve in the One who has granted these magnificent blessings, the extent of which none can hope to estimate let alone count? How can you deny what He informs you of with regards the Resurrection? How can you use His blessings to disobey Him and deny them?

17) Indeed, the Day of Decision is an appointed time. 18) On the Day the Trumpet is blown, you will come forth in multitudes, 19) and heaven is opened up, becoming

apertures, 20) and the mountains are set in motion, becoming a mirage.

Allah, Most High, proceeds to mention what will occur on the Day of Rising about which the deniers are asking each other and the obdurate are rejecting. It is a momentous Day, “Indeed, the Day of Decision is an appointed time,” for creation. “On the Day the Trumpet is blown, you will come forth in multitudes, and heaven is opened up, becoming apertures, and the mountains are set in motion, becoming a mirage,” during this Day such violent and terrifying events are set in motion as would turn the hair of a babe white and beset hearts with utter confusion and dismay. Mountains will be shaken until they become “scattered dust”^[3] and the heaven will be rent asunder such that it “becomes apertures”. On that Day, Allah will judge between all creatures with His judgment that cannot be wrong or unjust, and the Fire of Hell which Allah has made a place of ambush and a homecoming for the transgressors will be kindled to a blaze.

21) Truly, Hell lies in ambush, 22) for the transgressors, a final place of return: 23) abiding in there for [countless] ages. 24) There they will not taste any coolness*** or drink, 25) save boiling water and [foul] pus:◊ 26) a fitting recompense! 27) They were not expecting a reckoning, 28) and they roundly denied Our Signs, 29) but We have listed everything in a Book. 30) “So taste this! We will only ever increase you in torment.”

“Truly, Hell lies in ambush, for the transgressors, a final place of return: abiding in there for [countless] ages,” meaning many many ages, the meaning of age (haqb) here, in the view of many exegetes, is eighty years. When they enter it, “There they will not taste any coolness or drink,” not receiving what would cool their skins or quench their thirst. “Save boiling water” that would scald their faces and rip open their stomachs “and a scalding pus:” the pus of the denizens of Hell: a truly vile liquid with a foul taste. This atrocious punishment is “a fitting recompense” for what they worked. Allah will not wrong them in the slightest; rather it was they who wronged themselves. This is why Allah proceeds to mention their deeds which made them deserving of this recompense, “They were not expecting a reckoning,” they did not believe in the Resurrection or that Allah would recompense creation for the good and bad that they worked. For this reason they neglected to work for the Hereafter, “and they roundly denied Our Signs,” they clearly denied them, leaving no shadow of doubt that would indicate otherwise. The clear proofs came to them but they obstinately denied them. “But We have listed everything” small and large, insignificant and significant, good and evil, “in a Book,” i.e. We have recorded it in the Preserved Tablet. Therefore let not the sinners think that We have punished them for sins they

did not commit, neither let them think that any of their deeds will be lost or forgotten – no, not even an atoms weight! “And the Book is placed, and you will see the guilty fearful of that which is therein, and they say, ‘What kind of a Book is this that leaves not a small thing nor a great thing but takes account thereof!’ And they find all that they did confronting them, and your Lord wrongs no-one.”^[4] “So,” you deniers “taste this,” painful punishment and perpetual anguish. “We will only ever increase you in torment,” each period of time brings with it an increase in punishment. This verse is one of the most severe verses depicting the punishment of the Fire, may Allah save us from it.

31) For those mindful of Allah there is salvation: 32) Gardens and vineyards, 33) maidens, nubile and alike of age, 34) and an overflowing cup. 35) There they will hear no vain speech or falsehood - 36) a reward from your Lord, a gift more than fitting: 37) Lord of the heavens and the earth and everything between them, the All-Merciful, from whom they hold no [right] of address.

After having mentioned the state of the sinners, Allah mentions the end of those with taqwa, “For those mindful of Allah there is salvation,” i.e. those who ward off the displeasure of their Lord by adhering firmly to His obedience and shunning disobedience, for them is success and victory, and distance from the Fire. Part of this victory is, “Gardens,” containing all types of luscious vegetation giving forth fruit, “and vineyards,” with rivers sprouting from them. Grapes have been specifically mentioned because of their excellence and because they are present in plenitude in those Gardens. “Maidens, nubile” full breasted women whose bosom never loses its firmness, eternally youthful and beautiful “and alike of age,” i.e. of one age. The norm for people who are atrab is that they are sociable and companionable, their age is thirty-three which is the pinnacle of youth. “And an overflowing cup,” with the choicest wine, “delicious to the drinkers”.^[5] “There they will hear no vain speech,” words that contain no benefit, “or falsehood” words calling to sin. Allah says, “There hear they no vain speaking or sinful discourse.”^[6]

Allah gave them this magnificent reward out of His beneficence and grace, “a reward from your Lord, a gift more than fitting,” by reason of their deeds which Allah guided them to and made to be a cause leading to His grace. He is their Lord, “Lord of the heavens and the earth, and everything between them,” who created them and regulated them, “the All-Merciful,” whose mercy extends to everything. Hence He nurtured them and extended His mercy to them until they attained this state of felicity. Then He mentioned His greatness and His Kingship on the Day of Judgment, “from whom they hold no [right] of address,” except “for the one the All-Merciful permits and says what is right.” Therefore none will be able to speak unless he meets these two pre-

requisites: Allah grants him leave to speak and he speaks rightly. This is because “That is the Day of Truth,” the day when falsehood cannot be circulated and lying is of no benefit.

38) On the Day when the Spirit and the angels will stand in ranks, they will not speak except for one who the All Merciful permits and says what is right. 39) That is the Day of Truth; so whoever wants to should take a way back to his Lord. 40) Indeed We have warned you of an imminent punishment, on the Day when a man will observe what his own hands have sent before him and the disbeliever will cry out, ‘Oh, if only I were dust!’

“On the Day when the Spirit,” Jibril, the best of the angels “and the angels will stand in ranks,” submissively before Allah. “They will not speak except for one who the All-Merciful permits and says what is right.” After having encouraged and discouraged, and given glad-tidings and warned, He says, “That is the Day of Truth; so whoever wants to should take a way back to his Lord,” with deeds and a truthful footing to which he can recourse on the Day of Judgement. “Indeed We have warned you of an imminent punishment,” because it is approaching and everything that is approaching is imminent, “on the Day when a man will observe what his own hands have sent before him,” being concerned with it and being terrified of it. So look in this abode to what you are preparing for the Eternal Abode! “O you who believe! Observe your duty to Allah and let every soul look to that which it sends on before for the morrow. And observe your duty to Allah, Allah is well-informed of what you do.”^[7] Then, whoever finds good, let him praise Allah; and whoever finds other than that, he has none to blame but himself. It is for this reason that the disbelievers will wish for death by reason of their extreme sorrow and anguish, “and the disbeliever will cry out, ‘Oh, if only I were dust!’”. We ask Allah to deliver us from disbelief and all evil. He is the Bestower of Good, the Kind.

Endnotes

* lit: “as a cessation.”

** Another interpretation is “and have sent down cascading water from wind (driven clouds).” [Abu Hayyan]

*** Another interpretation has “There they will find no sleep or rest or drink” [Abu Hayyan]

◇ Another interpretation has, “paralysing cold” [Qurtubi]

1. al-Tur (52): 13
2. al-Tur (52): 14
3. al-Waqi`ah (56): 6
4. al-Kahf (18): 49
5. Muhammad (47): 15
6. al-Waq`iah (56): 25
7. al-Hashr (59): 18

Tafsir of Surah al Nazi'at - The Pluckers (Surah 79)

1) By those who wrench out from the very roots, 2) by those who tenderly draw out, 3) by those who glide along serenely, 4) by those who race along, speeding ahead, 5) and by those who arrange a matter.

The beginning of this chapter contains oaths taken by the noble angels and the actions that they do showing their complete subservience to the command of Allah and their rushing to implement His order. It is possible that the purpose of the oaths is to stress the Recompense and Resurrection as this is what is mentioned in the ensuing verses. It is also possible that the oath being taken and the purpose of the oath be one and the same: the oath is taken by the angels (and the purpose is to stress belief in them) because belief in the angels is one of the six pillars of faith. Their actions mentioned here; what they do before, during and after death also point to the Recompense.

“By those who wrench out from the very roots,” these are the angels who pluck out souls forcefully such that they be recompensed for their deeds, engrossed in their duty and diligently carrying it out. “By those who tenderly draw out,” these are also angels that draw out souls forcefully and vigorously, or these specifically draw out the souls of the believers whereas the wrenching is reserved for the souls of the disbelievers. “By those who glide along” frequently descending and ascending “serenely, by those who race along,” racing others “speeding ahead,” rushing to obey Allah and hence convey the revelation to the Messengers before the devils can steal a hearing, thereby outstripping them. “And by those who arrange a matter,” the angels whom Allah has appointed to regulate the affairs of this

creation such as rain, plants, winds, oceans, foetuses, animals, Paradise, Hell and other such matters.

6) On the Day when the Blast thunders,* 7) following this, the [Blast] riding behind: 8) that Day hearts will be pounding, 9) their eyes downcast. 10) They say, ‘What! Will we be restored to how we were before?*** 11) ...When we have become decayed bones?!’ 12) They say, ‘[Bah!] That, then, would be a ruinous turn of events.’ 13) There will be but one Cry, 14) and suddenly they will be above ground, wide awake!

“On the Day when the Blast” heralding the Last Hour “thunders, following this, the [Blast] riding behind,” another blast following the first. “That Day hearts will be pounding,” in terror at what they see and hear. “Their eyes downcast,” humbled and abased, their hearts overcome with fear, their very core stunned by the horror around them, regret overtaking them, anguish and loss hemming them in. “They” the disbelievers “say,” mockingly and arrogantly, “‘What! Will we be restored to how we were before?’” Shall we return to our first form after having died? The question is asked incredulously, by way of rejection. They rejected the Resurrection and then persisted in their denial by saying “...When we have become decayed bones?!” Are we to be given life again after we have become “bones, rotted away”^[1]“They say, ‘[Bah!] That, then, would be a ruinous turn of events.’” They considered it extremely unlikely that such an event would occur, betraying their ignorance of the power of Allah and intrepidly displaying their insolence before Him. Allah responds by declaring how easy this is for Him, “There will be but one Cry,” a blast of the Trumpet “and suddenly they” all of creation “will be above ground,” on the surface of the earth “looking on,” “standing and looking on!”^[2] Allah will gather them together and judge them with His perfect justice and then recompense them.

15) Has the story of Moses reached you? 16) When his Lord called out to him in the sacred valley, Tuwa, 17) “Go to Pharaoh, he has transgressed, 18) and ask him, ‘Are you [disposed] to purify yourself, 19) and have me guide you to your Lord so you may fear [Him]?’” 20) Then he showed him the Greatest Sign, 21) but he denied and disobeyed. 22) Then he turned his back, striving [to counter truth]. 23) Then he mustered [his people] and called out, 24) he said, ‘I am your lord most high.’ 25) So Allah seized him with an exemplary punishment in this world and the next. 26) There is a lesson in this for anyone who fears [Allah].

Allah says to His Prophet, Muhammad (SAW), “Has the story of Moses reached you?” The question is asked in order to highlight the magnitude of the incident and to show that it really happened. “When his Lord called out to him in the sacred valley, Tuwa,” the place where Allah spoke to him, conferred messengership upon him, commissioned him with the revelation and chose him. ““Go to Pharaoh, he has indeed transgressed,” forbid him from his transgression, shirk and disobedience with lenient, gentle words so that “hopefully he may pay heed or fear (Allah).”^[3] “And ask” him, ““Are you [disposed] to purify yourself,” do you have the resolve to take on fine traits and praiseworthy qualities the likes of which all intelligent folk would compete for? These are that you purify yourself and cleanse it of the stain of disbelief and transgression, and then progress into the light of faith and righteous action. “And have me guide you to your Lord,” I will direct you to Him and show you the ways and means of pleasing Him and differentiate these from the ways and means of earning His displeasure “so you may fear (Him),”” however Pharaoh refused to accept the call of Musa, “then he showed him the Greatest Sign,” the genus of Great Signs, as such this verse does contradict the fact that there were a number of such signs, “but he denied” the truth “and disobeyed” His command. “Then he turned his back, striving,” expending his efforts in countering the truth and declaring war against it. “Then he mustered” his forces “and called out. He said,” to them ““I am your Lord Most High!”” so submit to him and accept his falsehood and his looking down on them. “So Allah seized him with an exemplary punishment in this world and the next,” Allah made His punishment a proof and a warning, demonstrating the punishment that occurs in this life and the next. “There is a lesson in this for anyone who fears [Allah],” it is the person who fears Allah that truly benefits from the Signs and admonitions. Therefore when such-a-one sees the punishment of Pharaoh, he comes to know that a person who is exultant, arrogant, disobedient, and competes with Allah in His dominion will be punished in this life and the Hereafter. As for the person whose heart is devoid of the fear of Allah, even if every Sign comes to him, he will not believe.

27) Are you a more difficult creation or is the heaven? He constructed it. 28) He raised its ceiling high and proportioned it. 29) He darkened its night and brought out its morning light. 30) After that He spread out the earth, 31) He brought forth its water and its pasture from it, 32) and the mountains He firmly anchored - 33) for you and your livestock to enjoy.

Allah then proceeds to mention a clear proof for those who reject the Resurrection, “Are you” man “a more difficult creation or the heaven?” of immense volume, great strength and dazzling height, “He constructed it. He raised its ceiling high” raising its size and form “and proportioned it,” with a precision and perfection

that befuddles the mind and bewilders the intelligent. “He darkened its night,” such that the night spreads across the face of the earth, reaching every region “and brought out its morning light” with the light of the sun so that man goes out to fulfil what he needs for his religious and worldly life. “After that” the creation of the heaven “He spread out the earth,” placing in it its benefits which are explained as “He brought forth its water and its pasture from it, and the mountains He firmly anchored - for you and your livestock to enjoy.” Therefore the earth was spread after the creation of the heaven, however the actual creation of the earth occurred before the creation of the heaven as is proven by the verse, “Say, ‘Disbelieve you in Him who created the earth in two days, and ascribe rivals to Him?’ That (and none else) is the Lord of the Worlds! He placed therein firmly embedded mountains, towering above it, and blessed it and measured therein its sustenance in four days, alike for (all) who ask; then turned He to the heaven when it was smoke, and said to it and the earth, ‘Come both of you, willingly or unwillingly.’ They said, ‘We come in willing obedience.’ Then He ordained them seven heavens in two days and inspired in each heaven its mandate; and We adorned the celestial heaven with lamps, and guarded it.”^[4]

Therefore the One who created the seven heavens in all their splendour and the lamps and celestial bodies they contain, and who created the earth and all it contains is definitely able to resurrect the creation and recompense those who are legally responsible (mukallaf) for their deeds. Whoever worked righteousness, for him lies in store great good, and whoever worked evil, he has none to blame but himself. It is for this reason that Allah proceeds to mention the Last Hour and the Recompense:

34) But when the Great Calamity comes to pass, 35) that Day man will remember what he strove for, 36) and the Blazing Furnace will be displayed for all who can see. 37) Then, as for him who transgressed 38) and preferred the life of this world, 39) the Blazing Furnace will be [his] shelter. 40) But as for him who feared the standing before his Lord and forbade the self its lust, 41) the Garden will be [his] shelter.

“But when the Great Calamity comes to pass,” the Great Judgement, the Severe Hardship – a hardship that renders all other hardships insignificant. It is at this time that a parent shall forget his child, a friend shall forget his friend, and a lover shall forget his beloved. “That Day man will remember what he strove for,” in this world of good and evil. He will hope for any increase in his good deeds, even an atoms weight, and any addition to his evil deeds, even an atoms weight, will cause him despair and misery. It is then that he will realise that the foundation of real profit and loss lay in what he strove for in this world. On that occasion every means and every tie that existed in this world will be severed; except for deeds. “And the Blazing Furnace will

be displayed for all who can see,” prepared for its denizens, ready to seize them, waiting for the command of its Lord. “Then, as for him who transgressed” boldly committing major sins and not restricting himself to the limits set by Allah, “and preferred the life of this world,” over the Hereafter such that he strove for the world and devoted his time and efforts in running after it and its allures, forgetting the Hereafter and neglecting to work towards it, “the Blazing Furnace will be [his] shelter,” his home and final place. “But as for him who feared the standing before his Lord,” feared the time when he would stand before Him, and feared His just judgment to such an extent that it affected his heart, “and the self its lust,” that diverts it from the obedience of Allah and strove against desires and lusts such that his desires conformed to what Messenger (SAW) came with “The Garden,” containing every type of goodness, joy, and bliss “will be [his]” the one who has these characteristics “shelter.”

42) They ask you about the Hour, ‘When will it arrive?’*** 43) But how can you tell them? 44) Its coming to pass is your Lord’s affair. 45) You are merely a warner to those who fear it. 46) On the Day they see it, it will seem they had only lingered but an evening or the morning after.

“They” the obstinate deniers of the Resurrection “ask you about the Hour: ‘When will it arrive?’” Allah replies by saying, “But how can you tell them?” What is the benefit for you and for them in mentioning this and knowing when it will occur? There is no real point to this question. Now, because there is no benefit in the creation knowing the answer to this question, rather the benefit lies in them not knowing it, Allah kept the knowledge of it to Himself, “Its coming to pass is your Lord’s affair,” i.e. its knowledge belongs to Him alone. He says, “They ask you about the Hour, when will it arrive? Say, ‘Knowledge thereof is with my Lord only. He alone will manifest it at its proper time.’”^[5] “You are merely a Warner to those who fear it,” your warning will only benefit those who fear its occurrence and dread the standing before Allah. The only concern of these people is preparation for that event and working towards it. As for the one who does not believe in it, he pays no attention to it and neither does he pay attention to his obstinacy. This is because his obstinacy arises because of denial and obduracy. When a person reaches such a state and then asks the question, to answer him is useless, and the Wisest of the Wise is free of him. “On the Day they see it, it will seem they had only lingered but an evening or the morning after.”

* lit: “On the Day when the Shuddering shudders,” which has also been interpreted to mean, “On the Day when the Quake shall convulse.”

** or: “What! Will be restored to [life] in holes in the ground?”

*** lit: “When will it drop anchor?” the analogy being to that of a ship set sail, which stops when the anchor is dropped.

1. Ya Sin (36): 68
2. al-Zumar (39): 78
3. Ta Ha (20): 44
4. Fussilat (41): 9-12
5. al-A`raf (7): 187

Tafsir of Surah 'Abasa - He Frowned (Surah 80)

1) He frowned and turned away 2) because the blind man came his way. 3) But, for all you know, he might well purify (himself), 4) or, profiting from the Reminder, take heed. 5) As for him who thinks himself without need, 6) to him are you fully attentive, 7) yet you are not [responsible] if he does not purify (himself). 8) But as for him who came to you in earnest endeavour, 9) fearful [of Allah], 10) to him are you inattentive.

The reason for the revelation of these noble verses was that a blind believer came to the Prophet (SAW) to ask him questions and to learn from him. At the same time an affluent man came to him. The Prophet (SAW) was always desirous of guiding people to Islam and so he devoted his attention to the rich person and ignored the indigent blind man in the hope of guiding the former. As a result Allah sent down these verses reprimanding him in a gentle manner.

“He frowned” showing it on his face “and turned” his body “away because the blind man came his way.” Then Allah mentioned the benefit that lay in his attending to him: “But, for all you know, he” the blind man “might well purify (himself),” cleanse himself of lowly mannerisms and adorn himself with beautiful mannerisms, “or take heed, profiting from the reminder?” This is a great point of benefit and it is the

purpose of the sending of Messengers, the purpose of giving admonition, and the purpose of reminding. Therefore attending to one who comes to you, desirous of such admonition and reminder, and is attentive, is more befitting and deserving. “As for him who thinks himself without need, to him are you fully attentive,” attending to a person who thinks himself self-sufficient, who is not asking, who is not desirous of good, coupled with your ignoring one who is more important than he is not befitting. “Yet you are not [responsible] if he is not purified,” there is no blame on you if he grows not in purity; hence if does not become pure, you are not held accountable for the evil that he works. “But as for him who came to you in earnest endeavour, fearful [of Allah], to him are you inattentive,” this then points to a well-known principle, ‘Something known should not be left for something possible. A benefit that is real should not be left for a benefit that is a mere possibility.’ This also points to the fact that one should more attentive to a student of knowledge, desirous of knowledge and in need of it, than any other person.

11) No indeed! It is a reminder; 12) so whoever wants to can remember it.* 13) [Inscribed] in honoured pages, 14) exalted and purified, 15) by the hands of scribes, 16) noble and virtuous.

“No indeed! It is a reminder,” from Allah in all truth, by it He admonishes His servants. He shows them, through His Book, what they are in need of and He clarifies right guidance from straying. “So whoever wants to can remember it,” i.e. act by it as Allah says, “Say, ‘The truth is from your Lord’: Therefore let him who will believe, and let him who will, disbelieve.”^[1] Then Allah mentions the place of this admonition, its greatness and its sanctity: “(Inscribed) in honoured pages, exalted,” in ranking and esteem “and purified,” from defect, from being harmed by the devils or their eavesdropping (and stealing), “by the hands of scribes,” the angels who are the envoys of Allah between Him and His servants, “noble,” full of goodness and blessings “and righteous,” in heart and deed.

17) Woe to man, how ungrateful he is!** 18) From what substance did He create him? 19) From a sperm-drop He created him, then proportioned him.*** 20) Then He makes the way easy for him. 21) Then He causes his death and stows him in a grave. 22) Then, when He wills, He will raise him. 23) No, indeed! Man has not yet fulfilled what He commanded him.

“Woe to man! How ungrateful he is” of Allah’s blessing and how severe is he in his rejection of the truth after it has been made plain! But what is he? He is one of the weakest of creatures, created from “fluid (held) despicable”^[2] “From what substance

did He create him? From a sperm-drop He created him, then proportioned him,” into a well-formed man and precisely formulated his inner and outer strengths and abilities. “Then He makes the way easy for him,” makes the worldly and religious things easy for him, guides him to the Path and tests him with command and prohibition. “Then He causes his death and stows him in a grave,” honouring him with burial and not leaving him to rot on the surface of the earth like all other animals. “Then, when He wills, He will raise him,” from the dead for the Recompense. Allah alone regulates the affairs of man and does what has been previously mentioned, none shares with Him in this, yet “No, indeed! Man has not yet fulfilled what He commanded him,” he has not fulfilled his obligations and so remains deficient in his duty, in need of completing it. Then, after this, Allah directs man’s attention to his food, to ponder it, and to ponder how it reaches him after having first passed through many transitions:

24) Then let man look at his food: 25) how We poured down water in abundance, 26) then We split the earth into furrows. 27) Then We made grain grow in it, 28) and grapes and herbage, 29) and olive and date-palm trees, 30) and gardens of dense, luxurious foliage, 31) and fruit and pasture, 32) for you and your livestock to enjoy.

“Then let man look to his food, how We poured down water in abundance,” sent down in rain in plenitude. “Then We split the earth into furrows,” for vegetation “then We made grain grow in it” in all its various types giving rise to delicious foods and delectable provision, “and grapes and herbage, and olive and date-palm trees,” these four have specifically been mentioned because of their benefits and advantages, “and gardens of dense, luxurious foliage,” containing trees and plants in such plenitude that they are entwined with each other, “and fruit,” food that man takes pleasure in eating such as grapes, pomegranates and the likes, “and pasture” as food for cattle and other animals. This is why Allah proceeds to say, “for you and your livestock,” which He created for you and made subservient to you, “to enjoy.”

Now, whoever ponders these blessings is led to show gratitude to his Lord, to expend all his efforts in turning in penitence to Him, to devote himself to obedience, and is led to believe in what He has informed us of.

33) But when the Deafening Blast comes, 34) on that Day a man will flee from his brother, 35) and his mother and his father, 36) and his wife and his children. 37) That Day, each person will have concerns enough of his own.

38) That Day, some faces will be radiant, 39) laughing and rejoicing. 40) That Day, other faces will be covered in dust, 41) gloom overlaying them. 42) Those are the disbelievers, the dissolute.

“But when the Deafening Blast comes,” when the cry heralding the Day of Rising comes, a cry whose terror stuns the ears, their very cores are struck with trepidation at what they see of the horrors unfurling before them and at the realisation of the dire need they have of their previous deeds. “On that Day a man will flee,” from those he held in the highest regard and were most beloved to him: “from his brother, and his mother and his father, and his wife and his children” because “that Day, each person will have concerns enough of his own,” his only concern is his own self and how he can ransom it from the punishment, so much so that he has no care for any other. On this occasion, mankind will be divided into two groups: the felicitous and the wretched. As for the felicitous their “faces will be radiant,” showing their extreme joy and delight because they know that they have been successful, “laughing and rejoicing.” As for the wretched: “[others] faces will be covered in dust, gloom overlaying them,” black, murky, dark; having given up all hope of good, certainty dawning on them of the misery and wretchedness that is their lot. “Those are disbelievers, the dissolute,” those who were ungrateful for the blessings of Allah, denied His signs and boldly committed those things He had prohibited. We ask Allah for pardon and well-being, He is the Bestower of Good, the Kind.

Endnotes

* or: “So whoever wants to can remember Him.”

** or: “Woe to man! What makes him so ungrateful?!”

*** or: “From a sperm-drop He created him, then set his destiny.”

1. al-Kahf (18): 29
2. al-Mursalat (77): 20

Tafsir of Surah al Takwir - The Contracting (Surah 81)

1) When the sun is contracted, losing its light, 2) when the stars scatter and fall, blinking out, 3) when the mountains are set in motion, 4) when camels ten months pregnant are abandoned,* 5) when wild beasts are all herded together, 6) when the seas boil over,** 7) when the souls are sorted in classes,*** 8) when the baby girl buried alive is asked 9) for what sin she was killed, 10) when the scrolls are spread open, 11) when the sky is stripped bare, 12) when Hellfire is stoked to a blaze, 13) and when Paradise is brought up close: 14) [each] soul will know what it has brought [with it].

“When the sun is contracted, losing its light,” i.e. when the horrifying events mentioned in this chapter unfurl, mankind will be divided into groups and each person will know what he has made ready of good and evil for his Hereafter. On that Day the sun will be folded up, i.e. compacted and extinguished, the moon will eclipse, and both shall be hurled into the Fire. “When the stars scatter and fall, blinking out,” altered and strewn about, away from their heavenly zones. “When the mountains are set in motion,” becoming “a heap of running sand”^[1] then becoming “like carded wool”^[2] then changing into “scattered dust”^[3] and destroyed. “When camels ten months pregnant are abandoned,” man on that Day shall ignore his most precious commodity, that item which he would keep a watchful eye on and carefully tend to on all occasions. However, such horror shall be unleashed upon him as would distract him from it. The camel mentioned here is the camel which is about to give birth, and at that time, to the Arabs, this was their most precious property. Therefore, the camel is used as an example to point to all that man holds dear and precious. “When wild beasts are all herded together,” for the Day of Judgement so that Allah may retaliate for any injustices that some of them may have done to others, in this way His servants will see His perfect justice. He will even retaliate for a sheep that was battered by a ram, then He will say to them, ‘Be dust!’ “When the seas boil over,” meaning that they will be stoked up and become, despite their massive size and volume, a fuming blaze. “When the souls are sorted in classes,” every person will be paired with those who did like deeds, the righteous shall be gathered with the righteous and the iniquitous will be gathered with the iniquitous. The believers will be married to the Hur al-`Ayn whereas the disbelievers will be partnered with the devils. Allah says, “And those who disbelieve are driven to Hell in companies”^[4], “And those who keep their duty to their Lord are driven to the Garden in companies”^[5], “Assemble those who did wrong, together with their wives and what they used to

worship.”^[6] “When the baby girl, buried alive, is asked,” this is a reference to a practice common in the Jahiliyyah where the ignorant would bury a female child alive for no reason other than the fear of poverty. She will be asked, “for what sin she was killed,” it is obvious that she is not guilty of any sin, but the question is asked rhetorically to censure and rebuke those who perpetrated this crime. “When the scrolls” containing a record of man’s good and bad deeds “are spread open,” and distributed to their owners. The recipient will receive it with his right hand, or left hand or from behind his back. “When the sky is stripped bare,” and disappears as Allah says, “The Day when the heaven with the clouds will be rent asunder”^[7], “The Day when We shall roll up the heavens as a recorder rolls up a written scroll”^[8], “When the whole earth is His handful on the Day of Resurrection, and the heavens are rolled in His right hand.”^[9] “When Hellfire is stoked to a blaze,” giving off a heat that it did not previously have. “And when Paradise is brought up close,” to those mindful of Allah. “Each soul will know what it has brought [with it],” the deeds it performed will be presented: “They will find all that they did placed before them.”^[10]

The descriptions of these events that will occur on the Day of Judgement strike the heart with trepidation, increase ones anxieties concerning that Day, seize one with a violent fear, increase one’s apprehensions, encourage the astute to prepare for this Day, and prevent them from doing anything that would deserve rebuke. This is why one of the Salaf said, ‘Whoever wishes to see the Day of Judgement unfurling as if he is seeing it with his very eye, let him ponder Surah al-Takwīr.’^[11]

15) No! I swear by the receding stars◊ – 16) running [their courses], setting from sight - 17) and by the night as it draws in,◊◊ 18) and by the dawn as it breathes out: 19) truly it is the speech of a noble Messenger, 20) mighty, securely placed with the Owner of the Throne, 21) obeyed there and trustworthy.

“No! I swear by the receding stars,” those planets that fall back from the normal course traversed by stars moving instead towards the east. These are the seven celestial planets: the sun, the moon, Venus, Jupiter, Mars, Saturn and Mercury. These stars map two courses of travel: a course towards the west in line with the rest of the stars and a course towards the east at odds to the rest of the stars. Allah takes on oath by these stars, by their tarrying behind, by their running their course, and by their being concealed by the day. “Running [their course], setting from sight, and by the night as it draws in,” i.e. the close of the night and it is also said: the onset of the night, “and the dawn as it breathes out,” i.e. the first signs of the morn: the gradual increase of light dissipating the darkness until day dawns and the sun rises. Allah took an oath by these great signs to emphasise the source of the Qur’an, its magnificence

and its preservation from every accursed devil: “truly it is the speech of a noble Messenger,” Jibril, peace be upon him, who conveyed it from Allah, Most High; “It is a revelation of the Lord of the worlds, which the Faithful Spirit has brought down upon your heart, that you may be (one) of the warners.”^[12] Allah describes him as being noble due to his excellent morals and manners and his many praiseworthy traits, he is the best of the angels and enjoys the greatest standing with his Lord. “Mighty,” stringently enacting what Allah commands him. An example of his might is his raising the homes of the people of Lut, turning them upside down and destroying them. “Securely placed with the Owner of the Throne,” Jibril is close to Allah, holding a lofty standing and enjoying a special place above and beyond that which is given to the other angels. “Obeyed there,” in the Exalted Company because he is one of the angels brought close, implementing the command of his Lord amongst them, whose opinion is obeyed, “and trustworthy,” implementing what Allah orders him to do precisely, without adding, subtracting or overstepping the limits. All of this proves the excellence of the Qur’an in the sight of Allah, Most High, in that He sent this noble angel, with these perfect qualities, to convey it. It is known that kings only ever send their best and most noble envoys with the most important of tasks and most noble of messages.

Then, after mentioning the excellence of the heavenly messenger who conveyed the Qur’an, Allah proceeds to mention the excellence of the earthly Messenger to whom the Qur’an was revealed and who invited mankind to it:

22) Your companion is not at all mad: 23) he certainly saw him on the clear horizon. 24) He is not grudging with the unseen, 25) and it is not the word of an accursed devil. 26) So where, then, are you going? 27) It is nothing but a reminder to the worlds, 28) to those of you who wish to take the right course. 29) But you do not will unless Allah wills, Lord of the worlds.

“Your companion” Muhammad (SAW) “is not at all mad,” as claimed by his enemies, the deniers of his message, falsely inventing enormities about him desiring thereby to extinguish the light he brought to the utmost of their ability. Rather, he (SAW) had the greatest of human intellects, the most perspicuous insight, and the most truthful speech. “He” Muhammad (SAW) “certainly saw him” Jibril (AS) “on the clear horizon,” the extremity of what is visible to the naked eye. “He is not grudging with the unseen,” neither is he of disreputable character such that he would conceal some of what is revealed to him, or add to it or detract from it. Indeed he is the Trusted One in the heaven and the earth; he completely conveyed the messages of his Lord with a “plain conveyance.”^[13] He did not begrudgingly withhold any of the revelation; not from the rich or the poor, not from a leader or a subject, not from a male or a female,

and not from a city dweller or a bedouin. It is for this reason that Allah sent him to an illiterate and ignorant nation, who, by the time he had passed away, had become sagacious scholars and perspicuous saints; knowledge found its heights in them and the ability to understand and derive the finest of details and wisdoms found its peak with them. They became the leaders in their respective disciplines and others were barely able to reach the rank of being their students!

After Allah mentions the greatness, the superiority and the excellence of His Book by pointing out the two noble Messengers through whose hands it reached mankind, and after having praised them, Allah proceeds to absolve it of any defect or deficiency that would impair its truth, “It is not the word of an accursed devil,” far removed from Allah, unworthy of His proximity. “So where, then, are you going,” how could such a thought cross your minds? Where have your minds wandered off to? You have thought the truth, reaching the limits of truthfulness, to be aught but lies, reaching the lowest of the low. What is this but a reversal of reality! “It is nothing but a reminder to the worlds,” through it are mankind reminded of their Lord, His Perfect Attributes, His being absolved of all defect, lowly traits and similitudes. Through it are they reminded of the injunctions and prohibitions and the wisdoms behind them. Through it are they reminded of the natural laws, the legal laws and the retribitional laws. They are reminded of what is good for them in both abodes, and they attain felicity in both abodes by following it. “To those of you who wish to take the right course,” after clear direction has been made plain from idle wandering and guidance from misguidance. “But you do not will unless Allah wills, Lord of the worlds,” it is His will that is implemented and it is not possible to oppose it or contradict it. This verse, and its likes, contains a refutation of the sects of the Qadariyyah, those who denied the decree, and the Jabariyyah, those who held that man had no free will, as has been previously mentioned when commenting on similar verses.

And Allah knows best and all praise and thanks are due to Him.

Endnotes

* or: “When the clouds are left without water,” or “When homes are abandoned, left vacant.”

** or: “When the seas surge and swell.”

*** lit: “when the souls are paired,” which has been interpreted to mean, “sorted in classes,” as above, i.e. categorised as Forerunners, Companions of the Right or Companions of the Left. It has also been interpreted to mean, “When the souls are reunited with their bodies.”

◇ or: “No! I swear by the planets with their retrograde motion.”

◇◇ or: “and by the night as it dissipates.”

1. al-Muzzammil(73): 14
2. al-Qari`ah(101): 5
3. al-Waqi`ah(56): 6
4. al-Zumar(39): 71
5. al-Zumar(39): 73
6. al-Saffat(37): 22
7. al-Furqan(25): 25
8. al-Anbiya’(21): 104
9. al-Zumar(39): 67
10. al-Kahf(18): 49

11. This statement is recorded as a hadith of the Prophet (SAW) by Tirmidhi and Ahmad and it is hasan.

12. al-Shu`ara’(26): 192-194

13. al-Taghabun(64): 12

Tafsir of Surah al Infitar - The Fracturing (Surah 82)

1) When the sky fractures, 2) when the stars scatter and fall, 3) when the seas are made to rage and erupt, 4) when the graves are overturned and emptied, 5) each soul will know what it has sent ahead and left behind.*

“When the sky fractures, when the stars scatter and fall,” losing their radiance, and the mountains vanish, “when the seas are made to rage and erupt,” becoming one mass of water “when the graves are overturned and emptied,” throwing out their dead who are then resurrected for the final Standing before Allah that they may be recompensed for their deeds. “Each soul will know what it has sent ahead and left behind,” on that Day the veil will be lifted: what was hidden shall become apparent, and every soul shall realise what it has reaped leading to its success or anguish.

It is on this occasion that the wrong-doer will “gnaw at his hands”^[1] when he sees “what his hands have sent forth”^[2] and the certainty of eternal punishment and

everlasting misery will dawn on him. It is on this occasion that those mindful of Allah, those who sent forth righteous deeds, will be victorious attaining eternal bliss and deliverance from the punishment of Hell.

6) O mankind, what has enticed you from your Noble Lord? 7) He who created you, shaped you, proportioned you, 8) and assembled you in whatever form He willed. 9) No! But you deny the Judgement. 10) [Yet] guardians are standing over you: 11) noble, recording, 12) who know all that you do.

Allah, Most High, proceeds to censure man for his deficiency in fulfilling the rights due to Him and his ever-falling into disobedience, “O mankind, what has enticed you from your Noble Lord,” is it that you are care-free of His rights, or is it that you think little of His punishment, or is it that you do not believe in His recompense? Is He not “He who created you, shaped you,” “in the finest moulds”^[3] “proportioned you,” into a well-balanced creation bearing the finest shape and stature? Is it then befitting that you be an ingrate or obstinately refuse to recognise His beneficence? To do so can only arise from ignorance, obstinacy and tyranny on your part. Instead, praise Allah for not making your features like that of a dog or donkey or the likes! This is why Allah proceeds to say, “and assembled you in whatever form He willed.” Then He says, “No! But you deny the Judgement,” despite this exhortation, despite this admonition, you persist in your denial of the Judgement! Yet you will, without a shadow of doubt, be judged for all that you did, “[Yet] guardians are standing over you,” whom Allah has appointed “noble, recording, who know all that you do,” of speech and deed: deed of the limb and deed of the heart. It is only befitting that you honour and respect them.

13) The righteous will be in bliss. 14) The dissolute will be in a Blazing Furnace; 15) in it will they roast on the Day of Judgement, 16) never will they be absent from it. 17) [But] what will make you realise what the Day of Judgement is? 18) Again, what will make you realise what the Day of Judgement is? 19) It is a Day when no soul will be able to do anything for another soul; that Day, the command is [entirely] Allah’s.

“The righteous” those who establish the rights of Allah and the rights of His servants. They adhere firmly to righteousness in the deeds of their hearts and the deeds of their limbs. These “will be in bliss,” experiencing this delight in their hearts, souls and bodies; in this life, in the life of the grave and in the Hereafter. “The dissolute” those who were deficient in fulfilling the rights of Allah and the rights of His servants, those whose hearts were filled with iniquity and so their deeds were wicked “will be in a

Blazing Furnace,” in torment in this world, in the life of the grave, and in the Hereafter. “In it will they roast on the Day of Judgement,” the Day of recompense for one's deeds. “Never will they be absent from it,” remaining therein forever, never to leave it. “[But] what will make you realise what the Day of Judgement is? Again, what will make you realise what the Day of Judgement is?” This is said in order to drive home the terror of that Day, a terror that leaves one's mind in disconcerted perplexity! “It is a Day when no soul will be able to do anything for another soul,” even if it be of close kin or a loved one. Every person, on that Day, will be concerned with himself and have no care for any other, nor will he ask for the deliverance of any other.^[4] “That Day, the command is [entirely] Allah's,” He will judge between His servants and take the right of the oppressed from the oppressor.^[5]

Allah knows best.

Endnotes

* i.e. what it has done and what it has failed to do.

1. al-Furqan (25): 27
2. Naba' (78): 40
3. al-Tin (95): 4

4. As Allah says, “So on that Day no power shall they have over each other, for profit or harm.” [34: 42]

5. Qatadah said, ‘Similarly, the command is Allah's alone today, however on that Day none will contend with this truth.’ [Abu Hayyan] Allah says, “The Day when they come forth, nothing of them being hidden from Allah. Whose is the Sovereignty this Day? It is Allah's, the One, the Almighty. This Day is each soul requited for that which it has earned; no wrong (is done) this Day.” [40: 16-17]

Tafsir of Surah al Mutaffifin - The Skimpers (Surah 83)

1) Woe to the skimpers! 2) Those who, when they take a measure from people, exact it in full, 3) but when they give by measure or weight, defraud them. 4) Do they not think that they will be resurrected 5) [to render account] on a Grave Day: 6) a Day when man will stand before the Lord of the worlds?

“Woe,” a word indicating punishment and destruction^[1] “to the skimpers,” Allah proceeds to explain who they are by saying, “those who, when they take a measure from people, exact in full,” without any loss, “but when they give by measure or weight,” if they give people what they are rightfully owed by measure or weight, “defraud them,” giving them less than their due, either by using defective scales and measures, or by not filling them or by other means. This amounts to stealing the property of another and being unjust. Now, if this is the threat directed to those who give people less than what is due them, what then of a person who takes their property by force, or actually steals it? Surely he is more deserving of this threat?

This noble verse proves that just as man takes his due from people, it is upon him to give them their due in wealth and any other dealings. The generality of this principle also covers matters such as debating and writing; each party is always desirous of presenting its case and its evidences, but it is also obligatory upon it to fairly present the evidences of its opponent and to investigate his evidences just as it investigates its own. In this way the justice of that person becomes clear, his lack of partisanship, his humility and his intelligence. We ask Allah for divine accord to every good.

Then Allah proceeds to threaten the skimpers, to express amazement at their state and their persistence in what they are doing, “Do they not think that they will be resurrected [to render account] on a Grave Day: a Day when man will stand before the Lord of the worlds?” It was lack of faith in the Last Day that led them to skimp, otherwise, had they believed in it and had they the certainty that they were soon to stand before their Lord who would judge them for every small and great deed, they would have refrained from their iniquity and repented.^[2]

7) No indeed! The record of the dissolute is in Sijjin. 8) What will make you realise what Sijjin is? 9) It is a register indelibly inscribed. 10) Woe, that Day, to the deniers: 11) those who deny the Day of Judgement, 12) and no one denies it save every sinful transgressor. 13)

When Our Signs are recited to him, he says, ‘Fables of the ancient!’ 14) No indeed! Rather, what they have earned has rusted up their hearts. 15) No indeed! That Day, they will be veiled from their Lord. 16) Then they will roast in the Blazing Furnace. 17) Then they will be told, ‘This is what you used to deny.’

“No indeed! The record of the dissolute,” this is general for all types of wicked people: the disbelievers, the hypocrites and the iniquitous, “is in Sijjin,” proceeding to explain what this is: “What will make you realise what Sijjin is? It is a register indelibly inscribed,” mentioning therein their vile deeds. Sijjin is a constricted and confined place and it is the opposite of `Illyyin which is the place for the record of the righteous as will be mentioned later. It is also said that Sijjin is the lowest part of the seventh earth, the place of the wicked and their place of residence when they are resurrected. “Woe, that Day, to the deniers:” then proceeding to explain who they are with His words, “those who deny the Day of Judgement,” the Day of Recompense, the Day in which Allah will judge man for his deeds. “And no one denies it save every sinful” i.e. committing many sins “transgressor,” transgressing the limits of Allah, overstepping the lawful and trespassing into the unlawful. It is this person whose enmity leads him to denial and whose arrogance leads him to reject the truth, hence Allah says, “When Our signs,” directing towards the truth and proving the truth of what the Messengers came with “are recited to him,” he denies them and obdurately rejects them and “says, ‘Fables of the ancient!’” fabrications concocted by the earlier generations and tales of nations long-gone; not from Allah.

As for the one who is just and desires to attain the manifest truth, such a person will not deny the Day of Judgement because Allah has erected clear evidences and signs pointing to its reality, such signs as would lead a person to have certain knowledge of it, such signs that would lead his spiritual sight to see it in the same manner that his physical sight sees the sun. “No indeed! Rather, what they have earned has rusted up their hearts,” However the person whose deeds have rusted up his heart and whose sins have hemmed him in, is veiled from the truth^[3] “No indeed! That Day, they will be veiled from their Lord,” a fitting recompense, he will be veiled from Allah just as his heart was veiled from the Signs of Allah in this world. “Then” in addition to this severe punishment “they will roast in the Blazing Furnace. Then they will be told,” by way of censure and rebuke, ““This is what you used to deny.”” Three punishments have been mentioned here: the punishment of Hell, the punishment of rebuke and blame, and the punishment of being veiled from the Lord of the worlds. This last punishment is the greatest of the three for it includes His being displeased and angry with them.

One also understands from this verse that the believers will see their Lord on the Day of Judgment in Paradise. They will take delight in looking on at Him and this delight will supersede all other delights in Paradise. They will rejoice at His discourse with them and feel extreme joy at His closeness. This has been mentioned by Allah in a number of verses in the Qur'an and there are concurrent ahadith concerning it from the Messenger of Allah (SAW).

These verses serve to warn one against sins because they show that sins, little by little, rust the heart and veil it until its light is extinguished, its spiritual sight dies, and it views reality in its opposite light such that it sees falsehood as truth and truth as falsehood – this is one of the greatest punishments of sin.

18) No indeed! The record of the righteous is in `Illiyin.
19) What will make you realise what `Illiyun is? 20) It is a register indelibly inscribed, 21) which those brought near [to Allah] will witness.

“No indeed! The record of the righteous is in `Illiyin,” after mentioning that the record of the wicked is in the lowest and most confined of places, Allah mentions that the record of the righteous is in the highest and vastest of places. “What will make you realise what `Illiyun is? It is a register indelibly inscribed, which those brought near [to Allah] will witness,” the noble Angels, the souls of the Prophets, the Sincerely Truthful and the Martyrs. Allah will laud them by mentioning them in this Exalted Company. `Illiyun is a term referring to the highest part of Paradise.

22) The righteous will be in bliss: 23) [seated] on couches, gazing [in wonder]. 24) You will recognise blissful radiance on their faces. 25) They will be given the choicest sealed nectar to drink, 26) the last residue of which is musk* - for this let the contenders compete. 27) It is mixed with [the water of] Tasnim, 28) a spring from which those brought near [to Allah] drink.

“The righteous will be in bliss,” after mentioning their record, Allah mentions that they are in bliss and this term encompasses the bliss of heart, soul and body, “[seated] on couches,” lined with fine, decorative sheets “gazing [in wonder],” at the joys Allah has prepared for them, looking on at the face of their Noble Lord. “You” who are looking at them “will recognise blissful radiance on their faces,” brought about by delight followed by delight, joy followed by joy and pleasure followed by pleasure. All these matters serve to give light, radiance and beauty to the face. “They will be given the choicest sealed nectar to drink,” the purest and sweetest of drinks “the last residue of which is musk,” it is possible that the word khitam refers to the fact that

this drink is sealed so that nothing can enter it that would diminish its purity or lessen its taste. This seal is musk. It is also possible that it mean that the last residue at the bottom of the cup containing this drink is pure musk as opposed to the murky fluid that is commonly found in the bottom of cups in this world. “For this,” eternal bliss, the extent of which is known to Allah Alone, “let the contenders compete!” by rushing to perform such deeds as would lead to it. This goal is most deserving of our expending our most precious commodities in acquiring and being the aspiration of the best of people! “It” this drink is “is mixed with [the water] of Tasnim, a spring from which those brought near [to Allah] drink,” unadulterated with anything else. Tasnim is the best drink of Paradise, and it is drunk in its unadulterated state by Those Brought Near who have the best standing among creation. It is mixed with other liquids, such as pure wine, for the People of the Right.

After having mentioned the recompense of the wicked and the recompense of the righteous and the vast gulf between the two, Allah proceeds to mention some of the actions of the wicked in this world,

29) Indeed, those who worked evil would laugh at those who believed, 30) winking at one another when they passed by them. 31) When they returned to their families, they would return ridiculing them.** 32) When they saw them, they would say, ‘This lot are truly misguided,’ 33) though they were not sent to be guardians over them.

“Indeed, those who worked evil would laugh at those who believed,” mockingly, “winking at one another when they passed by them,” deriding them and putting them down. Yet despite this, you would see the believers having peace of mind and content, the thought of fear not even crossing their minds. “When they returned to their families,” in the morning or evening, “they would return ridiculing them,” happy and exultant. This attitude shows the extremes to which they had deceived themselves: their evil behaviour coupled with a sense of total security in this world as if Allah had promised them felicity! “When they saw them, they would say, ‘This lot are truly misguided,’” they had adjudged themselves to be guided and the believers misguided thereby lying against Allah and speaking about Him without knowledge. “Though they were not sent to be guardians over them,” over the believers, committed to assessing and safeguarding their deeds, such that they could accuse them of misguidance. They did what they did because of their obdurate rejection, their arrogance and their playing games. They have no support for their claims and no proof. This is why their recompense in the Hereafter is of the same type as their deeds.

34) This Day those who believed are laughing at the

disbelievers, 35) [sitting] on couches, gazing [in wonder].
36) Have the disbelievers [not] been rewarded for what they used to do?

“This Day those who believed are laughing at the disbelievers,” when they see them in the midst of torment, the lies they had concocted shown to be idle fancy. The believers, on the other hand, are in total comfort and beatitude, “[sitting] on couches,” decorated “gazing [in wonder],” at the joys Allah has prepared for them, looking on at the face of their Noble Lord. “Have the disbelievers [not] been rewarded for what they used to do?” are they not requited with a recompense of the same type as their deeds? They would laugh at the believers in this world and accuse them of misguidance, so the believers shall laugh at them in the Hereafter when they see their torment, a torment which is the punishment of their own straying and misguidance. Yes, indeed, the disbelievers are rewarded for what they used to do: justice and wisdom from Allah.

Allah is the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.

Endnotes

* or: ‘Its seal is of musk...’

** or: “they would return rejoicing,” i.e. at their own disbelief.

1. Ibn `Abbas said, ‘Wayl refers to a valley in Hell in which flows the pus of the denizens of the Fire.’ [Qurtubi]

2. Ibn Majah records, that `Abdullah ibn `Umar said that the Prophet (SAW) said:

“O Muhajirun, you may be afflicted by five things; Allah forbid that you should live to see them: If fornication should become widespread, you should realise that this has never happened without new diseases befalling the people, which their forebears never suffered. If people should begin to cheat in weighing out goods, you should realise that this has never happened without drought and famine befalling the people, and their rulers oppressing them. If people should withhold zakat, you should realise that this has never happened without the rain being stopped from falling; and were it not for the animals’ sake, it would never rain again. If people should break their covenant with Allah and His Messenger, you should realise that this has never happened without Allah sending an enemy against them, to take some of their possessions by force. If the leaders do not govern according to the Book of Allah, you should realise that this has never happened without Allah making them into groups and making them fight one another.”

3. Muslim records, that Hudhyafah ibn al-Yaman reports that the Messenger of Allah (SAW) said,

“Trials and tribulation will be presented to the heart [one after another] in the same way that the mat is knitted together, reed by reed. Any heart that accepts them will have a black spot form on it. Any heart that rejects them will have a white spot put on it until the hearts end up being one of two types: a black heart, murky and like an overturned vessel: it does not know the good and does not reject the evil, [all it seeks] is that which its base desires seek; and a white heart which will not be harmed by trials for as long as the heavens and the earth remain.”

Nasa’i records, that Abu Hurayrah reports that the Messenger of Allah (SAW) said,

“When a servant commits a sin a black spot stains his heart, if he asks for forgiveness and repents, his heart will be polished of it; if he; however, repeats the sin, the black spot will grow until it covers his heart, and this is the rust that Allah, Most High, mentions, ‘No indeed! Rather what they have earned has rusted up their hearts.’”

Tafsir of Surah al Inshiqaq - The Ripping (Surah 84)

1) When the heaven rips apart, 2) responding to its Lord as it rightly should! 3) When the earth is spread out and levelled, 4) casting out its contents and emptying, 5) responding to its Lord as it rightly should!

Allah says, explaining the changes that will occur in the huge constructs that we see around us on the Day of Rising, “When the heaven rips apart,” fragmenting, and its stars are strewn about and its sun eclipses with the moon. “Responding to its Lord,” i.e. paying attention to His command, lending its ear fully to the order, and listening to His address “as it rightly should,” since it is under the control and direction of a great king, it cannot disobey His command and it cannot oppose His ruling. “When the earth is spread out and levelled,” i.e. it shakes and trembles such that its mountains are levelled, the buildings and great landmarks on its surface are demolished, and it will become “a barren, level plain on which you see no dip or gradient.”^[1] Allah will spread it out such that it becomes large enough to accommodate the whole of mankind to stand on. “Casting out its contents,” the dead and its treasures “and emptying,” itself of them. The trumpet will be blown and all the dead will come out of their graves onto the face of the earth, and the earth will cast

out its treasures. The creation will see it and despair of what they had previously been competing for. “Responding to its Lord as it rightly should.”

6) O mankind, you are toiling laboriously toward your Lord. You will meet Him. 7) Then, as for him who is given his record in his right hand, 8) he will receive a lenient reckoning, 9) and return joyfully to his family.*

“O mankind, you are toiling laboriously toward your Lord. You will meet Him,” your are journeying to Him, enacting His commands and avoiding His prohibitions, drawing closer and closer to your reckoning either by working good or by working evil. Then you will meet Allah on the Day of Rising and you will either be recompensed in accordance to the dictates of His beneficence or His justice. His beneficence if you are from the felicitous and His just punishment if you are from the wretched. “Then, as for him who is given his record in his right hand,” the felicitous “he will receive a lenient reckoning,” a presentation of his deeds, an easy presentation where Allah will make the servant acknowledge his sins to the point that he will think his perdition is assured, at which point He will say, “I concealed your sins in the world and I will conceal them on this Day.”^[2] “and return joyfully to his family” in Paradise because he has been delivered from the punishment and attained the reward of Allah.

10) But as for him who is given his record behind his back, 11) he will cry out for destruction 12) but will roast in a Scorching Blaze. 13) He once [lived] happily among his family 14) without a thought that he would return [to Allah]: 15) but yes! His Lord always had sight of him.

“But as for him who is given his Record behind his back,” in his left hand “he will cry out for destruction,” out of despair and humiliation, and because of the sins that he sent forth from which he never repented recorded in that record. “But he will roast in a Scorching Blaze,” hemmed in by it on all sides. This is because “he once lived happily among his family, without a thought that he would return (to Allah),” it never even crossed his mind that the Resurrection would occur, he committed sins and never once thought that He would return to his Lord and stand before Him. “But yes! His Lord always had sight of him,” therefore one should not imagine that He would leave him to wander directionless, not being commanded, not being prohibited, not being rewarded and not being punished.

16) No! I swear by the twilight glow, 17) by the night and all it envelops,** 18) and by the moon when full: 19) you will surely pass through state after state.*** 20) So what

is the matter with them that they do not believe, 21) and when the Qur'an is recited to them, they do not prostrate?

“No! I swear by the twilight glow,” the last traces of sunlight after the sun has set, the onset of night, “by the night and all it envelops,” of animals and other things, “and by the moon when full,” this is when it is most beautiful and most beneficial. The point of the oath follows: “You” O man “will surely pass through state after state,” from stage to stage and condition to condition: from a drop of liquid, to a clinging clot, to a piece of chewed flesh, to the breathing of the soul into the foetus, to a babe, to a child able to understand and differentiate. Then the child becomes legally responsible and the commands and prohibitions become incumbent on him, then he dies and is resurrected to be recompensed for his deeds. All these distinct stages go to prove that Allah alone is deserving of worship, that He alone regulates the affairs of his servants through his wisdom and mercy, that the servant is poor and needy, regulated by the Almighty and All-Wise. Yet, despite this, “What is the matter with them that they do not believe, and when the Qur'an is recited to them, they do not prostrate?” they do not humble themselves and nor do they follow its injunctions and avoid its proscriptions.

22) But those who have disbelieved deny, 23) and Allah knows very well what they keep hidden within. 24) So give them tidings of a painful punishment, 25) not so those who believe and do righteous deeds: for them is an unfailing reward.

“But those who have disbelieved will deny,” obdurately denying the truth after it has been made plain, therefore it is not strange that they would not believe in the Qur'an nor would they comply to its injunctions. “And Allah knows very well what they keep hidden within,” what they are doing and planning in secret, for Allah knows what is apparent and what is hidden, and He will judge them for their deeds, this is why He says, “So give them tidings of a painful punishment,” the word bashara (tidings) has been called so because it affects the one who has been given these tidings either by making him joyous or by making him sorrowful. This is the state of the majority of mankind: denial of the Qur'an and not having faith in it. But there is a party amongst man whom Allah has guided, “not so those who believe and do righteous deeds,” they believed in Allah and accepted what came to them from His Messengers. Therefore they believed and worked righteousness, “for them is an unfailing reward,” permanent, a reward that no eye has ever seen, no ear has ever heard of and no heart has ever thought of.

All praise and thanks are due to Allah.

Endnotes

* i.e. his family in Paradise

** or: “By the night and all that it brings together.”

*** or: “mount up stage by stage.”

1. Ta Ha (20): 106-107

In Bukhari `A`ishah (RA) reports that the Prophet (SAW) said,

“Whoever's account is scrutinised will be destroyed.” She asked, 'Does not Allah say, “Then he who is given his Record in his right hand, soon will his account be taken by an easy reckoning,”?' He replied, “That is not the scrutiny that is a presentation, whoever's account is scrutinised will be punished.”

Tafsir of Surah al Buruj - The Constellations (Surah 85)

1) By the heaven with its towering constellations,* 2) by the Promised Day, 3) and by the witness and the witnessed:^[1] 4) Cursed be the people of the trench, 5) [kindlers of] that [searing] fire, well stocked with fuel. 6) They were seated around it, 7) witnessing what they were doing to the believers.

“By the heaven with its towering constellation,” i.e. mansions holding the sun, the moon and the stars all running their courses in perfect harmony and regulation, all proving the perfect ability of Allah, His mercy, infinite knowledge and wisdom. “By the Promised Day,” the Day of Rising, the gathering of mankind which Allah has promised, wherein the first man will be raised with the last, the Day which cannot be altered or changed. “Allah never fails in His promise.”^[2] “And by the witness and the witnessed,” this is general to all who meet this description: the one who sees and that which is seen, the one who is present and the one in whose company he is present etc. The point of the oath is to highlight what each object of oath shows: the clear Signs of Allah, His all-encompassing wisdom and vast mercy. It is also said that the point of the oath is to highlight, “cursed be the people of the trench,” this is a supplication

against them for their destruction. The people of the trench were a disbelieving folk, living amongst whom were some believers. They tried to entice the believers into renegading into disbelief but they refused. In response to this the disbelievers dug trenches and lit a fire in them. Then they sat around these trenches and persecuted the believers, threatening to burn them in those trenches. Whoever renegaded was allowed to go free and whoever remained firm on his belief was thrown in. This is the extremes of fighting Allah and His party, the believers, and this is why Allah cursed them and destroyed them and threatened them by saying, “cursed be the people of the trench.” Then He proceeded to expound on these trenches by saying, “[kindlers of] that [searing] fire, well stocked with fuel. They were seated around it, witnessing what they were doing to the believers.” This represents the limits of coercion and hardness of heart for they combined obdurate rejection of the Signs of Allah with fighting those who believed in them and punishing them with a punishment that would have broken the hearts of normal people.

8) Their only grievance against them was that they believed in Allah, the Almighty, the Praiseworthy, 9) to whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and earth. Allah is witness of all things.

“Their only grievance against them was that they believed in Allah,” for them doing something praiseworthy, through which they would attain eternal felicity, “the Almighty,” whose might encompasses everything, “the Praiseworthy,” in speech, deed and attributes. “To whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and earth,” the inanimate and animate objects, directing them however He wills, “Allah is witness of all things,” in His knowledge, seeing and hearing. Knowing all this, should not those who rebel against Him fear Him, fear that they should be seized by “the Almighty, the Powerful,”^[3]? Do they not know that they are His servants, owned by Him and that they have no authority over another except by the permission of the Master? Is it hidden to them that Allah ever-encompasses their deeds and will recompense them for them? Nay, rather the disbelievers live in a state of delusion, and the ignoramus is wandering blindly in misguidance far removed from the Straight Path.^[4]

Then Allah threatened them, and promised them, and offered them the chance of repentance:

10) Those who persecuted believing men and women without subsequently repenting will have the punishment of Hell, they will have the punishment of the Searing Blaze. 11) But those who believed and worked righteous deeds will have Gardens beneath which rivers flow. That is the supreme triumph.

“Those who persecuted believing men and women without subsequently repenting will have the punishment of Hell, they will have the punishment of the Searing Blaze” al-Hasan said, ‘Look at His munificence and generosity: they killed His friends yet He invites them to repentance and forgiveness!’ After mentioning the recompense of the wrong-doers, Allah follows this with mention of the reward of the believers, “But those who believed” in their hearts “and worked righteous deeds,” with their limbs “will have Gardens beneath which rivers flow. That is the supreme triumph,” the pleasure of Allah and the Abode of His beneficence.

12) Indeed, your Lord’s assault is very fierce. – 13) It is He who originates [creation] and repeats [it], 14) He is the Ever Forgiving, the Loving, 15) Owner of the Throne, the Glorious,** 16) always doing whatever He wishes. –

“Indeed, your Lord’s assault is very fierce,” i.e. His punishment of the criminals and grave sinners is severe. He is ever-watching the wrongdoers. Allah says, “Such is the grasp of your Lord when He grasps the townships while they are doing wrong. His grasp is painful, very strong.”^[5] “It is He who originates [creation] and repeats [it],” He alone is the One who originates creation and repeats it; none shares with Him in this. “He is the Ever-Forgiving,” the One who forgives all sins for the penitent, and overlooks evil deeds for the one who asks His forgiveness, “the Loving,” who is loved by the lovers with a love that is unique and resembles no other. Just as nothing resembles Him in any of His Attributes of beauty and Grandeur, or in any of His actions, so too this love of Him which is placed in the hearts of the elite of His creation does not resemble any other love. This is why loving Allah is the foundation of servitude and this love precedes, and overcomes, all other loves. If however, another love takes precedence over this love, it is in reality a punishment for that person. He, Most High, is the Loving, loving His lovers as Allah says, “He loves them and they love him.”^[6] Mawaddah is pure love.

There is a subtle reason behind mentioning the Name 'the Loving' alongside 'the Ever-Forgiving.' This is: if the sinful repent and turn to Allah, He will forgive them their sins and love them; not as some of the wrong-doers claim, ‘He forgives them but does not return His love to them!’ Rather, Allah is more delighted at the repentance of His servants than a man who loses his mount, laden with his food and drink, in the middle of a vast desert. Giving up all hope of finding it again, he lays down in the shade of a tree waiting for death. While like this, he suddenly finds his mount standing by his head and takes hold of it by its reigns. Allah is more delighted at the repentance of His servant than this man is at finding his mount again: the delight and joy of this man being the greatest that one can imagine. So all praise is due to Allah as is unadulterated love. How great is His beneficence, how copious is His good, how amazing is His grace and how vast is His blessings! “Owner of the Throne, the

Glorious” the Great Throne that encompasses the Heaven, the earth and the Kursī. The Kursī, with respect to the Throne is like a ring thrown into a desert. The Throne has been specifically mentioned here because of its greatness and it is the closest of created objects to Him. The word 'Glorious' is either a description of the Throne according to one reading, or a description of Allah according to another. The word glory signifies vastness and greatness of descriptions and attributes. “Always doing whatever He wishes,” whenever and whatever He wishes, He does. He says to it, “Be! and it is.”^[7] There is none who can do what he wants save Allah, this is because any creature, when it wants to do something, there will always something aiding its facilitation or preventing its occurrence, this is not so for Allah, for He stands in no need of aid and none can oppose Him.

Then Allah proceeds to mention some of His actions that prove the truth of what the Messengers brought:

17) Has the story of the hosts reached you, 18) [those of] Pharaoh and Thamud? 19) Yet those who disbelieve persist in denial, 20) while Allah encompasses them from behind.*** 21) This, however, is a glorious Qur'an 22) [inscribed] on a Preserved Tablet.

“Has the story of the hosts reached you, 18) [those of] Pharaoh and Thamud?” how they denied the Messengers and were destroyed. “Yet those who disbelieve persist in denial,” remaining in it, the Signs do not benefit them and they are not moved by exhortation. “While Allah encompasses them from behind,” in knowledge and power as He says, “Your Lord is ever watchful.”^[8] This verse then contains a severe threat directed at the disbelievers who are in His grasp and under His regulation. “This, however, is a glorious Qur'an” vast in meaning, containing great import, vast in goodness and knowledge, “[inscribed] on a Preserved Tablet,” preserved from alteration, addition or subtraction, and preserved from the devils. The preserved tablet is the tablet in which Allah has written everything and this in turn shows us the greatness of this Qur'an and its standing with Allah, Most High.

Allah knows best.

Endnotes

* or: “By the heaven containing great stars,” or, “By the heaven and its cycling planets,” with the particular reference being to the moon's lunar cycle of 28 days and the sun's annual cycle of 12 months.

** another recitation has, “Owner of the Glorious Throne,” and both are correct. [Ibn Kathir]

*** ...from behind, employed to stress their heedlessness of Allah and the truth. The analogy being that of a person surrounded by his enemy, yet unaware of them; when they strike, he turns to run and finally realises that there is no escape.

1. A hadith in Ahmad and Tirmidhi mentions that the witness is the day of Friday and the witnessed is the Day of `Arafah. Ibn `Abbas and al-Hasan ibn `Ali said that the witness was Muhammad (SAW) and the witnessed was the Day of Rising, adducing Hud (11): 103 and al-Nisa' (4): 41 as evidence. It is also reported that ibn `Abbas said that the witness was Allah and the witnessed was the Day of Rising. Others said that the witness was man and the witnessed was the Day of Rising. There is no reason why all cannot be meant here. [Abu Hayyan]

2. Ali `Imran (3): 9

3. al-Qamar (54): 42

4. Suhayb ibn Sinan, the Roman, reports that the Messenger of Allah (SAW) said,

“There lived a king before you and he had a (court) magician. As the magician grew old, he said to the king, 'I have grown old, send some young boy to me so that I may teach him magic.' The king sent to him a young man so that he might train him (in magic). On his way (to the magician) the young man found a monk sitting there and listened to his talk and was impressed by it. It became his habit that on his way to the magician he met the monk set there so he was late in coming to the magician who beat him because of the delay.

He made a complaint about it to the monk and he said, 'When you feel afraid of the magician, say, “Members of my family detained me.” And when you feel afraid of your family you should say, “The magician detained me.” It so happened that there came a huge beast (of prey) and it blocked the way of the people. The young boy said, 'I shall find out today whether the magician or the monk is superior.' He picked up a stone and said, 'O Allah, if the affairs of the monk are dearer to You than the affairs of the magician, bring death to this animal so that the people will be able to move about freely.' He threw that stone towards it and killed it and the people began to move about (on the path freely). The young man then came to that monk and informed him. The monk said, 'My son, today you are superior to me. Your affairs have reached a stage where I find that you will soon be put to the test, and in that case don't reveal my identity. The young man began to treat the blind and those suffering from leprosy and began to cure people of (all kinds) of illness.'

When a companion of the king, who had become blind, heard about him, he came to him with numerous gifts and said, 'If you cure me, all these things collected together here will be yours.' He said, 'I myself do not cure anyone; it is Allah Who cures. If you affirm faith in Allah, I shall also supplicate Allah to cure you.' He affirmed his faith in Allah and Allah

cured him. He came to the king and sat by his side as he used to sit before. The king said to him, 'Who restored your eyesight?' He said, 'My Lord.' Thereupon he said, 'Is your Lord One besides me.' He said, 'My Lord and your Lord is Allah;' whereupon the king took hold of him and tormented him until he revealed the identity of boy.

The young man was thus summoned and the king said to him, 'O boy, it has been conveyed to me that you have become so proficient in your magic that you cure the blind and those suffering from leprosy and you do such-and-such things.' Thereupon he said, 'I do not cure anyone; it is Allah Who cures.' The king took hold of him and began to torment him. So he revealed the identity of the monk. The monk was thus summoned and it was said to him, 'Turn back from your religion.' He, however, refused to do so. He (ordered) a saw to be brought (and when it was done) the king placed it in the middle of his head and sawed it until it fell apart. Then the courtier of the king was brought and it was said to him, 'Turn back from your religion but he refused to do so.' Therefore the saw was placed in the middle of his head which was sawed until it fell apart.

Then the young boy was brought and it was said to him, 'Turn back from your religion.' He refused to do so and he was handed over to a group of his courtier. He said to them, 'Take him to such and such mountain; make him climb that mountain and when you reach its top (ask him to renounce his faith) but if he refuses to do so, throw him down the mountain.' So they took him and made him climb the mountain and he said, 'O Allah, save me from them (in any way) You will.' The mountain began to quake and they all fell down young man came walking back to the king. The king said to him, 'What has happened to your companions?' He said, 'Allah has saved me from them.'

He again handed him to some of his courtiers and said, 'Take him and carry him away in a small boat and when you reach the middle of the ocean (ask him to renounce) his religion, but if he does not renounce his religion throw him (into the water).' So they took him and he said, 'O Allah, save me from them and what they want to do.' It was not long before the boat overturned and they were drowned but he came walking back to the king. The king said to him, 'What has happened to your companions?' He said, 'Allah has saved me from them.' He also said to the king, 'You cannot kill me until you do what I ask you to do.' He said, 'What is that?' He said, 'You should gather people on a plain and hang me by the trunk (of a tree). Then take an arrow from the quiver and say, "In the name of Allah, the Lord of the worlds;" then shoot an arrow. If you do that, you would be able to kill me.' So the king called the people to an open plain and tied the boy to the trunk of a tree. Then he took an arrow from his quiver placed the arrow in the bow and then said, 'In the name of Allah, the Lord of the young boy;' he then shot an arrow and it hit his temple. The boy placed his hands upon the temple where the arrow had hit him and died. The people said, 'We affirm our faith in the Lord of this young man, we affirm our faith in the Lord of this young man, we affirm our faith in the Lord of this young man.' The courtiers came to the king and it was said to him, 'Do you see that their faith is in the Lord?'

The king commanded ditches to be dug at important points in the path. When these ditches were dug, and the fire was lit in them, it was said (to the people), 'He who does not turn back from the boy's religion will be thrown in the fire or they will be told to jump in it.'

(The people courted death but did not renounce their religion) till a woman came with her child and she felt hesitant about jumping into the fire, the child said to her, 'O mother, endure (this ordeal) for it is the truth.' [Muslim]

5. Hud (11): 102

6. al-Ma'idah (5): 54

7. (2): 117, (3): 47, (6): 73, (16): 40, (19): 35, (36): 82, (40): 68

8. al-Fajr (89): 14

Tafsir of Surah al Tariq - The Night Visitant (Surah 86)

1) By the heaven and the night-visitant! 2) What will make you realise what the night-visitant is? 3) The piercing star! 4) There is no soul except that it has a guardian over it.

Allah, Most High, says, "By the heaven and the night-visitant," proceeding to explain what this is: "What will make you realize what the night-visitant is? The piercingly star!" i.e. brilliantly luminous, whose light pierces the expanse of the heaven, traversing its distance until it is seen on earth. The correct opinion concerning al-Tariq is that it does not refer to any particular star but to the genus of luminous stars. It is also postulated that it refers to Saturn. It is called al-Tariq because it comes out at night. The point of the oath is (to stress), "There is no soul except that it has a guardian over it," carefully recording its good and evil deeds and it will be judged by these deeds.

5) So let man look at what he was created from. 6) He was created from a spurting fluid, 7) emerging from between the backbone and the breast-bones.

"So let man look at what he was created from," let him ponder his creation carefully and his point of origin. "He was created from a spurting fluid," i.e. semen "emerging from between the backbone and the breast-bones," it is possible that this phrase means: from between the backbone of the man and the breast-bones of the woman. It is also possible that the phrase means: from between the backbone and breast-bones of man. This second opinion seems to be the stronger one as what is being discussed is a

fluid which is observable and seen to be ejaculated, i.e. the man's seminal fluid. Moreover, the word tara'ib refers to the male breast-bone and Allah knows best.

- 8) Certainly, He is fully able to return him [to life]* 9) on the Day when all secrets will be laid bare and examined.
10) Then he will have no power or helper.

The One who brought man into existence through this spurting fluid extracted from this intricate and complex place, "Certainly, He is fully able to return him (to life)," in the Hereafter, able to put his body back together that it may be resurrected and judged. It is also said that the meaning of the verse is that Allah is able to return the seminal fluid to its place. This meaning, although in itself correct, is not the intent of this verse for Allah proceeds to say, "on the Day when all secrets will be laid bare," when all the secrets concealed in one's breast are examined and all that is in the hearts of good and evil is made plain being written across the pages that will be our faces, "The Day when some faces will be white and some faces will be black."^[1] In this world one is able to hide many things and is able to conceal them from people. However, on the Day of Rising, the piety of the righteous will be in plain sight as will the iniquity of wicked, as such all matters will come to light. "Then he" himself "will have no power," to hold back the examination, "or" external "helper," to aid him in this.

Therefore the point of the beginning oath as a whole is to stress the deeds of man and their resulting recompense.

- 11) By the sky with its recurring [cycles]** 12) and by the earth which splits open [with vegetation]: 13) this truly is a decisive statement. 14) It is not frivolity.

Then Allah takes a second oath to stress the authenticity of the Qur'an. "By the sky with its recurring (cycles)," of rain coming back year after year, "and by the earth which splits open," with vegetation. It is with these two that man and animal alike sustain life. The heaven also continuously returns decrees and other heavenly matters and the earth splits asunder for the dead. "This" the Qur'an "truly is a decisive statement," true and correct, clear and explicit, "it is not frivolity," rather it is of grave import, it gives a decisive word concerning the differences between various sects and beliefs and through it are disputes resolved.

- 15) They are hatching a plot, 16) but I too am hatching a plot. 17) So bear with the disbelievers. Leave them awhile.

“They” who deny the Messenger (SAW) and the Qur’an “are hatching a plot,” to repress truth and aid falsehood, “and I too am hatching a plot,” to manifest the truth “even if the disbelievers detest it”^[2] and repress the falsehood of the disbelievers. Therefore, we already know who the victor is: man is far too feeble and mean to be able to defeat the Omnipotent, the All-Knowing! “So bear with the disbelievers. Leave them awhile,” a short while and soon will they know their end when the punishment descends upon them!

Endnotes

* or: “Certainly, He is fully able to return it [to its place].”

** i.e. recurring rain and cycle of the sun and moon

1. Ali`Imran (3): 106
2. al-Tawbah (9): 32

Tafsir of Surah al A'la - The Most High (Surah 87)

1) Glorify the name of your Lord, the Most High, 2) who created and gave due proportion, 3) who determined and guided, 4) who brought forth green pasture 5) then turned it to russet stubble.

“Glorify the name of your Lord, the Most High,” Allah commands that He be glorified. This includes the fact that He be remembered and worshipped, and that one submit before His grandeur and humble himself before His greatness. He commands that this glorification be worthy of Him such that His Beautiful and Exalted Names are lauded in way that one brings to mind the lofty meaning of every Name that he mentions.

Moreover, that one brings to mind His actions, amongst which are creating: “Who created and gave due proportion,” in perfect precision and in the best way. “Who determined,” “in due proportion.”^[1] All ordinances are subject to His determination “and guided,” all creatures to that determination. This refers to

guidance in its general sense meaning that every creature is directed towards what it requires.

Moreover, that one brings to mind His worldly blessings, “Who brought forth green pasture,” i.e. “sends down water from the heaven”^[2] causing the growth of many varieties of plants and herbs from which both man and animal eat. Thereafter, when the growth has reached its fruition, He causes the stems to bend and wither, and causes the herbs to dry: “then turned it to russet stubble,” black in colour: dry stalks and decayed foliage.

Moreover, that one brings to mind His religious blessings, the axis of which is the Qur’an which Allah graced us with:

6) We shall cause you to recite it so that you do not forget, 7) save what Allah wills. He knows what is voiced out aloud and what is hidden. 8) We shall pave your way to Ease.

“We shall cause you to recite it,” O Muhammad “so that you do not forget,” i.e. We shall preserve what We have revealed to you of the Book and We shall let your heart grasp it such that you will not forget any of it. In this lies auspicious tidings from Allah to His servant and Messenger, Muhammad (SAW), that Allah will teach him knowledge that he will never forget. “Save what Allah wills,” which He will cause you to forget as dictated by His sublime wisdom having therein far-reaching benefits. “He knows what is voiced out aloud and what is hidden,” such as His knowing what is good for His servants and it is for this reason that He legislates what He wills and judges as He wills. “We shall pave your way to Ease,” this contains further tidings, auspicious tidings, that Allah will smooth the way for His Messenger (SAW) to a state of ease in all affairs and that He will make his religion and law easy.

9) Therefore remind for so long as the reminder profits.*
10) He who fears will take heed, 11) but the most miserable wretch will shun it, 12) such as will burn in the Great Fire 13) where he will neither die nor live.

“Therefore remind,” of the Law and Signs of Allah “for so long as the reminder profits,” i.e. for as long as the reminder gains acceptance and the exhortation is listened to, regardless of whether all or part of the purpose behind the reminder is achieved. The understanding of this verse is that if the reminder is of no benefit such that it, for example, causes an increase in evil or decrease in good, it no longer becomes legislated, rather it now becomes forbidden. In response to the reminder, man is divided into two categories: those who benefit and those who do not benefit.

As for those who benefit: “He who fears will take heed,” because the fear of Allah, Most High, and knowledge of the fact that He will recompense deeds leads the servant to refrain from doing anything that would displease Him, and instead encourages him to hasten towards working righteousness. As for those who do not benefit: “But the most miserable wretch will shun it, such as will burn in the Great Fire,” kindled for them “which rages over the hearts (of people)”^[3] “where he will neither die nor live,” being punished with a painful torment, eternal with no respite or decrease. The denizens of Hell will long for death and beg for it, but it will never come, “They will not be killed off so that they die and its punishment will not be lightened for them. That is how We repay every thankless man.”^[4]

14) He who has purified himself has succeeded, 15) remembering the name of his Lord and praying. 16) Yet you prefer the life of the world 17) although the Hereafter is better and longer lasting. 18) This is certainly in the earlier scriptures: 19) the scriptures of Abraham and Moses.

“He purifies himself,” of shirk, wrongdoing and lowly mannerisms “has succeeded, remembering the name of his Lord and praying,” clothing himself with the remembrance of Allah such that it imbues his very heart, and this in turn leads him to work deeds that would please Allah, the greatest of which is the prayer upon which faith stands poised. This is the meaning of the verse.

It is also said that the meaning of tazakka is to give zakat al-fitr and that “remembering the name of his Lord and praying” refers to the `Eid prayer. Although this falls under the meaning of the verse, the verse is not restricted to this alone.

“Yet you prefer the life of the world,” giving it precedence over the Hereafter: you give preference to its temporal and immediately available blessings over the blessings of the Hereafter, “although the Hereafter is better and longer lasting,” than the world in every respect. The Hereafter is eternal and pure whereas the world is temporal. Therefore, the intelligent believer will never prefer the worst for the best, he will never trade the joy of a mere hour for eternal damnation. “This,” that has been mentioned in this blessed chapter “is certainly in the earlier scriptures: the scriptures of Abraham and Moses,” the best Messengers after Muhammad (SAW). Therefore the ordinances contained in this chapter are to be found in every Law because they bring about good in both this world and the next, in every place and in every time.

All praise and thanks are due to Allah.

Endnotes

* Another interpretation is “...in case the reminder profits” or “...the reminder is of use.” [Abu Hayyan]

“The way of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) was to recite two soorahs in Jumu’ah prayer: Sabbih isma rabbika al-A’la (Soorat al-A’laa 87) and al-Ghaashiyah (88), or he would recite al-Jumu’ah (62) and al-Munaafiqoon (63).” [IslamQA, fatwa No. 105329]

“...it was narrated that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) used to recite al-A’la and al-Ghaashiyah in the Eid prayer” [IslamQA, fatwa No. 36491]

1. al-Furqan (25): 3
2. al-Baqarah (2): 22
3. al-Humazah (104): 7
4. al-Fatir (35): 36

Tafsir of Surah al Ghashiyah - The Pall (Surah 88)

1) Has news of the Pall reached you? 2) Faces that Day will be downcast, 3) labouring, haggard, 4) roasting in a scorching Fire. 5) They will be given drink from a scalding spring, 6) their only food being bitter dry thorns 7) which neither nourish nor still hunger.

“Has news of the Pall reached you?” Allah, in this chapter, mentions the events that will occur on the Day of Rising, the terrors that will unfurl and the severe hardships that will beset man. There they will be recompensed for their deeds and fall into one of two groups: the inhabitants of Paradise or the denizens of the Blazing Fire. He describes the denizens of the Fire: “Faces that Day,” the Day of Rising “will be downcast,” in humiliation, debasement and despair, “labouring, haggard,” worn out by the punishment, they will be dragged on their faces and “the Fire will envelop their faces.”^[1]

It is also possible that this verse mean that they had toiled and wearied themselves in worship in the worldly life, but because they lacked the basic pre-requisite – faith – their deeds became “scattered dust”^[2] on the Day of Rising. Although, in itself, this meaning is correct, it is not the intent of the verse here for the context does not lend itself to such an interpretation. Therefore the correct opinion, undoubtedly, is the first. This is because these are specifically related to the Day of Judgment and the purpose is to mention the denizens of the Fire in their generality. If the second possibility were to be the intent of this verse, it would only apply to a small portion of the denizens of the Fire. Moreover, the verses speak of the condition of man when overshadowed with the Pall, they do not discuss his condition in this world.

“Roasting in a scorching Fire,” intensely hot, encompassing them from every direction. “They will be given drink from a scalding spring,” “Calamitous the drink and ill the resting-place!”^[3] This is their drink, as for their food: “Their only food being bitter dry thorns which neither nourish nor still hunger,” one of two things are intended from food: to still hunger and remove its spasms or to nourish the body so it does not become emaciated. This food does neither of the two; instead it has the foulest taste and stench. We ask Allah for well-being!

8) (Other) faces that Day will be radiant, 9) well-pleased with their past efforts, 10) in a lofty Garden 11) where they will hear no idle speech. 12) In it is a gushing spring, 13) couches raised high, 14) goblets placed at hand, 15) cushions ranged in rows, 16) and fine carpets outspread.

As for the people of goodness: “(Other) faces that Day will be radiance,” filled with “the radiance of delight.”^[4] Their bodies feel extreme bliss, their faces are lit up and they feel unimaginable joy and delight. “Well-pleased with their past efforts,” in the worldly life of righteous deeds and beneficence to Allah’s servants. They will be glad when they see their reward stored for them and multiplied manifold. They will attain all that they had hoped for “in a lofty Garden,” containing all forms of blessings, lofty in position and containing lofty homes. It is positioned in the uppermost parts of Illiyin and it has solidly constructed, raised houses that have rooms, above which are more rooms, from which they look down upon what Allah has prepared for them of His grace. This is a lofty garden “whereof the fruit clusters are in easy reach,”^[5] in their multitudes, luscious, resplendent and easy to pick no matter where they be without having to expend any effort. “Where they will hear no idle speech,” i.e. words that have no benefit let alone words that are actually prohibited. All words spoken therein will be good and fruitful comprising the remembrance of Allah and mention of His innumerable blessings. Their conduct and dealings with each other will be fine and pleasing, all of which brings delight to the

hearts. “In it is a gushing spring,” this is collective noun, meaning that there are many gushing springs there flowing wherever they will, “couches raised high,” raised high in themselves and raised high by having soft cushions placed on them, “goblets placed at hand,” filled with delicious drinks made ready for them brought to them as and when they desire, waited on by “immortal youths.”^[6] “Cushions” of silk, velvet and other materials that only Allah knows “ranged in rows,” ready for them to sit on or recline on, already set for them so they do not even need to arrange them, let alone make them, “and fine carpets outspread,” covered with seats.

17) Do they not look at the camels, how they are created?
18) At the heaven, how it was raised high? 19) At the mountains, how they were set down? 20) And at the earth, how it was spread out?

Allah says, encouraging those who believe in the Messenger (SAW), and those who don't, to ponder the creation which itself point to His Oneness. “Do they not look at the camels, how they are created?” in an amazing fashion, how Allah has made them subservient to man, how Allah has brought about many benefits through them for man, benefits that they are in dire need of. “At the heaven, how it was raised high? At the mountains, how they were set down?” standing tall, astounding the onlooker, giving firmness to the earth, containing many beneficial things. “And the earth, how it is spread out” far and wide, and made subservient to His servants that they may live on its surface in ease, cultivate its earth, build their dwellings on it and travel through its pathways.

Know that the fact that earth has been spread out does not in any way negate the fact that it is a globe surrounded by space as has been proven both by theoretical research and actual observation. 'Spreading out' only negates something being a globe when that object is very small which, when spread out, would lose its circular shape. As for the earth, a huge body, there is nothing to prevent it being described as a globe as well as being described as spread out as is obvious to those who know.

21) Therefore remind them! You are only a reminder. 22) You are not their controller. 23) But whoever turns away and disbelieves, 24) Allah will inflict the greatest punishment upon him. 25) Certainly they will return to Us, 26) and then their reckoning is Our concern.

“Therefore remind them,” the people, exhort them, give them glad-tidings and warn them “for you are only a reminder,” this is the purpose for which you have been sent: to call mankind to Allah and to admonish them, “You are their controller,” who would coerce them and neither are you charged for their deeds. Therefore if you fulfill your

charge, you have carried out your duty and there is no blame on you, “and you are in no way a compeller over them; but warn by the Qur’an him who fears My threat.”^[7] “But whoever turns away” from obedience “and disbelieves, Allah will inflict greatest punishment on him,” terrible and eternal. “Certainly they will return to Us,” when they will be gathered on the Day of Rising, “and then their reckoning” for their good and bad deeds “is Our concern.”

All praise and thanks are due to Allah.

Endnotes

“The way of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) was to recite two soorahs in Jumu’ah prayer: Sabbih isma rabbika al-A’la (Soorat al-A’laa 87) and al-Ghaashiyah (88), or he would recite al-Jumu’ah (62) and al-Munaafiqoon (63).” [IslamQA, fatwa No. 105329]

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1. Ibrahim (14): 50
2. al-Furqan (25): 23
3. al-Kahf (18): 29
4. al-Mutaffifin (83): 25
5. al-Haqqah (69): 23
6. al-Waqi`ah (56): 17
7. Qaf (50): 45

Tafsir of Surah al Fajr - Daybreak (Surah 89)

1) By the break of day, 2) by ten nights, 3) by the even and the odd, 4) and by the night as it advances; 5) is there not in that an oath sufficing a person of sense?

In this chapter, it seems clear that the oath and the purpose for which the oath is taken is one and the same. This is something permissible and a usage known in the language when the subject matter is clear and important, as is the case here. “By the break of day,” Allah takes an oath by the dawn: the last part of the night and the start of a new day. In the night’s departure and the day’s beginning lies a great sign pointing to the

all-encompassing power of Allah and proving that He is the One who regulates all affairs, and therefore, as a consequence, worship should only be directed to Him. At the time of dawn it is legislated to pray a noble and great prayer, the prayer of Fajr. Hence, it is behoves Allah to take an oath by it and this is also why He follows by saying, “by ten nights,” according to the correct opinion this is a reference to last ten nights of Ramadan or the ten nights of Dhu’l-Hijjah because these nights, including their days, are noble days in which worship is done to an extent not found in other days.

In the last ten nights of Ramadan lies the Night of Decree which is “better than a thousand months”^[1] and in the days following these nights one fasts, and fasting the month of Ramadan is one of the pillars of Islam. In the first ten days of Dhu’l-Hijjah falls the Standing at `Arafah, a day in which Allah forgives His servants with a forgiveness that drives Shaytan to despair. It is a day in which Shaytan is never seen so miserable and wretched due to what He sees of the descent of Allah’s angels and His mercy. In these ten days many of the rites of Hajj and `Umrah are also carried out. All of these great affairs deserve to be taken an oath by. “By the even and the odd,* and the night as it advances,” i.e. as it sets, enveloping the servants with darkness so that they can rest therein and sleep: a mercy from Allah and all-encompassing wisdom. “Is there not in that an oath sufficing a person of sense?” possessing intelligence. The answer: yes, even some of what has been mentioned is sufficient for one “who has a heart, or gives ear and is witness.”^[2]

6) Have you not seen how your Lord dealt with `Ad, 7) of Iram, (the city) of lofty pillars, 8) whose like was not made in any land? 9) And with Thamud, who carved out rocks in the valley? 10) And with Pharaoh of the Stakes? 11) All of whom were inordinate in their lands, 12) infesting them with corruption. 13) So your Lord unleashed a scourge of punishment on them. 14) Your Lord is always lying in wait.

“Have you not seen,” in your heart and considered, based on sure knowledge, “how your Lord dealt with `Ad,” an inordinate nation “of Iram,” a well known tribe in Yemen “of lofty pillars,” i.e. of great might, unruly and haughty of nature. “Whose like” the like of `Ad “was not made in any land?” in strength and power, just as their Prophet, Hud, said to them, “Remember when He appointed you successors to the people of Nuh, and increased you greatly in stature. Remember Allah’s blessings, so that hopefully you will be successful.”^[3] “And with Thamud, who carved out rocks in the valley?” hewing out dwellings amongst the rocks. “And with Pharaoh of the Stakes?” i.e. of armies who helped him to enforce his rule in the same way as stakes help to hold something down. “All” i.e. `Ad, Thamud, Pharaoh and their followers “of

whom were inordinate in the lands,” harming Allah’s servants both in their worldly life and in their religion. This why He proceeds to say, “infesting them with corruption,” spreading disbelief and its multifarious branches of sin and transgression. They actively fought the Messengers and prevented people from the Path of Allah. Then, when they reached a level of haughtiness that called for their destruction, “your Lord unleashed a scourge of punishment on them. Your Lord is always lying in wait,” of those who disobey Him. He grants them a short respite and then seizes them “with the grasp of the Mighty, the Powerful.”^[4]

15) As for man, whenever his Lord tries him by honouring him and favouring him, he says, ‘My Lord has honoured me!’ 16) But whenever He tries him by stinting his provision, he says, ‘My Lord has disgraced me!’ 17) No indeed! You do not honour the orphan, 18) nor do you encourage feeding the destitute; 19) you devour inheritance with voracious appetites 20) and you have an insatiable love of wealth.

Allah, Most High, informs us of man’s nature: he is essentially an ignorant and oppressive creature having no knowledge of the consequences of his deeds. He thinks that the state he is in will endure, never to leave. He thinks that Allah’s favouring him in this world by granting him blessings proves that he is noble in His sight and close to Him. “As for man, whenever his Lord tries him by honouring him, and favouring him, he says, ‘My Lord has honoured me.’ But whenever He tries him by stinting his provision,” such that he gets just what he needs to survive with nothing extra “he says, ‘My Lord has disgraced me.’”

Allah refutes this assertion with His words, “No indeed,” not everyone to whom I grant blessings in this world is noble in My sight; neither is everyone whose provision I restrict disgraced in My sight. Richness, poverty, ease and difficulty are all tests from Allah by which He examines His servants as to who is grateful and patient that He may reward him abundantly, and who is not that He may give him a woeful punishment. Moreover, in the servant’s only being concerned with fulfilling his own needs lies proof that he has petty and weak aspirations, and this why Allah proceeds to censure them for their lack of concern for the needy amongst creation, “you do not honour the orphan,” who has lost his father and therefore the 'breadwinner' of his family. As such he stands in need of one who will show him beneficence and alleviate his distress. You do not honour the orphan, instead you humiliate him, and this proves that your hearts are devoid of mercy and that you do not desire to strive for goodness. “Nor do you encourage feeding the destitute” the indigent and the orphans because you are miserly and love this world inordinately with a love that has taken hold of your hearts. This is why He then says, “you devour inheritance,” wealth left

behind as inheritance “with voracious appetites,” rapidly, leaving nothing. “And you have an insatiable love of wealth,” just as Allah says elsewhere, “But you prefer the life of the world although the Hereafter is better and more lasting”^[5], “No indeed! You love the present life and neglect the Hereafter.”^[6]

21) No indeed! When the earth is crushed, pounded, pulverised to dust, 22) and your Lord comes, and the angels, rank upon rank, 23) and Hell that Day is brought out; on that Day man will remember, but what good will memory be to him then? 24) He will cry, ‘If only I had prepared in advance for this life of mine!’ 25) That Day, no one will punish as He punishes, 26) and none will shackle as He shackles.

“No indeed,” all the wealth that you crave and all the worldly delights you compete for are soon to vanish; ahead of you lies a Grave Day and an awful terror: “but when the earth,” and the mountains and all that is on it “is crushed, pounded, pulverised to dust,” until it becomes “a barren, level plain on which you see no dip or gradient.”^[7] “And your Lord comes,” “in the shadows of the clouds”^[8] to judge His servants “and the angels,” the inhabitants of the heavens, all of them, “rank upon rank,” the angels of each heaven in a rank, overshadowing the creation. These ranks are ranks of abject subservience to the King, the Compeller. “And Hell that Day is brought out,” dragged forward by Angels on iron chains, “on that day man will remember,” what he has sent forth of good and bad deeds “but what good will memory be to him then?” the time for doing something about it has past. “He will cry,” in deep regret of how he has fallen short in “his duty to Allah”^[9] “If only I had prepared” righteous deeds “in advance for this life of mine” to come, the eternal life, just as Allah says elsewhere, “the Day when a wrongdoer will bite his hands and say, ‘Alas for me! If only I had gone the way of the Messenger. Alas for me! If only I had not taken so-and-so for a friend!’”^[10] This verse proves that the life one should strive for, strive to perfect and complete, and strive to attain the delight of is not the life of this world but the life of the Hereafter because that is the abode of permanence and eternity. “That Day, no one will punish as He punishes,” those who ignored this Day and neglected to work for it “and none will shackle as He shackles,” they will be fettered in chains of Fire and they will be “dragged through boiling waters; then thrust into the Fire.”^[11] This is the reward of the criminals!

27) ‘O soul at rest and peace, 28) return to your Lord, well-pleased and well-pleasing! 29) Enter among My servants, 30) enter My Garden!’

As for those who have faith in Allah and believe in His Messengers: “O soul at rest and peace” having found tranquillity in the remembrance of Allah, serenity in His love, and contentment in Him, “Return to your Lord,” who nourished and sustained you with His grace, lavishly bestowing His munificence on you such that you became one of His friends and beloved “well-pleased” with Allah and His reward “and well-pleasing,” to Allah. “Enter among My servants, enter My Garden!” This is how this soul will be addressed on the Day of Rising and how it will be addressed at the point of death.

All praise and thanks are for Allah, Lord of the worlds.

Endnotes

* Ahmad #14511 records on the authority of Jabir that the Prophet (SAW) said, “The ten are the ten days of al-Adha. The odd is the day of `Arafah and the even is the Day of al-Nahr.” i.e. `Arafah falls on an odd day and `Eid al-Adha falls on an even day.

1. al-Qadr (97): 3
2. Qaf (50): 37
3. al-A`raf (7): 69
4. al-Qamar (54): 42
5. al-A`la (87): 16-17
6. al-Qiyamah (75): 20-21
7. Ta Ha (20): 106-107
8. al-Baqarah (2): 210
9. al-Zumar (39): 56
10. al-Furqan (25): 27-28
11. Ghafir (40): 71-72

Tafsir of Surah al Balad - The City (Surah 90)

1) I swear by this city – 2) and you are a freeman of this city – 3) and by a father and what he fathered: 4) We have created man for toil and struggle.

“I swear by this” secure “city,” Mecca al-Mukarrama, the best of all cities without exception, especially when the Messenger (SAW) lived as one of its populace. “And you are a freeman of this city - and by a father and what he fathered,” i.e. Adam and

his offspring. The point of the oath follows, “We have created man for toil and struggle,” it is possible that the verse be a reference to the various difficulties and hardships man faces during his life, in the grave and on “the day when the witnesses arise.”^[1] The verse then shows that it is required of him to strive in working such deeds as would relieve him of these hardships and lead to eternal joy and bliss. If he does not do so, he will be faced with severe torment for eternity.

It is also possible that the meaning is that “We have indeed created man in the finest mould”^[2] able to undertake many tasks and endure burdensome deeds. Yet, despite this, he does not show Allah gratitude for this great blessing, instead he ignores what is required of him in his state of well-being and is haughty before his Creator. In his ignorance and oppression he thinks that this state of well-being will endure forever and his ability to move and do things will never depart. This is why He proceeds to say,

5) Does he think that no one has power over him? 6) He boasts, ‘I have squandered vast riches!’ 7) Does he think that no one has seen him? 9) Have We not given him two eyes, 9) and a tongue and two lips, 10) and shown him the two highways?

“Does he think that none has power over him?” thereby transgressing all bounds and exulting in the wealth he squandered to satiate his lusts. He boasts, “I have squandered vast riches!” Here Allah has called to consuming wealth to satiate ones lusts, and in sin, squandering or destruction of that wealth. This is because the spender gains no benefit from his spending; instead all he accrues is sorrow and loss, toil and decrease. This, however, is not the case for a person who spends for the good-pleasure of Allah, in paths of goodness; such a person has traded with Allah and the profit he accrues is many times what he spent.

Allah says, threatening this person who boasts about his spending to satiate his lusts, “Does he think that no one has seen him?” in what he has done, does he think that Allah does not see him and will not judge him for his deeds, the large and small? Indeed, most certainly, Allah sees him, his deeds are carefully recorded by the noble recording angels appointed over him who record every good and evil deed he does. He then emphasises His many blessings by saying, “Have We not given him two eyes, and a tongue and two lips,” giving him beauty, sight, speech and other necessary qualities. These then are the worldly benefits. He then mentions the religious benefits with His words, “and shown him the two highways?” the paths of good and evil. i.e. We have clarified guidance from misguidance and right-direction from straying for him. These ample blessings require the servant to establish the rights of Allah, to

show Him gratitude, and not to employ them to disobey Him. However this person has not done this:

11) But he has not braved the steep ascent. 12) What will make you understand what the steep ascent is? 13) It is freeing a slave, 14) or feeding, on a day of hunger, 15) an orphaned relative, 16) or a destitute man, dirt-poor. 17) Then, moreover, to be one of those who believe, counsel one another to patience, and counsel one another to mercy. 18) Such are the Companions of the Right.

“But he has not braved the steep ascent,” instead following his own desires. This path is hard upon such a person. This road is then explained, “What will make you understand what the steep ascent is? It is freeing a slave,” either by freeing him altogether or helping him to meet his freedom contract. This also applies, more so, to freeing Muslim prisoners of war. “Or feeding, on a day of hunger,” i.e. feeding a person who is more needy than you when you yourself are in need, “an orphaned relative, or a destitute man, dirt-poor,” covered in dust out of need and necessity. “Then, moreover, to be one of those who believe,” and work righteous deeds, i.e. they have faith in their hearts of that which is obligatory to believe in and work righteous deeds with their limbs. This then includes every word or deed which is obligatory or recommended, “counsel one another to patience” upon the obedience of Allah, away from disobedience of Him, and in the face of His decree such that they exhort each other to submit to it and face it with an open heart and a soul at peace, “and counsel one another to mercy,” to creation: they give to the needy, teach the ignorant, help them in whatever way they can, aid them in attaining both religious and worldly benefit, love for them what they love for themselves, and hate for them what they would hate for themselves. “Such,” people who meet the previous descriptions “are the Companions of the Right,” because they have did what Allah ordered of fulfilling His rights and the rights of His servants, and they abandoned what they were prohibited from, this being the very source of success.

19) But those who disbelieved in Our Signs, such are the Companions of the Left. 20) Above them is a sealed vault of Fire.

“But those who disbelieved in Our Signs,” by throwing these matters behind their backs. They did not believe in Allah and neither did they work righteous deeds “they are the Companions of the Left. Above them is a sealed vault of Fire,” hemming them in, “in towering columns”^[3] extending from behind them. Hence, its gates can never be re-opened and they are caged, confined in a constricted area, living on in despair and torment.

Endnotes

1. Ghafir (40): 51
2. at-Tīn (95): 4
3. al-Humazah (104): 9

Tafsir of Surah al Shams - The Sun (Surah 91)

1) By the sun and its morning glow, 2) by the moon as it follows in tow, 3) by the day as it reveals its glory, 4) by the night as it conceals it totally, 5) by the heaven and He who built it, 6) by the earth and He who spread it, 7) and by a soul and He who proportioned it,* 8) inspiring it with depravity or piety.

Allah, Most High, takes an oath by all these great Signs, the purpose of the oath being to direct attention to the successful soul and the depraved soul. “By the sun and its morning glow,” and the benefits ensuing thereby, “by the moon when it follows in tow,” in its lunar cycle, reflecting its light, “by the day as it reveals its glory,” displays and shows all that is on the earth’s surface, “by the night as it conceals it totally,” i.e. envelops the face of the earth in darkness. The alternation of darkness and light, and the movement of the sun and moon in perfect harmony and precision, and their bringing about great benefit for the servants, proves clearly that Allah is All-Knowing, Omnipotent, that He alone deserves worship, and that every object of worship besides Him is false.

“By the heaven and He who built it,” it is possible that meaning be this, so the oath is taken by the heaven and by Allah; or the meaning be, “by the heaven and its construction” so the oath is taken by the heaven and its perfect and precise construction. The same applies to “by the earth and He who spread it,” i.e. stretched it and made it vast so that mankind would be able to benefit from it. “And by a soul and He who proportioned it, inspiring it with depravity or piety,” it is possible that the soul be a reference to the soul of every creature as is proven by the generality of the verse. It is also possible that the reference be to the soul of man as is proven by what follows. In either case, the soul is one His great Signs which is deserving of taking an oath by. It is something that is subtle, hidden, swift, quick to change, and produces

emotions such as grief, desire, intent, love and hate. Were it not for the soul, the body would be a mere empty shell having no benefit. Therefore, its being proportioned in this way is one of the Allah's great Signs.

9) He who purifies his soul has succeeded, 10) and he who stifles it has failed. 11) Thamud denied (the truth) in their inordinacy, 12) when the worst of them rose up. 13) The Messenger of Allah said, 'This is Allah's she-camel, let her drink!' 14) But they denied him and hamstrung her; so their Lord crushed them for their sin, visiting all alike.** 15) Nor does He fear the consequences.

“He who purifies his soul” of sins and cleanses it of defects, who urges it to obey Allah and ennobles it through beneficial knowledge and righteous deeds “has succeeded, and he who stifles it,” who covers his noble self up – which should not be curbed or hidden – by sullyng it with evil, tarnishing it with defect and sin, leaving what would perfect and benefit it, and employing what would mar and stunt it “has failed.”

“Thamud denied (the truth) in their inordinacy,” i.e. because of their excessive tyranny, thinking themselves above the truth, and their haughtiness before their Messenger, “when the worst of them rose up,” i.e. the most wretched of them, Qaddar ibn Salif. He hamstrung the camel after they had all agreed to this course of action. “The Messenger of Allah,” Salih, “said,” warning them “This is Allah's she-camel, let her drink!” i.e. beware of hamstringing her. He has appointed her as a great Sign for you, so do not repay Allah's favour on you, your drinking her milk, by killing her. “But they denied him” their Prophet, Salih, “and hamstrung her; so their Lord crushed them for their sin,” He destroyed them, enveloping all of them with His punishment. He sent an awful cry from above them and an earthquake from beneath them, and the morning found them prostrate in their dwellings, “visiting all alike,” meaning equally afflicting all of them with His punishment. “Nor does He fear the consequences,” how can He fear when he is the Omnipotent, not a single object of His creation is outside His control and power. He is All-Wise in all that He decrees and legislates.

Endnotes

* Another interpretation is, “by the heaven and its construction, by the earth and its spreading, and by a soul and its proportioning...” [Abu Hayyan]

** or, "...crushed them for their sin, levelling them", "...crushed them for their sin, razing (their city) to the ground."

Tafsir of Surah al Layl - The Night (Surah 92)

1) By the night when it enshrouds, 2) by the day when it appears in full splendour, 3) and by Him who created the male and female:* 4) surely your striving is for diverse ends.

In this chapter Allah takes an oath by the times in which the servants, in all their differing circumstances, perform their deeds. "By the night when it enshrouds," its darkness falling on creation, and man takes his repose, resting from toil and labour. "By the day when it appears in full splendour," illuminating creation. In its light, people leave their houses seeking their livelihood. "And by Him who created the male and female," it is possible that this be the meaning in which case Allah is taking an oath by His noble self, i.e. He created male and female. It is also possible that the meaning be, "and by the creation of the male and female" in which case the oath is by His creation. His all encompassing wisdom is exemplified here in His creating every species in pairs, male and female. In order for them to propagate, He has led one to be naturally attracted to the other and has made the male and female of each species compatible with the other, so "blessed be Allah, the best of creators!"^[1] "Surely your striving is for diverse ends," this is the point of the oaths: man, responsible for your deeds, your efforts are greatly disparate because of the huge differences in your actual works, the amount of them, the energy expended in doing them, the desire to perform them, and in their goals: are they for eternal face of Allah, the Most-High, or are they for some temporal objective soon to disappear? If it is the first case, the deed will endure forever but if it is the second case the deed would come to an end as soon as the goal is reached. This holds true for every deed that is done for other than the face of Allah.

This is why Allah gave a degree of eminence to those who work (for His sake) by saying:

5) As for him who gives and is mindful of Allah 6) and believes in the Good; 7) We will pave his way to Ease. 8) But as for him who is niggardly and deems himself self-

sufficient, 9) and denies the Good; 10) We will pave his way to Adversity. 11) His wealth will not help him when he plummets to the depths.

“As for him who gives,” of what he has been commanded subsuming acts of worship linked to wealth: zakat, charity, expiation and spending in ways of goodness; and acts of worship linked to the body: prayer, fast etc.; and those acts of worship that combine both: Hajj, `Umrah etc. “and is mindful of Allah” by staying away from all that Allah prohibited. “And believes in the Good,” i.e. believes in 'None has the right to be worshipped save Allah' and all its related beliefs and requirements. “We will pave his way to Ease,” we will smooth his affair, and make the performance of good and the avoidance of evil easy for him. This is because he met the requirements for ease so Allah smoothed his way to that ease. “But as for him who is niggardly” in doing what he has been commanded, leaving off the obligatory and recommended spending, and not permitting his self to fulfil its obligations to Allah “and deems himself self-sufficient,” in no need of Allah. As such he abandons servitude to Allah and does not view himself to be utterly and completely dependant on Allah. There is no victory and success for the soul unless Allah be its beloved and its object of worship, for whose sake it performs deeds, and towards whom it turns. “And denies the Good,” that Allah has enjoined His servants to: correct beliefs. “We will pave his way to Adversity,” the state of adversity and all despicable traits will be made easy for him. We ask Allah or well-being! “His wealth,” which made him take the path of inordinacy, which made him think he was self-sufficient, which made him niggardly, “will not help him when he plummets to the depths,” i.e. when he is destroyed and dies because at that time nothing accompanies man save his deeds. His wealth from which he did not give what was obligatory for him will be a source of anguish because he never used it to prepare for his Hereafter.

12) Providing guidance is up to Us 13) and the Last and the First belong to Us. 14) I have warned you of a raging Fire 15) in which only the most wretched will roast: 16) those who denied and turned away.

“Providing guidance is up to Us,” i.e. the path of guidance leads one to Allah and draws one close to His good-pleasure. As for misguidance, its paths are barred from Allah and they lead the one traversing them to severe torment. “The Last and the First belong to Us,” it belongs to Us and We can do with it as We will, He has no partner in it so let the desirous turn to Him when seeking something and sever their hopes in the objects of creation. “I have warned you of a raging Fire in which only the most wretched will roast: those who denied” the truth “and turned away,” from the ordinances.

17) The one most mindful of Allah will be spared it: 18) he who gives his wealth to purify himself, 19) not to return a favour to anyone, 20) desiring only the face of his Lord, Most High. 21) He will certainly be well-pleased.

“The one most mindful of Allah will be spared it: he who gives his wealth to purify himself,” from sins and filth, seeking thereby the face of Allah. This then proves that if spending in a recommended way causes one to leave the obligation of repaying debts, or spending in ways that are obligatory upon him, this recommended spending is not legislated for him, rather, in the view of many of the scholars, this spending of his would be rejected because he sought to purify himself with a recommended deed at the expense of an obligatory deed.

“not to return a favour to anyone,” meaning that there is no one who done him a good turn requiring a return except that he has returned it. Perhaps they are even left owing him but he did what he did for the sake of Allah alone because he is in dire need of His beneficence and His alone. Whoever still has to return a favour will eventually do some turn for them that may be a cause for a decrease in his sincerity to Allah. This verse was revealed concerning Abu Bakr: everyone who had done him a favour had been repaid, even the Messenger of Allah (SAW), with the obvious exception of the blessing that came as a result of his being a Messenger which cannot possibly be repaid: the blessing of Islam and receiving guidance. In this respect Allah and His Messenger have a blessing over everyone that can never be repaid. However, this said, the verse is general and applicable to everyone who has this quality. Therefore, such a person has nothing left that he must repay to any object of creation and as such all his deeds are entirely and sincerely for Allah, Most High. This is why He says, “desiring only the face of his Lord, Most High. He will certainly be well-pleased,” with what Allah will grant him of favour and reward.

Endnotes

* Another interpretation is, “and the creation of the male and female.” [Abu Hayyan]

Tafsir of Surah al Duha - The Morning Brightness (Surah 93)

1) By the morning brightness, 2) and by the night when it grows still.* 3) Your Lord has not forsaken you, nor does He abhor (you). 4) The Last will be better for you than the First. 5) Your Lord will soon give to you and you will be satisfied. 6) Did He not find you an orphan and give you shelter? 7) Did He not find you wandering and guide (you)? 8) Did He not find you destitute and enrich (you)? 9) Therefore, do not oppress the orphan, 10) do not berate the beggar, 11) and proclaim the favour of your Lord.

“By the morning brightness, and by the night when it grows still,” Allah, Most High, has taken an oath by the prime of the morning when its light diffuses and spreads, and by the night when at its stillest and darkest. The purpose of these oaths is to stress Allah's concern for His Messenger (SAW): “Your Lord has not forsaken you,” since the time He has attended to you, nor has He ever ignored you when tending to you as you grew up, rather He nurtured and cultivated you in the best and most complete of ways, and raised your prestige stage by stage “nor does He abhor,” you. Since He loved you, He has never hated you. This is because when a negation is stated, intending praise thereby, it automatically presupposes the opposite of what is negated for a mere negation, by itself, is not praiseworthy.

This then is the state of the Messenger of Allah, past and present: it is the most perfect and most complete of states, it is a state in which Allah loves him and this love endures, it is a state in which Allah elevates him through the stations of perfection, it is a state in which Allah is continuously concerned with him.

As for his state in the future, “The Last will be better for you than the First,” meaning every state you will reach in the future will be better for you than the former state you were in. He (SAW) continuously ascended through the most sublime stations; Allah made firm his religion for him, aided him against his enemies, and made him steadfast in all circumstances till the day he passed away. When he passed away, he had arrived at state not reached by those who came before him or would come after him in terms of excellence, blessings, joy of eye and delight of heart. Moreover, after all this, ask not about his exalted state in the Hereafter, the details of the way his Lord will bless him and grace him! This is why He said, “your Lord will soon give to you and you will be satisfied,” this is something that cannot be expressed in words other than in this succinct way.^[1]

“Did He not find you an orphan,” without father or mother, “and give you shelter?” His father had died while he was yet an infant and so Allah took him into His protection and caused his grandfather, 'Abdu'l-Muttalib to care for him. Then when his grandfather died, Allah caused his uncle, Abu Talib to care for him. This continued until He aided him with His help and through the believers. “Did He not find you wandering” “not knowing what the book was nor what faith was”^[2] “and guide (you)?” teaching you what you did not know and granting you the accord to perform the best of deeds and have the best mannerisms. “Did He not find you destitute” poor “and enrich (you)?” through the lands that He allowed you to conquer which then surrendered their wealth to you and their land-tax.^[3] The One who removed these handicaps from you shall soon remove all such handicaps from you. Be grateful to the One who led you to the state of enrichment, who protected you, aided you and guided you! This is why He proceeds to say, “Therefore do not oppress the orphan,” act not unjustly towards him in your dealings with him, let not your breast be constrained towards him, do not turn him away, rather honour him and give him whatever you can give easily. Treat him as you would like your children to be treated after you have passed away. “Do not berate the beggar,” speak not unkind words to him in order to turn him away, rather give him whatever you can give easily, or turn him away in a kindly and gentle manner. Included in this category of people is one who asks for wealth and one who asks for knowledge. It is for this reason that the teacher is enjoined to display fine conduct to his student, to honour him and to show him affection. In doing so he will be aiding the student in fulfilling his goal and he will be honouring someone who will benefit the servants and the various lands. “And proclaim” praise Allah for His blessings, mention specific favours when there is a benefit in doing so, otherwise, as a general course, mention them in a general way. Mentioning them leads one to be grateful and to love the one who conferred them: hearts naturally love those who do good to them “the favour of your Lord,” both the worldly and religious.

Endnotes

* or “when it envelops,” or “when it dissipates,” or “at its darkest” [Abu Hayyan]

1. Muslim records on the authority of `Abdullah ibn `Amr ibn al-`As that,

The Prophet (SAW) recited the saying of Allah concerning Ibrahim, “But whoever follows me, he certainly is of me. And whoever disobeys me - still You are Forgiving, Merciful” (14:36); and the saying of `Isa, “If You punish them, they are Your servants, and if You forgive them (they are Your servants)” (5:118) and then raised his hands in supplication, “Allah! My nation! My nation!” and he wept. Allah, Most High, said to Jibril, “Go to Muhammad – and even though your Lord already knows – and ask him what ails him.” So Jibril went to the Prophet (SAW) and asked him and he told him. Then Allah said to Jibril,

“Go to Muhammad and tell him that Allah says to you, ‘We will make you well-content with regards your nation and we shall not cause you distress.’”

‘Ali (RA) said to the Iraqis, ‘You think that the verse that inspires most hope is, “Say: ‘O My servants who have transgressed against their souls! Despair not of the mercy of Allah: Allah forgives all sins: He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful’” (39:53) whereas we, the family of the Prophet, say that the verse which inspires most hope in the Book of Allah is, “Your Lord will soon give you and you will be satisfied”!’

A hadith mentions that when this verse was revealed, the Prophet (SAW) said, “Therefore, by Allah, I will never be content if even one of my nation remains in the Fire!” [Qurtubi]

2. Shura (42): 52

3. Others said: i.e. through your wife Khadijah, stating that this chapter was revealed in Mecca whereas the various conquests at the hand of the Messenger of Allah (SAW) came about when he was in Medina. [Qurtubi]

Tafsir of Surah al Inshirah - Solace (Surah 94)

1) Have We not expanded your breast for you, 2) and relieved you of your burden 3) which weighed down so heavily on your back, 4) and raised your renown high? 5) For truly with hardship comes ease; 6) truly with hardship comes ease. 7) So when you have finished, work on, 8) and turn all your attention to your Lord.

Allah says, recounting His favours bestowed upon His Messenger, “Have We not expanded your breast for you” such that it readily accepts the laws of the religion, the duty of calling to Allah, it absorbs all the many facets of fine conduct, directs its attention to the Hereafter, and eagerly performs all good deeds.^[1] “And relieved you of your burden,” your sin “which weighed down so heavily on your back?” Allah says in another place, “That Allah may forgive thee thy faults of the past and those to follow,”^[2] “And raised your renown high,” such your lot is lofty and fine praise. No other creature has reached such a station. Hence, on many occasions, Allah is not mentioned except that His Messenger is mentioned alongside Him, such as when articulating the testimony of faith when accepting Islam, or during the Call to Prayer, or the Iqamah for Prayer, and in sermons.

The hearts of his nation contain such love, magnification, and veneration for him that is not to be found for any other besides Allah, Most High. May Allah grant him the best of rewards on behalf of his nation, a reward better than that granted to any other Prophet. “Truly with hardship comes ease; truly with hardship comes ease,” in this lies great tidings! Each time a person is best with hardship and difficulty, ease comes with it and accompanies it. If hardship entered the hole of a lizard, ease would enter with it and remove it!^[3] Allah, Most High, says, “Allah will vouchsafe, after hardship, ease.”^[4] The Prophet (SAW) said, “Relief accompanies distress, and with hardship come ease.”

In these two verses the word hardship has been preceded by the definite article prefix thereby proving that it is one. The word ease has been left indefinite, thereby proving that it occurs repeatedly. Hence ‘one hardship will never overcome two eases.’^[5] Moreover, in its being given the definite article, the word hardship incorporates all manner of difficulties, and therefore this verse proves that no matter what the hardship, no matter how great, ease must follow.

Then Allah orders His Messenger, specifically, and therefore all the believers indirectly, to be grateful to Him and to establish the dictates of gratitude: “So when you have finished,” all your duties, and there no longer remains anything in your heart that would hinder it, “work on,” in worship and supplication. Be not of those who, when they are free, waste their time and turn away from their Lord and His remembrance and as such end up being amongst the losers.

It is also said that the meaning of this is that when you have finished your prayer, expend effort in supplication, and the proponents of this opinion went on to say that “And turn all your attention to your Lord,” means to ask Him to fulfil your needs. Those who followed this latter opinion then used these verses to prove the legality of supplication and remembrance after the prescribed prayers. Allah knows best.

Endnotes

1. Bukhari records on the authority of Anas bin Malik who said,

“Three people came to the Prophet while he was sleeping before revelation came to Him. One of them asked, “Which of them is he?” The middle one said, “He is the best of them.” The last one said, “Take the best of them.” Only that much happened on that night and he did not see them till they came on another night, (after revelation came to him). He saw them, his eyes were asleep but his heart was not - and so is the case with the Prophets: their eyes sleep while their hearts do not sleep. The angels did not talk to him till they carried him and placed him beside the well of Zamzam. Gabriel took charge of him and he cut open

(the part of his body) between his throat and the middle of his chest. Taking everything out of his chest and abdomen, he washed it with Zamzam water with his own hands till he cleansed the inside of his body. Then a gold tray containing a gold bowl full of belief and wisdom was brought and Gabriel stuffed his chest and throat and blood vessels with it and then sealed it. He then ascended with him to the heaven of the world and knocked on one of its doors...'

2. Fath (48): 2

3. This sentence is recorded as a statement of the Prophet (SAW) by Hakim and Bazzar with a da`if isnad.

4. at-Talaq (65): 7

5. This is a statement of ibn Mas`ud and `Umar recorded by Bayhaqi, Shu`ab al-Iman. It is also reported as a statement of the Prophet (SAW) by Bayhaqi and Hakim with a da`if isnad.

Ibn Kathir said,

‘The meaning of these words is that in both occurrences, the word difficulty is appended to the definite article prefix, al, as such it is singular. The word ease is left indefinite; as such there is more than one occurrence of it. Therefore the second reference to difficulty denotes the same as in the first reference, whereas there is more than one instance of ease.’

Tafsir of Surah al Tin - The Fig (Surah 95)

1) By the fig and the olive, 2) by Mount Sinai, 3) and by this secure land. 4) We have indeed created man in the finest mould, 5) then We reduced him to the lowest of the low, 6) save those who believe and work righteous deeds: theirs is an unfailing reward. 7) So what will make you deny the Reckoning? 8) Is not Allah the most just of all judges?*

“By the fig and the olive,” Allah took an oath by these two trees because of the huge benefit they give and the fruits they grow. Moreover, these trees are predominately found in Sham which was the place in which `Īsa was given Prophethood. “By Mount Sinai,” the place where Musa was given Prophethood, “and by this secure land,” Mecca, the place where Muhammad (SAW) was given Prophethood. Allah took an oath by these three places which He selected and from where He commissioned the best and most noble Prophets. The purpose of the oath follows: “We have indeed created man in the finest mould,” a complete creation, well proportioned and of upright stature. He is not lacking in anything that he needs, not outwardly or inwardly. Yet, despite this great blessing, most of creation turn their

backs on showing gratitude to the Granter of these blessings, busying themselves instead with idle pastimes and play. They preferred the lowest qualities and meanest manners so “then We reduced him to the lowest of the low,” the lowest part of the Fire, the place reserved for the disobedient, those who boldly transgressed the bounds set by their Lord. Exempted from this are those who Allah graced with faith, righteous deeds and lofty, gracious mannerisms: in recompense for their lofty stations “is an unending reward,” never to end, rather they will have abundant delight, innumerable joys, and fulsome blessings and plentiful food and fruits, and shade for eternity. “So what will make you deny the Reckoning?” i.e. what will make you, man, deny the Day of Recompense? You have seen the many Signs of Allah that would lead you to having certainty and you have seen His many blessings that would lead you to gratitude. “Is not Allah the most just of all judges?” Would His wisdom dictate that He leave man wandering aimlessly, not being commanded or prohibited, not being rewarded or punished? Or is the One who created man in various “diverse stages”^[1], who granted him innumerable blessings and gifts, and who cultivated and nurtured him in the best of ways going to return him to a land which will be his final abode of residence, the final stop of his journey, towards which he is being led?

Endnotes

* or “the most decisive of all judges” [Qurtubi]

1. Nuh (71): 14

Tafsir of Surah al 'Alaq - The Clot (Surah 96)

1) Read in the name of your Lord who created, 2) created man from a clinging form. 3) Read! Your Lord is the Most Generous, 4) who taught by means of the pen; 5) taught man what he did not know.

This was the first chapter to be revealed to the Messenger of Allah (SAW), it was revealed at the beginning of his Prophethood when he “knew not what the Book was nor what faith was.”^[1] Jibril came to him with the message and commanded him to recite. He said that he could not because he was illiterate. Jibril kept asking him until he began to recite,^[2] “Read in the name of your Lord who created,” all creation. Then He specifically mentions man and the beginning of his creation, “created man from a clinging form.” The One who created man, undertaking the task of regulating his affairs, must regulate them through prescription and proscription. This is done by

sending Messengers and revealing Scripture, and this is the reason why the creation of man has been mentioned after the command to recite. “Read! Your Lord is the Most Generous,” having many Attributes, beneficent and munificent, and extremely generous. Because of this, He taught man knowledge, “who taught by means of the pen; taught man what he did not know,” Allah took him out of his mother's womb not knowing anything, gave him the faculties of hearing and seeing, gave him a heart, and made easy the route to learning for him. He taught him the Qur’an and wisdom, and He taught him the use of the pen through which these sciences are preserved and duties and rights are precisely recorded.

To Allah belongs all praise and grace, who blessed His servants with all these favours for which they can never show due gratitude or repay. Then, additionally, He blessed them by conferring them with wealth and provision.

6) No indeed! Truly man is inordinate, 7) thinking himself self-sufficient! 8) Truly, to your Lord is the Return. 9) Have you seen him who prevents 10) a servant when he prays? 11) Do you think he is rightly guided 12) or enjoins mindfulness of Allah? 13) Do you see how he has denied and turned away? 14) Does he not know that Allah sees all?

Yet man – because of his ignorance and oppression – when he thinks himself to be wealthy and self-sufficient, transgresses and turns away from guidance and forgets that “truly to your Lord is the Return,” and does not fear the recompense. He could indeed reach such a state that he willingly leaves guidance and calls others to leave it as well, prohibiting man from performing the best actions of faith: prayer. Allah says to such a rebellious, insubordinate hinderer, “Have you seen him who prevents a servant when he prays? Do you think,” O you who would prohibit the servant from praying the one who is praying “is rightly guided,” i.e. knows the truth and acts by it “or enjoins” others with “mindfulness of Allah?” How can one prohibit a person who has such qualities? Is not his prohibiting one of the greatest manifestations of turning away from Allah and fighting the truth? Prohibitions like this should only be directed to a person who is not upon guidance or enjoins other people to do things that oppose the dictates of taqwa. “Do you see how he” the one who prohibits from the truth “has denied and turned away” from the command. Does he not fear Allah and dread His punishment? “Does he not know that Allah sees all” that he does?

15) No indeed! If he does not desist, We will seize him by the forelock – 16) a lying, sinful forelock! 17) Let him call his henchmen, 18) We will call the guards of Hell! 19) No indeed, do not obey him, but prostrate and draw

near (to Allah).

Allah proceeds to threaten those who persists in such a state, “No indeed! If he does not desist,” from what he says and does “We will seize him by the forelock,” forcibly, harshly as is befitting “a lying,” in what it says “sinful” in what it does “forelock! Let him” who is deserving of this punishment “call his henchmen,” his companions and friends, and those around him to help him out of his predicament. “We will call the guards of Hell,” to seize him and torment him. Carefully consider which of the two groups is mightier and more able! This then is the state of this prohibiter and the punishment he is threatened with. As for the one who is being prohibited, Allah orders him never to lend ear to such a person, “No indeed, do not obey him,” for he commands only to that which will bring loss and anguish “but prostrate,” to your Lord “and draw near,” to Allah in prostration and outside of prostration by performing all the various duties of obedience: all of them draw one closer to Him and His good-pleasure.

This is general to every prohibiter and every person prohibited even though the specific occasion of revelation concerned Abu Jahl when he prohibited the Messenger of Allah (SAW) from praying and tormented him and harmed him.

Endnotes

1. Fath(48): 2

2. Bukhari records on the authority of `A`ishah who said,

“The commencement of the revelation to Allah's Messenger was in the form of good righteous dreams. He never had a dream but that it came true like the cleaving of light in the morn. He used to go in seclusion (to the cave of) Hira where he used to worship (Allah) continuously for many nights. He used to take with him food for that (stay) and then come back to (his wife) Khadija to take his food again for another period of stay, till suddenly the Truth descended upon him while he was in that cave. The angel came to him in it and asked him to read. The Prophet replied, “I do not know how to read.” (The Prophet added), “The angel caught me (forcefully) and pressed me so hard that I could not bear it anymore. He then released me and again asked me to read, and I replied, ‘I do not know how to read,’ whereupon he caught me again and pressed me a second time till I could not bear it anymore. He then released me and asked me again to read, but again I replied, ‘I do not know how to read (or: what shall I read?).’ Thereupon he caught me for the third time and pressed me and then released me and said, ‘Read in the name of your Lord who created, created man from a clinging form. Read! Your Lord is the Most Generous, who taught by means of the pen; taught man what he knew not.’”

Then Allah's Messenger returned, his neck muscles twitching with terror till he entered upon Khadija and said, "Cover me! Cover me!" They covered him till his fear was over and then he said, "O Khadija, what is wrong with me?" Then he told her everything that had happened and said, "I fear that something may happen to me." Khadija said, "Never! But have the glad tidings, for by Allah, Allah will never disgrace you as you keep good reactions with your kith and kin, speak the truth, help the poor and the destitute, serve your guest generously and assist the deserving, calamity-stricken ones." Khadija then accompanied him to (her cousin) Waraqa ibn Nawfal ibn Asad ibn 'Abdu-l-'Uzza ibn Qusayy. Waraqa was the son of her paternal uncle, who during the Pre-Islamic Period had become a Christian and used to write the Arabic writing and used to write of the Gospels in Arabic as much as Allah wished him to write. He was an old man and had lost his eyesight. Khadija said to him, "O my cousin! Listen to the story of your nephew." Waraqa asked, "O my nephew! What have you seen?" The Prophet described whatever he had seen.

Waraqqa said, "This is the same Namus (Angel) whom Allah had sent to Moses. I wish I were young and could live up to the time when your people would turn you out." Allah's Messenger asked, "Will they turn me out?" Waraqa replied in the affirmative and said: "Never did a man come with something similar to what you have brought but was treated with hostility. If I should remain alive till the day when you will be turned out then I would support you strongly." But after a few days Waraqa died and the revelation also paused for a while and the Prophet became so sad that he intended several times to throw himself from the tops of high mountains and every time he went up the top of a mountain in order to throw himself down, Jibril would appear before him and say, "O Muhammad! You are indeed Allah's Messenger in truth" whereupon his heart would become quiet and he would calm down and would return home. And whenever the period of the coming of the inspiration used to become long, he would do as before, but when he used to reach the top of a mountain, Jibril would appear before him and say to him what he had said before."

Tafsir of Surah al Qadr - Power (Surah 97)

- 1) Truly We have revealed it in the Night of Power. 2) What will make you realise what the Night of Power is?
- 3) The Night of Power is better than a thousand months.
- 4) In it the angels and the Spirit descend by their Lord's permission with every ordinance. 5) Peace!...until the break of dawn.

Allah says, explaining the excellence of the Qur'an and its sublime status, "Truly We have revealed it in the Night of Power." Allah began the revelation of the Qur'an in Laylatu'l-Qadr of Ramadan, and through it showed a mercy to His servants that they can never show enough gratitude for. It is called the Night of Power because of its great status, its excellence in the sight of Allah, and because decrees are apportioned therein for the coming year. Allah then proceeds to emphasise its

importance by saying, “What will make you realise what the Night of Power is,” its affair is tremendous “The Night of Power is better than a thousand months,” therefore a deed performed during it is better than that deed being performed over a period of one thousand months that do not contain that one night. That Allah has graced this weak nation with such a night astounds and amazes one’s mind. One thousand months: eighty odd years, the lifespan of a man who has lived a long life! “In it the angels and the Spirit descend” frequently “by their Lord’s permission with every ordinance. Peace,” it is safe from every defect and evil due to its immense good, “until the break of dawn,” i.e. this night commences when the sun sets and ends with the break of dawn. The ahadith concerning its virtue are concurrent (mutawatir), they mention that it falls in the odd nights of the last ten nights of Ramadan, and it will fall therein every year until the Hour falls. It was in the hope of finding the Night of Power that the Prophet (SAW) would perform i`tikaf and increase in worship during the last ten nights of Ramadan.

Allah knows best.

Tafsir of Surah al Bayyinah - The Clear Proof (Surah 98)

1) Those who disbelieve of the People of the Book and the idolaters would not desist until the Clear Proof came to them: 2) a Messenger from Allah reading out purified pages 3) containing upright scriptures. 4) Those given the Book did not divide into sects until after the Clear Proof came to them.

Allah, Most High, says, “Those who disbelieve of the People of the Book,” the Jews and Christians “and the idolaters” from all races “would not desist,” from their disbelief and misguidance. They persist in their aimless wandering and misguidance, not changing their ways, and the passage of time only increases them in disbelief. “Until the Clear Proof came to them,” self-evident and conclusive, this proof is explained next, “a Messenger from” sent by “Allah,” calling man to the truth. Allah revealed a Book to him that he recited in order to teach man wisdom, to purify him and to lead him out of the darkness into the light. This is why He said, “reading out purified pages” protected from the approach of devils, “touched by none save the purified,”^[1] because it is the most exalted form of speech. This is why He said, “containing,” i.e. these purified pages “upright scriptures,” comprising truthful

narratives; just, upright injunctions leading to the truth and to the Straight Path. When this Clear Proof comes to them, the seeker after Truth is distinguished from one who has no purpose in his endeavours. Therefore the destroyed perishes upon clear proof and the living is given life upon clear proof.

If the People of the Book do not believe in this Messenger, and refuse to follow him, this is nothing new for them, it something part and parcel of their misguidance and obstinate rebellion, for “those given the Book did not divide into sects,” into groups and parties “until after the Clear Proof came to them,” that would lead its adherents to unity and accord. However these people, because of their filth and depravity, only increased in misguidance in the face of guidance and blindness in the face of sure knowledge, this despite that fact that all Scripture came with one religion and one basic message.

5) They were only ordered to worship Allah, sincerely devoting their religion to Him as people of pure, natural belief, and to establish the prayer and to pay the alms-due. That is the true religion. 6) Those who disbelieve of the People of the Book and the idolaters will be in the fire of Hell, remaining in it forever. They are the worst of creatures.

“They were only ordered,” in all the religious laws “to worship Allah, sincerely devoting their religion to Him,” intending His face alone in all actions of worship, outward and inward, seeking to draw closer to Him “as people of pure, natural belief,” who turn away from all religions that oppose the religion of Tawhid “and to establish the prayer and to pay the alms-due,” these two actions of worship have specifically been mentioned even though they fall under the meaning of “they were only ordered to worship Allah” because of their excellence and superiority. Whoever establishes these two actions of worship has established all the various injunctions of the religion. “That,” Tawhid and sincerity in religion “is the true religion,” the upright and straight religion that leads to gardens of bliss, anything other than it leads to Hell. Allah then mentions the recompense of the disbelievers after the Clear Proof had come to them: “Those who disbelieve of the People of the Book and the idolaters will be in the fire of Hell, remaining in it forever,” its punishment encompassing them, its torment only ever increasing in severity “remaining there forever,” “It will not be eased for them. They will be crushed there by despair.”^[2] “They are the worst of creatures,” because they knew the truth and abandoned it and thereby lost both this world and the Hereafter.

7) Those who believe and work righteous deeds are the best of creatures. 8) Their reward is with their Lord:

Gardens of Eden graced with rivers flowing under them, remaining in them forever. Allah is well-pleased with them and they are well-pleased with Him; that is for those who fear their Lord.

“Those who believe and work righteous deeds are the best of creatures,” because they knew Allah and worshipped Him and thereby succeeded by attaining joy in this world and the Hereafter. “Their reward is with their Lord: Gardens of Eden,” Gardens of permanency from which they will never depart and beyond which they have no desire, “graced with rivers flowing under them, remaining in them forever. Allah is well-pleased with them,” for all that they did that pleased Him “and they are well-pleased with Him,” for the grace He has prepared for them “that” wonderful reward “is for those who fear their Lord,” and therefore avoid disobeying Him and live by what He obligated.

Endnotes

Bukhari records on the authority of Anas bin Malik that the Prophet (SAW) said to Ubayy (ibn Ka`b),

“Allah has ordered me to recite to you, ‘Those who disbelieve among the People of the Scripture and the idolaters could not have left off (erring) till the Clear Proof came to them.’” Ubayy asked, ‘Did Allah mention me by name?’ The Prophet (SAW) said, “Yes.” On that, Ubayy wept.

1. al-Waqi`ah (56): 79
2. al-Zukhruf (43): 77

Tafsir of Surah al Zalzalah - The Earthquake (Surah 99)

1) When the earth is violently shaken with its (final) quake, 2) and the earth disgorges its burdens, 3) and man cries, ‘What is wrong with it?’ 4) On that Day will it recount its news, 5) because your Lord had inspired it. 6) That day, man will come forward in scattered groups to be shown their deeds: 7) whoever does an atom’s weight of good will see it, 8) and whoever does an atom’s weight of evil will see it.

Allah informs us about what will happen on the Day of Rising, “When the earth is violently shaken,” convulsing and rocking “with its (final) quake,” flattening all buildings and edifices, the mountains crumble and fall, and the hills are flattened. The earth’s surface becomes like a barren, level plain on which you see neither dip nor gradient.^[1] “And the earth disgorges its burdens,” the deceased and treasures lying within her “and man cries,” when he sees the terror that has stricken it, exclaiming “What is wrong with it?” what has happened! “On that Day it” the earth “will recount its news,” bearing witness against man for the good and evil he wrought on its surface. The earth is one of the witnesses that will be brought forward on the Day of Rising to testify for or against man. That is “because your Lord had inspired her,” ordered her to relate what was done on her surface and she will not disobey His command. “That day, man will come forward” to the Standing of the Day of Rising for Allah to judge them “in scattered groups” broken, disparate bands “to be shown their deeds,” that Allah may show them what they worked of good and evil and that He may show them His recompense. “Whoever does an atom’s weight of good will see it, and whoever does an atom’s weight of evil will see it,” this holds true for any good and any evil that was worked: if a person will see even an atoms weight and, moreover, be recompensed for it, then for sure he will see anything greater as well. Allah says, “On the Day that each self finds the good it did, and the evil it did, present there in front of it, it will wish there were an age between it and then. Allah advises you to beware of Him. Allah is Ever-Gentle with His slaves.”^[2]

This verse then contains strong encouragement towards performing good, even if it be little, and discouragement from working evil even if it seem paltry.

Endnotes

1. Ta Ha (20): 106-107
2. Ali `Imran (3): 30

Tafsir of Surah al 'Adiyat - The Charging Horses (Surah 100)

1) By the charging horses, snorting, 2) striking sparks with their hooves, 3) raiding at full gallop at dawn, 4) blazing a trailing dust-cloud in their wake, 5) and cleaving through the centre (of the foe):

Allah takes an oath by horses due to His resplendent Signs and evident blessings that they contain, virtues recognised by everyone.^[1] Allah takes an oath by them when they are in a state in which they do not resemble other animals: “By the charging horses,” running swiftly and powerfully “snorting,” their exertion causes their breaths to come out in pants and snorts. “Striking sparks with their hooves,” the strength of impact of their hooves on rock brought about by the speed of the charge causes sparks to fly. “Raiding at full gallop” against the enemy “at dawn,” as this is generally when the raid is done.^[2] “Blazing a trailing dust-cloud in their wake” because of the speed of their charge “cleaving through the centre (of the foe),” they charged against. The purpose of the oath follows:

6) Truly man is ungrateful to his Lord 7) and he himself is a witness to this* 8) and he is tenacious in his love of wealth. 9) Does he not know that when the contents of the graves are thrown out, 10) and the secrets in the breasts are brought into the open, 11) that Day their Lord will be fully aware of them.

“Truly man is ungrateful to his Lord,” parsimonious in showing gratitude for the good Allah has granted him. Man by nature does not freely fulfil his duties, and often, when he does do them, he does not do them completely or go beyond what is required; instead his nature is one of laziness and he lacks the resolve to fulfil his duties, those related to both wealth and body – except for those Allah has guided. “And he himself is a witness to this,” to his lack of desire in fulfilling duties and his tenacity, he will not deny or reject this because it is evident. It is also possible that the personal pronoun refers to Allah, Most High, i.e. “He (Allah) is a witness to that.” “And he” man “is tenacious in his love of wealth,” it is this love that has led him to abandon fulfilling his obligations. He has given precedence to the lusts of his soul over the good-pleasure of his Lord. This because his sight is beholden to this world and he is heedless of the Hereafter. It is for this reason that Allah says, directing his attention to the Promised Day so that he may fear it, “Does he not know that when the contents of the grave are thrown out,” the dead are taken out of the graves, resurrected and gathered “and the secrets of the breasts are brought into the open,” whatever they

contained of good and evil is made known: secrets become open and the concealed, apparent. The end result of deeds will be plainly seen on people's faces. "That Day their Lord will be fully aware of them," their outer and inner deeds, the minor and major, and He will recompense them for them. Even though Allah is perfectly informed about them on every day, this Day has specifically been mentioned to highlight that those deeds will be fully recompensed since Allah is fully aware of them.

Endnotes

* or "He (Allah) is a witness to that." [Qurtubi]

1. Bukhari and Muslim record on the authority of `Urwah bin Abu'l-Ja`d (RA) that the Messenger of Allah (SAW) said,

"Great good is attached to the forelocks of horses: reward and war booty, until the Day of Judgment."

Bukhari and Muslim record on the authority of `Uqbah bin `Amir (RA) that the Prophet (SAW) said,

"If you wish to embark on a military expedition, buy a black horse with a white streak on the forehead and white hooves, for you will then procure war booty and return safely."

Muslim records on the authority of `Abdullah bin `Amr ibn al-`As that the Messenger of Allah (SAW) said,

"There is none undertaking a military expedition or a raiding party in the way of Allah, and returns safe and sound with his war booty except that he receives two thirds of his reward [in this world and the remainder in the Hereafter]. There is none undertaking a military expedition or a raiding party in the way of Allah and returns empty handed and is wounded except that he receives his full reward;"

...another version has the wording,

"There is none undertaking a military expedition or a raiding party in the way of Allah who attains war booty except that two thirds of his reward in the Hereafter is meted out to him in this world and one third remains in the Hereafter, if he does not attain any war booty he gets the complete reward [in the Hereafter]."

2. Bukhari records on the authority of Sahl ibn Sa`d that the Messenger of Allah (SAW) said,

“An early morning expedition in the Way of Allah, or an evening expedition in the Way of Allah, is better than the world and what it contains. Keeping watch for a day in the Way of Allah is better than the world and what it contains.”

Tafsir of Surah al Qari'ah - The Crashing Blow (Surah 101)

1) The Crashing Blow! 2) What is the Crashing Blow?
3) What will make you realise what the Crashing Blow is?
4) A day when mankind will be like scattered moths,
5) and the mountains like tufts of wool. 6) Then, as for him whose scales are heavy; 7) he will have a most pleasant life. 8) But as for him whose scales are light, 9) a Bottomless Pit will be his matron. 10) What will make you realise what it is? 11) A raging Fire!

“The Crashing Blow” one of the names given to the Day of Judgment, it is called so because its horrors strike man with fear and trepidation. It is for this reason that Allah stressed its gravity and severity by asking, “What is the Crashing Blow? What will make you realise what the Crashing Blow is? A day when mankind” in abject terror and horror “will be like scattered moths,” like scattered locusts, randomly surging into each other, not knowing where they are going; then, when a fire is lit, they rush headlong into it, unable to perceive its danger. On that Day, despite man being a rational creature, this will be his state.^[1] “And the mountains,” firm, mighty, unmoving, “like tufts of wool,” feeble and of such weight that the least gust of wind cause them to flutter away. Allah says, “And you see the mountains that you deem solid flying with the flight of clouds.”^[2] Then, the mountains shall become like “scattered dust”^[3] and no perceivable trace of them shall remain. Then, the Scale will be erected and man shall be divided into two categories: the felicitous and the wretched. “Then, as for him whose scales are heavy,” i.e. his good deeds outweigh his bad “he will have a most pleasant life,” in the Gardens of Bliss. “But as for him whose scales are light,” whose good deeds do not compare to his bad “a Bottomless Pit,” al-Hawiyah (one of the names of Hell) “will be his matron,” his abode and final destination. It will like a mother to him who always sticks close to him just as Allah says, “surely the punishment thereof is lasting and clinging.”^[4] It is also said that the meaning is that his mind will be hurled into Hellfire, meaning that he will be thrown into Hell headfirst. “What will make you realise what it is?” asked by way of emphasising its severity, then the answer is given: “a raging Fire” intensely hot, seventy times hotter than the fire of this world, we seek Allah’s protection from it!

Endnotes

1. Muslim records on the authority of Jabir that the Messenger of Allah (SAW) said,

“My example and your example is that of a person who lit a fire and insects and moths began to fall in it, and he did his utmost to prevent them from falling in. I am grabbing onto your lower garments trying to hold you back from the Fire, but you are slipping from my hand.”

In another place Allah describes the state of man with the words, “With downcast eyes, they come forth from the graves as they were scattered locusts.” [al-Qamar (54): 7]

2. al-Naml (27): 88

3. al-Waqi`ah (56): 6

4. al-Furqan (25): 65

Tafsir of Surah al Takathur - Rivalry (Surah 102)

1) Fierce rivalry for this world distracts you 2) until you visit the graves. 3) No indeed! You will soon know! 4) Again, no indeed! You will soon know. 5) No indeed, if you only knew with a knowledge born of certainty! 6) You will certainly see the Blazing Fire. 7) Then you will see it with the eye of certainty! 8) Then you will be asked that Day about the pleasures (you indulged in!).

Allah reprimands His servants for being distracted from the purpose of their creation: worshipping Him alone without any partners, knowing Him, turning to Him in penitence, and giving preference to what He loves over everything else,^[1] “Fierce rivalry for this world,” exactly what worldly effects are being referred to have been left unmentioned so as to generalise the import of the verse to everything that man piles up and takes pride in of wealth, children, helpers, armies, servants, status and the likes: everything, whose goal is not Allah’s face, that one man seeks to surpass another in. “Distracts you,” from your purpose. Your idle pastime and state of heedlessness will continue “until you visit the graves,” when the veil of negligence will be lifted from you; but then it will be too late to do anything! This verse proves

that the Barzakh is a wayfaring post whose purpose is to pass one on his way to the Abode of the Hereafter. This is because Allah called the deceased in their graves, 'visitors' and did not call them, 'residents.' This then directs man's attention to the Resurrection and the recompense for deeds in an Abode that is eternal. It is for this reason that Allah proceeds to threaten them with His words, "No indeed! You will soon know! Again, no indeed! You will soon know. No indeed, if you only knew with a knowledge born of certainty!" i.e. if you knew what lies before you with a knowledge that penetrates the heart, fierce rivalry would not have distracted you; instead you would have rushed to work righteous deeds. However, the absence of true knowledge has led to your current state. "You will certainly see the Blazing Fire," you will witness the Rising in which you will behold Hell prepared for the disbelievers. "Then you will see it with the eye of certainty," with the physical eye, as Allah says, "The evildoers will see the Fire and realise they are going to fall into it and find no way of escaping from it."^[2] "Then you will be asked that Day about the pleasures (you indulged in)," in this world.^[4] Did you show Him due gratitude? Did you fulfil the rights of Allah in this world and not use his blessings to disobey Him? If so He will confer upon you a blessing far greater and better. Were you deceived by this world and abandoned due gratitude? If so, Allah will punish you: "On the Day when those who disbelieved are exposed to the Fire: 'You dissipated the good things you had in your worldly life and enjoyed yourself in it. So today you are being repaid with the punishment of humiliation for being arrogant in the earth without any right and for being deviators.'"^[3]

Endnotes

1. Muslim records on the authority of `Abdullah ibn al-Shikhkhir who said,

'I came to Allah's Messenger as he was reciting: "Fierce rivalry for this world distracts you." He said: The son of Adam cries, 'My wealth, my wealth!' He said, "Son of Adam, what do you get of your wealth except what you ate and consumed, what you wore and wore out, or what you gave as charity and sent it forward?" another narration adds, "and all besides this (it is of no use to you) because you will pass on and leave it for other people.'"

2. al-Kahf (18): 53

3. al-Ahqaf (46): 20

4. Muslim records on the authority of Abu Hurayrah that,

Allah's Messenger (SAW) went out (of his house) one day or one night, and there he found both Abu Bakr and `Umar. He asked, "What has brought you out of your houses at this hour?" They replied, 'Allah's Messenger, hunger.' Thereupon he said, "By Him in whose

hand is my soul, what has brought you out has brought me out too; stand up!” They stood up with him and (all of them) came to the house of an Ansari, but he was not at home. When his wife saw him she said, ‘Welcome!’ Allah's Messenger (SAW) said to her, “Where is so-and-so?” She said, ‘He has gone to fetch some fresh water for us.’ When the Ansari came and saw Allah's Messenger (SAW) with his two companions, he said, “Praise be to Allah, no one has more honourable guests today than I!” He then went out and brought them a bunch of ripe dates, some dry dates and fresh dates, saying, ‘Eat!’ He then took hold of his long knife (for slaughtering a goat or a sheep). Allah's Messenger (SAW) said to him, “Do not kill a milking animal.” He slaughtered a sheep for them and they ate it and the dates, and drank. When they had taken their fill and were fully satisfied with the drink, Allah's Messenger (SAW) said to Abu Bakr and `Umar, “By Him in whose hand is my soul, you will certainly be questioned about this joy on the Day of Judgment. Hunger brought you out of your house and you did not return until this bounty came to you.”

Tafsir of Surah al 'Asr - Time (Surah 103)

1) By Time. 2) Truly man is in a state of loss! 3) Not so those who believe and do good works, and counsel one another to truth, and counsel one another to patience.

Allah takes an oath by time, the passage of night and day, the time in which man works his deeds: “By Time,” the purpose of the oath being “Truly man is in a state of loss,” loss has many different levels: complete loss, the state of one who loses both this world and the Hereafter, who loses eternal bliss and instead deserves Hell. A person could also lose out in some aspects and not others and this is why Allah generalises this loss to all of man save those who have four qualities: “Not so those who believe” in what Allah as ordered to believe in, faith cannot come about or be complete without knowledge and therefore it is a branch of knowledge, “and do good works,” all good deeds, outward and inward, those linked to the rights of Allah and the rights of His servants, both the obligatory and recommended “and counsel one another to truth” which is faith and righteous deeds “and counsel one another to patience,” in obedience to Allah, away from disobedience to Him, and in the face of His decrees that man finds trying. The first two matters perfect the servant and the next two aid to perfect others. In the completion of these four matters lies safety from loss and through them does the servant attain success.

Tafsir of Surah al Humazah - The Slanderer (Surah 104)

1) Woe to every slandering traducer, 2) who has amassed wealth, counting it over, 3) thinking that his wealth will make him immortal. 4) No indeed! He will be flung into the Shatterer. 5) What will make you realise what the Shatterer is? 6) The fire of Allah, kindled (to a blaze), 7) which rages over the hearts (of people). 8) It closes in on them (from every side), 9) in towering columns.

“Woe,” this is a threat of evil consequences and severe punishment “to every slandering traducer,” who defames people with his deeds and slanders them with his words. The hammaz is one who defames people by pointing and deed, and the lammaz is one who denigrates them with his words.^[1] Amongst the descriptions of such a person is that he is one “who has amassed wealth, counting it over,” this being his only concern, he takes delight in it and he has no desire to purify it by spending it in ways of goodness, joining ties of kinship and so on. “Thinking,” in his ignorance “that his wealth will make him immortal,” in this world. It is for this reason that all his efforts and struggles are expended in increasing his wealth through which he believes that his lifespan will increase. He is not aware of the fact that miserliness actually ruins lives and destroys homes whereas righteousness in reality is what causes an increase in lifespan.^[2] “No indeed! He will be flung into the Shatterer.”^[3] What will make you realise what the Shatterer is? This is asked by way of emphasising the gravity of the affair and increasing one’s dread of it. Then it is explained, “The fire of Allah, kindled (to a blaze),” “whose fuel is men and stones”^[4] “which,” because of its extreme intensity “rages over the hearts (of people),” piercing their bodies and scorching their very hearts.^[5] Along with this unbearable heat they are imprisoned therein having lost all hope of ever leaving, “It closes in on them (from every side),” caging them in “in towering columns,” behind its doors preventing them from leaving, “Whenever they desire to go forth from it they shall be brought back into it, and it will be said to them: Taste the chastisement of the Fire which you used to deny.”^[6]

We take refuge with Allah and ask Him for well-being and pardon!

1. The opposite has also been said by scholars such as ibn Kathir. Others such as Qarafi, al-Furuq, vol. 4, pg. 316, said that al-hamz was to defame a person in his presence whereas al-lamz was to defame a person in his absence in which case it had the same meaning as backbiting (ghibah).

2. Tirmidhi records on the authority of Thawban that the Messenger of Allah (SAW) said, "Nothing increases the life-span save righteousness."

Ahmad records on the authority of Anas ibn Malik that the Messenger of Allah (SAW) said, "Whoever wishes to have his life-span increased, let him be dutiful to his parents and join the ties of kinship."

3. Qurtubi: it is called the Shatterer because it breaks, shatters and crushes whatever is thrown therein.

4. al-Baqarah (2):24

5. Qurtubi: When torment reaches the heart the person should normally die, therefore these people are in a state where they should be dead, but they do not die. Allah says about them, "Wherein he will neither die nor live." These people are the living dead.

6. al-Sajdah (32): 20

Tafsir of Surah al Fil - The Elephant (Surah 105)

- 1) Have you not seen what your Lord did with the army of the elephant?
- 2) Did He not utterly foil their schemes?
- 3) He unleashed flock after flock of birds against them,
- 4) pelting them with stones of hard-baked clay,
- 5) making them like stripped wheat-stalk eaten bare.

"Have you not seen" the might of Allah, His greatness, His mercy to His servants, the proofs of His Tawhid and the truthfulness of His Messenger (SAW) demonstrated in "what your Lord did with the army of the elephant" who set out for the Sanctified House with the goal of demolishing it. They fully equipped their army and enlisted a herd of elephants to help them and, as such, amassed an army from Abyssinia and Yemen that the Arabs had no hope of repelling. When they approached Mecca, they found no defending army to face them, seeing instead that the inhabitants of Mecca

had fled in fear. "Did He not utterly foil their schemes? He unleashed flock after flock of birds against them," one after another, "pelting them with stones of hard-baked clay?" striking every single one of them, debilitating them, wearing them down and finally killing them, "making them like stripped wheat-stalk eaten bare." Allah sufficed against their evil and utterly confounded their schemes.

Their story is well-known and famous. This event occurred in the year that the Messenger of Allah (SAW) was born, and became one of the miracles prior to his call and one of the precursors heralding his coming.^[1] To Allah belongs all praise and thanks.

Endnotes

1. The story of the People of the Elephant:

Ibn Kathir: It has already been mentioned in the story of the People of the Ditch that Dhu Nuwas, the last king of Himyar, a polytheist, was the one who ordered killing the People of the Ditch. They were Christians and numbered approximately twenty thousand. None of them except a man named Daws Dhu Tha`laban escaped. He fled to Syria where he sought protection from Caesar, the emperor of Syria, who was also a Christian. Caesar wrote to Najashi, the king of Abyssinia, who was closer to them. Najashi sent two governors with him: Aryat and Abrahah ibn al-Sabah Abu Yaksum, along with a great army. The army entered Yemen and began searching the houses and looting in search of the king of Himyar. Dhu Nuwas was eventually killed by drowning in the sea. Thus, the Ethiopians were free to rule Yemen, with Aryat and Abrahah as its governors. However, they opposed each other, attacked each other, and fought each other, until one of them said to the other, "There is no need for our two armies to fight. Instead let us fight each other (in a duel) and the one who kills the other will be the ruler of Yemen." So the other accepted the challenge and they held a duel. Behind each man was a channel of water (to keep either from fleeing). Aryat gained the upper hand and struck Abrahah with his sword, splitting his nose and mouth, and slashing his face. But `Atawdah, Abrahah's freed slave, attacked Aryat and killed him. Thus, Abrahah returned wounded to Yemen where he was treated for his injuries and recovered. He thus became the commander of the Abyssinian army in Yemen.

Then the king of Abyssinia, Najashi wrote to him, blaming him for what had happened and threatened him, saying that he swore to tread on the soil of Yemen and cut off his forelock. Therefore, Abrahah sent a messenger with gifts and precious objects to Najashi to appease him and flatter him, and a sack containing soil from Yemen and a piece of hair cut from his forelock. He said in his letter to the king, "Let

the king walk upon this soil and thus fulfill his oath, and this is my forelock hair that I send to you." When Najashi received this, he was pleased with Abrahah and gave him his approval. Then Abrahah wrote to Najashi saying that he would build a church for him in Yemen the like of which had never been built before. Thus, he began to build a huge church in San`a', tall and beautifully crafted and decorated on all sides. The Arabs called it al-Qullays because of its great height, and because if one looked at it, his cap would be in danger of falling off as he tilted his head back. Then Abrahah decided to force the Arabs to make their pilgrimage to this magnificent church, just as they had performed pilgrimage to the Ka`bah in Makkah. He announced this in his kingdom (Yemen), but it was rejected by the Arab tribes of `Adnan and Qahtan. The Quraysh were infuriated by it, so much so that one of them journeyed to the church and entered it one night. He then relieved himself in the church and ran away (escaping the people). When its custodians saw what he had done, they reported it to their king, Abrahah, saying, "One of the Quraysh has done this in anger over their House in whose place you have appointed this church." Upon hearing this, Abrahah swore to march to the House of Makkah and destroy it stone by stone. Maqatil ibn Sulayman mentioned that a group of young men from the Quraysh entered the church and started a fire in it on an extremely windy day. So the church caught on fire and collapsed to the ground. Due to this Abrahah prepared himself and set out with a huge and powerful army so that none might prevent him from carrying out his mission. He took along a great, powerful elephant that had a huge body the like of which had never been seen before. This elephant was called Mahmud and it was sent to Abrahah from Najashi, the king of Abyssinia, particularly for this expedition. It has also been said that he had eight other elephants with him; their number was also reported to be twelve, plus the large one, Mahmud, and Allah knows best. Their intention was to use this big elephant to demolish the Ka`bah. They planned to do this by fastening chains to the pillars of the Ka`bah and placing the other ends around the neck of the elephant. Then they would make the elephant pull on them in order to tear down the walls of the Ka`bah all at one time. When the Arabs heard of Abrahah's expedition, they considered it an extremely grave matter. They held it to be an obligation upon them to defend the Sacred House and repel whoever intended a plot against it. Thus, the noblest man of the people of Yemen and the greatest of their chiefs set out to face him (Abrahah). His name was Dhu Nafr. He called his people, and whoever would respond to his call among the Arabs, to go to war against Abrahah and fight in defense of the Sacred House. He called the people to stop Abrahah's plan to demolish and tear down the Ka`bah. So the people responded to him and they entered into battle with Abrahah, but he defeated them. This was due to Allah's will and His intent to honor and venerate the Ka`bah.

The army continued on its way until it came to the land of Khath`am where it was confronted by Nufayl bin Habib al-Kath`ami along with his people, the Shahrani and

Nahis tribes. They fought Abrahah but he defeated them and captured Nufayl bin Habib. Initially he wanted to kill him, but he forgave him and took him as his guide to show him the way to al-Hijaz.

When they approached the area of Ta'if, its people went out to Abrahah. They wanted to appease him because they were fearful for their place of worship, which they called al-Lat. Abrahah was kind to them and they sent a man named Abu Righal with him as a guide. When they reached a place known as al-Mughammas, which is near Makkah, they settled there. Then he sent his troops on a foray to capture the camels and other grazing animals of the Makkans, which they did, including about two hundred camels belonging to `Abdu'l-Muttalib. The leader of this particular expedition was a man named al-Aswad ibn Mafsud. Then Abrahah sent an emissary named Hanatah al-Himyari to enter Makkah, commanding him to bring the head of the Quraysh to him. He also commanded him to inform him that the king will not fight the people of Makkah unless they try to prevent him from the destruction of the Ka`bah. Hanatah went to the city and he was directed to `Abdu'l-Muttalib ibn Hashim, to whom he relayed Abrahah's message. `Abdu'l-Muttalib replied, "By Allah! We have no wish to fight him, nor are we in any position to do so. This is the Sacred House of Allah, and the house of His Khalil, Ibrahim, and if He wishes to prevent him from (destroying) it, it is His House and His Sacred Place (to do so). And if He lets him approach it, by Allah, We have no means to defend it from him." So Hanatah told him, "Come with me to Abrahah." And so `Abdu'l-Muttalib went with him. When Abrahah saw him, he was impressed by him, because `Abdu'l-Muttalib was a large and handsome man. So Abrahah descended from his seat and sat with him on a carpet on the ground. Then he asked his translator to say to him, "What do you need" `Abdu'l-Muttalib replied to the translator, "I want the king to return my camels which he has taken from me which are two hundred in number." Abrahah then told his translator to tell him, "I was impressed by you when I first saw you, but now I withdraw from you after you have spoken to me. You are asking me about two hundred camels which I have taken from you and you leave the matter of a house which is (the foundation of) religion and the religion of your fathers, which I have come to destroy and you do not speak to me about it" `Abdu'l-Muttalib said to him, "Verily, I am the lord of the camels. As for the House, it has its Lord who will defend it." Abrahah said, "I cannot be prevented (from destroying it)." `Abdu'l-Muttalib answered, "Then do so." It is said that a number of the chiefs of the Arabs accompanied `Abdu'l-Muttalib and offered Abrahah a third of the wealth of the tribe of Tihamah if he would withdraw from the House, but he refused and returned `Abdu'l-Muttalib's camels to him. `Abdu'l-Muttalib then returned to his people and ordered them to leave Makkah and seek shelter at the top of the mountains, fearful of the excesses which might be committed by the army against them. Then he took hold of the metal ring of the door of the Ka`bah, and along with a number of Quraysh, he called upon Allah to give them victory over Abrahah and his

army. `Abdu'l-Muttalib said, while hanging on to the ring of the Ka`bah's door, "There is no matter more important to any man right now than the defense of his livestock and property. So, O my Lord! Defend Your property. Their cross and their cunning will not be victorious over your cunning by the time morning comes." According to Ibn Ishaq, then `Abdu'l-Muttalib let go of the metal ring of the door of the Ka`bah, and they left Makkah and ascended to the mountains tops. Maqatil ibn Sulayman mentioned that they left one hundred animals (camels) tied near the Ka`bah hoping that some of the army would take some of them without a right to do so, and thus bring about the vengeance of Allah upon themselves.

When morning came, Abrahah prepared to enter the sacred city of Makkah. He prepared the elephant named Mahmud. He mobilized his army, and they turned the elephant towards the Ka`bah. At that moment Nufayl ibn Habib approached it and stood next to it, and taking it by its ear, he said, "Kneel, Mahmud! Then turn around and return directly to whence you came. For verily, you are in the Sacred City of Allah." Then he released the elephant's ear and it knelt, after which Nufayl ibn Habib left and hastened to the mountains. Abrahah's men beat the elephant in an attempt to make it rise, but it refused. They beat it on its head with axes and used hooked staffs to pull it out of its resistance and make it stand, but it refused. So they turned him towards Yemen, and he rose and walked quickly. Then they turned him towards Syria and he did likewise. Then they turned him towards the east and he did the same thing. Then they turned him towards Makkah and he knelt down again. Then Allah sent against them the birds from the sea, like swallows and herons. Each bird carried three stones the size of chickpeas and lentils, one in each claw and one in its beak. Everyone who was hit by them was destroyed, though not all of them were hit. They fled in panic along the road asking about the whereabouts of Nufayl that he might point out to them the way home. Nufayl, however, was at the top of the mountain with the Quraysh and the Arabs of the Hijaz observing the wrath which Allah had caused to descend on the people of the elephant. Nufayl then began to say, "Where will they flee when the One True God is the Pursuer for al-Ashram is defeated and not the victor. `Ata' ibn Yasar and others have said that all of them were not struck by the torment at this hour of retribution. Rather some of them were destroyed immediately, while others were gradually broken down limb by limb while trying to escape. Abrahah was of those who was broken down limb by limb until he eventually died in the land of Khath`am. Ibn Ishaq said that they left (Makkah) being struck down and destroyed along every path and at every water spring. Abrahah's body was afflicted by the pestilence of the stones and his army carried him away with them as he was falling apart piece by piece, until they arrived back in San`a'. When they arrived there he was but like the baby chick of a bird. And he did not die until his heart fell out of his chest. So they claim. Ibn Ishaq said that when Allah sent Muhammad with the Prophethood, among the things that he used to recount to the Quraysh as blessings that Allah had

favoring them with His bounties, was His defending them from the attack of the Abyssinians. Due to this the Quraysh were allowed to remain (safely in Makkah) for a period of time.

Tafsir of Surah al Quraysh - The Quraysh (Surah 106)

1) For the tradition of the Quraysh, 2) their tradition of the winter and summer caravans: 3) so let them worship the Lord of this House, 4) who has fed them against hunger and has secured them from fear.

“For the tradition,” many of the exegetes have stated that this section of the chapter continues on from the previous chapter. In this case the meaning would be, ‘We did what We did for the tradition of the Quraysh, their safety and their benefit, and so that their winter and summer caravans to Yemen and Syria continue as they are, bearing profit.’ Allah destroyed those who wished to harm them; He magnified the standing of the Sanctified House and raised the status of its inhabitants in the hearts of the Arabs such that they held those who lived around it in great respect. Moreover, He did not stop them from undertaking any journey they wished. “Of the Quraysh, their tradition of the winter and summer caravans,” it is for these reasons that He ordered them to show Him gratitude by saying, “so let them worship the Lord of this House,” let them single Him out alone for worship and direct their worship to Him and Him alone. “Who has fed them against hunger and has secured them from fear,” being able to eat freely and living in safety are two of the greatest worldly blessings which call for gratitude to Allah, Most High.^[1] O Allah! All praise and thanks are Yours for Your blessings, the outer and inner!

Allah specifically mentions that He is the Lord of the House because of its nobility and excellence. In reality, He is the Lord of everything.

Endnotes

1. Allah mentions this further in al-Baqara (2): 126: “And when Ibrahim said, ‘My Lord, make this a place of safety and provide its inhabitants with fruits – all of them who have faith in Allah and the Last Day,’ He said, ‘I will let anyone who becomes a disbeliever enjoy himself a little but then I will drive him to the punishment of the

Fire. What an evil destination!” and al-Qasa (28): 57, “They say, ‘If we follow the guidance with you, we shall be forcibly uprooted from our land.’ Have We not established a safe haven for them to which produce of every kind is brought, provision direct from Us? But most of them do not know it.”

Tafsir of Surah al Ma'un - Common Kindness (Surah 107)

1) Have you observed him who denies the religion? 2) Such is one who harshly rebuffs the orphan 3) and does not encourage the feeding of the indigent. 4) So woe to those who pray: 5) those who are heedless of their prayers, 6) those who show off, 7) yet forbid common kindness!

“Have you observed him who denies the religion,” by denying the resurrection and the recompense and as such does not believe in what the Messengers came with. “Such is one who harshly rebuffs the orphan,” with coarseness and insolence. He shows him no mercy because of the hardness of his heart and because he does not look to reward, nor fear punishment. “And does not encourage” others “the feeding of the indigent,” not to mention him, himself feeding them! “So woe to those who pray,” they pray but “are heedless of their prayers,” lax in its performance, not praying in its correct time and skipping its pillars. This is because they do not give the commandments of Allah due regard; they wasted the prayer which is the most important act of obedience.

Heedlessness of the prayer is what leads to censure and blame. However to have some sort of heedlessness in the prayer is something that affects everyone, even the Prophet (SAW). It was to express this fact that Allah describes them as being ostentatious, hard of heart and without mercy: “Those who show off,” i.e. they work their deeds by way of ostentation “yet forbid common kindness,” they forbid giving small things that would not harm them at all, essentials such as a cup or bowl or the likes which are habitually given away without the giver feeling any remorse at their loss. These people, because of their intense greed, prevent even these being given let alone larger, more significant things!

This chapter encourages the feeding of the indigent and the orphan, it encourages the encouragement of this, it stresses the importance of being careful in our prayers, the importance of preserving them, the importance of being sincere in them, and in all

other deeds. The chapter also encourages doing good and spending small amounts of wealth in charity because Allah reprimands those who do not do this. Allah, Transcendent is He, knows best.

Tafsir of Surah al Kawthar - Abundance (Surah 108)

1) Truly We have given you Abundance. 2) So pray to your Lord and sacrifice. 3) The one who hates you, he has been cut off.

Allah says to his Prophet, Muhammad (SAW), “Truly We have given you Abundance,” great good and immense grace. Part of this goodness and grace is the river that he (SAW) was given called al-Kawthar and the Pond (Hawd) whose breadth and width is the distance of one month’s journey; its water is whiter than milk and its taste sweeter than honey; its vessels number the amount of stars in the sky and resemble them in radiance. Whoever drinks from it, be it just one sip, will never be thirsty again.^[1]

After mentioning the blessings conferred him (SAW), Allah orders him to show gratitude, “so pray to your Lord and sacrifice,” these two have been specifically mentioned because they are two of the best acts of worship and means of drawing close to Allah. The prayer comprises submission of the heart and limbs to Allah and the body's moving from one posture of servitude to another. Sacrifice comprises the servant drawing closer to Allah by his sacrificing the best animals he has and expending his wealth which man naturally loves and hoards. “The one who hates you,” abhors you, censures you and devalues your true status “he has been cut off,” of all good. His deeds will be severed and his acclaim forgotten. As for Muhammad (SAW), he is the perfect man, reaching the heights of human perfection. His acclaim will be heralded everywhere and his followers and helpers will be many.

Endnotes

1. Bukhari #4964 records the hadith of Anas who said,

‘When the Prophet (SAW) was taken to the heaven he said, “I came to a river, the banks of which were domes of hollowed pearls. I asked, ‘What is this Jibril?’ He replied, ‘This is al-Kawthar.’”’

Bukhari #4965-4966 records that `A`ishah said,

‘It is a river which was given to your Prophet (SAW), on its shores are hollow pearls and the number of its vessels are like that of the stars.’

Bukhari #7050 and Muslim #2290 record on the authority of Sahl ibn Sa`d that the Messenger of Allah (SAW) said,

“I will arriving before you at the Hawd. Whoever comes to it will drink from it; and whoever drinks from it will never again experience thirst.”

The ahadith concerning it reach the level of mutawatir. Ibn Hajr said,

‘This is because thirty-odd Companions related ahadith concerning it, more than twenty of them being mentioned in the Two Sahihs and the remainder being mentioned in others, [this number refers to those narrations] that are authentic and famous.’

Tafsir of Surah al Kafirun - The Disbelievers (Surah 109)

1) Say: O disbelievers! 2) I do not worship what you worship, 3) and you do not worship what I worship. 4) I will never worship what you worship, 5) and you will never worship what I worship. 6) You have your religion and I have mine.¹

“Say: O disbelievers!” openly and clearly “I do not worship what you worship,” I clear myself of what you worship, outwardly and inwardly “and you do not worship what I worship,” because you do not worship Allah sincerely, alone. Your worship of Him, mixed as it is with the worship of others besides Him, cannot truly be called worship. “I will never worship what you worship, and you will never worship what I worship,” this sentence has been repeated. The first instance shows that what is said is a statement of fact, the act will not happen. The second instance shows that the state of affairs has now been set in stone. It is for this reason that Allah proceeds to differentiate the two groups by saying, “You have your religion and I have mine,” just as Allah says, “Say, ‘Each man acts according to his nature, but your Lord knows best who is best guided on the Path’”^[2] and “If they deny you, say, ‘I have my actions and you have your actions. You are not responsible for what I do and I am not responsible for what you do.’”^[3]

Endnotes

1. Muslim records on the authority of Jabir that the Messenger of Allah recited this Surah al-Kafirun and Surah Ikhlas in the two Rak`ahs of Tawaf. Muslim also records from Abu Hurayrah that the Messenger of Allah recited these two Surahs in the two optional Rak`ahs of the Fajr prayer.

Ahmad recorded from Ibn `Umar that the Messenger of Allah recited these in the two Rak`ahs before the Morning prayer and the two Rak`ahs after the Sunset prayer on approximately ten or twenty separate occasions.

Ahmad also recorded that Ibn `Umar said,

“I watched the Prophet on twenty-four or twenty-five occasions reciting these two Surahs in the two Rak`ahs before the Fajr prayer and the two Rak`ahs after the Sunset prayer.”

2. al-Isra' (17): 84

3. Yunus (10): 41

Tafsir of Surah al Nasr - Help (Surah 110)

1) When Allah's help and victory arrive, 2) and you see people embracing Allah's religion in crowds, 3) then glorify your Lord, all the while praising Him, and ask His forgiveness. He is the Ever-Returning.

This noble chapter bears glad-tidings for the Messenger of Allah and a command when he sees their fruition; it also contains an indication of what follows next from these glad-tidings.^[1] The glad-tidings are tidings of Allah's aiding His Messenger, the conquest of Mecca and people embracing true faith in crowds, “When Allah's help and victory arrive and you see people embracing Allah's religion in crowds,"many of whom will be from his tribe and family after having been his antagonists. This occurred.

The command is to show gratitude to his Lord, "then glorify your Lord, all the while praising Him, and ask His forgiveness."

The indication of what will follow on from this is two-fold: the first is that victory will remain for the religion and it will increase with the Messenger of Allah glorifying and praising Allah and asking His forgiveness. This is an expression of gratitude about

which Allah says, “If you are grateful, I will grant you increase.”^[2] This fact was also actualised in the time of the Rightly Guided Khalifs and after them. This aid remained until Islam spread to an extent that no other religion had spread, and nations and people embraced the religion as had not been done for any other religion. Then, this nation began to oppose the command of Allah and they were tried with splitting and discord; then what followed followed. Yet, despite this, Allah still shows this nation and religion mercy and kindness the extent of which does not even cross the mind!

The second is that the Messenger of Allah was soon to pass away. This is because his life is a noble life which Allah Himself took an oath by. It is known in Islam that noble matters are completed by asking Allah’s forgiveness as we see in the case of prayer and Hajj for example. Allah’s ordering the Prophet (SAW) to praise Him and ask forgiveness while in this state indicates that his time has come and that he should now prepare himself for the meeting with his Lord and that he should end his life with one of the best deeds. May Allah shower abundant peace and blessings upon him!

He would frequently implement this verse of the Qur’an in his ruku` and sujud by saying, “Glory be to Allah, our Lord, and all praise; O Allah forgive me!”

Endnotes

1. Nasa’i recorded from `Ubaydullah ibn `Abdullah ibn `Utbah that Ibn `Abbas said to him,

‘Ibn `Utbah, do you know the last Surah of the Qur’an that was revealed” He answered, “Yes, it was: ‘When Allah’s help and victory arrive...’” Ibn `Abbas said, “You have spoken truthfully.”

Bukhari recorded that Ibn `Abbas said,

“‘Umar used to bring me into the gatherings with the seniors of (the battle of) Badr. However, it was as if one of them disliked my attending and asked, ‘Why do you bring this lad to sit with us when we have children like him?’ `Umar replied, ‘We know his worth.’ Then, one day, he called them and invited me to sit with them, I think that the only reason he did so was to prove his point. He asked, ‘What do you say about Allah’s statement, “When Allah’s help and victory arrive.” Some of them said, ‘We were commanded to praise Allah and ask His forgiveness when He helps us and gives us victory.’ Some of them remained silent and did not say anything. Then `Umar asked me, ‘Ibn `Abbas, is this what you say?’ I replied, ‘No.’ He asked, ‘What do you say?’ I said, ‘It marks the end of the life of Allah’s Messenger. Allah said, “When Allah's help and victory arrive” which means that is a sign of your passing away. “Then glorify your Lord, all the while praising Him, and ask His forgiveness. He is the Ever-Returning.” `Umar ibn al-Khattab said, ‘I do know no more

about it than what you have said.”

2. Ibrahim (14): 9

Tafsir of Surah al Masad - Palm Fibre (Surah 111)

1) Perish the hands of Abu Lahab, and he will perish! 2) His wealth and all that he has earned will not avail him. 3) He shall soon roast in a flaming fire 4) as will his wife, the wood-carrier, 5) a rope of palm-fibre round her neck.

Abu Lahab was the uncle of the Prophet (SAW), one of his worst enemies, and one of the people who harmed him the most. He was not religious, and neither did he feel any sense of filial obligation towards the Prophet (SAW), may Allah disgrace him!^[1] Allah censured him with this severe rebuke that would be his bane till the Day of Rising. “Perish the hands of Abu Lahab,” i.e. may his hands waste away and may he be wretched, “and he will perish,” indeed he did not gain any profit. “His wealth and all that he has earned will not avail him,” his money and earnings made him iniquitous and will not aid him at all; they will not avert the Allah’s punishment when it besets him. “He shall soon roast in a flaming fire,” enveloping him from all directions, “as will his wife, the wood-carrier,” she was also someone who harmed the Messenger of Allah (SAW) greatly.^[2] Her and her husband aided each other in sin and transgression, and they did all they could to harm him (SAW). Her sins have collected on her back, weighing her down, in the same way as a wood-carrier piles wood on his back, binding them with a rope of palm-fibre around his neck. The meaning could also be that she will actually carry wood to fuel the fire burning her husband with “a rope of palm-fibre round her neck.”

Whatever the case, this Surah contains a clear miracle from Allah. Allah revealed this Surah before Abu Lahab’s death and his wife’s death. He informed them that they would roast in the Fire, which necessarily means that they would never accept Islam. This is what happened, exactly as the Knower of the unseen and seen informed us!

Endnotes

1. Bukhari recorded from Ibn `Abbas that,

The Prophet went out to the valley of al-Batha and ascended the mountain. Then he cried out, “O people, come at once!” So the Quraysh gathered around him. Then he said, “If I told you all that the enemy was going to attack you in the morning, or in the evening, would you all believe me?” They replied, “Yes.” Then he said, “Verily, I am a warner to you all before the coming of a severe torment.” Abu Lahab said, “Have you gathered us for this? May you perish!” Then, Allah revealed, “Perish the hands of Abu Lahab, and he will perish...” to the end of the chapter.

Ahmad recorded from Abū al-Zinad that,

A man called Rabi`ah ibn `Abbad from the tribe of Bani al-Dil said to him, “I saw the Prophet in the time of pre-Islamic ignorance in the market of Dhu’l-Majaz and he was saying, ‘O people! Say there is none worthy of worship except Allah and you will be successful.’ The people were gathered around him and behind him was a man with a bright face, squint eyes and two braids in his hair. He was saying, ‘He is an apostate and a liar!’ This man was following the Prophet wherever he went. I asked who he was and the people replied, ‘This is his uncle, Abu Lahab.’”

2. Ibn Kathir: Ibn Abi Hatim reported that Asma’ bint Abu Bakr said,

“When ‘Perish the hands of Abu Lahab, and he will perish!’ was revealed, the one-eyed Umm Jamil bint Harb came out wailing, carrying a stone in her hand. She was saying, ‘He criticizes our father! We scorn his religion, we disobey him!’ The Messenger of Allah was sitting in the Masjid with Abu Bakr. When Abu Bakr saw her he said, ‘Messenger of Allah! She is coming and I fear that she will see you.’ The Messenger of Allah replied, ‘She will not see me.’ Then he recited some of the Qur’an as a protection for himself. This is as Allah says, “And when you recite the Qur’an, We put between you and those who believe not in the Hereafter, an invisible veil.” (17:45) She advanced until she was standing in front of Abu Bakr but she did not see the Messenger of Allah. She then said, ‘Abu Bakr! I have been informed that your friend is composing defamatory poetry about me.’ Abu Bakr replied, ‘No! By the Lord of this House, he is not defaming you.’ So she turned away saying, ‘The Quraysh know that I am the daughter of their leader.’”

Tafsir of Surah al Ikhlas - Purity of Faith (Surah 112)

1) Say: He is Allah, the One and only. 2) Allah, the Everlasting Sustainer of all. 3) He has not given birth, nor was He born. 4) There is none comparable to Him.

“Say,” with certainty, believing it and understanding its meaning, “He is Allah,

the One and only,” Oneness is something unique to Him and He is one in every sense. He is one, singular in His perfection, having the Most Beautiful Names and perfect Lofty Attributes coupled with pure deeds. There is nothing comparable to Him or like Him. “Allah, the Everlasting Sustainer of all,” the one who is sought for the fulfilment of all needs. The inhabitants of the lower and upper world all stand in need of him in the direst of ways. They ask Him for their needs and they place their hope in Him to fulfil their desires. This is because His qualities and attributes are perfect: He is the All-Knowing whose knowledge is perfect, the Forbearing whose forbearance is perfect, and the Most-Merciful whose mercy encompasses everything. The same applies to all His Attributes. Part of His perfection is that “He has not given birth, nor was He born,” because He has absolutely no need of anything and “there is none comparable to Him,” not in His Names, or His Attributes or His actions. Blessed and Exalted is He!

This chapter focuses on Tawhid al-Asma’ wa’l-Sifat.

Endnotes

Ahmad records that the polytheists asked the Prophet, “Muhammad! Tell us the lineage of your Lord.” So Allah revealed,

“Say: He is Allah, the One and only. Allah, the Everlasting Sustainer of all. He has not given birth, nor was He born. There is none comparable to Him.”

Bukhari records from `A'ishah who said,

“The Prophet sent a man as the commander of a war expedition and he used to lead his companions in prayer with recitation (of the Qur'an) and he would complete his recitation by reciting ‘Say: He is Allah, the One and only.’ When they returned they mentioned this to the Prophet and he said, “Ask him why he did that.” They asked him and he replied, ‘It contains the description of the All-Merciful and I love to recite it.’ So the Prophet said, “Inform him that Allah, Most High, loves him also.”

Bukhari records from Abu Sa`id that,

A man heard another reciting “Say: He is Allah, the One and only” repeating it over and over again. When morning came, the man went to the Prophet and mentioned this to him, and it was as though he thought it insignificant. The Prophet said, “By Him in whose hand is my soul, it is equivalent to a third of the Qur’an.”

Tafsir of Surah al Falaq - Daybreak (Surah 113)

1) Say: I take refuge with the Lord of daybreak 2) from the evil of what He created, 3) from the evil of darkness as it gathers, 4) from the evil of those who blow on knots, 5) and from the evil of the envious when he envies.

“Say,” in order to take refuge “I take refuge” recourse, shelter and hold fast to “the Lord of daybreak,” the Cleaver of the seed and kernel,^[1] the Cleaver of the sky at dawn.^[2] “From the evil of what He created,” all that Allah created: man, jinn and animal. Therefore one takes refuge with their Creator from the evil they contain.^[3]

Next, Allah lists specific cases subsumed by the general import of the previous verse: “from the evil of darkness as it gathers,” i.e. from the evil of what happens at night when darkness envelops man, when many evil souls and harmful creatures disperse therein. “From the evil of those who blow on knots,” i.e. witches who would blow on knots to aid them in their sorcery which they had tied in the ways of their secret art. “From the evil of the envious when he envies,” the envier is one who wishes to see the removal of the blessings he sees in the envied, and does his utmost to have them removed. Man is therefore in need of seeking refuge from his evil and in order to render his plots vain. Included in the category of the envier is someone who afflicts others with the evil-eye because this only ever emanates from one who is envious and has an evil nature.

This chapter covers seeking refuge from all types of evil: general and specific. It also proves that magic is something real, its harm should be feared, and that one should take refuge with Allah from it and from those who practice it.^[4]

Endnotes

1. al-An`am (6): 95
2. al-An`am (6): 96

3. Muslim reports from Qais ibn Hazim from `Uqbah ibn `Amir (RA) that the Messenger of Allah (SAW) said,

“Have you not the heard the verses that were revealed last night, the likes of which have never been heard? (They were): Say: I take refuge with the Lord of daybreak and Say: I take refuge with the Lord of mankind.”

In another wording the Messenger of Allah (SAW) said,

“Shall I not inform you of the best thing that those seeking refuge can seek refuge with?” I replied, “Of course.” He said, “Say: I take refuge with the Lord of daybreak and Say: I take refuge with the Lord of mankind.”

Tirmidhi records that `Uqbah ibn `Amir (RA) said,

“The Messenger of Allah (SAW) commanded me to read the Mu`awwidhatayn after every prayer.”

Tirmidhi, Nasa'i and Abu Dawud record that `Abdullah bin Habib said,

“We went out in search of the Messenger of Allah (SAW) during a dark and rainy night. When we found him he said, ‘Speak!’ but I did not say anything. Again he said, ‘Speak!’ but I did not say anything. A third time he said, ‘Speak!’ upon which I asked, ‘Messenger of Allah, what should I say?’ He replied, ‘Say, Say: He is Allah, the One and only and the Mu`awwidhatayn three times when you lie down to sleep and when you awake. They will suffice you against everything.’”

Tirmidhi also records the hadith of Abu Hurayrah (RA) from Abu Sa`id (RA) that,

“The Messenger of Allah (SAW) used to seek refuge from Jinn and the evil eye until the Mu`awwidhatayn were revealed. When they were revealed, he took to (reciting) them and abandoned (seeking refuge through) anything else.”

4. Bukhari records from `A`ishah (RA) that,

“The Prophet (SAW) was affected by magic such that he thought he had done things he had not done. This continued until one day, while in my presence, he supplicated and supplicated and then said, ‘A`ishah! Do you know that Allah has instructed me concerning the matter I asked Him?’ I asked, ‘Messenger of Allah, what?’ He replied, ‘Two men came to me, one of the sat near my head and the other near my feet. One of them asked the other, ‘What has harmed this man?’ The other replied, ‘He is under the effect of magic.’ The first one asked, ‘Who was it that worked magic on him?’ The other replied, ‘Labid ibn al-`Asam, a Jew from the tribe of Banu Zurayq.’ The first one asked, ‘With what has it been done?’ The other replied, ‘With a comb and the hair stuck to it, and a skin of the pollen of a male date-palm tree.’ The first one asked, ‘Where is it?’ The other replied, ‘In the well of Dharwan.’” Then the Prophet (SAW) went to the well with some of his companions and looked at it, surrounding the well there were date-palm trees. Then he returned to me and

said, ‘By Allah! The water of that well was [red] as if infused with henna leaves, and its date palms were like the heads of devils.’ I asked, ‘Messenger of Allah, did you remove those materials?’ He replied, ‘No, as for me then Allah has cured me and I feared [that by letting the people know of it] I would spread its evil amongst them.’ Then he ordered that the well be filled up with earth and that was done.”

Bukhari records from `A`ishah (RA) that,

“The Messenger of Allah was affected by magic such that he thought that he had had sexual relations with his wives when in fact he had not. (Sufyan [ibn `Uyaynah] said: this is the hardest kind of magic due to it having such an effect). Then [one day] he said, ‘`A`ishah! Do you know that Allah has instructed me concerning that which I asked Him? Two men came to me, one of the sat near my head and the other near my feet. One of them asked the other, “What is wrong with this man?” The other replied, “He is under the effect of magic.” The first one asked, “Who was it that worked magic on him?” The other replied, “Labiid ibn al-`Asam, a man from the tribe of Banu Zurayq – an ally of the Jews and a hypocrite.” The first one asked, “With what has it been done?” The other replied, “With a comb and the hair stuck to it.” The first one asked, “Where is it?” The other replied, “In a skin pollen of a male date-palm tree kept under a stone in the well of Dharwan.” So the Prophet (SAW) went to that well and took out those things and said, ‘This is the well that I was shown. Its water was [red] as if infused with henna leaves and its date-palm trees looked like heads of devils.’ The Prophet (SAW) further said, ‘Those things were taken out.’ I asked, ‘Why do you not get treated [or bring it back with you]?’ He replied, ‘Allah has cured me and I dislike spreading its evil amongst the people.’”

Tafsir of Surah al Nas - Man (Surah 114)

1) Say: I take refuge with the Lord of mankind, 2) the King of mankind, 2) the God of mankind 4) from the evil of the stealthy Whisperer, beating a retreat, 5) who whispers in people’s breasts, 6) (coming) from the jinn and man.

“Say: I take refuge with the Lord of mankind, the King of mankind, the God of mankind,” this chapter deals with seeking refuge with the Lord and King of mankind, the God of mankind, from Shaytan who is the source of all evil. “From the evil of the stealthy Whisperer, beating a retreat, who whispers in people’s breasts,” some of the multifarious facets of his evil are that he whispers into the hearts of man, adorns evil, presenting it to them in an alluring guise, and incites them towards performing it. He is always whispering but beats a retreat when the servant remembers Allah, seeking His assistance in repressing him. Therefore, it is incumbent upon a person to turn to

Allah for aid, to take refuge with Him, and to seek recourse with His Lordship. All of mankind fall under the realm of His Lordship, rububiyyah, and sovereignty; He has taken hold of every creature by the forelock.

Man must also take recourse with His Divinity, uluhiyyah, for it was for His worship that he was created. This worship, however, cannot be perfected until and unless he represses the evil of his enemy who desires to cut him off from his goal, obstructing him from it, and who wants him to follow him, thereby becoming a denizen of the Scorching Blaze.

Whispering could occur from jinn or from man and this why Allah says, “(coming) from the jinn and man.”

All praise and thanks are due to Allah, Lord of the worlds, in the beginning and in the end, inwardly and outwardly.

Endnotes

Allah, Most High, says concerning seeking refuge,

“Show forgiveness, enjoin what is good and turn away from the foolish. And if an evil suggestion comes to you from Satan, seek refuge with Allah. Indeed He is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.” [al-A`raf (7): 199-200]

“Repel evil by means of what is best. We are best Acquainted with the things that they utter. And say, ‘My Lord! I take refuge with you from the whisperings of the devils and I take refuge with you my Lord lest they come near me.’” [al-Mu`minun (23): 96-98]

“Repel [evil] with that which is better than indeed the one, between whom and you there was enmity, [will become] as though he was a devoted friend. But none is granted [this quality] except those who are patient and none is granted it save one who possesses a great portion [of high moral character]. And if an evil suggestion comes to you from Satan, seek refuge with Allah, indeed He is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.” [Fussilat (41): 34-46]

Ibn al-Qayyim, may Allah have mercy upon him, explained the meaning of taking refuge in a beautiful way. He said in Bada`i al-Fawa`id, vol. 1, pp. 439-441, Know that the verb `adha and its derivatives carry the meaning of being careful and wary, guarding and fortifying, being rescued and victorious. Its essential meaning is to flee from what you fear will harm you to that which will protect you from it. This is why the one you seek refuge with is named ma`adh and malja` (the source of refuge and recourse). A hadith mentions that,

'When al-Jawn's daughter entered upon the Prophet (SAW) [after their marriage] he moved

his hand towards her [to touch her] and she said, "I take refuge with Allah from you." He said, "You have sought refuge with the Ma`adh, return and rejoin your family." [Bukhari]

Therefore the meaning of a`udhu is: I take refuge, guard myself and take precaution. There are two opinions concerning the etymology of this verb. The first is that it is derived from the meaning of satar, covering or protection, and the second is that it is derived from the meaning of luzum al-mujawara, firmly adhering to that which adjoins it. As for the first opinion, the Arabs used to say that a house built in the shade of a tree has`uwwadha. Therefore, when this house did the act of `adha with this tree by being built under its shade, the Arabs said it`uwwadh. The same applies to the one who takes refuge: he seeks protection and cover from his enemy with the one he resorts to for refuge. As for the second opinion, the Arabs used to say regarding flesh that was stuck to a bone and could not be removed, `uwwadha, because of its refusal to be dislodged from the bone. The same applies to the one taking refuge for he sticks firmly to the one he is seeking refuge with and refuses to be distanced. Both of these opinions are correct, seeking refuge covers both meanings. The person taking refuge seeks protection with the one he is seeking refuge with and sticks firmly to him. His heart attaches itself to him and holds firm just as the child sticks close to its father when threatened by an enemy. The same applies to the one taking refuge for he flees from his enemy who desires his destruction to his Lord, throwing himself between His hands, holding firmly to Him, sticking close to Him and resorting to Him. Now, know that the reality of seeking refuge that is takes place in the heart of the believer surpasses, and is beyond, these descriptions. These only serve as examples and representations. As for what takes place in the heart of its taking refuge, holding fast to, and throwing itself before its Lord, its need of Him and its submission and humility before Him, all of this is beyond description. In a similar vein, love and fear of Him can only be described in a deficient way because they can only truly be understood through experience. This is similar to the case of a person trying to describe the pleasure of sexual intercourse to someone who is impotent and feels no sexual urges. No matter how much you describe it and how many examples you give, never will he truly understand it. However, were you to describe it to one who does have these urges and has had intercourse, he will understand your descriptions completely. If it is asked: When one is commanded to take refuge with Allah why does the form of the command carry a sin and ta? For example in His saying,

"Seek protection (fasta`idh) with Allah from the accursed Satan" [al-Nahl (16): 98]

Yet one says, 'I take refuge' (a`udhu) and 'I took refuge' (ta`awwadhtu) without including the sin and ta? The reply is: the sin and ta are grammatically used to denote a person's seeking something. Therefore when one says, 'asta`idhu with Allah' he is saying, 'I seek refuge with Him.' When he says, 'astaghfirullah' he is saying, 'I seek

Allah's forgiveness.' Now, when the person says, 'I take refuge (a`udhu) with Allah,' he is actually implementing and actualising what he seeks since he sought refuge and protection with Allah. There is a clear difference between actually taking refuge and seeking refuge. Therefore, because the one who is seeking refuge is actually recouring to Allah and holding firmly to Him, he says the verb that denotes this rather than saying the verb that denotes that he only seeks this. The opposite is true for the saying, 'astaghfirullah' (I seek the forgiveness of Allah) for in this case the person is asking Allah to forgive him. Therefore, when he says, 'astaghfirullah' he is implementing what he desires because the meaning of this statement is, 'I ask Allah to forgive me.' This then is the best way of seeking refuge and it was for this reason that the Prophet (SAW) used to say, "I take refuge with Allah from the accursed Satan" and, "I take refuge with Allah's perfect words" and, "I take refuge with the might and power of Allah," in each case saying, 'a`udhu' rather than 'asta`idhu.' Indeed this is what Allah taught him to say with His words,

“Say: I take refuge with the Lord of daybreak.” [al-Falaq (113): 1]

“Say: I take refuge with the Lord of mankind.” [al-Nas (114): 1]

Employing the word 'a`udhu' rather than 'asta`idhu.'
