

sins has destroyed their innate capacity to distinguish right from wrong. Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضي الله عنه narrates that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: "Surely, when the servant commits a sin, a black dot appears on his heart. If he repents from it, his heart is polished clean. However, if he increases in the sin, the blackness continues to increase. That is the statement of Allah: *رَانَ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ كَلَّا بَلْ سَكَهَ* 'No! But that which they used to commit has covered their hearts with rust. [83:14]'. [Baghawī, Aḥmad, Tirmidhī, Nasā'ī, Ibn Mājah, Ibn Ḥibbān and al-Ḥākim have recorded it, and Tirmidhī has rated it as sahih, asquoted by Maḥzarī]. The particle *kallā*, in Arabic grammar, is called *ḥarf-ur-rad'* 'particle of disapproval, particle of repelling or averting'. In the preceding verses, mention was made of the attitude of the unbelievers towards the Qur'ānic verses, in that when they are recited to them, they say, "(These are) tales of the ancients." [13]. The present verse uses *kallā* to repel the false idea of the ignoramus [that Qur'ān is the tale of the ancients]. In fact, [the heavy] load of their sins have eclipsed the light and innate capacity to separate the right and the wrong. This capacity is innate and inborn in man. The verse purports to say that their rejection is not based on any logical or intellectual evidence, but their hearts have become blind, as a result they are unable to see the good and the bad.

إِنَّهُمْ عَنْ رَبِّهِمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ لَمَّحْجُوبُونَ (No! Indeed they will be screened off from their Lord on that Day...83:15). This will be their punishment for their failure to recognise Allah in the world. The unbelievers will remain deprived of seeing their Lord on the Day of Judgement, and a screen will fall between them and their Lord. Imāms Shāfi'ī and Mālik said that in this verse is a proof that the believers and friends of Allah will be able to see Him. Otherwise, the wording that the unbelievers will be screened off from their Lord on that Day will have no real sense.

Special Note

According to some of the learned predecessors, this verse is a proof that man, by virtue of his innate nature, is forced to love Allah. Therefore, all unbelievers in the world, no matter how deeply they are steeped in their form of disbelief or hold false beliefs regarding the [Supreme] Being and attributes of Allah, there is a common denominator in their hearts. They love, respect and honour Allah. They worship Him according to their belief system in quest of Him and His pleasure. Because they have taken the wrong road, they are unable to reach their

destination, but they are, nonetheless, in search of the same destination of truth. If they did not have the desire to see their Lord, it would not have been said, in their punishment, that they will remain deprived of seeing Allah, because if a person is not desirous [rather he is hateful] of seeing Him, it would be no punishment for him.

كَلَّا إِنَّ كِتَابَ الْأَبْرَارِ لَفِي عِلِّيَّيْنَ (No! The record of deeds of the righteous is in 'illiyūn....83:18). According to some authorities, 'illiyūn is the plural of 'uluww and it signifies the 'highest point'. According to Farrā', this is the name of a place. It is not a plural, but on the measure of plural. When analysing the word *sijjīn* in the foregoing paragraphs, the traceable Tradition of Sayyidnā Barā' Ibn 'Āzib ؓ was cited to prove that 'illiyīn is a place on the seventh heaven beneath the Divine Throne where the souls of the believers and their registers of deeds are kept. The phrase: كِتَابٌ مَّرْقُومٌ (A register inscribed...83:20) is not the interpretation of 'illiyīn, but rather an explication their records of deeds, as in the verse that precedes it:

يَشْهَدُهُ الْمُقَرَّبُونَ (...attended by those [angels] who are blessed with nearness to Allah!...83:21) The verb *yash-hadu* is derived from *shuhūd* which means 'to attend, to witness, to be present, to observe'. The verse purports to say that the record of deeds of the righteous will be in the custody of angels who are blessed with nearness to Allah. [Qurtubī]. If *shuhūd* is taken in the sense of 'being present', then the attached pronoun will refer to 'illiyīn instead of *kitāb* or 'register' (and 'those who are blessed with nearness to Allah' will refer to the righteous people, and not to the angels), and the verse in that case will mean: 'The souls of those blessed with nearness to Allah will be in the place called 'illiyīn' because that is the abode of their souls, as *sijjīn* is the abode of the unbelievers. The proof of this is the narrative of 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd ؓ recorded in Muslim in which the Holy Prophet ﷺ said that the souls of the martyrs are in the crops of green birds, enjoying the rivers and gardens of Paradise, and their abode will be the lamps suspended from [the Divine] Throne. This indicates that the souls of the martyrs will be under the Divine Throne, and will be able to stroll in Paradise. In Sūrah Yāsīn, we came across the incident of Ḥabīb Najjār, where it is stated that:

قِيلَ ادْخُلِ الْجَنَّةَ قَالَ يَا لَيْتَ قَوْمِي يَعْلَمُونَ بِمَا غَفَرَ لِي رَبِّي

'He was told, "Enter the Garden!" He said, "If my people only knew how my Lord has forgiven me [36:26]"

This indicates that no sooner he passed away than he entered Paradise. Similarly, some Prophetic narratives also show that the souls of the believers are in Paradise. The sum total of these verses and narratives is that the abode of all the souls is in the seventh heaven beneath the Divine Throne. This is the locale of Paradise, and the souls have been given freedom of movement within the Paradise. Here reference has been made particularly to 'those souls who are blessed with nearness to Allah' because of the most exalted ranks they will enjoy. [This does not, however, mean that souls at the lower ranks will not be in this abode.] In fact, this will be the abode of the souls of all the believers as is narrated by Sayyidnā Ka'b Ibn Mālīk رضي الله عنه that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

انما نسمة المؤمن طائر يعلق في شجر الجنة حتى ترجع الى جسده يوم القيمة.
(رواه مالك والنسائي بسند صحيح)

'The soul of a believer is a bird that will be hanging in the tree of Paradise, until it returns to its body on the Day of Judgement.' [Mālīk and Nasā'ī through an authentic chain of narrators. A Tradition of Umm Hānī' to the same effect is recorded in Musnad of Aḥmad and in Ṭabarānī. See Maẓharī].

The Abode of Human Souls After Death

What is the abode of human souls after death? In answer to this question, reports seem apparently different. Narratives were cited in explanation of *sijjīn* and *'illiyyūn* above which showed that the souls of the unbelievers are in *sijjīn* which is beneath the seventh earth, and the souls of the believers are in *'illiyyūn* which is in the seventh heaven beneath the Divine Throne. Some traditions indicate that the souls of the unbelievers will be in Hell, and the souls of the believers will be in Paradise. Some narratives, like the lengthy narrative of Barā' Ibn 'Āzīb, suggest that the souls of all the deceased, believers and non-believers, will be in the graves. When the angels carry the soul of a believer to the sky, Allah says: 'Keep the record of deeds of this servant of mine in *'illiyyūn* and return him to the earth, because I have created him from earth, and to it I shall return him, and from it I shall resurrect him.' Complying with this command, the angels return his soul to the grave. Likewise, the soul

of the non-believer is carried to the sky, but the doors are not opened for him. The angels will be commanded to return the soul to its grave. Imām ‘Abdul Barr prefers this narrative and believes that the souls of all [believers and non-believers] remain in their graves. As for the first two sets of traditions, there is no contradiction because, carefully considered, ‘*illiyūn* is in the seventh heaven beneath the Divine Throne, and this is exactly the locale of Paradise, as is clear from the Qur’ānic text:

عِنْدَ سِدْرَةِ الْمُنْتَهَىٰ عِنْدَهَا جَنَّةُ الْمَأْوَىٰ

'by sidrat-ul-muntaha (the lot-tree in the upper realm), near which there is Jannat-ul-ma'wa (the Paradise of Abode), [53:14-15]

This clearly states that Paradise is near the lot-tree in the upper realm, and *aḥādīth* confirm that the lot-tree is in the seventh heaven. Thus it may be argued that since the abode of the souls is ‘*illiyūn*, Paradise must be near it. These souls will stroll in and along the Gardens of Paradise. Therefore, their abode may be said to be Paradise.

Similarly, the souls of the unbelievers remain in *sijjīn* which is situated beneath the seventh earth. It is also proved by *ahādīth* that Hell is beneath the seventh earth, and the dwellers of *sijjīn* will receive the heat and torture of the Hell. Therefore, it would be correct to say that their abode is in Hell.

However, the *hadīth* that informs us that the souls of the unbelievers will remain in the graves, is apparently contradictory to the preceding two narratives. The Baihaqī of his time, Qāḍī Thanā’ullah Pānī Patī, in his *Tafsīr Maẓharī*, has reconciled them thus: It is not far-fetched to assume that ‘*illiyūn* and *sijjīn* are the real abodes of the souls, but they have a special connection with their graves. None, besides Allah, knows the actual nature of the connection. However, there is the sun and the moon in the sky, but their rays fall on the earth and provide to it light and heat. Similarly, the souls of ‘*illiyūn* and *sijjīn* may have some spiritual connection with the graves. The scholarly view of Qāḍī Thanā’ullah Pānī Patī has just been discussed in Sūrah Nāzi‘āt, the sum total of which is as follows: There are two types of soul: The one is a subtle substance that permeates the human body. Despite being a material substance, it is too subtle to be visible, and its other name is *nafs*. The other soul is abstract and non-material, pure essence. The pure, abstract and non-material soul

is the life of the first soul, and therefore it is called the 'soul of soul'. Both the categories of souls are connected to human body, but the first type of soul resides in the human body. When the soul leaves the body, death occurs. The second type of soul is connected with the body more closely than the first type, but Allah alone knows the nature of the connection. The first soul, after death, is taken to the heaven, and then returned to the grave. Grave is its abode where it is rewarded and punished. The abstract soul remains in *'illiyūn* or *sijjīn* [as the case might be]. Thus we have several views on the issue. The final destination of souls is Paradise or *'illiyūn*, or its opposite Hell or *sijjīn*. The abode of the abstract souls is *'illiyūn* or *sijjīn*. The souls of the first type, the *nafs*, or the body, remains in the grave after death. And Allah knows best!

وَفِي ذَلِكَ فَلْيَتَنَافَسِ الْمُتَنَفِسُونَ (and in aspiring for this, the competitors should compete....83:26) The word *tanāfus* means for a few people 'to try or strive to gain some desirable things before others can get them.' Having mentioned the bounties of Paradise, the attention of heedless people are drawn to the fact that they are thinking that certain material things are desirable, and therefore they are competing one another to obtain them before others. They are told that the material blessings [after which they are running] are perishable. They should not be made the ultimate goal of life, nor the object of racing. Man should be content with what he has for the comfort of the fleeting period of this life. If he loses the means, it should not hurt him much, because it is not a loss that cannot be recovered. However, people with aspiration should aspire, race and compete for the blessings of Paradise that are perfect and eternal in every possible dimension. How aptly the late poet Akbar has put it:

یہ کہاں کا فسانہ ہے سود و زیاں، جو گیا سو گیا جو ملا سو ملا
کہو دل سے فرصت عمر ہے کم، جو دلا تو خدا ہی کی یاد دلا

'Gain and loss - what fiction is this?

What is lost is lost, what is gained is gained

Say to the mind, the life is little.

If you wish to remind me, remind me of God.'

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ أَجْرَمُوا كَانُوا مِنَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا يَضْحَكُونَ (Indeed those who were guilty used to laugh at those who believed, 83:29). In these verses, Allah depicts fully the attitudes of the followers of falsehood [non-believers] towards the

upholders of truth [the believers]. The non-believers used to laugh at the believers in the worldly life. In other words, they would mock at them and despise them. Whenever they would pass by the believers, they would wink at each other in contempt of them. When the non-believers returned home, they would take great pleasure in describing the mocking manner in which they treated the poor believers, saying that Muḥammad has misled the simpletons.

If we review the situation today, [it is no better.] People whose minds are contaminated with contemporary secular education, are careless about the religion and the Hereafter. Belief in Allah and the Holy Prophet ﷺ is nominal. They treat the [religious] scholars and righteous people exactly in the same manner as the non-believers used to treat the Companions in the days of the Holy Prophet ﷺ]. May Allah salvage the Muslims from this painful scourge. There is much solace in this verse for the righteous believers. Never bother about their laughter and mockery. How well a poet puts it:

ہم نے جانے سے جب تک ہم ڈریں گے
زمانہ ہم پہ ہنستا ہی رہے گا

'So long as we fear people's laughter [at us],
the people will continue laughing at us'

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah At-Taṭfīf
Ends here

Sūrah Al-Inshiqāq (The Splitting)

This Sūrah is Makkī, and it has 25 verses and 1 section.

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 25

إِذَا السَّمَاءُ انشَقَّتْ ﴿١﴾ وَأَذْنَتْ لِرَبِّهَا وَحُقَّتْ ﴿٢﴾ وَإِذَا الْأَرْضُ
 مُدَّتْ ﴿٣﴾ وَأَلْقَتْ مَا فِيهَا وَتَخَلَّتْ ﴿٤﴾ وَأَذْنَتْ لِرَبِّهَا وَحُقَّتْ
 ﴿٥﴾ يَا أَيُّهَا الْإِنْسَانُ إِنَّكَ كَادِحٌ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ كَدْحًا فَمُلْقِيهِ ﴿٦﴾ فَمَا
 مَن أُوْتِيَ كِتَابَهُ بِيَمِينِهِ ﴿٧﴾ فَسَوْفَ يُحَاسَبُ حِسَابًا يَّسِيرًا ﴿٨﴾
 وَيُنْقَلِبُ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهِ مَسْرُورًا ﴿٩﴾ وَأَمَّا مَن أُوْتِيَ كِتَابَهُ وَرَأَىٰ ظَهْرَهُ
 ﴿١٠﴾ فَسَوْفَ يَدْعُوا ثُبُورًا ﴿١١﴾ وَيَصْلَىٰ سَعِيرًا ﴿١٢﴾ إِنَّهُ كَانَ فِي
 أَهْلِهِ مَسْرُورًا ﴿١٣﴾ إِنَّهُ ظَنَّ أَن لَّنْ يَحُورَ ﴿١٤﴾ بَلَىٰ إِنَّ رَبَّهُ كَانَ بِهِ
 بَصِيرًا ﴿١٥﴾ فَلَا أُقْسِمُ بِالشَّفَقِ ﴿١٦﴾ وَاللَّيْلِ وَمَا وَسَقَ ﴿١٧﴾
 وَالْقَمَرِ إِذَا اتَّسَقَ ﴿١٨﴾ لَتَرْكَبُنَّ طَبَقًا عَن طَبَقٍ ﴿١٩﴾ فَمَا لَهُمْ لَا
 يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٢٠﴾ وَإِذَا قُرِئَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقُرْآنُ لَا يَسْجُدُونَ ﴿٢١﴾ بَلِ الَّذِينَ
 كَفَرُوا يَكْذِبُونَ ﴿٢٢﴾ وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا يُوعُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾ فَبَشِّرْهُمْ
 بِعَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ ﴿٢٤﴾ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَهُمْ أَجْرٌ غَيْرُ
 مَمْنُونٍ ﴿٢٥﴾

When the sky will split apart, [1] and will listen to (the command of) its Lord, and it ought to, [2] and when the earth will be stretched (to give room to more people), [3] and it will throw up whatever it contains, and will become empty, [4] and will listen to (the command of) its Lord, and it ought to, (then man will see the consequences of his deeds.) [5] O man, you have to work hard constantly to reach your Lord, then you have to meet Him. [6] So, as for him whose book (of deeds) will be given to him in his right hand, [7] he will be called to account in an easy manner, [8] and he will go back to his people joyfully. [9] As for the one whose book (of deeds) will be given to him from his back side, [10] he will pray for death, [11] and will enter the blazing fire. [12] He had been joyful among his people. [13] He thought he would never revert (to Allah). [14] Why not? Indeed his Lord was watchful over him. [15] So, I swear by the twilight (after sunset), [16] and by the night and what it envelops, [17] and by the moon when it develops at the full, [18] you shall certainly ascend from stage to stage. [19] So, what has happened to them that they do not believe, [20] and when the Qur'ān is recited to them, they do not offer *sajdah* (prostration)? [21] Rather, those who disbelieve deny (the truth). [22] And Allah is most aware of what they store. [23] So give him the 'good news' of a painful punishment, [24] but those who believed and did righteous deeds, for them there is a reward that will never be interrupted. [25]

Commentary

The present Sūrah depicts the conditions that will prevail on the Day of Judgement, such as reckoning and accountability, reward of good and torment of evil. The heedless man is asked to look into himself and his environs, which will lead him to believe in Allah and the Qur'ān. [The powerful opening of the Sūrah sketches some of the scenes of universal upheaval]. First, it speaks about the sky that will split apart. Then it goes on to speak about the earth that will be stretched and will throw up whatever it contains - whether natural treasures, or buried treasures, or dead human bodies, and then it will become empty. A new earth will be prepared for *Ḥashr* (Gathering of the Day of Requit). It will have neither caves nor mountains, neither buildings nor trees. It will be flat and smooth. It will be stretched so that there is ample room for the former as well as the latter generations to gather on the plain. This description

has been given in other Sūrahs with different styles, but in the present verses, there is an addition. About what Allah will demonstrate about the heaven and earth on the Day of Judgement, the following comment is made:

وَأَذِنَتْ لِرَبِّهَا وَحُقَّتْ (and will listen to (the command of) its Lord, and it ought to,...84:5) The verb *adhinat* means 'it will listen'. Here listening includes obedience. The verb *huqqat* may be interpreted as 'It had an obligation to listen and obey Allah's command'.

Two Categories of Divine Commands

The obedience of the heaven and the earth, referred to here, may have two meanings, because the Divine commands are of two kinds: [1] the Divinely legislated [*tashrī'i*] injunctions; and [2] the cosmic and destined [*takwīnī* and *taqdīrī*] commands. In the former case, the command appears as a law the violation of which is punishable. However, men are not practically coerced in the sense that they become practically unable to violate it. Instead, they have their free will to choose whether to abide by the law or to violate it. Such laws are imposed upon those who are endowed with intellect like humans and Jinn. This divides them into believers and non-believers, obedient and disobedient. In the former case, the commands are implemented by force. No one can deviate from them in the least. The entire universe, including humans and Jinn, follow them by force. The cosmic commands [which Allah has decreed] are applied forcefully and all the creatures, whether believers or unbelievers, pious or impious, have no choice or will but to do according to that command.

ذره ذره دہر کا پابستہ تقدیر ہے
زندگی کے خواب کی جامی یہی تعبیر ہے

'Every particle in this world is bound by the Divine Decree.
Jāmī, this is the interpretation of the dream of life.'

It is possible that Allah will, on that day, endow the sky and the earth with special sense and perception like humans and Jinn. When they receive a command from Allah, they, of their own volition choose to act upon it. Alternatively, the command may refer to the second kind, that is, the cosmic command that no one can violate. But the words, وَأَذِنَتْ لِرَبِّهَا وَحُقَّتْ "and will listen to [the command of] its Lord, and it ought to," are closer to the first meaning of command, while the second one is possible, if these

words are taken in their figurative sense.

وَإِذَا الْأَرْضُ مُدَّتْ (and when the earth will be stretched [to give room to more people]...84:3) The word *madda* means 'to stretch, spread, expand out'. Sayyidnā Jābir ibn 'Abdullāh رضي الله عنه narrates that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said that on the Day of Judgement the earth will be stretched out like leather (or rubber) and expanded into a smooth plain, and there will be just enough space on it for all individuals of human race to keep their feet. To understand this tradition, it is necessary to keep in mind that on the Day of Resurrection all individuals who will have been born from the inception of creation till resurrection will be brought back to life simultaneously. Thus each individual will have just enough space on the earth where he could place his feet. [Transmitted by Ḥākīm with a good chain of authorities - Maḏharī].

وَأَلْقَتْ مَا فِيهَا وَتَخَلَّتْ (and it will throw up whatever it contains, and will become empty...84:4) The earth will, with one convulsion, throw up whatever it contains in its belly, whether natural treasures or buried treasures, or mines, or dead human bodies and their remains and particles.

يَا أَيُّهَا الْإِنْسَانُ إِنَّكَ كَادِحٌ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ كَدْحًا فَمُلِيقِهِ (O man, you have to work hard constantly to reach your Lord, then you have to meet Him...84:6) The word *kadh* means to 'exert one's efforts fully', and 'to your Lord' means 'to meet your Lord'. In other words, every effort of man would end at his Lord.

Return to Allah

Mankind is addressed in this verse and shown a road that if he were to think about it carefully, and use his sense and intelligence, he could exert his efforts in the right direction that will ensure for him welfare, well-being and safety in this world, as well as in the Hereafter. First, it has been pointed out that man, whether he is good or bad, believer or non-believer, has the natural tendency to exert himself in order to achieve his goal. A good-natured person will work hard and adopt lawful means to acquire his livelihood and necessities of life. A bad person cannot obtain his needs and objective without working hard. Thieves, robbers, rouses, cheats and looters apply their minds and exert their physical strength in order to achieve their objective. Secondly, it has been pointed

out that if the intelligent man were to think carefully, all his movements and pauses are stations of a long journey he is going through, though unconsciously. This journey will end at his presence before Allah, that is, at death. This is stated in the phrase *ilā rabbika* 'to your Lord'. This is a statement of reality which none can deny. All efforts, [good or bad], must end with death. The third point is that after death, in the presence of his Lord, he will have to give an account of his movements and deeds, and of his efforts. This is rationally necessary and justified, so that the consequences of good and bad may be separately known, because such distinction is not known in this life. A good person may work hard for a month or so in order to obtain his livelihood and necessities of life, but thieves and looters may obtain them overnight. If there is no time of reckoning or punishment, both of them [the good and the bad] will be equal, which is contrary to reason and justice. At the end, the verse says: *فَمُلَاقِيهِ* (then you have to meet Him.) The translation given above is based on the assumption that the attached pronoun (*hi*) refers to Allah. The sense is that every person has to meet his Lord and to present himself before him to give the account of his deeds. Another possible interpretation is that the attached pronoun (*hi*) refers to '*kadh*' (working hard). Given this interpretation, the translation of the verse would be: "O man, you have to work hard constantly to reach your Lord, then you have to meet it." And the sense would be: 'you have to meet the good or bad consequences of your working hard.'

The verses that follow depict separately the consequences of the good and the bad people, of the believers and the non-believers. First, the ledger of deeds must be received in the right or the left hand. Those who receive the ledgers in their right hands will be the inmates of Paradise with its eternal blessings. Those who receive the ledgers in their left hands will be the inmates of Hell. The point for careful consideration is that necessities of life, as well as unnecessary desires are fulfilled by both righteous and wicked people in this world, and thus both spend their lives in some way or the other, but the consequences of the two [for the Hereafter] are diametrically opposite to each other. One results in eternal and unending comfort, and the other results in eternal perdition, torture and torment. Man still has the chance [while he is living] to redirect his attention to working hard towards switching the situation in a direction

that not only fulfils his legitimate needs and desires in this world, but also attains the eternal pleasures of the Hereafter.

فَأَمَّا مَنْ أُوتِيَ كِتَابَهُ بِيَمِينِهِ ﴿٧﴾ فَسَوْفَ يُحَاسَبُ حِسَابًا يَسِيرًا ﴿٨﴾ وَيَنْقَلِبُ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهِ مُسْرُورًا ﴿٩﴾

(So, as for him whose book [of deeds] will be given to him in his right hand, he will be called to account in an easy manner, and he will go back to his people joyfully....7-9)

This verse describes the condition of the believers. Their books of deeds will be given to them in their right hands. An easy reckoning will be taken from them and the welcome news of Paradise will be given to them. They will return to their families joyfully.

It is reported in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Bukhārī from Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said:

من حوسب يوم القيمة عذب

"He who is required to account for [or questioned about] his deeds will have to be punished."

At this Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها asked, "What is the meaning of the [following] verse?" "يُحَاسَبُ حِسَابًا يَسِيرًا" (he will be called to account in an easy manner,...84:8). The Holy Prophet ﷺ explained that the verse signifies 'the deeds will merely be presented before Allah without being questioned. As for the person whose deeds are scrutinised, he will never be able to escape torment'.

This explanation of the Holy Prophet ﷺ clarifies that the deeds of the believers will also be presented before Allah, but by virtue of their faith, not all of their actions will be scrutinised. This is referred to as 'account in an easy manner'. The words 'he will go back to his people joyfully' may be interpreted in one of two ways. This may refer to the Houris who will be his family members in Paradise, or it may refer to his family members in the world who will be present in the Plain of Gathering, and he, after knowing about his success, will impart to them, according to the custom of this life, the welcome news of his achievement. The commentators have mentioned both possibilities in interpreting this sentence. [Qurṭubī].

كَانَ فِي أَهْلِهِ مُسْرُورًا (He had been joyful among his people...84:13). This verse tells us that those who will be given their Record in their left hands

from behind their backs, they will desire death and destruction under the impression that this might end their misery. But it will not be possible for them to die. One of the reasons given here for his misery is that he used to live joyfully among his people in the world, and he was completely oblivious of the Hereafter. The believers, on the other hand, never for a moment were oblivious of the Hereafter in the life of this world. At every moment of pleasure and comfort, they were anxious and worried about the Hereafter. The Qur'an quotes the believers on another occasion as saying:

إِنَّا كُنَّا قَبْلُ فِي أَهْلِنَا مُشْفِقِينَ

'Indeed we were afraid (of Allah's punishment) when we were amidst of our family, [Aṭ-Ṭūr 26]

In other words, they lived among their families and yet were fearful and conscious of the Hereafter. The consequences of the two groups will be appropriate to their respective positions. Those who led a life of luxury and pleasure in this world with their families oblivious of the Hereafter, their portion will be punishment of Hell in the next world. Those who were aware of reckoning and feared punishment in the next world will live with their families in eternal luxury, pleasure and happiness. This indicates that a believer should not be immersed in the comforts of this life. At no time and in no circumstance should he be oblivious to the reckoning of the Hereafter.

فَلَا أُقْسِمُ بِالشَّفَقِ وَاللَّيْلِ وَمَا وَسَقَ. وَالْقَمَرِ إِذَا اتَّسَقَ (So, I swear by the twilight [after sunset], and by the night and what it envelops, and by the moon when it develops at the full...84:16-18) In these verses Allah takes oath by four phenomena and reinforces what was asserted in :

إِنَّكَ كَادِحٌ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ

'you have to work hard constantly to reach your Lord'

If we consider the four phenomena by which oath is taken, it bears evidence to the subject which is forthcoming in the complement of the oath, that is, the condition of man never remains the same at all times. He undergoes changes and unexpected phases all the time. The first phenomenon that brings about a change in his life is the twilight after the sunset, or the red glow that remains on the west side of the sky after

the sunset in the evening. This is the beginning of the night. This is the harbinger of a massive change in human conditions, that is, the light is disappearing and a flood of darkness is setting in. The second phenomenon by which oath is taken is night itself which completes the change in his life. The third phenomenon by which oath is taken includes all things that night envelops or shrouds. The primitive sense of the word *wasāqa* means to 'pile, gather, heap up the thing'. If it is taken in general sense, it embraces every member of the entire universe which the darkness of night covers, such as animals, vegetation, minerals and inorganic matter, mountains and oceans. By extension, the word would comprehend all things that normally disperse in the light of day and retreat to their own places at night. Human beings return to their homes, animals to their habitats and birds to their nests. Business goods and merchandise are or piled up in one place. This massive change is related to man himself. The fourth phenomenon by which oath is taken is in the following verse: وَالْقَمَرِ إِذَا اتَّسَقَ (and by the moon when it develops at the full...84:18). The word *ittisāq* is also derived from *wasāqa* and it means 'to gather'. The 'gathering of moon' signifies that it gathered its light, and it became complete and full [*badr*] the moon of the 14th night. The phrase إِذَا اتَّسَقَ *idhat-tasaqa* in relation to moon points to the phenomenon that it goes through various phases. First, it appears as a very fine semicircle. Then its light grows progressively night after night, until it becomes *badr kāmīl* [full moon of the 14th night]. Having taken oath by the vicissitudes of the four phenomena, the Sūrah asserts the subject: لَتَرْكَبُنَّ طَبَقًا عَنْ طَبَقٍ (you shall certainly ascend from stage to stage...84:19) The word *ṭabaq* or *ṭabaqah* refers to a 'stage'. Its plural is *ṭabaqāt*. The verb لَتَرْكَبُنَّ *latarkabunna* is derived from *rukūb* which means 'to mount or mount up'. The verse purports to say that mankind from the inception to the end of his life will continue to mount up stage by stage, or will pass through all the conditions, gradually and in stages referred to in the preceding verses, that is, periods of light and darkness and other phenomena. He never remains in one condition all the time. He gradually goes through the vicissitudes of life.

Vicissitudes of Human Life, His Eternal Journey and His Final Destination

In the first instance the male sperm is united with the female egg to

form a new human organism. This is turned into a blood-clot which transforms into a lump of flesh, and the lump is formed into bones, and the bones are clothed in flesh. The limbs of the human body thus were completed. Then the soul was breathed into him, and he became a living human being. His first food in the womb of his mother was the unclean blood of the mother's womb. Nine months later, Allah made his way easy to come into the world. Now instead of the unclean blood, he got the [pure] milk of his mother's [breast]. When he saw the wide atmosphere and air of the world, he began to grow and develop. Within the first two years of his life, he started moving and walking about, and was able to talk. He weaned and began to eat more delicious and different types of food. As he grew a little older, he made play and amusement his daily preoccupation. When his intelligence developed [sufficiently], he was tied up in educational and training activities. When he grew into a youth, he abandoned all previous activities and replaced them with youth activities and ushered himself in a new era where marriage, children and house-keeping became his day-to-day preoccupation. Eventually, this era too neared its end. His physical and other prowess began to give up, and every day he fell prey to new ailments. Old age set in. The final stage of this life, that is, death, began to mount. All this happens in full view of everyone. No one dare deny this. But the ignoramus assumes that death or grave is his final stage, and there is nothing beyond. Allah, the Creator of the universe, the Omniscient, made it known, through the various Prophets [through the ages], to the heedless man that grave is not the final stage of his life, but it is merely a waiting-room to enter an enormously large and gigantic world that is yet to come, where the final examination will be conducted and the final stage of his life will be determined. In this world, he will celebrate the Divine remembrance and enjoy eternal comfort and pleasure or he will suffer eternal perdition and damnation [depending on the final assessment]. This is where the vicissitudes of his life will end. Thus the Qur'an says:

إِنَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ الرُّجْعَىٰ

'Surely, to your Lord is the return [96:8]'

إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ الْمُنْتَهَىٰ

'and that to your Lord is the end (of every one), [42]'

إِنَّكَ كَادِحٌ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ كَدْحًا

'you have to work hard constantly to reach your Lord [84:6]'

The ignoramus and unmindful man is made aware of the fact that the vicissitudes of life are stages in the journey to his final destination. Man ought to realise that walking, moving about, sleeping, waking, and standing and sitting are conditions, in the process of which he is covering the stages of his journey. Eventually, he will reach his Lord and, accounting for his life-long deeds, he will find his final abode that will be a place of never-ending comfort, luxury and pleasure, or [God forbid!] a place of never-ending retribution, torture and torment. A wise person should treat himself in this world as a traveller and prepare himself for the next world. His main goal in this life should be to cultivate for the next life as the Prophet ﷺ said:

كُنْ فِي الدُّنْيَا كَأَنَّكَ غَرِيبٌ أَوْ عَابِرُ سَبِيلٍ

"Be in this world as though you are a stranger or a wayfarer."

Under the phrase above *tabaqan* 'an *ṭabaq* 'from stage to stage', a similar narration is cited by Abū Nu'aim from Sayyidnā Jābir Ibn 'Abdullāh رضي الله عنه that the Holy Prophet ﷺ stated that these verses remind the unmindful of his creation, the vicissitudes of his life and instructs him to reconsider his position and the consequences [of his attitude in this life as there is still time] and to prepare for next life. However, despite these clear guidelines, there are people who never desist from their heedlessness. Therefore, the verse concludes:

فَمَا لَهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ، وَإِذَا قُرِئَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقُرْآنُ لَا يَسْجُدُونَ

So, what has happened to them that they do not believe, and when the Qur'an is recited to them, they do not offer *sajdah* [prostration]? (84:20-21)

It means that when the Qur'an, replete with clear guidelines, is recited to them, they do not bow in submission.

The word *sajdah* / *sujūd* literally denotes 'to bow' and it connotes 'obedience'. Obviously, the word here is not used in its technical sense. It is used in the sense of bowing in submission with respect, humbleness and humility. The reason [for this interpretation] is quite clear. This verse does not command to prostrate at the time of recitation of a particular

verse. It is related to the entire Qur'ān. If the word *sajdah* had referred to the technical prostration, it would necessarily entail that prostration be offered at every verse of the entire Qur'ān, which by unanimous agreement of the Ummah is not the case. Neither *salaf* nor *khalaf* subscribe to this view. Now remains the question whether or not a *sajdah* is obligatory when this verse is recited. (There is a disagreement among the jurists on this point) By a long stretch of imagination, it is possible to use this verse in evidence or support of arguing in favour of prostration being obligatory on recitation of this verse, as some of the Ḥanafī jurists have done. According to them, the definite article al- 'the' in the word al-Qur'ān stands for the article that is used to indicate previous knowledge, and thus the word al-Qur'ān here refers to this particular verse under comment, not to the entire al-Qur'ān or the Holy Book. However, this interpretation is after all merely a possibility, but the clear context of the verse indicates that it seems to be far-fetched to take the verse in this sense. And Allah knows best! The true interpretation can be determined by prophetic narratives, the practice of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and that of the noble Companions. The narratives pertaining to *sajdah* of *tilāwah* differ. Some indicate that it is an obligatory duty to make *sajdah* on this verse, and others indicate that it is not. As a result, there is a difference of opinion among jurists. Imām Abū Ḥanīfah holds the view that prostration at this verse is an obligatory duty as is obligatory at other verses of *mufaṣṣal*. Imām A'ẓam adduces the following Aḥādīth in favour of his opinion:

Bukhārī recorded from Abū Rāfi' ﷺ that he prayed the 'Ishā' [Night] prayer behind Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ﷺ, and the latter recited: إِذَا السَّمَاءُ انْشَقَّتْ (When the sky will split apart) and at the relevant verse, he prostrated. So, Sayyidnā Abū Rāfi' ﷺ asked him what type of prostration it was. Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ﷺ replied: "I prostrated at this verse behind Abul Qāsim in a *ṣalāh*, and I will never cease prostrating during its recitation until I meet him on the Plain of Gathering." Muslim transmitted a narrative from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ﷺ that they prostrated with the Holy Prophet ﷺ at relevant verses of this Sūrah, and of *أَقْرَأَ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ*

Qurtubī reports from Ibn-ul-'Arabī that the veritable view is that this verse is one of the verses at which it is an obligatory duty to prostrate

when read or recited or heard being recited. However, the people among whom Ibn-ul-‘Arabī lived' it was not customary among them to prostrate at this verse. They probably followed an Imam, according to whom the prostration was not obligatory. As a result, Ibn-ul-‘Arabī says that whenever he led the congregational prayer, he would avoid reciting Sūrah Al-Inshiqāq, because in his view prostration at the relevant verse is obligatory. If he does not perform the prostration, he would be sinning. If he does perform the prostration, the entire congregation would regard it an unnecessary act. Therefore, he felt he should not unnecessarily split the community. And Allah knows best!

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah Al-Inshiqāq
Ends here

Sūrah Al-Burūj (Stellar Formations)

This Sūrah is Makkī, and it has 22 verses

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 22

وَالسَّمَاءِ ذَاتِ الْبُرُوجِ ﴿١﴾ وَالْيَوْمِ الْمَوْعُودِ ﴿٢﴾ وَشَاهِدِ
 وَمَشْهُودِ ﴿٣﴾ قَتَلَ أَصْحَابُ الْأَخْذُودِ ﴿٤﴾ النَّارِ ذَاتِ الْوُقُودِ ﴿٥﴾
 إِذْهُمْ عَلَيْهَا فُوعُودٌ ﴿٦﴾ وَهُمْ عَلَى مَا يَفْعَلُونَ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ شُهُودٌ ﴿٧﴾
 وَمَا نَقَمُوا مِنْهُمْ إِلَّا أَنْ يُؤْمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَمِيدِ ﴿٨﴾ الَّذِي لَهُ
 مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيدٌ ﴿٩﴾ إِنَّ
 الَّذِينَ فَتَنُوا الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَتُوبُوا فَلَهُمْ عَذَابُ جَهَنَّمَ
 وَلَهُمْ عَذَابُ الْحَرِيقِ ﴿١٠﴾ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَهُمْ
 جَنَّاتٌ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ ۗ ذَلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْكَبِيرُ ﴿١١﴾ إِنَّ بَطْشَ
 رَبِّكَ لَشَدِيدٌ ﴿١٢﴾ إِنَّهُ هُوَ يُبْدِئُ وَيُعِيدُ ﴿١٣﴾ وَهُوَ الْغَفُورُ الْوَدُودُ
 ﴿١٤﴾ ذُو الْعَرْشِ الْمَجِيدُ ﴿١٥﴾ فَعَالٌ لِّمَا يُرِيدُ ﴿١٦﴾ هَلْ أُنثِقُ
 حَدِيثُ الْجُنُودِ ﴿١٧﴾ فِرْعَوْنَ وَثَمُودَ ﴿١٨﴾ بَلِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فِي
 تَكْذِيبٍ ﴿١٩﴾ وَاللَّهُ مِنْ وَّرَائِهِمْ مُحِيطٌ ﴿٢٠﴾ بَلْ هُوَ قُرْآنٌ مَجِيدٌ
 ﴿٢١﴾ فِي لَوْحٍ مَّحْفُوظٍ ﴿٢٢﴾

I swear by the sky, the one having stellar formations, [1] and by the Promised Day, [2] and by that which attends, and that which is attended, [3] cursed were the People of the Trench, [4] the (people of the) fire that was rich with fuel, [5] when they were sitting by it, [6] and were watching what they were doing with the believers. [7] And they had blamed them for nothing but that they believed in Allah, the All-Mighty, the Worthy of All Praise, [8] the One to whom belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth. And Allah is witness over every thing. [9] Surely, those who persecuted the believing men and the believing women, then did not repent, for them there is the torment of Jahannam (Hell), and for them there is the torment of burning. [10] As for those who believed and did righteous deeds, for them there are gardens beneath which rivers flow. That is the big achievement. [11]

The seizure of your Lord is severe indeed! [12] Surely He originates (creation) and repeats (it after death). [13] And He is the Most-Forgiving, the Most-Loving, [14] the Master of the Throne, the Glorious. [15] He is ever doer of what He intends. [16]

Has the come to you the story of the forces, [17] of Fir'aun (the Pharaoh) and Thamud? [18] But those who disbelieve are (engaged) in denying (the truth). [19] And Allah has encircled them from all sides. [20] The reality is that it is the glorious Qur'an, [21] (recorded) in the Preserved Tablet (Lauh Mahfuz). [22]

Commentary

وَالسَّمَاءِ ذَاتِ الْبُرُوجِ (I swear by the sky, the one having stellar formations....85:1) The word *burūj* is the plural of *burj* which means 'a large mansion or fortress'. The Qur'an says:

وَلَوْ كُنْتُمْ فِي بُرُوجٍ مُّشَيَّدَةٍ

'...even though you are in fortified castles [4:78]'

Here the word *burūj* means 'castles'. The primitive sense of the word *barj* is to become manifest'. The word *tabarruj* means 'to display one's beauty' as in the verse:

وَلَا تَبَرَّجْنَ تَبَرُّجَ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ الْأُولَى

'...and do not display your beauty as it was previously displayed

in the Time of Ignorance [33:33]'

According to the majority of commentators like Sayyidnā Ibn ‘Abbās, Mujāhid, Daḥḥāk, Ḥasan Al-Baṣrī, Qatādah, Suddī ﷺ and others, the word *burūj*, in this verse, refers to 'giant stars'. Other commentators take the word *burūj*, in this place, to refer to mansions and castles that are reserved in the sky for the guardian angels. Some of the later commentators chose the astronomical view in which the sky is divided into twelve parts, each one called a *burj*. The primitive philosophers believed that the *thawabit* (stationary) stars are fixed in these *burūj*. The planets move with the movement of their particular sky and the planets descend in these *burūj*. But this is absolutely incorrect. According to the Qur’ān, Allah has not fixed the stars and planets in the skies. In fact, every star and planet has its own orbit and revolves by itself as in Sūrah Yā Sīn:

وَكُلٌّ فِي فَلَكٍ يَسْبَحُونَ

'...And each one is floating in an orbit. [36:40]'

The word *falak* in this verse does not refer to the sky, but rather to the orbits of the stars and planets in which they move. [Mazharī]

وَالْيَوْمِ الْمَوْعُودِ. وَشَاهِدٍ وَمَشْهُودٍ (and by the Promised Day, and by that which attends, and that which is attended...85:2,3) With reference to a prophetic *Ḥadīth* reported by Tirmidhī, the phrase 'the Promised Day' refers to the Day of Judgement; the phrase 'that which attends' refers to 'Friday'; and the phrase 'that which is attended' refers to the day of 'Arafah. Thus in this verse, Allah has taken oath by four objects: [1] 'the sky, the one having stellar formations'; [2] 'the Day of Judgement'; [3] 'Friday'; and [4] 'the Day of 'Arafah'. The relationship between the objects of oath and the subject of oath is as follows: They bear evidence to the Divine omnipotence, and they are a proof of reckoning and reward and punishment on the Day of Judgement. Friday and the day of 'Arafah (the main day of Hajj that is 9th Zul-Hijjah of the Islami Calender) are blessed days for the believers to accumulate treasures for the Hereafter. Further, the subject of oath curses the infidels who burned the Muslims on account of their faith, and gives cheerful news to the righteous believers of securing elevated ranks in the Hereafter.

The Story of the People of Trench

Verse 4 refers to the People of the Trench. Their story is recounted in a

Hadīth reported by Imām Muslim as follows: There was an infidel king who lived in bygone times. He had a soothsayer , or, according to some narrations, a magician. The infidel king is identified as the ruler of Yemen. His name, according to Ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنه, was Yūsuf Dhu Nuwās, and he lived about seventy years before the birth of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. The soothsayer or magician [occult teacher] said to the king that he should be given an intelligent boy, so that he could train him in the skill of foretelling or the black magic. Accordingly, the king sent a boy, ‘Abdullāh Ibn Tāmīr by name, to be trained by the soothsayer or magician [occult teacher]. Whenever the boy went to his teacher, he had to pass by a Christian monk. He followed the true religion of ‘Isā عليه السلام and worshipped Allah. Since the religion of ‘Isā عليه السلام was the true religion in those days, the monk was, in fact, a Muslim. The boy sat with the monk and was very much impressed by his teachings. As a result, he frequented the monk's house and sat with him for long hours before proceeding to his teacher, and ultimately embraced Islam. Allah had blessed him with such a strong faith that he was prepared to bear any pain and persecution for the sake of Allah. His teacher used to beat him for his coming late. On his way back from the occult teacher, he would spend some time again with the monk and used to go home late. The family would then beat him up for being late. But he was so keen to have the company of the monk that he managed to sit regularly with the monk without fear of persecution. Through the blessings of this, Allah had gifted him with many miracles [*karamah*]. Once it happened that the boy saw a lion has blocked the path and prevented people from passing. They were perturbed. He picked a stone and prayed: "O Allah! If the religion of the monk is true, then kill this beast with this stone [so that people may pass]. And if the soothsayer or magician is true, then the beast must not die with my stone." So praying, he aimed at the lion and it died instantly. The news spread among the people that the boy possesses wonderful knowledge. A blind man heard about this and came up to him. He requested him to restore his sight. The boy conceded on the condition that he embraces Islam. The blind man agreed. The boy prayed and Allah restored his sight. The blind man became Muslim. The king came to know about these incidents, and he got the boy, the monk and the blind were apprehended. They were brought before the king. He got the blind and the monk killed, and ordered that the boy be taken to the summit of a mountain and be thrown

from there. But those who had taken him up there fell and died. The boy went home safely. Then the king ordered to have him drowned in the sea. The boy escaped safely, while the people who took him to the sea were drowned. The boy then himself told the king how to kill him. He told him to take an arrow from his quiver and place it in his bow, and reciting, بِاسْمِ اللَّهِ رَبِّي 'In the name of Allah, my Lord' they should shoot. They did that and they boy finally died. In this way, the boy gave his life away but seeing this, the entire nation of the king cried out spontaneously: "We believe in Allah." At this, the king was greatly enraged and, after consultation with his cabinet, ordered for deep trenches to be dug and filled with fire. An announcement was then made that the people must renounce their faith in Allah. If they refuse, they would be thrown into the fiery furnace. Eventually, a woman carrying her infant child was brought to a trench, but she hesitated. Allah granted speech to her child who said: "O mother, be steadfast, because you are certainly on the truth." In this way, many people were burned. According to some reports, about twelve thousand people were burned to ashes and, according to other reports, the number is put more than this. Consequently, Divine wrath descended on the People of the Trench and fiery furnace. Reference in verse 4 is made to this incident after taking an oath.

In a narration of Muḥammad Ibn Ishāq, it is reported that the place where the boy 'Abdullāh Ibn Tāmīr was buried had to be dug up for some important reason during the time of Sayyidnā 'Umar رضي الله عنه. It was found that the body of 'Abdullāh Ibn Tāmīr was intact, and he was sitting up. His hand was placed on his hip joint, where the arrow struck him. Someone moved his hand out from that place, and his wound started bleeding. When the hand was placed back in its position, the bleeding stopped. There was a ring in his finger which had the inscription: اللَّهُ رَبِّي "Allah is my Lord." The governor of Yemen informed Sayyidnā 'Umar رضي الله عنه about this, and he wrote back in reply: "Bury the body back as it was with his finger-ring." [Ibn Kathīr]

Special Note

Ibn Kathīr, with reference to Ibn Abī Ḥātim, writes that the incidents of 'trenches of fire' took place many times in history in different parts of the world. Then Ibn Abī Ḥātim specifies three particular incidents: [1] a trench in Yemen. [This incident took place during the period of *fatrah*

(the interval between 'Īsā عليه السلام and the Holy Prophet ﷺ), about seventy years before the advent of the Prophet ﷺ; [2] a trench in Syria; and [3] a trench in Irān. He further states that the incident the Qur'ān refers to here in Sūrah Burūj is the first one that occurred in Najrān, the trench of the kingdom of Yemen, because that was in Arabia.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ فَتَنُوا الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَتُوبُوا (Surely, those who persecuted the believing men and the believing women, then did not repent,...85:10) This verse describes the torment of the wrong-doers who burned the Muslims in the fire pit only on account of their faith. The description points out two things: [1] فَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ جَهَنَّمَ (for them there is the torment of Jahannam) and [2] وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ الْحَرِيقِ (and for them there is the torment of burning). The second sentence may be treated as explicative of the first sentence, a statement for emphasis. It signifies that they will be put into Hell and will have to suffer eternal torment of the fire. Another possible interpretation is that the second statement describes the wrong-doers' torment in this world, as is narrated in some reports. The believers, who had been cast in fire pits, were spared the torture of fire, in that the souls of the believers were taken out before the fire could touch them. Only their dead bodies were lying in the fiery furnace. After that the fire flared up so high that it spread out wildly through the city and burned all those who were watching the fun of burning the Muslims. Only Yūsuf Dhu Nuwās managed to run away, and threw himself into the sea in order to save himself from the rage of the fire, but he got drowned and died. [Maẓharī].

Attached to the torment of Hell and the torment of burning for the wrong-doers is the restrictive phrase: ثُمَّ لَمْ يَتُوبُوا (then did not repent). That is, this torment is for those who did not repent of their deed and did not offer *taubah*. Thus this part of the verse invites people to repent. Sayyidnā Ḥasan رضي الله عنه states: "Look at Allah's compassion and benevolence. They burned Allah's friends alive, yet He invites them towards repentance and forgiveness." [Ibn Kathīr].

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah Al-Burūj
Ends here

Sūrah Aṭ-Ṭāriq (The Night-Comer)

This Sūrah is Makkī, and it has 17 verses

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 17

وَالسَّمَاءِ وَالطَّارِقِ ﴿١﴾ وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا الطَّارِقُ ﴿٢﴾ النَّجْمُ الثَّاقِبُ ﴿٣﴾
 إِنَّ كُلَّ نَفْسٍ لَّمَّا عَلَيْهَا حَافِظٌ ﴿٤﴾ فَلْيَنْظُرِ الْإِنْسَانُ مِمَّ خُلِقَ ﴿٥﴾
 خُلِقَ مِنْ مَّاءٍ دَافِقٍ ﴿٦﴾ يَخْرُجُ مِنْ بَيْنِ الصُّلْبِ وَالتَّرَائِبِ ﴿٧﴾
 إِنَّهُ عَلَى رَجْعِهِ لَقَادِرٌ ﴿٨﴾ يَوْمَ تُبْلَى السَّرَائِرُ ﴿٩﴾ فَمَا لَهُ مِنْ
 قُوَّةٍ وَلَا نَاصِرٍ ﴿١٠﴾ وَالسَّمَاءِ ذَاتِ الرَّجْعِ ﴿١١﴾ وَالْأَرْضِ ذَاتِ
 الصَّدَعِ ﴿١٢﴾ إِنَّهُ لَقَوْلُ فَضْلٍ ﴿١٣﴾ وَمَاهُوَ بِالْهَزْلِ ﴿١٤﴾ إِنَّهُمْ
 يَكِيدُونَ كَيْدًا ﴿١٥﴾ وَآكِيدٌ كَيْدًا ﴿١٦﴾ فَمَهْلِكُ الْكُفْرِينَ أَمَهُلُهُمْ
 رُوَيْدًا ﴿١٧﴾

I swear by the sky and the Night-Comer, [1] and what may let you know what the Night-Comer is? [2] The star of piercing brightness! [3] there is no human being, but there is a watcher over him. [4] So, let man consider of which stuff he is created. [5] He is created of a spouting water [6] that comes out from between the loins and the chest-bones. [7] Surely He is Powerful to bring him back [8] on a day when all the secrets will be searched out, [9] and he will have no strength (to defend), nor a supporter. [10] I swear by the sky that rains, [11] and

the earth that cracks open (for plants), [12] this is a decisive word, [13] and it is not a joke. [14] They are devising plans, [15] and I Am devising plans. [16] So leave the disbelievers at the moment; give them respite for a while. [17]

Commentary

After swearing an oath by the sky and stars, in this Sūrah, Allah asserts that He has assigned a guardian angel to every human being who watches over his deeds and actions, and accurate and immediate record is kept on the basis of which the reckoning will be made, and on the Day of Reckoning, all secrets will be revealed. The rational conclusion is that man must ponder over the consequences of the deeds he is doing in this life. Therefore, he should not, at any moment of his life, lose sight of what is to happen on the Day of Reckoning. Thereafter, the verse disposes of a doubt that the Satan perennially casts into the people's hearts. When they are dead and have become dust and decomposed particles, how will they be recomposed and life be brought back? This seems to be an imaginary thought, rather, in the view of the general public, it is impossible. In answer to this doubt, man is invited to reflect on his origin. At the inception, he was created from various elements collected from throughout the world, and Allah's Power transformed them into a human being who is able to listen and see. Allah Who has created him and looked after him is well able to bring him back to life after death. Then some events of the Day of Judgement are mentioned. Then, after swearing an oath by the earth and the sky, the negligent man is told that the Hereafter he is urged to care about is no joke or amusement, but it is a reality that has to come to pass. Towards the end of the Sūrah, the unbelievers pose the question: If Allah abhors disbelief, idolatry and sins, why then does He not punish us in this life? The Sūrah ends with a rebuttal to this question. Let us now explain some expressions used in the Sūrah:

The first oath, in the beginning of the Sūrah, is by the sky and *ṭāriq*. The word *ṭāriq* means the 'Night-Comer'. Stars normally disappear during the day and only appear at night, therefore they are called *ṭāriq*. The Qur'ān itself raises the question:

وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا الطَّارِقُ (and what may let you know what the Night-Comer is?...86:2) and then answers the question thus: النَّجْمُ الثَّاقِبُ (The star of

piercing brightness!...86:3). The word *najm* means 'star'. The Qur'ān does not specify any particular 'star'. Therefore, it may be applied to any star. Some of the commentators say that *najm* refers to the Pleiades or Saturn, and they quote specimens of Arabic speech to confirm their argument. The word *thāqib* means 'piercing brightness'.

إِنَّ كُلَّ نَفْسٍ لَّمَّا عَلَيْهَا حَافِظٌ (there is no human being, but there is a watcher over him...86:4). This is the subject of the oath. The particle *in* at the beginning of the statement is used in the sense of 'no', that is, a negative particle; and the particle *lammā* is used in the sense of 'but/except', that is, it is an exceptive particle in the dialect of Baḥr Hudhail. The verse purports to say that there is not a single person over whom there is not a watcher [*ḥāfiẓ*]. The word *ḥāfiẓ* may mean 'guardian' who may watch over someone's actions and deeds, so that the reckoning is made on that basis. The word *ḥāfiẓ* may also be used in the sense of 'one who protects from calamities'. In the first sense, the word *hafiz* refers to the angels who record the deeds. Here the word *ḥāfiẓ*, although appears in the singular form, it is used in the generic sense, because there is not just a single recording angel, but there is a host of them as another verse testifies to this fact:

إِنَّ عَلَيْكُمْ لَحَافِظِينَ كِرَامًا كَثِيرِينَ

'While [appointed] over you there are watchers, who are noble, the writers [of the deeds],[82: 10-11]'

According to the second sense of the word, *ḥāfiẓ* refers to the angels who have been appointed to protect man from all kinds of calamities that befall him day and night, except the calamities that Allah has decreed for him, as the following verse explicitly states:

لَهُ مُعَقِّبَاتٌ مِّنْ أَيْمَانِهِ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِ يَحْفَظُونَهُ، مِنْ أَمْرِ اللَّهِ

'For him there are angels replacing each other, before him and behind him, who guard him under the command of Allah [13:11]

A tradition has reported the Messenger of Allah ﷺ saying that Allah has appointed three hundred and sixty angels for every believer. They protect every limb of his. Of the three hundred and sixty, seven angels alone protect man's eye. These angels defend man from every calamity that is not decreed, like a fan chases away the flies coming to a vessel containing honey. If there are no security guards for man, the devils will

snatch them away. [Qurṭubī].

خُلِقَ مِنْ مَّاءٍ دَافِقٍ يَخْرُجُ مِنْ بَيْنِ الصُّلْبِ وَالتَّرَائِبِ (He is created of a spouting water that comes out from between the loins and the chest-bones...86:6,7). The general body of commentators have explained that the spouting water (sperm) comes out from the loins of men and the chest-bones of women. However, the research of embryological science on the subject shows that the seminal fluid comes out from every part of human body, and every part of the foetus is made of the seminal fluid that has come out from that part of the man's and woman's body. The brain, of course, plays the greatest role in this matter. Thus experience shows that people who indulge in excessive cohabitation mostly suffer from weakness of mental weakness. The embryologists have at the same time discovered that the seminal fluid separates from all parts of the body, and through the spinal cord, collects in the testes and from there it spouts.

If these findings have any value, it is not far-fetched to reconcile them with the explanation of some of the commentators. Embryologists agree that the brain plays the most important role in the preparation of seminal fluid. The representative of the brain is the spinal cord that has come into the backbone from the brain, up to the loins and the testes. Some of its branches have come into the chest-bones. It is likely that the seminal fluid coming from the chest-bones into the woman's seminal fluid and the seminal fluid coming from the loins into a man's seminal fluid have a greater role to play. (Baidawi)

If we analyse the verse of the Qur'ān carefully, we notice that it does not specify 'man or woman'. It merely says 'He is created of a spouting water that comes out from between the loins and the chest-bones.' This may simply signify that the seminal fluid comes out from the entire body of both men and women. The expression 'the entire body' is understood from the mention of the principal organs of front and back. The front part of the body is chest and the back part of the body is the loin. These are the principal parts of the body. The expression, 'the spouting water that comes out from between the loins and the chest-bones' may mean 'comes out from the entire body'.

إِنَّهُ عَلَى رَجْعِهِ لَقَادِرٌ (Surely He is Powerful to bring him back...86:8) The word *rajf* means 'to bring back'. The verse signifies that Allah Who has

created him from a drop of seminal fluid is well able to bring him back to life after death a fortiori.

يَوْمَ تُبْلَى السَّرَائِرُ (on a day when all the secrets will be searched out..86:9). The word *tubla* literally means 'to test/examine' and *sarā'ir* means 'secrets'. On the Day of Reckoning, the secrets will be tested and examined and laid bare. Man's beliefs, his thoughts, and his motives and intentions that were hidden in this life, and no one knew about them, will be revealed in the Hereafter.

Likewise, his deeds and actions that he had done secretly, and no one was aware of them in this world, all of them will be tested and scrutinised on the Plain of Gathering and will be laid bare. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umar رضي الله عنه has said that on the Day of Judgement Allah will disclose the secrets of all human beings. The sign of every good or bad belief and action will be displayed on man's face, in the form of beauty or darkness or gloom [depending on each individual's situation]. [Qurṭubī].

وَالسَّمَاءِ ذَاتِ الرَّجْعِ (I swear by the sky that rains...86:11) The word *rajf* refers to 'the rain that comes down repeatedly'. In other words, the rain that comes down and stops and then returns.

إِنَّهُ لَقَوْلُ فَضْلٍ (this is a decisive word..86:13) In other words, the Qur'an is truly a Decisive Word that decides between truth and falsehood, and there is no room for any doubt in it.

Sayyidnā 'Alī رضي الله عنه says that he heard the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم as saying about the Holy Qur'an:

كتاب فيه خبر ما قبلكم وحكم ما بعدكم وهو الفصل ليس بالهزل

'[It is] a book which describes the stories of past communities and [it contains] injunctions for future generations. It is truly a Decisive Word. It is no joke.'

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah Aṭ-Ṭāriq
Ends here

Sūrah Al-A‘lā (The Most Exalted)

This Sūrah is Makki, and it has 19 verses

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 19

سَبِّحِ اسْمَ رَبِّكَ الْأَعْلَى ﴿١﴾ الَّذِي خَلَقَ فَسَوَّى ﴿٢﴾ وَالَّذِي قَدَّرَ
فَهَدَى ﴿٣﴾ وَالَّذِي أَخْرَجَ الْمَرْعَى ﴿٤﴾ فَجَعَلَهُ غُثَاءً أَحْوَى ﴿٥﴾
سُنُقِرُكَ فَلَا تَنْسَى ﴿٦﴾ إِلَّا مَا شَاءَ اللَّهُ ط إِنَّهُ يَعْلَمُ الْجَهْرَ وَمَا
يَخْفَى ﴿٧﴾ وَنَيْسِرُكَ لِلنَّيْسِرَى ﴿٨﴾ فَذَكِّرْ إِنْ نَفَعَتِ الذِّكْرَى ﴿٩﴾
سَيِّدَكَ مَنْ يَخْشَى ﴿١٠﴾ وَيَتَجَنَّبُهَا الْأَشْقَى ﴿١١﴾ الَّذِي يَصْلَى
النَّارَ الْكُبْرَى ﴿١٢﴾ ثُمَّ لَا يَمُوتُ فِيهَا وَلَا يَحْيَى ﴿١٣﴾ قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ
تَزَكَّى ﴿١٤﴾ وَذَكَرَ اسْمَ رَبِّهِ فَصَلَّى ﴿١٥﴾ بَلْ تُؤَتِرُونَ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا
﴿١٦﴾ وَالْآخِرَةَ خَيْرٌ وَأَبْقَى ﴿١٧﴾ إِنَّ هَذَا لَفِي الصُّحُفِ الْأُولَى
﴿١٨﴾ صُحُفِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَمُوسَى ﴿١٩﴾

Pronounce the purity of the name of your Most Exalted Lord, [1] who created (everything), then made (it) well, [2] and who determined a measure (for everything), then guided (it), [3] and who brought forth pasturage, [4] then turned it into blackening stubble. [5] We will make you recite, then you will not forget [6] except that which Allah wills. Indeed He knows what is manifest and what is hidden. [7] And We will facilitate for you (to reach)

the easiest way. [8] So, extend advice (to people) if advice is useful. [9] The one who fears (Allah) will take to the advice, [10] and it will be avoided by the most wretched [11] who will enter the Biggest Fire, [12] then he will neither die therein, nor live (a life worth mentioning). [13] Success is surely achieved by him who purifies himself, [14] and pronounces the name of his Lord, then offers prayer. [15] But you prefer the worldly life, [16] while the Hereafter is much better and much more durable. [17] Indeed this is (written) in the earlier divine scripts, [18] the scripts of Ibrahim and Musa. [19]

Commentary

Ruling [1]

Scholars have ruled that when anyone recites the verse: سُبْحَانَ رَبِّيَ الْأَعْلَى (Pronounce the purity of the name of your most exalted Lord...87:1) it is commendable to say:

سُبْحَانَ رَبِّيَ الْأَعْلَى

'I pronounce the purity of my most exalted Lord.'

This was the practice of all the noble Companions, like Sayyidna 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Abbaā, Ibn 'Umar, Ibn Zubair, Abū Mūsā and 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd رضي الله عنهم اجمعين. Whenever they started reciting the Sūrah, they would recite:

سُبْحَانَ رَبِّيَ الْأَعْلَى

'I pronounce the purity of my most exalted Lord.' [Qurṭubī].

It should be noted that the desirability of reciting this is outside of the prayer.

Ruling [2]

Sayyidnā 'Uqbah Ibn 'Āmir Al-Juhānī رضي الله عنه narrates that when the Sūrah Al-A'la was revealed, the Holy Prophet ﷺ instructed:

اجعلوها في سجودكم

'Say this (Subḥāna Rabbiyal-A'la) in your *sujūd* [prostrations]'

سُبْحَانَ رَبِّيَ الْأَعْلَى (Pronounce the purity of the name of your Most exalted Lord.) The word *tasbiḥ* means 'to pronounce the purity' and سُبْحَانَ رَبِّيَ signifies to 'honour the name of your Lord'. When the name of Allah is pronounced, it should be done with utmost humility and respect.

His name should be kept pure and free from anything that is unbecoming to His sublime status. Allah should be called by the names He Himself has stated or taught the Holy Prophet ﷺ. It is not permitted to call Him by any other name.

Ruling [3]

Besides, it is also included in the above imperative that there are some names exclusively meant for Allah; calling human beings or any other creation by those specific names is contrary to declaring the purity of Allah. Therefore, it is not permissible. [Qurṭubī]. Nowadays, people are not particular about names like 'Abdur Raḥmān, 'Abdur-Razzāq, 'Abdul Ghaffār and 'Abdul Quddūs. They call the persons bearing these names 'Raḥmān', 'Razzāq', 'Ghaffār', 'Quddus' and so on, for short. People have got into the habit of shortening such names without realising that the speakers as well as the listeners are committing a sin. People commit this joyless sin day and night without any reason.

Some commentators interpret the word '*ism*' does not mean 'name' in this verse. Instead, they say, it is referring to the *Dhāt* or the 'Being' of Allah. According to the Arabic expressions, this interpretation is not unlikely, and the Qur'ān has used the word '*ism*' in that sense also. The Ḥadīth that instructs us to recite the *tasbīḥ* in *sajdah* [prostration] is not "I pronounce the purity of the name of my most exalted Lord, but "I pronounce the purity of my most exalted Lord". This indicates that in this context '*ism*' is not used in the sense of 'name' but it refers to the Being of Allah Himself. [Qurṭubī]

Subtle and Profound Wisdom in the Creation of the Universe

الَّذِي خَلَقَ فَسَوَّى وَالَّذِي قَدَّرَ فَهَدَى (who created [everything], then made [it] well, and who determined a measure [for everything], then guided [it]...87:2,3). All these are the attributes of the 'Most Exalted Lord'. The first attribute is *khalāqa* which does not simply mean 'to make' or 'manufacture'. It has a deeper significance: 'to bring out something from pure non-existence into the realm of existence without the help of any pre-existing matter'. (This is the correct meaning of 'creation'. If something is made with the help of some pre-existing matter, it cannot be called 'creation' in its original sense.) This is not within the power of anyone else. Only the perfect power of Allah can bring things into existence, whenever He wills, without the help of any pre-existing matter.

The second attribute, which is connected with *takhlīq* (creation), is *sawwā*. This word is derived from *taswīyah*, and it literally means 'to make well or equal'. The verse signifies that Allah made the constitution of everything symmetrical or made it congruously consistent in its several parts, the body structure, shape and size, limbs and organs. Man and every other animal is adapted to the requirements of wisdom. The hands and legs, the tips of the fingers and toes have joints with different types of springy connective tissues that make it possible to bend and fold in different ways. If we look at another limb or organ of human body, its symmetry and balance baffles our imagination and is sufficient for us to believe in the consummate wisdom and power of the Creator of the universe.

The third attribute is *qaddara* which is derived from *taqdīr* and it means 'to determine; to measure; to balance; to design symmetrically; to decree/ decide'. The word is used in the last sense here. The verse purports to say that things in the world have not been created without purpose. Everything has been created for a specific purpose, and has been endowed with natural capacities to fit its function. If we look carefully, the principle does not apply only to specific species. Every member of the universe has been assigned a specific function to perform. We witness the manifestation of the assignments in the sky, the stars, lightning, rain, humans, animals, vegetation and minerals.

Maulānā Rūmī رحمه الله تعالى says:

خاک و باد و آب و آتش بنده اند..... با من و تو مُردہ با حق زندہ اند

"The earth, the wind, the water and the fire__all of them are slaves of Allah.

According to me and you, they are senseless, but according to Allah, all of them are alive and sensible.

Allah has especially geared man and every species of animals to do particular works and they perform them according to their natural inclination, and their predisposition pivots around their respective tasks.

ہر یکے را بہر کارے ساختند..... میل اور اوردش اند اختند

Allah has created everything for a particular purpose
And has filled its heart with inclination towards it.

The fourth attribute of Allah is *fa-hadā* 'then guided it'. In other words, The Creator of the universe did not create things and left them to their own mercy to perform their particular function as they like, but they are shown the way in which they should be performed. As a matter of fact, He guided the entire creation by equipping each member of it with suitable nature to function for which it was created, whether the member is the sky or celestial creation, or it is the earth or the earthly creation. They all possess a special type of sense, though it is of a lower than that of man. The Qur'an says:

رَبُّنَا الَّذِي أَعْطَى كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلْقَهُ، ثُمَّ هَدَى

'Our Lord is He Who gave to each thing its form and nature, then guided it aright . [20:50]'

As a result, since the inception of their creation, the skies, the earth, the stars and planets, mountains and oceans are all performing their functions accurately, without any failure or deviation. Humans and animals, in particular, whose intellect and sensibility can be observed easily, have been invested with capabilities of fulfilling their minute needs and repelling harmful things in a way that baffles the one who thinks about it. Since man possesses sense and intelligence of a higher degree, his capabilities may not be so much surprising, but let us look into wild animals, ferocious animals or beasts of prey, birds and insects. Each and everyone of them is able to obtain its necessities of life. They are able to find their habitats. They have not acquired the skills of fulfilling their individual and communal needs through a teacher that may educate or train them, nor did they need any school or college to acquire this knowledge and skill. Their education and training comes directly from the Creator of the universe. It is this divine guidance that has been referred to in the Holy Qur'an by saying,

رَبُّنَا الَّذِي أَعْطَى كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلْقَهُ، ثُمَّ هَدَى

'Our Lord is He Who gave to each thing its form and nature, then guided it aright . [20:50]'

and in this Sūrah thus:

وَالَّذِي قَدَّرَ فَهَدَى

'and who determined a measure (for everything), then guided (it), [3]'

The Knowledge of Science is a Divine Gift to Man

Allah has equipped man with the higher order of intelligence and sense. The entire universe is made subservient to him,___the earth, mountains and oceans and everything created therein are made to serve man and created for his benefit. However, full advantage of them is not possible unless man acquires knowledge and skill to put various things together and produce a new item. Nature has provided man with intelligence and understanding to excavate mountains and dive into the oceans to obtain minerals and marine objects. He composes certain items like wood, iron, steel, copper, brass and so on and makes new items of his need. This knowledge and technology is not dependent on scientific research and college or university education. Even illiterate people have been doing this since the inception of human existence . This is intrinsic science that Allah has endowed upon man as a natural gift. Later, man developed the capability of doing technical and scientific research. He thus made progress in various fields of science and technology. The capability to do this is also a Divine gift.

Obviously, science and technology does not create anything, but it merely shows the way to use the created things. The initial knowledge about their use is taught by Allah, but there is a wide scope to make progress in it by the capabilities Allah has bestowed to man, the manifestation of which we are witnessing in this scientific age day by day, and what further range of these abilities and talents will manifest in future is unknown. All this is the interpretation of *hadā* '[He] guided (it), [3] In other words, Allah has placed in them potentials and capabilities to perform their natural functions. But alas! the scientists are getting more and more negligent, rather blind to these realities day by day.

وَالَّذِي أَخْرَجَ الْمَرْعَىٰ. فَجَعَلَهُ غُثَاءً أَحْوَىٰ (and who brought forth pasturage, then turned it into a blackening stubble....87:4, 5)

The word *mar'ā* means 'pasturage'. This is the land that has grass growing on it, and that is used for animals to graze. The word *ghuthā'* refers to 'stubble, and scum borne upon the surface of a torrent'. The word *aḥwā* is derived from the root *ḥuwwah* which refers to 'a kind of black colour that comes upon a dense vegetation'. The verse purports to depict the Divine power and wisdom related to herbage and vegetation. He grows the green vegetation and then He gradually turns it into black

colour, and it loses its freshness. This directs man's attention also to his end. His body radiating with health, beauty, smartness and alertness is a Divine gift, but its tenure of life is limited. Eventually it will come to an end.

إِلَّا مَا شَاءَ اللَّهُ سَنَقْرِيكَ فَلَا تَنْسَى. (We will make you recite, then you will not forget, except that which Allah wills. Indeed He knows what is manifest and what is hidden....87:6,7). In the preceding verses, Allah depicted the manifestation of His Omnipotence and [profound] wisdom. Thereafter, a few guidelines are given to the Holy Prophet ﷺ regarding his prophetic obligation. Before putting forth the guidelines, he is given the cheerful news of making his task easier. When the Qur'an was revealed initially, and as Jibra'il عليه السلام began to recite, the Holy Prophet ﷺ made haste to repeat, lest any word or sentence should be lost. He was, therefore, told not to make haste with it, and to wait until the angel had delivered the whole message, and then to repeat the words of the revelation, being assured that it was a Divine arrangement, and that nothing would be lost. On this occasion, he is still more plainly told: 'then you will not forget, except that which Allah wills.'

While Allah made the Holy Prophet ﷺ remember all of the Qur'an, there were certain verses which Allah made him forget, because they had been abrogated. This was done by Allah's command, and is not done without reason. There are several ways in which this is done. One way of doing this is that a second clear injunction is revealed contrary to the first injunction. Another way of abrogating a particular verse is to obliterate a verse from the memory of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the memory of all other Muslims, as stated in:

مَا نَنْسَخُ مِنْ آيَةٍ أَوْ نُنسِئُهَا

'Whenever We abrogate a verse or cause it to be forgotten.

[2:106]'

Some scholars interpret the exceptive sentence 'except that which Allah wills' differently. They say that for some reason Allah blots out temporarily a verse from Holy Prophet's ﷺ memory, but he may remember it again, in support of which the following narrative may be adduced: One day the Holy Prophet ﷺ recited a Sūrah, but omitted one of the verses. Sayyidnā Ubayy Ibn Ka'b رضي الله عنه, one of the Prophet's scribes,

was present. He thought it might have been abrogated. On inquiry, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said that it was not abrogated, but that it was omitted by mistake. [Qurṭubī]. In this interpretation, it may be summarised that forgetting a verse temporarily, and then remembering it again, does not go against the promise made in this verse. [In fact, it is an exception from this promise.] Allah knows best!

وَيُسِّرْكَ لِلسَّرَى (And We will facilitate for you [to reach] the easiest way....87:8). The phrase 'the easiest way' refers to the sacred laws of Islam. Apparently, according to the demand of the context, it should have been stated 'We will make the Shari'ah easy for you'. But the Qur'an chose, instead, to state 'And We will facilitate for you (to reach) the easiest way. [8]'. The reason for that, probably, is to indicate that Allah will predispose him to the sacred laws, so that they will become part of his nature, and he will become an embodiment of Shari'ah.

فَذَكِّرْ إِنْ نَفَعَتِ الذِّكْرَى (So, extend advice [to people] if advice is useful....87:9) The preceding verses described the facilities created by Allah for the Holy Prophet ﷺ in performing his Prophetic obligation. This verse commands him to perform his obligation. The verse contains the conditional particle 'in' (if) that apparently makes the sentence a conditional statement. But, in fact, the command is not intended to be made conditional. It is rather an emphatic statement. This is similar to the grammatical phenomenon in many languages. The particle 'if' is sometimes used when something is always true. It is used for introducing a situation that always has the same meaning, result or effect. For example: "If you are a 'man' [obviously he is a man], then you will have to do this work;" In neither of such sentences, the particle 'if' is conditional, but rather emphatic. Likewise, the verse purports to say that preaching truth and righteousness is certainly useful. Therefore, the beneficial thing should never be abandoned at anytime.

فَقَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ تَزَكَّى (Success is surely achieved by him who purifies himself,..87:14) The word *tazakkā* is derived from *zakāh*, the primitive meaning of which is 'to purify'. The *zakāh* of wealth is so called because it purifies the rest of man's wealth for him. In this context, the word *tazakkā* is used in a general sense, which comprehends the purity of faith and character, and purity of wealth.

وَذَكَرَ اسْمَ رَبِّهِ فَصَلَّى (and pronounces the name of his Lord, then offers prayer...87:15). This covers all categories of prayer, obligatory as well as supererogatory. Some commentators say that it refers especially to 'Id prayers. This interpretation too can fall under the preceding category.

بَلْ تُوْزِنُوْنَ الْحَيٰوةَ الدُّنْيَا (But you prefer the worldly life,...87:16). Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd رضي الله عنه says that people generally prefer the worldly blessings and comforts to the blessings and comforts of the Hereafter, because the former is visible and readily available, while the latter is invisible and unavailable readily. People unaware of reality preferred the visible to the invisible, which became the cause of eternal loss. In order to spare them the eternal loss, Allah, through His Messengers and Books, described to them the blessings and comforts of the Hereafter so clearly as if they can perceive them [through their sense organs]. It has been made plain to them that what they think is readily available and preferred, is actually fragile and will very soon perish. It is unwise to put one's heart into, or faith in, it and waste one's energy on it. Thus the Qur'an says:

وَالْآخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ وَأَبْقَى (while the Hereafter is much better and much more durable...87:17). The verse purports to warn those who prefer this life to the Hereafter that they should use their intelligence to find out what they have preferred and what they have abandoned. They are, first of all, made to realise that the highest degree of comfort and pleasure in this life is not free from the mixture of grief and hardship. In the second place, it is not permanent. We experience in our daily life that a king of today becomes a pauper tomorrow. A vigorous youth of today becomes old tomorrow. In the Hereafter, on the other hand, there will be freedom from both these defects. All its blessings and comforts will be 'much better' and they cannot be compared to the blessings and comforts of this life. Most importantly, it is *abqa* 'much more durable'.

Let us consider the following scenario: It is said to a person that there are two houses in front of him, one of which is a magnificent mansion, fully furnished and another an ordinary, substandard house, not properly furnished. He has the choice to take the mansion, but only for a month or two. Thereafter, he will have to vacate the mansion. Or he may take the underdeveloped house that he will own permanently. Which of the two houses a wise person will prefer? The answer is obvious that he will prefer the second option. On this analogy, one should prefer the blessings of the

Hereafter even if, for argument's sake, they are substandard, because they are permanent and eternal. But the fact is that they are not only permanent, but also much better and far more superior to the worldly comforts. In this situation only an unfortunate fool will prefer the blessings of this life to the bounties of the Hereafter.

إِنَّ هَذَا لَفِي الصُّحُفِ الْأُولَى صُحُفِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَمُوسَى (Indeed this is [written] in the earlier divine scripts, the scripts of Ibrāhīm and Mūsā....87:18, 19) In other words, either all the themes of this Sūrah or its last theme, that the Hereafter is much better and much more durable than this life, was written in the earlier Divine scriptures. It is further explicated that this theme was written in the scriptures of Prophets Ibrāhīm and Mūsā عليه السلام. Probably, it refers to other scriptures that were given to Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام before Torah. It is also possible that it refers to Torah itself.

Themes of the Scripts of Prophet Ibrāhīm عليه السلام

Ājurī transmits a narration from Sayyidnā Abū Dharr Al-Ghifārī رضي الله عنه that he inquired from the Prophet ﷺ as to the contents of the scripts of Prophet Ibrāhīm عليه السلام and the Holy Prophet ﷺ replied that they contained educating parables . A story is told in it about a tyrant king where he is addressed and told: You haughty, arrogant and oppressive ruler! I did not give you kingdom so that you may amass wealth, but I had given you power so that you may let the supplication of the oppressed against the oppressor reach me, because my law does not reject the supplication of an oppressed, even though it may be uttered by an unbeliever.

Another parable addresses the general public thus: A wise person should divide his time into three parts. One part should be reserved for the worship of his Lord and supplication to Him. The second part should be reserved for self-assessment of his deeds, and reflection on the Omnipotence and creation of Allah. The third part should be allocated for acquisition of livelihood and fulfilling the natural needs. It further imparts that a wise person should keep himself abreast of the circumstances of his time, and keep himself busy in performing his intended work. He should take care of his tongue. He who takes speech as one of his works, his speech will be confined only to the things of real need .

Themes of the Scripts of Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام

Sayyidnā Abū Dharr Al-Ghifārī رضي الله عنه says that he then inquired from the Holy Prophet ﷺ as to the contents of the scripts of Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام and the Holy Prophet ﷺ replied that they contained lessons of wisdom. Some of them are as follows:

- I am surprised at the person who believes that he will certainly die, and yet he is lives happily.
- I am surprised at the person who believes in Divine destiny, and yet he is despondent and aggrieved.
- I am surprised at the person who experiences the vicissitudes of life and rise and fall of nations, and yet he is content with the world.
- I am surprised at the person who believes in the Reckoning of the Hereafter, and yet he abandons [good] deeds.

Sayyidnā Abū Dharr Al-Ghifārī رضي الله عنه says that he asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ whether anything from these scriptures was revealed to him, he replied in the affirmative and asked Sayyidnā Abū Dharr Ghifārī رضي الله عنه to recite verses 14-19 of this Sūrah. [Qurtūbī]

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah Al-A'la
Ends here

Sūrah Al-Ghāshiyah

(The Overwhelming Event)

This Sūrah is Makki, and it has 26 verses

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 26

هَلْ أَتٰكَ حَدِيثُ الْغَاشِيَةِ ﴿١﴾ وَجُوهُ يَوْمَئِذٍ خَاشِعَةٌ ﴿٢﴾ عَامِلَةٌ
 نَّاصِبَةٌ ﴿٣﴾ تَصَلٰى نَارًا حَامِيَةً ﴿٤﴾ تُسْقٰى مِنْ عَيْنٍ اَنِیَّةٍ ﴿٥﴾ لَيْسَ
 لَهُمْ طَعَامٌ اِلَّا مِنْ ضَرِيْعٍ ﴿٦﴾ لَا يُسْمِنُ وَلَا يُغْنٰى مِنْ جُوْعٍ ﴿٧﴾
 وَجُوهُ يَوْمَئِذٍ نَّاعِمَةٌ ﴿٨﴾ لَسَعِيْهَا رَاضِيَةٌ ﴿٩﴾ فِى جَنَّةٍ عَالِيَةٍ ﴿١٠﴾ لَا
 تَسْمَعُ فِيْهَا لَآغِيَةً ﴿١١﴾ فِيْهَا عَيْنٌ جَارِيَةٌ ﴿١٢﴾ فِيْهَا سُرُرٌ مَّرْفُوْعَةٌ
 ﴿١٣﴾ وَاَكْوَابٌ مَّوْضُوْعَةٌ ﴿١٤﴾ وَنَمَارِقُ مَصْفُوْفَةٌ ﴿١٥﴾ وَزَرَابِيُّ
 مَبْثُوْنَةٌ ﴿١٦﴾ اَفَلَا يَنْظُرُوْنَ اِلٰى الْاِبْلِ كَيْفَ خُلِقَتْ ﴿١٧﴾ وَاِلٰى
 السَّمٰءِ كَيْفَ رُفِعَتْ ﴿١٨﴾ وَاِلٰى الْجِبَالِ كَيْفَ نُصِبَتْ ﴿١٩﴾ وَاِلٰى
 الْاَرْضِ كَيْفَ سُطِحَتْ ﴿٢٠﴾ فَذَكِّرْٓ اِنَّمَا اَنْتَ مُذَكِّرٌ ﴿٢١﴾ لَسْتَ
 عَلَيْهِمْ بِمُصِيْطِرٍ ﴿٢٢﴾ اِلَّا مَنْ تَوَلٰى وَكَفَرَ ﴿٢٣﴾ فَيَعْدِبُهُ اللّٰهُ الْعَدَابَ
 الْاَكْبَرَ ﴿٢٤﴾ اِنَّ اِلَيْنَا اِيَابُهُمْ ﴿٢٥﴾ ثُمَّ اِنَّا عَلَيْنَا حِسَابُهُمْ ﴿٢٦﴾

Has there come to you the description of the Overwhelming Event? [1] Many faces on that day will be humbled, [2] working hard, exhausted. [3] They will enter

into the scorching fire. [4] They will be made to drink water from a boiling spring. [5] There will be no food for them except from a thorny plant [6] that will neither nourish, nor satisfy hunger. [7] Many faces on that day will be full of glamour, [8] well pleased with their endeavour, [9] in a lofty garden, [10] in which they will not hear any absurd talk. [11] In it there is a running spring. [12] In it there are couches, elevated, [13] and goblets, well placed [14] and cushions, arrayed [15] and carpets, spread around. [16]

So, do they not look at the camels how they are created, [17] and at the sky, how it is raised high, [18] and at the mountains, how they are installed, [19] and at the earth, how it is spread out? [20] So, keep on preaching; you are only a preacher. [21] You are not a taskmaster set up over them, [22] but whoever turns away and disbelieves, [23] Allah will punish him with the greatest torment. [24] Surely towards Us they have to return, [25] then it is Our job to call them to account. [26]

Commentary

وَجُوهٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ خَاشِعَةٌ. عَامِلَةٌ نَّاصِبَةٌ (Many faces on that day will be humbled, working hard, exhausted...88:3). On the Day of Judgement, there will be two separate groups of people, believers and unbelievers, and their faces will be different. This verse describes the faces of the unbelievers. They will be downcast. The word *khāshī'ah* from the root word *khushā'* means 'to humble, humiliate, cast down'. This is the meaning of casting oneself down before Allah in prayer. People who did not cast themselves down before Allah in this world, their faces on the Day of Judgement will be downcast with humiliation and disgrace .

The other conditions of the unbelievers are *'āmilah* and *nāṣibah*. The word *'āmilah* from *'āmal* means 'to work hard' and *'āmil* or *'āmilah* in Arabic is used for 'a person who works continuously, so as to become completely tired'. The word *nāṣibah* is derived from *nasab*. This word also refers to 'one who toils unceasingly so as to become totally exhausted'. It seems that the latter two conditions of the unbelievers relate to this world, because Hereafter is not a realm in which one has to work to become so tired and exhausted. Therefore, Qurṭubī and other commentators are of the view that the humbleness of their faces relates to the Hereafter, but their working hard and being exhausted refers to their work in this world. Given this interpretation, the sense is that many unbelievers exert

themselves in their false rituals, and work hard in their presumed acts of worship in the world, as for instance the Hindu Yogis and many Christian monks do. They endure many difficulties in the devotional acts of worship sincerely in order to seek the good pleasure of Allah, but being on wrong and idolatrous ways, they are not acceptable to, or rewarded by, Allah. Thus their faces show signs of exhaustion in this world; and in the Hereafter they will show signs of disgrace and humiliation.

Sayyidnā Ḥasan Baṣrī رحمه الله تعالى reports that when Sayyidnā ‘Umar رضي الله عنه went to Syria, a Christian monk came to him. He was an old man, and on account of his religious exercises and great endeavours, his face was exhausted, his body was dry and his dressing was miserable. When Sayyidnā ‘Umar رضي الله عنه looked at him, he began to weep. People asked him about the cause of his weeping. He replied: "I pity the condition of this old man. This poor soul worked so hard and showed such readiness to lay down his life to achieve a particular purpose (that is, to gain the pleasure of Allah) but, alas! He could not achieve it. Then he recited the following verse:

وَجُوهٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ خَاشِعَةٌ. عَامِلَةٌ نَاصِبَةٌ

Many faces on that day will be humbled, 'working hard, exhausted. [88:2-3]

نَارًا حَامِيَةً (...[the] scorching fire...88:4). The word *ḥāmiyah* literally means 'hot' and 'scorching'. Although this is the natural property of fire that needed no mention, yet the specific reference to this quality of the fire brings out the point that the fire of Hell cannot be compared to the fire of this world. The heat of the fire of this world, some time or the other, is reduced or ends. But the fire of Hell is everlasting and eternal. Its heat will neither reduce nor end.

لَيْسَ لَهُمْ طَعَامٌ إِلَّا مِنْ ضَرِيعٍ (There will be no food for them except from a thorny plant...88:6) The only food available for the inmates of Hell would be *ḍarīʿ*. In the world, this is a kind of thorny grass that spreads on the ground. No animal goes near it. It is foul-smelling, poisonous and thorny. [As interpreted by ʿIkrimah, Mujāhid, and quoted by Qurṭubī].

How will Grass or Tree Survive in Hell

One may ask the question that the grass or trees are among things that burn in fire. How will they survive in Hellfire? The answer is that

the Supreme Creator Who cherished and sustained them in this world with water and air, has the power and ability to make the fire itself the nutrient of these trees, so that they may flourish.

Another question may be raised here. The Qur'ān mentions several things as the food of the inmates of Hell. Here it refers to their food as *ḍarī'*. On another occasion, it refers to *zaqqūm*, and on a third occasion it refers to *ghislīn*. This verse restricts their food to *ḍarī'*, thus: 'There will be no food for them except from a thorny plant...88:6)

The answer is that the restriction in this verse is in contrast to a palatable food that may be fit for [human] consumption. *Ḍarī'* is cited here as an example. The verse means that the inmates of Hell will not get any palatable food. They will get worst, most disgusting and loathsome food like *ḍarī'*. Thus the purpose of mentioning *ḍarī'* is not restriction. In fact, *ḍarī'* includes *zaqqūm* and *ghislīn*. Qurṭubī says that it is possible there will be different levels in Hell, and on different levels there will be different kinds of food. On one level, there will be *ḍarī'* and on another level, *ghislīn*, and so on.

لَا يُسْمِنُ وَلَا يُغْنِي مِنْ جُوعٍ (that will neither nourish, nor satisfy hunger...88:7). When the preceding verse was revealed in which it was stated that the inmates of Hell will get food like *ḍarī'*, some of the pagans of Makkah [mockingly] said that their camels eat *ḍarī'* and yet they are fat and healthy. In response to their statement, the following verse of the Qur'ān was revealed which means that they should not compare the *ḍarī'* of this world with that of the Hereafter. The latter will neither provide nutrition, nor satisfy their hunger.

لَا تَسْمَعُ فِيهَا لَافِيَةً (in which they will not hear any absurd talk...88:11). It includes the words of disbelief, futile or idle talk, obscene language, calumny or false accusation, or any other talk that hurts people's feelings. On another occasion, the Qur'ān puts it thus:

لَا يَسْمَعُونَ فِيهَا لَغْوًا وَلَا تَأْتِيهَا

'They will hear neither an absurd talk therein, nor something leading to sin, [56:25]

This shows that false accusation and absurd talks are hurtful. That is why the Holy Qur'ān has described it as a blessing to the inmates of Paradise that no such foolish words will come across their ears that may

pollute their hearts.

Etiquette of Living

وَآكُؤَابٌ مَّوْضُوعَةٌ (and goblets, well placed...88:14) The word *akwāb* is the plural of *kūb* and it refers to a 'goblet', a 'glass' or a cup for drinking water. It has been qualified by the adjective *mauḍū'ah* and it means 'well placed'. This signifies that the glasses or cups or containers will be set in their due places close to water. This description opens an important chapter in setting down some of the rules of correct behaviour in social situations. The drinking containers for water ought to be placed near the water in the designated place. They should not be misplaced so that the other members of the household will have to look for them when they wish to drink water. This situation is irritating. Other household items of daily use, such as cans, glasses, towels, and so on, should be arranged in their designated places, and after using them, they must be kept back in their respective places, so that the other members of the household do not face any difficulty in finding them out. All this is deducible from the word *mauḍū'ah* 'well placed', because Allah has arranged the goblets near the water for the comfort of the inmates of Paradise.

أَفَلَا يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَى الْإِبِلِ كَيْفَ خُلِقَتْ (So, do they not look at the camels how they are created...88:17) The Qur'ān first described the conditions of the Hereafter; and it then went on to depict the reward of the believers and the retribution of the unbelievers. Now it turns attention to rebuff the obdurate unbelievers' foolish denial of the Hereafter. They reject it on the ground that after death and decomposition of the body and bones it is inconceivable that they would be recomposed and resurrected. For their guidance, Allah invites their attention to reflect carefully on a few of His Signs. There are uncountable Signs of Allah in the universe. These verses refer to four of them specifically which suited the condition of the desert Arabs. They often travelled through the desert. In such a situation, all they saw were camels they travelled on. They mounted camels and covered long journeys. Above them was the sky and beneath them was the earth. All around them [left, right, front and back] they saw mountains. The Arabs are commanded to ponder over these four natural phenomena which make Allah's might manifest.

Among animals, the camel has certain peculiar characteristics that can be a reflection of Divine wisdom and power. It is the largest, most

robust and durable animal. Although elephant is a much larger animal than the camel, Allah has mentioned the camel rather than the elephant, because the Arabs knew camels and scarcely saw an elephant. Despite the fact that a camel is such a huge animal, a Bedouin Arab will not find it difficult to look after it even if he is poor. If he is unable to gather or afford food for it, it has to be let loose and will gather its own nutriment and live on leaves. It has a long neck to reach the tops of the high trees. The food of elephants and other animals work out expensive. In Arabian deserts, water is a scarce commodity. It is not available everywhere or anytime. Yet it can survive for about a week without water as Allah's Power has provided it with a small narrow-mouthed pouch in its paunch in which it stores up extra water [which it uses up gradually for seven to eight days]. Thus it is a superb draught beast. Nature has created it uniquely, so that it is perfectly adapted to survive the hazards of the harsh climate of the desert.

There is no need to set up a ladder to climb up the high animal. Allah has divided its legs into three levels. Each leg has two knees that it manoeuvres to sit down so that it becomes easier for riders to climb up and down. It is the chief beast of burden in deserts, and as such, it is able to carry large loads. It is most difficult to travel in daytime in Arabia because of scorching sunlight. Allah has made it possible for the camel to keep on travelling the whole night. Camels are so obedient that that even a little child can lead them along anywhere. Camels are very valuable to them in many other ways that teach man that Allah is Omnipotent and has consummate wisdom.

In conclusion of the Chapter, the Messenger of Allah is comforted thus:

لَسْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِمُصَيِّرٍ (You are not a taskmaster set up over them,....88:22)
The Holy Prophet ﷺ is told that he is only a preacher, and as such he must keep on preaching. He should not worry beyond that. It is for Allah to call the unbelievers to Him to render account of their deeds and actions, and punish them accordingly.

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah Al-Ghāshiyah
Ends here

Sūrah Al-Fajr

(The Dawn)

This Sūrah is Makkī, and it has 30 verses

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 30

وَالْفَجْرِ ﴿١﴾ وَلَيَالٍ عَشْرٍ ﴿٢﴾ وَالشَّفْعِ وَالْوَتْرِ ﴿٣﴾ وَاللَّيْلِ إِذَا يَسِرُ ﴿٤﴾ هَلْ فِي ذَلِكَ قَسَمٌ لِّذِي حِجْرِ ﴿٥﴾ أَلَمْ تَرَ كَيْفَ فَعَلَ رَبُّكَ بِعَادٍ ﴿٦﴾ إِرْمَ ذَاتِ الْعِمَادِ ﴿٧﴾ الَّتِي لَمْ يُخْلَقْ مِثْلُهَا فِي الْبِلَادِ ﴿٨﴾ وَثَمُودَ الَّذِينَ جَابُوا الصَّخْرَ بِالْوَادِ ﴿٩﴾ وَفِرْعَوْنَ ذِي الْأَوْتَادِ ﴿١٠﴾ الَّذِينَ طَعَنُوا فِي الْبِلَادِ ﴿١١﴾ فَأَكْثَرُوا فِيهَا الْفُسَادَ ﴿١٢﴾ فَصَبَّ عَلَيْهِمْ رَبُّكَ سَوْطَ عَذَابٍ ﴿١٣﴾ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَبِالْمُرْصَادِ ﴿١٤﴾ فَأَمَّا الْإِنْسَانُ إِذَا مَا ابْتَلَاهُ رَبُّهُ فَأَكْرَمَهُ وَنَعَّمَهُ ۖ فَيَقُولُ رَبِّي أَكْرَمَنِ ﴿١٥﴾ وَأَمَّا إِذَا مَا ابْتَلَاهُ فَقَدَرَ عَلَيْهِ رِزْقَهُ ۖ فَيَقُولُ رَبِّي أَهَانَنِ ﴿١٦﴾ كَلَّا بَلْ لَّا تَكْرُمُونَ الْيَتِيمَ ﴿١٧﴾ وَلَا تَخْضُونَ عَلَىٰ طَعَامِ الْمِسْكِينِ ﴿١٨﴾ وَتَأْكُلُونَ التَّرَاثَ أَكْلًا لَّمًّا ﴿١٩﴾ وَتُحِبُّونَ الْمَالَ حُبًّا جَمًّا ﴿٢٠﴾ كَلَّا إِذَا دُكَّتِ الْأَرْضُ دَكًّا دَكًّا ﴿٢١﴾ وَجَاءَ رَبُّكَ وَالْمَلَكُ صَفًّا صَفًّا ﴿٢٢﴾ وَجِئَاءَ يَوْمٍ يُؤْمَدُ ۖ بِجَهَنَّمَ ۖ يَوْمَئِذٍ يَتَذَكَّرُ الْإِنْسَانُ وَأَنَّىٰ لَهُ الذُّكْرَىٰ ﴿٢٣﴾ يَقُولُ يَلَيَّتَنِي قَدَمْتُ لِحَيَاتِي ﴿٢٤﴾ فَيَوْمَئِذٍ لَّا يُعَذِّبُ

عَذَابَهُ أَحَدٌ ﴿٢٥﴾ وَلَا يُوثِقُ وَثَاقَهُ أَحَدٌ ﴿٢٦﴾ يَا أَيَّتُهَا النَّفْسُ الْمُطْمَئِنَّةُ
 ﴿٢٧﴾ ارْجِعِي إِلَىٰ رَبِّكِ رَاضِيَةً مَّرْضِيَّةً ﴿٢٨﴾ فَادْخُلِي فِي عِبَادِي
 ﴿٢٩﴾ وَادْخُلِي جَنَّاتِي ﴿٣٠﴾

I swear by the dawn, [1] and by the Ten Nights, [2] and by the even and the odd, [3] and by the night when it moves away, [4] Is there (not) in that an oath (enough) for a man of sense? [5] Have you not seen how your Lord dealt with (the people) of 'Ad [6] of *Iram*, the men of tall pillars, [7] the like of whom were never created in the lands, [8] and (how He dealt) with (the people of) *Thamūd* who had carved out the rocks in the Valley (of *Qura*), [9] and with *Fir'aun* (the Pharaoh), the man of the stakes, [10] all those who had rebelled in the cities, [11] and spread a lot of mischief therein. [12] So, your Lord unloosed on them the whip of torment. [13] Surely your Lord is ever on the watch. [14] As for man, when his Lord tests him, and thus gives him honour and bounties, he says, "My Lord has honoured me." [15] But when he tests him, and thus straitens his provision for him, he says, "My Lord has disgraced me." [16] No! But you do not honour the orphan, [17] and do not encourage one another to feed the needy. [18] And you devour the inheritance with a sweeping gulp, [19] and love wealth, with an excessive love. [20] No! When the earth will be crushed thoroughly to be turned into bits, [21] and your Lord will come, and the angels as well, lined up in rows, [22] and *Jahannam* (Hell), on that day, will be brought forward, it will be the day when man will realise the truth, but from where will he take advantage of such realisation? [23] He will say, "O Would that I had sent ahead (some good deeds) for (this) my life!" [24] So, that day, no one can punish as He will punish, [25] nor can anyone shackle like He will shackle. [26]

(As for an obedient man, it will be said to him,) "O content soul, [27] come back to your Lord, well-pleased, well-pleasing. [28] So, enter among My (special) servants, [29] and enter My Paradise." [30]

Commentary

This Sūrah, by swearing five oaths in its beginning, emphasises the

following fact:

إِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَبِالْمُرْصَادِ

Surely your Lord is ever on the watch. [89:14]

This means that Allah is watching over whatever you do, and reward or punishment for your deeds is certain and inevitable.

The first among the five oaths sworn at the beginning is Fajr (dawn). It may refer to the dawn of every day that brings about a great change in the world, and thus directs man's attention to the absolute Omnipotence of Allah. It is also possible that it refers to the dawn of some specific day. Commentators like Sayyidnā 'Alī, Ibn 'Abbās and Ibn Zubair رضي الله عنهم say that the word is general, and it refers to any dawn. According to another narration of Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه, it refers to the dawn of the first of Muḥarram which is the start of the lunar-Islamic calendar. Sayyidnā Qatādah رضي الله عنه, among others, has interpreted it in the same way.

Some commentators, like Mujāhid and 'Ikramah, refer this to the dawn of 'the Day of Sacrifice' on the tenth of Dhul Ḥijjah. A narration from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه concurs with this view. The reason for this specification is that according to Islamic principles, Allah has made a night to precede the day. All days are preceded by their respective nights, except the 'the Day of Sacrifice', because the night that precedes the Day of Sacrifice is not the night of Sacrifice. In fact, the preceding night, according to Shari'ah, is the night of 'Arafah. Staying at 'Arafāt is the most important and foremost rite of Ḥajj. If a pilgrim is not able to reach 'Arafāt on the 9th of Dhul Ḥijjah, any time in the day or in the night following it to halt there for a while, he will not be considered to have performed Ḥajj at all. However if he arrives there any time during the night before the break of dawn on the 10th of Dhul Ḥijjah, his halt in 'Arafah will be acceptable and his Hajj will be considered valid. This shows that the day of 'Arafah has two nights, one preceding it, and another following it. The Day of Sacrifice [10th of Dhul Ḥijjah] has no night. From this point of view, the dawn of the day of Sacrifice, among all the days of the year, occupies a special position. [Qurṭubī].

Next, it says:

لَيْلٍ عَشْرٍ (and by the Ten Nights...89:2) According Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās

ﷺ, Qatādah, Mujāhid, Suddi, Daḥḥāk, Kalbī and other leading commentators, the 'ten nights' refers to the [first] ten nights of Dhul Ḥijjah. It is recorded in Ḥadīth that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said that the first ten days of Dhil Hijjah are the most meritorious days for Allah's worship. Every fast of the day is equivalent to fasts of the whole year. Worshipping Allah every night during this period is equivalent to worshipping Him on the night of Qadr. [Transmitted by Tirmidhī and Ibn Mājah with a weak chain of authorities from Abū Hurairah ﷺ - Mazharī]. Abū-z-Zubair narrated from Sayyidnā Jabir ﷺ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said : وَالْفَجْرِ وَلَيَالٍ عَشْرٍ (I swear by the dawn and by the Ten Nights' refers to the first ten days of Dhul Ḥijjah. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ said that these are the ten nights that are mentioned in the story of Prophet Mūsā ﷺ: الْعَشْرَةَ: ... then We supplemented them with ten' [7:142]. Thus these are the ten nights in the whole year which are most meritorious. Imām Qurṭubī says that the Ḥadīth reported by Sayyidnā Jābir ﷺ indicates that the ten nights of Dhul Ḥijjah are most meritorious, and that the same ten nights of Dhul Ḥijjah were designated for Prophet Mūsā ﷺ.

وَالشَّفْعِ وَالْوَتْرِ (and by the even and the odd,...89:3). The Qur'ān has not specified what the words 'the even' and 'the odd' refer to. Therefore, the commentators have assigned different interpretations to them. Nevertheless, it has been mentioned in a Prophetic Ḥadīth narrated by Abū-z-Zubair from Sayyidnā Jābir ﷺ thus:

(وَالْفَجْرِ. وَلَيَالٍ عَشْرٍ) هُوَ الصَّبْحُ وَعَشْرُ النَّحْرِ وَالْوَتْرُ يَوْمَ عَرَفَةَ وَالشَّفْعُ يَوْمَ النَّحْرِ
'Fajr' refers to the dawn, and 'the ten nights' refer to the first ten nights of Dhul Ḥijjah [which include the Day of Sacrifice], and that *al-watr* [the odd] refers to the day of 'Arafah [because it falls on the ninth] and *ash-shaf* refers to the Day of Sacrifice [because it falls on the 10th day of Dhul Ḥijjah].'

Qurṭubī cites this narration and confirms that its chain of authorities is more authentic than the other tradition narrated by Sayyidnā 'Imrān Ibn Ḥusain ﷺ which talks about odd [three] and even [two/four] units of prayers. Therefore, Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ﷺ 'Ikramah and Naḥḥās رَحِمَهُمَا اللهُ تعَالَى have preferred the view that 'even' refers to the Day of Sacrifice and 'odd' refers to the day of 'Arafah.

Some commentators like Ibn Sīrīn, Masrūq, Abū Ṣāliḥ and Qatādah رَحِمَهُمَا اللهُ تعَالَى said that 'even' refers to the entire creation, because Allah

has created them in pairs, and thus He says:

وَمِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ خَلَقْنَا زَوْجَيْنِ

'And from everything We have created (a pair of) two kinds
[51:49]'

- belief/disbelief, happiness/unhappiness, light/darkness, night/day, cold/heat, sky/earth, human/Jinn and male/female as against all of these pairs, Allah is the only One Being 'odd' that does not have a pair:

هُوَ اللَّهُ الْوَاحِدُ الصَّمَدُ

'He, is Allah, the One, Besought of all, needing none'

وَاللَّيْلِ إِذَا يَأْسُرُ (and by the night when it moves away...89:4). The word *yasr* is derived from *sarā* and means 'to walk in the night' or 'travel by night'. The verse says when the night itself moves away. It signifies 'when the night departs and goes away.' After taking oath by these five items, the next verse says:

هَلْ فِي ذَلِكَ قَسَمٌ لِذِي حِجْرٍ (Is there [not] in that an oath (enough) for a man of sense?...89:5). An intelligent person is, in a very special style, invited to think and reflect. The word *hijr* literally denotes 'to prevent'. The intellect has been called *hijr* because it prevents the person from doing which is unbecoming of him – actions or statements. Are these oaths not sufficient for a man possessed of intellect, sound reasoning, understanding and religious discernment? This sentence is in the form of interrogation to awaken man from his slumber. The subject of oaths is implied, though not stated explicitly. The verse purports to say that when man considers into the Majesty of Allah and reflects on the greatness of objects of oaths, it would be confirmed and verified that everyone has to give account of his deeds, and reward and punishment in the Hereafter is sure. In this connection, reference is made to the destruction of three previous nations: [1] the nation of 'Ād; [2] the nation of Thamūd; and [3] the nation of Fir'aun (the Pharaoh). 'Ād and Thamūd are two nations whose genealogy link up with Iram. Thus Iram may refer to both, 'Ād as well as Thamūd. Here however with 'Ād only the name Iram is linked for genealogical reasons:

أَلَمْ تَرَ كَيْفَ فَعَلَ رَبُّكَ بِعَادٍ. إِرَامَ دَاتِ الْعِمَادِ (Have you not seen how your Lord dealt with [the people] 'Ād of Iram, the men of tall pillars...(89:6-7). The word

'Iram' in verse [7] is, grammatically speaking, either *'atf bayān* (syndetic explicative) or *badal* (complement). The purpose of the construction is to specify one of the two tribes of 'Ād. This statement specifies that it refers to *'Ad-ul-'ulā* (the early generation of 'Ād). A remnant from the former generation is referred to as *'Ād-ul-'Ukhrā*, because they are linked with their great-grand father Iram more closely than *'Ad-ul-'Ukhrā*. Here the Qur'an refers to the first tribe as 'Ād Iram. In Surah An-Najm, they are described as: *عَادِ الْأُولَى* (the earlier 'Ād,) [53:50]

They are introduced here by the epithet: *ذَاتِ الْعِمَادِ* (the men of tall pillars)

The word *'imād*' and *'amūd*' means 'pillar'. The people of 'Ād are mentioned as the men of tall pillars because they were very tall in stature. They were a stronger and more powerful people than any other nations. The Qur'an describes them explicitly, thus:

لَمْ يُخْلَقْ مِثْلَهَا فِي الْأَرْضِ (the like of whom were never created in the lands...89:8) The Qur'an made it clear that this nation was the tallest and the strongest in their physical stature, but the Qur'an did not state the exact measurement of the people because it was unnecessary [for Qur'anic purposes]. Therefore, that detail has been left out. Israelite traditions, however, narrate such incredible reports about their stature, height and power that are difficult to believe. It is reported from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه and Muqatil that they were six yards or eighteen feet [5.46] tall. This too seems to be derived from Israelite reports. And Allah knows best!

Some commentators say that 'Iram' is the name of the 'paradise' which 'Ād's son Shaddād had built. The epithet 'possessor of tall pillars' [translated above as 'men of tall pillars'] is used for him. The [so-called paradise] was a lofty structure standing on tall pillars built with gold and silver and studded with jewels, gems and other precious stones, so that people may prefer an instant and ready at hand paradise instead of Paradise of the Hereafter. When this magnificent palace was ready for use, and Shaddād, together with the leaders of his kingdom, wanted to enter, Divine punishment overtook them. They, together with the palaces, were completely destroyed. [Qurṭubī]. In this interpretation, the verse refers to a specific punishment which descended upon the paradise built by 'Ād's son Shaddād. In the first interpretation, which the majority of

the commentators prefer, it refers to all the punishments that descended upon the nation of 'Ād.

وَفِرْعَوْنَ ذِي الْأَوْتَادِ (and with Fir'aun [the Pharaoh], the man of the stakes...89:10). The word *autad* is the plural of *watad* that means 'peg or stake or nail'. Fir'aun (the Pharaoh) is referred to as 'the man of the stakes'. There are several reasons for this. Majority of the commentators hold the view that he was so called because of the brute torture and cruel torment he inflicted on the people. When he was angry with people, he would hammer stakes into the ground and tie them to these, so that they could be tortured; or he would hammer stakes into their hands and feet, as they lay on the ground in the scorching heat of the sun, and leave them to the mercy of snakes and scorpions. Other commentators have recounted a lengthy story about his wife 'Āsiyah. She embraced 'Īmān (the True Faith) and expressed it to Fir'aun (the Pharaoh). This angered him and he inflicted on her the same type of brute torture and destroyed her. [Maẓharī].

فَصَبَّ عَلَيْهِمُ رَبُّكَ سَوْطَ عَذَابٍ (So, your Lord unloosed on them the whip of torment....89:13). The punishment inflicted upon them as a result of their mischief is referred to here as a 'whip of torment'. It signifies that just as lashes are inflicted across different parts of the body, the torment these nations received was similar to it in that they suffered different kinds of punishment.

إِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَبِالْمُرْصَادِ (Surely your Lord is ever on the watch....89:14). The word *mirṣād* or *marṣad* [is derived from the root *raṣada* which means 'to lie in wait or on watch']. Thus it means 'an ambush, or a place of observation; it is usually used for a place where persons have to travel through a pass in which someone is lying in wait to strike them'. The verse purports to say that Allah is ever watching and observing their movements and activities. No one should think that he could escape Divine torment, because all are under His authority and Power, and He may administer His punishment whenever He wills. Some commentators state that this verse is the subject of the five oaths mentioned taken in the first five verses of this Sūrah.

Wealth and Poverty are no Signs of One's Acceptance or Rejection

لَا يَقُولُ رَبِّي ۚ فَمَا الْإِنْسَانُ إِذَا مَا ابْتَلَاهُ رَبُّهُ فَأَكْرَمَهُ وَنَعَّمَهُ، فَيَقُولُ رَبِّي أَكْرَمَنِ ۚ وَأَمَّا إِذَا مَا ابْتَلَاهُ فَقَدَرَ عَلَيْهِ رِزْقَهُ

أَهَانِن (As for man, when his Lord tests him, and thus gives him honour and bounties, he says, "My Lord has honoured me. But when he tests him, and thus straitens his provision for him, he says, "My Lord has disgraced me...89:15-16). The word 'man' here primarily refers to an 'unbelieving man' who may form any thought about Allah as he feels like, but in its general sense, the word may include a Muslim as well who has the same thought as an unbeliever. When Allah gives abundant wealth and good health to such people, the devil puts into their head two false ideas. First, they succumb to their baser instincts; they become haughty and arrogant; and they think that the wealth and health is the result of their superior intellect, personal capability, efforts and achievement. Secondly, they think that they are enjoying a favourable status with Allah. If they did not enjoy the favourable position with Him, they would not have been granted such an abundance of wealth. By the same token, if Allah curtails their sustenance i.e. they suffer some degree of poverty, they regard it as a curse from Allah, and complain that He is humiliating or dishonouring them, while they deserved honour and respect. The unbelievers and idolaters do hold such thoughts and ideas, as the Qur'ān has pointed out on many occasions, but it is regrettable that many Muslims nowadays fall into similar ideas. Allah refutes man's belief by the expression كَلَّا Kallā 'No/never!' The matter is not as he claims. Wealth does not indicate acceptance of a man by Allah, nor does poverty indicate rejection. [For indeed Allah gives wealth to those whom He loves and those whom He does not love. Likewise, He withholds sustenance /wealth from those whom He loves and those whom He does not love.] Often the matter is quite the contrary. Fir'aun (the Pharaoh) claimed godhead and lordship, yet he never suffered from any headache. Some of Prophets ﷺ were sliced, by enemies, into two pieces with a saw. The Holy Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said that the poor refugees will enter Paradise forty years before the wealthy *muhājirs* (Immigrants). [Imām Muslim has transmitted it from 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umar ؓ - Mazharī]. In another narration, the Holy Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said that whomever Allah loves, He keeps him away from the worldly luxuries as people keep away their sickly patients from water. [Aḥmad and Tirmidhī transmitted it on the authority of Qatādah Ibn Nu'mān__ Mazharī].

Spending on the Orphan is not Sufficient. Their respect is also necessary

لَا تُكْرِمُونَ الْيَتِيمَ (No! But you do not honour the orphan....89:17). The

unbelievers are warned, in these verses, against some of their evil character traits. First, as is mentioned in this verse, they do not honour and treat the orphans kindly. The basic objective of the verse is that they deprive them of their rights, and do not spend on them what is due to them, but the expression used is that they do not honour them, probably to indicate that the requirement of Allah's gratitude, and also of humanitarian sense, is not only that the orphans are given their dues by spending wealth on them, but it is also necessary to honour them and treat them kindly. The guardians should not despise and look down upon their wards, and to discriminate them against their own children. This is apparently a rebuff to the unbelievers who think that wealth is an 'honour' and poverty is a 'dishonour'. After refuting their thoughts and ideas with the expression *Kallā* 'No/ never!', the verse under comment progresses to say *bal* 'But' that they are deprived of sustenance, because they squander it in immoral pursuits, depriving the orphans of their rights in it.

وَلَا تَحْضُوهَا عَلَى طَعَامِ الْمُسْكِينِ (and do not encourage one another to feed the needy...:89:18). This is the second evil trait of the unbelievers. The style of this verse, in condemning the evil trait of the unbelievers, indicates that it is an obligation of the affluent to spend on the poor and indigent from their own wealth. Obviously, the poor are unable to spend owing to lack of means, but they should at least encourage others to feed the needy.

وَتَأْكُلُونَ التُّرَاثَ أَكْلًا لَمًّا (And you devour the inheritance with a sweeping gulp...:89:19). The word *lamm* means to 'gather, amass, concentrate the thing'. This is the third evil trait of the unbelievers, and the verse signifies that they devour inheritance with voracious appetites however they can get it, whether by lawful means or unlawful means. They gather them all together to make a sweeping gulp. When someone passes away, they take their own shares, together with the shares of others, regardless of whether the shares belong to orphans, widows or people who are absent. [As a matter of principle,] it is not permitted to mix up lawful and forbidden wealth in any transaction. Here, however, 'inheritance' has been particularly mentioned, probably because having a greedy eye on it and pursuing it are a proof of man's greed and voracity for wealth. He stares at it like a beast of prey waiting for the person to die, and looking for the opportunity to distribute the estate. But an honourable man of

principle and a noble person would not look at the wealth of the deceased with greedy eyes.

وَتُحِبُّونَ الْمَالَ حُبًّا جَمًّا (and love wealth, with an excessive love....89:20). The word *jamm* means 'excessive'. This verse refers to the fourth evil trait of the unbelievers. They have an insatiable love for wealth. The word 'excessive' indicates that love of wealth in itself, in a sober sense, is a natural instinct of man. That has not been condemned here. What is denounced is the excessive or insatiable love of wealth. After describing the evil traits of the unbelievers, the passage reverts to the main theme that was emphasised in the earlier part of the Sūrah with five oaths, that is, the punishment of the Hereafter. In this connection, it first mentions the process of the end of the world, and subsequently the establishment of the Day of Resurrection, thus:

كَلَّا إِذَا دُكَّتِ الْأَرْضُ دَكًّا دَكًّا (No! When the earth will be crushed thoroughly to be turned into bits...89:21). The word *dakk* literally means 'to pound or crush a thing into bits and pieces'. This refers to the earthquakes that will crush and ground the mountains to dust. The world will thus be dissolved. This will be the first stage of Resurrection. When this stage of Resurrection ends, the second stage of Resurrection will begin. The word *dakkan* is repeated in order to show that there will be a series of earthquakes before the dissolution of the world.

وَجَاءَ رَبُّكَ وَالْمَلَكُ صَفًّا صَفًّا (and your Lord will come, and the angels as well, lined up in rows....89:22) They will arrive in the Plain of Gathering. The words 'your Lord will come' is an allegorical expression. No one, besides Allah, knows the nature of His coming. The words 'and the angels [will arrive] as well, lined up in rows' are clear in meaning.

وَجِئَ يَوْمَئِذٍ بِجَهَنَّمَ يَوْمَئِذٍ يَتَذَكَّرُ الْإِنْسَانُ وَأَنَّى لَهُ الذِّكْرَى (and *Jahannam* [Hell], on that day, will be brought forward, it will be the day when man will realise the truth, but from where will he take advantage of such realisation?... 89:23). No one, besides Allah, knows how exactly 'Hell' will be brought forward in the Plain of Gathering. Apparently, 'Hell' which is at the moment beneath the seventh earth will at that moment will flare up, and the oceans become part of the flame. In this way, Hell during the gathering will be in front of all.

يَوْمَئِذٍ يَتَذَكَّرُ الْإِنْسَانُ وَأَنَّى لَهُ الذِّكْرَى (it will be the day when man will realise the

truth, but from where will he take advantage of such realisation? - 89-23). The word *tadhakkur* in this context means 'to realise'. The unbelievers will realise the errors of their ways in the Hereafter, but it will be too late, because it is this present world where 'Imān and good deeds benefit the people. The Hereafter is the place only for reckoning and retribution. Man will express his remorse thus:

يَقُولُ يَا لَيْتَنِي قَدَّمْتُ لِحَيَاتِي (He will say, "O Would that I had sent ahead [some good deeds] for [this] my life!"...89:24). When he faces the torment of disbelief and idolatry on that day of devastation, man will lament that he should have carried out good deeds and refrained from sin in this world to be saved from punishment in the Hereafter. But it will be of no avail. Allah says: 'So, that day, no one can punish like He will punish, nor can anyone shackle like He will shackle....89:26] Having described the torment of the unbelievers, the conclusion of the Sūrah gives cheerful news to the believers that they will be admitted into Paradise. Thus it says:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّفْسُ الْمُطْمَئِنَّةُ ("O contented soul...89:27). Here the soul of the believer is referred to as *nafs muṭma'innah* 'the contented soul'. The word *muṭma'innah* literally means 'calm'. It refers to the soul that is 'peaceful and tranquil' as a result of remembrance and obedience of Allah. When he abandons it, he feels restless. This is probably the same soul as is made pure, through spiritual exercises and discipline, from the evil traits and bad conduct. Obedience of Allah and His remembrance becomes his predisposition. Sharī'ah becomes his nature.

إِرْجِعِي إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ (come back to your Lord....89:28). The words 'come back' indicate that his first place was with his Lord, and now he is commanded to go back to Him. This confirms the narration that the souls of the believers, together with their Book of Deeds, will be in *'illiyīn*. *'Illiyīn* is a place on the seventh heaven in the shade of the Throne of the Most-Merciful Lord. This is the original resting-place of all human souls, from where they are brought out and put into human body. After death, the souls are returned to that place.

رَاضِيَةً مَّرْضِيَةً (...well-pleased, well-pleasing....89:28). [The true believer's] soul is well-pleased with decrees destined by Allah and His legislative commands, and Allah too is well-pleased with His slave. The slave's being pleased with Allah's decrees and injunctions is a sign that Allah is pleased