

Section 1: Unity Shall Ultimately Triumph

Surah As-Saffat – Verses 1–3

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In The Name of Allah, The Beneficent, The Merciful

وَالصَّافَّاتِ صَفًّا

فَالزَّاجِرَاتِ زَجْرًا

فَالتَّالِيَاتِ ذِكْرًا

1. ***“By those who range themselves in ranks,”***
2. ***“And those who drive away (the evils and temptations) with reproof,”***
3. ***“And the reciters of a Remembrance (Qur'an),”***

It is necessary that there should be some impedimental factors of sins and forbidders of indecencies in the society.

This Surah is the first Surah of the Qur'an that the beginning verses of which begin with oaths. They are

some expressive oaths which take the man's thought with them toward different directions of this world and make it ready for accepting the facts.

It is true that Allah is more truthful than all truthful ones and He does not need to take any oath. Moreover, if the oath is for the believers, they are submitted without any oath, and if it is for the rejecters, they do not believe in the oaths of Allah. But noting to two points will solve the problem of oaths in all verses of the Qur'an upon which we will deal with henceforth.

The first point is this that oaths are always made by the worthy and important things. Thus, the oaths of the Qur'an show the importance and greatness of the things that the oaths are made by, and this very matter causes the more contemplation upon the thing that the concerning oaths are made by, a contemplation which makes man acquainted with some new facts.

The other point is that: oath is always for emphasis, and it is a proof upon this fact that the things for which the oath is made are among the completely earnest and emphasized affairs of creation.

Besides, when a speaker states his speech decisively, it will psychologically affect more on the addressee's heart, strengthens the believers more, and makes the deniers of that speech milder.

However, at the beginning of this Surah, we find three groups by whom oaths are made.

At first, it says:

“By those who range themselves in ranks,”

Then, it says:

“And those who drive away (the evils and temptations) with reproof,”
“And the reciters of a Remembrance (Qur'an),”

Who are these three groups? And whom are these qualities about? And what is its final aim? The popular and known commentary is that these are some qualities for some groups of angels.

These are some groups of angels who have stood in rows in the world of existence and are ready for performing the command of Allah. They are some groups of Divine angels who restrain men from sins, and nullify the temptations of Satans in their hearts.

Or they are arranged for the cloud in sky to take them to different sides and make them ready to water the dry lands.

And, finally, there are some groups of angels who, at the time of revelation of the verses of the heavenly Books, recite them to the Divine prophets.

It is noteworthy that the Qur'anic term /saffat/ is the plural form of /saffah/ which in term has a plural

sense, and it refers to a group who have ranged themselves in rank. Therefore, the term /saffat/ indicates some numerous rows.

The Qur'anic term /zajirat/ is derived from /zajr/ in the sense of driving away something with sound and shout. Then it has been used in a vaster scope of meaning which envelops any repel and prohibition. Therefore, the term /zajirat/ means some groups who act in prohibition, repelling, and driving others away.

The Arabic term ***italiyat*** is derived from /talawat/, the plural form of /tali/, and means some groups who take action on reciting something.

And, regarding to the vastness of the concepts of these words, it is not surprising that commentators have mentioned different interpretations for them that, in the meantime, they do not contrast each other, and all of them may be found in the concept of these verses.

For example, the purpose of 'Saffat' is all the rows of the angels who are ready to perform the Divine commands in the world of creation, and also the angels who are ordered to bring the revelation down to Divine prophets in the atmosphere of religion; and also the rows of strivers and strugglers in the path of Allah, or the rows of keepers of prayer and worshippers.

Although the frame of references show that the purpose of it is mostly the angels, this meaning has been referred to in some Islamic narrations. ¹

Also, it does not matter that the Arabic term ***lazjirat*** refers to both the angels who drive away the Satanic temptations from the men's hearts, and the men who perform the duty of forbidding from doing evils.

And the term /taliyat/ points to all Divine angels and groups of the believers who constantly recite the Divine verses and the name of Allah.

However, the oath of Allah made by all these groups shows the greatness of their rank with Allah, and in the meantime inspires this fact that those who pave the path of the Truth also for reaching the destination must pass these three stages. Firstly, they must arrange their rows and every group stand in their own row.

Then they must remove the barriers from the way and repel the troubles by shout and a loud voice. And, after that, they must continually recite the Divine verses and the commands of Allah to the receptive hearts and try to actualize their contents.

The strugglers of the path of the truth have not any way but passing these three stages, either. In the same manner, the truthful scholars, in their collective efforts, must also follow the same program.

It is notable that some of the commentators have rendered these verses into 'strugglers' and some

others into ‘scholars’, but restricting the concept of these holy verses to those two groups seems improbable, while the generality of verses is not improbable; and we also consider them particular to the angels, again others can be inspired in their lives by the program of these angels.

In the first sermon of Nahj-ul-Balaqah, where the angels are spoken of, Amir-ul-Mu’mineen Ali (as), dividing them into different groups, says:

“...some of them (angels) are in array and do not leave their position. Others are extolling Allah and do not get tired. The sleep of the eye or the slip of wit, or languor of the body, or the effect of forgetfulness does not affect them. Among them are those who work as trusted bearers of the message, those who serve as speaking tongues for His prophets...”

Surah As-Saffat – Verses 4-5

إِنَّ إِلَهَكُمْ لَوَاحِدٌ

رَبُّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا وَرَبُّ الْمَشَارِقِ

4. ***“Verily your God is One,”***

5. ***“Lord of the heavens and the earth and all between them, and Lord of the rising-places (of sun).”***

Among the signs and proofs of Unity is the agreement between the heaven, the earth, and other creatures of the world of existence.

Therefore, in these holy verses, the Qur’an says:

“Verily your God is One,”

“Lord of the heavens and the earth and all between them...”

Here, there arises a question that: after mentioning the words heavens and the earth and what is between them, what is the need of mentioning ‘rising-places (of sun)’ which is also a part of them?

By noting to one point, the answer to this question will be made clear.

The Qur’anic term /mašariq/ (rising-places (of sun)) whether points to the rising-places of the sun during the year, or the rising-places of different stars in the sky, they have a particular program and order that their system, besides the system of the heavens and the earth, is the sign of the infinite Power and

Knowledge of their Creator and their Administrator.

During the year, everyday the sun rises from a point in the sky which is different from the points where it rises the previous day and the next day, and the distance between these points is so exact and regular that they do not decrease or increase even one thousandth of a second during a year and for ever, and the order of the rising-places of the sun has been the same in thousands of thousands years.

This very order is also seen in the rising and setting of other stars, too.

Moreover, if the sun did not gradually pave this path, the different blessings that are produced because of four seasons of the year would not exist. This is itself another sign upon the greatness and administration of Allah.

Besides, one of the other meanings of /mašariq/ is that for the earth being globular, every point of it, comparing another point, is counted east or west. And, thus, the above verse attracts our attention to the globular shape of the earth and its different places of east and west.

The verse is concluded as follows:

“...and Lord of the rising-places (of sun).”

Surah As-Saffat – Verses 6-7

إِنَّا زَيْنَّا السَّمَاءَ الدُّنْيَا بِزِينَةِ الْكَوَاكِبِ

وَحِفْظًا مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْطَانٍ مَّارِدٍ

6. “Verily We have adorned the lower heaven with the adornment of the stars.”

7. “And to preserve against every rebel Satan;”

The adornment of the heaven of the world is a reflection of the Lordship of Allah.

The man’s willing to adornment and beauty is among his natural inclinations, and the Qur’an has verified it.

This holy verse says:

“Verily We have adorned the lower heaven with the adornment of the stars.”

Verily, a look at the sky at night, when it is dark and the stars are seen, will show man a very beautiful scenery that it fascinates him to itself.

As if they speak with us by dumb language and reiterate the secrets of Divine creation. It seems all of them were poets and constantly made the most beautiful amatory and gnostic poems.

Their nictitating express some secrets that exist nowhere but between a lover and a beloved.

Truly the scenery of the stars of the sky is so beautiful that never the eyes become tired from seeing them, on the contrary, they send out fatigue from the man's body, although in our Age when the citizens of large cities are living in the smoke of the factories, and the like, and naturally they have a dark and black sky, these interesting subjects are not so meaningful.

But the villagers can still observe the concept of this verse of the Qur'an which says that the lower heaven is adorned with the adornment of the bright stars.

It is interesting that, in this verse, He says:

"... We have adorned the lower heaven with the adornment of the stars."

While the hypothesis which dominated the thoughts of the scholars at that time said that only the higher sky was the sky of stars and planets: (according to hypothesis of Ptolemy, the eighth sky).

But as we know, the nullification of this hypothesis has been proved and that the Qur'an did not follow the wrong famous hypotheses of that time is itself a living miracle delivered by this heavenly Book.

Another interesting point is that from the view point of the modern science it is certain that the beautiful nictitating act of stars is as a reason of the air which has covered all around the earth and makes them to do so, and this meaning completely fits with the Qur'anic phrase /as-sama'-ud-duniya/ (the lower heaven).

But outside the atmosphere of the earth, the stars gaze and they lack sparkle.

The next verse refers to the protection of the sky from the penetration of Satans. It implicitly says that Allah preserves the heaven from every corrupt Satan who is far from any benevolence.

It says:

"And to preserve against every rebel Satan;"

The Arabic word */marid/* is derived from /mard/ which originally means 'a high land empty of any kind of plant'. A tree that is bare of its leaves, in Arabic, is called /'amrad/, that is why for the young man on whose face has grown no hair this word is usually used. Here, in this verse, the purpose of /marid/ is the one who has no benevolence, or, in other words, 'has nothing'.

We know that one of the ways of protecting the sky from Satans is by a group of stars called in Arabic */šuhub/* which will be dealt with in later verses.

Surah As-Saffat – Verses 8-10

لَا يَسْمَعُونَ إِلَى الْمَلَأِ الْأَعْلَى وَيُقَدِفُونَ مِنْ كُلِّ جَانِبٍ

دُحُورًا وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ وَاصِبٌ

إِلَّا مَنْ خَطِفَ الْخَطْفَةَ فَأَتْبَعَهُ شِهَابٌ ثَاقِبٌ

8. “They cannot listen to (the secrets of) the exalted assembly and they are thrown at from every side,”

9. “(To be) driven off, and for them is an everlasting chastisement,”

10. “Except him who snatches a fragment, and he is pursued by a piercing flame.”

Satans are some responsible beings who will be called to account and will be given retribution by Allah.

So, here the Qur’an says:

“They cannot listen to (the secrets of) the exalted assembly and they are thrown at from every side,”

The next verse implies that they will seriously be driven back and will be sent off from the scene of heaven, and there is a permanent punishment for them.

It says:

“(To be) driven off, and for them is an everlasting chastisement,”

The Qur’anic term */la yassamma’un/* (which is used in the sense of */yatasamma’un/*) means that: they want to listen to the news of the exalted assembly (High council), but they are not allowed.

The Arabic phrase */mala’-il-’a’la/* means the angels in the high world, because */mala’/* originally means ‘community and group who have the same attitude and, by this agreement and unity, they fill the eyes of others.

And superiors, notables, and entourage of the centres of power are also called /mala'/ because their outward situation is considerable, but when it is qualified by /'a'la/ (high), it refers to the high ranked angels of Allah.

The Arabic term ***lyaq'ifun*** is derived from /qa'if/ in the sense of 'throw' and 'shooting to a distanced place', and the purpose here is 'repelling Satans' by 'flames', which will be explained later. This shows that Allah does not let them even approach the realm of 'High Council'.

The Arabic term ***lduhur*** is derived from /dahr/ in the sense of 'drive off'. And the term /wasib/ originally means 'chronic diseases', but, in general, it means: permanent and lasting, and sometimes it has also been used with the sense of pure.

Here, it points to this meaning that not only Satans are prohibited from approaching the scene of heaven, but also they will finally be involved with the permanent chastisement, too.

This, verse refers to a group of rebellious and insolent Satans who intend to ascend to the high expanse of heaven.

It says:

“Except him who snatches a fragment, and he is pursued by a piercing flame.”

The Qur'anic term /šihab/ originally means: a flame which comes up from a burning fire. It is also called to the fiery flames which are seen in the sky like an extended line. We know that these are not stars, but they are alike to stars.

They are some small pieces of stone which are scattered in the sphere, and when they come into the gravity realm of the earth, they will be attracted toward the earth, and as the result of speed and their intense of strike with the air around the earth, they burn.

The Arabic word ***lthaqib*** means: penetrating and piercing, as if, because of an intense light, it pierces the face of the eye and burns it.

Therefore, there are two barriers for the influence of Satans into the expanse of heavens: the first barrier is 'throwing from every side', which is also apparently done by /šuhub/. The second barrier is a special kind of flame which is called: 'a piercing flame'.

It waits for them that when they, now and then, approach 'High council' for eavesdropping, they will be struck by them.

Similar to this meaning is mentioned in Surah Al-Hijr, No. 15, verses 17 and 18, where He says:

“And We have guarded them against every accursed Satan” “Save him who steals the hearing, so there pursues him a clear flame.”

Again, Surah Al-Mulk, No. 67, verse 5 says some meaning like this.

It says:

“And We have adorned the lower heaven with lamps, and We have made them missiles for the Satans...”

Surah As-Saffat – Verses 11-12

فَاسْتَفْتِهِمْ أَهُمْ أَشَدُّ خَلْقًا أَمْ مَنْ خَلَقْنَا إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاهُمْ مِنْ طِينٍ لَازِبٍ

بَلْ عَجِبْتَ وَيَسْخَرُونَ

11. “Then ask their opinion whether they are stronger in creation or (the others) whom we have created. Verily We created them of a sticky clay.”

12. “Nay! you wonder while they mock.”

We can adjust the mockers and proud persons by reminding them their own source of creation.

These two verses also pursue the subject of Resurrection and the opposition of the obstinate rejecters, and following the previous discussion about the Power of Allah over everything, Who is the Creator of the heaven and the earth, the first verse says:

“Then ask their opinion whether they are stronger in creation or (the others) whom we have created. Verily We created them of a sticky clay.”

Yes, Allah has created them of a simple thing, from a piece of sticky clay. It seems that the polytheists, who had denied Resurrection, after hearing the former verses concerning the creation of the heavens, the earth and the angels, stated that their creation was more important than them.

In answer to them the Holy Qur’an implies that the men’s creation compared with the creation of the earth and the vast heaven and the angels, which are in these worlds, is not such a significant thing, because the creation of man was from a little amount of sticky dust.

The Arabic phrase *’istafihim/* is derived from *’istifta’/* which originally means ‘asking for some new news’.

And that a young man is called in Arabic *’ifatal/* is because of the freshness of his body and soul.²

This application points to this fact that if they really know their creation more important and stronger than the creation of the heaven and the angels, they say a new word which is void of example.

The Arabic term *lazib*, as some have said, originally has been /lazim/ the ‘m’ of which has changed into ‘b’ and now it is used in this form.

However, it means some mud which is sticky, since the source of the creation of man at first was ‘dust’, then it was mixed with water and, little by little, it changed into a bad smell slime, and then it became a sticky mud. (And, thus, by this statement the different meanings in various verses of the Qur’an are gathered here)

Then, the Holy Qur’an implicitly says: you wonder of their denial concerning the Resurrection while they mock it.

It says:

“Nay! you wonder while they mock.”

By your pure heart, you see the matter so clear that you surprise of their denial, but these impure hearted people count this matter so impossible that they begin to mock.

Surah As-Saffat – Verses 13-15

وَإِذَا نُكِّرُوا لَا يَذْكُرُونَ

وَإِذَا رَأَوْا آيَةً يَسْتَسْخِرُونَ

وَقَالُوا إِنَّ هَذَا إِلَّا سِحْرٌ مُّبِينٌ

13. “When they are admonished, they mind not,”

14. “And when they see a sign (miracle) they invite one another to scuff,”

15. “And they say: ‘This is nothing but an open sorcery.’”

Admonishment is not usually effective for the hard-hearted persons.

The cause of these ugly actions is not only ignorance, but it is obstinacy and enmity. That is why when

they are reminded the evidences, the argumentations of Resurrection and Divine punishment, they never mind and continue their own way.

The verse says:

“When they are admonished, they mind not,”

Then even they go beyond this, as the verse says:

“And when they see a sign (miracle) they invite one another to scuff,”

In the third verse, it says:

“And they say: ‘This is nothing but an open sorcery.’”

They use the Arabic word *lhaṣal* (*this*) in order to despise it and to show that the miracles and Divine verses are worthless.

And the application of ‘sorcery’ had been for the sake that, from one side, the supernatural deeds of the Prophet of Islam (S) were not deniable, and, on the other side, they did not want to submit before them and accept them as a miracle.

The only word, which could show their wickedness and quench their desires, had been this very word: ‘sorcery’, which, in the meantime, shows the confession of the enemy upon the wonderful and extraordinary influence of the Qur’an and the miracles of the Prophet (S).

Surah As-Saffat – Verses 16-18

عِذًا مِتْنَا وَكُنَّا تُرَابًا وَعِظَامًا ءَأِنَّا لَمَبْعُوثُونَ

أَوْ ءَابَاؤُنَا الْأَوَّلُونَ

قُلْ نَعَمْ وَأَنْتُمْ دَاخِرُونَ

16. “(They say:) ‘When we are dead and have become dust and (rotten) bones, shall we (then) be raised up (again)?’”

17. “And also our forefathers?”

18. “Say: ‘Yes, (you all shall be raised) while you will be brought low’.”

The rejecters of resurrection, instead of reasoning, consider it as improbable.

This holy verse introduces the improbability of the deniers of Resurrection as follows:

“(They say:) ‘When we are dead and have become dust and (rotten) bones, shall we (then) be raised up (again)?’”

And worse than this, they say:

“And also our forefathers?”

Verily there has not remained from them aught but a little rotten bone or some scattered dust. Who can gather these scattered particles? And who can give life again to them?

But those blind-hearted persons had forgotten that on the first day all of them were dust and they were created from dust. If they were doubtful upon the Power of Allah, they should know that once He had shown them His Power, and if they were doubtful about the receptivity of dust, it would also have been proved once.

Moreover, the creation of the heavens and the earth, with all their greatness, has left no room for doubt upon the infinite Power of Allah in anybody.

It is noteworthy that they strengthened their statements upon denial with kinds of emphasises, which was an evidence on their ignorance and obstinacy.

The third verse contains a very harsh answer to them. It, addressing the prophet, says:

“Say: ‘Yes, (you all shall be raised) while you will be brought low’.”

The Arabic term /daxir/ is derived from /daxr/ and /duxur/ both of which mean: ‘disgrace’ and ‘humiliation’.

Surah As-Saffat – Verses 19-21

فَإِنَّمَا هِيَ زَجْرَةٌ وَاحِدَةٌ فَإِذَا هُمْ يَنْظُرُونَ

وَقَالُوا يَا وَيْلَنَا هَذَا يَوْمُ الدِّينِ

هَذَا يَوْمُ الْفَصْلِ الَّذِي كُنْتُمْ بِهِ تُكَذِّبُونَ

19. “Then it (the Resurrection) will only be a single cry, and behold, they begin to see (the scene of Hereafter)!”

20. “And they shall say: ‘Woe for us!’ This is the Day of Judgment.”

21. “(They will be told:) ‘This is the Day of Separation (of right and wrong), which you used to belie.”

Man becomes dust and it is not a barrier for his being quickened again.

The obstinately denying the Resurrection causes humiliation in the Hereafter.

This holy verse indicates that you think that quickening you and your forefathers is difficult for Allah, the Mighty, the Omnipotent. But by a single great cry, ordered from the side of Allah, all will suddenly come out of their graves, and, being alive, they all will see the scene of Resurrection by their own eyes, the thing which they would have been denying until that Day.

The verse says:

“Then it (the Resurrection) will only be a single cry, and behold, they begin to see (the scene of Hereafter)!”

The Arabic word **/zajrah/** is derived from **/zajr/** and, as we pointed out before, sometimes it means ‘drive away’, and sometimes means ‘cry’, and here the second meaning is meant. It points to the second Blast, which will be done by Seraph: the explanation about it will be stated in the commentary of the verses of Surah Az-Zumar, Allah willing.

The Arabic sentence **/yanzurun/ (they begin to see)** refers to their look at the scene of Hereafter awaiting for the punishment. And, however, its purpose is that not only they will be quickened, but also will gain again their senses of understanding and seeing by that one single cry.

Regarding to the content of these two Arabic words: **/zajratan wahidah/ (a single cry)** the verse refers to the speed of the event and that Resurrection will happen suddenly, and it is easy for the Might of Allah that by a commanded cry of ‘the angel of Resurrection’ everything will be arranged.

It is in this place that the moaning of these obstinate proud polytheists, which is the sign of their weakness and disgrace, is heard, as the verse says:

“And they shall say: ‘Woe for us!’ This is the Day of Judgment.”

Yes, when they observe the just court of Allah, the witnesses and the judgment of this court, and the sings of chastisement, they involuntarily cry moaning and thoroughly confess the truthfulness of

Resurrection, a confession that cannot solve any problem for them, or create the least mitigation in their sentence.

The third verse indicates that it is here that from the side of Allah or His angels they will be addressed, as the holy verse says:

“(They will be told:) ‘This is the Day of Separation (of right and wrong), which you used to belie.’”

This means: the separation of the right from the wrong, the separation of the rows of the wrong doers from the good doers, and the Day of arbitration of Allah, the Exalted.

Some other verses of the Qur’an contain a similar meaning like this very verse which have introduced the Hereafter Day as the Day of separation: /yaum-ul-fasl/. What a wonderful, expressive and horrible meaning it is! It is noteworthy that on the Day of Hereafter when the pagans speak about that Day they render it as the Day of Judgment.

But Allah refers to it as ‘the Day of separation’. This difference of meaning may be from this view that the guilty think only about their own retribution and sentence, while Allah points to a vaster meaning, one of which is the subject of sentence and it is one of its dimensions, and that the Day of Hereafter is the Day of separations.

Yes, it is the Day of separation of the rows of the ugly doers from the righteous ones, as Surah Yasin, No. 36, says:

“And (they will be told) get you aside this day O’ you the guilty ones!”.³

And how painful this is that they observe that their faithful children and relatives separate from them and go toward Paradise! Moreover, that Day is the Day of separation of the truth from false. The opposite schools and lines, and the true programs and false ones are not mixed with each other, like this word, Everyone of them must be set in their own position.

Besides all, that Day is the Separation Day, that is, the Day of Judgment, and the Lord of the Worlds, the Just, in the rank of judgment, will issue the most exact judgments about His servants, and it is here that there will be a complete disgrace for the polytheists.

Shortly speaking, the nature of this world is with the mixture of right and wrong, while the nature of Hereafter is the nature of separation of these two from each other.

That is why one of the names of Hereafter in the Qur’an, which has been numerously repeated, is /yaum-ul-fasl/ (the day of separation). In principle, on the day when all the hidden things are made manifest, the separation of the rows is unavoidable.

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1. Burhan, the commentary, Vol. 4, P. 15, Ad-Durr-ul-Manthur, Vol. 5, P. 271
 2. Rauh-ul-Ma'ali, following the verse
 3. Surah Yasin, No. 36, verse 56

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