

Surah al-Waqi'a, Chapter 56, Verses 1 – 40

(The Event)

Section (juz'): 27

Number of Verses: 96

General Overview of the Chapter

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

The Chapter was revealed in Mecca and it has 96 Verses. The title of the Chapter, Waqi'a, is a designation of Resurrection whose imminence is prognosticated in the opening Verse. The majority of the blessed Verses of the Chapter treat of Resurrection, its qualities and happenings, and division of mankind into peoples of Hell and Paradise on that Day. Thus, recitation of the Chapter is awakening.

Merits of Recitation of the Chapter

Numerous traditions are to be found in Islamic sources concerning the recitation of the Chapter an instance of which is a Prophetic tradition according to which:

"One who recites Surah al-Waqi'a will be excluded from the neglectful."¹

The blessed Verses of the Chapter are so shocking and awakening that no room is left for human neglect. It is narrated from Imam Sadiq (as):

*"Whoever recites Surah al-Waqi'a every Friday night, God Almighty will like him and will make him to be loved by all people. He will never suffer hardships, poverty, destitution, and other worldly afflictions. He will be amongst the friends of the Commander of the Faithful, Imam 'Ali (as)."*²

It goes without saying that such Blessings may not fall into the lot of one who merely recites the blessed Verses of the Chapter without attending to their significance, but recitation is supposed to follow intellection and acting upon Divine Injunctions.

Surah al-Waqi'a – Verses 1-2

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

إِذَا وَقَعَتِ الْوَاقِعَةُ

لَيْسَ لَوْفَعَتِهَا كَاذِبَةٌ

- 1. When the Great Event [Resurrection] befalls.*
- 2. There can be no denial of its befalling.*

As reflected in numerous Qur'anic Verses, the Events of Resurrection are initially accompanied by great and shocking happenings.

The blessed Chapter in question focuses on Resurrection and similar Events are being enumerated in its opening Verses, e.g.

"When the Great Even befalls, There can be no denial of its befalling"

since the Events preceding Resurrection shall be so shocking and awakening that their manifestations shall be reflected in all the constituent elements of the world.

The Arabic word waqi'a:

("event")

alludes to Resurrection, since it is inevitable. The word is also regarded as one of the designations of Resurrection. Some Qur'anic exegetes maintain that the Arabic word kadhiba is employed in the infinitive sense connoting that befalling of Resurrection shall be so crystal clear that it leaves no room for denial and discussion.

Some Qur'anic exegetes hold that it is used in its literal present participial sense saying that it reflects that befalling that Day is inevitable and there shall be no denial of the same.

It is worthy of note that following the blessed Qur'anic Verses on Divine Graciousness as attested in Chapter 55 (Surah al-Rahman) serve as a reminder of Resurrection which is owing to His Attribute of Graciousness and also designates that the posthumous survival of man constitutes the most exalted Emanation of His Graciousness.

According to some Qur'anic exegetes, the designation of the blessed Chapter alludes to the multiplicity of hardships to be inflicted at the Time. It is a source of encouragement for people to prepare themselves for such hard Day.

Surah al-Waqi'a – Verses 3-4

خَافِضَةٌ رَّافِعَةٌ

إِذَا رُجَّتِ الْأَرْضُ رَجًا

3. That Event lowers and elevates the system of creation and makes it upside down thus lowers the evil and elevates the good.

4. When the earth shall be shaken with a terrible shake.

Resurrection makes alterations in both the world and mankind. Thus, the blessed Verse 3 is saying that Resurrection lowers some people and elevates some others.

The arrogant, the disobedient, and the wrong-doers shall be denigrated whereas believers and righteous good-doers shall be elevated to the zenith of glory. The mighty shall be humiliated and sinners shall be cherished with no reason.

Some people shall fall into the depth of Hell and some others shall abide in the most exalted levels of Paradise. They are all the consequences of Divine Great and Encompassing Revolution.

In this vein, a tradition is narrated regarding the exegesis of the blessed Verse in question from Imam 'Ali ibn al-Husayn (as):

*"Resurrection shall be lowering since by God Almighty! Enemies of Allah shall be cast into Hellfire and it shall be elevating, since by God Almighty! The friends of Allah shall be elevated to the higher levels of Paradise."*³

Honor and humility and exalted and lower ranks shall become crystal clear on that Day as great figures have said that true poverty and affluence shall be manifest upon presenting the record of deeds before God Almighty.4

The blessed Verse 4 further treats of such Events, saying that Resurrection shall befall when the earth shall be shaken with a terrible shake as the occurrence of Resurrection and its terrible earthquakes is indubitable.

The word idha

("when")

is herein employed to connote inevitability.

Surah al-Waqi'a - Verses 5-6

وَيُسَّتِ الْجِبَالُ يَسًّا

فَكَانَتْ هَبَاءً مُنْبَثًّا

5. And the mountains shall be powdered to dust.

6. Therefore, they shall become scattering dust particles.

The blessed Verses 5 and 6 are saying that the earthquake shall be so enormous that it shall pulverize mountains into scattering dust particles. The Arabic word bussat derives from b-s-s denoting "grind by water."

The Arabic words haba' and munbath denote

"dust"

and

"scattered"

respectively. By haba' minute dust particles are intended which scatter and suspend in the air and are normally invisible unless one looks at them in sunlight penetrating into some dark place.

Now one may understand that the earthquake and the explosion are so enormous that they may

pulverize colossal mountains proverbial for solidity into scattered dust particles and the shout heard from such enormous explosion shall be even more horrible. In short, Qur'anic Verses present different depictions as to different stages of the enormous explosion of mountains.

It is needless to say that only God Almighty is All-Aware of the course of such events which may not be describable in our own terms. However, such meaningful allusions all reflect the enormity of such enormous explosion.

It is worthy of note that the earth which is our abode and resting place on which we strive to make our sustenance shall be perturbed and restless on that Day such that an unprecedented earthquake shall severely agitate the earth and.

The same motif is to be found elsewhere in the Holy Qur'an5 as well:

"O mankind! Fear Lord and be dutifully to Him! Indeed, the earthquake of the Hour [of Resurrection] shall be a terrible thing."

Thus, we are supposed to obedient and do righteous good deeds such that we may restrain ourselves from committing sins in order to avoid entanglement in torment on such Day.

Surah al-Waqi'a – Verses 7-9

وَكُنْتُمْ أَزْوَاجًا ثَلَاثَةً

فَأَصْحَابُ الْمَيْمَنَةِ مَا أَصْحَابُ الْمَيْمَنَةِ

وَأَصْحَابُ الْمَشْأَمَةِ مَا أَصْحَابُ الْمَشْأَمَةِ

7. And you shall be in three groups on that Day.

8. Therefore, people on the Right Hand are as if they are personifications of happiness.

9. And people on the Left Hand, how unfortunate shall they be because of their vices and unhappiness.

Depiction of the Great Event of Resurrection is followed by a treatment of the conditions of people on that Day.

They are divided into three groups;

("And you shall be in the three groups on that Day").

The Arabic word jawj is not only applied to feminine and masculine but also it connotes similar objects.

Since certain people shall be similar on the Day of Resurrection, the blessed Verse 8 treats of the first group, namely

the people on the Right Hand (ashab al-maymana)

whom are being referred to as fortunate, since the record of their deeds are given to their right hands.

They symbolize the saved believers doing righteous good deeds. They shall be granted Divine Rewards. The Arabic word maymana is cognate with yumna which denotes happiness. Thus, the first group includes the happy and the fortunate.

The blessed Verse 9 makes mention of

the people on the Left Hand (ashab al-mush'ama)

who are the unfortunate people.

How unfortunate they are that the records of their deeds shall be given to their left hands owing to their misery and unhappiness. They symbolize those who committed sins and did wrong.

The expression:

"people on the Left Hand"

reflects their utmost misery and unhappiness.

Surah al-Waqi'a – Verses 10–14

وَالسَّابِقُونَ السَّابِقُونَ

أُولَئِكَ الْمُقَرَّبُونَ

فِي جَنَّاتِ النَّعِيمِ

ثَلَاثَةٌ مِّنَ الْأَوَّلِينَ

وَقَلِيلٌ مِّنَ الْآخِرِينَ

- 10. And those foremost in doing righteous good deeds shall be foremost in receiving Rewards.**
- 11. These shall be the nearest Divine Threshold.**
- 12. In the Gardens abounding in Blessings.**
- 13. A multitude of those shall be from the ancients and former nations.**
- 14. And a few of those shall be from later generations.**

Taking the lead in matters of faith and doing righteous good deeds is meritorious. Those who take the lead in doing righteous good deeds in this world shall be foremost in receiving Divine Rewards.

Depicting the third group, the blessed Verses 10 and 11 are saying that "those foremost shall be nearest to Divine Threshold."

The Arabic word *sabiqun* is ad hoc applied to those who are not only foremost in matters of faith and belief, but are also foremost in doing righteous good deeds and in matters of human ethics. They serve as people's role models and leaders as a consequence of which they are nearest to Divine Threshold.

Therefore, different Qur'anic exegetes interpret their being foremost owing to their being foremost in obedience to Allah, establishing the five daily prayers, embarking upon jihad and emigration, repentance, and the like. Thus, Qur'anic exegetes address different aspects of such broad sense.

According to Islamic traditions, the Arabic word *sabiqun* is applied to Habil (Abel), the believer among the family of Pharaoh, Habib Najjar, and the Commander of the Faithful, Imam 'Ali (as) owing to their being foremost in their own communities, for instance Imam 'Ali (as) was the first man who converted to the Islamic faith.

Such instances do not restrict the semantic application of the word.

It is also worthy of note that Ibn 'Abbas narrates from the Messenger of Allah (S) that he asked the Noble Prophet of Islam (S) concerning the exegesis of the blessed Verse in question and he replied:

*"Gabriel said unto me that they are 'Ali (as) and his followers who shall be foremost in being admitted to Paradise and they shall be nearest to Divine Threshold owing to the respect accorded them by God Almighty."*⁶

These are actually the manifest and perfect instances of the aforesaid concept encompassing all who have been foremost in all nations and communities.

The blessed Verse 12 tersely depict the exalted state of:

"those nearest to Divine Threshold"

in the Gardens of Paradise abounding in Divine Blessings, saying that different material and immaterial Blessings of Paradise are in store for them. The depiction may also reflect that the Gardens of Paradise constitute the only place where Divine Blessings may be found. They stand in contrast against the gardens in this world which are the means of living and toil for mankind.

In like manner, the state of those nearest to Divine Threshold in this world is different than that of the Hereafter, since their exalted state in this world is accompanied by responsibilities, whereas the Hereafter is their resting place abounding in Blessings.

It goes without saying that "nearest" herein reflects their exalted state rather than spatial nearness, since God Almighty does not exist in space and is nearer to us than ourselves.

The blessed Verse 13 treats of the manner of diving people in former nations and the Muslim community, saying that:

"a multitude of those shall be from the ancients and former nations."

The blessed Verse 14 is saying that:

"and a few of those shall be from later generations"

in which the Arabic word thulla designates "group, multitude" and some Qur'anic exegetes maintain that it denotes "piece, part" which ad hoc connotes "enormous part."

According to the blessed Verse, a great multitude of those nearest to Divine Threshold are from former nations and few of them are from the Muslim community.

It is also worthy of note that certain believers may not be amongst those foremost in matters of belief, but they may possess certain qualities and characteristics thereby they may be on a par with "the foremost" in terms of being granted Divine Rewards.

In this vein, traditions have been narrated from Imam Muhammad Baqir (as) who said:

*"We are the foremost of the foremost and we are the last ones."*⁷

It is narrated from Imam Sadiq (as) that addressed to a number of his followers, he said:

*"You are the first and the last of those foremost in loving us in this world and the foremost in being admitted to Paradise in the Hereafter."*⁸

It is also worthy of note that some Qur'anic exegetes interpret the foremost and the last as the first and

the last Muslim communities that are accordingly the nearest to Divine Threshold.

Surah al-Waqi'a - Verses 15-16

عَلَى سُرُرٍ مَّوْضُونَةٍ

مُتَّكِنِينَ عَلَيْهَا مُتَقَابِلِينَ

15. On thrones laid side by side adorned with precious stones.

16. Reclining thereon, face to face.

The blessed twain Verses treat of the material and immaterial Blessings granted to those nearest to Divine Throne on the Day of Resurrection. Such Blessings are innumerable, they are depicted in the blessed Verses in question such that man with his limited intellectual capacities be able to comprehend them.

The blessed Verses are saying that thrones shall be prepared for those nearest to Divine Throne, thrones adorned with different jewels like rubies, diamonds, and emeralds. The blessed Verse 16 is saying that the people of Paradise shall recline upon those couches and thrones while they shall be face to face enjoying each other's society without being bored of loneliness.

It might be a reference to numerous thrones laid together thus according further glory to their majestic mansions. The Arabic word surur is the plural form of sarir denoting throne and mawdhuna designates a special fabric adorned with pearls and rubies.

Surah al-Waqi'a - Verses 17-19

يَطُوفُ عَلَيْهِمْ وِلْدَانٌ مُّخَلَّدُونَ

بِأَكْوَابٍ وَأَبَارِيقَ وَكَأْسٍ مِّن مَّعِينٍ

لَا يُصَدَّعُونَ عَنْهَا وَلَا يُنْزَفُونَ

17. Immortal youths shall go around them in glory and freshness,

18. With cups, jugs, and a glass of flowing springs of Paradise [or pure wine],

19. Wherefrom they shall get neither any aching of the head, nor any intoxication.

The first two blessed Verses in question are saying that the people of Paradise reclining on those magnificent thrones are in a safe place around whom boys and youths of fair face and good character possessing utmost beauty move. They were originally created in Paradise and are immortal.

They serve the people of Paradise with jugs and glasses with or without handle, namely all kinds of vessels. The third blessed Verse is saying that the people of Paradise drink from bowels filled with the wine of Paradise and pure water which may allude to the water of springs flowing in Paradise, or pure wine mingled with camphor and ginger.

Such wine causes neither headache nor intoxication. The Arabic word akwab is applied to jugs without handles and narrow mouths, similar to mundane jugs. The Arabic word abariq is the plural of ibriq denoting a vessel with a handle and a narrow mouth. Ka's designates a glass brimming with wine or other drinks.

Ma'in is applied to drink. The verbal form yusadda'un denotes headache. The verbal form yunzafun derives from n-z-f originally denoting gradual extraction of water from a well but it ad hoc connotes "driving mad."

Surah al-Waqi'a - Verses 20-21

وَفَاكِهَةٍ مِّمَّا يَتَخَيَّرُونَ

وَلَحْمِ طَيْرٍ مِّمَّا يَشْتَهُونَ

20. And with fruit that they may choose.

21. And with the flesh of fowls that they desire.

The blessed twain Verses further treat of the material Blessings in store for the people of Paradise who are nearest to Divine Throne, saying youths in Paradise shall make available to them whatever kinds of fruits and the flesh of fowls which they desire. It is worthy of note that the precedence of fruit over flesh

is that the former is healthier and consumption of fruit before meal is far better.

Surah al-Waqi'a - Verses 22-24

وَحُورٌ عَيْنٌ

كَأَمْثَالِ اللُّؤْلُؤِ الْمَكْنُونِ

جَزَاءً بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

22. And fair females with wide, lovely eyes,

23. Like pearls in shells.

24. A Reward for what they used to do.

The first twain blessed Verses are saying that the people of Paradise shall have spouses from amongst huris with fair complexions and wide black eyes who are preserved like pearls in shells. The Arabic word hur is the plural form of hawra' and ahwar, denoting those whose pupils of eyes are raven black and the whiteness of their eyes are quite transparent.

The Arabic word 'ayn, the plural forms of which are 'ayna' and a'yan, denotes "wide-eyed." The emphasis is owing to the fact that most of the beauty of mankind lies in their eyes. In other words, the spouses in Paradise are so beautiful that eyes shall be astonished by looking at them. The Arabic word maknun denotes "concealed" and it herein connotes being preserved in shells, since pearls are more transparent and more beautiful while they are still lying untouched in their shells.

The expression may connote that they are totally preserved from other people's eyes, since they are untouched and unseen by others.

The third blessed Verse is saying that the Divine Blessings shall be bestowed upon them because of their righteous good deeds, such that one may not falsely imagine that such innumerable Divine Blessings of Paradise shall be bestowed upon anyone with no reason, but being accorded such Blessings requires unfaltering belief and constant doing of righteous good deeds.

Surah al-Waqi'a - Verses 25-26

لَا يَسْمَعُونَ فِيهَا لَغْوًا وَلَا تَأْتِيَمًا

إِلَّا قِيلًا سَلَامًا سَلَامًا

25. No vain talk shall they hear therein, nor any sinful speech.

26. But only the saying of peace, peace!

The Arabic word laghw denotes vain talk and ta'thim is applied to ascribing committing of sin to others. There shall be no psychological pain in Paradise. Mundane pleasures usually entail vain talk and committing sins, but it is different in Paradise since it is the abode of peace and serenity.

Vain talk and sin may not penetrate a peaceful and serene community. The people of Paradise shall not hear anything but the sayings of Peace by God Almighty, the angels nearest unto Him, and the salutations and greetings exchanged amongst them.

They shall attend sessions brimming with enthusiasm, friendship, love, and purity.

Paradise is the Abode of Peace, Serenity, and Security:

("For them shall be the Home of Peace with their Lord. And He shall be their Protector and Helper because of what they used to do,")⁹.

Surah al-Waqi'a - Verses 27-29

وَأَصْحَابُ الْيَمِينِ مَا أَصْحَابُ الْيَمِينِ

فِي سِدْرٍ مَّخْضُودٍ

وَطَلْحٍ مَّنْضُودٍ

27. And those on the Right Hand, how [fortunate] shall be those on the Right Hand!

28. [They shall be] among thornless lote trees,

29. And among fragrant talh trees beautiful of color and abundant in leaves.

Following depictions of material and immaterial Blessings bestowed upon those nearest to Divine Threshold, the blessed Verses in question treat of the people of the Right Hand. They shall be the happy group whose brilliant record of deeds shall be given to their right hands.

The blessed Verse 27 makes mention of their exalted state saying that the people of the Right Hand are so fortunate. This is the best expression of their state connoting indescribable attributes. The blessed Verse 28 is saying that they shall rest beneath thornless lote trees.

It is actually the best depiction possible for human perception regarding trees in Paradise. It is narrated that a Bedouin asked the Noble Prophet (S) regarding the exegesis of the blessed Verse.

The Noble Prophet of Islam (S) replied:

*"God Almighty has cut off the thorns of this tree and has made fruits instead of thorns, such that the different fruits are unlike each other."*¹⁰

The third blessed Verse is saying that they rest in the shade green, fragrant trees which are beautiful of color. Some Qur'anic exegetes say that banana trees are being intended which have quite broad, green, and beautiful leaves and sweet and delicious fruit. The Arabic word mandhud denotes "dense."

Surah al-Waqi'a - Verses 30-33

وَوَظِلٍّ مَّمْدُودٍ

وَمَاءٍ مَّسْكُوبٍ

وَفَاكِهَةٍ كَثِيرَةٍ

لَا مَقْطُوعَةٍ وَلَا مَمْنُوعَةٍ

- 30. And in shade long extended,**
31. And by waterfalls,
32. And fruit in plenty,
33. Whose supply is not cut off, nor are they out of reach,

The four blessed Verses further depict heavenly Blessings like long extended shades. Some Qur'anic exegetes interpret the long extended shade as a state between the twain risings when shades encompass everywhere.

According to a tradition narrated from the Noble Prophet of Islam (S),

"long extended shade"

connotes that the people of Paradise shall never be harmed by sunlight, but they shall rest in extended and pleasant shades at all times. 11

The blessed Verse 31 is saying that the people of Paradise abide by quite beautiful waterfalls. The Arabic word maskub denotes flowing and since waterfalls create the most beautiful landscapes and its whispers gives delight to the soul and its scenery pleases the eyes, it is regarded as one of the Divine Blessings bestowed upon the people of Paradise.

The blessed Verse 32 is saying that such trees and flowing water are accompanied by different fruits. Thus, the blessed Verse 33 is saying that fruits of Paradise are different from those of this world in that they are never cut off nor are they out of reach.

Fruits of this world are limited to certain seasons and solely appear on branches for a few weeks or months. Besides heavenly fruits never entail harms for certain people, namely, unlike fruits of this world, they possess general availability.

Surah al-Waqi'a - Verses 34-37

وَفُرُشٍ مَّرْفُوعَةٍ

إِنَّا أَنْشَأْنَاهُنَّ إِنِشَاءً

فَجَعَلْنَاهُنَّ أَبْكَارًا

عُرْبًا أْتْرَابًا

34. And endeared women.

35. Indeed, We created them of a novel creation.

36. And made all of them virgins.

37. Loving their husbands and of equal age, fluent, and sweet of tongue.

Referring to another Blessing, the blessed Verse 34 is saying that the people of Paradise have cherished women. The Arabic word furush is the plural form of firash originally denoting any kind of bed spread for rest.

It is narrated from the Commander of the Faithful, Imam 'Ali (as) that concerning the exegesis of the blessed Verse he said:

"Precious carpets are herein intended which are spread on their couches."

Some Qur'anic exegetes maintain that by furush, women are intended, since woman is termed thus in the Arabic tongue. The adjective marfu'a connotes their exalted state in terms of beauty and endearment.

The blessed Verses 35–37 enumerate four characteristics for huris in Paradise. Firstly, they are women in Paradise who have been created in Paradise rather than in this world. Secondly, they are virgins.

Thirdly, they love their husbands. Fourthly, they are thirty three years of age. According to some traditions, all the people of Paradise are fair of complexion, pure, and hairless of body and have black eyes and very beautiful hair.

Surah al-Waqi'a – Verses 38–40

لِأَصْحَابِ الْيَمِينِ

ثُلَّةٌ مِّنَ الْأُولَىٰ

وَتِلْكَ مِّنَ الْآخِرِينَ

38. All these are for the people on the Right Hand.

39. A multitude of those [on the Right Hand] shall be from former nations.

40. And a multitude of those [on the Right Hand] shall be from the later generations.

All these Blessings are in store for the people on the Right Hand who are righteous good-doing believers. Since the records of their deeds shall be given to their right hands and they shall be called the fortunate and the happy, they are designated as the people on the Right Hand.

It is worthy of note that the state of those nearest to Divine Threshold may not be compared to that of the people of the Right Hand, because the former abide within the proximity of God Almighty whereas the latter dwell in the affluence of Blessings.

The Arabic word *thulla* in the third and the fourth blessed Verses in question originally denotes a piece of wool, though it connotes large number and multitude. Qur'anic exegetes differ as to the contextual meanings of "a multitude from former nations" and "a multitude from the later generations.

The majority of the exegetes, based on the contents of certain traditions, maintain that

"former nations"

and

"later generations"

both refer to those nations living before the Noble Prophet's (S) community. However, some Qur'anic exegetes hold that the former designates pre-Islamic nations and the latter refers to the community of the Noble Prophet of Islam (S) whose population is twice the former.

1. Tafsir Majma' al-Bayan; Tafsir Burhan.

2. Majma' al-Bayan; Tafsir Burhan, under the blessed Verse in question; Tafsir Nur al-Thiqalayn. Other traditions narrated in this vein are to be found in tradition and exegetic sources; however, they were not cited for the sake of brevity.

3. Saduq's Khisal; Tafsir Nur al-Thiqalayn, under the blessed Verse in question.

4. Ghurar al-Hikam.

5. 22:1

6. Tafsir Nur al-Thiqalayn, under the blessed Verse in question; Tafsir Safi; Khisal; Ikmal al-Din; Tafsir Burhan, under the blessed Verse in question. The tradition is also attested in some Sunni sources including exegetic works.

7. Tafsir Safi, under the blessed Verse in question; Tafsir Atyab al-Bayan and other exegetic works.

8. Tafsir Safi; Tafsir Burhan; see also other exegetic works.

9. 6:127

10. Tafsir Ruh al-Ma'ani; Durr al-Manthur, under the blessing Verse in question.

11. Rawdha al-Kafi; Tafsir Nur al-Thiqalayn, vol. 5, p. 216.

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