

Surah al-Waqi'a, Verses 41 – 96

Surah al-Waqi'a – Verses 41–44

وَأَصْحَابُ الشِّمَالِ مَا أَصْحَابُ الشِّمَالِ

فِي سَمُومٍ وَحَمِيمٍ

وَوَظِلٍّ مِّنْ يَحْمُومٍ

لَا بَارِدٍ وَلَا كَرِيمٍ

41. And those on the Left Hand, how [unfortunate] shall be those on the Left Hand!

42. They are in fierce hot winds and boiling water,

43. And shadow of black smoke,

44. That shadow is neither cool nor pleasant,

Following a treatment of the great Blessings of those nearest to Divine Threshold and the people of the Right Hand, the blessed Verses in question deal with the horrible and excruciating torments in store for the people on the Left Hand in order to make a comparison between the three groups, saying that the people on the Left Hand shall be so unfortunate that the records of their deeds shall be given unto their left hands symbolizing that they are sinners, impure, wrong-doers, and worthy of being cast into Hellfire.

Then, three torments of theirs are being enumerated: They are in fierce hot winds and boiling water; they are in a shadow of stifling and burning smoke; the fierce hot winds on the one hand and the boiling water and the stifling and hot smoke on the other side entangle them in such manner that they may not bear it any longer. Even if they be not chastised with further torments, their suffering suffices to punish them.

The blessed Verse 44 is saying that they shall be in a shadow which shall be neither cool nor pleasant. Shadows preserves man from direct sunlight, winds, and showers at times, but it is manifest they their shadows shall be unpleasant since they are but stifling black smoke which may solely harm.

Surah al-Waqi'a - Verses 45-47

إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا قَبْلَ ذَلِكَ مُتْرَفِينَ

وَكَانُوا يُصِرُّونَ عَلَى الْحِنثِ الْعَظِيمِ

وَكَانُوا يَقُولُونَ أَإِذَا مِتْنَا وَكُنَّا تُرَابًا وَعِظَامًا أَأَنْتَا لَمَبْعُوثُونَ

45. Indeed, before that they indulged in luxury,

46. And were persisting in committing grave sins.

47. And they used to say: "When we die and become dust and bones shall we then indeed be resurrected?"

The sources of the sufferings of the people on the Left Hand are expressed tersely in three clauses. Firstly, they were vain and indulged in the pleasures of the flesh in this world. The Arabic word mutraf is applied to one who is vain and rebellious owing to indulgence in mundane pleasures. 1

It is true that all the people on the Left Hand are not amongst those indulging in affluence and those who disobeyed Divine Commands. The Holy Qur'an refers to their chiefs. Likewise we notice that corruptions in human societies are due to the vanity and obduracy of those who lead others astray.

Such wrong-doers are the main sources of all the battles and bloodsheds and concupiscent inclinations. Thus, the Holy Qur'an above all points at them. It is worthy of note that Blessings include youth, health, and long life besides material possessions which should be employed toward Divine Satisfaction.

The blessed Verse 46 is saying that they persisted in committing grave sins. The Arabic word hinth

originally denotes any kind of sin, but the word is mainly applied to breaking one's promise and turning away from one's word, since they are manifest instances of sins.

Thus, the characteristics of the people on the Left Hand does not solely lie in committing sins, but their persistence in committing grave sins, since the people on the Right Hand may commit sins as well, but they never persist in committing sins and when they see that they have sinned, they immediately repent.

Some Qur'anic exegetes interpret the Arabic phrase *hinh 'adim* as polytheism, since it is the gravest sin as it is reflected elsewhere in the Glorious Qur'an:

"Indeed, Allah forgives not that partners be associated with Him in worship, but He forgives except that anything else to whom He wills; and whoever sets up partners with Allah in worship, he has verily invented a grave sin."

Some also maintain that:

"grave sin"

is applied to lying which is the gravest sin and the source of committing other grave sins, particularly instances which entail denial of Prophets (as) and Resurrection. However, the general meaning of the blessed Verse reflects that these are all instances of "great sin."

The blessed Verse 47 is saying that their evil deeds included their saying that when they die and turn into bones and dust, they may not be raised from the dead. Thus, denial of Resurrection is the source of many a sin and the same constitutes another characteristic of the people on the Left Hand.

The expression:

"they used to say"

reflects that they persisted in the denial of Resurrection even though they witnessed the scenes of Resurrection in this world. They saw that animate beings like plants withered away and turned into dust, but they were rejuvenated.

They neglected the fact that One Who basically created the world in the beginning shall be Omnipotent to recreate the world of existence, but they persisted in the denial of Resurrection.

Surah al-Waqi'a – Verses 48–50

أَوْ آبَاؤُنَا الْأَوَّلُونَ

قُلْ إِنَّ الْأَوَّلِينَ وَالْآخِرِينَ

لَمَجْمُوعُونَ إِلَىٰ مِيقَاتٍ يَوْمٍ مَّعْلُومٍ

48. "And also our forefathers?"

49. Say: "Indeed, those of old, and those of later times,

50. "All shall certainly be gathered together on an appointed Day.

Addressed to the Noble Prophet of Islam (S), the blessed Verses in question say unto him that the former and the later generations of them from amongst their forefathers to their last generation see the light in this world and they shall all get together on an appointed Day when shall meet one another and the records of their deeds shall be investigated.

The Arabic word miqat ("meeting place") is cognate with waqt denoting a certain time appointed for carrying out something and it herein connotes the appointed time for Resurrection, in which all mankind shall meet so that their records of deeds be investigated.

The word miqat is also applied to a certain place appointed for carrying out something, like those of pilgrimage to Mecca where pilgrims put on their pilgrimage garbs (ihram). The blessed Verses in question clearly reflect that all mankind shall be resurrected on the same day and the same is also attested in other Qur'anic Verses.

It goes without saying that the appointed time of Resurrection is only known by God Almighty and others, even His Messengers (as) and archangels nearest unto Him, are unaware of it.

Surah al-Waqi'a - Verse 51-53

ثُمَّ إِنَّكُمْ أَيُّهَا الضَّالُّونَ الْمُكذِبُونَ

لَأَكُلُونَ مِن شَجَرٍ مِّن زُقُومٍ

فَمَالِؤُونَ مِنْهَا الْبُطُونَ

51. "Then moreover, indeed you the erring deniers!

52. "You indeed shall eat of the tree of Zaqqum.

53. "Then you shall fill your bellies therewith.

Proceeding with the enumeration of the chastisements of the people on the Left Hand, the blessed Verses 51–53 address them saying:

"Then, O erring deniers! You shall eat of the tree of Zaqqum filling your bellies by it."

The preceding Verses just treated of the dwelling place of the people on the Left Hand in Hell, but the blessed Verses in question deal with their food. In this respect, they stand in contrast to those nearest unto Divine Threshold and the people on the Right Hand.

It is worthy of note that the phrase

"the erring deniers"

mentioned in the blessed Verse 51 is applied to those who besides erring they are obdurate against Truth and persist in their error. As mentioned above, Zaqqum is a bitter, foul of smell and taste, whose juice is inflammatory. It is at times applied to any disgusting food given to the people of Hell.²

The clause:

"Then you shall fill your bellies therewith"

reflects that they shall be so hungry that they devour such disgusting food and fill up their bellies with it.

Surah al-Waqi'a – Verses 54–56

فَشَارِبُونَ عَلَيْهِ مِنَ الْحَمِيمِ

فَشَارِبُونَ شُرْبَ الْهَيْمِ

هَذَا نُزِّلُهُمْ يَوْمَ الدِّينِ

54. "And drink boiling water on top of it.

55. "And you shall drink it like thirsty camels!"

56. That shall be their preliminary entertainment on the Day of Resurrection!

The blessed Verses in question are saying that when they eat the disgusting food, they become thirsty. But, what shall their drink be? The blessed Qur'anic Verses reflect that they shall drink boiling water on top of the disgusting food such that they are likened to thirsty camels suffering from dropsy or edema. Camels afflicted with the disease get so thirsty and drink so much water that they perish.

This is the fate of the erring and the deniers on the Day of Resurrection. The Arabic word hamim denotes very hot and boiling water. The Arabic phrase wali hamim is applied to a very intimate friend.

The word hammam ("bathroom") is a cognate of the same. The word him is applied to burning thirst or dropsy with which camels may be afflicted. Some Qur'anic exegetes maintain that the word is applied to sandy deserts absorbing water even in large quantities.

The blessed Verse 56 makes another reference to the food and drink in question saying that they shall be their means of entertainment. Au contraire, the people on the Right Hand rest in very pleasant shades and eat of the best fruits and drink of sweet spring water and pure wine and are absorbed in Divine Love.

Thus, there shall be a great difference between the twain groups. The Arabic word nuzul is applied to the preliminary entertainment provided for the company who are ad hoc disbelievers and further excruciating torments shall be in store for them.

Thus, God Almighty is Just and His Chastisements are Fair. All hardships are the consequences of deeds and that Day shall be the Day of Recompense and Reward.

Surah al-Waqi'a - Verses 57-61

نَحْنُ خَلَقْنَاكُمْ فَلَوْلَا تُصَدِّقُونَ

أَفَرَأَيْتُمْ مَا تُمْنُونَ

أَأَنْتُمْ تَخْلُقُونَهُ أَمْ نَحْنُ الْخَالِقُونَ

نَحْنُ قَدَرْنَا بَيْنَكُمْ الْمَوْتَ وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمَسْبُوقِينَ

عَلَى أَنْ نُبَدِّلَ أَمْثَالَكُمْ وَنُنشِئَكُمْ فِي مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

57. We created you then why do you believe not?

58. Have you seen what is emitted into wombs?

59. Is it you who create it in the form of man, or are We the Creator?

60. We have decreed death to you all, and We are not outstripped.

61. To transfigure you and create you in forms that you know not.

Resuming the treatment of deniers of Resurrection, the blessed Verses in question deal with the arguments substantiating Resurrection. Such arguments strengthen the pillars of faith and belief in Resurrection and ensure man of the Divine Promises concerning those nearest unto Divine Threshold, the people on the Right Hand, and the people on the Left Hand.

They open with saying that God Almighty created you. Why do you not believe in recreation? Why are you surprised on Resurrection and physical raising of the dead after having been turned to dust? Did He not create you from earth? Why do you deny it?

The argument is like the one attested elsewhere in the Glorious Qur'an3 saying:

"And he puts forth for Us a parable and forgets his own creation. He says: "Who will give life to these bones after they are rotten and have turned into dust?" Say: "He shall give life to them Who created them for the first time! And He is the Omniscient of every creation!"

The blessed Verses 58 and 59 read:

"Have you seen what is emitted into wombs? Is it you who create it in the form of man [through different embryonic stages], or are We the Creator [Who each and every day turns the insignificant and worthless semen into a new form and recreate everything]?"

Do you cause all these astonishing developments perplexing all thinkers or is it God Almighty Who causes them? Is the He Who is All-Able to Recreate everything unable to raise the dead on the Day of Resurrection?

Furthermore, taking into account the findings of modern scientists concerning this seemingly insignificant drop, it becomes manifest that it is a combination of male sperm and female ovum. Sperm constitutes microscopic cells and two to five hundred million spermatozoa, as large as the population of a number of countries, upon each ejaculation.⁴

It is a source of surprise that such microscopic cell grows with an astounding speed following its intermingling with ovum and makes human cells. Although all the cells are seemingly alike, but they immediately divide and form the heart, the limbs, the ears and eyes and each of them move to its particular place.

In short, semen undergoes drastic development in the embryonic stage until the infant sees the light. All these developments occur in the light of constant Divine Creatorship. It is worthy of note that the form of human beings is simply made through the ejaculation of semen into womb. Is it not a manifest argument for Resurrection substantiating that Divine Omnipotence shall raise the dead?

The blessed Verse 60 is saying that God Almighty decreed death to all and He is not outstripped by anyone. He shall never be vanquished. Decreeing death does not mean that He cannot bestow everlasting life.

Consequently, the blessed Verse 61 is saying that decreeing death aims at taking away some of you and substituting you with others and finally at recreating you in another world unknown to you. Thus, the law of death clearly reflects that the world is a passage rather than a permanent abode. It is like a bridge rather than the destination, since had it been the destination, it would have been intransient.

In short, based on these blessed Verses, one may draw three conclusions. Firstly, the creation and emergence of human beings and all the world of existence is dependent upon Divine Omnipotence and he is outstripped by no one. Secondly, human survival and life span are dependent upon Divine Will. Thirdly, God Almighty Who created you out of nothing is All-Able to turn you into those like you.

It may intend to say that God Almighty is All-Able to make you perish and recreate human beings like you. It may also indicate that He is Omnipotent to turn you into beings upon Resurrection of whom you are unaware. In other words, God Almighty is All-Able to make you appear in your own dispositions and characters.

The last justification rests on the blessed Qur'anic Verse:

"And We make you in forms of which you are unaware"

and also many traditions reflecting that mankind shall enter the Plain of Resurrection in the forms of their deeds.

Surah al-Waqi'a - Verse 62

وَلَقَدْ عَلِمْتُمُ النَّشْأَةَ الْأُولَىٰ فَلَوْلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ

62. And indeed, you have already known the first form of creation: why then do you not believe in recreation?

The blessed Verse 62 reminds man that he was created in this world and proceeded through the course of all the developments of creation from the time that he was a drop of semen to the last stage of development. He proceeded through all the stages constantly from potentiality into actuality and from deficiency to perfection.

Man comprehends through experiments and his experience that each and every being proceeds on the path toward perfection such that they may attain to the goal of their creation. Now, why does he not acknowledge that as the noblest of creatures, he is supposed to proceed on the path of perfection to attain a certain goal?

It is evident that man may not attain to his final goal without another creation such that he may attain to his last actuality and the final goal of his existence. Failing to attain to such final goal, his creation as well as that of the world which is created for his perfection will be of no avail and the Absolutely All-Wise Creator may never act unwisely.

Thus, it shall be on Resurrection that each and every being shall attain to its final goal, perfection, actuality. Thus, man shall see the Recompense of his deeds and shall find everlasting life.

Surah al-Waqi'a - Verses 63-67

أَفَرَأَيْتُمْ مَا تَحْرُثُونَ

أَأَنْتُمْ تَزْرَعُونَهُ أَمْ نَحْنُ الزَّارِعُونَ

لَوْ نَشَاءُ لَجَعَلْنَاهُ حُطَامًا فَظَلَلْتُمْ تَفَكَّهُونَ

إِنَّا لَمُغْرَمُونَ

بَلْ نَحْنُ مَحْرُومُونَ

63. Have you ever thought about what you have sown in the ground?

64. Is it you that make it grow, or are We the Grower?

65. Were it Our Will, We could crumble it to dry pieces and you would be left in perplexity.

66. Such that you say "Indeed, we are verily losers!"

67. "Nay, but we are deprived and unfortunate."

The blessed Verses in question as well as the following ones refer to three arguments each of which bear testimony to Divine Omnipotence in human life: creation of seeds, water, and fire as the three pillars of human life.

Seeds of crops constitute the most important elements of nutrition; water is the most important drink; fire is the most important means for the preparation of food and carrying out other life issue.

Thus, the blessed Verse 63 asks:

"What you ever thought about what you sow in the ground?"

The blessed Verse 64 further asks:

"Do you make it grow or We make it grow?"

It would be of interest to notice that the verbal form tahruthun ("you sow seeds") derives from h-r-th "sow seeds and preparing them for growth" but the verbal form tazra'un ("you cultivate") is from the root z-r-' ("to cultivate, to farm"). It is evident that man only sows but God Almighty is He Who makes the seeds grow.

In this vein, a tradition is narrated from the Noble Prophet (S), saying:

*"Do not say that you cultivated, but say that you sowed, since God Almighty is the True Cultivator."*⁵

The reason is that man's role in the process of agriculture is like that of his in the process of procreation, namely he solely throws seeds or ejaculates semen and It is God Almighty Who causes the growth of a microscopic cell in favorable conditions. The seed uses the nutritive elements available in it, sprouts, and develops roots; then it uses the nutritive elements in the soil with an astounding speed.

The enormous laboratory of the plant functions and makes the stems, leaves, and clusters and at times one single seed engenders hundreds or even thousands of seeds. Scientists maintain that such laboratory is far more sophisticated and perplexing than those used in a highly developed industrial city with its numerous factories. Now, God Almighty Who created such system through His Omnipotence is also All-Able to raise the dead.

The blessed Verse 65 is saying:

"Were it Our Will, We could crumble it to dry pieces and you would be left in perplexity."

God Almighty is All-Able to cause venomous winds blow onto seeds such that they nip them in the bud or afflict them with other blights, like locusts. He may even cause lightning destroy them such that a bunch of withered pieces may remain. Then, you will be perplexed and regretful.

Now, were you the true cultivators, such things would have never happened. Therefore, you should know that such Blessings spring from another source.

The Arabic word hutam, deriving from h-t-m, originally denotes "breaking something" but it is often applied to breaking dried up things, like rotten bones or withered stems. The word herein connotes "hay."

Some Qur'anic exegetes also maintain that the word may ad hoc connote rotting of seeds underneath the earth and thus impeding them from growth.⁶

The Arabic verbal form tafakkahun ("you are left in perplexity") is a cognate of fakiha ("fruit") and fukaha ("witticism; jokes [as the fruit of friendly assemblies]") derives from f-k-h which is at times, as in the blessed Verse in question, employed in the sense of "to be perplexed."

The blessed Verses 66 and 67 read:

"You are astounded saying that you are verily losers. But we are totally deprived and unfortunate."

Were you the true cultivators, would you have the same fate? Such instances clearly reflect that He is the One Who makes an insignificant seed grow into a fresh plant which may engender hundreds or even thousands of seeds. Such plants are the food for men and their leaves, stems, and branches are fodder; even their roots and other parts may be used as herbs in curing different ailments.

Surah al-Waqi'a - Verses 68-70

أَفَرَأَيْتُمُ الْمَاءَ الَّذِي تَشْرَبُونَ

أَأَنْتُمْ أَنْزَلْتُمُوهُ مِنَ الْمُزْنِ أَمْ نَحْنُ الْمُنزِلُونَ

لَوْ نَشَاءُ جَعَلْنَاهُ أُجَاجًا فَلَوْلَا تَشْكُرُونَ

68. Have you thought about the water that you drink.

69. Is it you who cause it from the rain clouds to come down, or are We the Causer of it to come down?

70. If We willed, We indeed could make it salt: why then do you not give thanks?

These blessed Verses further treat of Resurrection reflecting Divine Omnipotence over everything including raising of the dead.

The blessed Verse 68 asks:

"Have you thought about the water that you drink?"

The blessed Verse 69 poses the question:

"Is it you who cause it from the rain clouds to come down, or are We the Causer of it to come down?"

The Arabic word muzn denotes white rain cloud. The Arabic word ujaj is applied to salty and bitter water. These Verses make human conscience encounter a series of questions and make them acknowledge Divine Omnipotence. The blessed Verse 68 is asking men that have they ever thought about the water as their means of subsistence.

Who is commanding the sun to shine upon the face of oceans, purify salty and bitter water and make it into pure and sweet water and evaporate it? Who commands vapors to condense into rain? Who commands winds to move clouds and send them over scorched and dead lands?

Who has made higher strata of atmosphere to lose the capacity to absorb the vapor when it is cold as a consequence of which vapors turn into rain drops descending unfalteringly upon lands? If the sun ceases to shine for one year, winds cease to blow, higher strata of atmosphere keep vapors, and the heaven fails to send down rain, you shall die of thirst and your animals, gardens, and farms shall die.

God Almighty who is All-Able to bestow such blessings easily upon you through such means shall be Omnipotent to raise the dead like the dead lands which are rejuvenated through absorption of rain. All these instances reflect Divine Unity and Glory.

How is it that you do not show gratitude for Divine Blessings? Had He willed, he would have allowed aquatic mineral to evaporate into the heaven to form salty and bitter rain clouds raining bitter brine like sea water, but it is through His Divine Omnipotence that he does not allow minerals as well as noxious microbes to evaporate onto the heaven thus polluting rain drops.

Consequently, if the air happens to be free from pollution, rain water is the purest and sweetest water.

It is also worthy of attention that the Noble Prophet (S) when desiring to drink water said:

"Praise be to the Lord Who through His Graciousness, made pure and sweet water available to us without making available bitter and salty water unto us."7

Surah al-Waqi'a - Verses 71-74

أَفَرَأَيْتُمُ النَّارَ الَّتِي تُورُونَ

أَأَنْتُمْ أَنْشَأْتُمْ شَجَرَتَهَا أَمْ نَحْنُ الْمُنشِئُونَ

نَحْنُ جَعَلْنَاهَا تَذْكَرَةً وَرَمَاقًا لِلْمُقْوِينَ

فَسَبِّحْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الْعَظِيمِ

71. Have you seen the fire which you kindle?

72. Is it you who made the tree thereof to grow, or are We the Grower?

73. We have made it a Reminder [of Hellfire] and an article of use for the travelers.

74. Then, glorify with praises the Name of your Lord, the Most Glorified.

The blessed Verses in question treat of the last argument presented for the acknowledgement of Resurrection. It is the creation of fire which is the most significant means of human life and the most effective means in all industries.

The blessed Verse 71 is asking:

"Have you ever thought about the fire which you kindle? Have you created the trees wherewith you kindle fire or We have created them?"

The Arabic verbal form tawrun

("you kindle")

is cognate with wara and ira' denoting "covering" and connoting the fire potential in the means of making fire which appears through sparkling. It is worthy of note that today we make use of matches, lighters,

and the like to make fire but formerly iron and flint were used for making fire.

Arabs of Hijaz used two trees growing in deserts named murkh and 'affar for kindling fire such that the former was placed underneath and the latter was struck against it and they sparkled like flint stones.

Some Qur'anic exegetes maintain that the blessed Verses in question reflect Divine Omnipotence by saying that it is through His Will that fire is potentially existent in the wood of such trees as He created fire in the "green tree" (shajar akhdhar) despite the fact that trees live by water.

God Almighty Who created fire and water beside each other or even one in the other. Then, why do you say that He cannot raise the dead on the Day of Resurrection?

The blessed Verse 73 further adds:

"We have made it a Reminder [of Hellfire] and an article of use for the travelers."

Emergence of fire from green trees reminds raising of the dead on the Day of Resurrection on the one hand and fire serves as a reminder for Hellfire on the other; as it is narrated from the Noble Prophet (S):

"The fire which you kindle

*is one part of the seventy parts of Hellfire."*⁸

Finally, fire is one of the most significant discoveries in making which God Almighty makes all the contributions and human contributions are quite insignificant. Furthermore, it was through the discovery of fire that man entered another phase of civilization. The Glorious Qur'an tersely alludes to all these truths by such brief clause.

It is also worthy of note that the immaterial benefit of fire, namely reminding man of Hellfire and the Day of Resurrection, precedes the material use of the same, since the former bears further significance and plays the fundamental role in this respect.

The blessed Verse 74 draws a conclusion by saying:

"Then, glorify with praises the Name of your Lord, the Most Glorified."

God Almighty, the Creator of all these Blessings each of which serve as a reminder of Resurrection and Divine Unity, Omnipotence, and Greatness, deserves to be praised and glorified of any defect and fault. He is the Lord and the Greatest, the All-Mighty, the Omnipotent. The blessed Verse seemingly addresses the Noble Prophet (S), but it actually addresses all mankind.

It would be of interest to make mention of three meaningful traditions regarding the blessed Verses narrated from the Noble Prophet (S) and the Commander of the Faithful, Imam 'Ali (as).

1. According to Tafsir Ruh al-Ma'ani, it is narrated from Imam 'Ali (as) that one night when he was establishing his prayer reciting Surah al-Waqi'a, he came unto the blessed Verses:

"Have you seen what is emitted into wombs? Is it you who create it in the form of man, or are We the Creator?"

he said thrice:

"Yes, You are the Creator of man, O Lord!"

When he came unto the blessed Verse:

"Is it you that make it grow, or are We the Grower?"

he said thrice:

"Yes, You are the Tye Cultivator, O Lord!"

When he came unto the blessed Verse:

"Is it you who cause it from the rain clouds to come down, or are We the Causer of it to come down?"

he said thrice:

"Yes, You are the One Who send down rain from clouds, O Lord!"⁹

The tradition reflects that man is supposed to provide positive replies against the rhetorical questions attested in the Glorious Qur'an, as if God Almighty is speaking unto him. The, he is supposed to rejuvenate its truth in his soul and refrain from reciting Qur'anic Verses without paying attention to their significance.

2. It is narrated from the Noble Prophet (S):

"Never withhold your available extra water, pasture, and water from Allah's servants since God Almighty has placed it at the disposal of travelers and the needy."¹⁰

3. It is narrated from the Noble Prophet (S) that upon the Revelation of the blessed Verse:

"Then, glorify with praises the Name of your Lord, the Most Glorified"

he said

"Use it as your formula of genuflexion (ruku') in establishing your prayers,"

namely say:

"Glorified and Praised is my Great Lord" (subhan rabbi al-a'la wa bi-hamdih).

Surah al-Waqi'a - Verses 75-78

فَلَا أُقْسِمُ بِمَوَاقِعِ النُّجُومِ

وَإِنَّهُ لَقَسَمٌ لِّو تَعْلَمُونَ عَظِيمٌ

إِنَّهُ لَقُرْآنٌ كَرِيمٌ

فِي كِتَابٍ مَّكْنُونٍ

75. Therefore, I swear by the place of the stars and their places of rising and setting.

76. And indeed that is a great oath, if you but know.

77. That is verily an Honorable Qur'an.

78. Which is in the well-preserved Tablet.

The blessed Verses in question treat of the significance of the Glorious Qur'an, since the questions of Prophethood and Revelation of the Holy Qur'an, in terms of doctrinal fundamentals, stand second in significance to the questions of Creation and Resurrection. Furthermore, the Holy Qur'an treats of profound discussions in the domains of the principles of Divine Unity and Resurrection thereby it forms the solid bases of the same.

The blessed Verses in this series open with a great oath, saying:

"Therefore, I swear by the place of the stars and their places of rising and setting."

The majority of Qur'an exegetes maintain that the Arabic particle la is herein employed in the sense of an emphatic particle rather than the negative particle, as it is attested in other blessed Qur'anic Verses regarding oaths taken to the Day of Resurrection, the concupiscent soul, the Lord of easts and wests, and the like.

It is worthy of note that the Arabic phrase mawaqi' al-nujum designates the resting place and motion of

stars, since the oath taken to the course of celestial bodies is far more significant than that taken to them per se, as the greatness and vastness of the places of rest for stars are thousands times more than planets.

Today, it is known to us that each of the stars has its own fixed place and their orbits are determined and precisely calculated by the law of gravity and repulsion and the velocity of their courses is determined by a specific order.

Although it is not possible to make precise calculations regarding remote planets, but the same is quite possible regarding the celestial bodies of the solar system and the order of their orbits is astoundingly precise.

Paying attention to the fact that according to scientists, there exist approximately one thousand million stars and planets in our galaxy and the fact that there are many galaxies in the world each of which follow a certain course, the significance of this Qur'anic oath is further clarified.

Astronomers maintain (and it is reflected in the Book of Allah and tradition sources) that these celestial bodies, whose number exceeds billions and solely some of which are visible and may be photographed by using astronomical equipment like telescopes, all move in their specific orbits and they may not transgress the gravitation of others and cause collisions.

Such scientific discoveries further clarify the significance of the aforesaid oath.

Thus, the Holy Qur'an proceeds to say that

"and indeed that is a great oath, if you but know."

The Arabic verbal form *law ta'lamun* ("if you know") clearly reflects that human knowledge at that time failed to fully comprehend the fact in question and it is regarded as one of the scientific miracles of the Holy Qur'an, since at that time some people still considered stars as silver nails driven into the firmament.

Thus, such expression is that milieu which is termed the age of ignorance is quite extraordinary.

Now let us turn to the reason lying behind such great oath. The reason is to be found in the blessed Verse 77:

"That is verily an Honorable Qur'an."

Thus, obdurate polytheists persisting in believing that such blessed Verses were a kind of soothsaying and they sprang from madness, or they had been inspired by devils as they thought that poets at the time were thus inspired, but the Holy Qur'an is saying that the blessed Verses are Divine Revelation reflecting greatness and originality and their contents indicate that they are Revealed by God Almighty.

It is quite evident and one is needless to provide arguments for the same. The Attribute karim employed for the Glorious Qur'an refers to God Almighty, the Most Generous and the Most Benevolent and the same attribute also designates a human virtue.

The Arabic word also reflects the great merits of the Holy Qura'n and its eloquence and rhetorical figures as well as its interesting contents; since it is revealed by the Lord Who is the Origin of perfection and beauty. God Almighty is the Origin of the Revelation as well as the Goal of the Holy Qur'an.

The blessed Verse 78 treats of the Attributes of the Holy Qur'an, saying:

"Which is in the well-preserved Tablet."

The point is that Divine Omniscience is free from any error or alteration and it is evident that such Book originating from such Sublime Source whose original version is in the well-preserved Tablet is far from any error and alteration.

Surah al-Waqi'a - Verses 79-82

لَا يَمَسُّهُ إِلَّا الْمُطَهَّرُونَ

تَنْزِيلٌ مِّن رَّبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

أَفْبِهَذَا الْحَدِيثِ أَنْتُمْ مُدْهِنُونَ

وَتَجْعَلُونَ رِزْقَكُمْ أَنْكُمْ تَكْذِبُونَ

79. Which none can touch but the purified.

80. A Revelation from the Lord of the worlds.

81. Do you regard the Word, the Holy Qur'an possessing the aforesaid Attributes insignificant?

82. And instead of thanking Allah for the provisions He gives you, you deny it?

The blessed Verse 79 treats of the third Attribute of the Holy Qur'an, saying:

"Which none can touch but the purified."

Following traditions narrated by the Infallible Imams (as), many Qur'an exegetes maintain that the Holy Qur'an may not be touched by the impure, namely those who have not performed the minor and major ritual ablutions (wudhu, ghusl).

However, some others hold that the blessed Verse refers to the pure angels who know the Holy Qur'an or served as intermediaries of Revelation conveying the Divine Message to the Noble Prophet's (S) heart. It stands in contrast to the polytheists' belief as per which such words were inspired by devils.

Some exegetes also believe that the sublime truths and meanings of the Holy Qur'an may solely be comprehended by the pure, as it is reflected elsewhere in the Holy Qur'an¹¹:

"This is the Book whereof there is no doubt, a Guidance to the God fearing."

In other words, possession of minimum purity required for the spirit of truth seeking is needed for the minimum comprehension of its meanings. The purer one becomes, the more one may understand the meanings and the contents of the Holy Qur'an.

It is worthy of note, however, that the three exegeses are not inconsistent and the contextual meaning of the blessed Verse may reflect all the three exegeses.

According to the traditions narrated from Ahl al-Bayt, Imam 'Ali ibn Musa al-Ridha (as) is quoted as saying:

"Do not touch the Holy Qur'an without having performed the minor and major ablution (wudhu, ghusl) as God Almighty says:

'None but the pure touch it.'¹²

Similar traditions have been narrated from Imam Baqir (as) and Imam Sadiq (as) with minor alterations.¹³

Similar traditions are attested in Sunni sources amongst which mention may be made of the tradition recurrently narrated from the Noble Prophet (S):

*"None but the pure may touch the Holy Qur'an."*¹⁴

A tradition is narrated from the Noble Prophet (S) on the authority of Ibn 'Abbas concerning spiritual touch:

*"The Holy Qur'an is in the Concealed Book [the Preserved Tablet] recorded on pure pages and none but the pure, namely those nearest unto Divine Threshold, may touch it."*¹⁵

The point stands to reason as well since although the Holy Qur'an has been revealed for guiding all mankind and we know that there were many people who heard the Noble Prophet (S) recite Qur'anic Verses and had access to the pure water of truth springing from the fountainhead of Revelation, but they were preoccupied with bias, obduracy, and enmity as a consequence of which they could not benefit from it in the least.

However, those who purified their selves and turned to Divine Revelation through their truth seeking attitude, attained to Guidance. Thus, the more one purifies himself and fear God Almighty, the more they comprehend more profound meanings of the Holy Qur'an. Thus, the blessed Verse in question applies to both material and spiritual dimensions.

It goes without saying that the Noble Prophet (S), the Infallible Imams (as) and the Archangels nearest unto Divine Threshold are nearest to God Almighty and further comprehend the Qur'anic truths, since they are the treasures of Divine Secrets and the Trust of Divine Light and they are the interpreters and expounders of the Holy Qur'an and eminent scholars who have attained to the purity and knowledge emanating from the Light of Divine Guardianship according to their capacities stand second to them in the interpretation and exposition of Qur'anic knowledge and learning.

The blessed Verses 80 and 81 treat of the last Attribute of the Holy Qur'an saying that it is revealed by the Lord of the worlds, the Lord and Fosterer of all the inhabitants of the worlds. The Holy Qur'an was revealed to His Noble Prophet's (S) heart for the Guidance of mankind, such that as He is the Owner and Fosterer of the world of existence, all legislation is from Divine Source.

The blessed Verse 81 is asking whether disbelievers underestimate the Holy Qur'an possessing the said Attributes, whereas the tokens of its Veracity and Truth are crystal clear. Divine Word is supposed to be acknowledged with utmost seriousness and encounter the same as a great reality.

"This word"

(hadha al-hadith) refers to the Holy Qur'an and the Arabic verbal form mudhinun ("you underestimate") derives from dahn denoting "oil," since it is used for softening the body or other things.

The Arabic gerund idhan denotes toleration and gentility and at times the same connotes softness and lack of serious encounter. Since liars and hypocrites are often mild in their disposition, the word may connote denial and belying and both meanings are possible for the blessed Verse in question.

The blessed Verse 82 is saying that disbelievers, instead of showing gratitude for Divine Blessings, particularly the great Blessing of the Revelation of the Holy Qur'an, they deny it. Some Qur'an exegetes maintain that the blessed Verse intends to say that their share of the Holy Qur'an is denying it or that they make use of such denial to earn their sustenance.

However, the former exegesis is further consistent with the preceding blessed Verses. It may also mean

that the Holy Qur'an is their spiritual sustenance and it may rejuvenate their hearts and by attending to its blessed Verses they may strengthen their hearts and their souls, but owing to their denial and enmity, they deprive themselves of it. 16

Surah al-Waqi'a – Verses 83–87

فَلَوْلَا إِذَا بَلَغَتِ الْحُلُقُومَ

وَأَنْتُمْ حِينِيذٍ تَنْظُرُونَ

وَنَحْنُ أَقْرَبُ إِلَيْهِ مِنْكُمْ وَلَكِنْ لَا تُبْصِرُونَ

فَلَوْلَا إِنْ كُنْتُمْ غَيْرَ مَدِينِينَ

تَرْجِعُونَهَا إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ

83. Then why do you not intervene when the soul of a dying person reaches the throat?

84. And you at the moment are looking on,

85. But We are nearer unto him than you, but you see not,

86. Then why do you not, if you are exempt from the reckoning and recompense

87. Bring back the soul if you are truthful?

The last moments of life preoccupies man with serious thoughts, when nothing may be done to bring the person back to normal life conditions, when the people surrounding the dying person desperately look at them and see that they are dying like a burnt out candle bidding farewell to life and no one may do anything to restore their life.

Human weakness is reflected in such moments. Despite modern sophisticated technical and medical equipment, such weakness is evident like former times. To draw a conclusion out of the preceding discussions on Resurrection and providing replies to liars and deniers, the Holy Qur'an provides a telling

depiction of the last moments, saying:

"Then why do you not intervene when the soul of a dying person reaches the throat? And you at the moment are looking on".

The people surrounding the dying person are herein addressed. While looking at the dying person, they see that they cannot do anything, but notice that life and death are dependent upon Divine Will and they know that the same fate is in store for all of them.

The blessed Verse 85 is saying that We are nearest unto him than you and Our angels, prepared to take his life, are also nearest unto him then you, but you fail to see;

("But We are nearer unto him than you, but you see not").

We are fully aware of what is happening in the soul and the perturbed depth of his being as We have decreed that his life be taken at an appointed time, but you see him outwardly unaware of the manner of his departure for the other world and the violent tempests of that time. Thus, the blessed Verse reflects that God Almighty is Nearer unto the dying person.

Nonetheless, some Qur'an exegetes maintain that the blessed Verse may reflect that the angels responsible for taking the life of the dying person are here being intended. However, the former exegesis is further consistent with the literal meaning of the blessed Verse. It is worthy of note that God Almighty is Nearest unto us than anyone else, not only at the time of dying, but at all times.

He is even Nearer unto us than ourselves, but we are far from Him owing to our ignorance. Above all, the point in question is quite manifest at the time of dying. It goes without saying that being near to God Almighty or being far away from Him is spiritual rather than spatial or temporal. It is like nearness to or remoteness from the Friends of God Almighty in common usage of the term.

However, nearness unto God Almighty entails a more sublime significance solely intelligible to

"those deeply rooted in knowledge"

(rasikhun fi al-'ilm), namely the Ahl al-Bayt. 17

The blessed Verses 86 and 87 further emphasize and expound the same truth by saying that if you shall never be recompensed for your deeds, then bring him back if you are truthful. Your failure to carry out the same reflects that you have no authority over life and death, but it is God Almighty Who rewards and chastises you for your deeds and He is the One who causes death and gives life.

It is worthy of note that the Arabic word madinin is the oblique plural form of madin which is cognate with dayn ("recompense").

In short, the blessed Verses in question are addressed to deniers of Divine Origin and Resurrection

warning them that you imagine that you may do anything, but when the soul of the dying person is at his throat, you notice that you may not do anything to bring him back to life.

Then We are Nearer to him than you, but you do not comprehend the manner by which We take his soul, whereas you have not authority over warding off death and keeping your beloved alive.

Surah al-Waqi'a - Verses 88-89

فَأَمَّا إِنْ كَانَ مِنَ الْمُقْرَبِينَ

فَرَوْحٌ وَرَيْحَانٌ وَجَنَّةٌ نَعِيمٌ

88. Then, if he [the dying person] be of those brought near unto Allah,

89. [There is for him] rest and Mercy and a Garden abounding in Blessings.

The blessed Verses 88 and 89 sum up the points discussed in the preceding blessed Verses, thus depicting the differences between human dispositions at the time of death reflecting that some people pass away with utmost serenity, peace of mind, and happiness, whereas some others depart the mundane world with anxiety and horror when they see Hellfire from afar.

The blessed Verses are saying that if the dying person happens to be one of those nearest unto Divine Threshold, he shall leave this world with utmost peace and serenity since they know that they shall abide in Paradise which abounds in Divine Blessings. According to lexicologists, the Arabic word rawh originally designates breathing.

The word rayhan denotes sweet scented plant or something else. However, the word connotes the cause of life and peace and in this context the word is applied to Blessings. Thus, the words rawh and rayhan connote all Blessings and the means of human comfort and peace.

In other words, it may be said that the former alludes to all the things which rescues man from hardships such that he may feel peace and comfort. In contrast to the former, the latter refers to the Blessings granted to man following hardships and vicissitudes. Muslim exegetes present different meanings for the twain terms, but since the number of such interpretations amounts to ten, they are not mentioned for the sake of brevity.

However, they are all applications of the general and comprehensive meanings mentioned under the exegesis of the blessed Verse in question.

It is also worthy of note that following making reference to rawh and rayhan, mention is made of janna na'im ("Paradise abounding in Blessings") which may reflect that rawh and rayhan shall be bestowed upon the believers at the time of death, in the grave, in purgatory, and in Paradise.

Regarding the blessed Verse in question, a tradition is narrated from Imam Sadiq (as) according to which if the dying person happens to be one of those nearest unto Divine Threshold, rawh and rayhan shall be bestowed upon him in the grave and Paradise abounding in Blessings, namely in the Hereafter. 18

Surah al-Waqi'a - Verses 90-91

وَأَمَّا إِنْ كَانَ مِنْ أَصْحَابِ الْيَمِينِ

فَسَلَامٌ لَّكَ مِنْ أَصْحَابِ الْيَمِينِ

90. And if he [the dying person] be of those on the Right Hand,

91. Then, it shall said unto him: "Peace be unto you from your friends who are from those on the Right Hand."

The twain blessed Verses in discussion is saying that if he happens to be from the second group, those on the Right Hand, namely righteous good doing men and women whose records of deeds shall be given unto their right hands, symbolizing their victory and being admitted unto their everlasting abode, thus they shall be addressed:

"Peace unto you from your friends who are from those on the Right Hand."

Thus, the angels responsible for taking lives, convey the message of peace unto them from their friends.

The same idea is reflected in the blessed Verse 26 of the same Chapter:

"But only the saying of peace, peace!"

The blessed Verse may as well reflect the saying of peace by angels:

"Peace unto you! O you who are from those on the Right Hand!"

In other words, they are saying that you are so honorable as you are one of those on the Right Hand.

In short, the expression of

"peace"

uttered by angels or those on the Right Hand reflects rawh and rayhan and any kind of peace, serenity, and Blessing.

However, some Qur'anic exegetes maintain that the contextual meaning of the blessed Verse is:

"O you who are from those on the Right Hand! Peace unto you since you are saved from Divine torment."¹⁹

Surah al-Waqi'a - Verses 92-96

وَأَمَّا إِنْ كَانَ مِنَ الْمُكْذِبِينَ الضَّالِّينَ

فَنُزِّلُ مِنْ حَمِيمٍ

وَتَصْلِيَةٍ جَحِيمٍ

إِنَّ هَذَا لَهُوَ حَقُّ الْيَقِينِ

فَسَبِّحْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الْعَظِيمِ

92. But if he be of the erring deniers,

93. Then for him is an entertainment with boiling water in Hell.

94. Then, it shall be his fate to enter Hellfire.

95. Indeed, this is an absolute Truth with certainty.

96. Therefore, glorify with praises the Name of your Lord, the Most Great.

In the first three blessed Verses in question, mention is made of the third group, aforementioned as ashab shamal:

("those on the Left Hand"),

saying:

"If he happens to be of the erring deniers, then for him is an entertainment with boiling water and venomous winds. Then it shall be his fate to enter Hellfire."

In other words, they taste Divine torments at the threshold of death. They experience the bitter taste of the chastisements of Resurrection in the graves and purgatory. Since the blessed Verses treat of the disposition of the dying person, the phrase:

"an entertainment with boiling water"

(nuzulu min hamim) refers to torments in Hell, whereas:

"it shall be his fate to enter Hellfire"

(tasliyatu jahim) alludes to torments on the Day of Resurrection. The same significance is also attested in numerous traditions narrated from the Ahl al-Bayt (as).²⁰

It is also worthy of note that

"the erring deniers"

(mukadhdhibin al-dhalin) are mentioned together; "the erring" refers to those who have deviated from the Straight Path, whereas "the deniers" alludes to denying Resurrection, Divine Unity, and the Prophethood of the Noble Prophet (S).

Such emphatic expression may also reflect that those in error may include the oppressed, and the defaulters who entertain neither enmity nor obduracy against the Truth and Divine Favors may be bestowed upon them.²¹ In contrast, obdurate deniers shall have the aforesaid fate. It is also worthy of note that the Arabic word hamim connotes boiling water or hot and venomous winds and the word tasliya denotes burning and entering fire.

The blessed Verses 95 and 96 are saying:

"Indeed, this is an absolute Truth with certainty. Therefore, glorify with praises the Name of your Lord, the Most Great."

Qur'an exegetes maintain that truth of certainty ("haqq al-yaqin") is appositive genitive, connoting that what was said about the three groups, those nearest unto Divine Threshold, those on the Right Hand, and the deniers is absolute truth and one of certainty.

It is also possible that since there are degrees as to certainty, the most sublime of which is truth of

certainty, namely the true, perfect and undoubted certainty.

It is also noteworthy that the demonstrative pronoun:

"this"

(hadha) herein makes a reference to the states of the three aforementioned groups. Some Qur'an exegetes also maintain that the antecedent of the demonstrative pronoun is the entirety of the contents of the blessed Chapter in question or that of the Holy Qur'an. However, the former interpretation sounds more consistent with the meaning of the blessed Verse in question.

Another noteworthy point is that the verbal form fasabbih

("then glorify")

with the ramification (tafri') particle fa' alludes to the truth that what was said above regarding the three groups is absolute justice.

Thus, man is required to glorify his Lord of any injustice. It may also connote that if man intends to avoid the fate of the third group, he is supposed to glorify God Almighty of associating any partners with Him or ascribing injustice to Him which entails denial of Resurrection.

Finally, in their exegesis on the last blessed Verse, many Qur'an exegetes maintain that following the Revelation of the blessed Verse, the Noble Prophet (S) said:

"Recite it in your genuflections [in your prayers],"

namely say

"Praise be unto God, the Greatest, and to His Praise."

When the blessed Verse 'Glorify with praises the Name of your Lord, the Most Great' he said:

"Recite it in your prostrations [in your prayers] and say: 'Praise be unto my Lord, the Most Sublime.'"22

O Lord, place us amongst those nearest to Your Threshold, those on the Right Hand, and Your close friends. Bestow upon us Your Rawh and Rayhan and Your Paradise abounding in Blessings. Amen! O Lord of the Worlds!

1. Lisan al-'Arab.

2. Raghīb's Mufradat; Lisan al-'Arab; Ruh al-Ma'ani.

3. 36:78-79

4. Awalīn Kitāb-i Danīshgāh, vol. 1, the discussion on embryology.

5. Tafsīr Majma' al-Bayan; Tafsīr Ruh al-Ma'ani.

6. Abu al-Futuh Razi's Tafsir.
7. Tafsir Maraghi; Tafsir Ruh al-Ma'ani.
8. Tafsir Ruh al-Ma'ani; Tafsir Qurtubi.
9. Tafsir Ruh al-Ma'ani, under the blessed Verse in question.
10. Tafsir Majma' al-Bayan; Tafsir Nur al-Thiqalayn; Durr al-Manthur; Man la Yahdhuru al-Faqih.
11. 2:2
12. Wasa'il al-Shi'a, vol. 1, p. 269).
13. Wasa'il al-Shi'a, vol. 1, p. 270; Tafsir Burhan; Tafsir Safi; Tafsir Majma' al-Bayan, under the blessed Verse in question; Tafsir Makhzan al-'Irfan, etc.
14. Tafsir Durr al-Manthur, vol. 6, p. 162.
15. Tafsir Durr al-Manthur, vol. 6, p. 162.
16. Tafsir Nur, vol. 11, p. 546; Tafsir Makhzan al-'Irfan; Tafsir Nimuna, under the blessed Verse in question.
17. Tafsir Nur, vol. 11, p. 5; Tafsir al-Furqan; Tafsir Nimuna, under the blessed Verse in question.
18. Tafsir Nur al-Thiqalayn, vol. 5, p. 228; Tafsir Nur, vol. 11, p. 547; Tafsir Makhzan al-'Irfan; Tafsir Nimuna, under the blessed Verse in question.
19. Tafsir Majma' al-Bayan.
20. Tafsir Nur al-Thiqalayn.
21. Tafsir Nur, vol. 11, p. 547; Tafsir Makhzan al-'Irfan; Tafsir Nimuna, under the blessed Verse in question.
22. Abu al-Futuh Razi's Tafsir; Ruh al-Ma'ani, Qurtubi's Ruh al-Bayan; Durr al-Manthur; Maraghi's Tafsir; Tafsir Majma' al-Bayan; Tafsir Minhaj al-Sadiqin; under the blessed Verse in question.

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