

Surah al-Mudaththir, Chapter 74

(The One Reposing in Bed)

Section (juz') 29

Number of Verses: 56

General Overview of the Chapter

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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

This Chapter, revealed in Mecca, has 56 Verses. It was indubitably revealed in Mecca, though there exists no unanimity as to being the earliest of the Chapters revealed to the Noble Prophet (S), or it followed Chapter 96 (Surah al-'Alaq) in the sequence of Revelation.

However, according attention to the contents of these two Chapters (74, 96) reflects that the latter was revealed on the threshold of the Prophetic call, but the former concerns the time when the Noble Prophet (S) was Divinely appointed to call the general public, when the clandestine call had come to its end.

Therefore, some of the Qur'an exegetes maintain that Chapter 97 was the earliest of the Chapters revealed on the threshold of the Prophet Revelation of the Noble Prophet (S), but Chapter 74 was the earliest of the Chapters revealed following his call to the general public.

At any rate, the nature of the Meccan Chapters, mainly calling people to turn toward the origin and the return, confrontation with polytheism, and warning the beliers against Divine torment, is explicitly reflected in the blessed Chapter in question.

The Merit of Reciting the Chapter

It is narrated from the Noble Imam Baqir (as) that whoever recites Surah al-Mudaththir in their obligatory canonical prayers, God Almighty shall make them accompany the Noble Prophet (S) and shall grant them his elevated degree, and they shall not be entangled with misfortune and pain in this worldly life. Further traditions have been narrated from the Noble Prophet (S) and the Infallible Imams (as), though for the sake of brevity, mention is not herein made of them.

It goes without saying that the mere recitation of the words of the blessed Chapter may not result in such great consequences, but one is supposed to accord attention to the contents and most precisely act upon them.

Surah al-Mudaththir – Verses 1-2

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

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

يَا أَيُّهَا الْمُدَّثِّرُ

قُمْ فَأَنْذِرْ

- 1. O you reposing in bed!**
- 2. Arise and warn [the world]!**

Different occasions of Revelation have been reported in Qur'an exegetic sources for the blessed Chapter in question, though for the sake of brevity, mention is not herein mentioned of them. However, the Noble Prophet (S) is undoubtedly addressed in these Verses, though no explicit reference has been made to him therein, but it is reflected in the contents.

The opening two blessed Verses say:

"O you reposing enveloped in bed covers! Arise and warn the world [against Divine torment, since the time of rest and repose has passed and the time of rising and propagation of the Islamic faith have arrived]!"

The particular emphasis laid on the Noble Prophet (S) as both a bearer of glad tidings (bashir) and a warner (nadhir) is owing to the truth that warning the people, particularly on the threshold of the Prophetic call, made significant contributions to awakening the neglectful souls.

Concerning the reason lying behind urging him to embark upon his Prophetic call while he reposed in bed, some Qur'an exegetes hold that the Arab polytheists assembled on the threshold of pilgrimage to Mecca and some of them, e.g. Abu Jahl, Abu Sufyan, Walid ibn Mughayra, and Nadhr ibn Harith, consulted as to the manner of providing replies to the questions raised by non-Meccan pilgrims who had heard scattered material regarding the Prophetic call of the Noble Prophet of the Islamic faith (S).

Following holding many a conference, they came to the conclusion that they had better call him a magician (sahir), since the consequences of magic include causing separation between couples and fathers and sons, and the Noble Prophet (S) had acted accordingly through his Prophetic call.

Having heard such words, the Noble Prophet (S) was deeply saddened and returned home morbidly and reposed in his bed. Then, the blessed Verses in question were revealed calling him to arise and struggle against them. Other suggested interpretations make mention of the same call to rising and guiding the society.

It would be of interest to know that the Arabic imperative clause fandhir

("Warn!")

makes no reference to the object of such warning, since it reflects the generality of the act. In other words, he is urged herein to warn the people against idolatry, polytheism, disbelief, wrong doing, corruption, Divine torment, the reckoning on the Day of Resurrection, and the like.

In this respect, it is narrated from the Noble Imam Sadiq (as) that the blessed Verse means

"shorten your clothes!" (thiyabaka faqsir).¹

Some Qur'an exegetes also maintain that reference is herein made to wives, since it is reflected elsewhere in the Holy Qur'an²:

"They are garments for you and they are your garments."

In other words, you maintain the dignity of each other and you are the adornments of one another. All these interpretations may be intended by the blessed Verse, reflecting the truth that Divinely appointed leaders may be charismatic when they are unadulterated and people be certain as to their fear of God Almighty. It is in the same vein, that the Command as to chastity follows that of rising and warning.

In the course of the third Injunction, the blessed Verse 5 says:

"Keep away from impurities and what entails Divine torment."

The generalization of the meaning of the Arabic word

rujz ("**impurity**")

has led to different interpretations for the same: idols, any kind of sin, vice, mammonism as the sources of any wrong and sin, Divine torment as the consequence of polytheism and committing sins, and anxiety and apprehension.³

The term is also applied to any kind of sin and polytheism, idolatry, satanic temptations, vices, and Divine torment leading to apprehension and deviation from the Straight Path. The comprehensive meaning of the blessed Verse includes any deviation and vice leading to Divine Wrath in this world and the Hereafter.

The Noble Prophet of the Islamic faith (S), as reflected in his biographical accounts acknowledged by friends and foes, is indicative of his keeping away from vices, though the point is accorded emphasis herein.

The fourth Injunction is intended by the blessed Verse 6, saying:

"Give not a thing in order to have more nor consider your deeds of obedience to Allah as a favor to him."

The contextual meaning of the blessed Verse includes any kind of expecting obligation from God Almighty and the people because of good deeds. One is not supposed to be expected indebtedness from God Almighty for struggling in His Cause, since He did favors to individuals by granting them such exalted degrees.

Likewise, God's servants are not supposed to think highly of their good deeds, but they should at all times bear in mind their neglect and the truth that worshipping God Almighty is a great Divine Blessing.

In other words, your rising, warning, propagation of monotheism, making mention of Divine Glory and Majesty, purity of garments, and abstaining from sins are not sources of regarding God Almighty indebted to you nor should you think highly of them, but you are supposed to keep in mind that they are Divine Blessings for which you should be grateful and be absorbed in His Love such that you underestimate such great deeds.

In technical terms, omission of objects of a relation is indicative of generality which in this case includes the torments in this world and the Hereafter as well as the evil consequences of vices.

Surah al-Mudaththir – Verses 3-7

وَرَبِّكَ فَكَبِّرْ

وَتِيَابِكَ فَطَهِّرْ

وَالرُّجْزَ فَاهْجُرْ

وَلَا تَمُنَّ بِمَا تَسْتَكَثِرُ

وَلِرَبِّكَ فَاصْبِرْ

3. **And magnify your Lord!**
4. **And purify your garments!**
5. **And keep away from impurities.**
6. **And give not a thing in order to have more.**
7. **And be patient for the sake of your Lord!**

Five significant Injunctions are revealed unto the Noble Prophet (S) following his call to rise and warn. These injunctions serve as models for the people.

The first injunction concerns monotheism:

"Only magnify your Lord, your possessor and fosterer. Whatever you possess is granted by Him.

Laying emphasis on the word

rabb ("Lord")

which precedes the imperative verbal form *kabbir* ("magnify") indicates exclusivity and reflects the question of monotheism substantiated by an argument in such brief clause. It is so interesting and meaningful that the Qur'anic clause is so terse and concise.

The mere utterance of

"Allah is the Greatest"

is not intended, though such utterance is an implication reflected in the traditions as well, but the utterance is intended to say that the believers are supposed to magnify their Lord in terms of belief,

words, and practice. God Almighty is supposed to be regarded as possessing the Attributes of Beauty and glorified of any defect.

He is too Glorious to be describable. It is narrated from the Ahl al-Bayt that

"Allah is the Greatest"

intends to say that God Almighty is far Superior to be described and comprehended by mankind. Therefore, uttering such clause is far comprehensive than glorification which merely includes being glorified of any kind of defect.

Proceeding with the question of monotheism, the blessed Verse 4 includes the second Injunctions as to purity from impurities, saying:

"Purify your clothes."

The word

"clothes"

may herein serve as a metaphor for human deeds, since the deeds are likened to clothes as the outward appearance reflects the inward beliefs and feelings. Some also maintain that the word "clothes" herein indicates heart and soul, namely purify you heart from impurities. Where the clothes are supposed to be cleansed, the one who wears them is accorded precedence.

Some have also held that the word denotes the outward clothes, since their purity constitutes the most significant token of character, education, and culture. Pre-Islamic Arabs hardly accorded attention to keeping away from impurities and their clothes were generally unclean. It was quite common, as in the case of those entangled in the age of ignorance, to wear quite long garments, such that their garments were soiled out of being dragged while they walked.

The blessed Verse 7 makes a reference to the last Injunction, saying:

"Be patient for the sake of your Lord!"

Once more, we are faced with a comprehensive meaning of patience and steadfastness against the ignorant polytheists' and the enemies' abuses.

The blessed Verse is urging the believers to be steadfast in obedience to Allah's Commands and be patience in struggling against concupiscent desires and the enemies of the faith. Patience is indubitably the basis and the safeguard of all the aforesaid plans. It is principally the best means of propagating the faith and guiding people.

Thus, patience is accorded attention is many a Qur'anic Verse.

As reflected in the Nahj al-Balagha, it is narrated from the Commander of the Faithful, Imam 'Ali (as) as saying:

"Patience and steadfastness in the cause of the faith is like the head against the body."

Therefore, patience and steadfastness serve as the most significant of the plans of the Prophets (as) and the men of God. The more they faced hardships, the more they grew patient.

Regarding the Rewards of the patient, the Noble Prophet (S) is reported as saying:

*"Allah says that whenever I inflict some afflictions upon my servants' bodies, property, or children, they face them patiently and I cannot measure their deeds nor may I open up their record of deeds."*⁴

Having been inquired regarding faith, Allah's Messenger (S) replied:

*"Half of faith lies in patience."*⁵

In this respect, it is narrated from Imam 'Ali (as) as saying:

*"Ward off sorrows through good certitude and patience."*⁶

Surah al-Mudaththir – Verses 8-10

فَإِذَا نُقِرَ فِي النَّاقُورِ

فَذَلِكَ يَوْمٌ عَسِيرٌ

عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ غَيْرُ يَسِيرٍ

8. When it shall be blown into the Trumpet.

9. That Day shall be a Hard Day,

10. Far from convenient for the disbelievers.

Proceeding with the Injunction as to the rise and warning reflected in the preceding blessed Verses, those in question open with a particular and eloquent emphasis, saying:

"When it shall be blown into the Trumpet that Day shall be a Hard Day, far from convenient for the

disbelievers.”

It is noteworthy that the Arabic nominal form naqur, derived from n-q-r, denotes strike so as to pierce something. The cognate form minqar is the birds' beak thereby they may pierce objects. Consequently, the Trumpet whose sound is so loud as if it pierces the ears and penetrates into the brain is termed naqur.

It is explicitly reflected in the Qur'anic Verses that the Trumpet shall be blown into twice in the last moment of this world and the beginning of the Resurrection Day, the first of such extraordinarily awe inspiring and shocking sounds is that of death and the latter is that of awakening and life encompassing the world over.

These two sounds are also terms the first and the second sounds of the Trumpet. The blessed Verse in question treats of the second sound whereby the Resurrection shall be established and the hardship of such Day for the disbelievers.

A detailed discussion on the Trumpet and its sound is to be found above under 39:68. At any rate, the blessed Verses in question reflect the truth that many a hardship shall await the disbelievers upon blowing into the Trumpet. That Day shall be so excruciating and agonizing that the strongest men shall be brought to their knees.

Surah al-Mudaththir – Verses 11-15

ذَرْنِي وَمَنْ خَلَقْتُ وَحِيدًا

وَجَعَلْتُ لَهُ مَالًا مَمْدُودًا

وَيَنْبِنَ سُهُودًا

وَمَهَّدْتُ لَهُ تَمْهِيدًا

ثُمَّ يَطْمَعُ أَنْ أَزِيدَ

11. ***Leave Me Alone with the one whom I created alone.***
12. ***I granted him abundant possessions.***
13. ***And children to be by his side [serving him].***
14. ***And prepared all the means of life for him.***
15. ***He still desires further increase.***

As reflected above, the disbelievers were collectively warned, though the blessed Verses in question particularly make reference to the most influential amongst them by eloquently and decisively warning them, saying:

"Leave me Alone with the one whom I created alone."

The blessed Verses in question allude to Walid ibn Mughayra Makhzumi, one of the most notorious chiefs of Quraysh. An occasion of Revelation is mentioned in many an exegetic sources, e.g. Majma' al-Bayan, Fi Hilal al-Qur'an, al-Mizan, and those by Qurtubi and Maraghi.

It is also mentioned that whatever service rendered to the people, irrespective of spiritual ones, e.g. propagation of the Islamic faith and guiding them or expending in Allah's Cause, are not supposed to be compensated by reminding people of them or desiring further increase in possessions granted by God Almighty, since such undesirable acts render the good deeds ineffective.

In this respect, it is mentioned elsewhere in the Holy Qur'an:

"O you who believe! Do not render in vain your expending in Allah's Cause by reminders of your generosity or by abuse."

The Arabic negative imperative verbal form *la tamnun* deriving from *m-n-n* herein implies any word reflecting the significance of something granted someone else. T

hus, its relation with the question of

"desiring further increase" (istikthar)

is clarified. Man is supposed to regard his services meager without expecting any remuneration, rather than desire increase which will lead to rendering in vain the righteous good acts. In this vein, the theme of the blessed Verse is reflected in some of the traditions that one is not supposed to grant anyone anything if he desires further increase in return.⁸

Regarding the exegesis of the blessed Verse in question, it is narrated from the Noble Imam Sadiq (as) as saying:

"Do not overestimate the good deed done in Allah's Cause."

The tradition reflects one of the implications of the universal meaning of the blessed Verse.9

The Arabic adverb of manner *wahidan* may either modify the Creator or the created.

The former possibility allows two suggestions:

"Leave Me Alone with him so that I severely chastise him,"

or:

"I created him alone and granted him all these Bounties, but he showed ingratitude."

The latter possibility may also entail two interpretations either alluding to the point that in his mother's womb and upon his birth, he was alone, without any possessions or children, but such Bounties were granted him later on; or it may make a reference to the point that he regarded himself and his father unique and unrivaled amongst the Arabs.¹⁰ However, the first of these four interpretations sound further befitting.

The blessed Verse 12 says:

"I granted him abundant possessions."

The Arabic past participial form *mamdud* originally denotes "stretched, expanded," though it herein implies the abundant possessions or expansion in temporal and spatial terms. It is also suggested that he possessed numerous gardens and farms and plenty of money and gold. The word implies all these senses, but they were of not avail to him owing to his showing ingratitude and confronting Allah and His Messenger (S).

The blessed Verse 13 alludes to the large number of people at his disposal, saying:

"And children to be by his side [serving him]."

They were with their father at all times, since they were neither pressed for means of life nor had they to leave their father behind and depart for a remote place. It is reported in a number of traditions that he had ten children.

The blessed Verse 14 makes a reference to other Bounties bestowed upon him, saying:

"And prepared all the means of life for him."

The Bounties bestowed upon him included healthy body, possessions, healthy children, and social prestige. The Arabic word *tamhid*, derived from *m-h-d*, originally denotes preparing a place, like a cradle, for the child, though it connotes all means and opportunities of life in terms of convenience,

promotion, prestige, and generally speaking all the Bounties of life and the means of achievement and success.

The blessed Verse 15 is saying that in lieu of prostrating himself before God Almighty for all these Bounties, he showed ingratitude and desired further Bounties:

"He still desires further increase."

Reference is not only made to Walid ibn Mughayra, since all mammonists are alike in that their thirst may never be quenched and even if the entire world happens to fall into their share, they expect to possess more. The point is that worldly possessions all fall into the shares of men and the distribution depends on Divine Will rather than human knowledge and skills.

Surah al-Mudaththir – Verses 16-17

كَلَّا ۚ إِنَّهُ كَانَ لِآيَاتِنَا عَنِيدًا

سَأُرْهِقُهُ صَعُودًا

16. It shall never be thus, since he opposes Our Āyat [Verses, Signs, proofs].

17. I shall soon oblige him to climb the summit of life [then, I shall thrust him downwards].

The disbelieving stranger is harshly rejected in the blessed Verse 16:

"I shall never be thus, since he opposes Our Āyat."

The disbeliever was fully aware that the Holy Qur'an is neither the word of the jinn nor that of mankind, but it possesses strong roots, fruitful branches, and unparalleled appeal. However, he regarded it as magic and its bearer a magician.

The Arabic adverb of manner

'anidan ("obdurately")

implies willful opposition and animosity, when one comprehends the truthfulness of something, but he rises against it. Walid was the personification of such obdurate animosity. The Arabic past verbal form kana implies progressiveness, in that he bore animosity against the truth at all times, rather than temporarily.

The blessed Verse 17 makes a terse reference to his dire fate:

"I shall soon oblige him to climb the hard to pass summit of life and then I shall thrust him downwards.

The Arabic verbal form sa-urhiquhu, derived from r-h-q ("to cover fiercely") connotes overburdening and afflicting one with different torments. The Arabic nominal form sa'ud denotes a place climbed by someone and the Arabic verbal noun su'ud is employed in the sense of climbing. Since climbing summits is hard, it implies any kind of hard task. Consequently, some exegetes maintain that it herein connotes Divine torment.

The blessed Verse may allude to the torments inflicted upon Walid in this world, since it is reported in historical sources that having reached the summit of achievements in his personal and social life, he fell down such that he recurrently lost his possessions and offspring.¹¹

Surah al-Mudaththir – Verses 18-25

إِنَّهُ فَكَّرَ وَقَدَّرَ

فَقُتِلَ كَيْفَ قَدَّرَ

ثُمَّ قُتِلَ كَيْفَ قَدَّرَ

ثُمَّ نَظَرَ

ثُمَّ عَبَسَ وَبَسَرَ

ثُمَّ أَدْبَرَ وَاسْتَكْبَرَ

فَقَالَ إِنَّ هَذَا إِلَّا سِحْرٌ يُوتَرُ

إِنَّ هَذَا إِلَّا قَوْلُ الْبَشَرِ

18. *He thought and plotted [against the Qur'an].*
19. *So let him be cursed: how he plotted [against the Truth]!*
20. *And once more let him be cursed: how he plotted [to employ his satanic stratagem]!*
21. *Then he cast a glance.*
22. *Then, he frowned and hastened;*
23. *Then he turned away [from the Truth] and was arrogant.*
24. *Then, he said: "This is nothing but appealing magic like that of the ancients,*
25. *"This is nothing but the word of a human being!"*

The blessed Verses in question provide further details regarding Walid ibn Mughayra Makhzumi whom God Almighty had bestowed abundant possessions and offspring, but he rose against the Noble Prophet of the Islamic faith (S), striving to belie the Noble Prophet (S) and the Holy Qur'an by resorting to ploys.

It goes without saying that thinking is basically good, provided that it be in line with the Truth. One hour spent on intellection entails the merits of worshipping God Almighty for one year or more, since that one hour may totally alter the course of human fate. Nonetheless, if it be employed in the cause of disbelief, corruption, and vices, it will be reprehensible. Walid's thoughts fall into the second category.

The Arabic verbal form qaddara herein implies that he devised his vicious ploys.

The blessed Verses 19 and 20 say:

"So let him be cursed: how he plotted [against the Truth]! And once more let him be cursed: how he plotted [to employ his satanic stratagem]!"

Concerning the occasion of the Revelation of the blessed Verse in question, Qur'an exegetes maintain that Walid intended to unify the polytheists urging them to disseminate false accusations against the Noble Prophet (S).

When it was suggested to call the Noble Prophet (S)

"the poet,"

he refused. He further rejected his being called a soothsayer or a lunatic.

Finally, the polytheists suggested that the Noble Prophet be called a magician and he accepted such

false attribution, since he falsely imagined that magicians were in the habit of severing the bonds of friendship and establishing friendly ties between former opponents. He thought that such things had appeared upon the emergence of the Islamic faith and the Holy Qur'an.

Thus, he embarked upon investigation and reflection, as reflected by the terse Qur'anic expression:

"He thought and devised his ploys."

Other polytheists made suggestions, but it was Walid who reflected upon the idea and made the choice. Such expression, particularly its reiteration, reflects that he was an expert in devising such evil plots, such that his ideas were a source of surprise.

The blessed Verses 21–25 say:

"Then he cast a glance [to make sure that everything was in order. Then, he frowned and hastened; then he turned away [from the Truth] and was arrogant. Then, he said: 'This is nothing but appealing magic like that of the ancients, this is nothing but the word of a human being [rather than Divine Revelation]!"

Thus, following persistent investigations and devising satanic ploys against the Holy Qur'an, he uttered his final words and notwithstanding all the stratagems employed by such mastermind of the age of ignorance and polytheism, he inadvertently extolled the Qur'an, reflecting that it was so unprecedentedly appealing that all hearts might be impressed by it.

He held that the Holy Qur'an engenders magical impressions bewitching the hearts. Since the Holy Qur'an bears no resemblance to the sorcerers' art, but its logical, rhythmical, and well-measured words clearly indicate that it is Divine Revelation whose source is Divine Omniscience encompassing all beauties consistently and coherently.

The Arabic past verbal form 'abasa denotes that he frowned. The past verbal form basara both implies hastened and frowned or grimaced. The second sense of basara would be in line with 'abasa, though intending the former meaning would imply making hasty decisions for choosing a false "label" for the Holy Qur'an.

The verbal form yu'tharu is used in the sense of relating a tale from the ancients as their vestige. However, some hold that it is cognate with ithar denoting choosing and deeming as precedent.

According to the former sense, Walid is saying that this magic is like what is reported from the ancients, but as per the latter sense, he is saying that magic is something that impresses the hearts owing to its sweetness and appeal, hence its precedence over any other thing by the people.

It is worthy of note that the blessed Verse includes an implied confession as to the Inimitability of the Holy Qur'an, since it bears no likeness to the extraordinary tasks performed by sorcerers.

The language of the Holy Qur'an is imbued with dignity, spirituality, and unparalleled appeal, such that if Walid had been true in his claim as to it being the words of mankind, others would have been able to produce the like of it.

It is well-known that the Holy Qur'an many a time calls other to try to produce the like of it, though none of the obdurate enemies well-versed in the Arabic tongue have failed to produce the like or even something inferior to it. The miracle of the Holy Qur'an lies in its inimitability.

Surah al-Mudaththir – Verses 26–30

سَأُصَلِّيهِ سَقَرَ

وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا سَقَرُ

لَا تُبْقِي وَلَا تَذَرُ

لَوَّاحَةٌ لِلْبَشَرِ

عَلَيْهَا تِسْعَةَ عَشَرَ

26. I will cast him soon into Hell.

27. And you are unaware of the Hell.

28. Hellfire neither spares nor leaves anything [unconsumed].

29. It totally alters the skin!

30. Over it are appointed nineteen angels of torment.

The preceding blessed Verses treated of the denial of the Holy Qur'an and the Prophetic call of Muhammad (S) by one of the chiefs of the polytheists. The blessed Verses in question make a reference to his horrible chastisement on the Day of Resurrection, saying that God Almighty will cast him soon into Hell burning him in the Fire.

The Arabic nominal form saqar denotes alteration and melting down under the scorching heat of the sun. It is one of the attributes of the Hell, frequently mentioned in the Qur'anic Verses. The attribute alludes to the frightening torments awaiting the people of Hell. It is also suggested that it is the name of one of the horrible and lower stages of Hell.

Treating of the severity of the torments in store for the people of Hell, the blessed Verse 27 poses a question:

"What do you know about saqar?"

The question indicates that the torments in it will be so severe that they are imaginable in the same manner that the significance and the greatness of the Bounties in Paradise are unimaginable.

The blessed Verse 28

"Hellfire neither spares nor leaves anything [unconsumed]"

may reflect that unlike the worldly fire that affects one part of the body leaving other parts unscathed, for instance it affects the body leaving intact the soul, Hellfire consumes man in its entirety leaving nothing behind.

It is also suggested that Hellfire neither takes the life of the people of Hell nor does it keep them alive, but they are entangled at all times in a state between life and death, as reflected elsewhere in the Holy Qur'an:

"There he will neither die nor live"¹²;

"We shall burn them in Fire such that their skins shall be roasted through, We shall make other skins grow that they may taste the chastisement"¹³.

The blessed Verse 29 provides another depiction of such burning Fire of Divine Wrath:

"It totally alters the skin"

such that it shall be visible from afar. The Arabic clause lawwahatun li-'l-bashar indicates that the Fire blackens the complexion blacker than the dark of the night.

The Arabic nominal form bashar herein implies complexion or it may serve as an instance of synecdoche alluding to mankind. The Arabic feminine present participial form lawwaha, cognate with lawh ("tablet") implies becoming clear and apparent, though it also connotes altering and making changes.

The blessed Verse 30,

"Over it are appointed nineteen angels of torment"

reflects that they are not appointed to be compassionate, but they are supposed to severely chastise them.

Although the blessed Verse solely makes mention of the number

"nineteen"

without any explicit reference to the angels appointed to inflict chastisement, but the following Verse clearly reflects that the angels in charge of inflicting chastisement is intended herein.

It is worthy of note that we human beings are bounded by the restrictions of the mundane world, are not fully aware of the precise nature of Resurrection, Paradise, and Hell, but what our knowledge consists of generalities. Thus, it is reported in traditions that each of these nineteen angels is so powerful that it may easily cast a large tribe into Hell.

The frailty of the thoughts of people like Abu Jahl is reflected herein that upon hearing the blessed Verse in question, he said derisively unto the Quraysh tribe:

"May your mothers mourn your death! Do you not hear what the man is saying?"

Pointing at the Noble Prophet (S), he said:

*"He is saying that nineteen guardians guard the Hell, though each of the guardians may not be overcome by ten brave men of your large tribe."*¹⁴

These light headed enemies of the Islamic faith intended to impede the Light of Truth and rescue themselves from imminent perdition through such derisive remarks.

Surah al-Mudaththir – Verse 31

وَمَا جَعَلْنَا أَصْحَابَ النَّارِ إِلَّا مَلَائِكَةً ۚ وَمَا جَعَلْنَا عَدَتَهُمْ إِلَّا فِتْنَةً لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا
لِيَسْتَيَقِنَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ وَيَزِدَّادَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِيمَانًا ۚ وَلَا يَرْتَابَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا
الْكِتَابَ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ ۚ وَلِيَقُولَ الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِم مَّرَضٌ وَالْكَافِرُونَ مَاذَا أَرَادَ اللَّهُ
بِهَذَا مَثَلًا ۚ كَذَلِكَ يُضِلُّ اللَّهُ مَن يَشَاءُ وَيَهْدِي مَن يَشَاءُ ۚ وَمَا يَعْلَمُ جُنُودَ رَبِّكَ إِلَّا
هُوَ ۚ وَمَا هِيَ إِلَّا ذِكْرٌ لِلْبَشَرِ

31. And We have set none but angels as guardians of the Fire. And We have fixed their number only as a trial for the disbelievers, in order that the people of the Book may arrive at a certainty [that the Holy Qur'an is the Divine Book, since the same number is attested in the Bible] and that

the believers may increase their faith, and that no doubt may be left for the people of the Book and the believers; further [the number nineteen made] those in whose hearts is a disease and the disbelievers may say: "What Allah intends by this example?" Thus, Allah leads astray whom He wills and guides whom He wills. And none may know the hosts of your Lord but He. And this is nothing else than a reminder to mankind.

As reflected in the preceding blessed Verses, God Almighty appointed nineteen angels (or nineteen groups) as the guardians of Hell and it led to controversy amongst the polytheists and the disbelievers. Some of them derided such words and few of them imagined that they could easily overcome them.

The blessed Verse in question, the longest one in the Chapter, responds to them and sheds further light on the point:

"We have set none but angels as guardians of the Fire."

Such angels are so powerful and in the Qur'anic terms ghalath and shidad, i.e. stern and strict, that all sinners shall be feeble and weak before them.

The blessed Verse proceeds to say

"We have fixed their number only as a trial for the disbelievers."

The trial aimed at two things: firstly, they derived the number nineteen, whereas any other number could engender the same question.

Secondly, they regarded the number nineteen to be few and said derisively that they could appoint ten people against each of them and thereby overcome them. They were unaware of the truth that the angels are so powerful that according to the Holy Qur'an, a number of them sufficed to send the people of Lot (as) to perdition by totally destroying their prosperous cities.

Further, the preceding blessed Verses treated of the points lying behind the number of the guardians of Hell; however, the blessed Verse in question adds:

"So that the people of the Book may arrive at a certainty."

In this respect, it is narrated that the Noble Prophet (S) was asked by his companions regarding the number of the guardians of Hell.

He replied:

"Allah and His Messenger (S) know better."

Gabriel was sent down and revealed unto him that they were nineteen angels appointed as the guardians of Hell. 15

The people of the Book did not protest against the number which reflects that they had found the number in line with their Scriptures. Thus, they arrived at further certitude as to the Prophetic Call of Allah's Messenger (S). Besides, the believers' faith was further firmly established.

Thus, the blessed Verse proceeds to say:

"[the aim was] that the believers may increase their faith."

Further emphasis is laid on the three goals: the faith of the people of the Book, that of the believers in the Islamic faith, and the trial of the polytheists and disbelievers:

"that no doubt may be left for the people of the Book and the believers; further [the number nineteen made] those in whose hearts is a disease and the disbelievers may say: 'What Allah intends by this example?'"

Regarding

"those in whose hearts is a disease,"

some Qur'an exegetes hold that the hypocrites are hereby intended, since the Qur'anic expression alludes to them, an instance of which is

"In their hearts is a disease and Allah has increased their disease"¹⁶.

Nonetheless, further investigation of the Qur'anic instances of the expression reflects that it does not solely include the hypocrites, but it encompasses all the disbelievers who take a belligerent stance against the Qur'anic Verses.

The blessed Verse further says:

"Thus, Allah leads astray whom He wills and guides whom He wills. And none may know the hosts of your Lord but He."

The aforesaid remarks clearly reflect that Divine Will as to guiding some people and leading some others astray is well-measured. Those who are in error deserve no better than that and those obedient to Allah deserve such Guidance.

In other words, God Almighty does not intend to harm some people by leading them astray, but error is the disbelievers' chastisement. Put the case that a thief breaks into your home and you lock the doors. Confining him does not entail leading him astray, but it aims at chastising him.

What should be borne in mind regarding God Almighty leading some people astray, as reflected in a number of the Qur'anic Verses, that the Arabic word idhlal denotes abandoning someone, implying that God Almighty abandons those who do not deserve to be guided; the similitude of which is a farmer who

abandons the rotten seeds but keeps the good ones and paves the ground for their growth.

The closing clauses of the blessed Verse read:

"And none may know the hosts of your Lord but He. And this is nothing else than a reminder to mankind."

The nineteen guardians of Hell does not reflect the total number of the hosts of the Lord, but the number of the latter are so large that according to some of the traditions, the earth and the heaven are filled with them, such that there is no spot in the entire world of existence unless there is an angel glorifying God Almighty there.

For further details in this respect, one may refer to elevated words of Imam 'Ali as recorded in the first sermon of the Nahj al-Balagha.

Different suggestions have been made by Qur'an exegetes concerning the antecedent of the pronoun

hiya ("this, it")

in

wa ma hiya illa dhikra li-'l-bashar ("And this is nothing else than a reminder to mankind.")

Some maintain that the hosts of the Lord some of whom are the guardians of Hell are the antecedent.

Some hold that

saqar ("Hell")

is the antecedent.

There are some exegetes who believe that reference is made to the Holy Qur'an. Although they all lead to awakening, reminder, and awareness, but the first suggestion is more in line with the tone of the Verse, since the aim is to state the truth that if God Almighty has selected hosts, it does not reflect that He cannot chastise all the enemies and sinners Himself, but they all serve as a reminder, awakening, and according attention to the seriousness of Divine torment.

Surah al-Mudaththir – Verses 32-34

كَلَّا وَالْقَمَرَ

وَاللَّيْلِ إِذَا أَدْبَرَ

وَالصُّبْحِ إِذَا أَسْفَرَ

32. It is not what they imagine! By the moon!

33. And the night when it withdraws,

34. And by the dawn when it brightens.

Different oaths have been taken in the blessing Verses in question in order to lay emphasis on raising the dead on the Day of Resurrection, Hell, and the torments awaiting the disbelievers there, saying:

"It is not as they imagine. By the moon!"

The Arabic negative emphatic adverb *kalla* is employed to reject the words uttered by the other party.

It is also used at times to negate the following words. It herein negates the disbelievers' unfounded belying of Hell and its torments as well as their derision of the number of the angels guarding Hell, as mentioned in the preceding blessed Verses.

An oath is taken to the moon, since as one of the greatest of Divine Signs, it is of significance in terms of creation, regular rotation, brightness, beauty, and the lunar phases used as the standard for preparing calendars.

The blessed Verses 33 and 34 say:

"By the night when it withdraws! And by the dawn when it brightens!"

These three oaths are related and complementary, since it is common knowledge that the moon shines at night and its light is overshadowed by sunshine such that it is hardly visible during the day. Night is serene and peaceful, when the lovers of the Truth may invoke their beloved and share their secrets.

However, the dark night would be of interest when it withdraws and the bright dawn approaches. The day break offers a beacon of the end of the dark night. It is the most delightful and the most beautiful ecstatic experience when the heart brims with light and purity. It is noteworthy that the three oaths stand in harmony with the Light of Guidance (the Holy Qur'an), withdrawal of the shadows of polytheism and idolatry, and the daybreak of monotheism.

Surah al-Mudaththir – Verses 35-37

إِنَّهَا لِأَحَدَى الْكُبْرِ

نَذِيرًا لِلْبَشَرِ

لِمَنْ شَاءَ مِنْكُمْ أَنْ يَتَقَدَّمَ أَوْ يَتَأَخَّرَ

35. It [the frightful incidents on the Day of Resurrection] is but one of the greatest issues.

36. A warning to all mankind,

37. To any of you that chooses to go forward or to lag behind [namely proceed or not to proceed toward Guidance].

The blessed Verses in question treat of the objects of the oaths and frightening incidents on the Day of Resurrection, Hell, and the angels of torment indubitably constitute significant issues. The Arabic adjectival form kubar denotes "great, significant."

The antecedent of the pronoun in innaha is either

saqar ("Hell")

or

junud ("Lord's Host"),

or all the incidents to occur on the Day of Resurrection; the greatness of each and every of them is crystal clear.

The blessed Verse 36 proceeds to say that the goal behind the creation of Hell is not seeking revenge, but it serves as a warning to mankind against the frightening torment in store for the disbelievers, the sinners, and the enemies of Truth.

The blessed Verse 37 lay further emphasis on the point, saying that the warning is not particular to a specific group but it addresses all mankind, to anyone who opts for taking precedence by proceeding toward doing good righteous deeds and obedience to Allah, and to those who intend to lag behind. Good for those who takes precedence and woe unto those who intend to lag behind.

Some Qur'an exegetes also maintain that precedence and lagging behind herein reflects proceeding or not proceeding toward Hellfire. Some also hold that taking precedence indicates human self and its development and growth or its decadence and lagging behind.

Surah al-Mudaththir – Verses 38-45

كُلُّ نَفْسٍ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ رَهِينَةٌ

إِلَّا أَصْحَابَ الْيَمِينِ

فِي جَنَّاتٍ يَتَسَاءَلُونَ

عَنِ الْمُجْرِمِينَ

مَا سَلَكَكُمْ فِي سَقَرٍ

قَالُوا لَمْ نَكُ مِنَ الْمُصَلِّينَ

وَلَمْ نَكُ نُطْعِمِ الْمَسْكِينِ

وَكُنَّا نَخُوضُ مَعَ الْخَائِضِينَ

38. Every person is a pledge for what he has earned,

39. Except those on the Right [whose records of deeds are given to their right hand as a token of their faith and fear of God Almighty].

40. In Gardens they will ask,

41. the sinners [inquiring]:

42. "What has caused you to enter Hell?"

43. They will say: "We were not of those who used to offer the prayers,

44. "Nor we used to feed the poor;

45. "And we used to talk falsehood with vain talkers.

Proceeding with the discussion raised in the preceding blessed Verses concerning Hell and the dwellers of Hell, the blessed Verse 38 says:

"Every person is a pledge for what he has earned."

The Arabic nominal form rahina, derived from r-h-n ("pledge") denotes the pledge provided as a guarantee against the loan. It sounds as if all human existence is a pledge against the fulfillment of his obligations, such that when he fulfils them, he will be set free, otherwise, he will remain in bondage.

Thus, the blessed Verse 39 adds:

"Except those on the Right [whose records of deeds are given to their right hand as a token of their faith and fear of God Almighty],"

who are free from such bondage since they have broken the shackles and fetters of bondage through faith and doing good righteous deeds as a consequence of which they freely enter Paradise.

Qur'an exegetes disagree on the meaning of

"the people on the right."

Some maintain that it makes a reference to those whose records of deeds are given to their right hand. Some hold that they are the believers who have committed no sins at all. Some others believe that a reference is made to the angels.

However, the Qur'anic evidence reflects the first suggestion – those who have faith and have done good righteous deeds and their few sins are overshadowed by their good righteous deeds, as reflected elsewhere in the Holy Qur'an¹⁷:

"The good deeds remove the evil deeds."

Their good deeds efface their evil deeds, or they freely enter Paradise, or the reckoning of their deeds shall be quite easy, as reflected elsewhere in the Glorious Qur'an¹⁸:

"Then as for him who will be given his record in his right hand, he shall receive an easy

reckoning."

Qurtubi, the Sunni Qur'an exegete of repute narrates from Imam Baqir (as) as saying:

"We and our adherents are

"the people of the right hand"

*and whoever regards our Ahl al-Bayt as enemies, he shall be in the bondage of his deeds."*¹⁹

The blessed Verses 40–42 say:

"In Gardens they will ask, the sinners [inquiring]: "What has caused you to enter Hell?"

The blessed Verses clearly reflect that the ties between the people of Paradise and those of the Hell shall not be totally severed, as the former may witness the dire fate of the latter and converse with them.

In the blessed Verses 43–45, the sinners respond to the question posed by the people of the right hand by confessing to their four grave sins:

"They will say: "We were not of those who used to offer the prayers, nor we used to feed the poor; and we used to talk falsehood with vain talkers."

Had they offered their prayers, they would have remembered God Almighty forbidding them from committing evil deeds and calling them unto the Divine Straight Path. They confess that they did not feed the poor, seemingly implying that they refrained from attending to the urgent necessities and requirements of the needy, with respect to clothes and accommodation.

Qur'an exegetes maintain that reference is herein made to the obligatory alms, since failing to pay the supererogatory alms may not entail ending up in Hell, emphasizing that some of the Qur'anic Verses revealed in Mecca addressed the issue of paying alms, though the details and specifications of the same, particularly its concentration in the Muslim treasury (bayt al-mal) were specified in Medinan Verses.

They also confess that they used to associate with the followers of falsehood and whenever they heard some words against the Truth or upon being notified of some session aiming at the dissemination of falsehood, they joined them acknowledging their denial of Truth and derived pleasure from deriding the words of Truth.

The verbal form

nakhudhu ("we entered"),

derived from kh-w-dh, originally denotes entering water and moving in it, though it is also applied to

getting adulterated by impurities. The word is used in the Holy Qur'an in the sense of engaging oneself in unfounded and false affairs.

Mention is herein made of attending meetings held for deriding Divine Verses, anti-Islamic propaganda, dissemination of heresy, obscene jokes, and taking pride and deriving pleasure from the sins committed, slander and sportive vain talks. The blessed Verse in question mainly refers to attending the meetings held for destabilizing faith in God Almighty, sacrilege, and dissemination of disbelief.

Surah al-Mudaththir – Verses 46-48

وَكُنَّا نُكْذِبُ بِيَوْمِ الدِّينِ

حَتَّىٰ آتَانَا الْيَقِينَ

فَمَا تَنْفَعُهُمْ شَفَاعَةُ الشَّافِعِينَ

46. "And we used to belie the Day of Recompense at all times,

47. "Until there came to us the death."

48. Therefore, no intercession of intercessors will be of any avail to them.

The blessed Verses 46-47, the sinners confess that their sins included the denial of the Day of Reckoning at all times, until their death came unto them. It goes without saying that denial of the Day of Resurrection which is the Day of Reckoning destabilizes all Divine and ethical values, particularly when it continues to the end of life.

It is worthy of note that the blessed Verses in question clearly reflect that the disbelievers are obliged to observe the primary and the secondary principles of religion, and the four injunctions, namely establishing ritual prayers, paying religious obligatory alms, refraining from attending the meetings held by the followers of falsehood, and believing in the Day of Resurrection significantly contribute to human guidance and spiritual growth.

Thus, those who truly establish obligatory ritual prayers, pay alms, believe in the Day of Resurrection, and refrain from following falsehood shall not be cast into Hell. It goes without saying that establishing prayers entails worshipping God Almighty and it solely rests on faith. Thus, making a reference to it reflects believing in God Almighty and obedience to His Command.

It may be said that these four pillars begin with monotheism and end in Resurrection, encompassing the relations amongst the Creator, the created, and one's self. The majority of Qur'an exegetes maintain that death is herein intended by "certitude," since the believers and the disbelievers believe in its certainty.

Man may doubt anything, but death, as it is reflected elsewhere²⁰ in the Holy Qur'an:

"And worship your Lord until there comes unto you the certainty (of death)."

However, some hold that certainty herein indicates the awareness obtained posthumously as to purgatory and Resurrection. Such exegesis is somehow in line with the former.

The blessed Verse 48 makes a reference to the dire fate of this group saying:

"Therefore, no intercession of intercessors will be of any avail to them."

Neither the intercession of Allah's Messengers (as) and Imams (as), nor that of angels, nor the true believers, nor the martyrs, nor the righteous shall be of any avail to them, since intercession requires the right ground, and the disbelievers have totally destroyed such ground. It is like pure water by which a feeble sapling is irrigated. Now, when the sapling happens to be dead, such pure water may not give a new life to it.

It was mentioned above in the discussion devoted to intercession²¹ that the Arabic word shafa'a derives from the root sh-f-', originally denoting "attach something to something else," connoting that the person for whom it is interceded is supposed to have traversed some part of the way, though he has faced hardships, vicissitudes, and impediments. Thus, he is interceded with to bear him assistance to traverse the remaining distance.

It is noteworthy that the blessed Verse in question once again emphasizes the question of intercession and the diversity of the intercessors interceding with the believers at Divine Threshold. It also serves as a harsh response to those belying the principle of intercession.

It lays further emphasis on the point that intercession is not unconditional; in other words, it is not a green light to committing sins, but may lead to spiritual growth such that he prepares the required ground for being interceded with him. The ties of such person are not supposed to be totally severed from God Almighty and His friends.

It is also worthy of note, however, that the blessed Verse in question is not saying that intercessors intercede with such people, but it reflects that they cease to intercede with them as intercession shall be of no avail to them and Allah's friends may never perform vain deeds.

The blessed Verses in question and some other Qur'anic Verses indicate that there shall be different kinds of intercessors interceding with God Almighty on the behalf of the true believers. The numerous traditions transmitted in the Shi'i and Sunni sources reflect that such intercessors shall intercede on

behalf of those sinners who have prepared the required ground for intercession.

Reference may be made here to such different intercessors:

1. The Noble Prophet of the Islamic faith, as reflected in the Prophetic tradition:

*"I shall be the first intercessor in Paradise."*²²

2. All the Prophets (as) shall be intercessors on the Day of Resurrection, as per another Prophetic tradition:

*"The Prophets shall intercede on behalf of all those who sincerely testify to Divine Unity and take them out of Hell."*²³

3. Angels shall be amongst the intercessors on the Day of Resurrection, as reported in the Prophetic tradition:

"The Angels, Allah's friends, and the martyrs shall be permitted on that Day to intercede."²⁴

4–5. The Infallible Imams (as) and their followers shall also intercede on behalf of true believers.

In this respect, Imam 'Ali (as) is narrated as saying:

*"We and our friends shall intercede [on behalf of true believers]."*²⁵

6–7. The religious scholars and the martyrs shall be among the interceders, as it is reflected in the Prophetic tradition:

*"On the Day of Resurrection, the Prophets (as), then the scholars, then the martyrs shall be intercessors."*²⁶

According to another Prophetic tradition:

*"The martyr's intercession on behalf of seventy people from amongst his family shall be accepted."*²⁷

As per another tradition recorded in 'Allama Majlisi's Bihar al-Anwar²⁸, their intercession on behalf of seventy people shall be accepted.

8. According to Imam 'Ali (as), the Holy Qur'an shall be an intercessor on the Day of Resurrection.²⁹

9. The intercession of those believers who are advanced in years shall be accepted.

In this vein, it is narrated from the Noble Prophet (S) as saying:

*"When man reaches the age of ninety [having proceeded on the path of faith], God Almighty shall forgive his past and future sins and his intercession on behalf of his family shall be accepted."*³⁰

10. Prayers and devotions shall be intercessors as well, as it is narrated from Allah's Messenger (S) as saying:

*"Fasting and the Qur'an shall intercede on behalf of the servants [of Allah] on the Day of Resurrection."*³¹

11. Some traditions reflect that God Almighty shall intercede on behalf of the sinners, as it is narrated from the Noble Prophet (S) as saying:

"The Prophets, the angels, and the believers shall intercede on the Day of Resurrection and God Almighty shall say:

*'I am to intercede as well.'*³²

12. It is reflected in a number of traditions that the good righteous deeds, like something for whose preservation man has made attempts, shall intercede on behalf of man on the Day of Resurrection.³³

Numerous traditions have been transmitted concerning intercession, a few of which were mentioned above. It would be fruitful to reiterate that there are certain conditions for intercession without which it may not be accepted by God Almighty.

In this vein, the blessed Verses in question clearly indicate that the intercessions of all intercessors shall be of no avail to some of the disobedient. It is of significance to pave the required ground for the acceptance of intercession, since intercession on behalf of some people may not be of any avail.³⁴

Surah al-Mudaththir – Verses 49-51

فَمَا لَهُمْ عَنِ التَّذْكَرَةِ مُعْرِضِينَ

كَأَنَّهُمْ حُمُرٌ مُسْتَنْفِرَةٌ

فَرَّتْ مِنْ قَسْوَرَةٍ

49. Then, why do they turn away from the reminder?

50. As if they were frightened wild asses,

51. Fleeting from lions.

The blessed Verses in question proceeds with the dire fate of the sinners and the people of Hell clearly reflecting that such obdurate disbelievers' are afraid of hearing the word of Truth and any reminder and admonition.

The blessed Verse 49 asks:

"Then, why do they turn away from the reminder?"

Is it not surprising that they reject the cure of the Holy Qur'an?

The blessed Verses 50 and 51 say:

"As if they are frightened wild asses fleeing from lions [or hunters]."

The Arabic nominal form humur the plural of himar, denoting "ass," though it herein connotes "wild ass," taking the contextual meaning of the blessed Verse into account which includes "lions" or "hunters." In other words, the nominal form encompasses a broad semantic scope including the domestic and wild kinds of asses.

The Arabic nominal form qaswara, derived from the root q-s-r ("vanquish, overcome") is an attribute of lion, though it is also taken to imply "archer" and "hunter" as well. However, the former sense is more befitting herein.

It is said that the wild ass is strikingly afraid of the lion, such that upon hearing the lion's roar, it fleets away madly, particularly upon noticing a lion's approach, they scatter away surprisingly. The animal is afraid of anything owing to its wildness, let alone its ferocious enemy, the lion.

At any rate, the blessed Verses in question reflect a very eloquent expression of the polytheists' fear of the life giving Qur'anic Verses. These polytheists are herein likened to wild asses, devoid of understanding that owing to their wildness, they are afraid of anything, whereas they hear nothing but the reminder aiming at their awakening.

Surah al-Mudaththir – Verses 52-55

بَلْ يُرِيدُ كُلُّ امْرِئٍ مِنْهُمْ أَنْ يُؤْتَىٰ صُحُفًا مُنشَرَةً

كَلَّا ۚ بَلْ لَا يَخَافُونَ الْآخِرَةَ

كَلَّا إِنَّهُ تَذَكِّرَةٌ

فَمَنْ شَاءَ ذَكَرَهُ

- 52. Nay, everyone of them desires that he should receive separate letters [from God Almighty].**
53. Nay! But it [The Qur'an] is but a reminder [to them].
54. But whoever desires may find admonitions in it,
55. So whoever desires may receive admonitions!

The blessed Verses in question say that notwithstanding their dire ignorance, they are so arrogant that they expect to receive separate letters from God Almighty. The Arabic nominal form *suhuf* is the plural of *sahifa* implying a page which is turned over.

The same theme is to be found elsewhere in the Holy Qur'an:

"And even then we will put no faith in your ascension until you bring down for us an epistle that we would read"³⁵;

"We shall not believe until we receive the like of that which the Messengers of Allah had received"³⁶.

Therefore, each of them expected to be an Arch-prophet and some Book be revealed unto them by God Almighty from the heaven. The point is that even if such Book had been revealed unto them, they would not have surely believed.

According to some traditions, Abu Jahl and some other people from Quraysh said:

"O Muhammad! We will not believe in you unless you bring us some Book from the heaven opening with: 'From God, the Lord of the worlds to so and so son of so and so' clearly specifying that we believe in you."³⁷

Thus, the following blessed Verse further says that it is not like what they say, since the Heavenly Book being revealed unto them and the like of which are nothing but pretexts. They truly do not fear the Hereafter.

Had they been afraid of the torments in the Hereafter, they would not have resorted to such pretexts, denial of the Prophetic Call of Allah's Messenger (S), and derision of Divine Verses and the number of the angels of torment in the Hereafter.

The consequences of belief in the Hereafter and their effects in refraining from committing sins and

purification from different kinds of grave sins are clearly reflected herein. The truth is that belief in the Day of Resurrection and the recompense of deeds lead to spiritual growth such that the arrogant, the irresponsible, and the wrong doing may turn into committed, God fearing, humble, and just people.

The blessed Verses 54 and 55 once again emphasize that what they imagine concerning the Holy Qur'an is untrue. The Holy Qur'an is a Reminder and whoever desires may find admonitions in it. The Qur'an is the Guide unto the Straight Path and provides man with insight and sun light, such that man may find his path unto Truth.

Surah al-Mudaththir – Verse 56

وَمَا يَذْكُرُونَ إِلَّا أَنْ يَشَاءَ اللَّهُ ۗ هُوَ أَهْلُ التَّقْوَىٰ وَأَهْلُ الْمَغْفِرَةِ

56. And no one may receive admonition unless Allah wills. And He is the One, deserving that mankind should stand in awe of Him, and He is the One Who forgives [sins].

The closing blessed Verse of the Chapter says that receiving admonitions from the Qur'an is totally dependent upon Divine Will and Blessing. In other words, the disobedient may not receive admonitions unless God Almighty wills.

Besides the aforementioned exegesis, namely man may not proceed on the Path of Guidance unless he puts his trust in Divine Blessing and invokes Him to bestow His Blessings on him, other exegeses may be suggested for the blessed Verse. Unless there be not any attraction on behalf of the beloved, the unfortunate lover's efforts shall be of no avail (two lines of poetry).

It is worthy of note that Divine Aid is bestowed upon those who have prepared the required ground for such bestowal of Blessings.

Further, the blessed Verse 55,

"So whoever desires may receive admonitions!"

may create the wrong impression in some people that everything is totally dependent upon human will.

The blessed Verse 56 removes such wrong interpretation by saying that notwithstanding man's free choice, his will is dependent upon Divine Will, prevailing in the world of existence and creation. In other words, human free choice is dependent upon Divine Will and God Almighty may deprive him of his free choice at any time.

The blessed Verse in question is saying that they never believe unless God Almighty wills to make them

believe and we know that God Almighty never makes anyone believe or disbelieve. Thus, the first two exegeses sound more befitting herein.

The blessed Verse closes by saying that

"He deserves that mankind should stand in awe of Him, and He is the One Who forgives sins."

It is befitting that Allah's servants fear His torments, associate any partners in worshipping Him, and set their hopes on His Forgiveness. The blessed Verse alludes to the states of fear, hope, Divine torment, and Divine Forgiveness, providing further support for the preceding blessed Verse.

Concerning the exegesis of the blessed Verse in question, it is narrated from the Noble Imam Sadiq (as) as saying:

*"Allah says that He is Worthy of being feared such that My servant does not associate any partner with Me in worship and if My servant refrains from associating any partner with me in worship, I shall make him enter Paradise."*³⁸

Within the knowledge of the present author, all Qur'an exegetes hold that the nominal form taqwa;

("fear [of God Almighty]"

is herein employed in the accusative case, saying that God Almighty deserves that His servants refrain from polytheism.

However, it may be taken in the nominative case, implying that He neither does wrong nor act unwisely. The most exalted of the degrees of taqwa belongs to God Almighty and that of servants is nothing but a feeble flame of His Infinite taqwa, though the word in nominative case rarely refers to God Almighty.

The blessed Chapter opened with an Injunction as to warning and obligation and it closes with calling the believers to fear of God Almighty and the Promise of Forgiveness.

Thus, we invoke at His Threshold with utmost humbleness:

"O Lord! Make us of those who fear You and bestow Your Forgiveness upon us! O Lord! We may not succeed unless You grant us Your Favors and Blessings. Bestow Your Blessings upon us!"

1. Tafsir Majma' al-Bayan, under the blessed Verse in question.

2. 2:187

3. Raghیب's Mufradat.

4. Tafsir Ruh al-Ma'ani, vol. 29, p. 120.

5. Ibn Hadid's Commentary on the Nahj al-Balagha.

6. Kanz al-Fawa'id, vol. 1, p. 140.

7. 2:264
8. Nur al-Thiqalayn, vol. 5, p. 454; Tafsir Burhan, vol. 4, p. 400.
9. Ibid.
10. Fakhr Razi's, Maraghi's, Qurtubi's, and Zamakhshari's exegetic works under the blessed Verse in question.
11. Tafsir Maraghi, vol. 29, p. 131.
12. 87:12
13. 4:13
14. Majma' al-Bayan and other exegetic sources, under the blessed Verse in question.
15. Tafsir Maraghi, vol. 29, p. 134.
16. 2:10
17. 11:114
18. 84:7-8
19. Tafsir Qurtubi, vol. 10, p. 6878.
20. 15:99
21. 2:48
22. Muslim, Sahih, vol. 2, p. 130.
23. Ahhmad ibn Hanbal, Musnad, vol. 3, p. 12.
24. Ibid., 5, p. 43.
25. Saduq, Khisal, p. 624.
26. Ibn Maja, Sunan, vol. 2, p. 1443.
27. Ibid., vol. 2, p. 15.
28. vol. 100, p. 14
29. Nahj al-Balagha, sermon 176.
30. Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Musnad, vol. 2, p. 89.
31. Ibid., vol. 2, p. 174.
32. Bukhari, Sahih, vol. 9, p. 149.
33. Ibn Shahrashub, Manaqib, vol. 2, p. 14.
34. For further details, see above under 2:48.
35. 17:93
36. 6:124
37. The exegetic sources, e.g. those by Qurtubi and Maraghi.
38. Tafsir Burhan, vol. 4, p. 405.

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