

Surah Nazi'at, Chapter 79

(Those Who Tear Out)

Number of Verses: 46

Contents of the Surah

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

In The Name of Allah, The Beneficent, The Merciful

The theme in this Surah, like Surah Nabaa, is about Resurrection and, on the whole, can be divided into six parts:

1. It emphasizes on the certainty of the Great Day and lays stress on its occurrence by emphatic statements, which relate to the Resurrection.
2. It points to one part of the frightening and dreadful incidents of that Day.
3. It precisely mentions the story of Moses and the end of the arrogant Pharaoh as a consolation for both the Prophet (S) and the believers, as well as giving a warning to the unbelievers, and also contains an indication to the fact that the denial of the Resurrection is the source of many sins.
4. It mentions a few of the countless Powers of Allah, which exist in the heavens and on the Earth; themselves, being evidences of the possibility of Resurrection and the new life after death.
5. It describes another part of the horrible events, on that Great Day, and the painful end of the unbelievers in contrast to the rewards of the righteous.
6. At the end of the Surah, it emphasizes on the fact that no one knows the date of that Day, however, it is certain that it is near.

The name Nazi'at is derived from the first verse of this Surah.

The Virtue in Studying this Surah

It is narrated that the Prophet (S) said:

“For he who studies Surah Nazi'at the length of his stay and his reckoning on the Day of Judgment will last as long as the saying of a daily prayer and, thereafter, he will come into Paradise”. 1

A tradition from Imam Sadiq (as) says:

“He who studies it (Surah Nazi'at) will not pass away but satisfied, will not be brought into the Resurrection but satisfied, and will not come into Paradise but satisfied”,

(with the infinite Grace of Allah).

The shocking verses of this Surah awaken the sleeping souls and draw their attention to their duties. Then, it is certain that only those who spiritually put the contents of this Surah into practice will receive these rewards; not those who content themselves with the mere reading of its words.

Surah Nazi'at, Verses 1-5

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

In The Name of Allah, The Beneficent, The Merciful

وَالنَّازِعَاتِ غَرْقًا

وَالنَّاشِطَاتِ نَشْطًا

وَالسَّابِحَاتِ سَبْحًا

فَالسَّابِقَاتِ سَبْقًا

فَالْمُدَبِّرَاتِ أَمْرًا

1. ***“By those (angels) who tear out (the souls of the wicked) with violence;”***
2. ***“By those (angels) who gently draw out (the souls of the Blessed);”***
3. ***“And by those who glide along (on errands of mercy),”***
4. ***“Then press forward as in a race,”***
5. ***“And those who manage the affair,”***

By The Angels Who Try Hard

There are five important matters sworn to in the above verses and whose aim is to settle the rightfulness and certainty of the Resurrection.

“By those (angels) who tear out (the souls of the wicked) with violence,”
“By those (angels) who gently draw out (the souls of the blessed);”
“And by those who glide along (on errands of merry),”
“Then press forward as in a race,”
“And those who manage the affair,”

First, some particular terms used in these verses should be made clear before we proceed with the commentary of the verses.

The word /nazi'at/ is based on /naza'a/ which means 'to pluck out', or 'to draw out some what sharply, like drawing a bow to shoot arrows'. This word is sometimes used for spiritual matters, such as the detachment of enmity or love from the heart.

The term /qaraq/, according to many philologists, means 'to sink, the act of drowning' and sometimes it has been used in the sense of 'being entirely busy in an event or a disaster'.

Or, the term /qarq/, according to Ibn-manzur in Lisan-al-Arab, is a noun replacing the infinitive with the meaning of /iqraq /'to exaggerate' which originally means 'to draw a bow to the extreme possible point', hence, to exaggerate in anything.

This clearly shows that, in the above verse, the word does not mean 'to sink, or to drown', but it means 'to do something to the extreme end'.²

The term /naḥīḥat/ is derived from /naḥt/ which originally means 'to untie the knots which are easily

unfastened'. 'A shallow well', from which the bucket can be drawn easily at one pull, is called /inʕat/. 'A camel which is instigated by a subtle hint and moves very fast' is called /naʕitah/. Therefore, this word is generally used in any case where a movement is fluently done.

The term /sabiha/ is based on /sabh/ which means 'a quick movement in water or air'. Hence, it is applied to swimming, or a swimming motion, or a swift gallop, or to perform a daily affair, quickly. The word /tasbih/ 'to praise Allah' is from the same root, as if the one who praises Allah goes quickly forward in worship of the Lord.

The term /sabiqa/ is derived from /sabqah/ which means 'to precede' and since the action is usually impossible without full speed, this term is sometimes used in the sense of 'speed', too.

The term /mudabbirat/ is based on /tadbir/ which means 'to mediate upon, or consider the end of an action', and since foresight causes one to arrange his affairs in a better manner, this word is used here in that sense.

Now, with due attention to what was explained about the words concerning the verses, we are going to proceed with the commentary.

To whom or to what do these five oaths refer? The oaths, at first sight, seem rather ambiguous, while at the same time this ambiguity stimulates us to mediate more deeply and thus causes our progressive thinking.

In this regard, commentators have given many different ideas and commentaries, which mainly revolve around three points:

1. The oaths are aimed at 'angels' who are ordered to tear out the souls of the wicked and the pagan, violently; those Souls who have never assumed to submit to the Truth and to the angels who are appointed to draw out the souls of the blessed, gently and smoothly.

Then, it refers to the angels who move fast and fluently to carry out the Divine Command. And in so doing, they race each other to fulfill their errands.

Finally, they arrange the affairs according to Allah's plan.

2. The oaths refer to the 'stars', which continually set on one horizon and rise above another.

A group of them moves slowly, but another goes swiftly, from one place to another, with speed. They are floating above us in immense space, taking the lead one after another.

And finally, these stars, having their own influence and effect (like the effect of sunlight and moonlight on the Earth), arrange the affairs according to Allah's plan.

3. The oaths are aimed at the fighters of 'Holy War' (Jihad), or at their horses, and who leave their own

houses and cities with expressive grief, but, then they smoothly and happily leave for the battlefield taking the lead one after another directing and running the affairs of war.

On occasion, some commentators have tried to combine these three ideas by choosing one part from one commentary and another part from another one, but the framework is the same.³

There is no contrast, of course, among these commentaries and it is possible that the above verses refer to all of them. But, on the whole, first commentary, regarding its suitability to the main theme, Resurrection, and with the traditions by the sinless Imams, seems to be most fitting.

Surah Nazi'at, Verses 6-14

يَوْمَ تَرْجُفُ الرَّاجِفَةُ

تَتَّبِعُهَا الرَّادِفَةُ

قُلُوبٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ وَاجِفَةٌ

أَبْصَارُهَا خَاشِعَةٌ

يَقُولُونَ أَأَنَا لَمَرْدُودُونَ فِي الْحَافِرَةِ

أَإِذَا كُنَّا عِظَامًا نَخِرَةً

قَالُوا تِلْكَ إِذًا كَرَّةٌ خَاسِرَةٌ

فَإِنَّمَا هِيَ زَجْرَةٌ وَاحِدَةٌ

فَإِذَا هُمْ بِالسَّاهِرَةِ

6. ***"The Day on which everything that can be in commotion will be in violent commotion,"***
7. ***"Followed by another mighty convulsion,"***
8. ***"Hearts that Day will be in agitation,"***
9. ***"Cast down will be (their) eyes."***
10. ***"They say (now): What! shall we indeed be returned to (our) former state?"***
11. ***"What! when we shall have become rotten bones?"***
12. ***"They said: That then will be a losing return."***
13. ***"But it shall be only a single blast."***
14. ***"When behold they shall be in the awakened state."***

The Resurrection Will Happen with a Single Great Blast!

The occurrence of the Resurrection, in the aforementioned verses, was described as a certain event confirmed by five strict oaths. Now, in the present verses, some of the signs and incidents on that Great Day are described.

"The Day on which everything that can be in commotion will be in violent commotion,"
"Followed by another mighty convulsion".

The term /rajifah/ is based on /rajf/ which means: 'an agitation or a violent quake'; and seditious news is called /arajif/, because it causes a society to become agitated.

The term /radifah/ is derived from /radf/ which means: 'a person or a thing streaming one after another'.

Many commentators believe that /rajifah/ refers to 'the first Blast of the trumpet' which is to precede the blast of the quake and the destruction of the universe, and the term /radifah/ refers to the second Blast after which the Resurrection will occur and the new life begins.

Therefore, this verse is somewhat similar to what was revealed in Surah Zumar, No. 39, verse 68, thus:

"And the Trumpet will (just) be sounded, when all that are in the heavens and on earth will swoon, except such as it will please Allah (to exempt). Then will a second one be sounded when, behold, they will be standing and looking on!"

Some others have also said that the term /rajifah/ refers to 'the quake that will destroy the earth' and the

term /radifah/ means: 'the quake that will wreck the sky'. However, the first commentary seems more appropriate.

“Hearts that Day will be in agitation,”

Being anxious for the Reckoning and penalty at the Judgment, the hearts of the criminals, the sinners and the Unjust will severely tremble.

The term /wajifah/ is derived from /wajf/ which originally means 'to move fast'; where the term /aujaf/ is used with the meaning of 'to make a horse or camel move briskly with a bounding pace'; and since a quick movement causes shaking and anxiety, this word is also used in the sense of 'violent agitation'.

This inner anxiety is so violent that its effects appear in the whole body of the sinners.

“Cast down will be (their) eyes.”

On that Day, the eyes will subside, coming to a stop and be dazed as if they are blinded by fear.

Then the scope of the speech changes from the Hereafter to this world.

“They say (now): What! shall we indeed be returned to (our) former state?”

The term /hafirah/ is based on /hafr/ which originally means 'to dig' and the cavity resulting from this action is called /hufrah/ 'ditch'. The hoof is also called /hafir/, because it is usually used to dig the soil. In any event, the term /hafirah/ is metonymically used in the sense of 'a beginning, or original state, or former condition'.

“What! when we shall have become rotten bones?”

This is the very thing that the rejecters of the Resurrection always used to emphasize on and said that it was not believable that rotten bones could come to life again, because they imagined that the distance between rotten bones of dust and living creatures was too far. They had forgotten that they had been created from that very same dust.

The term /naxirah/ is based on /naxr/ which originally means: 'a rotten tree which is hollow and makes a whistling sound when the wind blows'; hence, a nasal sound is called /naxir/; and, so, the word has been used for everything which is rotten and worn.

The unbelievers are not satisfied with the idea of Resurrection, so, they ridicule it.

“They said: That then will be a losing return”.

Commenting on the verse, another probability can come about which is that they expressed their view in a serious manner. If so, then, they want to say: 'if there is a return it will be a uselessly repeated one,

which will be injurious'. If this life is good why does Allah not continue the same one, and if it is bad why is there a return?

Regarding the term /hafirah/ which means: 'a ditch', the sentence

"Shall we indeed be returned to (our) former state?"

can, also, be an evidence for this commentary. But, the first is a more well-known commentary.

It is worth noting that in the former verses the term /yaquluna/ denoted that they used to say their words repeatedly, but in the current verse the word /qalu /shows that they did not always repeat the statement.

At the end of this part, the Resurrection and the occurrence of the Hereafter is again mentioned in a decisive and shocking tone.

"But is shall be only a single blast."

"When, behold, they shall be in the awakened state."

It means that the event of the Resurrection will not be the fruit of a difficult and complicated action for Allah. It only depends on His command and when the second blow of the Trumpet occurs all rotten bones, which are scattered in the earth, will be gathered, revived and raised from their graves.

The term /zajrah/ means 'to cry for moving', and, here, it means 'the second blast'.

Regarding the content of the meaning of these two terms

/zajratun - wa'idah/ 'only a single blast',

they denote that the Resurrection is a sudden happening and it is easy for Allah's Power that with a cry of an order by the angel of the Trumpet, all the dead come to life again and are present in the Hereafter for the Reckoning.

The term /sahirah/ is based on /sahar/ which means: 'to sit up at night', and since this frightful occurrence removes the sleep of night from the eyes and, moreover, since the land of the Hereafter is horrible, so, the gathering place, in the Hereafter, is called /sahirah/. The term is also used for any desert, since, all deserts are generally frightful and it seems that this fright takes the sleep from the eyes.

Surah Nazi'at, Verses 15-26

هَلْ أَتَاكَ حَدِيثُ مُوسَىٰ

إِذْ نَادَاهُ رَبُّهُ بِالْوَادِ الْمُقَدَّسِ طُوًى

أَذْهَبَ إِلَى فِرْعَوْنَ إِنَّهُ طَغَى

فَقُلْ هَلْ لَكَ إِلَىٰ أَنْ تَزَكَّىٰ

وَأَهْدِيكَ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ فَتَخْشَىٰ

فَأَرَاهُ الْآيَةَ الْكُبْرَىٰ

فَكَذَّبَ وَعَصَىٰ

ثُمَّ أَدْبَرَ يَسْعَىٰ

فَحَشَرَ فَنَادَىٰ

فَقَالَ أَنَا رَبُّكُمُ الْأَعْلَىٰ

فَأَخَذَهُ اللَّهُ نَكَالَ الْآخِرَةِ وَالْأُولَىٰ

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَعِبْرَةً لِمَنْ يَخْشَى

15. ***“Has the story of Moses reached you?”***
16. ***“When his Lord called to him in the holy valley of Tuwa:”***
17. ***“Go to Pharaoh, surely he has transgressed all bounds:”***
18. ***“And say to him: ‘Wouldst thou that thou shouldst be purified (from sin)?’”***
19. ***‘And that I guide thee to thy Lord, so thou shouldst fear (Him)?’***
20. ***“Then did (Moses) show him The Great Sign.”***
21. ***“But (Pharaoh) rejected it and disobeyed (guidance);”***
22. ***“Further, he turned his back striving hard (against Allah).”***
23. ***“Then he collected (his men) and made a proclamation,”***
24. ***“And said: I am your Lord, Most High.”***
25. ***“So Allah seized him for an exemplary punishment in the Hereafter and in this life.***
26. ***“Surely in that is a lesson for him who fears (Allah).***

Pharaoh Used to Say: I Am Your Lord, Most High

After a considerable description in the former verses about Resurrection and the rejection of the unbelievers, in the following verses the painful end of Pharaoh, one of the great arrogant blasphemers and rebels of history, is pointed out, to show Pagan Arabs that those who were stronger than them could not stand against Allah’s wrath and punishment, and encourages the believers not to be afraid of the apparent strength of their enemies, because it is easy for Him to destroy them all.

“Has the story of Moses reached you?”

It is interesting that it addresses the Prophet (S) and begins with a question to attract the attention of the listener in order to make him ready to hear this wonderful story.

“When his Lord called to him in the holy valley of Tuwa.”

‘Tuwa’ may be the name of a sacred valley just below Mount Sinai, which was located in Sham (Damascus) between Madyan and Egypt, and where Moses, subsequently, received, in his heart, the first light of inspiration.

The term is also mentioned in Surah Ta-Ha, No. 20, verse 12 where Moses hears a voice say:

“Verily I am thy Lord! therefore (in My presence) put off thy shoes: thou art in the sacred valley Tuwa.”

Or, it has a descriptive meaning derived from the term /tay/ which means ‘the act of rolling up’, as if the land is rolled up in holiness and sanctity, or as Raqib cites: Moses should cover a long distance to be

prepared to receive the inspiration, but Allah rolled up the way and made it near for Moses to reach the goal.

Then, in three short, but meaningful sentences, it refers to the message that Allah sent to Moses in that valley where He commanded:

“Go to Pharaoh, surely he has transgressed all bounds.”

“And say to him: ‘Wouldst thou that thou shouldst be purified (from sin)?’”

“And that I guide thee to thy Lord, so thou shouldst fear (Him)?”

And, since invitations should be accompanied by reasons, in the next verse it says:

“Then did (Moses) show him The Great Sign.”

The Great Sign, whether being the 'white shining hand' or the rod that became a 'snake active in motion' or both of them, has been one of the Great Signs that Moses relied on in the prime of his prophetic mission.

There are some interesting points in these four verses that should be noted:

1. It says that Moses is told to go to Pharaoh, because he has transgressed, and this shows that one of the great missions that the prophets had was to guide the rebels or to oppose them decisively.
2. This invitation to purity, by Moses, with those conciliatory words and in the most benevolent terms, to Pharaoh, where Allah tells Moses to go:

“And say (to him) ‘Wouldst thou that thou shouldst be purified (from sin)?’”

is similar to the sense found in Surah Ta-Ha, No. 20, verse 44 which says:

“But speak to him mildly...”

3. This meaning has a delicate hint to the fact that the goal of the prophecy of the prophets is to purify men and lead them to their real purified nature.

By the way, it does not say 'I purify you', it says:

“...Wouldst thou that thou shouldst be purified?...”

which indicates that purification should come about from inside and by one's own intention; not from an imposition from an outside source.

4. The statement of 'guidance' after mentioning the sense 'to purify' is a reason for showing that 'purification' is a preliminary step to 'guidance'.

5. The term

/rabbikal 'your Lord',

indeed, is an emphasis on this fact that

'I take you to Him Who is your master and your cherisher. Why do you flee from the path of happiness?'

6.

'Fear of Allah'

is the fruit of guidance. Truly, those who are guided to monotheism feel responsible before Allah, the Almighty, because fear of Allah never appears without knowing Him.

That is why in Surah Fatir, No, 35, verse 28 it says:

"...those truly fear Allah among His Servants, who have knowledge..."

7. First, Moses appeals to Pharaoh's emotional guidance and then, he evokes his rational and logical guidance by showing him his Great Sign, his great miracle. The most effective way of preaching is by influencing emotions and, then, presenting the reasons and evidences.

Now, we will deal with Pharaoh and his reaction to so much affection and love and the beautiful, reasonable speech and the Great Sign that Moses showed him.

The fact is that many signs were given, but Pharaoh and his men were steeped in arrogance.

"But (Pharaoh) rejected it and disobeyed (guidance)".

This shows that rejection is the primary step in transgression, as well as faith, and admitting the truth is paramount to obedience.

Pharaoh was not satisfied with only rejecting the guidance.

"Further, he turned his back, striving hard (against Allah)".

Since the miracle of Moses threatened the whole devilish unity of Pharaoh, he sent some men to different cities to gather the sorcerers and he also ordered to announce people to come to see the challenge between the sorcerers and Moses.

"Then he collected (his men) and made a proclamation".

Though the term /قارا/ is mentioned, here, alone, but with reference to the term /قارين/ in Surah

Araf, No. 7, verses 111–112 which say:

***“...and send to the cities men to collect”,
“And bring up to thee all (our) sorcerers well-versed”,***

and also referring to the term

Inadal 'made a proclamation',

though it is absolute, it points to the invitation of Pharaoh to the people to gather and watch the challenge; with the evidence from Surah Shuara, No. 26, verse 39 which says:

“And the people were told: Are you (now) assembled?”

He did not quit with these plots and he made claims with the worst statements.

“And said: I am your Lord, Most High.”

Verily, it is amazing that these arrogant transgressors, when riding on the horse-back of pride, know no limit for their selfishness. They are not content with their claim of being Lord; they want to be 'Lord of Lords'.

This statement denotes that he says,

“If you worship idols, it is accepted, but I am the highest of all and I am your Lord.”

And, it is interesting that Pharaoh, himself, was one of the idol-worshippers as Surah Araf, No. 7, verse 127 attests to:

“...wilt thou leave Moses and his people, to spread mischief in the land, and so to abandon thee and thy gods?”

but here, he claims that he is their Lord, Most High, that is, he considered himself still higher than his own god; and this is in the vain statements of all transgressors.

And, more astonishing than this is that in Surah Qasas, No. 28, verse 38 he claims

“...No god do I know for you but myself...”;

but in the current verse he goes further and says:

“I am your Lord, Most High”

and this is the manner of these air-headed rebels.

He reached the ultimate point of disobedience and deserved the most painful punishments. He and his

corrupted surroundings should perish by the order of Allah, that is why, in the next verse, it says:

“So Allah seized him with an exemplary punishment in the Hereafter and in this life”.

The term /nakal/ originally means 'weakness' and 'disability', so it is said of a person who fails to pay his debt and since the divine chastisement makes people weak and stops others from doing sin; it is called /nakal/.

The term /nakal_al_axirah/ means 'the chastisement of the Hereafter' which will envelop Pharaoh and his people and because of its importance it is mentioned first and the term /ula/ 'former life' which meant 'the punishment in this world', is mentioned second and is that which destroyed Pharaoh and all his followers in waters of the sea.

There is another commentary which says that /ula/ means 'the first word that Pharaoh said claiming to be a deity'⁴, and /axirah/ refers to the last word that he said in which he claimed that he was their Lord, Most High. Then, Allah punished him for these two blasphemous statements, even in this life.

This very idea is narrated in a tradition from Imam Baqir who added that 40 years had elapsed between the occurrence of these two statements (meaning that Allah did not just punish him to complete the argument). ⁵

This commentary is more fitting with the term /axatha/ which is a verb in the past tense, and indicates that the punishment was completely fulfilled in the present world, and also with the next verse that considers the event to be a lesson.

"Surely in that is a lesson for him who fears (Allah)".

This verse clearly shows that learning a lesson from these events is possible only for those who, more or less, fear Allah and possess a feeling of responsibility in their hearts.

Yes, that was the destiny of Pharaoh, the blasphemer; an example to make other pagans and chiefs of the Arab unbelievers and all those who follow on the path of Pharaoh, in any age, understand the facts and know that Allah's law is always true, firm and unchangeable.

Explanation: A Small Sample of the Elegance of Holy Qur'an

Careful attention paid to the above eleven short verses is enough to show us the fine elegance and fluency of Qur'an; a summary of the statements and activities concerning Moses and Pharaoh the motive of prophet hood, its aim, the means of purification, the manner of invitation, kinds of actions and reactions, the description of Pharaoh's plot, some examples of his vain claims, and, finally, the painful punishment of this arrogant blasphemer, which can, consequently, teach a lesson to all those who have insight, are illustrated.

Surah Nazi'at, Verses 27-33

أَأَنْتُمْ أَشَدُّ خَلْقًا أَمْ السَّمَاءُ ۚ بَنَاهَا

رَفَعَ سَمَكَهَا فَسَوَّاهَا

وَأَغْطَشَ لَيْلَهَا وَأَخْرَجَ ضُحَاهَا

وَالْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ دَحَاهَا

أَخْرَجَ مِنْهَا مَاءَهَا وَمَرْعَاهَا

وَالْجِبَالَ أَرْسَاهَا

مَتَاعًا لَكُمْ وَلِالْأَنْعَامِ كُمْ

27. "Is the creation of you harder or the heaven He built?"
28. "He raised its vault and regulated it,"
29. "And He made dark its night and brought forth its daylight,"
30. "And the earth, after that He spread it out;"
31. "He brought forth from it its water and its pasture,"
32. "And the mountains, He set them firm,"
33. "For use and convenience to you and your cattle."

A Reason For the Resurrection: Are You More Difficult to Create or the Heaven He Built?

With the story of Moses and Pharaoh as a lesson for all transgressors and rejecters, our attention is turned to the Resurrection. Again, and the statements are about some attributes of Allah's infinite Power, as a proof to the possible existence of Resurrection. These words convey the explanation of some of the unlimited blessings of Allah endowed to man to evoke a sense of gratitude, in the soul, which is the origin of knowing Allah.

At first, it addresses the rejecters of the Resurrection and, in a scolding tone, questions:

"Is the creation of you harder or the heaven He built?"

This statement is, in fact, a reply to their words in the former verses, thus:

"They say (now): What! shall we indeed be returned to (our) former state?"

Now, this verse says that those who have any degree of understanding know that the creation of this lofty sky, with so many celestial gigantic bodies and endless galaxies, is not comparable with the creation of man. He who has this authority, how could He be unable to return you to life again?

"He raised its vault and regulated it",

The term /samk/ originally means 'height, or altitude'. It has also been used with the meaning of 'ceiling'.

In Tafsir Kabir, a commentary by Fakhr-ud-din Muhammad Razi, it is said that when we measure from the top to the bottom of something it is called depth ('umq), and when we measure it from bottom to top it is called height (samk).⁶

The term /sawwaha/ is based on the term /taswiyah/ which means 'to make level or equal, to proportion something'. It refers, here, to the accurate regularity that dominates all the celestial bodies; and, if /samk/ means 'ceiling' refers to the thick atmosphere which, like a hard and safe shield, has surrounded the earth and protects it from the rush of meteorites and fatal cosmic rays.

Some have considered the above sense to mean the globular form of the atmosphere that covers all around of the earth. They believe that using the term, with the sense of 'equal', refers to the equal distance between the parts of the ceiling and its center, that is the Earth; and this cannot exist, but only by being globular.

It is also probable that the verse points to both the height of the sky and the extreme long distance of the celestial bodies from us, and the safe vault around the Earth.

In any case, this verse is similar to what Surah Momin, No. 40, verse 57 says:

"Assuredly the creation of the heavens and the earth is a greater (matter) than the creation of men; yet most men understand not".

"And He made dark its night and brought forth its daylight."

Each of these two has an extraordinary important role in the life of any living creature whether animal or plant. Man cannot live without sunlight, because all of his sustenance, his senses and movement depend on it, as well as his life is not possible without the darkness, which is the cause of his tranquility.

The term /aghḡaḡa/ is based on /ghaḡḡ/ with the sense of 'dark' but, Raqib cites in his book, Mufradat, that its origin is /aghḡaḡ/, which means 'a person who has weak or dim eyes'.

The terms /wa duḡa/ means 'when the full brightness of the sun spreads in the heaven and over the earth.'

"And the earth, after that He spread it out".

The term /duḡa/ is derived from /daḡw/ which means 'to spread, to expand'. Some have also rendered it to mean 'to move something from its original place'. And since these two meanings are interdependent, they return to one root.

The objective meaning of /daḡw-ul-ard/ is that, at first, the surface of the Earth was totally covered with water from the prime rainfalls, the water of which was gradually sucked down through the holes and ditches in the ground, and then, parts of the land appeared. It expanded little by little, until it formed its present state. (And this happened after the creation of heavens and the Earth.)

"He brought forth from it its water and its pasture".

This idea shows that there was water stored in the layers of the earth. Then, it appeared flowing over the ground in the form of springs and streams and forming the seas and lakes.

The term /mar'a/ is a place-noun and means 'pasture'. It is originally derived from /ra'y/ in the sense of 'animal protection' from the point of view of foodstuff or, feeding cattle, or in other respects; then the term /mura'at /has been used in the sense of protection and arranging the affairs.

The known proverb:

"Each of you all is a shepherd and responsible,"

is, also, a reference to the necessity of people needing to be protected by each other.

Even though different factors, such as continuous storms, gravitational pull; caused by the sun or the moon having an effect on the surface of the land, and earthquakes; produced from the pressure of the inner molten lava of the earth, could disturb the peace and calmness of the ground, it became still and peaceful due to the existence of high mountain ranges throughout the earth.

“And the mountains, He set them firm”

“For use and convenience to you and your cattle”.

Yes, He raised the vault of the sky, and set the light and darkness regular. He expanded the earth, and put forth water and plants from it. He made the mountains over the face of the earth to protect it; preparing everything for the life of man, so that all of them obey and are at His service.

The reason is that man enjoys the bounties of life and should be grateful to Allah, Who created them all, and obey His laws.

These affairs are, on the one hand, the kinds of power He has over the Resurrection and, on the other hand, they refer to some reasons and signs along the path of the existence of unity and knowing Allah.

Surah Nazi’at, Verses 34-41

فَإِذَا جَاءَتِ الطَّامَّةُ الْكُبْرَىٰ

يَوْمَ يَتَذَكَّرُ الْإِنْسَانُ مَا سَعَىٰ

وَبُرِّزَتِ الْجَحِيمُ لِمَنْ يَرَىٰ

فَأَمَّا مَنْ طَغَىٰ

وَأَثَرَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا

فَإِنَّ الْجَحِيمَ هِيَ الْمَأْوَىٰ

وَأَمَّا مَنْ خَافَ مَقَامَ رَبِّهِ وَنَهَى النَّفْسَ عَنِ الْهَوَىٰ

فَإِنَّ الْجَنَّةَ هِيَ الْمَأْوَىٰ

34. *"But when the great calamity comes,"*

35. *"That Day man shall remember what he strove for,"*

36. *"And Hell-fire shall be manifest for him who sees,"*

37. *"Then as for him who transgressed,"*

38. *"And had preferred the life of this world,"*

39. *"Then surely Hell-fire will be the Abode."*

40. *"And as for him who feared his Lord's presence and restrained the soul from the low desires,"*

41. *"Then surely the Garden will be the Abode."*

Those Who Restrain Their Soul From Low Desires

To continue stating the details of the Resurrection, mentioned in the former verses, the following verses refer to the subject, again, and explain the destiny of those who fear Allah and of those who disobey and follow their low desires.

"But when the great calamity comes"

The term /ʕammah/ is derived from /ʕamm/ which originally means 'to fill', and anything which is in a high state is called /ʕammah/; hence, it is used for the great and difficult events and also for the grievous, disastrous happenings to come. Here, it refers to the Hereafter, which is full of horrible incidents.

It is characterized by the word

'great'

as an emphasis on the importance of this unique event.

"That Day man shall remember what he strove for".

But what is the use of this remembrance? How could it be helpful to him? If he asks to return to this world to recompense the past, his request will be denied and the reply will be: 'Nay!'.

If he repents for the pardoning of his evil deeds, it will be useless, since it will be too late for it.

Then, he can do nothing, but regret and as the Qur'an says:

"The Day that the wrongdoer will bite at his hands..." 7

It should be noted that the term /yatathakkaru/ is a verb in the future tense, which usually expresses the constancy of an action, i.e. on that Day man will constantly remember all his deeds because on that Day the hearts and the souls of men will be unveiled and all the hidden facts will be made manifest.

"And Hell -fire shall he manifest for him who sees".

Hell exists at the present time. Furthermore, according to Surah Ankabut, No. 29, verse 54:

"But, of a surety, Hell will encompass the rejecters of Faith!",

however, the curtains of this world hinder it to be seen; hence, on the Day of Judgment, that is, the Day of the manifestation of everything, Hell becomes apparent and the most clearly visible.

The words

Iliman yaral 'for him who sees'

denote that Hell, on that Day, will be so visible that everyone who has the ability to see, and with no exception, will see it. It will be covert neither to the righteous nor to the evildoers, whose abode is -Hell.

It is, also, probable that the words refer to those who have eyes to see with on that Day, because according to Surah Ta-Ha, No. 20, verse 124, some will be blind then:

"...and We shall raise him up blind on the Day of Judgment".

But the first meaning which is accepted by many commentators seems more fitting, because Hell, for the evildoers, is a punishment and a doubled penalty. That some of them will be blind, perhaps, occurs at some definite sites in the Hereafter, not everywhere.

Then, attention is paid to the status of sinners and unbelievers in the Hereafter and, in a few short, but meaningful sentences, both the destiny of theirs and its causes are expressed:

"Then as for him who transgressed",

"And had preferred the life of this world,"

"Then surely Hell -fire will be the Abode".

In the first sentence, their corrupted belief is referred to since transgression originates from self-complacence and self-conceit, which, itself, is caused by the absence of knowledge of Allah.

One who knows Allah, the Almighty, finds himself insignificant and never rejects his servitude.

The second sentence points to their corrupted deeds, because transgression causes man to consider the glitter of the lusts of this scintillating world his highest values and prefers it to everything else.

These two, in fact, are the 'cause and effect' of each other. Transgression caused by corrupted belief is the source of corrupted deeds and also preferring this fleeting life to all, brings about the blazing fire of Hell.

Hazrat Ali (as) has said:

*“He who transgresses, goes astray and acts not reasonably”.*⁸

This is because of self-complacency in which man acknowledges his low desires and conceives them as being valuable.

Then, through two short and extremely meaningful sentences, it characterizes the Blessed, thus:

***“And as for him who feared his Lord's presence and restrained the soul from the low desires...
Then surely the Garden will be the Abode”.***

Yes, the first condition of being 'blessed' is 'fear' caused by 'knowledge' knowing the presence of the Lord and being afraid of disobeying His command. The second condition, which is, indeed, the fruit of knowledge and fear of Allah, is restraining the soul from rebellion, since, all the sins, corruption's and disasters, come from low desires which is the worst god worshipped in the world.

The means of Satan to influence in man's entity, is still 'low desire'.

It is this inner evil that opens the gate for the outer Evil to come in, or else this case would never be possible, as Surah Al-Hijr, No. 15, verse 42 says:

“For over My servants no authority shalt thou have, except such as put themselves in the wrong and follow thee”.

Explanations

What is the meaning of “the Presence of the Lord”?

It is worthy to note that in Verse 40, of the current Surah, it says:

“...as for him who feared his Lord's presence...”

but it does not say: 'as for him who feared his Lord'. Then, what is 'the

Lord's presence'?

The following are some different commentaries to be considered:

1. It means 'the halting-places in the Hereafter' wherein man stands in front of the Lord for Judgment.

Therefore, 'the

Lord's presence'

is in the sense of 'his presence with his Lord', i.e. the standing of man before his Lord.

2. It points to 'Allah's knowledge and His protection' for all human beings; as Surah Ra'd, No. 13, verse 33 says:

"Is then He Who standeth over every soul (and knoweth) all that it doth, (like any others)?"

The next evidence to this commentary is the tradition that has been narrated from Imam Sadiq who said:

"He who knows that Allah sees him, hears what he says, knows what he does regarding good or evil, and this consciousness keeps him away from doing wrong, it is he who'...feared his Lord's presence and restrained the soul from the low desires".

3. It means 'His Justice' since His Holy Essence is not frightening. The fear is for His Justice. In fact, this fear is obtained from the comparison between our actions and His Justice. Criminals tremble when they see the just judge, and fear when they hear the words 'court and Judgment', while an innocent person feels no fear of any of them.

These three commentaries do not contrast with each other and all of them may be gathered in the meaning of the verse.

The Relation Between the Rebels and Worldliness

In fact, the above verses clearly and in a beautiful style illustrate the principles of both man's happiness and adversity. The adversity of man is considered in his worldliness, and his happiness is found in his fear of Allah and the absence of low desires; the whole of which is the extract and essence in the teachings of all Prophets and Saints.

A tradition from Hazrat Ali (as) says:

"O' people what I fear most about you are two things: acting according to desires and extending of hope. As regards acting according to desires, this prevents from truth; and as regards extending of hopes, it makes one forget the next world."⁹

Low desires put a curtain over man's mind, decorates his evil deeds to seem good in his sight, robs him of the sense of recognition; which is the greatest gift of Allah, is the privilege of man over animal, and makes him preoccupied with himself.

This is the very thing that Jacob, the conscientious prophet, told his guilty children:

“...Nay, but your minds have made up a tale (that may pass) with you...”¹⁰.

There are many things to say in this regard, but we will conclude this subject with two traditions from Ahlul Bayt (as) containing many facts.

Imam Baqir has said:

*“Paradise is covered in pain and patience. Then he who shows patience in suffering and toils in this life, will enjoy Heaven. Hell is covered in (unlawful) pleasures and lusts. Then, he who leaves his soul in them, will enter into the fire.”*¹¹

Imam Sadiq has said:

*“Don’t let the soul free in its low desires. Surely low desires cause the death of the soul, and if you leave the soul free in its low desires, it causes pain for it, and keeping it apart from its low desires is a remedy for it”*¹².

Not only is the fire of the Next World the fruit of lusts and low desires, but, it is also the blazing fires of this world, such as: insecurities, chaos’s, wars, murders, conflicts, hatreds and vengeance’s which totally originate from them.

There are only Two Groups

In the above verses people are categorized in only two groups: the worldly rebels and the pious who fear Allah. The permanent abode of the first group is Hell, and the eternal site of the second group is Heaven.

Of course, there is, here, a third group who are not mentioned in these verses. They are those guilty believers, of minor sins, through human frailty, who had repented and been forgiven and if they deserve it will join the blessed, and if not, will enter Hell, but, they will not be there for ever.

Surah Nazi’at, Verses 42-46

يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ السَّاعَةِ أَيَّانَ مُرْسَاهَا

فِيمَ أَنْتَ مِنْ ذِكْرَاهَا

إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ مُنْتَهَاهَا

إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ مُنذِرٌ مَّنْ يَخْشَاهَا

كَأَنَّهُمْ يَوْمَ يَرَوْنَهَا لَمْ يَلْبُثُوا إِلَّا عَشِيَّةً أَوْ ضُحَاهَا

42. "They ask you about the Hour, When will it come to pass?"

43. "Wherein art thou (concerned) with the declaration thereof?"

44. "With thy Lord is the limit fixed therefor"

45. "You are but a Warner to him who fears it."

46. "It shall seem to them on the day when they behold it, as though they tarried not (in their graves) but an evening or a forenoon."

Only Allah knows the Final Hour, the Resurrection.

In the aforementioned verses the Hereafter and the destiny of the righteous and the wrongdoers, on that Day, is described and, now, in the following verses the focus is on the common question of the rejecters of the Resurrection.

It says:

"They ask you about the Hour, When will it come to pass?"

Answering this question, to make them understand that no one knows when the final Great Event will take place, the Holy Qur'an addresses the Prophet (S) and says:

"Wherein art thou (concerned) with the declaration thereof?"

When the date of the occurrence of the Hereafter is hidden even from the Prophet, then the status of others is obvious. This is of the knowledge, which is hidden and exclusively belongs to Allah. It is out of reach for all.

It is mentioned, repeatedly, that one of the things that are veiled for everyone is the exact time of the Hereafter whose training effect is not possible save being secret; since, if the exact time appointed for it were revealed and it were far away, everyone would sink deeply in negligence; and if it were near, avoiding sin would be done confusingly and far from free-will and intention, both of which are worthless from the point of training.

There have been other probabilities cited, also, and among them is that: 'you were not appointed in order to tell the time of the occurrence of the Hereafter but, you are appointed to inform others of its existence and that it will certainly happen.

Moreover, 'your appointment shows that the Day of Judgment is coming nearer'.

So, the Holy Prophet (S) is reported to have said, showing his two forefingers:

*"My appointment and the Hour are like these."*¹³

But the first commentary is the most appropriate.

"With thy Lord is the limit fixed therefor".

It is only He Who knows the Hour. No man knows the mystery and no effort and endeavor is useful for finding the answer.

This is the same idea that Surah Luqman, No. 31, verse 34 says:

"Verily the knowledge of the Hour is with Allah (alone)..."

And, again, from Surah Araf, No. 7, verse 187:

"...Say: 'the knowledge thereof is with my Lord (alone)..."

Some have said that the objective point of the above sentence is that the actual occurrence of the Hereafter is under His control, and the sentence is a statement for the cause of what is said in the previous verse. To combine these two commentaries is possible, too.

"You are but a Warner to him who fears."

'Your duty is only to warn them and you are not responsible to tell them the final Hour.'

It is worthy to note that the warning referred to, here, is only to those who fear that Day and this is similar to what Surah Baqarah, No. 2, verse 2 says:

"This is the Book; in it is guidance without doubt, to those who fear Allah".

These kind of statements refer to the fact that when there is an absence in the soul for seeking the right and the truth and a lack of the sense of responsibility in front of Allah exists, then, man neither goes in search of the heavenly books for information about the Resurrection nor does he listen to the warnings of the Prophets and Saints.

Finally, to express that there is not a great deal of time until the Day of Judgment, it says:

"It shall seem to them on the day when they behold it, as though they tarried not (in their graves) but an evening or a forenoon".

The length of the life, in this world, is so short and the period of the intermediate state (Barzakh) passes so quickly, that when they rise, again, for the Day of Judgment the whole period seems to them as if it were only a few hours.

This idea, that the life in this world is short and fleeting, is both practical and true and, in comparison with the Hereafter and the life of the whole Universe, it is like a moment.

The term /aʿiyyah/ means 'evening', and /duha/ is used for 'a period when the sun has come up and its beam of light has spread'.

Some verses of the Qur'an indicate that on the Day of Judgment the sinners will talk about the length of their stay in partition (purgatory) or their life in this world, in this manner:

"In whispers will they consult each other: 'Ye tarried not longer than ten (days)"¹⁴.

But those of them who think more soundly say:

"...their leader most eminent in conduct will say: 'Tarried not longer than a day!"¹⁵.

In another sura, it narrates the sinners idea:

"On the Day that the Hour (of reckoning) will be established, the transgressors will swear that they tarried not but an hour..."¹⁶.

The difference between these various statements is that the sinners want to compare the shortness of this time with an approximate length of their stay, therefore, each of them states his own feelings, and they all have one thing in common which is that the shortness of life in this world is compared to the life in the Hereafter. This, of course, is a matter that shakes man, and awakens him from the sleep of negligence.

Supplication

O Lord! Gift us the calmness and tranquility on that Great Day¹ in partition (purgatory) and in this world.

O Lord! No one can erase the troubles of that Great Day, but by your Grace. Then, we seek your holy Grace.

O Lord! Lead us so that you put us among those who fear your presence and restrain their soul from low desires and will reside in eternal Heaven.

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1. Majma-al-Bayan, vol. 10, p. 428
 2. Lisan-al-Arab; Majma-al-Bayan, The Commentary; Kashshaf, The Commentary; and Majma-al-Bahrayn.
 3. A fourth point of probability cited refers to the natural movements of creatures in the world
 4. Surah Qasas, No. 28, verse 32
 5. Majma-al-Bayan, vol. 10, p. 432
 6. Tafsir Kabir, vol. 31, p. 46.
 7. Surah Furqan, No. 25, verse 27
 8. Nur-uth-Thaqalayn, vol 5, p. 506, Tradition No. 43.
 9. Nahj-ul Balaqa, Sermon No. 42 (Arabic Version), No. 47 (English Version).
 10. Surah Yusuf, No. 12, verse 18
 11. Nur uth-Thaqalayn, vol 5, p. 507, Tradition No. 46.
 12. ibid., Tradition No. 45.
 13. Tafsir-i-Fakhr-i-Razi, The Commentary, vol. 29, p. 29. This matter is mentioned referring to Surah 49, verse 18 in Majma-al-Bayan, Qartabi, Fizalal and others.
 14. Surah Ta-Ha, No. 20, verse 103
 15. Surah Ta-Ha, No. 20, verse 104
 16. Surah Rum, No. 30, verse 55

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