

## Surah Takwir, Chapter 81

(The Folding Up)

Number of Verses: 29

### Contents of the Surah

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

#### *In The Name of Allah, The Beneficent, The Merciful*

This Surah is among the Meccan Surahs and there is a variety of evidence to verify this fact. For instance, the Surah denotes that the enemies of the Prophet (S) called him mad and this treatment used to happen in the early periods of his prophecy in Mecca, when his enemies did not take his statements seriously and were quite careless about them.

This Surah can be divided into mainly two themes:

The first theme is pointed out in the beginning verses of the Surah; those which contain the signs about the Hereafter and the occurrence of some great changes regarding the end of this world and the beginning of the Next World; the Resurrection.

The second theme is in a mystical passage showing how the Great Qur'anic Revelation was true, and was revealed through the angel Gabriel, and which has a remarkable effect on man's soul for his spiritual guidance. This part is accompanied by some enlightening oaths; full of meaning.

### The Virtue in Studying Surah Takwir

There are many traditions narrated about the importance of this Surah and studying it, such as a tradition from the Prophet (S) that says:

*"He who studies Surah Takwir (The Folding Up) will be saved by Allah from being exposed to shame when the book of deeds will be laid open."* 1

Another tradition from the Prophet (S) says:

*"He who wishes to look at me on the Day of Judgment, should study Surah Takwir (The Folding Up)".* 2

The tradition has also been narrated in another form, which says:

*"He whose looking at the Hereafter makes him glad (as if he sees it), studies Surah Takwir (The Folding Up), 'Infitar' (Cleaving Asunder), and 'Inshiqaq' (The Rending Asunder)."*

(Since, in these Surahs, the signs of the Hereafter are illustrated so clearly that the reciter of them feels that the scene of the Hereafter is in front of him).3

It is narrated that the Prophet (S) was asked why he had grown old so early and he answered:

*"Hud, Waqiah, Mursalat and Naba' made me old".*

(The reason is that the horrible events of the Hereafter are so clearly illustrated in them that it makes every conscious person prematurely old).4

It is also narrated from Imam Sadiq who said:

*"He who studies Surah 'Abasa and Takwir will be with the Mercy and Grace of Allah in the eternal Heaven and this is easy for Him when He wills."* 5

The items mentioned in this narration vividly show that the goal, by recitation, is to produce knowledge, faith, and action in the reciter.

## **Surah Takwir, Verses 1-9**

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

***In The Name of Allah, The Beneficent, The Merciful***

اِذَا الشَّمْسُ كُوِّرَتْ

وَإِذَا النُّجُومُ انْكَدَرَتْ

وَإِذَا الْجِبَالُ سُيِّرَتْ

وَإِذَا الْعِشَارُ عُطِّلَتْ

وَإِذَا الْوُحُوشُ حُشِرَتْ

وَإِذَا الْبِحَارُ سُجِّرَتْ

وَإِذَا النُّفُوسُ زُوِّجَتْ

وَإِذَا الْمَوْءُودَةُ سُئِلَتْ

بِأَيِّ ذَنْبٍ قُتِلَتْ

1. "When the sun is folded up;"
2. "And when the stars darken;"
3. "And when the mountains shall be set in motion;"
4. "And when the pregnant camels shall be neglected,"
5. "And when the wild beasts shall be herded together,"
6. "And when the seas boil over,"
7. "And when the souls are reunited (like with like),"
8. "And when the girl-child buried alive is asked,"

## **9. "For what sin she was slain."**

### **The Day When All the Universe Will be Dissolved**

As it was mentioned earlier, the Surah opens with a series of highly mystical metaphors, with some short, but shocking hints, suggesting the break-up of the world, as we know it, and then, after the end of this world, the Resurrection comes forth. On the whole, eight signs out of all the Great Events are mentioned here.

First, it says:

#### ***"When the sun is folded up."***

The term /kuwwirat/ is based on the word /takwir/ which, according to dictionaries and commentaries, originally means 'the act of folding up' and 'rolling or wrapping up something (like wrapping on a turban)', and it is sometimes used with the sense of 'casting' and 'darkening', both of which seem to refer to the original meaning.

In any case, it means, here, the folding up the light of the sun, and the darkening and shrinking of its body.

We now know that the sun is a globe, extremely hot and blazing, surrounded by intense burning gases whose flames shoot out hundreds of kilometers, so that if the Earth were put in one of the flames it would change to ash and gas at once.

But, at the end of this world and at the threshold of the Hereafter this heat will end and the flames will be folded up, its light will be extinguished, and the sun itself will shrink. This is the meaning of the term /takwir/.

It is also a known fact, in modern science today, that the star; the sun, will darken gradually.

#### ***"And when the stars darken".***

The term /inkadarat/ is based on /inkidar/ which means 'to fall , or to scatter', and, it is derived from the root /kudurat/, meaning 'doom and darkness'.

Both of these two meanings can be combined for the commentary of the current verse, because at the threshold of the Hereafter, the stars will both lose their light, scatter and fall, and also the regularity of the Universe will be disturbed, as Surah Infitar, No. 82, verse 2 says:

#### ***"When the planets are scattered".***

In addition, Surah Mursalat, No. 77, verse 8 says:

***"Then when the stars are extinguished".***

***"And when the mountains shall be set in motion".***

And, as it was mentioned earlier, it is understood from various verses of the Qur'an that close to the time of the occurrence of the Resurrection the mountains pass through different stages: at first they move, and, in the end change into scattered dust<sup>6</sup>.

***"And when the pregnant camels shall be neglected"***

The word /iḡar/ is the plural form of /iḡara/ and basically means 'she-camel ten months with young', which is just about to be delivered of her young. That is, in the near future it will be delivered of another camel and, therefore, will possess much milk.

At the time of the revelation of these verses such a camel was considered the most valuable property to the Arabs.

The term /uttilat/ is based on /ta'til/ which means 'to leave without care'.

It means that the intensity of the horror and fear, on that Day, is so much so that everyone leaves his most precious things unattended.

The late Tabarsi cites in Majma' al-Bayan that some have said it means 'clouds' and the term /uttilat/ means that 'they are want of rain', that is, on that Day the clouds appear in the sky, but do not rain.

(The 'clouds' might be the ones which result from different gases or atomic clouds, or a mass of scattered dust produced from cleaving mountains at the threshold of the Hereafter, which contain no rain.)

Some have also commented that /iḡar/ means 'the houses or farming lands' that at the threshold of the Hereafter will be left in suspension.

However, the first commentary is the most popular.

***"When the wild beasts shall be mustered".***

There are some animals which normally live far from each other and fearing each other, flee, but the terror and the alarm of the events, prior to the Hereafter, is so great that these animals will gather together and forget every fear. It seems as if they feel safer gathered together.

Consequently, a lot of commentators believe that this verse refers to the Resurrection of the wild animals and their presence in the Court of the Hereafter. They will be judged on their limits and according to their knowledge which relates to their own responsibilities, and will be recompensed if they transgressed.

They have considered this verse similar to Surah Anam, No 6, verse 38 which says:

***"There is not an animal (that lives) on the earth, nor a being that flies on its wings; but (forms part of) communities like you. Nothing have We omitted from the Book, and they (all) shall be gathered to their Lord in the end".***

The first commentary is more fitting, here.

***"And when the seas boil over"***

The term /sujirat/ is based on /tasjir/ which originally means 'to light fire and to inflame the fire'.

In the old days this meaning seemed odd to the commentators, but today it does not, because now we know that water is formed by Oxygen and Hydrogen; both of which are flammable. It is not improbable that at the threshold of the Hereafter the water of the seas and oceans will be under such conditions that these two elements separate and turn totally into fire.

Some commentators have rendered the term in the sense of 'to fill', as a furnace full of fire is called /masajjar/. The earthquakes and the cleaving of the mountains asunder, nearly at the time of Resurrection, may cause the seas to fill and overflow, or meteorites to fall into them and their water flows over land, and then, everything would sink.

***"And when the souls are reunited (like with like)"***

The good-doers with the good-doers, the evildoers with the evildoers, the companions of the Right Hand with the companions of the Right Hand, and the companions of the Left Hand with the companions of the Left Hand, all will be like with like, in contrast to the world, today, where all of them are mixed. It sometimes happens that in the neighborhood of a believer there is an unbeliever, or the spouse of a good-doer is a wrong doer.

But on the Day of Judgment, which is also a 'Sorting Day' and 'a day of separation', these groups are quite apart from each other.

In commenting on this verse, some other probabilities are also suggested including the following:

- 1) the souls return to their bodies
- 2) the souls in Heaven will unite with Heavenly maidens and the souls in Hell will unite with devils;
- 3) everyone will, again, be with his intimate companions after death has made them separate; or
- 4) everyone will unite with one's deeds.

However, the first commentary seems to be the most appropriate among all of them.

This is what Surah Waqiah, No. 56, verses 7–10 verify:

***"And you shall be sorted out into three classes:"***

***"Then (there will be) the Companions of the Right Hand; What will be the Companions of the Right Hand?"***

***"And the Companions of the Left Hand?" What will be the Companions of the Left Hand?"***

***"And those Foremost (in Faith) will be foremost (in the Hereafter)".***

***"These will be those Nearest to Allah".***

In fact, this verse, after mentioning six great incidents, which are the preliminary events to the Resurrection, refers to the opening sign of that Great Day, viz: The Day when everyone will be with his companions.

Then attention is paid to another event of the Resurrection, and says:

***"And when the girl-child buried alive is asked",***

***"For what sin she was slain".***

The term /mau'udat/ is derived from /wa'd/ which means 'a girl who is buried alive'. Some commentators have said that this word means 'heaviness' since when girls were buried alive the soil that was poured over them was heavy.

Some narrations denote to a broader meaning for the verse so vast that it has been commented on as 'cutting the ties of kinship' or cutting 'the friendship of the Prophet's household (as), (Ahlul Bayt)'.<sup>1</sup>

In a tradition it is stated that once Imam Baqir was asked about the commentary of this verse, and he said that it meant this:

***"The persons whom are killed for their friendship to us".***

Another tradition says that the witness to this statement is the verse:

***"...Say: No reward do I ask of you for this except the love of these near of kin..."***<sup>7</sup>

Of course, the apparent meaning of the verse refers to the first commentary, but the verse can, itself, carry a vast meaning.

## **Explanation: The Practice of Female Infanticide**

One of the most dreadful and most savage actions of the pagan Arabs was female infanticide, which is made reference to, repeatedly, in the Qur'an.

Some commentators believe that this custom was committed only by one tribe of Arabs named 'Kindih', (or some other tribe), but, surely it was not a rare phenomenon, otherwise, the Qur'an would not emphatically refer to it on frequent occasions. In any case, it is so terrible and cruel that even its rare

occurrence is notable.

Commentators have said that the pagan Arabs, when their wives were going to give birth, used to dig a hole and sit above it waiting for the child to be born and then bury her if it was female, and keep him if it was male. The cause of this crime might be due to various reasons, such as the following:

1. The lack of value for women, in mankind, by the pagan Arabs.
2. The problem of poverty among those people, especially, because females could not be as economically productive and beneficial as males, or were not able to take part in robberies like males were.
3. Also, that in the numerous quarrels between the tribes, of that time, women would be captured by the enemies which brought disgrace on their men. All of these excuses were seen as justified for committing this crime.

These factors contributed to the terrible custom of female infanticide and were committed under the guise of social plausibility in secret collusion. But, unfortunately this cruelty is also seen in modern societies in the form of 'the freedom of abortion' by which fetuses are legally cast-off in many 'civilized' countries. The pagan Arabs used to commit infanticide after delivery, but these civilized people, of our time, kill them in their mother's wombs and under the guise of miscarriage.

It is noteworthy that the Qur'an condemns this action and counts it so disgraceful and hateful that it considers the crime of prime accountability prior to the Records in the Hereafter or pleading for justice about other matters. In addition to the value of woman, it shows the Islamic view on the importance of the matter, especially regarding the innocent persons.

Another point, which is also noteworthy, here, is that the Qur'an does not say that the murderers will be asked of what crime they committed, but it says that the innocent female-children will be asked about what sin it was for which they were slain so cruelly and indefensibly. It seems that the murderers are not worth questioning. Besides that, only the testimony of the murdered ones is enough.

## Surah Takwir, Verses 10-14

وَإِذَا الصُّحُفُ نُشِرَتْ

وَإِذَا السَّمَاءُ كُشِطَتْ



وَإِذَا الْجَحِيمُ سُعِّرَتْ

وَإِذَا الْجَنَّةُ أُزْلِفَتْ

عَلِمَتْ نَفْسٌ مَّا أَحْضَرَتْ

10. ***“And when the scrolls (of the deeds of mankind) are spread,”***
11. ***“And when the heaven shall be unveiled,”***
12. ***“And when Hell is set ablaze,”***
13. ***“And when the Garden is brought nigh (for the righteous),”***
14. ***“Every soul shall (then) know what it has produced (of its deeds)”***.

The first stage; the events as a preliminary to the Resurrection, viz: the destruction of the world, was described in the former verses. Now, in the following verses, the second stage of the Resurrection is pointed out, that is, the appearance of the Next World with its record and reckoning.

***“And when the scrolls (of the deeds of mankind) are spread”***.

The term /suhuf/ is the plural form of the term /sahifah/ meaning 'a thing spread open like a face, or pages of a book; a book on which something is written'.

In the Hereafter, the records are spread in front of their owners to view, read and count the deeds themselves, Surah Isra, No. 17, verse 14 says:

***“Read thine (own) record: sufficient is thy soul this day to make out an account against thee.”***

It is also open before the eyes of others; that which is a praise for the good-doers and a pain and punishment for the astray evildoers.

***“And when the heaven shall be unveiled.”***

The term /kuṣṣiṭat/ is based on /kaṣṣa/ which as Raqib cites in his book Mufradat, originally means to 'remove, take off – the covering or skin of an animal', and as Ibn-manthur cites in Lisan-ul-Arab it means 'to remove a curtain from something', then the sense, from verse II, the 'clouds separate and scatter' is derived from this word.

The term, in this verse, means that the curtains over the subjects hidden; such as angels, Heaven and

Hell, which do exist, but are secret to people in this world, will be removed and man can see the Reality of the existing Universe, and as the next verses denote, the blazing Hell and eternal Heaven are brought near.

Verily, the Day of Judgment is when the reality of everything will be made manifest and the heavens will be unveiled.

According to the above commentary, this verse points to the incidents of the second stage of the Resurrection in which the process of mankind's rebirth will come forth and their new life will begin. The verses before and after it, also, confirm the same idea.

Many commentators have meant it with the sense of 'folding up the heavens' which refers to the events of the first stage of the Resurrection, that is, the destruction of this world. This idea seems improbable, though, because it corresponds neither with the original meaning of the term /kuṣṣiṣat/ nor with the arrangement of the verses before and after it.

For this reason, in the next verse, it says:

***"And when Hell is set ablaze."***

As Surah Taubah, No. 9, verse 49 says:

***"...And indeed Hell surrounds the Unbelievers (on all sides)".***

Hell exists now, today, but, in this world, the curtains cover it and do not let us see it, as well as Heaven which, according to many verses of the Qur'an, is prepared for the Righteous, at this very moment.<sup>8</sup>

Also, for the same reason, the next verse says:

***"And when the Garden is brought nigh (for the righteous)".***

This very idea is mentioned in Surah Shu'ara, No. 26, verse 90 with a difference that it contains the word 'Righteous' but, this verse does not.

The term /uzlifat/ is based on /zalf/ and /zulfa/ which means 'nearness, proximity, a near approach'. This nearness may be from the view point of 'place' or 'time' or from the view point of 'the means of preparation', or all of them, viz: Heaven is near to the believers both from the point of view of place and time of arrival and it is also easy for them to reach it.

It is worthy to note that it does not say that the Righteous approach Heaven, but it says 'Heaven is brought near for the Righteous' and this is the most honorable situation possible in this case.

As was mentioned earlier Heaven and Hell are present just now, but, on that Day, Heaven is brought nearer and Hell is set more ablaze.

Then, finally, in the last verse of the current section which is, indeed, complementary to the previous verses and is a substantive clause for the conditional clauses occurred in the former twelve verses, it says:

***"Every soul shall (then) know what it has produced (of its deeds)".***

This statement clearly shows that all the deeds of man are present there, and man's knowledge about them is a knowledge consisting of Observation and self conviction.

This tact is mentioned in some other verses of the Qur'an, too, such as Surah Kahf, No. 18, verse 49:

***"They will find all that they did, placed before them..."***;

and Surah Zilzal, No. 99, verses 7–8 that say:

***"So whoever has done an atom's weight of good shall behold it",  
"And whoever who has done an atom's weight of evil shall behold it".***

This verse also makes reference to the personification of deeds. Our deeds apparently have an end and vanish in this world, but this will never be so. They will be personified (incarnated) in appropriate forms, in the next world, and present in the Hereafter.

### **Explanation: The Order of the Verses**

In the current and prior verses twelve events, in relation to the Resurrection, are mentioned. The first six events relate to the first stage viz: the desolation of this world; and the second six events relate to the second stage, that is, the rebirth and new life after death.

In the first group of verses, the word is about the darkening of the sun and the stars, the movement and agitation of the mountains, the exploding of the seas, the negligence about wealth, and the fear in wild animals.

In the second group of verses, the statement is about: the different groups of man coming into the Hereafter, the questioning of the girl-child buried alive, the spreading of the scrolls containing the deeds of mankind, the removing of the curtains from the heavens, Hell being ablaze, Heaven being brought near, and finally, man's full knowledge of his own deeds.

In spite of their brevity, these verses are so meaningful and awakening that they shake everyone and bring them into a thoughtful state such that they can visualize the end of this world and the circumstances of the Resurrection, in their minds, as if they see them with their very eyes. How nice and expressive the verses of the Qur'an are, and how impressive and meaningful its refined subtleties and pertinent details!

## Will the Solar System and the Stars Darken?

First of all, we should know that the Sun is a star and a medium sized one among all stars, but by itself and in comparison with the Earth it is extraordinarily large. Its volume is more than 1,300,000 times that of the Earth, but since its mean distance from the Earth is nearly 93,000,000 miles (about 150,000,000 kilometers) we see it as it is now.

To understand the immenseness and greatness of the Sun it is enough to imagine that if the Earth and its moon, with the same distance that they have between them now, were transferred into the Sun; the moon could easily rotate around the Earth, inside the Sun, without protruding out from its inner surface.

The outside heat of the Sun is estimated to be about 6,000 C, and the heat of the inside is estimated to be several million degrees.

If we want to express the weight of the Sun in metric ton, we should write the figure 2 with twenty seven zeros behind it.

The height of the flames from the Sun's surface shoot up to about 160,000 kilometers, so that our Earth can easily disappear in them because, the Earth's diameter is not more than 12,000 kilometers.

The heat and the brightness of the Sun, in spite of George Gamof's statement, do not originate from burning coal forming the Sun's body, but are from the energy produced by atomic decomposition and we know that this energy is extremely intense.

Therefore, the atoms of the Sun are always changing into energy through decomposition and reduction. According to the calculations of scientists, every minute, the Sun loses 4,000,000 tons of weight, but its body is so huge that it does not show an apparent change even after thousands of years.

It is worth mentioning, here, that the very loss of weight is effective in the destruction of the Sun over a length of time, and by becoming thinner and thinner at last, this great world-illuminating-lamp will gradually darken. This fate is also true for the other stars.

Therefore, what is said in the aforementioned verses about the darkening of the Sun and the destruction of the stars is a fact that is in agreement with modern science. The Qur'an has stated these facts when, not only in the Arabian Peninsula, but in all scientific meetings held by scientists of the world, at that time, no one knew anything about these statistics.

## Surah Takwir, Verses 15-25

فَلَا أُقْسِمُ بِالْخُنُوسِ

الْجَوَارِ الْكُنَّسِ

وَاللَّيْلِ إِذَا عَسَسَ

وَالصُّبْحِ إِذَا تَنَفَّسَ

إِنَّهُ لَقَوْلُ رَسُولٍ كَرِيمٍ

ذِي قُوَّةٍ عِنْدَ ذِي الْعَرْشِ مَكِينٍ

مُطَاعٍ ثَمَّ أَمِينٍ

وَمَا صَاحِبُكُمْ بِمَجْنُونٍ

وَلَقَدْ رَآهُ بِالْأُفُقِ الْمُبِينِ

وَمَا هُوَ عَلَى الْغَيْبِ بِضَنِينٍ

وَمَا هُوَ بِقَوْلِ شَيْطَانٍ رَجِيمٍ

15. ***"No, I swear by the orbiting planets,"***
16. ***"That run their course, (and) set,"***
17. ***"And (by) the night when it ends,"***
18. ***"And (by) the morning when it breathes."***
19. ***"Surely it is the word of a gracious Messenger,"***
20. ***"Endowed with power in the presence of the Lord of the Universe;"***
21. ***"One (to be) obeyed, moreover faithful in trust."***
22. ***"And (O people) your companion (Our Messenger) is not mad."***
23. ***"Indeed he saw him (angel Gabriel) on the clear horizon."***
24. ***"And he does not withhold concerning the unseen,"***
25. ***"Nor is it the word of the accursed Satan."***

## **Gabriel, the Bringer of Allah's Message Descends to him**

In the previous verses the Resurrection and preliminary events, with some other incidents of that Great Day, were discussed.

The following verses speak about the importance of the Qur'an, showing how the Qur'anic Revelation is true, was revealed through the angel Gabriel, and was not merely ravings or rhapsodies from one possessed. In fact, they confirm what was said about the Resurrection, in the former verses, and emphasize on the matter while giving some additional information.

***"No, I swear by the orbiting planets",  
"That run their course, (and) set".***

The term /xunnas/ is the plural form of /xanis/ based on /xans/ which originally means: 'shrink, hide away', and Satan is called /xannas/ because he hides himself at the name of Allah, as one tradition we find that it says:

*"Satan tempts the servants of Allah and when His name is mentioned he slinks out of sight".*

The term /jawar/ is the plural form of /jariyah/, which has the meaning: 'running'.

The term /kunnas/ is the plural form of /kanas/ based on /kans/ which means 'to lie in hiding', and the term /kinas/ from the same root word is called both 'the nest of birds' and 'the hiding place of deer and wild beasts'.

Different opinions have been introduced for the meaning of these oaths. Many commentators believe that they refer to the five planets: Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Venus, and Mercury, which are visible with the naked eye.

If we look to the sky over several nights in succession, we see that all of the stars gradually appear, but,

they sit all together without having apparent change in the distance between them. It looks like a piece of black cloth on which a great number of pearls have been sewn having defined spaces, and the cloth is pulled up from one side and taken down from another side depicting day and night.

Only five planets are exceptions to this regulation. They move through the stars as if there were five unsewn pearls on the cloth that move freely among the others.

On the one hand, the above mentioned five planets are the very ones which are among the family members of the solar system. We see their movements, because they are close to us in comparison with the other stars in the sky; which also have similar movements, but we cannot see this because of their very far distances.

On the other hand, these planets seem to have no retrograde and forward motion; apparently looking like they move forward for a length of time, then, they return a little and, again, continue moving forward. The causes for this status are discussed in astronomy.

The above verses may point to the same matter; that these planets move forward: /aljawar/, and along their way, they, apparently, and at last, in the morning at dawn, hide away: /kunnas/ like the deer which move in the deserts to find food at night, but conceal themselves in their hiding places; /kunas/, in the day time, from beast of prey.

It is probable that the meaning of /kunnas/ is that, when rotating round the sun, the planets hide or disappear completely at a point behind the sun, or are otherwise invisible. Astronomers call this case /ihtiraq/ in the Arabic language. This is a delicate point which can be understood with careful attention.

Some also believe that /konnas/ refers to the settlement of these planets in the Zodiac which resemble the deer concealing themselves in their brush-homes. It is obvious, of course, that the planets of the solar system are not limited to these five planets, but there are three more planets among them which are visible only by telescope and have been named Neptune, Uranus and Pluto.

All of them, together with the Earth, form the nine planets of our solar system. (Of course, some of the nine planets have a moon or moons which are different from the planets themselves).

By the way, the term /jawari/, the plural form of /jariyah/ (one of the meanings is 'ships in motion'), is a delicate analogy which compares the movement of these planets, in the ocean of sky, with the movement of ships on the surface of the oceans.

It seems that the Qur'an, by stating these meaningful oaths with a kind of ambiguity, tends to stir minds and make them contemplate and pay attention to the exceptional and various status of these planets from the millions of stars around them, in order to better understand the greatness of the Creator of this lofty establishment.

Others have suggested some commentaries on these verses which we will not mention here.

A narration, on the commentary of these verses, denotes that Amir\_al\_Momineen (as) said:

*“They are five stars: Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Venus and Mercury.”*

***“And (by) the night when it ends.”***

The term /as'as/ is based on /as'asah/ which originally means 'pale darkness' and since darkness is lesser at the beginning and at the end of the night this word is used for the coming and going of night, and that is why, in Arabic, 'he who goes round by night to keep watch', is called /asas/.

Although, as was mentioned before, the term has two quite opposite meanings, here, and by the evidence of the next verse, it means the end of night.

In fact, it is similar to the oath mentioned in Surah Muddathir, No. 74, verse 33:

***“And by the Night as it retreateth.”***

Night is one of the great gifts from Allah, and it is both the cause of man's spiritual and bodily tranquility, as well as an adjustment for the Sun's heat and, consequently, the continuation of vitality in living creatures.

The emphasis put on 'the end of night' may be for the reason that night moves toward light and brightness and it is the best time for praying to and the worshipping of Allah. Dawn, in this world, is the beginning of movement and struggle for living creatures.

***“And (by) the morning when it breathes.”***

What an interesting analogy! Morning resembles a living creature whose first breath is dawn and blows vitality into all creatures, as if it had been captured in the grip of night and now with the first glow of day, becomes free and breathes.

This sense is similar to what is mentioned in Surah Muddathir, No. 74, verse 34 which occurs after the oath to the night, which says:

***“And by the Dawn as it shines forth.”***

It is as though the gloom of night like a veil, has fallen on the face of morning which is removed now, at dawn, and the morning's glittering face, which is a sign of life, is shown to all in this world.

In the next verse, what all these oaths are for is mentioned:

***“Surely it is the word of a gracious Messenger.”***

This verse is an answer to those who accuse the Prophet (S) by saying that the Qur'an is from him; not from Allah.



In this verse and the following verse there are five characteristics mentioned for Gabriel, the courier of Allah, which are necessary, indeed, for any qualified messenger.

The first attribute of Gabriel is that he is 'gracious' which shows his worthiness. Verily, he is a worthy creature with Allah, the Great.

Then, another characteristic of Gabriel is mentioned; it says:

***"Endowed with power in the presence of the Lord of the Universe."***

The term

***/thil-'ar/ 'the Lord of the Universe'***

refers to Allah. He is the Lord of all, but since the Universe, with whatever definition it has, is in a higher position than that of other things, so, He is characterized by the Universe.

The term

***/thi-quwwah/ 'endowed with power'***

is used to characterize Gabriel for the reason that taking such a great Message and carefully communicating it needs a great power. And, as a matter of fact, any messenger should have an authority fitting with his mission or the message He must be especially free from any forgetfulness of the message that he is responsible for.

The term /makin/ means 'one whose rank is firmly established', and, basically, a messenger should be a great and outstanding person who can fulfill his mission and should be quite close and beloved. And, surely, the term

***/'ind/ 'in the presence of'***

does not have the meaning of a special presence, because Allah does not exist in any one location; but it is the 'rank presence' and 'spiritual nigh'.

***"One (to be) obeyed, moreover faithful in trust."***

The term

***/thummal/ 'moreover'***

points to the fact that the bringer of Allah's Message, the Archangel Gabriel, has an angelic authority among angels and is obeyed there, and, beyond these, he is faithful to his trust in conveying the Message.

It is understood from some narrations that when Gabriel was conveying the revelation he was accompanied by a large number of angels who obeyed him.

There is a tradition, which says that when these verses were descended, the holy Prophet (S) told Gabriel:

*“How well your Lord praised you when he said:*

***'Endowed with power in the presence of the Lord of the Universe, '***

*'One (to be) obeyed, more over faithful in trust.'*

*Then, what is your power? And what is your faithfulness in trust?”*

Gabriel answered him that his power was such that he was told to destroy the four cities of Lot's people, each of which had four hundred thousand fighters; excluding their children. He destroyed those cities and took them to Heaven, so that the angels of Heaven even heard the sound of the peoples' animals, then he returned them to the Earth and turned them upside down.

Gabriel continued, in this way, so that there was no instruction that he did not fully carry out.

Furthermore, to tell people that the holy Prophet (S) is honorable and trustworthy, it says:

***“And (O people) your companion (Our Messenger) is not mad.”***

The term /sahib/ means 'companion, friend', and besides pointing to the humility of the Prophet (S), toward all people, and that he did not seek any superiority for himself, it appeals to the people to take note of their own 'companion', the Prophet, (S) who had been born among them and had lived with them for many years.

He was known to be a wise, honorable, truthful, and trustworthy man. How could he be mad? The only thing is that, with his Prophecy, he brought some instructions to teach 'you' but, they are disagreeing with 'your' prejudices, blind imitations and low desires. So, to flee from obeying his instructions 'you' accuse him of demoniacal possession.

According to the verses of Qur'an, all Prophets were accused, by their enemies, of being mad:

***“Similarly, no apostle came to peoples before them, but they said (of him) in like manner, 'A sorcerer or one possessed'”***. 10

They thought the wise man was he who would fulfill their vices and follow their lusts, knew well on which side the bread was buttered, and would avoid any revolutionary development. Then, on this level, all the Prophets seemed, to them, to be mad.

For laying stress on the relation between the holy Prophet (S) and Gabriel, it says:

***“Indeed he saw him (angel Gabriel) on the clear horizon”.***

The meaning of the terms

***/ufuq-il-mubin/ 'clear horizon'***

is the same as 'the highest part of the horizon', where the angels were made manifest and where the Prophet (S) saw Gabriel.

Some believe that Surah Najm, No. 53, verse 7 which says:

***“While he was in the highest part of the horizon;”***

is an evidence for this commentary, but this verse, as well as the other verses of that Surah, talks about another fact.

Also, some have said that the Prophet (S) saw Gabriel twice in his genuine appearance: once, at the beginning of his prophetic appointment, and whose greatness made him (S) elated. He appeared to him (S) on the highest horizon.

The second time was on the Nocturnal Journey of the Prophet (S) where he saw Gabriel in the high heavens, in his real appearance, to which the current verse refers.

It is also probable that it refers to the Prophet's observation of Allah through a vision of inspiration.

***“And he does not withhold concerning the unseen”.***

Whatever he has, he puts it within the reach of the people. He is not like those who insist on keeping secret an important fact which they have gained and is in their own control and it sometimes happens that they withhold it until they die.

The Prophet (S) is not such a person. He gives what he has received, as revelation, to all the needy and even to those who stand in opposition to him and value him naught, in hopes that they may be guided to the right path.

The term /danin/ is based on /dinnah/ in the sense of 'stinginess for the precious things', which is a characteristic that Prophets never have, because the source of their knowledge is Allah; Who is infinite.

***“Nor is it the word of the accursed Satan”.***

These Qur'anic verses are not like the statements of necromancers and soothsayers who take them from the devils. Those statements are full of lies and mistakes, and based on their own wishes, which come with envy, spite, greed, or other vices, but these verses are full of clear truth, under divine inspiration

whose signs are apparent in them.

These two are completely different from each other, of course. It has been shown that the Qur'an is not the word of a mortal, but that it is full of divine wisdom; that its teaching is not that of a mad man, but from one sane to the core and in accordance with human needs.

The term /rajim/ is originally based on /rajm/ and /rijam/ which means 'stoned' and then, it is used in the sense of throwing stones in order to drive a person or an animal away. And it is used in the sense of any rejection or driving away. The Arabic term /<sup>aytan</sup>ir-rajim/ means 'Satan who is driven away with stones from the rank of those close to Allah'.

## **Explanation: The Characteristics of a Qualified Messenger**

The five characteristics, regarding the hierarchy, mentioned in the above verses for Gabriel, who was sent to the Prophet (S) of Islam by Allah, are required for every messenger, regarding the hierarchy.

1. Graciousness is the first spiritual characteristic, which respectfully makes Gabriel deserving of being a great Messenger.
2. Then his endowed power for the fulfillment of his responsibility comes forth which means that he is aloof from any weakness and feebleness or lassitude in bringing the Message.
- 3 His third highest rank, with the sender of the Message, is noteworthy in order to take all of the Message completely, and communicate them fearlessly.
4. If the Message is about an important thing, the messenger may have some assistants to help him on the errand; the ones who follow him obediently.
5. The fifth characteristic is that his messenger is qualified as being 'faithful in trust' so that the persons who are to receive the message, from him, trust in him and count on his words; the same as the words of the one who has sent them.

When someone is qualified with these five characteristics, he will be the most fitting messenger. The Prophet of Islam (S) used to choose his messengers carefully from those who were qualified among them. A clear example of his messengers is that of Amir-al-Mo'mineen Ali (as) who was sent, under that difficult situation, by the Prophet (S) to the pagans of Mecca to communicate the beginning verses of Surah Taubah, No. 9.

## **Surah Takwir, Verses 26-29**

فَأَيْنَ تَذْهَبُونَ

إِنَّ هُوَ إِلَّا زِكْرٌ لِلْعَالَمِينَ

لِمَنْ شَاءَ مِنْكُمْ أَنْ يَسْتَقِيمَ

وَمَا تَشَاءُونَ إِلَّا أَنْ يَشَاءَ اللَّهُ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ

**26. "Whither then will you go?"**

**27. "Surely it (the Qur'an) is naught but a Reminder to (all) the worlds,"**

**28. "For whoever of you who would go straight"**

**29. "But you cannot will, except as Allah wills, the Lord of the Worlds."**

### **O Neglectful Ones! Where Are You Going?**

In the previous verses it was made clear that the Holy Qur'an is the word Allah. Its contents show that it cannot be from a devilish source, but from Allah, the Merciful, from Whom Gabriel the powerful, faithful carrier of Allah's revelation, brought it to the sane Prophet (S) who communicated and taught it, completely, to people and did not withhold anything of it.

The following verses condemn the rejecters for their disobedience to this great word, the Holy Qur'an.

It reproachfully questions:

**"Whither then will you go?"**

Why have you left the straight path and gone astray? Why have you turned your back to this leading bright torch and gone toward darkness? Are you against your own happiness and safety?

**"Surely it (the Qur'an) is naught but a Reminder to (all) the Worlds".**

It advises and warns all to be aware and not to be neglectful.

Since training and guidance need not only the 'act of the actor' but, also 'the fitness of the fit', then it says:

**"For whoever of you who would go straight."**

It is noteworthy that the former verse says that the Qur'an is a reminder to all the worlds, but this verse says that it is for a special group of people; those who have decided to assume the truth and go on the

straight way.

The reason for this difference is that the first verse speaks about the generality of this divine gift, while the second one states the conditions for obtaining benefits from it. And all the blessings in the world are the same: they are basically general, but their usage depends on 'will' and 'decision'.

Surah Baqarah, No. 2, verse 2 carries a similar sense:

***“This is the Book, in it is guidance sure, without doubt, to those who fear Allah.”***

In any case, this verse is one of the verses, which shows that Allah has created man free; possessing free-will. Then, it is man who should decide which way to follow; the right way or the wrong one.

The term /yastaqim/ is used with an interesting sense which shows that the main road, the one in front of man, is the straight way to happiness and salvation and other roads are the false ones leading to aberration. All of man's talents, along with his hidden and apparent powers and his natural capacities, are equipped so as to help him move forward on the straight way.

When going to extremes, devilish temptations, and misleading propaganda do not interfere. Man, with the help of his nature, follows along the straight way, and we know that the straight way is always the nearest path to the goal.

It is possible, however, for man to imagine that this free-will is so infinite that he can do whatever he wishes and that he is not in need of Allah's help to follow the straight way.

The next and the last verse of the Surah points to the authority of Allah's Will and says:

***“But you cannot will, except as Allah wills, the Lord of the Worlds”***

In fact, these two verses illustrate the mid-way for man's limited will.

On the one hand, it says that man is free and can decide what he wills to do, but, on the other hand, it says:

***“You cannot will, except as Allah wills.”***

It means that you are created free, but this free-will is from Allah and He has willed that you be so.

Man is neither obliged nor completely free in his deeds. Neither 'fatalism' nor 'infinite freedom' is correct. Whatever man possesses out of wisdom, intelligence, bodily ability and mental capacity for making decisions, all in all, are from Allah. It is this very fact that requires man to be in need of Him and, due to his freedom and his free-will, to be responsible for his own duties and actions.

The term

## ***/rabbul\_‘alamin/ ‘the Lord of the worlds’***

shows, well, that Allah’s Will follows along the path of man’s training and development throughout the world. Allah never wills that anyone should go astray or commit sin and lose the nearness to Himself. He, according to His Lordship, helps all those who decide to travel on the path of spiritual development.

It is surprising that fatalists have grasped the second verse while the ‘adherents of infinite free\_will’ have assumed the first verse. Separating these kinds of verses from each other often causes aberration and lands one in a state of being misled. Verses of the Qur’an should be considered inseparable and the benefits should be taken from all of them.

It is interesting that some of the commentators have said that when the verse:

***“For whoever of you would go straight”,***

was revealed, Abu\_Jahl, who was actually one of the adherents of infinite free\_will, said that it became a good chance for them and they had all the authorizations at their disposal.

Then, following that, the second verse was revealed:

***“But you cannot will, except as Allah wills, the Lord of the Worlds.”***

## **Supplication**

*O Lord! We know that we cannot be on the straight way unless you help us, so we seek your help.*

*O Lord! We hare decided to go on the guided way; we ask for your Divine Will, too.*

*O Lord! Your throne of Judgment, in the Hereafter, is very frightening, and our Records contain few good deeds. Please forgive us with Your Own Sublime Graciousness; not with your strict Justice.*

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1. Majma \_al\_Bayan, vol. 10, p 441.

2. ibid.

3. Qartabi The Commentary, vol. 10, p. 7017.

4. Nur\_uth\_Thaqalayn, vol. 5, p 513.

5. Thawab\_ul\_amal, according to what is cited in the quotation of Nur\_uth\_Thaqalayn, vol 5, p. 512.

6. More explanation is given in the commentary of Surah Nabaa, No. 78, verse 20

7. Surah Shura, No. 42. verse 23

8. Surah Al\_i-Imran. verse 133, Surah Hadid, verse 21

9. For additional data about the Sun, refer to page 87, Surah Nabaa, No. 78, verse 13

10. Surah Zariyat, No. 51, verse 52

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