

Surah Al-Nazi'at (The Uprooters)

No. 79 (46 verses)

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Preface

Humanity, in this first century of the new millennium, has entered the era of communication and information, and thus has undergone an enormous exchange of thought and knowledge. Human beings are now much more interested in having dialogues with each other. Procurement of knowledge has become easy even for an ordinary person.

The opportunity to have and impart the knowledge of Islam is increasing day by day. Hence it has become quite easy to educate the minds, and illuminate the hearts of individuals in nearly all parts of the world. The scholars of Islam have made it very clear to the persons interested in acquiring knowledge of Islam that the understanding of the Qur'an, the Absolute Truth, the Word of Allah, is the pre-requisite for the correct understanding of Islam. Thus the Qur'an is the king-pin for the truss of Islam. Hence for the followers of Islam, the new millenium is the age of the Qur'an. The Qur'an is to be recited, pondered and acted upon by each and every believer in Islam

When it comes to the question of understanding the Qur'an, the immediate problem is the language of the Qur'an. The Qur'an was revealed in a classical, very literary Arabic language. A person speaking Arabic, or having the knowledge of journalistic Arabic, cannot comprehend the full meaning of the words of the Qur'an. Even a person who has studied classical Arabic, systematically, is unable to comprehend and interpret the word of the Qur'an in a contemporary situation if he does not have knowledge of the history and circumstances relevant to the revelation of the words; nor yet if he does not fully have understanding of the contemporary situation to which guidance of Allah is to be applied.

Qur'an and the Scientific Knowledge

Another characteristic of the Divine words must be well understood. It is the Absolute Truth and level of knowledge that conditions the human mind. This is not the same in each and every age. Human-acquired knowledge may not attain the Absolute Truth. Hence the two, the Divine word and contemporary scientific knowledge, may not necessarily be compatible, but on the other hand should not contradict each other, otherwise confusion is the ultimate outcome. This makes it very clear that the Divine words should characteristically, on one hand, not contradict any established facts of the time, and on the other, because of their eternal nature, should be interpreted in the language of any prevailing society, ie, they should be comprehended with the support of the latest valid research.

Humanity is so much conditioned by scientific progress and achievements that there is a general trend to judge any statement to be true only within the standards of science. Hence attempts are made to manipulate the Word of Allah to fall into the framework of modern concepts and stylised facts, thus claiming it to be scientifically proved.

There are two approaches for understanding the verses of the Qur'an. One is to put forth the scientific facts as the evidence to prove that the Qur'an is the word of Allah. This is a generally-followed contemporary method to prove the miracle of the Qur'an. This alleges that fourteen hundred years before, the Qur'an declared events, phenomena and statements which have been recently discovered through human scientific knowledge. This logic is false. In other words it conveys the theory that such scientific facts, if found to be compatible with the divine words revealed fourteen hundred years ago, thus confirm that the Qur'an is divine and not man-made. This is the wrong logic.

There are two fallacies related to this approach of finding compatibility between the Divine Words and scientific facts. Firstly, the Divine Words which were not compatible with flawed scientific notions in the period of revelation would have been outrightly rejected on this basis. History does not inform us of any such thing. Secondly, based on the first premise, the Divine words would have required a waiting period for scientific confirmation of their truthfulness.

This is a materialistic outlook being empowered by "scientific fact". No "scientific fact" is the absolute truth though science helps us to proceed towards absolute truth. The Divine Words can never be compared with man-acquired facts. It is very difficult to distinguish clearly between the "facts" and "non-facts" of scientific findings. Even in scientific world, the recent theory of uncertainty propounded and proved by Stephen Hawking confirms that no scientific finding should be considered absolute fact.

The belief in the Qur'an as being the Divine Revelation is just and true because of the truthfulness, righteousness, and the unshaken and firm declaration of that man in the limelight of history recognised as the greatest of all human beings.

If we do not accept this absolute fact of history, how is it possible for us to accept other facts — scientific or not? Hence the Qur'an, to be a miracle, is not to be proved by 'scientific fact'. It is a miracle because it is the Word of God as declared by the Prophet as well as Allah (swt).

Ongoing Qur'anic Interpretation

Certainly the Qur'an is the word of Allah and it is Absolute Truth. It was revealed to the Arabs in their language about 1450 years ago. On one hand it must be comprehensible to the Arabs being compatible with their level of knowledge and understanding and on the other hand it should satisfy the people of all ages until eternity in relation to its truthfulness and pragmatism.

The purpose of the revelation of the words was on one side to direct people how to make their lives much better and more comfortable in this world; and on the other to obtain reward or punishment for the next life. For example the gifts bestowed upon the humanity by Allah for the betterment of their life in the form of earth, water, sun, moon etc, are mentioned in the Qur'an firstly to gain knowledge in pondering upon and utilizing them in the best way, through discovery and innovation. Secondly they are to inculcate belief in Allah and the Hereafter. The believers worked upon these gifts of Allah and served as the pioneers of science and technology. Afterwards, others then went about developing science and technology up to this date. Thus whatever material comforts and benefits we enjoy, are the results of knowledge imparted by the Word of the Qur'an and previous revelations of Allah to other Prophets. As far as the life in the Hereafter is concerned, that will depend upon the belief and action pertaining to the directives of Allah in relation to oneself, to fellow beings; to other creatures; to the environment; and most importantly to Allah Himself.

Let us first understand the words of the Qur'an for their applications in material living. Take the word "earth" revealed in the Qur'an 1450 years ago. At that time Earth was just understood to be apparent surface with its very limited usage for making buildings, cultivation and digging wells. Hence in the first stage the words of the Qur'an were mostly taken as information for appreciating the Benevolence of Allah in providing the bounties for human comfort, later making use of them by search, research and actions.

Nowadays, humanity has advanced materially to the full utilization of the bounties of Allah, commensurate with the level of knowledge and expertise. It is essential therefore to explain the words of the Qur'an in the light of discoveries and achievements made by the advancements of science and technology. This can be accomplished only by a person, who on one hand, has deep knowledge of Islamics and, on the other, is well-versed in the achievements and knowledge of science and technology to date.

The correct approach is to have full belief in the Divine Message, about it being Absolute Truth to eternity; not alterable by the difference in the level of understanding and scientific findings. Its words are conceived and revealed to human beings through a combination of alphabets, words and sentences that can be and should be interpreted in such a way that they are matched with the findings of the era. Thus divine words are eternal, but their comprehension, understanding and interpretation should vary in different eras.

From the above explanation, there arises the need to bring commentaries of the Qur'an in every period so that the words of Allah are understood by humanity in each and every age. The level of thinking, the degree of comprehension, the logistic of language, all these vary with time, A *tafseer* (commentary) of the early period is the most authentic but it is a human effort conditioned by the

intellectual, social and comprehensive level of that time. Hence there is need of new *tafseer* for our own time, but it should be based on the classical and early *tafseer* (commentaries). Hence we have to avoid two extreme approaches for the understanding of the Qur'an, both erroneous and of little effect. One is to cling to the old *tafseer* and not to exert any thought, refusing feedback from much research incorporating all additional knowledge attained to this point. The other erroneous extreme is to be influenced by the present materialistic norms and traits of modern society with its ungodly material endeavours; thereby interpretation of the Qur'an compatible with the present socio-economic and worldly pursuits of materialism.

Hence there are three steps towards understanding and interpretation of the Divine words.

The first step is to read the Qur'an itself thoroughly many times with the help of the *sunnah* of the Prophet (including the *hadith*) in order to generate the Islamic world-view in the present language and style.

The second is to understand the literal meaning of words and their usage in the exact time frame of the revelation of the words, together with the *tafseer*, or the interpretation of the first generation of the followers of Islam who were strongest in the belief of the tenets of Islam and the most righteous people of history.

The third is to replace the influences of their era and their system of living in any interpretation, with the present system of living conforming to the Islamic world view. This step also includes the presentation in the style and language of the day. It will naturally comprise most of the classical *tafseer* with the change in style as well as some elaboration and insight gleaned from additional knowledge about human beings and the environment.

The light of Islam is needed to illuminate every corner of the world, hence presentation of *tafseer* (commentary) in the languages of the present era, and according to the present level of comprehension, is required. Therefore it is essential that the scholars and the research foundations should attempt learning to prepare commentaries of the Qur'an.

At the present juncture it seems difficult to find persons of such calibre in different localities. The promotion and the propagation of the Message of Allah are very essential, both for the balanced development of science and technology in the future as well as for the ultimate salvation of humanity in the next life. Moreover if the believers are keen and enthusiastic to change their destiny as well that of humanity at large, they have to make strenuous efforts in making the “*Understanding of the Qur'an*” their paradigm for this millennium. If it is so, there is no alternative except to set up an academy or an institute consisting of scholars of both streams: the *Ulema* having deep knowledge of Islamics, and the scientists and technologists — the *ulema* in science and technology. Commentaries

and lecture-notes should be prepared by these academies and seminars, classes, discussions and general lectures should be conducted.

It is a gigantic task requiring a large span of time to prepare and publish the *tafseer* of the whole Qur'an at one time. Hence herein an attempt is being made to prepare in English the *tafseer* of the part of the Qur'an that is mostly required at this time of the revival of Islam. No true revival of Islam can take place until the teachings of the Qur'an remain directly in the forefront of our existence to strengthen our belief. The basic three doctrines *Tawheed* (oneness of Allah), *Risalah* (the prophethood from the first man and Prophet Adam to the last prophet Muhammad peace be upon them) and *Aakhirah* (the life after death) must be fully understood and believed by the followers of Islam.

For the present ungodly and materialistic civilization of the globe, the most intricate and difficult doctrine is the Islamic version of the 'life after death'. The main thrust of the revelation to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was with this doctrine of *Aakhirah*. About eighty-five short *surahs* were revealed to propound, emphasize and explain the belief in *Aakhirah*.

Hence here we have ventured to present the commentaries of the *surahs* in this group compiled in the Qur'an as its last two sections 29 and 30. We have therefore selected to present the commentary of the last 30th section of the Qur'an to start herewith. Also, instead of waiting for the complete sections, we will start publishing *surahs* one or two at a time to receive the constructive comments of the readers for incorporation into the commentaries of the on-going *surahs*.

With the Blessings of Allah, the first *surah* no. 78 *Al-Nab'a* has been published by the Islamic Foundation for Education & Welfare (IFEW) Australia in the year 2000. The persons that helped at different stages in its preparation from the beginning to the end have rendered a great service. Thanks to them and their reward with Allah (swt).

Alhamdulillah we are able to present the understanding about this *surah* no. 79 *al-Naziat*, the second of the 30th part of the Qur'an.

It may not be considered as the author's original presentation in the sense of the ideas and words originally being his own. The words of the Qur'an are from Allah (swt) and whatever is thought, understood and presented by anyone, is borne upon his shoulders — the heritage of all contemporary thinkers and scholars, as well as those of the past.

The translation of the Qur'an, in this presentation, is a conglomeration of English translations that became available while trying to place the most suitable one according to the understanding of the author, even to the extent of coining of a new phrase or expression if compulsorily needed.

The ideas have also been generated as the result of the study of various *tafasir* and the best one has been taken in an original or modified sense. The literature most consulted and kept before me

throughout the study has been listed in the reference at the end of the book. Some phrases are quoted with the name of the book or the author beneath the quotations.

The main aim of the publication is not of commercial nature but it is the dissemination of knowledge to motivate the desire towards understanding and applying the Word of Allah in one's own lifestyle. We should, all of us, try our best to study all the presentations and select the best for onward transmission. Anyone interested in gaining benefit from the study of the present submission may use it for further transmission of these ideas.

We are grateful for the efforts of many persons involved in different ways in the final preparation and publication. We extend our thanks to them for their strong support as well as to those who have had more involvement and rendered assistance in this work.

It is the helpful Will of Allah (swt) that planned His graceful design and showered the ability and insight upon us to lead us to the present work. We eagerly pray that He will help us and guide us in all situations to continue the task successfully and then to accept our humble efforts, at each and every stage.

“There is no credit of mine except the Grace and Help of Allah.” (al-Nahl, 16:89)

Wa ma taufiqi illa billah

Qazi Ashfaq Ahmad

Introduction

Presenting the unique phenomenon of the functioning of different kinds of winds and clouds as evidence, Allah has directed the unbelievers not to consider themselves safe from His punishment, nor yet to dare to falsify the position or message of the Prophet (pbuh). They have latitude only for the moment. Once the freedom of living in this world has been removed, they will be taken into the grip of Allah, and for that He does not have to make any arrangement. The same winds and clouds that sustain their living at the moment will function as the wrath of Allah, totally uprooting them.

According to the introduction and style of content, this *surah* resembles *Surah Al-Dhariyat* (no. 51) and *Surah Mursalat* (no. 77). All the signs of the benevolence and sustenance from Allah are explicit indicators of the Day when Allah will punish the rebels who have disobeyed His directives. He will bestow His bounties upon those who have been consciously concerned about their presence before the Lord and Sustainer in the next life, having hence controlled their evil desires throughout the time allotted them in this life.

Theme

Stubborn unbelievers are warned about the dire punishment to be meted out to them on the Day of Resurrection and Judgement. This they ignore as an idle threat.

Sub-themes

A. Verses 1-5: The evidence of the winds and clouds

The functions of the winds and clouds have been enumerated as the evidence for the manifestation of the Day of Resurrection and Judgement. Allah, Who controls the functioning of the winds and clouds, can use them as bounties for some, and as punishments for others. Nothing is beyond His Power.

B Verses 6-14

The commotion on the Day of Resurrection and the reaction of the unbelievers on that Day.

C Verses 15-26

The story of Musa (a) and Firaun relevant to the theme of the Surah

Musa (a) fulfilled his task in the most polite and gracious manner to guide Firaun to the right path, but he became arrogant. This caused him to come into the grip of Allah. With slight manipulation of the winds, Allah brought about the drowning of Firaun and his army.

D Verses 27-33

Few only of the countless Powers of Allah in the heavens and on the Earth are mentioned which serve also as evidences of the Resurrection and new life after death.

It is revealed that for Allah, Who created the heavens and the Earth; originated day and night; provided enormous bounties for the sustenance of His creation, including human beings, it is trivial for Him to recreate human beings after life in this world.

E Verses 34-41

On that Great Day there shall be the painful end of the disbelievers in contrast to the rewards of the righteous.

F Verses 42-46

Instruction to the Prophet (pbuh) not to pay any attention to the questions of the opponents about the timing and detail of the Day of Resurrection.

The point of discussion regarding the date and details of the Day of Resurrection was not the concern of the Prophet (pbuh), being within the realm of Allah alone. The Prophet's task was only to warn the people who were afraid of that Day.

Those who consider the Resurrection impossible will, on that Day, feel as if they have lived in this world merely for one evening or one afternoon.

Section A

1. *By those tempests which uproot*
2. *By those breezes which glide (in the atmosphere)*
3. *By those (clouds) which float (upon the winds)*
4. *And yet overtake (one another) with swift overtaking*
5. *And thus manage the affairs (decreed by Allah)*

(Al-Nazi'at, 79:1-5)

These five verses are five oaths taken by Allah. There are five important matters sworn to with the aim to settle the legitimacy, justice and certainty of the Resurrection. Before each oath is analysed, the question arises: to what or to whom do these five oaths refer? This must be settled first.

The oaths, at first sight, seem rather ambiguous. At the same time this ambiguity has stimulated the scholars to meditate more deeply and has caused their thinking to progress.

Following are four different schools of thought around which the commentaries revolve.

1. The most popular interpretation is based upon the view that the descriptive participles *al-Naziat*, *al-Nashitat*, *al-Sabihat*, *al-Sabiqat* and *al-Mudabbirat* all refer to the angels and their activities regarding the souls of persons dying. Unfortunately there is no solid basis for this interpretation. Following are the obvious reasons for not accepting the interpretations as being that of angels:
 - a. There is no reference in the Qur'an which leads to this interpretation.
 - b. The traditions are only the personal ideas of the commentators.
 - c. The taking of the souls by the angels is a phenomenon of an implicit spiritual nature, which is unobservable by human beings. It is just an assumption that the souls of believers are removed softly while those of the unbelievers are removed harshly.

- d. This interpretation is categorically rejected by Abu Muslim al-Isfahani (quoted by Razi) who points out that the angels are never referred to in the Qur'an by Allah in the female gender, as is the case in these five participles.
2. *Qatadah* (quoted by *Tabrisi* and *Baghavi*) and *al-Hasan al-Basri* (quoted by *Baghavi* and *Razi*) maintain that in this passage there is reference to stars - including the sun and the moon - and their movements in space. *Zamakhshari* interprets these as stars in his commentary *Kashshaf*. Here again, nowhere in the Qur'an are the stars described in such a way.
 3. Another opinion of the commentators is that all five oaths are aimed at the fighters of Jihad or their horses. This also seems a laboured interpretation without reference to the Qur'an.
 4. The commentators *Farahi* and *Islahi* (20th Century) interpret these participles as referring to different kinds of winds. This is based on the principle of understanding the verses of the Qur'an through other verses, thus taking the integral approach. All five descriptive participles refer to varied activities of different kinds of winds.

It is thus determined that the winds and clouds shall be interpreted here as being the subject of these oaths, and supporting verses from the Qur'an shall be inserted by way of explanation of each oath.

1. *"By those (tempests) which uproot"*

Words

Naziat

The word *Naziat* is the feminine plural noun having the singular *naziah*. *Naziah* is based on the infinitive *naza'a* meaning to pluck out, to uproot, to pull out, and hence means the uprooter which pulls out.

Garq

The word *garq* is an adverb from the infinitive *garaqun* meaning to plunge, dive, to go under, to be drowned, to be immersed, to exceed the proper bounds, to exaggerate, to be excessive.

Explanation

The two words: the first is the object performing a particular activity and the other is describing the intensity of the action itself. The literal meaning of these two words combined is the uprooter uprooting deep inside. So here the oath is by the stormy or tempestual winds, meaning cyclones or hurricanes that uproot and destroy almost everything, even buildings and structures.

Referring to the Qur'an, the suffering brought about by the raging tempest which was brought upon the nation of 'Ad, by Allah, has been mentioned:

"Verily We! We sent against them a raging stormwind on a day of continuous calamity, carrying men away as if they were trunks of uprooted palm trees."

(Qamar 51:19,20)

2. *"By those breezes which glide (in the atmosphere)"*

Words

Nashitat

The word *nashitat* is the feminine plural noun having the singular *nashitah*, derived from the infinitive *nasht* meaning originally to be lively, spirited, to perform a task with enjoyment. The active participle *nashit* (m) or *nashitah* (f) is the cheerful bustling one.

A shallow well from which the bucket can be drawn easily with one pull is called *nishat*.

A camel, urged by a subtle hint, responds fast and effortlessly is called *nashitah*.

Therefore the concepts of lightness, enjoyment, ease, or smoothness of movement are noted.

Nashtan

This word is the adverb of the same root. It emphasises the act performed smoothly.

Explanation

Hence both these words are used to indicate that the activity is performed pleasantly and smoothly. The context indicates that in this phrase, the oath is referred to the gentle breezes, which exhilarate and please human beings, and provide comfort in this world.

There is similarity of expression in another verse of the Qur'an wherein Allah makes an oath by the winds:

"By those (winds) that scatter (the dust) far and wide, and those that carry the burden (of heavy clouds), and those that speed along with gentle ease, and those that apportion (the gifts of Allah) at (Allah's) behest"

(al-Dhariyat 51:1-4)

3. *'By those (clouds) that float (with the winds).'*

Words

Al-Sabihat

The word *sabihat* is again a feminine plural noun, the singular feminine of which is *sabihah* and the singular masculine *sabih*. These are derived from the base infinitive *sabh* or *sibaha* meaning to swim, to float, and to spread. The secondary derivative infinitive *tasbih* means to praise, to glorify (especially Allah) by saying *subhanallah*.

Sabhan

This word is the adverb from the same root. It also emphasises the act of floating performed with ease.

Explanation

The two words mean a quick floating of clouds in the atmosphere. The context indicates that the character of gliding or floating refers to the clouds, laden with water and moved by the winds.

4. "And yet overtake (one another) with swift overtaking."

Words

A l-Sabiqat

The word *Sabiqat* is, again, a feminine plural noun having the singular feminine form *sabiqah* and the masculine, *sabiq*. All of these are derived from the base infinitive *sabq* meaning to precede, go ahead of, arrive before someone, to surpass, to beat in a race. The secondary derivative infinitive *tasbiq* means to cause some to precede or go before.

The nouns *sabiq*, or *sabiqah* mean the one male or female preceding or foregoing others.

Sabqan

This word is the adverb from the same root. It again emphasises the act of racing and chasing each other, having the performance of precedence.

Explanation

This phrase is the outcome of the previous phrase. The floating and swimming of the clouds and winds appear as if to be racing, speeding up and surpassing each other. All indicate that Allah, Most Gracious, controls and manages the performance of the clouds and winds scattered throughout the Earth in order, finally, to perform the task described in the next verse.

5. "And thus manage the affairs decreed (by Allah)."

Words

Mudabbirat

The word *mudabbirat* is the feminine plural active participle with *mudabbirah* being the feminine singular, and *mudabbir* the masculine singular.

All these are derivatives from the secondary stem infinitive *tadbeer* meaning to make arrangement, to bring about according to the plan, to conduct, to manage well. Thus the words *mudabbirah* or *mudabbir* signify the one female or male who carries out and fulfils the planned commands.

Amran

It is an adverb from the noun *amr* meaning order, command, instruction, decree, ordinance. Here it refers to the Commands of Allah.

Explanation

This phrase is the final outcome of the two previous phrases - verse 3 and 4. The clouds and winds scatter throughout the Earth in different directions and then carry out the commands of Allah by pouring rain in some portions of land and leaving some without rain as planned and decreed by He Who knows best how all affairs are to be managed.

Summing Up

This section deals exclusively with the oath of varying kinds of winds and their activities as evidence for the occurrence of the Day of Resurrection and Judgement after the end of the present world system. This section describes the bounties and punishments; comforts and suffering given to human beings through two agents of Allah the Greatest - the winds and clouds.

The two functions of the tempests and breezes (verses 1 & 2) are quite different, but both indicate the Power and Control of Allah. It should be fully realised that these two characteristics of winds - gentleness and force - are used by Allah as agents both of suffering and blessing. The story of Musa and Fir'aun informs us that Allah bestowed freedom upon Musa and *Bani-Israil* through the stormy eastern wind, while He destroyed Fir'aun and his army, finally, through the calm breeze.

In verse 3, the context indicates that the characteristic of floating refers to the clouds.

Hence it must be observed that verses 4 and 5 commence with *fa* and not with *wa*. The rule of Arabic language points out that the other characteristics in verses 4 and 5 also refer to the one in verse 3, that is, the clouds. The three functions of the cloud are in sequence and well arranged. First these clouds float, then speed up as if they are racing, then release their burden where Allah decides to provide rain.

The verses 4 and 5 in this surah are very similar to the verses 3 and 4 of *Surah Al-Dhariyat* (no. 51) and verses 4 and 5 in *Surah Al-Mursalat* (no. 77).

"And these (clouds) that glide with ease and those (clouds) which distribute the affairs."

"And the scattering (winds) and those (winds) that bring down the remembrance."

These five verses depict the characteristics of winds laden with clouds, which are directed towards parts of the Earth and pour rain upon these places by His order. Thus at some places these winds send bounties by bringing clouds which deliver abundant moisture, while others they leave dry and parched.

The statement about which the oaths are taken by Allah is not mentioned in this passage. It is *mahzoof* (ellipsis), meaning implicit. This is the style of the Qur'an and also of Arabic classics. In the Qur'an there are examples in *Surah Sa'd* (no. 38), *Surah Qa f*(no. 50) and *Surah Qiyamah* (no. 75). As the commotion of Resurrection is mentioned further in this very *surah*, it has not been mentioned here, explicitly, immediately after the oaths. If we want to express clearly, the words of *Surah Mursalat*, "Verily what you are promised (Resurrection and Judgement) is about to befall." (77:7) may be considered as the oath statement.

Thus, presenting the evidences of the harsh and soft winds with clouds, Allah warns the arrogant Quraish to realise the certainty of the punishment with which they are threatened. Any such punishment Allah can bring whenever and however He wishes. He requires no special arrangement. The Quraish needed only to examine the history of former nations; nations more powerful and better established than they, to realise that Allah destroys whom-so-ever He wills.

Hence these five important characteristics of the winds and clouds sworn in these five verses aimed to settle the validity of the Resurrection; a certainty which must come; when all persons are to be resurrected.

Section B

6. *(Think of) the Day when a violent commotion will jolt the world.*
7. *And there will follow the next blast.*
8. *Hearts that Day will be throbbing (with great agitation and will be in a most disturbed condition).*
9. *Their looks will be downcast (with shame, humiliation and terror).*
10. *They (the Makkan pagans) are saying (in mockery and defiance): what! Are we indeed to be restored to our former state.*
11. *Even though we may have become (a heap of) crumbled bones.*
12. *And they are (further) saying (by way of sarcasm): that indeed shall be a return full of loss (to us).*
13. *(But) then, that (Last Hour) shall be a single blast.*
14. *And lo! They shall be in the awakened state.*

(Al-Naziat, 78:6-14)

After mentioning some characteristics of the winds and clouds in the previous five verses nos.1-5 to indicate the manifestation of the Resurrection, the Day itself is now described in the verse nos. 6-14

6. *“(Think of) the Day when a violent commotion will jolt the world.”*
7. *“And there will follow the next blast.”*

Words

Tarjuf & Rajifah

Tarjuf, the third person present tense, and *Rajifah*, the descriptive subject participle are derived from the same infinitive *rajf* meaning to be convulsed, to be shaken, to quake, to agitate. *Rajfah* or *Rajifah* mean heavy tremor. *Irjaf* (*Arajif*) means disturbing news that brings commotion in society.

Radifah

It is derived from the infinitive *radf* meaning to come next, to come immediately after someone or something. Thus *radifah* is an event that follows immediately after the first happening.

Explanation

Some commentators have opined that the term *rajifah* refers to the quake which will destroy the earth and that the term *radifah* points towards the quake which will wreck the sky.

Almost all commentators interpret the term *rajifah* as the first blast of the trumpet that refers to the destruction of the universe and the term *radifah* as referring to the second blast after which the Resurrection will occur, following which, life-after-death begins.

“And the Trumpet will (just) be sounded (on that Day) 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.”

(al-Zumar, 39:68)

In the light of the above verse *rajifah* is taken by some scholars as the quake which will destroy the earth on the first sounding of the trumpet while *radifah* is the quake which will wreck the sky on the second sounding.

8. ***Hearts that Day will be throbbing (with great agitation and will be in a most disturbed condition).***
9. ***Their looks will be downcast (with shame, humiliation and terror).***

The previous verses 6 and 7 depict the effects of the Resurrection on the universe while in these verses 8 and 9 those effects are indicated which pertain to human beings.

Words

Wajifah

It is derived from the infinitive *wajf*, *wujuf* or *wajif* meaning agitated, excited, troubled. The word *wajif* is used for a beating, throbbing heart.

Fi Sautin wajifin means tremulous voice.

Khashiah

It is derived from the infinitive *khashu*‘ meaning to be submissive, to be humble. The idiom *khasha*‘ *bibasrehi* means to lower one’s eyes. The subject participle *khashi*‘ or *khashi*‘*ah* means the submissive male or female.

Explanation

The organ of the human body which most affectively demonstrates stress and trauma relating to external stimulus such as that referred to, is the heart. The heart is the one organ, which immediately senses and reacts. Its condition is reflected in different parts of the body, as well as by the behaviour of the human being. But the most obvious effect is revealed through the eyes. Hence in these verses the heart and eyes are mentioned for gauging the physical and emotional effects upon the sinners when they actually face the Resurrection.

Allah informs that, on the Day, the hearts of people will be throbbing with great agitation and will be distraught about what is going to happen to them. Their eyes will be downcast because of fear and intense anxiety. These are the conditions of those human beings, about whom it is narrated, that they never bothered about that Day during their lives in this world. Whenever they were warned about the Day of resurrection and Judgement, and the life-after-death, they very boldly and arrogantly scoffed.

The ones who were concerned and afraid of the Day of Judgement, thus leading righteous lives, will be totally safe from the bewilderment of that Day.

The ones who were unjust and sinners, will be afraid about the punishment on the Day of Judgement. On that Day, their eyes will be dazed and downcast as if blinded by fear.

10. ***They (the Makkan pagans) are saying (in mockery and defiance): what! Are we indeed to be restored to our former state.***
11. ***Even though we may have become (a heap of) crumbled bones.***
12. ***And they are (further) saying (by way of sarcasm): that indeed shall be a return full of loss (to us).***

The scene then changes from the effects upon sinners in the Hereafter, to their thinking and remarks in this world.

Herein is portrayed a description of the ridicule which the sinners shared with each other when hearing of the Resurrection after death.

Words

Mardudun

Mardudun is plural of *mardud*, the descriptive objective noun of the verb *radda* with the infinitive *radd* meaning to bring back, to take back, to return, to restore, to trace back etc. Here in this context the phrase '*a inna lamarduduna*' means 'are we to be restored'. Hence *mardudun* are those who are restored.

Hafirah

Hafirah is the derivative of the infinitive *hafir* meaning to dig, to execute, to drill. The derived stem *infahar* means to pass.

The word *hafirah* means original condition, the beginning. The phrase '*ind al-hafirah*' means on the spot, right away, at once. The phrase *raja'a ila hafirahtehi* means reverted to its original state or origin. Hence the term *hafirah* in this instance is used as 'original state, or former condition.'

Nakhirah

The word *nakhirah* is derived from the infinitive *nakhr* or *nakhir* meaning to snort, to snore, to bore, to burrow, to eat away, to decay. *Nakhr*, the noun means a rotten tree. The word *nakhirah* means a thing worm-eaten, rotten, decayed, decomposed.

Karratun

The word is derived from the infinitive *karr*, *kurur*, or *takrir* meaning to turn around and attack, to return, come back, rescue.

Hence *karratun* means recurrence.

Khasirah

The word is derived from the infinitive *khusr*, *khasar*, *khasarah* or *khusran* meaning to incur a loss, to get lost, to lose, to forfeit some thing.

Hence *karratun khasirah* means a losing return, a return full of loss.

Explanation

It is a portrayal of the sinners and aggressors and their remarks when they are warned of the accountability of their deeds after death. They ridicule and mock, "Is it so! Shall we be returned back to our original state after the rotting and decaying of our bones?"

The apparent impossibility of the material conversion from rotten bones to life made the non-believers to ridicule. They forgot that they had originally been created from the dust.

The interrogation mark is repeated, first in verse 10 and then in verse 11. This denotes their increased feeling of incredulity. In their opinion the first unbelievable phenomenon was that of recreation from scratch after death, and more strange and unbelievable was the possibility of recreating when bones would be completely decayed and absorbed into the earth. Ultimately they reasoned that no one could possibly believe that such an illogical and irrational phenomenon would ever occur.

Then the disbelievers, feigning seriousness, remark in satire: “If somehow or another, this Resurrection occurs, it will mean a great loss after our return to life again.”

When they were told that they would surely be raised back to life after death, they started mocking, saying to one another, “Well, if we really have to be restored to our former state of life, then we would certainly be doomed.”

Though it looks like sarcasm, mockery or ridicule, it may also reflect anxiety in their inner consciences. In spite of so loud a declaration, in the inner heart they were not satisfied. They realised the arguments in favour of the Resurrection and they also feared their denial of it. But the dilemma was that their deep indulgence in the lust and comforts of life distracted them from giving serious thought to the reality of the Resurrection. Hence they escaped from this calamitous prospect and evaded thoughts of danger by distracting themselves in mockery and satire. They used to say that even if the Resurrection is a big event, which is to occur, ‘we will deal with it when it comes. Why should we make our present easy-going and merry-making life miserable by thinking of the Resurrection now!’.

This should be well understood that carefree and purposeless persons follow the above philosophy of life. But logic suggests that even if there is the slightest possibility that the Resurrection will occur, this should cause a person to spend his/her life conscious of God.

13. (But) then, that (Last Hour) shall be a single blast.

14. And lo! They shall be in the awakened state.

At the end of this section, the Resurrection and the occurrence of the Hereafter is again mentioned decisively and terrifyingly.

Words

Zajrah

The word *zajrah* is derived from the infinitive *zajr* meaning to hold back, to prevent. The noun *zajr* means rebuke, reprimand. Here the phrase *zajratun wahidah* means ‘only a single blast’. This phrase

denotes that the Resurrection is a sudden happening. It is not at all hard, by the power of Allah, for the cry of an order by the angel of the Trumpet to bring all the dead to life again, thus being present in the Hereafter for the Reckoning.

Sahirah

The word *sahirah* is derived from the infinitive *sahar* meaning to be sleepless, to stay up at night. The noun *sahraturun* means evening gathering.

The gathering after the second Trumpet on the Day of Resurrection is compared to an evening performance everyone attending it being fully awake and alert.

Explanation

The disbelievers are mocking the Resurrection as an impossibility, whereas, for Allah, it is not at all a difficult task. For the Resurrection to take place only a single shout or cry is needed, at which their dust or ashes will gather together from wherever they have lain, and they will suddenly find themselves alive and back on earth.

Thinking this return to be a return to loss, they may desperately try to escape from it, but it will inevitably take place; it cannot be averted by their denial, or their mockery.

Summing Up

The main thrust is on the belief of Allah. If Allah is believed to be the Creator, the Master and the Sustainer, He should be considered capable of any action taken immediately. Allah (swt) does not need human beings' limited reasoning to perform any action. He decides to take any action and it is done.

“Verily, when He intends a thing, His command is “Be”, and it is.”

(Yasin, 37:82)

Section C

15. *Has the story of Musa(a) reached you?*
16. *Recall when his Sustainer called out to him in the sacred valley of Tuwa.*
17. *“Go unto Fir’aun — for verily, he has transgressed all bounds.*
18. *And say unto him, ‘Will you consent to being purified (from sins).*
19. *And that I guide you towards (a recognition of) your Sustainer, so that you may display humility (may be submissive).’”*
20. *Then he [Musa(a) went to Fi’raun and] showed him (Fir’aun) the Great Sign (of his prophethood).*
21. *Yet his words belied the truth and he rebelled.*
22. *Further, he turned back, striving (devising plots against Musa(a)).*
23. *Then he gathered (his people) and made a proclamation.*
24. *And said, ‘I am your Lord All-Highest.’*
25. *Thereupon Allah took him to task (for exemplary) punishment in the life to come and in this life.*
26. *Indeed herein is a lesson for all who submit (to Allah).*

(Al-Naziat, 79:15-26)

Here we recollect that the events and feelings about the punishment on the Day of Resurrection were illustrated in section B, verses 6-14. Now, in this Section C, verses 15-26, the historical evidence of the punishment in this world, due to rejecting the prophets, is narrated.

The attention is drawn here towards the punishment on the Day of Resurrection before the punishment in this life, because of it being the ultimate, everlasting, and eternal punishment. Its occurrence, even without the punishment in this world, is a matter of great worry and grave concern. It is an additional

strategy of Allah that He renders punishment in this world as well upon those transgressors who have disclaimed the prophets, after they have been given the opportunity to repent and correct their ways.

The disbelievers of Makkah used the stratagem of ridicule against the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad (pbuh) in order to frustrate his mission. The story of the Prophet Musa(a) and Fir'aun is being related here to the disbelievers to show the consequences of negating and falsifying the position of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), thus rejecting Allah Who appointed him as His Messenger.

15. *“Has the story of Musa(a) reached you?”*

Words

Hal Ataaka

This literally means: Has reached you? This question is just to draw the attention towards the lessons from the historical event. Though it is primarily addressed to the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) like many places in the Qur'an, it is also meant as an address to every reader of the passage.

Explanation

That which took place between the Prophet Musa(a) and Fir'aun is the most patent historical evidence of the punishment in this world. Hence it has been cited by Allah as a lesson to the disbelievers.

This event has been narrated in the Qur'an in some places briefly and in others in full detail as the occasion demanded. Here brevity was essential as the emphasis is given to the belief in Resurrection, and this event is described as one of the several evidences recorded in this *surah*. Here only a brief report of the event has been given.

More details are described in *Surah al-A'raf* (7:104-137); *Surah Taha* (20:9-48); *Surah al-Shu'ara* (26:10-17); *Surah al-Naml* (27:7-12); and *Surah al-Qasas* (28:29-35).

16. *“Recall when his Sustainer called out to him in the sacred valley Tuwan (or Tuwa)”*

Words

Tuwan

The word *tuwan* is infinitive, but may also have the noun-form as well as noun. This infinitive literally means to fold over, to roll up, to wrap up, to enwrap something of the dark of night.

Tuwan as a common noun is an abode twice visited or twice blest and sanctified.

Tuwa as a proper noun is the name of the valley of Mount Sinai in Syria. This spot is on the right flank of Sinai in a narrow valley called the *Wadi Shoaib* which runs south-eastward from the great plain in front of the *Ras-Sufsafah*.

Tuwa may also be taken as the derivative of the noun *ta'y* meaning to roll, or, being rolled. “Musa (*a*) used to cover a long distance to receive the revelation from Allah so He rolled up the distance to make it near for him to reach.” (*Mufradat*, Imam Raghīb Isfahani)

Explanation

All the different shades of the meaning of the word *tuwan* (or *tuwa*) are combined. *Tuwa* is definitely the sacred place where Musa(*a*) subsequently received the first revelation. A detailed story starting with the same words, “Has the story of Musa(*a*) reached you?”, further goes:

“When he (Musa(a)) came near it (the fire), a voice called out to him: ‘Musa, I am your Lord. Take off your sandals, for you are now in the sacred valley of Tuwa. Know that I have chosen you. Therefore, listen to what shall be revealed.’”

(Taha, 20:11-13)

This is the event in which Musa, returning from Madyan with his wife, arrived in *Tur* (Mount Sinai) and upon seeing the blaze of fire went towards it to the valley of *Tuwa*. In the darkness of night, he desired to bring comfort from the fire for his wife. There he heard the voice addressing him,

“I have chosen you for Myself. Go you and your brother, with My signs, and do not cease to remember Me. Go both of you to Fir’aun, for he has transgressed all bounds. Speak to him with gentle words; he may heed and fear (God).”

(Taha, 20:43,44)

17. “Go unto Fir’aun – for verily, he has transgressed all bounds

Explanation

Here-on-in the directives are given by Allah to Musa(*a*) regarding Fir’aun. The first thing mentioned about Fir’aun relates to his transgressing the bounds of service, and rebelling against His creatures. As for his rebellion against the Creator, as mentioned later, this is when he gathered his people and proclaimed, ‘I am your Lord, the Supreme.’ His rebellion against the creatures was that he had divided his subjects into classes. He treated the weakest class, the Bani Israel, tyrannically and had reduced his entire nation to varying levels of slavery. As mentioned in the Qur’an:

“Now Fir’aun exalted him in the land. He divided its people into castes, one group of which he persecuted: putting their sons to death and sparing their daughters. Truly, he was an evil-doer.”

The claim of partnership with Allah, declaring oneself as the Greatest Lord of the people, is the transgression of the highest order. To stop this transgression Allah dispatched Musa(a) with His Special Signs first to invite Fir'aun softly towards the Right Way and then to warn him of the consequences if he did not pay heed.

18. ***“And say unto him, ‘Will you mind to be purified (from sins).”***
19. ***“And that I guide you towards (a recognition of) your Sustainer, so that you may display humility (may be submissive).”***
20. ***“Then he (Musa(a) after conveying the message) showed him (Fir'aun) the Great Sign (of his prophethood).”***

Words

Tazakka

Zaka is the derivative of the infinitive *zakiah*, meaning to grow, to be pure in heart, to be just, righteous, good. The derived stem form V *tazakka* means to be purified or to be chastened by oneself.

Takhsha

It is the derivative of the infinitive *khashiyah*, meaning to fear, to be alarmed, to be fearful, to apprehend, to become submissive. *Takhsha* is the second person masculine singular imperfect verb. *Fatakhsha* means ‘so that you become apprehensive and submissive to Allah(*swt*).’

Al-Kubra

It is the derivative from the infinitive *kubr, kibr, kibar, kibara*, meaning to become great, to become too great, too big, too large, to gain significance. It is the superlative feminine noun of *al-kubar*, meaning the greatest one.

Explanation

In verse 18 Musa(a) is guided by Allah to start the dialogue with Fir'aun in these words:

“Tell him: Do you have a desire to lead a pure life in this world? If so, then I may try to advise you how to purify yourself.”

Consider the content and style at the beginning of this dialogue. It is simultaneously affectionate, as well as conveying dignity and reflecting the Majesty in this, the Verdict of Allah and His Messenger.

The message is delivered: ‘Whatever your style of life until-now exhibits, it is not expected to produce any good from you, but Allah (*swt*) is Kind and Benevolent. Still there is a chance that if you wish to adopt the noble and peaceful life-style, the attempt can be made to advise you to that effect’.

The word *tazakka* has been used here in a much wider sense. It refers to a living, devoid of egoism, tyranny and transgression, which a God-conscious person adopts.

Thus it must be kept in mind that the main purpose of prophethood is to purify the inner-selves of human beings. This task the prophets performed through the Messages from, and Signs of, Allah. The Qur’an says about the Prophet Muhammad:

“He it is Who has raised amidst the unlettered ones (of Makkah) a messenger from among themselves, rehearsing to them His revelations and purifying them (of all moral and spiritual filth) and teaching (explaining, exposing and amplifying) them the Book and the Wisdom, though they have been before in gross error.”

(al-Jumu‘ah, 62:2)

The same purpose is here in the words of Musa(*a*) to Fir‘aun:

“If you are inclined and take interest in your reform, expelling the egoism of proclaiming to be God, then I may convey the directives of Allah to you.”

Here ‘to be purified’ means the purity of belief, morals and deeds, or in other words to accept the Sovereignty of Allah and follow His Commands.

Ibn Zaid says: ‘Whenever in the Qur’an, the word *tazkiyyah* (purity) has been used, it implies submission to Allah, the One and only One Master and Sustainer.’

Following are two concurring references from the Qur’an:

“He shall abide forever in the Gardens of Eden, in gardens watered by running streams. Such shall be the recompense of those that purify themselves.”

(Taha, 20:76)

“How can you tell? He might purify himself. He might be mindful and the reminder might profit him.”

(‘Abass, 80:3)

In verse 19, Musa is directed to say:

“At the moment you are intoxicated with the power of your claim to deity and hence you are leading the life according to your wrong attitudes and notions.”

“Kindly pay attention to my message and think about it. Then I can make you realise the existence of the Sustainer of yours, as well as of the whole universe, to Whom we all should submit.”

The right attitude of man in this world should be to consider himself a slave of the Sustainer, Allah, not a free man. Without the recognition of Allah and His consciousness, no purity of self is possible. Hence a righteous living emerges from the submissiveness to Allah which, in return, branches from correct recognition of Him.

Some people seem to think that Allah sent Musa(a) to Firaun mainly for the deliverance of the nation Bani-Israel. This idea is incorrect. The primary object of the mission of the Prophet Musa (a) was to show Firaun and his people the right way. But if there was no acceptance of the right way, then Bani Israel would have to be delivered from his slavery and taken from Egypt.

In these verses, the purpose of guiding Firaun is clearly mentioned. It can further be confirmed by the Qur’anic verses related to the story of Musa(a).

“Musa said: ‘Firaun, I am an apostle from the Sustainer of all the Worlds, and should tell nothing of Allah but what is true.’ ”

(al-A‘raf, 7:104)

“ ‘Who is the Lord of all men?’ asked Firaun, Musa replied: ‘He is the Lord of the heavens and the earth and all that lies between them. If only you had faith.’ ”

‘Do you hear?’, said Firaun to those around him.

‘He is your Lord’, went on Musa, ‘and the Lord of your forefathers.

Firaun said: ‘The apostle who has been sent to you is surely possessed.’

‘He is the Lord of the East and the West,’ said Musa, ‘and all that lies between them. If only you could understand.’ ”

(al-Shu‘ara, 26:23-28)

Allah has taught the correct methods of preaching Islam in the Qur’an. This verse is an example. Following are other models of the dialogues given in the Qur’an:

“Go both of you to Firaun, for he has transgressed all bounds. Speak to him with gentle words; he may yet heed and fear (God).”

(Taha, 20:44)

“Firaun said: ‘And who is your Lord, Musa?’

'Our Lord', he replied, 'is He Who gave all creatures their distinctive form and then rightly guided them.'

'How was it then with the ancients? Asked Firaun.

He answered: 'My Lord alone has knowledge of that; it is recorded in His book. He does not err, nor does He forget. It is He who has made the earth your cradle and made in it paths for you to walk upon. It is He who sends down water from the sky with which He brings forth every kind of plant, (saying): "Eat and pasture your cattle. Surely in this there are signs for men of understanding. From the earth We have created you, and to the earth We will restore you; and from it We will bring you back (to life)."'

(Taha, 20:49-55)

"Musa replied: 'My Lord knows best the man who brings guidance from Him and whose will be the best end in the Hereafter. The wrongdoers shall never prosper.'"

(al-Qasas, 28:37)

At the time of conveying this message, Musa(a) also informed Firaun that he was the messenger from Allah and he had the evidence of prophethood as well. As mentioned in other places in the Qur'an, Firaun, denying the knowledge of any Lord other than himself, demanded the testimony of prophethood from Musa(a). Thence Musa(a) showed him the Great Sign, as here mentioned in verse 20.

As recorded in several places in the Qur'an, the Great Sign, shown to Firaun on this occasion, was the turning of his staff into a serpent. The other miracle bestowed upon Musa(a) by Allah (swt), the white-shining hand, was not used at this time.

Obviously there could be no greater sign at this moment than that a lifeless staff should turn into a living serpent right in front of the eyes of the people; that it should devour the artificial servants produced by the magicians. When Musa(a) picked up his staff, it became a walking stick again.

These verses, very beautifully and precisely, draw the picture of the performance of Musa(a), the prophet, in terms of dialogue and action in front of the aggressive and rebellious tyrant Firaun.

Following are conclusions that may be drawn from these verses:

1. One of the important missions of the Prophet Musa (a) was to oppose the sovereignty of Fir'aun and guide him.
2. Prophet Musa was categorically directed by Allah to speak to Fir'aun with pleasant words as reminded again in *Sura Taha* no. 20 verse 44 'Speak to him mildly.'

3. The duty of a prophet is to guide, and to persuade the transgressors of their need for purification. The words of the verse no. 18, 'Will you agree to being purified (from sin)' indicates that the purification can take place only when the concerned person is willing.
4. Guidance is mentioned after purification. This shows that guidance comes only after becoming purified.
5. Musa (a) offered Fir'aun to take him to his lord, making him realise that in reality the sovereign is Allah and Fir'aun was merely His subject.
6. 'Submission to Allah' is the outcome of 'guidance'. Those who are guided by the One Supreme Allah feel responsible before Him, as the 'submission to Allah' never occurs without first recognising Him.
7. Musa (a) uses the *daawah* principle – to appeal to one's emotions and sentiments and then direct towards the Signs of Allah as rational and logical evidences.

21. ***“Yet his words belied the truth and he rebelled.***

22. ***“Further, he turned back striving (devising plots against Musa(a)).”***

23. ***Then he gathered (his people) and made a proclamation:***

24. ***“And said: ‘I am you Lord All-Highest.’”***

Words

Kazzaba

It is the derivative from the infinitive *kizb, kazba, kizba*, meaning to lie, to deceive, to tell a lie. *Kazzaba* (perfect verb, third person) is the derived, Second stem form meaning he belied, disproved, rejected.

‘Asa

This is derived from the infinitive *‘asy, ‘isyan*, meaning to disobey, resist, oppose, defy, rebel, revolt. *‘Asa* is third person masculine perfect verb meaning he disobeyed, rebelled or denied.

Adbara yas‘a

Adbara is the derivative for the infinitive *dabr, dubur*, meaning to turn back, to flee. *Adbara* is the derived Fourth stem form, third person masculine singular meaning he turned back, he went away.

Yas'a is the derivative from the infinitive *sa'y* meaning to move quickly, to run, to proceed, to strive, to make an effort. It is the imperfect third person masculine singular verb meaning runs, will be running or strives or will be striving.

When *yas'a* is used with *adbara*, it always means he turned back striving or devising some plots against the one from whom he turned back.

Hashara

It is derived from the infinitive *hashr* meaning together, to assemble, to gather in a crowd. *Hashara* is First Form third person masculine perfect verb meaning he gathered his people, he summoned the public for the show.

Nada

It is derived from the infinitive *munadat* meaning to address, to proclaim to call with another in an assembly. It also means to cry, if someone is alone and calling God.

A'la

It is the derivative from the infinitive *'luwan* meaning to be elevated, exalted. *A'la* is superlative masculine singular noun meaning the highest, the greatest. Its feminine is *'ulya*. Its plural is *'alaun*, meaning, the greatest ones.

Explanation

Fir'aun, because of his arrogance, reacted against the benevolent and kind speech of Musa (a) and did not become impressed with the Great Signs that Musa demonstrated in front of him.

Even after seeing the miracle himself, Firaun did not accept Musa(a) as the apostle of Allah. Firaun took Musa(a) as a magician displaying his magic and therefore he rejected the invitation of Musa (a) mentioned above in the verses 18 and 19.

Having turned from him, Fir'aun then devised plots to defeat Musa(a). In this surah events, after the address of Musa(a) and the exhibition of the miracle given by Allah, are not described elaborately.

Surah al-A'raf, The Heights (no. 7) gives a detailed portrayal which tells us in an elaborate manner from beginning to end.

Musa said: 'Pharaoh, I am an apostle from the Lord of the Creation, and should tell nothing of Allah but what is true. I bring you an undoubted sign from your Lord. Let the Children of Israel depart with me.'

He answered: 'If you have come with a sign, show it to us if you are one of those who are truthful.'

Musa threw down his staff, and thereupon it changed into a serpent plain (for all to see). Then he drew out his hand and it appeared white to the beholders.

(al-A'raf, 7:104-108)

The elders of Pharaoh's people said: 'This man is a skilled enchanter who seeks to drive you from your kingdom. What do you advise?'

Others said: 'Put them off awhile, him and his brother, and send forth heralds to your cities to summon every skilled magician to your presence.'

The magicians came to Pharaoh. They said: 'Shall we be rewarded if we win?'

'Yes,' he answered. 'And you shall become my favourites.'

(al-A'raf, 7:109-114)

They said: 'Musa, will you first throw or shall we?'

'Throw,' he replied.

And when the magicians threw, they bewitched the people's eyes and terrified them by a display of great wonders.

(al-A'raf, 7:115,116)

Then We revealed to Musa: 'Now throw down your staff.' And thereupon his staff swallowed up their false devices.

Thus the truth prevailed and their doings proved vain. They were defeated and put to shame, and the enchanters prostrated themselves in adoration, saying: 'We believe in the Lord of the Creation, the Lord of Musa and Harun.'

Pharaoh said: 'Do you dare believe in Him without my consent? This is a plot, which you have contrived in order to turn my people out of their city. But you shall see. I will cut off your hands and feet on alternate sides and then crucify you all!'

(al-A'raf, 7:117-125)

They replied: 'We shall surely return to our Lord. You would punish us only because we believed in His signs when they came to us. Lord, give us patience and let us die in submission.'

The elders of Pharaoh's nation said: 'Will you allow Musa and his people to commit evil in the land and to forsake you and your gods?'

He replied: 'We will put their sons to death and spare their daughters. We shall yet triumph over them.'

Musa said to his people: 'Seek help from Allah and be patient. The earth is Allah's; He gives it to those of His servants whom He chooses. Happy shall be the lot of the righteous.'

They replied: 'We were oppressed before you came to us, and oppressed we still remain.'

He said: 'Your Lord will perchance destroy your enemies and make you rulers in the land. Then He will see how you conduct yourselves.'

(al-A'raf, 7:126-130)

We afflicted Pharaoh's people with death and famine so that they might take heed. When good things came their way, they said: 'It is our due,' but when evil befell them they ascribed it to the evil auspices of Musa and his people. Yet it was Allah who had ordained their ill fortune, though most of them did not know it.

They said (to Musa): 'Whatever miracles you may work to confound us, we will not believe in you.'

So We sent upon them floods and locusts, with lice and frogs, and with blood. All these were clear signs, yet they scorned them, for they were wicked people.

And when the plague smote them, they said: 'Musa, pray to your Lord for us invoking the promise he has made you. If you lift the plague from us, we will believe in you and let the Children of Israel go with you.'

But when We had lifted the plague from them for a term which they had to reach, they broke their promise. So We punished them and drowned them in the sea, for they had denied Our signs and gave no heed to them.

(al-A'raf, 7:131-136)

"We gave the persecuted people dominion over the eastern and western lands, which We had blessed. Thus your Lord's gracious word was fulfilled for the Children of Isreal because they had endured with fortitude; and We destroyed the edifices and towers of Pharaoh and his people."

(al-A'raf, 7:137)

According to the above verses, nos. 109-125, Firaun summoned skilful magicians from all over Egypt and made them produce serpents out of sticks and cords in front of the assembled people so that they become convinced that Musa (a) was not a prophet but a magician, and that the miracle worked by him of turning a staff into a serpent, could also be produced by other magicians. But this device of Firaun backfired upon himself and the defeated magicians themselves admitted that what Musa(a) had displayed was no magic but a miracle bestowed upon him by Allah.

The strange thing is that, at the time of calamity, Fir'aun and his high-command requested Musa (a) to pray to his Sustainer to remove these sufferings. They also promised that once these were removed, they would accept and believe in The Allah of Musa(a). But when the calamity was taken away from them, Firaun and his Chiefs rejected Allah never fulfilling their promise.

“And (every time) they exclaimed: ‘O thou sorcerer! Pray for us to thy sustainer on the strength of the covenant (of prophethood) which He has made with thee: for verily, we shall now follow the right way.’

“But whenever We removed the suffering from them, lo! They would break their word.”

(Zukhruf, 43:49,50)

Even the Bible refers to this event and Fir'aun's attitudes:

“Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron, and said, ‘Entrust the Lord that he may take away the frogs from me, and from my people; and I will let the people go, that they may do sacrifice unto their Lord.’

(Exodus, 8:8)

“But when Pharaoh saw that there was respite, he hardened his heart, and he harkened not unto them.”

(Exodus, 8:15)

“And when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunders were ceased, he sinned yet more, and hardened his heart, he and his servants.”

(Exodus, 9:34)

Fir'aun's rejection of the acceptance of Allah, after His withdrawal from the sufferings to the whole nation, influenced the coptic masses in favour of Musa(a). Firaun felt the danger after the address by Musa(a) and the display of the miracle. Thence he collected all his courtiers to devise the plan to recoup his influence over the people. As a last resort, Firaun performed the acts mentioned in verses

23 and 24 here in this Surah Naziat (no. 79). The event described here in verse 24 is elaborated in Surah Zukhruf (no. 43) in verses 51-54).

“Firaun made a proclamation to his people: ‘My people! Is the kingdom of Egypt not mine, and are those rivers which flow at my feet not mine also? Can you not see? Am I not better than this despicable wretch, who can scarcely make his meaning plain? Why have no bracelets of gold been given him, or angels sent down with him.’”

Thus he incited his people. They obeyed him, for they were degenerate men.”

(Zukhruf, 43:51-54)

As informed in the Qur’an, Fir’aun was one of the idol-worshippers.

“Said the Chiefs of Pharaoh’s people: ‘Wilt thou leave Moses and his people, to spread mischief in the land, and to abandon thee and thy gods...’ ”

(Al-A’raf, 7:127)

Fir’aun is reported in Surah Qasas as saying:

“O Chiefs! No god do I know for you but myself.”

(Al-Qasas, 28:38)

And here Fir’aun says:

“I am your Lord All-Highest.”

(Al-Naba, 79:24)

This all clearly shows that he called himself the Lord, being supreme, not in the religious, but in the political, sense. He meant that he possessed sovereign rights: no one beside him had the right to rule in this kingdom and there was no power superior to his, whose orders could be enforced in the land.

25. “Therefore Allah took him to task (for exemplary punishment) in the hereafter and in this life.

26. “Indeed herein is a lesson for all who submit (to Allah)”

Words

Akhaza

It is the derivative of the infinitive *akhz* meaning to take. It is third person, masculine, single past tense verb. It is used here as transitive meaning He (Allah) seized/grabbed him (Firaun).

Nakal

It is the derivative of the infinitive *nukul*, *nakal* meaning to make an example, to punish severely. Here *nakal* is the noun meaning severe punishment. It originally means disability. As the punishment in *Aakhirah* destroys the non-believers, it is used as severe punishment by Allah.

Ula

It is the feminine noun of the masculine *awwal* meaning the first, foremost, previous. This word is opposite to the word *akhirah* (hereafter). Hence it is used for this world.

Nakal al-akhirah wal-ula

It means the punishment in the Hereafter as well as in this world. Since the punishment in the *akhirah* is severe and eternal, it is mentioned first and the punishment of the drowning of Firaun and his followers in the river Nile is mentioned in the verse secondarily.

La'ibratan

This word is composed of the suffix *la* and *ibratan*. The word *ibratan* is the noun derived from the infinitive *abr*, *ubur* meaning to cross, to traverse. As a noun the meaning of *ibratan* is changed. It is singular and its plural is *ibar*. It means admonition, warning example, lesson, precept (to be followed). The suffix *la* is for emphasis meaning the exemplary, the most important admonition.

Explanation

After summarising the interaction between Musa (a) and Fir'aun, the final result of the arrogance on the part of Fir'aun is declared in the two verses nos. 25 and 26. Fir'aun was to be chastised both in this world as well as in the Hereafter.

After hearing the message of Allah and seeing His Signs, still Firaun persisted upon in his rebellious and tyrannical lifestyle. Allah severed him with exemplary chastisement both in this world as well as in the Hereafter. He was swallowed by the ocean waves in this world and shall be devoured by the fire of the Hell in the Hereafter.

This complete story of Musa and Firaun is narrated in the Qur'an for a purpose. The purpose is explicitly described in verse 26. There is a great lesson and warning for the people who bear the consciousness of Allah. Though the statement is a general one for any reader of the story, it was particularly brought to the attention of the People of Quraish at that time. It directs the honest Quraishites, having some consciousness of Allah, to think over the final destruction of Firaun and thus to keep themselves from Firaun's lifestyle. Only in this way could they avoid such calamities befalling them.

The last verse of this passage, no. 26 clearly tells us the condition for admonishment. Not every human being is affected by any event. Only the persons, who fear Allah and feel responsible for their thinking and action in this world, take a lesson from such events. They realise and shun follies, small or big.

The events that occurred during times of the past prophets were narrated with the purpose of opening the eyes of the transgressors and the blasphemers of the Prophet's time. This end of Firaun should have been an eye-opener for the chiefs of the Arabs. They should have thought seriously and then believed and submitted to the commands of Allah.

Summing Up

This story of Musa and Firaun is also narrated to strengthen the believers in that what happened to the arrogant opponent of Musa (a), the same should happen to the opponents of Muhammad (s). Allah can destroy them whenever He likes but the way of Allah is quite different because He has to take care of all.

This short passage (verses 16-26) has summed up here the whole event in the precise manner which occurred between Musa (a) and Firaun. The details are given in other *surahs* especially *surah Taha*. A student of the Qur'an should be reminded of the whole event from only this passage if he has gone through the Qur'an with open eyes.

If we analyse this passage we find the following directives from Allah(swt):

- a) A prophet has to fulfil his mission no matter how weak he may consider himself.
- b) Allah is always on the side of the Prophet and eventually the Prophet is rescued.
- c) Purification starts from oneself on one's sincere intention to change.
- d) Guidance is given by Allah after the step is taken for purification.
- e) Arrogant persons are proud of their strength.
- f) The tricks and plots devised by the aggressors become the means of their defeat.
- g) There is no accepted excuse or turning back after the declaration of the punishment.
- h) The transgressors are punished in this world as well as in the Hereafter.

Section D

27. *“(O Men!) Are you most difficult to create or the heaven which He has built.”*
28. *He raised its vault and perfected it.*
29. *And He made its night dark and its sunshine bright.*
30. *And, thereafter, He stretched out the Earth.*
31. *And He brought forth, thereupon, its water and its pasture.*
32. *And then the mountains, He set them firm.*
33. *(All this) as provision for you and your cattle.*

(Al-Nazi'at, 79:27-33)

Starting with the oaths of the existing phenomena as evidences of Resurrection, the Resurrection itself is mentioned. Then the story of Musa (a) and Firaun has been narrated as a warning to the non-believers and as an indication to the believers for their ultimate success.

Repeatedly in the Qur'an, almost in every *surah*, many times in long *surahs*, the human beings are explicitly reminded about the blessings of Allah by virtue of which man is able to make his living comfortable and fulfil his needs in the best manner. So here this section verse nos. 27-33 deals with the bounties of Allah bestowed upon man as the evidences of the infinitive power of Allah. These sentences can also be considered as arguments for the possibility of Resurrection and Life-after-death, being, thereby, the very demand and requirement of intellect.

27. *“(O Men!) Are you most difficult to create or the heaven which He has built.”*
28. *He raised its vault and perfected it.*
29. *And He made its night dark and its sunshine bright.*

Words

Ashaddu

This word is derived from the infinitive *shadda* meaning to make strong, to strengthen, to bind, to brace. *Ashaddu* is superlative elative noun meaning most severe, most stronger, most difficult. It is generally used with indeterminate abstract substantives as paraphrasing eg *ashaddu ghadzban* most wrathful, angrier, *ashaddu sawadan* blacker. Here it is used *ashaddu khalqan* strongest or most difficult creation.

Bana ha

Bana is third person singular perfect tense verb, derived from the infinitive *bina* or *bunyan*, meaning He built, He constructed, He set up, He established. He refers to Allah (*swt*) and the suffix *ha* after *bana* refers to *al-samau*, the previous word.

Samk

The root for this word is *s*, *m* and *k* having different meanings with different vowels. *Samk* means roof, ceiling. *Sumk* means thickness *Samk* originally means height or altitude but is generally used for ceiling as here.

‘When measured from the top to the bottom of something, it is called depth (*‘umq*) and when measured it from bottom to top it is called height (*samk*).’

(Fakhruddin Mohammad Razi: Tafsir Kabir)

Sawwaha

The word *sawwa* is derived from the infinitive *taswiyah*. It is the stem form II meaning to even, to level, to smooth down, to make level or equal, to proportion something.

Aghtasha

It is derived from the infinitive *ghatsh* meaning to be or become dark (night), *Aghtasha* is the stem form IV meaning past tense singular meaning He made dark. The suffix *ha* after the verb is the pronoun that refers to the heaven. *Ghatsh* also means to become dim (eye) and hence *aghtasha* also means a person who has dim eyes or less sight.

Akhraja

It is derived from the root letter, *kh*, *r* and *j*. *Akhraja* is the perfect tense stem form IV meaning to move out, to take out, to bring out, to emit.

Dzuhaha

The word *dzuha* is derived from the infinitive *dzahu* or *dzuhuw* meaning to become visible, appear, to be struck by sun’s rays. The noun *dzuha* means the brightness of the day. The pronoun *ha* in *dzuhaha*

is the pronoun, thus it has having the meaning 'its sunshine.' The full brightness of the sun that spreads in the heaven and over the earth is termed *dzuha*.

Explanation

The verse no. 27: 'Is the creation of you harder or the heaven He built' is the reply to the words of the unbelievers described in the verse no. 10 in this surah, "They say (now): What! Shall we indeed be returned to (our) former state."

Verse no. 27 is in fact a logical reply to the non-believers' remark in verse no. 10: 'What! Shall we indeed be returned to (our) former state'. They are asked to have a simple comparison between the creation of a microcosm human being and a macrocosm the sky with numerous galaxies with so many facilities and then get convinced that Allah is the Creator and this develops a sense of gratitude. This short verse is a first of a long discourse or message of Allah to the unbelievers. It can be lucidly explained in the following words:

"You think that your resurrection after death is something extremely improbable and you express wonder saying: 'How is it possible that when our very bones will have decayed and become rotten, the scattered particles of our bodies will be re-assembled and made living once again?' But have you ever also considered whether the great universe is harder to create or your own re-creation in this form in which you were created in the first instance. The God Who created you in the first instance cannot be powerless to create you once again."

The Qur'an is full of this kind of statements at different places. Following are two references:

"Has He Who created the heavens and the earth no power to create their like? That He surely has. He is the all-Knowing Creator."

(Ya Sin, 36:81,82)

The Arabic word *al-Sama'*, used for the heaven, in many other places in the Qur'an is a metonym for 'cosmic system.'

"Surely the creation of heaven and earth is greater than the creation of man; yet most men do not understand (what this implies)"

(Ghafir, 40:57)

Hence the Qur'an stresses the fact that man is only a small, insignificant part of the universe. Thus it points out the absurdity of the man-centered world-view by comparing man's insignificance with the vastness and complexity of the whole God-created universe.

Allah divides the whole existence into two categories –*al-Sama'*, the Cosmic System and *al-ardz*, the Earth. In verse no. 28, Allah uses two words. First is *rafa'a samkaha* meaning He raised its vault. This means He structured and established the system. The second word is *fasawwaha* meaning He perfected and proportioned it. This means He endowed it with inner coherence and with qualities consistent with the functions, which the system is meant to perform.

“The word *samk* meaning ceiling may refer 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.” (The Enlightenment, p.139)

“Some commentators have the opinion that verse no. 27 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.” (The Enlightenment, p.140)

In verse no. 29, the night and day have been attributed to the heaven, for the night falls when the sun of the heavens sets and the day dawns when it rises. The word *ghatsh* has been used for the night meaning the ‘cover’. It is in the sense that, after the sun has set, the darkness of the night spreads over the earth as though it has covered it from above by a curtain, then the expression *akhraja dzuhaha* means that Allah concealed the darkness and brought out the light in the universe having thus regulated the system of night and day, light and darkness.

Each of these two, light and darkness, play an extraordinarily important role in the life of any living creature whether animal or plant. All the activities and the earnings of human beings depend upon sunlight while the comfort, rest and tranquillity – the recharging of the energy of living beings are attained in the darkness associated with sleep.

This is again to convince mankind that Allah, Who can arrange the phenomena of night and day in such a regulatory manner, shall very easily resurrect human beings. Resurrection is much easier than the creation and maintenance of the whole universal system.

30. ***And, thereafter, He stretched out the Earth.***
31. ***And He brought forth, thereupon, its water and its pasture.***
32. ***And then the mountains, He set them firm.***

Words

Dahaha

It is derived from the infinitive *dahw* meaning to stretch out, to spread out, flatten, level, unroll. *Daha* is the perfect tense verb, singular, third person meaning He stretched out, He extended, He flattened. The suffix *ha* is pronoun referring to the earth.

Mar'aha

The word *mar'a* is derived from the infinitive *ra'y*, *ria'ya* and *mar'an* meaning to graze, to guard, to protect, to take care, Here *mar'a* is noun used for the earth. Hence the specific meaning, here, is grassland, grazing, land, pasture. In the Qur'an, this word is used with deeper meaning. The pronoun *ha* refers to the earth.

The root depicts the protection of the animal but it is also used for human beings. The derivative *mura'at* is used in the sense of protection and arranging of affairs. The familiar proverb: 'Each of you all is a shepherd and responsible' denotes the necessity of people needing to be protected and taken care of by each other.

Arsaha

The word *arsa* is derived from the infinitive *rasw* meaning to be firm, stable, steady, to anchor. *Arsa* is stem form IV past tense, singular, third person meaning He anchored, He set firm, He made stable, He made fast, He fixed firmly. The suffix *ha* is the pronoun referring to mountains.

The word *bada zalika* (after that) in verse no. 30 does not mean that Allah created the earth after creation of the heavens. This style of expression is to draw attention from the first event to the second one, although both may exist together.

In some places within the Qur'an, the creation of the earth has been mentioned first and then the creation of the heavens:

'He created for you all that the earth contains; then, ascending to the sky, fashioned it into seven heavens. He has knowledge of all things.'

(al-Baqarah, 2:26)

In other places, just like this (surah 79, no. 28-30), the creation of the heavens has been mentioned first and then of the earth.

It is not a contradiction but it is according to the required context. Whenever the context requires the prominence of the excellences of the power of Allah, the heavens have been mentioned first and then the earth. But wherever the context requires the appreciation and acknowledgment by the people of the blessings that they benefit by on the earth, the mention of the earth has been made before that of the heavens.

“The objective explanation of the stretching of the earth by Allah is: At first, the surface of the earth was totally covered with water from the prime rainfalls. Its water 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. The expansion process still continues. All this happened and is happening after the simultaneous creation of heavens and the Earth.” (The Enlightenment, p. 140)

The words *akhraja ma’aha* (brought forth its water) in verse no. 31 presents “the idea that there was water stored in the layers of the earth. Then it appeared flowing over the ground in the form of springs and stream and forming the seas and lakes.” (The Enlightenment, p. 141)

The word *mar’a* in verse no. 31 literally meaning pasture connotes here, metonymically, all herbal produce suitable for consumption by man or animal. One example of this usage in the Qur’an is given below:

“*Send Yusuf with us tomorrow that he may freely graze and enjoy sport.*”

(Yusuf, 12:12)

This is the speech of the brothers of Yusuf. Hence the word ‘graze’ (rat) for the child Yusuf has been used with the meaning that he could move about freely in the wilderness plucking and eating fruit.

Verse no. 32 is about the mountain being the bounty of Allah, This is similar to verse no. 7 in the previous surah no. 78. The function of mountains has been explained in detail there. Here another angle is presented.

The earth is subjected to two different phenomena. One is that of disturbance due to continuous storms, gravitational pull, effect of the sun and the moon on the surface of the land, earthquakes etc and the other is of stability carried by the firm range of mountains throughout the earth. This again proves the Wisdom of Allah that how He manages the contradictions and creates balance.

33. (All this) as provision for you and your cattle.

Words

Mata’

It is the derivative of the infinitive *mat’*, *mut’a* meaning to carry away, take away. *Mata’* is a singular noun with the plural *amtia’a* meaning enjoyment, pleasure, delight, gratification, necessities of life, possession, property, goods, commodities, is a word that comprises about all commodities which man makes and employs for his comfort.

Explanation

Allah established and proportioned the cosmic system and set the light and darkness on a regular basis. He created the earth, and brought forth water and plants from it. He established the mountains over the earth to protect it. Thus He provided all the commodities for the comfortable living of human beings. All these are for the use and convenience to the human beings and their cattle. Hence Man should utilise all the blessings given by Allah with gratefulness and obedience to Him.

Provision of enormous bounties and comforts in this world by Allah points out towards the Resurrection and life-after-death from two aspects:

- I Allah, Who has made this vast universe with such wonderful balance, and this earth with such provisions, is powerful and capable of establishing the Resurrection and life-after-death. It is definitely not difficult for Him.
- II The perfect wisdom of Allah, manifested in the universe and the earth, points out that nothing is happening here purposelessly.
 - a) The balance that exists between countless stars and planets and galaxies in the heavens testifies that all this has not happened haphazardly but is a well thought-out plan.
 - b) The regular alternation of night and day is an evidence that this system has been established with supreme wisdom and knowledge for making the earth a home and place of settlement.
 - c) Spreading out the earth as a fit place in which to live, providing water palatable for man and animal in many ways, setting mountains for stability on the earth and creating enormous systems as means of life for both man and animal, all these explicitly declare that these are not chance happenings, or the purposeless works of a care-free person. These are arranged purposefully by the Supreme, Wise Being.

The denial of the accountability and the Hereafter reflects a very serious logical fallacy. The belief in Allah the Creator, the Sustainer and the Master of all that exists accepts the Wisdom and Power of Allah. Allah has also created Man and has delegated him vast powers of appropriation in this world. Allah (swt) has given a free choice of how to carry on his activities in this world. He has guided him about the way of life but left him independent. Now it looks ridiculous and disastrous that man should not be asked to submit his account of thinking and deeds in this world. Hence to believe in Allah and the handing over the management of the world in the hands of human beings by Allah logically demands for the accountability of the reward/punishment based on their deeds after the end of worldly life.

After the signs of the heavens, Allah has drawn the attention towards those of the Earth. The objective is to emphasise upon the Power of Allah and upon His Sustenance provided to human beings. Allah (*swt*) provided the Earth and its bounties – water, food through pastures, and stability through the mountains for the comfortable living of human beings, without difficulty. Then why is it difficult or impossible for Allah to recreate His own creatures, already created once?

Summing up

In this section of the seven verses (nos. 27-33) Allah (*swt*) has drawn the attention of human beings to His Signs of power and sustenance manifest all around the heavens and the Earth. These Signs attest that the Creator of the universe is so Great and Almighty that the most seemingly impossible task is very easy for Him to accomplish. As He created the great and complex Cosmic System, it is not difficult for Him to resurrect human beings after their worldly death and disintegration. Similarly the whole arrangement of His sustenance, in the universe and in the Earth, clearly points out that He shall not leave people unaccounted for. Rather He will definitely one day collect all human beings to account, some with the thankfulness of His benevolence and sustenance: and others for the ingratitude and non-recognition. And then He shall give reward or punishment as the case may be.

Thus, here in this passage Allah has given the reply to the doubts raised by the unbelievers in verses 10-12 of this Surah, and He has also very explicitly explained the wisdom and necessity of the Resurrection after this life.

Section E

34. *“And so, when the severe calamity (of resurrection) befalls.”*
35. *“The Day whereon man will remember what he had striven for.*
36. *“And the blazing fire (of hell) will be laid open to anyone who (is destined) to see it.”*
37. *“Then for the one who rebelled.”*
38. *“And preferred the life of this world,”*
39. *“The blazing fire will truly be his abode.”*
40. *“And for the one who dreaded standing before his Sustainer (for the Judgement) and held back his inner self from base desires,”*
41. *“The paradise will truly be his abode.”*

(Al-Naziat, 79:34-41)

Allah (*swt*), after drawing the attention of human beings to His Signs of power and His Bounties bestowed upon man, is declaring in these eight verses (nos. 34-41) the criterion of Judgement and the destiny of man in the life after death.

34. *“And so, when the severe calamity (of resurrection) befalls.”*
35. *“The Day whereon man will remember what he had striven for.*
36. *“And the blazing fire (of hell) will be laid open to anyone who (is destined) to see it.”*

Words

Altammatul kubra

This is a combination of two words *tammah* and *kubra*, the first being noun followed by the second adjective one.

Tammah is derived from the root *t, m, m* with infinitive *tamm* and *tamum* meaning to the overflow, flood, deluge, engulf. *Tammah* is the derived noun with the plural *tammat* meaning overwhelming event, calamity, disaster.

Kubra is the feminine of *akbar*, both derived from the infinitive *kubran* meaning to be important, great. The noun/adjective *kabeer* means great or old, important. *Akbar* and *kubra* are the masculine and feminine relatives of *kabeer*, used for good and evil alike.

Hence the combination *Altammatul Kubra* means the great overwhelming event or the severe calamity manifested by a great turmoil and commotion.

Yatazakkar

It is derived from the infinitive *zikh, tazkar*, meaning to remember, to bear in mind. *Tazakkara* is the derived stem V with the infinitive *tazakkur* and is the singular third person perfect verb. *Yatazakkar* is the third person singular imperfect verb meaning he remembers, he bears in mind, he ponders over. Here the noun of the verb *yatazakkar* is *insan*, the human being, man.

Ma sa'a

The word *sa'a* is derived from the infinitive *sa'y* meaning to move quickly, to heat, to proceed, to strive, to work, endeavour, attempt, to make an effort, to get or achieve. The word *ma* means whatever. *Sa'a* is singular third person perfect verb.

The combination *ma sa'a* means whatever he (the human being) has strived for, achieved or has performed activities.

Burrezat

The word is derived from the infinitive *baruz* meaning to come out, to appear, to show, to emerge. *Burrezat* is the feminine *passive* third person perfect verb of stem II with the infinitive *tabreez*. Its noun is *jahim* (the blazing fire). It means it will be brought out, exposed, laid upon, manifested.

Jahim

Jahim is itself a four letter word, not derived from any infinitive. Its root is *j, h, y, m*. It is used both as masculine and feminine, but mostly feminine. Its meaning is blazing fire, huge fire with intense heat. It is referred to hell and hence it is hellfire.

Explanation

The great overwhelming event or the severe calamity is used for the Day of Resurrection. The word 'severe' or 'great indicates that a great concern and worry should be associated with the thinking of the Resurrection. It should be taken seriously.

The verse 35 and 36 draws the picture of the events which will happen. On the Day of Resurrection, the Day of Accountability, man will, himself, meet and see this Day about which he was informed before in this world. Then he will start remembering each one of his misdeeds done in the world, even

before his records are handed over to him. Some persons experience it in this world. Suddenly, meeting a dangerous accident, when death seems inevitable, the life-time activities flash across the mind all at once just like a movie on the screen.

But alas! The remembrance of the misdeeds performed in this world will not help a person on the Day of Resurrection, on the Day of Judgement.

If one wishes to return to this world to recompense the past, his request will be refused.

If one repents and begs pardon of his evil deeds, it will be useless, being too late.

Then the wrongdoer will be desperate.

“On the day when the wrongdoer will bite his hands (in despair. He will say: ‘Oh, would that I had taken a straight path with the apostle! Oh, woe is me! Would that I had never taken such a one for a friend!’”

(al-Furqan, 25:27, 28)

The word *yatazakkaru* is used for the present and the future and hence it shows the continuity of the remembrance. This means that on that Day, Man will continually remember all his deeds because the whole system will be changed. Every portion of the human body will start speaking about the deeds performed.

Verse 36 states that the hell will be shown to the rejectors of Faith. Let us understand this.

As depicted in the Qur’an, hell exists at the present time but in this worldly life it is hidden from the sights of human beings. On the Day of Judgement, all the secrets of life will be disclosed and the answers of many questions not clear at the moment will be made clear to human beings.

Hell will be shown to those who are to deal with it due to their wrong-doing in this world. The sight of hell is itself a very painful event. The persons, who believed in Allah and the existence of Hell and thus made all efforts to be away from wrong-doing because of the fear of Hell, will be kept away and will not have its glimpse.

37. ***“Then for the one who rebelled.”***
38. ***“And preferred the life of this world,”***
39. ***“The blazing fire will truly be his abode.”***

The three verses nos. 37-39 describe the main sins of the wrongdoers and disbelievers and their punishment for these in the Hereafter in a very precise and transparent manner. The main sins are rebel and preference of worldly life and the punishment is the fire of the Hell.

Words

Tagha

It is derived from the infinitive *taghan* or *kughyan* meaning to exceed proper bounds. Overstep the bounds, be excessive, to be rough, tumultuous, to flood. For a person it means to be cruel, to tyrannize, oppress or terrorise.

Tagha is singular masculine third person past perfect. It means he crossed the limits in *tughyan* (rebellion). His rebellion exceeded the bounds.

Qur'an uses the *taghoot*, noun from the same infinitive, for every kind of transgressor who worshipped ones (other than God). It is used both singular and plural.

Athara

It is derived from the infinitive *athara* meaning to transmit, to pass along, to report, to relate. The word *athara* is singular masculine third person perfect IV stem verb. It means: he preferred, he chose, he adored, he became much affected, he emulated, he appropriated, he manipulated. The noun *athir* means favoured, preferred, selected, love and affection.

Alhayat al-dunya

This combination consists of two nouns or one noun and one adjective (the second noun qualifies the first).

Alhayat is the noun derived from the root *h,y,w* or *h,y,y* and the infinitive *hayah* means to live, to see, to live through a time. *Hayah* or *hayat* is singular run with the plural *hayawat* meaning liveliness, animation.

Al-dunya or *dunya* is the noun derived from the root *d, n, y d, n, w* and infinitive *dunuw* or *danawa* meaning to be near, to be close, to be imminent (time event). *Adna* (masc.) and *dunya* (feminine) is a noun meaning lower, inferior, of less significance. *Dunya* is used for this world as opposed to *aakhirah*. The life in this world is called *al-hayat al-dunya*.

Ma'wa

It is derived from the root *a, w, y* meaning to seek refuge, to seek shelter, to put up, to lodge, to accommodate. *Ma'a* is the noun of place derived from IV stem perfect verb third person singular *a'wa*

meaning he sought shelter. Hence *ma'wa* means place of refuge, retreat, shelter, abode, dwelling, habitation.

Explanation

The key word used in Arabic for the first sin of the wrongdoers is *tagha*. This word mainly shows the bad mentality of pride and self-conceit. Taking oneself as the master and most powerful one makes a person transgressor and cruel and hence undermining and disbelief in Allah. Thus *tagha* comprises disbelief in Allah, self-conceit and transgression.

In verse no. 17 of this surah no. 79, the *tughyan* (rebellion) of Firaun is mentioned. Here the next sentence (verse no. 38) manifests the outcome of rebellion and transgression. The first and everlasting effect of the self-conceit and transgression is excessive involvement in the lust ;and cardinal desires to be fulfilled in this world at any cost.

These two verses in combination disclose the reality that the one who, ignoring the Day of Resurrection and the Hereafter, become fully engrossed in this world, is the one indulged in tyranny and transgression. Transgression and excessive involvement in worldly life are complimentary to each other. Both are the cause as well as the effect.

The third sentence (verse no. 39) declares the destiny, the ultimate end of this category of people. The word *fa-inna* (and so) expresses the emphasis of the outcome. Hence for them is the blazing fire of the Hell. There is no other alternative for them.

40. ***“And for the one who dreaded standing before his Sustainer (for the Judgement) and held back his inner self from base desires,”***
41. ***“The paradise will truly be his abode.”***

In these two sentences Allah (*swt*) characterises the second category of the human being. The characteristics of the believers and their destiny are vividly expressed.

Words

Khafa

It is derived from the infinitive *khifa* meaning to be frightened, scared, to be afraid. *Khafa* is 3rd person singular masculine perfect verb meaning he became frightened, he feared, he became apprehensive.

Raghib in Mufriyat says: ‘*Khauf* (fear) of Allah does not mean the fear because of being destroyed immediately. It is not like the fear of a lion but it is the constraint – that is, inner constraint from sins

and evils, and the adoption of surrender to Allah swt. Hence it is said: ‘The one who does not abandon his evils does not fear Allah.’

Maqama Rabbihi

This is a combination of two words *maqam* and *rabihi*.

Maqam is derived from the infinitive *qiyaman* or *qaumatan* meaning to get up, to stand up, to stand erect, to rise. *Maqam* is the noun of place and time, meaning also standing, position, rank.

Rabihi means his Sustainer, his Lord. *Rab* is Allah Who provides sustenance and takes care of everyone.

Hence the combination *maqama rabihi* means the presence of his Sustainer on the Day of Resurrection or Judgement.

Naha

It is derived from the infinitive *nahw* and *naha* meaning to forbid. *Naha* is third person masculine singular perfect verb meaning He prohibited, he restrained. Generally it is used with the proposition ‘*au* (from) some thing. Then it means he restrained, held back, kept away.

Nafs

Nafs is singular feminine noun with plural *nufus*, *anfus* meaning soul, psyche, spirit, mind, living creature, human being, person, individual (masculine).

The word *nafs* and its plural forms *nufus* and *anfus* are used to denote the reflective meaning. Thus *anfusuhum*, *nafsuhu* mean himself, themselves, itself.

Hawa

It is derived from the infinitive *hawan* and perfect verb *hawiya* meaning he loved, he desired.

Hence the noun *hawa* with plural *hawaya* means love, affection, passion, desire, longing, craving, pleasure.

Thus the three words in combined form *nahan-nafsa ‘anil hawa* meaning he refrained himself from the base desires.

Explanation

The literal meaning of the word *maqama rabihi* is ‘his Lord’s presence’. This word ‘*maqam*’ is used at other places in the Qur’an:

“And most certainly shall We cause you (the believers) to dwell on earth (long) after they (the evildoers) have passed away: this is (My promise) unto all who stand in awe of My presence, and stand in awe of My warning.”

(Ibrahim, 14:14)

This verse points to the idea that the stress is not actually on the physical standing on the Day of Judgement but on the realisation, apprehension and comprehension of the accounting of the deeds and the reward and punishment of them.

After describing the characteristics and the destiny of the category of the disbelievers, Allah is describing the two characteristics of the believers in verse no. 40. The first characteristic is the realisation, fear, or full comprehension of the ‘Presence of his Sustainer’. Following are different interpretations of ‘the Lord’s presence’ as given in different commentaries.

1. Ameen Ahsan Islahi in his commentary ‘tadabur-e-Qur’an’ considers Lord’s Presence as the presentation of the humanity before Allah (swt) on the Day of Judgement for every individual’s accounting culminating towards reward or punishment. So first condition for a person to go to paradise to have the full belief and consciousness about the accounting before Allah (swt) for all worldly thinking and actions. He quotes the following verses of the Qur’an to support this idea:

“Do they not think that that they will be called to account? On a Mighty Day – A day when (all) mankind will stand before the Lord of all the Worlds.”

(al-Mutaffifin, 83:4-6)

This fear is the main substance that prohibits and checks as human being to surrender to the mundane and illicit desires.

2. Maudoodi in ‘Tahfim-ul-Qur’an’ also writes: ‘As for him who had feared to stand before the Lord.’ He interprets that the very happening of the Day of accountability would remind every man his misdeeds done in this world. The very fear of the presentation before the lord on the Day of Accounting makes one very afraid and stops to do any wrong deed.
3. Tabatabai in his commentary ‘Al-Meezan’ considers the word *Maqam* as the total personality of Allah, the Rabb – the attributes, the characteristics, the performances of Allah (swt) all combined. The very characteristic of *raboobiah* encompasses His various attributes of knowledge, absolute power, coercion, control, mercy and others suitable for Him.
4. The scholars in their ‘An Enlightening Commentary into the Light of the Holy Qur’an’ point to ‘Allah’s knowledge and His protection’ for all human beings.

‘Is, then, He who has every living being in His Almighty care (dealing with each) according to what he/she has acquired (according to his or her moral deserts) like anybody else that exists?’

(Ra’d, 13:33)

There is not much contradiction in the above interpretations but the one pertaining to the fear about the accountability in the presence of Allah on the Day of Judgement seems more appropriate here in this verse.

Man’s happiness as a permanent abode in Paradise, in the next life is tied with an attitude and a behaviour.

1. The attitude is of *khauf* (fear) about the accountability of all his thinkings and actions that he has performed or is going to carry on in future in this life.
2. The behaviour, as the outcome of fear is *nahi* (restrain) against his involvement towards the fulfilment of cardinal low desires.
3. On the other hand man’s adversity as a permanent abode in Hell, is associated with another attitude and another behaviour quite contrary to the above ones.
4. The attitude is *tuglyan* (rebel) against the Creator and Sustainer Allah because of self-conceit and arrogance.
5. The behaviour, as the outcome of rebel is *athera* (deep indulgence) in the worldly affairs of transgression, corruption and high-handedness.

Summing Up

In this section of eight verses (no. 34-41), the criterion of the final judgement in the Hereafter is precisely described.

One category of conduct of life in this world is that Man, transgressing all bounds of service, rebels against Allah and makes up his mind to seek only the benefits and pleasures of this world in whatever way these may be sought and achieved.

Another category of the conduct in the world is that Man, constantly keeping in view the reality of standing before his Sustainer on the Day of Judgement, refrains from fulfilling the evil desires of the self. He fears that if he has earned an unlawful benefit or enjoyed an evil pleasure, he will be punished in the eternal life after death.

The criterion of the judgement in the Hereafter is its compatibility with the two kinds of conduct adopted. If one has adopted the first kind, his permanent abode would be hell. And if he has adopted the second kind of conduct, his permanent abode will be paradise.

Though, these two are clearly distinct groups with two entirely different dealings in the Hereafter, there are quite a large number of human beings which fit into a third group. The believers may indulge themselves in minor sins because of human weakness. Allah has ordered them for repentance so that they join the group of blessed ones. Without repentance and forgiveness they may for some time remain in Hell. Such people, therefore, should be concerned and hence should try their best by having continuous realisation of the availability of forgiveness and ask *istighfar* for their sins however minor these may be. The present-day society-oriented carefree Muslims may fall under this category and hence an appeal is hereby made to all members of the community to have a constant practice of sincere *istighfar*.

Section F

42. *“They (the Makkan pagans) question you (O Prophet!) about the Hours: ‘When will its arrival be.’”*
43. *“By no reason art thou (concerned) with the declaration thereof.”*
44. *“Unto thy Sustainer is its utmost limit (fixed) thereof.”*
45. *“You are but a warner to him who fear it (the Judgement Day).”*
46. *“On that day when they behold it, it will be as if they had not tarried save a single evening or the morning following it.”*

(Al-Naziat, 79:42-46)

After giving the criterion of the Judgement on the Day of Resurrection about the destiny of the righteous and the wrongdoers in the previous passage, the focus, in this passage (verse nos. 42-46), is diverted towards the mockery by the disbelievers of Makkah implicit in a simple question. Answering this question, Allah addresses the Prophet (pbuh) and directs him as to his role.

This is the concluding passage of this surah. In this, consolation is given to the Prophet (pbuh): ‘You should not bother about their mockery in the form of question posed just to harass you. Your mission is to inform people about the Resurrection. The wise persons will accept your warning. For those who insist to see the Day of Resurrection for having a belief in it or who are bent upon knowing its exact time and date, you are not responsible to convince them. These are only the covers that they pretend for the rejection or disbelief.

42. *“They (the Makkan pagans) question you (O Prophet!) about the Hours: ‘When will its arrival be.’”*

Words

Al-Sa’ah

Root letters are *sa, wa, ‘ain* and the root word is *sa’a* meaning time. *Al-Sa’ah*, the time is mainly used as the Hour of Resurrection but the common word *sa’ah* (without *al*) means, now, at present, at the moment, instantly, a single moment. In the Qur’an the word *Al-Sa’ah* is used forty times solely as the Hour of Resurrection, and the common word *sa’ah* is used eight times meaning a moment or an impulse of time.

Mursaha

Root letters are *ra-sa-wa* and the infinitive is *raswan* or *rusuwan* meaning to be firm, to stabilise, to fix. *Arsa* is the perfect 3rd person masculine singular of the IV stem form, meaning he established firmly.

The noun of place derived from *Arsa* is *Mursa* has two meanings — anchorage and arrival. It is generally used for voyage and water transport – boats, ferry or ship. In the Qur'an it is used as anchorage:

“In the name of Allah be its course and its anchorage.”

(Yusuf, 11:14)

Here in verse 42 of this surah 79 it is used as landing or arrival.

“They question thee of the Hour of the Resurrection, when will its arrival be?”

(Al-Naziat, 79:42)

The pronoun suffix of *Mursaha* points towards *Al-Sa'ah* the event of the Resurrection.

Explanation

As show in the English translation of this verse the word '*aiyyana*' is used for questioning the timing of the Resurrection in the future, and not the place of Resurrection. Hence the word 'when' and not 'where' is used as its translation.

This simple question of the disbelievers is basically a satire. To make it a mockery they are taking the Resurrection as a ship laden with some good things to be received when the ship lands. So the inhabitants are impatiently waiting for the Resurrection as a very beneficial expectation. In the Qur'an they ask this question over and over again. (31:34), (33:63), (34:3, 29-30), (36:40), (49:18).

Iman Raghīb Isfahani in *Mufrīdat (Qur'anic Lexicon)* interprets the questioning about the time of the occurrence of the Resurrection, as the proof of its occurrence to end the quarrel of human beings.

They did not ask the question for actually obtaining knowledge about the time and place of the Resurrection. In fact, for them the Resurrection was impossible and unreasonable. They asked this question to have an excuse for denying it. They mean to ask the following questions:

“When will this strange Resurrection and gathering together materialise?”

“For what has it been delayed?”

“Why don't you bring it forward to occur now so that we are assured of it?”

So their mentality is exposed and hence there is no need to convince them. They have already decided to disbelieve because of their lusts and mundane desires. So Allah directs the Prophet in the next verse as to what should be his answer to them about the issue.

43. ***“By no reason art thou (concerned) with the declaration thereof.”***

44. ***“Unto thy Sustainer is its utmost limit (fixed) thereof.”***

Words

Zikraha

Its infinitive is *zika*, *tazkar* meaning to remember, to think, to recall, to speak, to talk about, to state. The word *zika* is noun and *zikraha* is the *zika* of Resurrection. Here it means any remark or statement as an answer to the question asked by the disbelievers.

Fi ma anta

It is a phrase having the literal meaning: ‘Who are you? In present way of talking in English it means: It is not your concern. You have nothing to do with it.

Muntahaha

The root letters are *na-ha-wa* and *na-ha-ya* with infinitive *naha* and *nahan* meaning to forbid doing something, to prohibit, to hold back, also meaning to reach, to get news, to come to someone’s knowledge.

The word *muntaha* is derived from the VIII stem form *intaha* meaning to be concluded, terminated, done with, come to an end, to end up, to wind up, to conclude, to get ultimately. *Muntaha* is the action-noun meaning a task or a knowledge or an information finished, terminated, to utmost, extreme, the utmost limit. In the word *muntahaha*, the suffix pronoun is referred to the Resurrection rests with thy Sustainer alone.

Explanation

Allah Almighty continues his address with the Prophet (pbuh). Allah states the fact about the information of the Hour of Resurrection asked by the disbelievers. In verse 43, Allah declares that the date of the occurrence of the Hereafter is not revealed and is kept secret from the Prophet as well. This is knowledge that is hidden. It belongs exclusively to Allah and it is out of reach for all.

Let us understand the futility of the knowledge about the exact timing of the Day of Resurrection before the death of individual human beings. It has been observed by man, since his existence in this planet, that sooner or later he has to die and leave this world. Now the question arises would it have

been better that exact day and time of one's death have been found out with 100 percent assurance. The wisdom directs that, for him, active endeavour and participation would occur only when the time of death is not known. If the assured time is near, frustration will take place, and the person shall be disheartened and thus minimise or leave his activities. If the assured time is far, man again will become slack that he has ample time hence what is to worry.

Thus suspense or not knowing about one's duration in this world keeps one hopeful to be active upto the last moment. Exactly the same idea can be applied to the Day of Resurrection . Allah has kept it secret till its occurrence. Man is afraid and tries his best to stay away from evil. The belief in the Day of Resurrection depends mostly on one's own frame of mind and on the understanding of and belief upon the Signs of God mentioned in the Qur'an and Sunnah.

Hence in this verse 43, the Prophet has been advised that question posed by the disbelievers was irrelevant to him. It was not incumbent upon him to express any opinion about the time of occurrence of the Resurrection, not even to speculate or guess about its timing. Therefore very strong words are used: 'The matter is not of any concern to you'. When you are not informed about it, how can you describe or make any statement about the Resurrection.

Verse 44 explains verse 43 by clearly disclosing the nature of the knowledge about the timing of the Resurrection. Allah, in this verse, declares:

"You don't know about the timing because the beginning and the end of all that can be known about it rests only with Allah, the Almighty and He has decided not to disclose it to mankind."

In verse 187 of Surah al-A'raf (no. 6) Allah gives the same information more explicitly,

"They ask thee (O Prophet) about the Hour of Resurrection: 'When will it come to pass?'

Say: 'Verily, knowledge thereof rests with my Sustainer alone. None but He will reveal it in its time. Heavily will it weigh on the heavens and the earth; (and) it will not fall upon you (people) otherwise that of a sudden.'

They ask thee – as if thou couldst gain insight into this (mystery) by dint of persistent enquiry!

Say: 'Knowledge thereof, rests with Allah alone; but (of this) most people are unaware.'

(Al-A'raf, 7:187)

Thus this above verse makes clear that no amount of enquiry or speculation can reveal to man – the prophets included – the coming of the Hour of Resurrection before its actual manifestation.

It is only He Who knows the Hour. No man knows the mystery and no effort or endeavour is useful for finding the answer. Allah is the Wise and All-Knowing. He is the One and hence no other is to share

with Him in the knowledge and control of the existence. Even the angels and the Prophets have not been informed about the actual occurrence of the Day of resurrection. Since in fact the Prophet does not have the knowledge, how can he, on his own, speculate and give wrong statement before others.

45. “You are but a warner to him who fear it (the Judgement Day).”

Words

Munzir

The root letters are *na-za-ra* and the infinitive (verbal noun) is *nazr* or *nazur* meaning to dedicate, to make a vow, to have been warned, to be on one’s guard. The IV stem form is *anzara* with the verbal noun *inzar* meaning warning, announcement, notice, admonition, alarm.

Munzir is the active participle of *anzara* or *inzar*. *Munzir* is the person who performs the action of *inzar* a warner, a cautioner.

Yakhshaha

The root letters are *kh-sh-ya* and the infinitive is *khashyan* and *khashiyatan* meaning to fear, to be afraid.

Yakhshaha has the suffix pronoun referring to the Resurrection. It means the one who fears it, who is afraid of the consequences.

Explanation

Allah (*swt*) directs the Prophet (pbuh): Your duty is only to warn the people and you are not responsible to tell them the time of the final Hour. You don’t have the responsibility for those people who insist on believing in the Resurrection only after seeing it with their own eyes. Leave them in their own ignorance. Your warning shall be effective only upon the ones who are willing to accept and have the fear of the Resurrection in this life by using their intellect and reasoning upon the phenomena of the universe and human beings.

Here very explicitly the Prophet has been consoled that your warning is not going to be effective and it will not work upon every human being. Hence if you see that persons do not take your warning seriously you must not be disheartened.

The criterion for the acceptance of the warning is the quality of *khashiyah* (fear) developed in a human being. But this *khashiyah* doesn’t come suddenly. It requires some prerequisites. Firstly a person should be serious and responsible enough to use his power of observation and thinking faculty to see the Signs of God, and then think about it. Qur’an emphasizes that the knowledge about the divine

scheme should be attained through inductive logic and spiritual enlightenment and not merely by the material senses of and observations by human beings.

Thus the second criterion is to have the belief in the Unseen – Allah, the angels, the past prophets, the Day of Resurrection, Hell and Paradise as the abode in the life after death.

Seriousness in life and beliefs in the unseen then develop *khashiyah* and for persons having *khashiyah*, the warnings and tidings by the Prophet (pbuh) are meaningful and effective.

46. ***“On that day when they behold it, it will be as if they had not tarried save a single evening or the morning following it.”***

Words

Ka-anna-hum

This word is a combination of three words. Basically the first two words *ka* and *anna* give the meaning ‘as if’. It is used for similarity between the actual happening and the understanding or feeling about it afterwards. This combination *ka-anna* is used to explain some difficult phenomenon or event by providing similarity or an example.

The last word *hum* is the suffix with *ka-annahu*. It is a pronoun in place of a noun used beforehand in this context. *Hum* means they. Here *hum* refers to the persons being presented on the Day of Resurrection in the life after death.

Lam Yalbathu illa

Yalbathu is third person masculine plural imperfect verb of stem form I. It is derived from the infinitive *labth* and *lubath*, having root letters *la-ba-tha*, meaning to tarry, to linger, to remain, to stay in a place, to keep doing.

Lam is the stronger particle, more so than *la* or *ma* meaning not. It always precedes an imperfect tense to denote the negative meaning of a perfect (past) tense when speaking of past events. To give most emphasis the word *illa* is used. The combination of *lam* and *illa* is sometimes replaced with the particle *lamma* meaning the same emphasis.

Thus *lam...illa* the two negatives, when combined, give the meaning of the certainty of the positive aspect of the information given with this combination.

Hence the meaning of this phrase is: ‘As if they had not tarried except...’ meaning as if ‘they definitely tarried...’.

Ashiyatan wa zduhaha

The root letters are 'an-sh-wa having the infinitive (verbal noun) 'shan meaning to be weak-sighted, to blind himself. The noun al-'isha means nightfall and is also used for the night prayer before sleep. The word al-'shiyu, 'ashiyyan or 'ashiyyatan is used for an evening.

Dzuha is derived from the root letters Dz-ha-wa/ya having the infinitive dzahw and dzuhuw meaning to become visible, appear, to be struck by the sun's rays. Dzuha is the noun meaning the noon. The phrase 'baina 'ashiyatin wa-dzuhaha' means from evening to the next morning, from one day to the next or overnight.

Explanation

This verse, as in other verses of the Qur'an, is a subtle indication of the relative and imaginary, earthbound nature of man's concept of 'time' – a concept which, as informed by Allah, will lose all its meaning in the context of the ultimate reality comprised in the term 'hereafter' (al-akhirah).

“On a Day when He will call you, and you will answer by praising Him, thinking all the while that you have tarried (on earth) but a little while.”

(al-Isra, 17:52)

As Tabari and Zamakhshari explained, man's life on earth will appear to him 'but as a little while' in comparison with the unlimited duration of the life in the Hereafter.

Moreover, man's conception of 'time' is earthbound and, hence, has no meaning in the context of ultimate reality.

The reference to the erstwhile deniers of the possibility of Resurrection as 'answering the call of Allah by praising Him' in this verse implies that as soon as they are resurrected, they will become fully aware of His Existence and Might.

“And on the Day when He shall gather them (unto Himself, it will seem to them) as if they had not tarried (on earth) longer than an hour of a day, knowing one another.”

(Yunus, 10:45)

Their past dwelling in this world, during which they were bound to one another by various ties of human relationship, will appear to them like a short moment when compared with the timeless duration of the life that awaits them after Resurrection, with all their past relationship cut asunder.

“On the Day when the trumpet is blown: for on that Day We will assemble all such as has been lost in sin, their eyes dimmed (by terror), whispering unto one another, ‘You have spent but ten (days on earth)...’ (But) We know best what they will be saying when the most perception of them shall say, ‘You have spent (there) but one clay!’ “

These verses touch upon the illusory character of man's consciousness of 'time' and, thus, upon the relativity of the concept of 'time', as such. According to Razi, the number 'ten' is often used in Arabic to denote 'a few'.

“And when the Last Hour dawns, those who had been lost in sin will swear that they had not tarried (on earth) longer than an hour: thus they went on turning away (from the truth all their lives).”

(al-Rum, 30:55)

Here also, just like other verses in the Qur'an, the illusory character of man's earthbound concept of time is expressed.

Stress is laid, firstly, on the relativity of this concept – on the infinitesimal shortness of our life on earth as compared with the timeless duration of life in the Hereafter.

And, secondly, on the resurrected sinners' self-deluding excuse that their life on earth had been too short to allow them to realise their errors and mend their ways. The Qur'an uses the word *yufakun* the passive form of the I stem verb *afaka* meaning 'they were turned away from their opinion (or from their judgement). This second aspect of the problem shows their perversion or delusion.

“(And) He will ask (the doomed): ‘What number of years have you spent on earth?’”

They will answer: ‘We have spent there a day, or part of a day; but ask these who (are able to) count (time)...’

(Whereupon) He will say: ‘You have spent there but a short while: had you but known (how short it was to be)! Did you, then, think that We created you in mere idle play, and that you would not be brought back to Us (for judgement).’ ”

(Al-Muminun, 23:112-114)

This allegorical dialogue between Allah and the doomed sinners touches upon the illusory, problematical character of 'time' as conceived by man, and the complete irrelevancy of the life of this world within the context of the ultimate – perhaps timeless – reality known only to Allah. This disappearance, upon resurrection, of man's earth-bound concept of time is indicated by the helpless answer, 'ask those who are able to count time.'

Even if the earth-bound concept of time is considered, it gives the comparative durations of man's different phases of life. Man's life in this world is an iota in comparison to the life of the Universe. This man has realised. Men die at different times and continue dying. As the Day of Resurrection is

fixed, there shall be a gap between the day of death and the Day of Resurrection for all the human beings except those who die on the Day of resurrection itself. This waiting period is the intermediate phase of human life called *barzakh* in Arabic. It is also very short, much shorter than the life of the whole universe. Thus all human creations, when raised on the Day of Judgement shall feel that a very short time has elapsed after the worldly death. In spite of their difference in the speculation of the time, the short duration of life in this world as compared to the life in the Hereafter, will be felt by all humans.

This, of course, is the matter that should shake Man and awaken him from the sleep of negligence.

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