

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the Name of Allah, The Beneficent, The Merciful

12th Taraweeh, Ramadan 1447 Hijri

Summary of Verses 16:90-18:74

Sura Nahl (Bee) (Verses 16:90-128)

Without Divine Guidance, we will all be lost. With Divine Guidance, we will find the Straight Path. There are actions we must take and actions we must avoid. Both, doing good and avoiding bad, are crucial for our physical and spiritual well-being. Justice, good deeds, and compassion should become natural to us, while indecency, intolerance, arrogance, anger, ostentation, and blaming kismet should become contrary to our nature. This is what Ihsan means - excellence in everything we do. Verse (16:90) is known as *Ayat al-Ihsan* and highlights six principles: three advocate justice, kindness, and charity and compassion toward relatives, while the other three prohibit immorality, bad conduct, and oppression. *"Allah commands justice, good deeds, compassion toward kith and kin, keeping away from shameful deeds and exercising restraint. He instructs you so that you may receive admonition."* (16:90)

(Ihsan Implies good manners and morals. According to the Quran, these do's and don'ts define good manners: Do not advise or exhort others to good conduct while not practicing it yourself (2:44). Do not cancel your charity through reminders of your generosity (2:264). Spend in charity, whether in prosperity or adversity. Restrain anger and forgive (3:134). Be lenient toward those under your authority and consult with them when making decisions (3:159). Do not wrongfully devour one another's possessions; instead, allow trade and transactions based on mutual goodwill (4:29).

Return a courteous greeting with an even more courteous one (4:86). Do not call someone a disbeliever (4:94). Strive to make peace between husband and wife (4:128). Be just, even if it means standing against yourself or your loved ones (4:135). Do not sit with those who mock religion unless they change the subject (4:140). Do not let others' hatred toward you lead to injustice on your part (5:8). Keep your promises (5:89). Do not ask unnecessary questions or questions beyond your knowledge (5:101). Do not insult others' false gods (6:108). Do not approach the property of orphans except to improve it (6:152). If the enemy seeks peace, you should seek peace as well (8:61). Honor your treaties with the agreed-upon terms (9:4). Do not undermine the contributions of others (9:79). Preach politely and eloquently, without stridency or arrogance (16:125). Be proportionate in your retaliation if necessary (16:126). Always be kind to your parents (17:23). Do not be extravagant (17:26). If you cannot materially help the needy, speak kindly to them (17:28). Speak gently, even to leaders of disbelief (20:44). Feed the poor (22:36). Avoid vain and boastful talk (23:3). Keep trusts and promises (23:8). Do not accuse others of immorality without proof (24:4). Think well of others (24:12). Do not gossip or spread gossip (24:15). Do not slander (24:16). Forgive others as you would want Allah to forgive you (24:22). Those who can should spend on the less fortunate (24:22). Do not enter others' homes without permission and leave quietly if refused entry (24:27-28). Walk humbly and speak kindly even to those who annoy or provoke you (25:63). Neither be miserly nor extravagant but remain balanced (25:67). Do not boast or exult in your wealth (28:76). Do not turn away from people in arrogance (31:18). Be moderate in your pace and lower your voice (31:19). Respond to evil with good, which can turn enemies into friends (41:34). Verify information before acting on it (49:6). Make peace between fighting groups with justice and fairness (49:9). Do not insult, defame, or mock others—avoid sarcasm or

calling each other offensive names. Do not make fun of others (49:11). Do not backbite; it is a serious sin. Avoid suspicion of others (49:12). Make space for others at gatherings (58:11). Seek only Allah's pleasure without expecting praise or reward from those who might benefit from your charity or good work (76:9). Do not ignore the humble and vulnerable when in the company of the wealthy and powerful (80:10).

In His infinite mercy, Allah promises believers rewards according to the best of their actions. He repeats this most generous promise in successive verses: *"What is with you must vanish: what is with Allah will endure. And We will certainly bestow, on those who patiently persevere, their reward according to the best of their actions. Whoever works righteousness, man or woman, and has faith, surely to him We will give a new life, a life that is good and pure and We will bestow on such their reward according to the best of their actions."* (16:96-97)

Reciting verses of the Quran is a noble act that requires a particular mindset and etiquette: *"When you read the Quran, seek Allah's protection from shaitan, the rejected one. No authority has he over those who believe and put their trust in their Lord. His (shaitan's) authority is only over those who take him as patron and who join partners with Allah."* (16:98-100) In other words, before reciting any verse of the Quran, we should say *"Auzu Billahi Minash Shaitanir Rajeem."* (I seek refuge with Allah from shaitan, the cursed.)

Yet, as flawed and fallible human beings, we may sometimes succumb to shaitan's temptations due to ignorance. *"Those who do wrong in ignorance but who thereafter repent and make amends, Your Lord, after all this, forgives often and is most merciful."* (16:119)

Prophet Ibrahim's (AS) example is held up as a model: *"Ibrahim was indeed exemplary, devoutly obedient to Allah and true in faith, and he joined not gods with Allah. He showed his gratitude for the favors of Allah, who chose him and guided him to a Straight Way. And We gave him good in this world, and in the Hereafter, he will be in the ranks of the righteous. So We have taught you the inspired message, 'Follow the ways of Ibrahim, the True in Faith, and he joined not gods with Allah.'" (16:120-123)*

Religious preaching (*dawa*) cannot be strident: *"Invite all to the way of your Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious. Indeed, your Lord is most knowing of who has strayed from His way, and He is most knowing of who is rightly guided."* (16:125)

Aggressive or manipulative preaching is worse than not preaching. Islam advocates for the middle way, which is also the most persuasive and eloquent approach. Zealots have no place in Islam.

This leads naturally to the question of who is favored by Allah. The Quranic answer: *"Indeed, Allah is with those who restrain themselves by shunning evil, and those who do good."* (16:128)

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(Sura Isra is a Makki Sura)

Sura Isra (The Night Journey) (Verses 17:1-111)

The Sura opens with the Prophet's (s.a.w) mystical experience of "the Night Journey" (*al-Isra*) to Jerusalem and the subsequent "Ascension" (*Mi'raj*) to heaven. *"Glory to Allah Who did take His servant for a journey by night from the sacred mosque to the farthest mosque, whose precincts We did bless so that We might show him some of Our Signs: for He is the One Who hears*

and sees all things.” (17:1)

(Mi'raj is also mentioned in Sura Najm (53:1-18))

Sometimes we desire the bad and reject the good due to a lack of patience. *“Man prays for evil as fervently as he prays for good, for man is given to haste.” (17:11)* The wise among us possess patience. They do not elevate their desires above Allah's commands. They accept Allah's blessings with gratitude and face setbacks with patience, praying for guidance in their hopes and needs. Conversely, haste or impatience not only leads to poor decisions but also fuels cravings for the immoral and vulgar.

(Note that verses 17:23-39 can be read as explanations of Allah's commands and prohibitions, as outlined in Sura Anam, verses 6:151-153).

In worshiping Allah, we must not associate partners with Him, for shirk is the gravest sin. Kindness toward parents comes after worshiping our One Sustainer. *“Your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him and that you be kind to parents. Whether one or both attain old age in your life, say not to them a word of contempt, nor repel them, but address them in terms of honor. And, out of kindness, lower to them the wing of humility, and say: ‘My Lord! Bestow on them Your Mercy like the way they cherished me in childhood.’ Your Lord knows best what is in your hearts. If you do deeds of righteousness, surely He is Most Forgiving to those who turn to Him in repentance again and again.” (17:23-24)*

Kindness toward people and fair dealings in commerce can help believers attain a high status in the Hereafter. *“And render to the kindred their due rights, as also to those in want and to the wayfarer. But squander not your wealth in the manner of a spendthrift. Surely wasters are companions of the shaitan, and the shaitan is to his Lord most ungrateful. And even if you have*

to turn away from them in seeking mercy that you expect from your Lord, yet speak to them a word of kindness.” (17:26-28)

We must seek a middle way between extravagance and miserliness: *“Make not your hand tied to your neck, nor stretch it forth to its utmost reach so that you become blameworthy and destitute. Surely your Lord provides sustenance in abundance for whom He pleases, and He restricts it for whom He pleases, for He is certainly All-Aware and All-Seeing of His servants.” (17:29-30)*

Rizq and sustenance come from Allah. *“Kill not your children for fear of want. We shall provide sustenance for them as well as for you. Surely the killing of them is a great sin.” (17:31)*

Adultery is forbidden for believers. *“Nor come close to adultery, for it is an indecent deed and an evil way.” (17:32)*

We must respect the sanctity of life: *“Nor take life, which Allah has made sacred, except for just cause. And if anyone is wrongfully slain, We have given the heir authority to demand justice (life or life) or to forgive, but let him not exceed bounds in the matter of taking life ...” (17:33)*

Just as the sanctity of life must be upheld, so must the properties of orphans: *“Do not approach the property of orphans except to improve it, until the orphan attains the age of full strength, and fulfill all commitment, for each commitment will be taken into account on the Day of Judgment.” (17:34)*

Fairness in transactions is critical: *“Give full measure when you measure and weigh with a balance that is straight. That is the most fitting and the most advantageous in the final determination.” (17:35)* In our time, such fairness translates to giving what is due to employees and service providers and to people who work for us to earn their livelihood.

Accountability in everything we do points to the foundational fairness and justice of our faith: *"And pursue not that of which you have no knowledge, for surely the hearing, the sight, the heart will all be questioned. Nor walk on earth with insolence and arrogance, for you cannot split the earth, nor will your stature reach the mountains in height. Of all such things, the evil is hateful in the sight of your Lord."* (17:36-37)

In summary: *"These are among the parts of wisdom that your Lord has revealed to you. Do not set up any other god with Allah, in case you are thrown into hell, blameworthy and rejected."* (17:39)

One of the most common and serious sins we commit is the sin of the tongue. Allah instructs us: *"Say to My servants that they should only say those things that are best ..."* (17:53)

(Imagine how much stress and bitterness we can avoid if we only say good things about others or remain silent when we cannot say anything positive, as the Prophet (s.a.w) instructed.)

Time and again, we are reminded of the importance of prayers: *"Establish regular prayers at the sun's decline until the darkness of the night, and the prayer and recitation at dawn, for the prayer and recitation at dawn carry their special testimony."* (17:78) (Scholars agree that verse 78 implicitly contains a command for the five daily prayers. Other verses containing command for daily prayers include (2:238, 4:103, 11:114, 20:130, 30:17 and 50:39)

The term '*Qiyam-ul-Layl*' literally means to 'stand during the night.' It is a voluntary prayer offered between the time of the Isha and the Fajr prayers. As indicated in Sura Muzzammil (Sura number 73), the preferred time for offering *Qiyam-ul-Layl* prayer is either in the last third of the night before sunrise or in the last half of the night, or even in the last two-thirds of the

night. *Qiyam-ul-Layl* prayer, which gains even greater significance during the month of Ramadan, is mentioned in this Sura as well: *"And as for the night, keep awake a part of it as an additional prayer for you so that your Lord may raise you to a station of praise and glory."* (17:79)

There is healing and mercy in the Quran for believers: *"And We sent down the Quran as a healing and mercy for the believers."* (17:82)

(While the entire Quran is a source of healing for believers, six specific verses address healing and are referred to as *Ayat Ash-Shifa* or the Verses of Healing. One of these verses is (17:82). The remaining five are:

"And (Allah) shall heal the breast of the believers." (9:14)

"O Humanity! There has come to you a guidance from your Lord and a healing for the diseases in your hearts, and for those who believe a guidance and a mercy." (10:57)

"There issues from within the bodies of the bee, a drink of varying colors wherein is healing for mankind." (16:69)

"And when I am ill, it is He alone who cures me." (26:80)

"And declare (O Muhammad) that (the Quran) is a guidance and healing for the believers." (41:44)

What is the 'Spirit' (*Ar-Ruh*)? (The Arabic word '*ruh*' appears 17 times in the Quran) *"They ask you concerning the Spirit. Say, 'The Spirit is by the Command of my Lord. And whatever knowledge you have been given of that is little.'"* (17:85)

Only Allah is Omniscient and All-Knowing. With this truth in mind, some commentators interpret the verses where the word '*Ar-Ruh*' appears in the Quran to suggest that it refers to angel Jibreel, as in verses (16:102), (26:193), (78:38), and (97:4). Other commentators believe that '*Ar-Ruh*' refers to Allah's Commands and Revelation, as in verses (16:2), (40:15),

and (42:52). In other verses (15:29, 32:9, 66:12), Allah 'breathes His spirit' into humans metaphorically to represent endowing them with life, consciousness, hearing, sight, feelings, and reasoning, essentially, a soul. Therefore, in a broad sense, the word '*Ruh*' or 'Spirit' implies attributes of Allah that He bestows upon humans to sustain and nurture them. It is a quality enabling humans to distinguish right from wrong, reflect, reason, seek, and strive. Some scholars also interpret the 'soul' as the self after death, which will be held accountable for how life was lived on earth. It will be reunited with its respective resurrected body to communicate with the Creator during the Final Reckoning (see 81:7). Hence, the word '*ruh*,' in either definite or indefinite form, can carry different meanings depending on the context, illustrating the linguistic miracle of the Quran. Conversely, the term '*nafs*' occurs 90 times in the Quran and literally means 'self,' often translated as 'ego' or 'psyche.' The Quran identifies three types of '*nafs*' (refer to the 10th Taraweeh summary), with one representing lower human instincts, while '*Qalb*' (heart) and '*Ruh*' (spirit) denote higher human instincts. *"Consider the human self, and how it is formed in accordance with what it is meant to be, and how it is imbued with moral failings as well as the consciousness of Allah. To a happy state shall indeed attain that person who causes the self to grow in purity, and truly lost is that person who buries it in darkness."* (91:7-10)

A remarkable aspect of Sura Isra is the use of the word "Quran." (The word "Quran" appears a total of 69 times in the Quran itself.) "Quran" is cited 11 times in this Sura, more than in any other Sura. These are the 11 verses:

- *Surely this Quran guides to that which is most right and gives glad tidings to believers who do good that they shall have a magnificent reward.* (17:9)

- *We have made plain Our revelations in this Quran so that they (the unbelievers) may take warning ... (17:41)*
- *When you (Muhammad) recite the Quran, We place between you and those who deny the life of the Hereafter a hidden barrier. (17:45)*
- *... and when you mention your Lord, Him alone, in the Quran, they (the unbelievers) turn on their backs, fleeing from the Truth. (17:46)*
- *We have made the vision which We showed you (Muhammad), as well as the Zaqqum tree cursed in the Quran, as a trial for men ... (17:60)*
- *... and the recital of the Quran in morning prayer, for the recital of Quran at dawn is witnessed. (17:78) ("Quran" quoted twice)*
- *We send down stage by stage the Quran in which is a healing and a mercy for those who believe. (17:82)*
- *Say, "If the whole of mankind and jinns were to gather together to produce the like of the Quran, they could not produce the like thereof ..." (17:88)*
- *We have explained to mankind in this Quran every kind of similitude ... (17:89)*
- *It is a Quran ... that We have revealed in stages ... (17:106)*

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(Sura Kahf is a Makki Sura)

Sura Al-Kahf (The Cave) (Verses 18:1-74)

This is the Surah that Muslims try to recite every Friday to renew their perspective on life and follow its lasting values. It is mainly made up of a series of parables and allegories that compare faith in the Creator with attachment to worldly life.

The story of the Youths (the Sleepers), who lived in a polytheist society and took shelter in a cave, shows the virtue of leaving the world behind for the sake of faith. They prayed, "*Our Lord! Bestow on us Mercy from You and*

dispose of our affair in the right way!" (18:10) After many years of sleep, "We strengthened their hearts. Behold, they stood up and said: 'Our Lord is the Lord of the heavens and of the earth. Never shall we call upon any god other than Him. If we did, we should indeed have uttered an enormity.'" (18:14)

This story functions as an allegory of faith, illustrating the subjective and mystical aspects of Time—its discontinuity inside and outside the cave—as well as themes of death, resurrection, and spiritual awakening. It demonstrates that understanding faith is accessible to anyone who follows Allah's commands and guidance. The people of the cave were young and humble, not among the most learned or wealthy in their community. Yet, Allah's Grace reached them because their hearts and minds were oriented correctly. Their story should inspire us to trust in our ability to learn about our faith, recognize the Truth, and act accordingly, even if we are not highly educated or have a large following. The humble and the ordinary are often the first to be touched by Allah's Grace.

In the parable of the rich and the poor man, we find a profound truth: Allah tests us by what He gives us. *"That which is on earth We have made but as a glittering show for it, that We may test them, as to which of them are best in conduct."* (18:7)

(There are 6236 verses in the Quran, comprising 77,449 words. The median word – the word that divides the Quran into two halves, the 38,725th word, occurs in verse (18:19) - *Wal Yatalattaf*, meaning 'with care and courtesy'.)

Whenever we plan on doing something, from the smallest task to the most demanding, we should invoke the Omnipotence of Allah: *"Nor say of anything 'I shall be sure to do so and so tomorrow, except If Allah so wills ...'"* (18:23-24)

Giving in to the excesses of unchecked desires can cause us to forget our Creator. Contentment defines a believer. *"And keep yourself content with those who call on their Lord morning and evening, seeking His face. And not let your eyes pass beyond them, seeking the pomp and glitter of this life, nor obey any whose heart we have permitted to neglect the remembrance of Us, one who follows his own desires, and his affair has become all excess."* (18:28)

One consequence of following our dark desires is that we devalue Time and waste it on meaningless pursuits. Another is that the love of the world blinds us from the knowledge of the unseen and prevents us from remembering Allah, without which life loses its meaning and purpose.

Belief and action go together. *"As to those who believe and do good deeds, surely We shall not suffer to perish the reward of any who do a single good deed."* (18:30)

The phrase *"Innal Lazeena A'manu Wa Milus Saalihatu ..."* (As to those who believe and do good) appears 61 times in the Quran. "Do good" by itself appears 12 times. The question arises: What is a 'good deed?' There are two main types of good deeds. The first is *Huququllah* (recognizing the rights and responsibilities we owe Allah and acting accordingly). Of course, Allah is al-Ghani. He is self-sufficient. He doesn't need anything from us. It is for our own benefit that we must fulfill our obligations to Him. The second is *Huququl Ibadah* (the rights we owe to our fellow humans, including those closest to us, especially spouses and family members whom we tend to take for granted and fail to give the respect they deserve). These rights and respect should extend to all sentient beings. We all want to be loved, admired, and appreciated. If we consistently perform good deeds, Allah will

also inspire those feelings in others toward us. We don't need to try to earn their love and admiration ourselves.

Look at "As to those who believe and do good" from a different angle. The two concepts here are orthodoxy (correct belief) and orthopraxy (correct conduct). Without orthopraxy supporting orthodoxy, it can result in hypocrisy. Yes, right conduct should come from right belief, but as complex human beings, we might find belief easier while practice and conduct are harder. That's why we need to aim to live out the full, unified idea of "believe and do good."

Continuing with the parable of the wealthy and the poor man, the wealthy man thinks his gardens and wealth will last forever, that he is superior to the poor man because "*more wealth have I than you, and more honor and power in my following of men.*" (18:34) Surrounded by palm trees, grapevines and cornfields of his garden, he tells himself, "*... I deem not that this will ever perish, nor do I deem that the Hour of Judgment will ever come. Even if I am brought back to my Lord, I shall surely find there something better in exchange.*" (18:35-36)

Notice the words "my Lord." The wealthy man is a believer but lacks conviction. Also notice the four "I"s in his boasting. It's all "I," "Me," "Mine." In his pride and arrogance, he sees himself as self-sufficient. This is both shirk and hubris. Although he does not explicitly deny Allah, he associates his wealth and garden with Allah. We commit shirk when we attribute our wealth and status to ourselves instead of to Allah. The same mentality led to the downfall of the wealthy Qarun (28:78) and the tyrant Pharaoh during Prophet Musa's time. Wealth and power tend to blind us spiritually. In prosperity, we believe we are in control, and gradually Allah recedes from our minds, leading us into ruin.

The wealthy man's companion, the poor man, in contrast, holds firm to his faith: *"He is Allah, My Lord, and none shall I associate with my Lord."* (18:38) *"... If you see me less than you in wealth and sons,"* he tells the rich man, *"it may be that my Lord will give me something better than your garden and that He will send on your garden thunderbolts by way of reckoning from heaven, making it but slippery sand. Or the water of the garden will run off underground so that you will never be able to find it."* (18:39-41)

That is precisely what happened. In the blink of an eye, the rich man's gardens lay in ruins, *"and he remained twisting and turning his hands over what he had spent on his property, which had now tumbled to pieces to its very foundations, and he could only say, 'Woe is me! Would I that I had never ascribed partners to my Lord and Cherisher!'"* (18:42)

The important question for each one of us is, 'Does that rich man reside in me?' and to remember that *"wealth and sons are allurements of the life of this world. But the things that endure - good deeds - are best in the sight of your Lord as rewards, and best as the foundation for hope."* (18:46)

Notice the powerful words "foundation for hope" in verse (18:46). We perform good deeds by the Grace of Allah. They are rewards for our faith, and they serve as the foundation of our hopes for the highest rewards in the Hereafter. Such hope is rooted in action, not superficial optimism or wishful thinking. Unlike optimism, hope is an active state of mind that stems from resolve and commitment, not a passive longing for things to turn out right without any effort from us.

We also need to recognize the opposite of "foundation for hope": the crisis of hope. In these turbulent times of stress, anxiety, despair and loss of faith, many of us are facing a crisis of hope. We don't believe that things can

improve. We don't believe that good deeds will lead us anywhere. We have become cynical, suspicious and indifferent. We have developed a nihilistic outlook on life. But Allah is telling us with certainty that "*the things that endure - good deeds - are best in the sight of your Lord as rewards, and best as the foundation for hope.*" As believers, we must replace a crisis of hope with a foundation for hope.

It is also instructive to remember the hadith of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w): "All deeds stop after the death of a person, except three things that continue to contribute to her/his account of good deeds: an ongoing *sadaqah* or charity that the person created (such as a school, a hospital, etc), beneficial knowledge that the person discovered, authored or disseminated that continues to benefit humankind after her/his death" and a righteous child who makes du'a for the deceased.

In the story of Prophet Musa (AS) and the unnamed sage, there are several lessons for us. The first is that the pursuit of knowledge and lifelong learning are qualities of a believer. "*And remember when Musa said to his assistant, 'I will never give up until I reach the junction of the two seas, even if I travel for ages.'*" (18:60)

What is the "junction of the two seas" that Musa (AS) sought to find when he began his journey? It is pointless to speculate about its geographical location; instead, we should focus on the mystical merging of the seen and unseen, the visible and the hidden, the mind's power, and the heart's purity.

Who is the unnamed sage? He is one "*on whom We had bestowed Mercy from Ourselves and whom We had taught knowledge from Our own Presence.*" (18: 65) When Musa meets him after first missing him, he pleads with him: "*I will serve you and in return, you can teach me some of the*

higher knowledge you have been given." The crucial word here is '*rushda*,' a word of many meanings: higher knowledge, right guidance, the right path, holistic consciousness, wisdom, sound judgment, and moral integrity. It is '*rushda*' that Musa (AS) seeks from one blessed by Allah (SWT) with it. (*Rushda*' appears 19 times in the Quran in seven derived forms).

In response to Musa's pleadings to accompany him, the sage says, "*You cannot be patient enough with me, for how can you be patient with what is beyond your ken?*" (18:67-68). Musa responds: "*You will find me patient, Allah willing, and I will not disobey any of your orders.*" (18:69)

We are reminded of the essential quality of patience needed for our intellectual and spiritual development, something that remains true even for prophets. But the story is more complicated than that. Consider the first two incidents and Musa's reactions: "*So they set out, but after they had boarded a ship, the man made a hole in it. Moses protested, 'Have you done this to drown its people? You have certainly done a terrible thing!'*" (18:71) The wise man reminds Musa of his promise of patience, and Musa apologizes.

So they proceeded until they came across a boy, and the man killed him. Musa protested, "Have you killed an innocent soul, who killed no one? You have certainly done a horrible thing." (18:74)

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