بِسْمِ اللهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

In the Name of Allah, The Beneficent, The Merciful

15th Taraweeh, Ramadan 1447 Hijri

Summary of Verses 24:21-26:227

Sura An-Noor (The Light) (Verses 24:21-64)

To forgive and forget life's slights and insults, and to take the moral high ground of mercy and forgiveness, is the hallmark of a believer. To be deserving of Allah's mercy, we must be merciful toward others. If Allah forgives, who are we to deny forgiveness to others? "*Let not those among you who are endued with grace and amplitude of means resolve by oath against helping their kinsmen, those in want, and those who have left their homes in Allah's cause. Let them forgive and overlook. Do you not wish that Allah should forgive you? For Allah is oft-forgiving, most merciful.*" (24:22)

(As Shakespeare wrote: "The quality of mercy is not strained/It drops as the gentle rain from heaven/Upon the place beneath. It is twice blessed:/
It blesses him that gives and him that takes.)

Islam considers marriage a religious obligation and requires Muslims to seek lawful relationships and avoid the breakdown of the family through immoral behavior. Particularly condemned is slander against chaste women: "*Those who defame honorable and innocent believing women shall be cursed in this life and the Hereafter. For them is a grievous penalty.*" (24:23) (This verse reemphasizes what we read in verse (24:15))

Just as preserving decency and preventing promiscuity are essential for societal cohesion, so are maintaining modesty and proper sexual conduct between men and women. "*Say to the believing men that they should lower*

their gaze and guard their modesty. That will make for greater purity for them … and say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty …" (24:30-31)

(Note that it is believing men who are addressed first before believing women regarding lowering the gaze and guarding chastity.)

The title of the Sura comes from verse 35: "*Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The Parable of His Light is as if there were a niche and within it a lamp. The lamp is enclosed in a glass of star-like brilliance. The lamp is lit by the oil of a blessed olive tree, neither of the East nor of the West, which radiates without being lit by fire! Light upon Light! Allah guides whom He will to His Light …*" (24:35)

Some scholars interpret this light as the revelation Allah sends to His prophets, which is reflected in the believer's heart as a 'niche.' It is this light that enables believers to tell right from wrong and good from evil. No matter how successful, wealthy, or powerful we are, if we lack awareness of Allah, we remain in constant spiritual darkness: '… *For any to whom Allah does not give light, there is no light!*' (24:40)

In contrast, those "*whom neither traffic nor merchandise can divert from the remembrance of Allah, nor from regular prayer, nor from practicing regular charity … Allah may reward them according to the best of their deeds, and add even more for them out of His grace …*" (24:37-38)

The possibility of being rewarded "according to the best of their deeds" fills the believer's heart with hope and optimism.

Allah is the Creator of all living beings, with water His chosen medium of creation: "*And Allah has created every animal from water. Of them, some*

creep on their bellies, some walk on two legs, and some walk on four. Allah creates what He wills, for surely Allah has power over all things." (24:45)

We are lost without Allah's mercy. How to ensure that we are not lost? "*So establish regular prayer and give regular charity and obey the messenger, that you may receive mercy.*" (24:56)

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(Sura Al-Furqan is a Makki Sura)
Sura Al-Furqan (The Criterion) (Verses 25:1-77)
Divine revelations give humankind the criteria to differentiate truth from falsehood and right from wrong, along with a core set of moral values binding on the individual and society: "*Blessed is He who sent down the criterion to His servant to discern the true from the false so that to all the world it might be a warning.*" (25:1)

The Sura lists a set of objections raised by the Prophet's (s.a.w) detractors and Allah's refutation of them: "*And they say: 'Tales of the ancients, which he has caused to be written that are dictated before him morning and evening.' Say: The Quran was sent down by Him who knows the mystery of the heavens and the earth. Surely He is much forgiving, most merciful. And they say: How is it that this messenger eats and walks about in the markets? Why has not an angel been sent down to him to give admonition with him?*" … (25:5-7) Allah says of them: "… *but they have strayed, so they cannot find a way.*" (25:9)

Although verse (25:20) addresses messengers, it highlights the timeless truth that "*We have made some of you a trial for others. Will you have patience? For Allah is One who sees all things*." In Allah's creation, everyone has a purpose. If some are wealthy, the poor should not envy them. It might be that being close to a wealthy person tests their virtue. (In Sura Al-Qasas

(28:76-82), we learn of the people around Qarun, the billionaire of his time, who desperately wanted to be like him until the earth swallowed Qarun and the blinders fell from their eyes. In Sura Al-Hajj (22:40), we learn that "*And were it not that Allah checked one set of people with another, monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques in which the name of Allah is much mentioned would have been destroyed. And Allah will surely support those who support Him. Indeed, Allah is Powerful and Exalted in Might.*" If some are poor, the wealthy should not despise or look down on them. It might be that the poor are a test of their charity and compassion.)

Verse 25:20 also reminds us to reflect on how we should conduct ourselves in our earthly lives. It addresses the question, "How can Allah allow acts of violence, injustice, and calamities to happen or continue?" Our primary goal in life should be to please Allah by following His commands and avoiding what He forbids. At the same time, we must understand that, through the limited free will Allah has given us, we are free to do things that may displease Him and anger Him. When people backbite, behave cruelly toward others, carelessly treat the environment, or kill others because they have the power to do so, they commit acts that displease Allah. Such actions become a test for the people they harm, just as those people become a test for them. If someone backbites against me, that person has wronged me. But it also depends on how I respond to the backbiting. If my reaction displeases Allah, then both that person and I become trials for each other. It is easy to seek Allah's help when we are victims, but harder when others fall prey to our wrongdoings. In His wisdom of making us a test for one another, Allah has provided us with the standard to distinguish right from wrong, mainly through patience, helping us stay on the Straight Path.

Those who doubt the reality of the Hereafter are warned: "*Those who entertain no hope of meeting Us ask, 'Why have no angels been sent down to us? Why can we not see our Lord?' Indeed, they have an arrogant conceit*

of themselves and have gone too far in their transgression. On the day when they see the angels, the transgressors will not receive glad tidings as the angels tell them, 'There is a barrier forbidden to you altogether.'" (25:21-22)

Those without faith demand to know why the Quran was not revealed all at once. Allah answers them through His prophet: "… *that We may strengthen your heart … and We have rehearsed it to you in gradual, well-arranged stages."* (25:32)

Those who take their *nafs* or ego as their master have gone astray: *"Have you seen the one who takes as his god his own desire? Then would you be responsible for him?"* (25:43)

(The other verse in the Quran that warns against taking our egos and desires as our master can be found in (45:23): *"Have you seen those who have taken as their god their own desires, and Allah has sent them astray knowingly and has set a seal on their ears and their hearts and put over their vision a veil? So, who will guide them after Allah? Then will you not be mindful?"* These verses command us to struggle against the lower tendencies of our ego, our animalistic nature, so we can control it and not be enslaved by it. They warn us about the tricks and treacheries of worldly life and point out the terrible fate of those who worship their desires and cravings, elevating them as gods alongside the one and only Deity, the Lord of the Worlds.)

The punishment that befell the people of Nuh, 'Ad, and Thamud shows the fate awaiting those who mock the Prophet's (s.a.w) message. However, even idol-worshipers are encouraged to use their intellect to recognize the truth for themselves, especially when observing the wondrous natural phenomena in the heavens and the earth. *"And it is He Who sends the winds as heralds of glad tidings, going before His mercy, and We send down pure water from the sky, that with it We may give life to a dead land, and slake*

the thirst of things We have created …" (25:48-49) Also, "*It is He Who has let free the two bodies of flowing water, one palatable and sweet, and the other salty and bitter, yet has He made a barrier between them, a partition that is forbidden to be passed.*" (25:53)

When the Prophet (s.a.w) preached the message of Islam to Makkans, he asked them to submit to the One Creator, the *Ar-Rahman* (the Merciful). "*And when it is said to them, Prostrate to Ar-Rahman, they say, And what is Ar-Rahman?*" (25:60)

The response: "*Blessed is He (Ar-Rahman) who has placed constellations in the heavens and placed therein a great lamp and a moon reflecting light. And He it is who has appointed the night and the day in succession, for him who desires that he should remember, or desire thankfulness.*" (25:61-62)

Ten essential qualities of believers, the *Ibadur-Rahmans*, slaves of the Beneficent, are identified in the concluding verses of this Sura:
1) "*True servants of the Ar-Rahman are those who walk humbly on earth and who say 'Peace!' when the ignorant address them*" (25:63)
2) "*Those who remember their Sustainer far into the night, prostrating and standing*" (25:64)
3) "*Those who say, 'Our Lord, keep us safe from the punishment of hell, for its punishment is everlasting'*" (25:65)
4) "*Those who are neither extravagant nor miserly but are moderate in their spending*" (25:67)
5) "*Those who invoke no deity other than Allah …*" (25:68)
6) "*… those who do not call upon any deity other than Allah, nor destroy life, which Allah has forbidden, except for a just cause …*" (25:68)
7) "*Do not engage in illicit sexual relations*" (25:68)
8) "*Those who do not bear false witness and shun profanity with dignity and grace*" (25:72)

9) "*Those who, when reminded of their Lord's revelations, do not ignore or resist them as the deaf and blind do*" (25:73)
10) "*And those who pray, 'Our Lord, grant unto us spouses and offspring who will be the comfort of our eyes and give us the grace to lead the righteous.'*" (25:74) We should memorize the stirring Du'a of this verse: "*Wallazina Yaquluna Rabbana Hab Lana Min AzWa'jina WaZurriya'tina Qurrata A'Yuni WazAlna Lil Muttaqina Ima'ma*."

"*These are the ones who shall be rewarded with the highest place in heaven for their patient endurance in life. And they will be welcomed with greetings and salutations, abiding eternally therein, an excellent abode and resting place.*" (25:75-76)

Notice that in verse 25:68, the severity of sexual transgressions is highlighted by comparing them to sins of shirk and unjust killing of others.

Note also the importance of walking mentioned in verse (25:63). When we walk on earth, we should do so with humility. What does that mean? It means walking with purpose, being mindful of our neighbors, our surroundings, and the natural world with its beauty and abundance of flora and fauna that reflect the majesty of Allah's creation. Walking teaches us to live in the moment, to be aware, to care, and to be in harmony with the natural world. That is why walking was a favorite pastime of the Prophet (s.a.w). There is no 'rush' in mindful walking. It does not involve putting on earplugs to listen to music or podcasts while ignoring the beauty of the earth along our path. Instead, it is listening to birdsongs filling the dawn sky, tracing the edge of a delicate fern, delighting in the sprawling shadow of an oak, marveling at the dew glistening on a spider's web in the morning light. It is being aware of the many beautiful things we find in our neighborhoods. The physical and spiritual benefits of walking are numerous. A long walk can chase away the blues, lift us out of depression, provide insight into the

sacred, and help us truly see — for sight leads to insight. Walking is good for our joints and muscles, boosts our health and happiness, and enhances creativity. Our senses become more alive, and so does the world around us because any place comes to life through the compassionate attention we give it. We hear, see, smell, and feel more. While we can gain much from walking, it is also important to realize that walking can give even more back to us. It wakes us up and inspires us to become observant. These qualities can help us when we pray. Many of us are heedless in our prayers, merely going through the motions. To truly connect with our Creator during prayer, the ultimate purpose of praying, is to live in the moment and be conscious of Allah. It is the believer's personal *Mi'raj* — the ascension toward our Creator. Walking can help give purpose to our prayers by cultivating qualities that enhance our focus on our relationship with Allah. The Quran also teaches that if others insult or mock us as we walk humbly on earth, we should not retaliate or seek revenge but leave honorably by saying "Peace" to them. Mindful walking can transform our lives. Once we learn to pay attention, the natural world becomes miraculous, and the ordinary becomes transcendent. As Thoreau said, "I took a walk in the woods and came out taller than the trees,"

The Quran reminds sinners of the rewards they can expect from Allah if they fulfill three conditions - repent, have faith and do good deeds: "*As for those who repent, believe, and do good deeds, they are the ones whose bad deeds Allah will change into good deeds. For Allah is All-Forgiving, Most Merciful*." (25:70) As imperfect human beings, believers knowingly or unknowingly commit sins. It is true for everyone that, while we often ask Allah for forgiveness, we can also ask Him to transform our wrongdoings into good deeds. What a hopeful thought that is for all!

To summarize the virtues of the *Ibadur-Rahmans*: 1) They are humble and patient. 2) They are mindful of Allah at all times, with a keen awareness of

the Judgment of the Hereafter. 4) They are moderate in all things. 5) They shun disobedience to Allah and are kind to all sentient beings. 6) They avoid falsehood and frivolity. 7) They are attentive in mind and manner to the Signs of Allah. 8) Their main goal in life is to please Allah, which includes bringing up their families in righteousness, abiding by the truth, and embrace all that is good in life.

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(Sura Shuara is a Makki Sura)
Sura As-Shuara (The Poets) (Verses 26:1-227)
The Sura highlights man's tendency toward self-deception and explains why so many people throughout history readily reject the truth, whether it's Allah's revelations or self-evident moral values. The result? A focus on worshiping power, wealth, celebrity, fame, and glory, which we see all around us. "*Do they not look at the earth, how many noble things of all kinds We have produced therein? Surely, in this is a Sign, but most of them do not believe.*" (26:7-8)

In the story of Prophet Musa, Pharaoh and the magicians, we again see the contrast between arrogance and power on the one hand and humility and submission on the other. "*Then did the sorcerers fall down and prostrate in adoration, saying: 'We believe in the Lord of the Worlds, the Lord of Musa and Harun.'*" (26:46-48) When Pharaoh threatened them with violent death, "*They said: 'No matter for us, we shall but return to our Lord. Our only desire is that our Lord will forgive us our faults since we are the first to believe.'*" (26:50-51)

We should memorize the heartfelt supplication of Ibrahim (AS) to Allah (SWT) that captures the gratitude and longing of believers across the ages and for all time: "… *the Lord and the Cherisher of the worlds, Who created me, and it is He Who guides me, Who gives me food and drink, and when I*

am ill, it is He Who cures me, Who will cause me to die and then to live again, and Who, I hope, will forgive me my faults on the Day of Judgment. O my Lord, bestow wisdom on me and join me with the righteous. Grant me honorable mention on the tongue of truth among later generations. Make me one of the inheritors of the Garden of Bliss. Forgive my father, for he is among those astray. And let me not be in disgrace on the Day when we will be raised up, the Day when neither wealth nor sons will avail, but only those will prosper who will bring to Allah a purified heart." (26:83-89)

As a reminder, the Quran again recounts the stories of prophets (AS) Nuh, Hud, and the people of 'Ad, Salih, and the people of Thamud, Lut, Shuaib, and the companions of the Wood, each revealing new insights about the human condition. The 'Ad people, full of pride and arrogance due to their materialistic civilization, for example, rejected Hud, their messenger. "*Do you build a landmark on every high place to amuse yourselves? And do you get for yourselves fine buildings in the hope of living therein forever? And when you strike, you strike like tyrants!*" (26:128-130) But prophet Hud's warnings fell on deaf ears and the 'Ad, with their palaces and monuments, were destroyed. Their fate echoed the fate of the ancient king and tyrant Ozymandias, evoked in the poem by P. B. Shelly: "I am Ozymandias, King of Kings! Look on my works, ye mighty and despair! … Boundless and bare the lonely and level sands stretch far away!"

Addiction to worldly power and possessions and the pursuit of hedonism lead to moral and spiritual decay, so we are warned: "*And follow not the bidding of those who are extravagant.*" (26:151)

Angel Jibreel (*Ruh-ul-Amin*) is mentioned as the one who brought revelations to Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w): "*Surely this is a Revelation from the Lord of the Worlds. With it came down the Truthful Spirit (Ruh-ul-Amin).*" (26:192-193)

The wicked who stray and say what they do not practice will get their just dues. But for "… *those who believe, work righteousness, engage much in the remembrance of Allah and defend themselves after they are unjustly attacked* …" (26:227), they will experience the ultimate salvation.

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