

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

All Praises to Allah, The Beneficent, The Merciful

26th Taraweeh, Ramadan 1446 Hijri

Summary of Verses 80:1-92:21

(Sura Abasa is a Makki Sura)

Sura Abasa (He frowned) (Verses 80:1-42)

Knowing the context of this Sura is important for perspective: The Prophet (s.a.w) was engrossed in a conversation with a group of prominent leaders of the Quraish tribe one day when he was interrupted by a blind Muslim named Abd Allah ibn Maktum. The Prophet's concern was to convince the Quraish leaders of his message so that they, in turn, could convince their followers to accept Islam. The interruption annoyed the Prophet (s.a.w), particularly from someone not as high in social status as the Quraish leaders. He ignored the blind man and continued his conversation with the Makkan notables. The disrespect immediately brought forth a Divine rebuke, showing that everyone, including the prophet himself, was accountable to Allah: *"He (Muhammad) frowned and turned away when the blind man came towards him. But how would you (Muhammad) know that he might not be reformed, or that he might not take heed and benefit from your admonition?"* (80:1-4)

The Prophet (s.a.w) was attentive to the Quraish leaders who considered themselves self-sufficient *"but as to him who came to you earnestly striving and with fear in his heart, of him you were unmindful!"* (80:8-10)

Allah (SWT) is telling us through His Prophet that we must extend our courtesy and attention to all sincere seekers of truth, irrespective of their social standings.

(We need to ask ourselves: Do we ignore humble people, those considered unsuccessful from a worldly point of view, who seek our help or attention? In contrast, do we slavishly cater to the needs of the rich and the famous for some material gain or in the hope that some of their fame will rub off on us? If the answer is 'yes' to either or both, we need to change our priorities and preferences and heed the lessons of the Quran. We must also guard against self-deception when we try to disguise the envy of wealth as a virtue, thinking that we are standing against the love of money as the root of evil, when in fact, we are hankering after money and wealth ourselves!)

The Sura touches on the theme of resurrection through the renewal we witness in nature: *"Then let man reflect on his food. We pour down water from the sky, and We cause cracks to appear in the ground through which We cause to grow corn and grapes and fresh vegetation and olives and palm trees and gardens dense with foliage, and fruits and herbage for you and your animals to enjoy."* (80:24-32)

Just as Allah can summon life from the seemingly dead earth, so can He revive those with barren or dead hearts as well as resurrect the physically dead.

(Sura Takwir is a Makki Sura)

Sura At-Takwir (The Folding Up) (Verses 81:1-29)

The Sura lists twelve events that will indicate the onset of resurrection, leading to the Day of Judgment:

- 1) *"When the sun is folded up"* (81:1) (science tells us that when the sun uses up its hydrogen fuel in the nuclear fusion that generates its power, the star will start to die.)
- 2) *"When the stars fall"* (81:2)
- 3) *"When the mountains are annihilated"* (81:3)
- 4) *"When pregnant she-camels are abandoned"* (81:4)

- 5) *"When the wild beasts are gathered together"* (81:5)
- 6) *"When the oceans boil over and flare up"* (81:6)
- 7) *"When the souls and their bodies are paired once more"* (81:7)
- 8) *"When the daughter killed in infancy is made to ask for what crime she was killed"* (81:8-9)
- 9) *"When the scrolls are laid open"* (81:10)
- 10) *"When the sky is unveiled"* (81:11)
- 11) *"When hell is made to burn fiercely"* (81:12)
- 12) *"When paradise is brought into view."* (81:13)

What will happen then? *"Each soul shall know what it has put forward."*
(81:14)

Note verse (81:7). It tells us that the body dies in our earthly death but the soul does not. However, when we are resurrected, each soul will be reunited with its respective body. In other words, we will be resurrected with body and soul together in the same state as we lived on earth until our death.

As curious beings, we want to know what happens when time and life ends. When a TV series spanning several seasons or even years grips us, for example, we keep watching it weekly until we finally see how the end plays out. But even though we are unlikely to witness what happens at the end of Time, which is likely to extend far beyond the 70-80 years of average human life span, the Quran foretells what will happen in the end in the verses quoted above. The Book gives us knowledge of the past through stories of prophets and their people in antiquity. It gives us knowledge of the present, as in this example: *"The mutual rivalry for piling up the good things of this world diverts you from the more serious things."* (102.1) And it gives us knowledge of the future, as in the first few verses of Sura 81. Even though we may not be alive then, Allah tells us in the Quran how the story will end. What a miracle the Quran is!

The Quran affirms Prophet Muhammad's (s.a.w) mission as a guidance for all mankind: *"I swear by the shining star that recedes by day, and by the stars that rise and set, and by the night when it spreads its darkness and the dawn as it breathes away the darkness, that this is the word of a most honorable messenger."* (81:15-19)

Just as dawn breathes away the darkness of the night, so a soul's spiritual darkness gradually awakes to its spiritual dawn through Revelation.

"So, where are you going?" asks the Quran (81:26). It is a profound question (Latin equivalent: *"Quo Vadis?"*) that we especially need to reflect on during Ramadan. Are we on the Straight Path? Are our words and deeds aligned with the good pleasure of Allah, the summit of success as stated in verse 9:72, or are we frittering our time away in frivolous pursuits and going astray from a combination of ego, envy, ingratitude, avarice and other failings? Ramadan is the month to take stock of where we are in life and apply correctives as required.

(Sura Infitar is a Makki Sura)

Sura Al-Infitar (The Cleaving Asunder) (Verses 82:1-19)

The theme of this Sura continues the theme of the previous Sura: The physical world as we know it will be destroyed before the Day of Judgment when true reality will manifest itself. *"When the sky is cleft asunder, when the stars are scattered, when the oceans are suffered to burst forth, and when the graves are turned upside down, then each soul shall know what it has sent forward and what it has kept back."* (82:1-5)

Allah has given us human beings limited free will: *"He who created you, fashioned you in due proportion and gave you a just bias."* (82:7) If we properly exercise the faculties of sight, sound, smell, taste and touch we have been blessed with, and use our power of reasoning and spiritual faculties, we will do what is right in the sight of Allah because of our inherent

'just bias.' If we err, we must accept responsibility and make amends so that we are again on the Straight Path.

What defines the Day of Judgment? Allah tells us: *"And, and what will explain to you what the Day of Judgment is? Again, what will explain to what the Day of Judgment is? It will be the Day when no soul shall have power to do anything for another, for the Command that Day will be with Allah alone."* (81:17-19)

The core of revelation is that in the end, we will all return to Allah, as emphasized in verses ((36:83) and (81:19).

(Sura Mutaaffifin is a Makki Sura, although some scholars think it is a Madani Sura)

Sura Al-Mutaaffifin (Those Who Deal in Fraud) (Verses 83:1-36)

There are people in every society who think only of their selfish interests and resort to any means to maximize their profit and pleasure. Morality and ethics play no role in the dealings and transactions of these hedonists and solipsists. The Quran warns them: *"Woe unto those who give short measure, those who, when they are to receive their due from other people, demand full measure, but when they must measure or weigh whatever they owe others, give less than what is due. Do they not know that they will be raised from the dead and called to account on an awesome day, the day when everyone will stand before the Sustainer of the world?"* (83:1-6)

(These verses are not limited to business transactions only. What about someone who demands his rights and privileges from his spouse and children but when it comes to fulfilling his own responsibility, is indifferent or negligent? The point is: just as we have rights over others, others have the same or similar rights over us, perhaps even more, as in the case of one's parents and families.)

Note that abiding by the rules of Islam means going beyond what in Western culture is known as the Golden Rule – ‘Do as you would be done by’ - for whatever good deeds we do are for the pleasure of Allah alone (76:9). Here too, in verse (83:1-3), we are told indirectly that Islam goes beyond the Golden Rule in that we must give in full what is due from us, whether or not we expect or wish to receive full consideration from the other side.

(Sura Inshiqaq is a Makki Sura)

Sura Al-Inshiqaq (The Rending Asunder) (Verses 84:1-25)

The theme of this Sura is a continuation of the themes of Suras 81 and 82: The coming of the Day of Judgment and the onset of True Reality. Those who suffered in this life because of their righteousness will rejoice and those who went about rejoicing in this life, thinking they would never have to return to their Lord, will weep. *“O you man! Surely you are toiling on toward your Lord, painfully toiling, but you shall meet Him. Then he who is given his record in his right hand, soon his account will be taken by an easy reckoning, and he will turn to his people rejoicing. But he who is given his record behind his back, soon he will cry in perdition, and he will enter a blazing fire. Truly he went about among his people rejoicing. Truly did he think that he would not have to return to Us!”* (84:6-14)

The patterns and rhythms we find in nature should strengthen our faith as we move from stage to stage in our spiritual development: *“So I do call to witness the crimson glow of sunset, the night and its homing, and the moon in her fullness, you shall surely travel from stage to stage.”* (84:16-19).

(If we observe and reflect on all the wondrous phenomena in nature, we can sense the connections that unite them. As the English poet Francis Thompson (1859-1907) wrote: “All things by immortal power/Near of far, to each other linked are/that you cannot stir a flower without troubling of a star.” After all, whose heart has not been lifted by the sight of birds

returning to their nests at dusk? As the seasons change, we observe birds migrating to distant shores for warmth and food, their journeys reflecting the enduring mystery of Allah's creation.)

To be successful on the Final Day, belief and action must go together:

"... those who believe and work righteous deeds, for them is a reward that will never fail." (84:25)

(The phrase *"Believe and do good"* occurs 61 times in the Quran while *"Do khayr (do good)"* by itself occurs 12 times in the Quran.)

(Sura Buruj is a Makki Sura)

Sura Al-Buruj (The Constellations) (Verses 85:1-22)

Allah gives opportunities to tyrants and oppressors to repent and redeem themselves and to be on the straight path. Their fates are contrasted with action-driven believers who are promised the ultimate success: *"Those who persecute the believers, men and women, and do not turn in repentance, will have the chastisement of hell, the chastisement of the burning fire. For those who believe and do righteous deeds, will be gardens beneath which rivers flow: This is the supreme triumph!"* (85:10-11)

As we read in numerous verses throughout the Quran, belief and good deeds go together: *"For those who believe and do righteous deeds will be Gardens beneath which rivers flow. That is the supreme triumph!"* (85:11)

The Sura concludes with the gift of the eternal and immutable Quran for believers: *"... This is a glorious Quran, in a tablet preserved!"* (85:21-22)
We see this sublime truth stated also in verses (15:9).

(Sura Tariq is a Makki Sura)

Sura At-Tariq (The Night-Visitor) (Verses 86:1-17)

In the darkest of nights, we behold the brightest star. So it is with the glorious star of Allah's revelation that shines brilliantly during nights of spiritual darkness: *"By the sky and the night-visitant; and what will explain to you what the night-visitant is? It is the star of piercing brightness."* (86:1-3)

Allah provides guardians over all human beings to record their deeds. *"Every soul has a guardian."* (86:4) Allah's sublime creation is suggested with poetic precision: *"By the firmament which gives the returning rain, and by the earth which opens out, behold, this is the Word that distinguishes good from evil."* (86:11-13)

Gentle forbearance with evil shows our trust in Allah and Allah's Plan. This does not imply compromising with evil or failing to defeat it when we have the power. It means patience and humility – thus, complete trust in Allah - when we are powerless to prevent evil.

"Therefore, grant a delay to the unbelievers. Give respite to them gently for a while." (86:17)

(Note how the fundamental idea of complete trust in Allah for a believer is stated in verse (9:129): *"But if they turn away, say, 'Allah is sufficient for me. There is no God but He. On Him is my trust. He is the Lord of the Throne Supreme!'"*)

(Sura A'la is a Makki Sura)

Sura Al-A'la (The Most High) (Verses 87:1-19)

The Prophet (s.a.w), and by extension his ummah, was reminded to *"Glorify the name of your Lord, the Most High, Who has created and given order and proportion, Who has measured and granted guidance."* (87:1-3)

(Sura A'la is among the most recited Suras during the Friday Jumuah prayers. Tradition holds that the Prophet (s.a.w) used to recite this Sura with its stirring opening verses (87:1-3) during Jumuah.)

The Quran instructs the believer: *"So always remind with the Quran, even if the reminder is beneficial only for some. Those in awe of Allah will be mindful of it. But it will be shunned by the most wretched."* (87:9-11)

Who will be successful? *"Successful indeed are those who purify themselves, remember the Name of their Lord, and pray."* (87:14-15)

But those *"deniers who prefer the life of this world"* (87:16) are told in unambiguous terms that *"... the Hereafter is better and more enduring. And this is in the Books of the earliest revelations, the Books of Ibrahim and Musa."* (87:17-19)

(Sura Ghashiya is a Makki Sura)

Sura Al-Ghashiya (The Overwhelming Event) (Verses 88:1-26)

On the Day of Judgment, the faces of wrongdoers will be *"laboring and weary"* while *"other faces that Day will be joyful, pleased with their striving."* (88:8-9)

We are asked to look at the wonders of Allah's creation and recognize His majesty and power: *"Do they not look at the camels and how they are made? And at the sky, how it is raised high? And at the mountains, how they are fixed firm? And at the earth, how it is spread out?"* (88:17-20)

The Prophet's (s.a.w) role as a messenger is made clear: *"... Do remind, for you are one to remind but you are not one to manage their affairs."* (88:21-22) This echoes what the Quran tells us in essence in verse (87:9), that *"of use is the reminder."*

(Sura Fajr is a Makki Sura)

Sura Al-Fajr (The Dawn) (Verses 89:1-30)

The Sura is suffused with symbols and allusions, the full meanings of which are known to Allah alone.

"By the dawn, by the ten nights, by the even and odd contrasted, and by the night when it passes away, considering all this, could there be, to anyone endowed with reason, more compelling evidence of the truth?" (89:1-5)

The break of day signifies not only the physical dawn but also our spiritual awakening. Many scholars think that "the ten nights" refer to the first ten nights of the sacred month of Dhul-Hijjah, the twelfth and last month of the Islamic calendar. A few scholars also suggest that the "ten nights" refer to the last ten nights of Ramadan. The "even and the odd" or "the One" contrasts the Oneness and uniqueness of the Creator with the multiplicity of His creation. And "the night when it passes away" perhaps signifies the night of spiritual darkness that disappears when we accept the light of truth by becoming conscious of Allah and obeying His commands.

Allah tests us in ways that He alone deems best. The characteristics of those who fail His tests are indicated in these verses: *"Now, as for man, when his Lord tries him, giving him honor and gifts, then he says, 'My Sustainer has justly been generous to me.' But when He tries him by restricting his means of livelihood, he says in despair, 'My Lord has humiliated me!'" (89:15-16)*

Who are these people? They are those *"... who do not honor orphans, nor encourage the feeding of the poor, who devour the inheritance of others and who love wealth excessively!" (89:17-20)*

Allah judges us by criteria known only to Him. He tests us with poverty and affluence, victory and defeat, success and failure, to decide how we will fare in the Hereafter. If we are to be successful in His sight, we must embrace

the positive habits of honoring orphans, encouraging one another to feed the hungry, and not devouring the inheritances of others. (See also verses (69:34), (90:14-16), and (107:3))

The last verses of this Sura pour joy into the heart of believers: *"To the righteous soul, Allah will say, 'O you who have attained inner peace, return to your Lord, well pleased yourself and pleasing Him! Enter you, then, with My other servants. Yes, enter you to My Heaven!'"* (89:27-30)

(Sura Balad is a Makki Sura)

Sura Al-Balad (The City) (Verses 90:1-20)

The City here refers to Makkah where the Prophet (s.a.w) was born and where he lived until he migrated to Madinah and his subsequent triumphant return. The Sura evokes eternal truths and the choices we make to either give or fail to give meaning to our lives. Life is difficult. *"Surely We have created humankind into toil and struggle."* (90:4) On the Day of Judgment, we will have to account for how we earned our wealth and how we spent it, and whether we chose the difficult path of virtue or the easy path of vice and rejection of Allah. *"... Does he think that no one has power over him? He may boast: 'I have squandered wealth in abundance.' Does he think no one sees him? Have We not given him a pair of eyes, and a tongue, and a pair of lips? And shown him two highways?"* (90:5-10)

The steep path is difficult, but it is also the path to success: *"And what will explain to you the path that is steep? It is freeing someone, giving food on a day of privation to the orphan with claims of relationship or the hungry and the poor in the dust."* (90:12-16) They will be the successful ones, *"... those who believe, and enjoin patience and self-restraint, and enjoin deeds of kindness and compassion. Such are the companions of the right hand."* (90:17-18)

(Sura Shams is a Makki Sura)

Sura Ash-Shams (The Sun) (Verses 91:1-15)

The sublime order, beauty and intricacy of the universe are signs of the Omnipotence and Omnipresence of the Creator. Consider the three pairs: *"By the sun and its glorious splendor, by the moon as it follows it; by the day as it reflects the sun's glory, by the night as it conceals it; by the firmament and its wondrous architecture, by the earth and its wide expanse."* (91:1-6)

Only a sealed heart will fail to sense the presence of the Divine in these signs.

Allah creates the soul and gives it order, balance, scale, and the ability to distinguish right from wrong, truth from falsehood. *"By the soul, and the proportion and the order given to it, and its inspiration as to its wrong and its right, truly he succeeds who purifies it, and he fails who corrupts it."* (91:7-10)

It is in our capacity to keep the soul pure and to use Allah's gifts to do good deeds that please Him. It is also in our capacity, given our limited free will, to soil the soul, go astray and invoke His displeasure. This is made clear in the example of the Thamud (details in 7:73-79) who rejected prophet Salih's message of humility and justice while oppressing the poor through avarice and arrogance. *"The Thamud rejected their prophet through inordinate wrongdoing"* (50:11) and so *"Their Lord crushed them for their sin and leveled them."* (50:14)

(Sura Lail is a Makki Sura)

Sura Al-Lail (The Night) (Verses 92:1-21)

We define ourselves by our beliefs and deeds. Good deeds bring success and happiness as the Quran defines them while bad deeds bring misery and suffering.

The diversity of Allah's creation, and the choices we make and their consequences, are suggested in these verses: *"By the night as it conceals the light, by the day as it appears in glory, by the mystery of the creation of male and female, surely the ends you strive for are diverse. So he who gives in charity and fears Allah and in all sincerity testifies to the best, We will indeed make smooth for him the path to bliss. But he who is a miser and thinks himself self-sufficient and gives the lie to the best, We will indeed make smooth for him the path to misery, nor will his wealth profit him when he goes to his grave."* (92:1-11)

Behold Allah's impeccable design of balance in the alternation of night and day and the creation of male and female! Those who give freely to anyone in need and have Taqwa comprising three categories – obedience to Allah, mindfulness and remembrance of Allah and gratitude to Allah – will receive the best and the finest reward from Allah. Taqwa implies the unconditional belief that good will come from Allah. It is "Allah above all else" mentality.

Believers must be optimistic about receiving the finest reward from Allah when Taqwa becomes their character. It is to believe in the certitude of reward to come. When we strive to please Allah, not deceived by the false and the fleeting, we achieve Taqwa. Allah promises us ease on the other side of sacrifice.

The contrast between the unsuccessful and the successful is made vivid:

"Therefore do I (Allah) warn you of a blazing fire. None shall burn therein but the most unfortunate ones, who give the lie to Truth and turn their backs. But those most devoted to Allah will be removed far from it."
(92:14-17)

Who are the fortunate ones?

(92:18) *"Those who spend their wealth for increase in self-purification"*
(*Allazi Yu'tee Ma' Lahu Yatazakka*. The Arabic root word *zaka* implies both increases in, and purification of, wealth.)

(92:19) *"And have in their minds no favor from anyone for which a reward is expected in return."* (This is the purification of intent: Charity is for the pleasure of Allah alone.)

(92:20) *"But only desire the countenance of their Lord, Most High."*

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