

Surah 'Abasa, Chapter 80

(He Frowned)

Number of Verses: 42

[Contents of the Surah](#)

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

In The Name of Allah, The Beneficent, The Merciful

Surah Abasa is short, but contains various important subjects, which especially emphasize on the Resurrection and can be summarized under five topics:

1. Allah's serious admonishment to the one who did not show suitable behavior to a truth-seeking blind man.
2. The importance of the Holy Qur'an.
3. Man's ungratefulness toward the blessings of Allah.
4. A partial description about His blessings in the field of nutrition for Men and animals in order to stimulate a sense of thankfulness.
5. Some hints about the terrible incidents of the Day of Judgment' and the fate of the believers and unbelievers on that Day.

The name of the Surah is derived from its first verse.

The Virtue in Studying this Surah

A tradition from Prophet Muhammad (S) says:

“One who studies Surah 'Abasa will arrive at the Gathering Place smiling and rejoicing will arrive at the Gathering Place smiling and rejoicing on The Day of Judgment.”

Surah 'Abasa, Verses 1-10

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

In The Name of Allah, The Beneficent, The Merciful

عَبَسَ وَتَوَلَّىٰ

أَنْ جَاءَهُ الْأَعْمَىٰ

وَمَا يُدْرِيكَ لَعَلَّهُ يَزَكَّىٰ

أَوْ يَذَّكَّرُ فَتَنْفَعَهُ الذِّكْرَىٰ

أَمَّا مَنْ اسْتَغْنَىٰ

فَأَنْتَ لَهُ تَصَدَّىٰ

وَمَا عَلَيْكَ أَلَّا يَزَكَّىٰ

وَأَمَّا مَنْ جَاءَكَ يَسْعَىٰ

وَهُوَ يَخْشَىٰ

1. ***"He frowned and turned away,"***
2. ***"Because there came to him the blind man."***
3. ***"And what would make you know that he might (spiritually) purify himself,"***
4. ***"Or become reminded so that the reminder might profit him?"***
5. ***"As to one who regards himself self-sufficient,"***
6. ***"To him do you address yourself!"***
7. ***"Though it is no blame on you if he would not (spiritually) purify himself."***
8. ***"But as to him who comes to you striving hard,"***
9. ***"And he fears (Allah in his heart),"***
10. ***"Of him wast thou unmindful."***

The Occasion of Revelation

These words show that Allah has blamed someone for an action which gave superiority to a man or men of wealth rather than to a blind man who was seeking the truth. But who was the admonished one? There are a variety of ideas on this subject, but the most famous commentary among the scholars is the following:

Once the Prophet (S) was deeply engaged in trying to explain the Holy Qur'an to some pagan Quraish leaders such as 'Atabat-ibn-i-Rabi'ah, Abu-Jahl, 'Abbas-ibn-'Abdul-Mutallib and some others. He was hopeful that it would attract them to Islam, and in so doing, surely a lot of others would come to Islam, too. And therefore, put an end to their sabotage. But, suddenly, he was interrupted by a blind man;

'Abdullah-ibn-Ummi-Maktum, who was apparently poor, so that no one took notice of him. He wanted to learn the Qur'an and asked the Prophet (S) to teach him. He repeated his statement again and again, because he did not know exactly whom he was talking to.

The Holy Prophet (S) naturally did not like the frequent interruptions and this was seen on his face.

"These Arab leaders",

he said to himself

"may think of Muhammad as a Prophet of the poor and the blind."

Then he turned away from 'Abdullah and continued the work at preaching Allah's Message to them.

At that moment he received the new verses stated above, which admonished the Prophet (S) for this action. Afterwards, he always held 'Abdullah in high honor, and whenever he saw him he used to tell him

“Hail to the one for whom Allah admonished me.”

And, then, he questioned the man:

“Is there anything that I can do for you?”

The blind man became a true and sincere Muslim and as a direct appointment by the Prophet, himself, become a governor of Medina on two occasions when the Prophet (S) went to battle.

A second opinion about this revelation is given for these verses, which is that a man from the Umayyads was sitting with the Prophet Muhammad (S) when 'Abdullah-ibn Umri-Maktum arrived. When this man saw 'Abdullah, he frowned and turned his back to him, as if he might become infected by him.

The aforementioned verses were about the man sitting with the Prophet (S) and the admonishment was for him. It has been narrated that Imam Sadiq (as) agreed with this opinion when he was asked about this occasion of revelation. The late Sayyed Murtaza, the great scholar of Islam, approved with this occasion of revelation, as well.

There is nothing, of course, in the verse, itself, to show clearly that the one who is addressed is Muhammad (S).

The only sign may be found in verses 8 to 10 where they say:

“But as to him who comes to you striving hard,”

“And he fears (Allah in his heart).”

“Of him wast thou unmindful.”

This is the matter that can be true about the Prophet (S) more than anyone else. But, according to what 'Sayyed Murtaza' has said, there are some signs in the verses showing that 'the one' is not the Prophet (S). Some of them are as follows:

'To be frowning' was not one of the Prophet's character traits, especially for the Prophet of Islam. He spoke gently and with a kind face even to his own enemies and was even more kind to the truth-seeking believers.

Moreover, paying attention to the wealthy people and neglecting, the poor is not agreeable, at all, with what is said about him in Surah Qalam, No. 68, verse 4 which says:

“And thou (standst) on an exalted standard of character”,

(with the particular note that Surah Qalam had been revealed before the revelation of Surah Abasa).

But, supposing the first occasion of revelation is true, this act is not more than 'leaving to the better' /tark-i-'ula/ and there is nothing in it that contrasts with the state of sinlessness.

Since, first, the purpose of the Prophet (S) was definitely to absorb the Quraish leaders in order to spread Islam and to stop their sabotage.

Secondly, it does not matter so much to frown at a blind man because he cannot see. Moreover, 'Abdullah_ibn_Ummi_Maktum did not keep the rules of etiquette, since, he should not have interrupted the Prophet (S) when he was busy talking to the people who were gathered there.

On the one hand, since Allah's emphasis is on love and affection for the poor and the afflicted, among the believers, it does not approve of the little amount of heedlessness from His prophet to that believing servant, so He admonishes him.

On the other hand, if we consider the Prophet (S) as a true, great prophet, from these verses we see that they are almost a miracle, because the great leader of Islam mentions such important responsibilities in the heavenly Holy Book, about himself, that he finds the slightest 'leaving to the better' an option: i.e. the little amount heedlessness to a blind truth-seeking believer, which Allah admonish him for.

This is an evidence for the fact that this Book is from Allah and he is a true prophet, because if the Book were not from Allah, surely it would not have such content.

A more astonishing matter is that according to the above mentioned narration, whenever the Prophet (S) saw 'Abdullah_ibn_Ummi_Maktum, he remembered the occasion a honored him very much.

The other aspect, which the verses contain, is that of the Islamic culture in relation to the behavior shown to the oppressed and to the arrogant: as to how it considers the blind, poor believer in comparison to those rich, powerful pagan Arab leaders. This clearly shows that Islam is a support for the oppressed and is against the arrogant.

In conclusion, we repeat that though the first thought about the occasion of this revelation is well-known among the commentators, it should be confessed that there is nothing vivid, in the verse, to prove the idea that the Prophet (S) is the clear target of the admonition.

Harsh Admonition For Heedlessness Shown to a Truth-Seeking Blind man

Keeping in mind what was said about the first idea regarding the occasion of revelation of the verses, we will now discuss the given commentary.

“He Frowned and turned away”.

“Because there came to him the blind man”.

“And what would make you know that he might (spiritually) purify himself”.

“Or become reminded so that the reminder might profit him?”

The reminder can be, at least, an advice to him. If it does not affect him to be really virtuous, it may

make him aware and this awareness would change him a little.

“As to one who regards himself as self-sufficient”

“To him do you address yourself!”

And 'you' insist on guiding him, but he is entangled with pride due to his wealth and selfishness.

It is the pride from which rebellion and disobedience originate, as Surah Alaq, No. 96, verses 6-7 say:

“Nay, most surely man does transgress (all bounds),”

“For he thinks himself self-sufficient”.

“Though it is no blame on you if he would not (spiritually) purify himself”.

It is for 'you' only to deliver His message; they may take its advice or merely become annoyed.

Therefore, you should not neglect the truth-seeking blind man or annoy him for the sake of the rich leaders, although you mean to guide them.

“But as to him who comes to you striving hard,”

“And he fears (Allah in his heart)”

The very motive, fear of Allah, has forced him to come to you in order to hear some truth and, thereafter, employ them in order to purify himself and grow in understanding.

“Of him wast thou unmindful.”

Indeed, the term /anta/ 'you, thee' is used to say that a person, such as the Prophet, should not divert himself, even for a moment, from such a truth-seeking man and should not pay attention to others although he definitely wanted to guide them, because the priority is given to that of the pure-hearted oppressed.

In any case, this reproachful speech, whether to the Prophet (S) or to anyone else, clearly states the fact that Islam and the Qur'an give a special high regard to the servants of Allah, particularly to those of the oppressed.

Also, Islam takes a severe position against those who are intoxicated and become proud from the abundance of Allah's blessings, so much so that Allah is not content if the least annoyance is caused to the truth-seeking oppressed, because of giving attention to the affluent.

The reason is clear: such a message works first amongst the simple and lowly, the poor and despised folk, and the mighty ones, of the earth only come around when the masses stream in like an irresistible force. The oppressed always support Islam, sincerely, helping the great leaders of the religion in their affairs, and are the candidates of the battle fields “or martyrdom.

As Imam Ali (as) said in his famous order to Malik-i-Ashtar:

"...While the common men, the poor and apparently the less important section of your subjects are the Islam; of Islam; they are the real assemblage of Muslims and the power and defensive force against the enemies of Islam. Keep an open mind for them, be more friendly with them and secure their confidence and sympathy."

Surah 'Abasa, Verses 11-23

كَأَلَّا إِنَّهَا تَذْكِرَةٌ

فَمَنْ شَاءَ ذَكَرْهُ

فِي صُحُفٍ مُّكْرَمَةٍ

مَرْفُوعَةٍ مُّطَهَّرَةٍ

بِأَيْدِي سَفَرَةٍ

كِرَامٍ بَرَرَةٍ

قُتِلَ الْإِنْسَانُ مَا أَكْفَرَهُ

مِنْ أَيِّ شَيْءٍ خَلَقَهُ

مِنْ نُطْفَةٍ خَلَقَهُ فَقَدَّرَهُ

ثُمَّ السَّبِيلَ يَسَّرَهُ

ثُمَّ أَمَاتَهُ فَأَقْبَرَهُ

تُمْ إِذَا شَاءَ أَنْشَرَهُ

كَأَلَّا لَمَّا يُفْضِنُ مَا أَمَرَهُ

11. ***“Nay surely it is an admonishment,”***
12. ***“So let him who pleases mind it,”***
13. ***“(It is) in Books held (greatly) in honor,”***
14. ***“Exalted (in dignity) kept pure and holy,”***
15. ***“In the hand of scribes,”***
16. ***“Honorable and pious and just,”***
17. ***“Cursed be man! How ungrateful is he”***
18. ***“Of what thing did He create him?”***
19. ***“Of a sperm-drop He created him, then molded him in due proportions;”***
20. ***“Then He made the way easy for him,”***
21. ***“Then He caused him to die, then assigned to him a grave,”***
22. ***“Then, when it is His will, He will raise him to life again,”***
23. ***“Nay, but (man) has not done what He commanded him”.***

Only the Purified Ones Can Touch the Qur'an

In connection with the aforementioned verses, which spoke about admonishing the one who was unmindful of a truth-seeking blind man, these verses are about the importance of the Qur'an, its pure origin, and the efficient effect it has on individuals.

Advising the one who was unmindful not to repeat this action again, it says:

“Nay, surely it is an admonishment.”

‘You’ do not need to pay attention to those who are, apparently, gifted and self-sufficient and are, subsequently, proud, while neglecting the purified oppressed.

It, is, also probable that the verse:

“Nay, surely it is an admonishment”

could be an answer to all accusations the pagans and the enemies of Islam uttered about the Qur'an. They called it 'a poetry', 'a magic', and sometimes 'a kind of soothsaying'. The Qur'an demands that none of them are right, but that these verses of Qur'an are reminders for acknowledgment, awareness and faith. It contains the proofs and documents in itself. The people who approach it can get the facts, themselves, except its enemies.

“So let him who pleases, mind it”.

This points to both the lack of obligation, and an evidence to exercise of free-will for everyone – that is, no one can obtain its merits unless one wishes to and makes the decision to follow its guidance.

“(It is) in Books held (greatly) in honor,”

The term /suhuf/ is the plural form of /sahifah /which means 'tablet' or 'sheet' or 'anything on which something can be written'. This shows that the verses of Qur'an had been written on some tablets before they were revealed to the Prophet (S), and the angels of revelation possessed them, therefore, it means that the tablets were in a very high position.

Some views have held that /suhuf/ means 'the Books of earlier prophets (as),' which does not seem agreeable with its pre and post verses. Some have also said that it means 'the Preserved Tablet', but this idea does not seem suitable, either, because /suhuf/ is in a plural form and has not been used in the form of 'the Preserved Tablet'.

“Exalted (in dignity) kept pure and holy”.

It is beyond the reach of the aberrant ones; they cannot distort it; it is pure and kept far from tainted hands. Finally, it is pure from any contradiction, discrepancy and doubt.

Moreover, they are:

“In the hand of scribes,”

who are:

“Honorable and pious and just.”

The term /safarah/ is the plural form of /safir/ based on /safir/, which originally means 'to unveil a matter or a thing', so, one who comes unto people with a special mission; to remove their difficulties and uncover the ambiguous matters for them is called /safir/ 'an ambassador'. A writer is also called /safir/ since he or she uncovers the meaning of a matter.

Therefore, /safarah/ means 'the Divine angels who reveal Messages or write them down'.

A narration from Imam Sadiq (as) says:

“One who learns the whole Qur'an by heart and acts accordingly is with the scribes, honorable and pious and just”.

This clearly shows that those who know the Qur'an by heart, commentators, and those who act according to its instructions are in the same rank as the scribes. And it is a fact that when scholars and

those who learn the Qur'an by heart, or preserve it, do something similar to what the angels and bringers of revelation do, then, they should be counted among them.

It is understood that, on the whole, any Muslim who tries to protect and keep the Holy Qur'an alive deserves a position as high as that of the 'honorable and pious angels'.

The term /kiram/ is the plural form of /karim/ which means 'honorable, or beneficent' and refers to the greatness of the angels of revelation.

It is sometimes said that it refers to their pureness of any sin, as Surah Anbiya, No. 21, verses 26–27 say about the angels:

"...Nay, they are honored servants, "

"They do not precede Him in speech and (only) according to His commandment do they act".

The term /bararah/ is the plural form of /bar/ based on /bar/ which originally means 'vastness', then, 'a vast land' is called /barr/, and since good people's generosity is vast and benefits many others, they are called /bar/.

The term

'pious'

used in this verse, of course, means 'obedient to His Command' and 'sinlessness'. Thus Allah characterizes the angels in three ways: first, they are His agents for His revelations, second, they are naturally pious and honorable; and third, they are pure, obedient and sinless.

Though there are so many signs of guidance from Allah in His

'Books held (greatly) in honor'

containing all kinds of reminders revealed by the angels, the ungrateful man does not resign himself to Him, hence, it says:

"Cursed be man! how ungrateful is he!"

The term /kufr/, may mean 'disbelief' or 'ingratitude' or 'any covering and denial of Allah', which can be suitable, here, because, in the last verses it refers to the signs of guidance and faithfulness, and in the next verses it mentions the different kinds of blessings from Allah.

In any case, the objective point of

"Cursed be man!"

is to express an intensive hatred toward the ungrateful ones.

Since the origin of disobedience and ungratefulness is generally pride, then to break it, the next verse says:

"Of what thing did He create him?"

"Of a sperm-drop He created him, then molded him in due proportions".

Why does man not think about the origin of his creation? Why does he forget his main source? Moreover, why does he not take note of Allah's ability in the creation of this strange creature from a sperm-drop? If he contemplated on his creation from a sperm-drop and, then, about the formation of his body and its limbs, and his faculties and abilities and even his necessities of life being in a suitable proportion, it could be the best guidance for his theological and divine knowledge.

The term

'Iqaddarahul, 'He molded him in due proportions'

is based on /taqdir/ which means 'the act of measuring and well-balancing'.

We know that there are more than twenty metals and metalloids in the human body, each of which is at a determined level from the point of quantity and quality. If these levels change to a lower or a higher degree, the regularity of the body's chemistry will be disturbed.

Besides this, the condition of the body's structure and the relations between its organs, have exact limits. The intellect and instincts hidden in an individual, alone, and in human beings, all together, must be in a special arrangement to provide for man's happiness.

Allah is He Who fulfilled all the above proportions for the worthless life-germ in the form of a sperm-drop. The life-germ is so small that if we gathered, together, as many of them as the number of human beings, which exists today, they would not amount to a thimbleful. Yes, He designed so many colorful characteristics and embellishments on and in such a slight, tiny particle, and from this created a creature such as man.

The term /taqdir/ has been defined as: 'to make ready' by some commentators. It is also probable that the meaning of /taqdir/ is 'to make the unworthy life-germ powerful'. How great is the Creator Who makes this feeble substance so powerful; Who puts the sky, the earth and the seas at his disposal, and enables him to conquer all the forces of his surroundings.

Of course, all three of the above comments can be considered, together, also.

"Then He made the way easy for him".

Allah made the way for the fetus to develop in its mother's womb, and then made the way for moving to this world, easy for man.

One of the wonders of man's birth is that a few moments before the time of nativity the child is so located in the mother's womb that usually its head is right side up, its face is to the mother's back and its feet are toward the down side of the womb; but when the time of birth comes, the child turns upside down so that its head is downwards, and this very position makes the birth easier for both the child and its mother.

There are, of course, exceptions where some children are born under various complications and, therefore, their mothers encounter many difficulties.

Allah has made everything easy for him: after his birth he grows during his childhood, then his human instincts grow, and after that he grows along the path of faith and spiritual perfection by way of guidance from the prophets (as) and by his own reasoning.

"Then He made the way easy for him".

What a completely meaningful and interesting sentence this is! It is very short, but it alludes to so many facts!

Another point which is noteworthy is that it says:

"Then He made the way easy for him".

It does not say: 'Then He forced him to go the way'. This is an emphasis, again, on man's free-will.

Further, it declares the end of man's life and says:

"Then He caused him to die, then assigned to him a grave".

Surely, the act of 'putting to death' belongs to Allah, but the act of covering the corpse, in a grave, apparently belongs to man, however, the required intelligence, for this action and, also, the other necessary means for it have been supplied by Allah, and that is why the assigning of a grave has been attributed to Allah too.

Some commentators have also said that the objective point of attributing the action to Allah is that He has created a grave for man which is under the ground, while some others have thought of it as a religious instruction, from Allah, about the burial of corpses.

One of the graces of Allah to human beings is the very burial of corpses. If they did not know what to do with their corpses or if there were not any instructions issued about the burial of corpses, the corpses would humiliatingly remain putrid on the ground, and the beasts and birds would feast on them, which would be a horrible debasement. Therefore, Allah's graces are bestowed on man; not only during his lifetime, but even after his death.

Moreover, the instruction for burying the corpses of people (after the ceremonial bath, shroud, and prayer) is an inspirational one, because it is to say that the dead bodies of human beings must be

purified and respected, even more than their live ones, because live people have the responsibility of keeping themselves pure.

Another noteworthy point is that the situation of death, in this verse, is counted among the blessings of Allah. This is really true if we care to understand, because, first, death is a release from the troubles and imperfections of this world and a close to the probationary period.

After which will dawn the full Reality in a world so much broader than this world. Secondly, the death of the present generations makes room for the later generations, and causes mankind to continue to live and to improve, or else the human population would reach such extremes that would be impossible for them to live on Earth.

It is interesting that this very idea is delicately mentioned in Surah Rahman, No. 55, verse 26–28 thus:

“Everything on earth will pass away;”

“And there will endure the Face of your Lord, the Lord of Glory and Honor.”

“Then which of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?”

There, again, according to these verses, death is one of the great gifts from Allah.

Yes, the world, with all its blessings, is a prison for a believer.

Moving from this world to the next world is a release from this prison. Besides, the abundance of blessings, in this world, sometimes causes people to neglect their position, then, the remembrance of death may awaken them, therefore, from this point of view, too, it is a blessing. If all of the past events of life were always alive, it would certainly be tiresome to continue it, but the immortal life, on the contrary, will be thoroughly full of joy and happiness.

Then, our attention is turned to the Resurrection of the human race, and, it says:

“Then when it is His will, He will raise him to life again.”

The term /inṣaraha/ is based on /inṣar/ which means 'to spread abroad after gathering'. It is an interesting point which shows that the life of man is totally gathered up by death, but it will be spread out, again, through Resurrection in a higher and greater environment.

It is worthy to note that for 'death' and for 'burial' it says:

“Then He caused him to die, then assigned to him a grave”,

but for Resurrection it says:

“When it is His will, He will raise him to life again”

and this makes it clear that no one knows the time of the Great Event (The Resurrection), but, it is only Allah, Who knows it, and death is an inevitable event where everyone, after living a willy-nilly natural life, will die.

The last verse of this group says that although these blessings and stages have been provided by Allah's grace, for the good of man, (from the time he was a lowly sperm-drop to the time he arrived in this world and went on the path of growth and, finally, passed away and was covered with dust in the grave), unregenerate man fails in carrying out the purpose of his creation and life:

"Nay, but (man) has not done what He commanded him".

The term /lamma/ is usually used with a negative meaning when something is still expected. It touches on this sense that man, having these divine gifts and the means of guidance, is expected to be earnest in obeying Allah and acting on His commands, but surprisingly he has not done it yet.

The following are two different ideas about the meaning of the term 'man' used in this verse:

The first idea says that it alludes to the persons who go the path of ungratefulness, denial, and injustice and corresponds with Surah Ibrahim, No. 14, verse 34 which says:

"...most surely man is very unjust, very ungrateful."

The second idea says that it refers to all of mankind, because no one (irrespective of believers and unbelievers) has accurately carried out what Allah has commanded him to do, to the extent that it deserves the greatness of His glory and dignity; as a Persian poem says:

Servants of Allah should ask Him to excuse them for their short comings.

Else, no one is able to do according to his Lordship.

Surah 'Abasa, Verses 24-32

فَلْيَنْظُرِ الْإِنْسَانُ إِلَى طَعَامِهِ

أَنَا صَبَبْنَا الْمَاءَ صَبًّا

ثُمَّ شَقَقْنَا الْأَرْضَ شَقًّا

فَأَنْبَتْنَا فِيهَا حَبًّا

وَعِنَبًا وَقَضْبًا

وَزَيْتُونًا وَنَخْلًا

وَحَدَائِقَ غُلْبًا

وَفَاكِهَةً وَأَبًّا

مِنَّا لَكُمْ وَلِيَأْتِعَامِكُمْ

24. "Then let man look to his food,"

25. "That We pour down the water, pouring it in abundance,"

26. "And We split the earth into fragments,"

27. "And We produce therein corn,"

28. "And grapes and grasses,"

29. "And the olive and the palm,

30. "And gardens, dense with trees,"

31. "And fruits and fodder,"

32. "Provision for you and for your cattle."

Man Should Look At His food!

Since the aforementioned verses allude to the Resurrection and the next verses also refer more vividly to this very matter, it seems that these verses are a proof for the Resurrection. By explaining Allah's authority over all things and, also, reviving the dead lands by sending down rain, which is a resurrection in itself for plants, proves the possibility of Resurrection.

By the way, since these verses mention the different kinds of nourishment that Allah has given to man and his cattle, they call him to thank Allah and pay heed to the knowledge of Him.

First, it says:

"Then let man look to his food;"

and considers how Allah has produced it.

The closest exterior substance, to man, is his food which, after some changes, is easily absorbed and

becomes part of his body, therefore, if he cannot obtain it he will perish. That is why the Qur'an, among all things, puts emphasis on the nourishment; especially those produced from trees and plants.

It is clear that the aim of saying 'look to' is not a simple look, but it means with deep care and contemplating on the vital elements and wonderful structure of the nourishment, and the surprising effects they have on him, so, consequently, he should think about the Creator, Who has created them. [1](#)

There is the idea which says that it may mean 'a superficial look, a look which stimulates the salivary glands and, as a result, helps the digestion'. This seems improbable because, in comparison with its pre and post verses, the verse does not carry such a meaning at all; but some food scientists look at the contents of the Qur'an with their own narrow view points, then, it is natural for them to have an idea like that about the verse.

Some others believe it to mean that when one sits at the table to eat, one must look carefully at the foods to see how they are prepared, whether they are permitted or forbidden, lawful or unlawful and, thus, one may consider the moral and religious aspects in eating.

In some narrations from the sinless Imams, the term

Ita'am/ 'food',

here, means 'knowledge', the sustenance of man's soul, then, one should be careful and 'look' at Whom he has taken it from.

Among these is a narration from Imam Muhammad Baqir (as) for the commentary of the above verse, which says:

“Be careful from where and from whom you get your information.”

Another narration, similar to this, has been quoted from Imam Sadiq (as).

Undoubtedly, the apparent meaning of the verse is about the bodily foods which are described in later verses, but the soul's sustenance can analogically be understood from it, since man is a combination of soul and body; as his body needs bodily food so his soul requires spiritual sustenance, as well.

When man should be careful about his bodily nourishment, and knows of its origin which, according to the next verses, is life-giving rain, he should also be careful about his spiritual nourishment, the Message revealed from above (like rain) to the Prophet's heart (S). The very place where the hearts of the sinless Imams got it from and store it like fountains of youth for others to make their own hearts fruitful with faith, virtue and morals.

Yes, one must completely be aware of the main origin of one's knowledge or one may call it 'spiritual nourishment', lest it may come from a corrupted source and, as a result, cause one's soul and body to

become sick or die.

And the matter of things being lawful /halal/ or unlawful, /haram/, and permitted or forbidden can analogically be understood through the potential guidance, too.

This is also probable that the terms 'food' and 'look' both have vast meanings in this verse, hence all the three above commentaries can be gathered in it.

It is evident that the term

'man',

used in the verse, includes all members of the human race whether they are believers or unbelievers. They must care about what they eat and, also, the wonder of its creation in order for the unbelievers, to find the right way, and for the believers to increase in their faith.

Verily, each article of food: fruits, nutritious seeds, and vegetables have some interesting properties which can be studied, separately, in our lifetime and many things can be learned from them to enlighten us and give us insight into the wonders that they contain.

Then, to explain the nourishment's and their origins, it says:

"That We pour down the water, pouring it in abundance".

The term /sab/ means 'to pour water over from above', and here it means 'sending down rain'. The term /sabba/, at the end of the verse, is used for emphasis and to note the abundance of water.

Water, which is very necessary for every living creature, often comes down sufficiently, because of Allah's grace. And we know that the essential source of water existing in rivers, streams, springs, subterranean canals and wells is rain, so that if it does not rain one year, all of them will dry up.

Thus, while studying articles of food, first and foremost, man should refer to the importance of the regularity of rainfall. The sun shines over the seas where vapor, in the form of clouds, rises from and moves above the earth where winds scatter the clouds high in the sky.

At cold points in the atmosphere, the clouds change into pure, harmless water again and fall gently on the ground in the form of droplets of rain or little pieces of snow that soak into the ground. Trees, plants and living things draw up water from the ground.

After mentioning water, which is an important factor in human life, it refers to another great factor; the earth, and says:

"And We split the earth in fragments".

many commentators have said that this splitting is the splitting of; the land by plant seeding. It is really wonderful that a little smooth seedling can break the hard, solid land and sometimes it shoots up through stone. What a surprising power the Creator has given to this tiny smooth seedling which enables it to do so!

Some others have said that the split may be the splitting of the land when man ploughs it or even when some worms burrow through it; a kind of plowing for the purpose of some other life activities.

Plowing is one of man's activities, of course, but Allah has given him all its necessary means, therefore it relates to Allah.

The third commentary, which has been cited for the verse, and seems preferable for certain considerations, says that the meaning of

'splitting the earth'

is 'the act of breaking the stone into pieces on the surface of the earth.'

Explanation

At first the surface of the earth was covered with a mass of stone. Heavy rains fell, continuously, and cleft the stone asunder and spread its little parts onto the low lands and, thus, a mass of agricultural soil was formed, some of which is now carried to the seas by floods. But the new soil, produced by the succeeding rain and snow was replaced by it, otherwise man would be faced with the lack of agricultural soil.

Then, the verse points to one of the miracles of the Qur'an, in science, when it says it rains, first, then the earth cleaves asunder and becomes fit for farming. This not only happened in the very early days, but also keeps occurring today.

This commentary seems more suitable, because the growth of plants and the production of grains are mentioned in the next verses.

Here, again, all three commentaries, together, can be probable.

After mentioning the two basic factors; i.e. water and soil, it refers to the eight items of plants, which contain the main nutrients for man and cattle.

"And We produce therein corn".

Corn /habbal

is 'grain, the seeds of cereal grass; wheat, oats, rye or barely, or the plants producing them'. They are the essential sources of man's and cattle's nourishment's during the year, the lack of which, because of

drought, causes famine and starvation, a great plague for the world.

The term

/habban/ 'corn',

in a general sense, shows the importance and the variety of the seeds. Some others have only meant it as 'wheat' or 'rye' which is not reasonable, because the term 'corn' can include all seeds, which was mentioned before.

“And grapes and grasses”

The term /inab/, which means both 'grapes and vine', in the verses of Qur'an, is mentioned, here, because it contains many nutrients, as a complete food and more than other fruits. It means only grapes in this verse.

The term /qathb/ originally means 'the vegetables which are cut several times', and, here, it means the different kinds of vegetables. Its occurrence after the term 'grapes' is for its importance as a food material.

Today, vegetables enjoy a high position in food science and are especially recommended.

The term /qathb/ is sometimes used with the meaning of 'to cut, or to pick'.

It is probable that /qathb/, used, here, in this verse, has a broader meaning which includes both vegetables and fruits.

“And the olive and the palm”.

It is clear that these two items are both from the most important articles of food which are useful, sound, and nutritious. This is why they are mentioned and emphasized on, here.

“And gardens, dense with trees”.

The term /hada'iq/ is the plural form of /hadiqah /which is 'a garden surrounded by a wall', but originally it means 'a piece of land containing water for irrigation'. The word is derived from /hadaqah/ 'eye_socket' where water exists, constantly.

Since these kinds of gardens are usually fruit gardens, the word may hint to the kinds of fruits in Heaven.

The term /qulb/ is the plural form of /aqlab/ and /qulba ' / which means 'thick-necked' and is originally derived from /qalabah/. Here, it means 'tall, thick trees'.

“And fruits and fodder”.

The term /abb/ means 'herbage not sown by men' or 'herbage prepared for pasture and for cutting'. Basically it means 'preparation' and, since these pastures are prepared for the usage, so, they are called /abb/.

Some others have also said that /abb/ is used for the fruits that are suitable for drying and storing to be used in winter, because they are always ready for use.

The late Mufid in his book, Irshad, has narrated from Amir_al_Mo'mineen Ali (as) that the word meant 'herbage as a pasture', and he added:

“What God said in the verse 'And fruits and fodder' is a divine gift for His servants that He created as a part of their food and for their cattle, from which their lives receive merit and their bodies are strengthened”. [2](#)

In the former verses some special fruits were named, while here fruits, in general, are discussed. Moreover, the last verse spoke about 'gardens', which seemed to mean 'the fruits of gardens', then, how are the fruits dealt with, here, again?

The answer to this question is this: There, some definite fruits such as grapes, olives, and dates, which are of great importance among all fruits, were named; but, here, fruits are mentioned separate from 'gardens', perhaps because, besides fruits, gardens have some more advantages, such as, fresh air, nice views, etc.

Moreover, the leaves of some trees and the twigs, the roots, and the barks of some others (for example: tea, cinnamon, ginger and the like) are among the edibles; in addition to the leaves of many trees, which are suitable food for cattle. And it is a fact that the items stated in the aforementioned verses are edible for both human beings as well as their cattle.

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

“Provision for you and for your cattle.”

The term /mata'/ means 'anything that man uses or enjoys'.

Explanation: Wholesome Nutriments

There are eight nutriments named, in these verses, for man and cattle. It is interesting that all of them are from herb ages and that is because of the importance of vegetables, grains and fruits in man's diet, so, in other words, they are the true original nutriments, while meat, obtained from animals, is in the second position and in a lesser amount.

Also noteworthy is that food science, which is one of the wide spread and important sciences and has a broad field with a large scope of investigation, is an explanation for what is mentioned in these verses

and shows the magnificence of the Holy Qur'an, especially when this science emphasizes on the value and the efficiency of these food materials.

In any case, taking note of these materials and thinking about the creator of them may cause man's awareness of Allah's grace and mercy to mankind.

Yes, paying attention to ones bodily food and, then, the sustenance of the soul from the points of both its structural content and how one obtained it, can push one forward along the path of knowledge of Allah, righteousness, and self-perfection.

Verily,

"Then let man look to his food",

and what a meaningful sentence this short, single statement is!

Surah 'Abasa, Verses 33-42

فَإِذَا جَاءَتِ الصَّاخَّةُ

يَوْمَ يَفِرُّ الْمَرْءُ مِنْ أَخِيهِ

وَأُمِّهِ وَأَبِيهِ

وَصَاحِبَتِهِ وَبَنِيهِ

لِكُلِّ امْرِيٍّ مِنْهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ شَأْنٌ يُغْنِيهِ

وُجُوهُ يَوْمَئِذٍ مُسْفِرَةٌ

ضَاحِكَةٌ مُسْتَبْشِرَةٌ

وَوُجُوهُ يَوْمَئِذٍ عَلَيْهَا غَبَرَةٌ

تَرْهَقُهَا قَتْرَةٌ

أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْكَافِرَةُ الْفَجَرَةُ

33. ***“And when the deafening cry comes,”***
34. ***“The Day on which a man shall flee from his brother,”***
35. ***“And his mother and his father,”***
36. ***“And from his wife and his children,”***
37. ***“Each one of them, That Day, will have concern enough to occupy him.”***
38. ***“Some faces That Day will be bright,”***
39. ***“Laughing, rejoicing”.***
40. ***“And some faces That Day will be dust-stained,”***
41. ***“Blackness will cover them:”***
42. ***“Those are they who are unbelievers, the wicked.”***

The Resurrection Cry!

After describing a notable number of divine gifts and worldly blessings, the theme changes to talk about the resurrection and some of its happenings as well as the end of the believers and unbelievers. The purpose in this is to say that, firstly, these gifts, whatever they are, will have an end sometime; and secondly, they are some signs to prove the existence of Allah’s authority which is over everything and, of course, over the Resurrection.

“And when the deafening cry comes,”

The term /saxah/ is based on /sax/ which originally means 'a very loud noise', so loud that it almost deafens the ears, or actually deafens them. It points, here, to the second sound of the blast of the trumpet, the very great cry which brings the dead to life again and makes them go forth to the gathering place for the final Judgment.

Verily, the cry is so loud and shocking that everyone forgets all but one's end resulting from one's own actions.

“The Day on which a man shall flee from his brother”.

The same brother who was loved sincerely, was helped in everything favorably, now he flees from that brother, abruptly.

“And his mother and his father,”

“And from his wife and his children”.

Thus, individuals not only leave the nearest and the dearest members of their family such as their brother, father, mother, wife, and children, but also flee from them.

This statement shows that the horror and the fear of the Day is so much so that it makes individuals cease all their wishes and affections. In the probationary life, mother was loved by her child very much; father was highly respected by his son; wife was eagerly beloved by her husband; children were the best for their father, as the apples of his eyes; but now, in the eternal life, one flees from all of them!

The reason why he flees from them is stated in the next verse.

“Each one of them, That Day, will have concern enough to occupy him”.

The term

/yuqnihi/ 'makes him self-sufficient'

shows that on That Day, man is so busy with his affairs that he does not pay attention to anyone; and the events are so terrible and overwhelming as to occupy him and his mind, totally.

It has been narrated that some of the households of the Prophet (S) asked him if one would remember one's close friend on That Day, and he answered:

“There are three halting-places where no one remembers anyone.

The first place is where the acts are weighed to see whether they are heavy (worthy) or light (unworthy); then, it is on the path where he wonders whether he can pass it (successfully) or not; and then it is the time when he is given his Record to see whether it is given to his right hand or to his left hand.

In these three halting-places no one cares for any one else: his supporter, his comrade, his companion, his very true friend, his child, his parents, and this is the same thing that Allah says:

'Each one of them, That Day, will have concern enough to occupy him'.³

Then the situation of the believers and unbelievers is described when it says:

“Some faces That Day will be bright”

“Laughing, rejoicing”,

“And some faces That Day will be dust-stained,”

“Blackness will cover them”.

The term /musfirah/ is based on /asfar/ which means 'to appear, or to glitter' like the light of the early morning at the end of the darkness of night; the term /qabarah/ is based on /qabar/ which means 'dust'; the term /qatarah/ originally is based on /qatar/ which means 'smoke'; the term /kafarah/ and the term /fajarah/ are the plural forms of /kafir/ 'a unbeliever from the point of view of belief and /fajir/ 'a sinner

from the point of view of action'.

The look on the face shows the inner self (mood), both physically and spiritually, good or bad.

It is understood from the verse that on That Day the faces show the righteousness or wickedness of persons during their lives in this world.

The dust on the faces of the sinners will be in contrast to the beaming light on the faces of the righteous; and the blackness (smoke) of the faces of sinners, who are sad and regretful, in contrast to the 'laughing, rejoicing' faces of the righteous.

On the whole, on That Day, the faces show the facts and it is enough to look at the faces to know who is a sinner and who is righteous; as it is said in Surah Rahman, No. 55, verse 41:

“(For) the sinners will be known by their faces”.

Explanation: Self-Perfection

The ideas set forth in the short and meaningful verses, of this Surah, are a good collection for individuals to use as a guidance to self-perfection.

1. On the one hand, it leads man to refer to the origin of his creation to understand how he was created from a lowly sperm-drop in order that he should not be proud, because one of the greatest hindrances on the path of self-perfection is pride.
2. On the other hand, it introduces the divine leadership to man as the best provision of his way including both the Prophet's guidance, originating from revelation, and the guidance led by rational thinking and the observation in the regularity of the created world.
3. Then, it orders man to look to his food to see how it is created and prepared for him by the Beneficent and the Merciful Creator, and then, to obey Him in humility. Man should be careful to obtain his food, lawfully, because pure and lawful food is an important basis for self-perfection.
4. When he must be careful about his bodily food, then, he should certainly be careful about his soul's sustenance to see that it is not from a corrupted source; that which threatens his spiritual life.

It is surprising that some people are seriously careful about their bodily food, but they do not take care about their soul's sustenance; they read any book and they learn the tutorship of any misleading education and observe no limits or conditions for the sustenance of their soul.

There is a narration from Amir-al-Mo'mineen Ali (as) that says:

"Why, I see that people light a lamp at night, to watch what kind of food they eat, but they do not mind what is the sustenance of their soul. They do not enlighten their mind by (the) rational knowledge, if they

do they will be safe from the bad results of ignorance and sinfulness in their beliefs and deeds.” [4](#)

His son Imam Hassan–Mujtaba (as) also said something along these lines:

“I wonder at some people who think about their bodily food, but do not care for their soul's sustenance. They avoid eating harmful food, but fill their hearts with fatal materials.” [5](#)

5. One should remember that the Deafening Cry will raise up all from their graves, and everyone will be faced with one's Record. Then, the circumstances, there, will be so awful that one will forget all of one's dearest beloved. One should think about one's acts whether they be so good that one will deserve to have a 'laughing, rejoicing' and bright face That Day, or whether one will have an ugly, black and frowning face, then, and thus, will cause oneself to prepare for that Day.

Supplication

O Lord! Make each of us successful in self–perfection.

O Lord! Do not deprive us from a good sustenance for our spirits.

O Lord! Make us conscious of our duties to fulfill them before the occurrence of the deafening Cry!

[1.](#) The term /fal–yanzur/ my originally mean that 'if man is in doubt of his Creator and the Resurrection, then let him look to his food'.

[2.](#) Irshad–i–Mufid, From Al–Mizan, vol. 20, p. 319.

[3.](#) Borhan, commentary, . vol. 4, p. 439.

[4.](#) Safinat–ul–Bihar, vol. 2, p. 84.

[5.](#) ibid.