

Surah al-Dukhan, Chapter 44, Verses 1 – 36

(The Smoke)

Section (juz' 25)

Number of Verses: 59

General Overview of the Chapter

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

The Chapter in question revealed in Mecca has fifty nine Verses. It is the fifth Chapter beginning with the detached letters HM.

The word:

dukhan (“*smoke*”)

it attested twice in the Holy Qur'an. One instance is to be found in Chapter 411 concerning the beginning of this world and the other which may be found in the tenth Verse of the Chapter in question, makes a reference to the end of the world.

Most of the issues mentioned in the Chapter concern the Greatness of the Qur'an; its Revelation on the Night of Decree; Unity; disbelievers' fate; the story of prophet Moses (as), Children of Israel, and Pharaoh; usefulness of creation; and the creation of the heavens and the earth.

Merits of the Recitation of the Chapter

According to a Prophetic tradition:

“One who recites Surah al-Dukhan on Friday in the day and at night, God will have a mansion built for him in Paradise.”²

Another Prophetic tradition says:

“One who recites Surah al-Dukhan in one night, he will awaken when seventy thousand angels ask for his forgiveness.”³

Surah al-Dukhan - Verses 1 – 3

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

ح

وَالْكِتَابِ الْمُبِينِ

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ فِي لَيْلَةٍ مُبَارَكَةٍ إِنَّا كُنَّا مُنذِرِينَ

1. HM

2. By the manifest Book that makes things clear.

3. We sent It down on a blessed night. Indeed, We are ever warning.

The word **“blessed”** (*mubarak*) refers to the Night of Decree (laylat al-qadr) which is in the blessed month of Ramadan [the ninth month of the lunar calendar]:

(“The month of Ramadan in which the Qur’an was sent down”).

Different interpretations have been put forward for the detached letters opening a number of Qur’anic Chapters the best of which may be the one according to which the inimitability of the Holy Qur’an springs from the same letters as the second Verse of Chapter 424, following the detached letters HM ‘ASQ, reads:

“Likewise Allah, the Omnipotent, the All-Wise sends Revelation to you [O Muhammad!].”

according to a number of traditions, a secret lies in these letters which is solely known to God.⁵

The detached letters HM open the Verse in question as well as the four preceding and the two following Chapters. Interpretations of these letters have been discussed above. Such interpretations of the detached letters HM may be found in the openings of Chapters 40 and 41.

It is worthy of note that a number of exegetes have taken HM in the sense of taking an oath consistent with the following oath to the Qur’an thus making two oaths to the detached letters HM and the Qur’an.

It was mentioned above that God Almighty swears to the Holy Qur’an in the second Verse of this Chapter saying:

“By the manifest Book that makes things clear.”

The Holy Qur’an is a Book with manifest contents, invigorating teachings, constructive decrees, and well measured plans. It bears testimony to Its Truth.

“The Sun bears testimony to [the existence of] the Sun.”

The truth for which the oath has been taken is suggested in the third Verse:

“We sent It [i.e., the Holy Qur’an bearing testimony to the veracity of the prophethood of the Prophet of Islam (S)] down on a blessed night.”

The word:

mubarak (“blessed; useful; everlasting; permanent”)

derives from baraka.

What night is the one which is the source of permanent good things? The majority of exegetes maintain that it is the Night of Decree, a blessed Night on which the Ordainments of the world of humanity found a novel color with the Revelation of the Holy Qur’an, a night on which the fates of humanity and the Ordainments of one year are predestined.

Thus, the Holy Qur’an was revealed to the pure heart of the Prophet (S) on a fateful and momentous night. It is noteworthy that the Verse apparently indicates that the Holy Qur’an, in Its entirety, was revealed to the Prophet (S) on the Night of Decree.

What was the main purpose behind Its revelation?

It is mentioned in the same Verse:

“Indeed, We are ever warning.”

God Almighty appoints His Messengers to warn polytheists and wrong doers and the prophethood of the Noble Prophet of Islam (S) with this manifest Book is the last link of the chain of prophethood.

It is true that prophets warned on the one hand and bore glad tidings on the other, but their calls basically rested on giving warnings to wrong doers and sinners.

Surah al-Dukhan - Verses 4 - 6

فِيهَا يُفْرَقُ كُلُّ أَمْرٍ حَكِيمٍ

أَمْرًا مِنْ عِنْدِنَا إِنَّا كُنَّا مُرْسِلِينَ

رَحْمَةً مِنْ رَبِّكَ إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ

4. Therein [the blessed night] is decreed [and explicated] every [momentous] matter of Ordainments [as per Divine Wisdom].

5. As a Command [the Revelation of the Qur'an on the Night of Decree and the Decree of every matter on that night] from Us. Indeed, We are ever sending [all the Messengers].

6. [Revelation of the Book and sending Messengers is] a Mercy from your Lord. Indeed, He is the All-Hearer, the Omniscient.

The Night of Decree is recurrent each and every year. The present tense of the verb indicates progression. The Ordainments of the Night of Decree concern basic issues. The Night of Decree is the fateful and momentous night.

The blessed Verse provides a description of the Night of Decree

“Therein [the blessed night] is decreed [and explicated] every [momentous] matter of Ordainments [as per Divine Wisdom].”

“Is decreed” (yufraqu)

makes a reference to the Ordainment of all fateful and momentous matters on that night.

The employment of the word:

“All-Wise” (hakim)

demonstrates the wisdom and unchangeability of Divine Ordainment. The attribute is usually used in the Holy Qur’an for God but its employment for things other than God is for the sake of emphasis.

The exposition is in harmony with many a tradition to the effect that the Ordainments of all humanity, e.g. provisions and longevity, within a period of one year are ordained on the Night of Decree. The exposition of the issue and other discussions on the Night of Decree and the harmony of Divine Ordainment with human free will are to be found in the exegesis of Chapter 97.

Emphasis is laid on the Divine Revelation of the Qur’an in Verse five:

“As a Command [the Revelation of the Qur’an on the Night of Decree and the Decree of every matter on that night] from Us. Indeed, We are ever sending [all the Messengers].”

Basic grounds for the revelation of the Qur’an, sending the prophets, and the Ordainments of the Night of Decree are mentioned in the third Verse:

“A Mercy from your Lord.”

His infinite Mercy necessitates that he does not abandon His servants but send them plans and guides in order to guide them on the winding path of perfection toward God. All the world of existence is basically emanated from his infinite Mercy and humanity enjoys His Mercy more than other creatures.

Seven Divine Attributes are enumerated in the Verse and the following Ones all of which indicate His Unity.

These Attributes include:

“All-Hearing (His servants’ invocations) and Omniscient (of the secrets of His servants’ hearts).”

Surah al-Dukhan – Verses 7 – 8

رَبِّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا إِنَّ كُنُوتَكُمْ مُوقِنِينَ

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ رَبُّكُمْ وَرَبُّ آبَائِكُمُ الْأَوَّلِينَ

7. The Lord of the heavens and the earth and all that is between them, if you have a faith with certainty.

8. There is no god but He. It is He Who gives life and causes death – your Lord and the Lord of your forefathers.

Let us give careful consideration to the Holy Qur'an revealed by the Lord of heavens, the earth, and all creatures. Careful consideration of creation and guidance on the path of perfection paves the way for acquiring certitude.

Three Divine Attributes are mentioned in these two Verses: firstly, Divine Lordship (rububiyya) describing Himself as the Lord and nurturer of creatures, i.e., the heaven, the earth and what exists between the twain.

Secondly, Divine Lordship, the Everlasting Lord and Creator of all material and immaterial creatures unassociated in His Sovereignty and Creation with any existent being. Thirdly, His Oneness in His Deeds the highest of which is to give life and cause death, i.e., He gives life to the dead and thereafter causes death.

With due consideration to the fact that in these Verses, one is supposed to reason a posteriori, the unity and movement of creatures evidently substantiates proving the Necessary Being (wajib al-wujud), God Almighty, the Creator of the world Who usually describes Himself in this Verse and many other Verses as the Creator of the heaven and the earth.

Thus, taking into consideration the admirable system of creation and the marvelous palace of this world, one may, to some extent, learn the secrets of creation and notice that there is a secret concealed in each and every atom of creatures,

“if you split the heart of each atom, you will find a sun shining within it.”

Thus, one may attain to certitude regarding the existence of the All-Wise and Omnipotent Originator.

Through careful consideration of the systematicity and unity of the world, it will be known that all creatures function as the links of a chain under the Command of the All-Wise God and will acknowledge His Unity, i.e., there is no creator but:

“He Who gives life and causes death – your Lord and the Lord of your forefathers.”

Surah al-Dukhan - Verses 9 - 11

بَلْ هُمْ فِي شَكٍّ يَلْعَبُونَ

فَارْتَقِبْ يَوْمَ تَأْتِي السَّمَاءُ بِدُخَانٍ مُّبِينٍ

يَغْشَى النَّاسَ هَذَا عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ

9. [Disbelievers do not believe in it.] Nay! They play about [with truths] in [unfathomable] doubt.

10. Then await you the Day when the sky will bring forth a visible smoke.

11. Covering [all] the people: this is an excruciating torment.

Both attestations of the word fa-^ʿrtaqib in the Holy Qur'an are to be found in this Chapter. The word is a warning to disbelievers and a consolation to the Prophet (S).

There is neither complication nor any ambiguity in the arguments produced for Divine Unity and disbelievers doubts spring from their innermost grudge and animosity;

(“But they play in their doubt in vain”).

The blessed Verse says that disbelievers are in doubt regarding what God Almighty imparted to them through prophets assuming that mundane life and possession are permanent, since they are preoccupied with mundane affairs and pass their time in sport until they become entangled with torment and they are rendered desperate.

According to the Verse, disbelievers pretend ignorance so that they spend their time in mere play and show unto others that the words of the Noble Prophet (S) are baseless; however any wise individual, thanks to his intellection, perceives that such marvelous systematicity requires the creation of the Omniscient and Omnipotent Creator.

It is so unfortunate that the wise man perceives the facts but pretends ignorance and through his pretence and denial deserves torment.

Had he been unable to distinguish between truth and falsehood, he would not have deserved torment.

According to the second and third Verses, following an exposition of His Lordship, Godhead, and Creation He warns disbelievers against their chastisement by Him and addressing his Messenger He says O Muhammad (S) against disbelievers' hostility and animosity await the day on which the recompense of their deeds will be sent down from the heaven as a consequence of their disobedience.

On such day, a visible smoke will embrace people and that will be an excruciating torment.

The Exegetes' Views Regarding the Verse in Question

By smoke famine is intended. As narrated on the authority of 'Abd Allah ibn Mas'ud, when the people of Quraysh did not believe in the prophethood of Prophet Muhammad (S) but made many an attempt to harm him, the Noble Prophet (S) cursed the tribe of Banu Nadr and they were afflicted by famine for seven years such that they had to feed on carcass and bones.

There was no rain and there was so much dust in the air that they, out of hunger, saw smoke in the sky.

Such dire situation made Abu Sufyan to go to the Noble Prophet (S) and say unto him:

"You enjoined us to care for our kith and kin and your blood relatives are dying of starvation. They have taken an oath that if you invoke God to remove the torment, they will believe in your prophethood."

As a consequence, their supplication

("O God! Remove the torment since we are believers")

is narrated in the Holy Qur'an. Upon the removal of the torment, they persisted in their disbelief.⁸

The smoke in question is a reference to the dust in the air resembling smoke on the day of the conquest of Mecca.

It refers to the day before the Resurrection Day and the disintegration of the world. According to the Prophet (S), early signs of Resurrection are the smoke, the descent of Jesus (as), and the fire erupting from the depth of the town of Aden driving all people to the gathering place of Resurrection.

Hudhayfa inquired:

"O Messenger of God (S)! What kind of fire is that?"

In reply, the Noble Prophet (S) recited the same Verse saying that:

"The smoke will embrace the East and the West and will last for forty days and nights. On that day, the believer will be like someone who has a cold and the disbeliever will resemble a drunk."

A similar narration is transmitted from Imam 'Ali (as).⁹ Taking into consideration the last tradition, the third explanation seems preferable since according to which God Almighty warns disbelievers against the signs appearing before the Resurrection Day.

Surah al-Dukhan - Verses 12 - 13

رَبَّنَا اكْشِفْ عَنَّا الْعَذَابَ إِنَّا مُؤْمِنُونَ

أَنَّى لَهُمُ الذِّكْرَى وَقَدْ جَاءَهُمْ رَسُولٌ مُّبِينٌ

12. [People will say]: “Our Lord! Remove the torment from us, really we shall believe!”

13. How can there be for them an admonition when a Messenger explaining things clearly has already come to them [though they ignored them].

Those who have taken religion as a mere play will notice their neglect and doubt one day. They will offer their supplications since Divine Wrath follows sending the last guidance and there will be no avail in repentance after being afflicted with torment.

Consequently, the two blessed Verses say that when disbelievers notice the tokens of torment and the approach of the Resurrection Day, they will regret their past evil deeds and say that they believe but their repentance will be of no avail since the torment will approach them and what exists in them potentially will be actualized. When the Messenger and Divine Guidance (S) called them to believe in God, they turned away from him and lost the opportunity to act and save themselves.

Surah al-Dukhan – Verses 14 – 16

ثُمَّ تَوَلَّوْا عَنْهُ وَقَالُوا مُعَلَّمٌ مَجْنُونٌ

إِنَّا كَاشِفُو الْعَذَابِ قَلِيلًا إِنَّكُمْ عَائِدُونَ

يَوْمَ نَبْطِشُ الْبَطْشَةَ الْكُبْرَى إِنَّا مُنْتَقِمُونَ

14. Then they had turned away from him and said: “[He is] one taught [by someone], a man possessed!”

15. Indeed, We shall remove the torment for a while. Indeed you will return [to disbelief].

16. On the Day when We shall seize you with the greatest seizure. Indeed, We will exact retribution.

Divine Retribution will not be exacted for gratification of His thirst for revenge, rather it will be exacted for administration of justice.

The word **batsh** is employed in the sense of “seize with awe, severity, and greatness.” Some have

taken the word in the sense of defeating polytheists in the battle of Badr. God Almighty is the source of Mercy; however at times, He is Wrathful. Those who take Divine Revelation as mere play shall suffer severely from Divine Wrath.

God Almighty shall exact retribution of disbelievers who called the Prophet (S)

“taught [by someone], a man possessed.”

Instead of believing in his prophethood and Divine Unity wholeheartedly, they turned away from him and said that:

“he was taught by someone and he was a man possessed [by evil spirits].”

They said at times that “a Roman slave” had heard the legends of the prophets and he taught him such legends. At times they also claimed that his words spring from his mental imbalance.

Verse 15 reads:

“Indeed, We shall remove the torment for a while. Indeed you will return [to disbelief].”

It is thus evident that regretting one’s deeds when afflicted with torment is of no avail since their decision as to the revision of their deeds is transient and when disasters subside, they proceed with their previous stratagems.

Verse 16 reads:

“On the Day when We shall seize you with the greatest seizure. Indeed, We will exact retribution.”

The word batsh denotes seizing by force and it ad hoc designates seizing for severe chastisement and the adjective:

kubra (“great, severe”)

modifying batsha indicates the harsh and severe chastisement in store for disbelievers and polytheists.

In short, subsiding and removal of their ad hoc chastisement will be of no avail since the harsh and final chastisement is inevitably in store for them. Muntaqimun is from intiqam indicating, as mentioned above, chastisement, though the latter is used in common usage in the sense of revenge which is accompanied by anger and hatred.

Surah al-Dukhan – Verses 17 – 19

وَلَقَدْ فَتَنَّا قَبْلَهُمْ قَوْمَ فِرْعَوْنَ وَجَاءَهُمْ رَسُولٌ كَرِيمٌ

أَنْ أَدُّوا إِلَيَّ عِبَادَ اللَّهِ إِنِّي لَكُمْ رَسُولٌ أَمِينٌ

وَأَنْ لَا تَعْلُوا عَلَيَّ اللَّهُ إِنِّي آتِيكُمْ بِسُلْطَانٍ مُبِينٍ

17. And verily We tried before them Pharaoh's people when there came to them a noble Messenger.

18. Saying [Moses unto the Children of Israel]: "Deliver to me Allah's servants [so that I may set them free and save them from exploitation]. Indeed, I am to you a trustworthy Messenger."

19. "And exalt not yourselves against Allah. Truly, I have come unto you with a manifest authority."

Divine trial is an inevitable and long standing tradition. God Almighty tries humanity through sending prophets so that those acknowledging the Truth and those persisting in their obstinate denial could be distinguished:

("And verily We tried").

Proceeding with the topic of the foregoing Verses as to the disobedience of Arab polytheists' and well as ancient people's disobedience against the Truth, the Verses in question make mention of their excruciating torment and utter defeat so that they may serve as a consolation for believers and a warning against hateful disbelievers.

Mention is made of the story of Moses and Pharaoh:

"And verily We tried before them Pharaoh's people when there came to them a noble Messenger."

Fatanna is taken from fitna which is originally employed in the sense of placing gold ore in crucible to refine it from impurities. It is figuratively used in the sense of any test or trial conducted to determine the sincerity of human beings. The world is the scene of the trial of humanity throughout their lifespan.

The people of Pharaoh enjoyed a powerful state, abundant possessions, and extraordinary resources and opportunities which contributed to their living at the zenith of power; however, such power led to their vanity and they were entangled with all kinds of sin and wrong doing.

"There came to them a noble Messenger"

at that time. The Messenger was noble (karim) in terms of his high esteem and magnanimity in the presence of God and in respect to his noble descent. The Messenger was Moses(as) son of 'Imran (as).

In Verse 18, Moses (as) addressed the Children of Israel politely and lovingly:

“The purpose of sending me to you is that you, as Allah’s servants, believe in me as His Messenger, and deliver to me what has been commanded to you.”

According to this exegesis,

“Allah’s servants”

is addressed to the people of Pharaoh, though this Qur’anic expression is used for God’s righteous servants, it is employed for disbelievers and sinners in order to console them and also attract them to believe in Truth. Therefore, ***“deliver” (addu)*** indicates obeying Divine Command and acting upon His Injunctions.

Some exegetes have presented another interpretation for the sentence maintaining that

“Allah’s servants” (‘ibad Allah)

indicates the Children of Israel and:

“deliver” (addu)

means leave them to Moses (as) so that he may set them free from bondage. Mention is made of the point in Verse 17 of Chapter 26;10

“Therefore, allow the Children of Israel to go with us.”¹¹

To reject any false accusation he says:

“Indeed, I am to you a trustworthy Messenger.”

Thus, in various Qur’anic Verses, he rejects the false accusations of the people of Pharaoh, e.g. sorcery, aiming at superiority and ruling the land of Egypt, driving Egyptians out of their land.

According to Verse 19, following calling them to obey God through liberating the Children of Israel, Moses (as) says:

“And exalt not yourselves against Allah. Truly, I have come unto you with a manifest authority.”

By manifest authority, he means clear miracles and obvious and logical arguments.

By

“exalt not yourselves against Allah”

any deed inconsistent with total submission to Divine Will is intended which may range from opposition and disobedience to harming and hurting God’s Messengers to claims to divinity, divine sovereignty and

the like.

Surah al-Dukhan – Verses 20 – 22

وَإِنِّي عُدْتُ بِرَبِّي وَرَبِّكُمْ أَنْ تَرْجُمُونِ

وَإِنْ لَمْ تُؤْمِنُوا لِي فَاَعْتِزُّونَ

فَدَعَا رَبَّهُ أَنَّ هَؤُلَاءِ قَوْمٌ مُجْرِمُونَ

- 20. “And truly I seek refuge with my Lord and your Lord lest you should accuse [or stone] me.**
21. “But if you believe me not (at least) keep away from me and leave me alone.
22. Then [when he lost his hope in his Call being acknowledged by them] called upon his Lord [saying]: “These are indeed the people who are sinners.”

Opposition against prophets and exploiting people are on a par with making attempts at being superior to God Almighty.

Moses (as) addressed his opponents who exploited people and said:

“And exalt not yourselves against Allah.”

When sin and corruption find their way into man’s heart, the prophets’ Call will be of no avail;

(“These are indeed the people who are sinners”).

According to the blessed Verse, when Moses (as) insisted on guiding them to the true path and worked miracles to show unto them his superiority over them, the people of pharaoh, intending to kill him, tried to stone the noble prophet (as).

Upon being threatened to execution, he said that he sought refuge to his Lord and their Lord, thus trying to say unto them that their Lord was the same and that he called them to believe in the One God Who created all creatures and they would all return to Him, but Pharaoh was a weak creature unworthy of being worshipped.

In Verse 22, Moses (as) says

“if you believe not in me who am the Messenger of God, why do you intend to kill me. Leave me on my own, i.e., I have my duty of trying to guide you to the true path but if you do not acknowledge my Call, keep distance from me.”

When Moses (as) lost his hope in guiding Pharaoh and the Copts to the true path he cursed them at Divine Command;

(“Then [he] called upon his Lord”).

It is mentioned in Verse 22 that Moses called upon his Lord saying:

“O my Lord! These are disobedient and sinners, so immersed in sin and disobedience and their hearts are so darkened that there is no hope for them to come to the true path.”

Being immersed in sins and pleasures of the flesh keeps man far from God such that even his primordial nature (fitra) may not save him.

Surah al-Dukhan - Verses 23 - 24

فَأَسْرِبِعِبَادِي لَيْلًا إِنَّكُمْ مُتَّبِعُونَ

وَأَتْرِكِ الْبَحْرَ رَهْوًا إِنَّهُمْ جُنْدٌ مُغْرَقُونَ

23. [We said unto him:] “Depart you with My servants by night¹². Surely you will be pursued [the people of Pharaoh].”

24. “And traverse the sea¹³ [and expect nothing since following your passage water will fill up the gap] since they are to be drowned.”

The nightly flight of the Children of Israel led by Moses (as) was a kind of velvet coup unbearable to Pharaoh hence dispatching a host to pursue them. The Verse implies that if you cannot attain to your goals in a land of disbelief emigrate from it and know that God bestows security and peace to his friends.

According to Verses 23 and 24, Moses’ (as) prayer was answered and he was asked to depart from Egypt at night with his followers from among the Children of Israel. God let him know that following their flight, the people of Pharaoh would pursue you.

He commanded Moses (as) to strike the Nile with his stick and it would be cleaved so that they may traverse it safely, but he had to leave it as it was and entertain no worries since it had been ordained that

Pharaoh and his host, i.e., the Copts, be drowned in it.

Upon hearing the intelligence that Moses (as) and the Children of Israel departed from the city, he pursued them with his host and saw that the Nile was cloven asunder and learned that it was Moses' miracle, but because of his vanity and arrogance he thought that he could traverse the Nile on their heels; however, when they reached half way, the cleft collapsed and they were all drowned.

All creatures are the Divine Host totally under His Command. They are the friends of God's friends and the enemies of His enemies. They await the Call to take vengeance upon His enemies and cause their destruction.

Surah al-Dukhan - Verses 25 - 28

كَمْ تَرَكُوا مِنْ جَنَّاتٍ وَعُيُونٍ

وَزُرُوعٍ وَمَقَامٍ كَرِيمٍ

وَنَعْمَةٍ كَانُوا فِيهَا فَاكِهِينَ

كَذَلِكَ وَأَوْرَثْنَاهَا قَوْمًا آخَرِينَ

25. How many of gardens and springs that they left behind.

26. And green crops and excellent places.

27. And comforts of life wherein they used to take delight!

28. Thus [We took them all from them] and We made other people inherit them.

Mundane possessions may not save man from Divine Wrath. Many a time, God Almighty caused the destruction of a wrong doing people and made another people inherit the kingdom of their predecessors.

(“Thus We made other people inherit them”).

In the last four Verses God Almighty lets know His Messenger that Pharaoh drowned together with his host and lost many a garden, excellent construction, and fountains because of their disobedience.

Many a field and excellent royal palace were inherited by others, i.e., the Children of Israel and the land of Egypt with so many bounties were inherited by them without toil and hardship because of their faith. It needs to be said that believers, besides the heavenly palaces reserved for them, they will inherit those of disbelievers.

The heavenly degrees of believers are attested in the Holy Qur'an;

“They are the inheritors who inherit Paradise.”

The Verse is an admonition and a reminder to believers to think about the manner in which Pharaoh and his people caused their destruction because of their disobedience against the Messenger of God and as a consequence of which were drowned in the torment of this world and the Hereafter, the latter of the two is more severe and excruciating.

Thus, the Children of Israel, through their faith in God and His Messenger, attained to such sovereignty without any hardship. Such sovereignty was their Divine Bounty in this world. Surely, their Bounties in the Hereafter will be infinite.

Surah al-Dukhan – Verse 29

فَمَا بَكَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ السَّمَاءُ وَالْأَرْضُ وَمَا كَانُوا مُنظَرِينَ

29. And the heavens and the earth wept not for them, nor were they given a respite.

All creation is harmonious through Divine will. Giving respites to man has certain prerequisites but at times man is so immersed in sin that he will not be given a respite;

(“nor were they given a respite”).

The blessed Verse is saying that neither the heaven nor the earth wept for the drowning of Pharaoh and the Copts.

It indicates his lawlessness despite his false claims to superiority and worthiness of being worshipped; however, he had neither dignity nor honor with the inhabitants of the heaven so that his death may cause them to grieve let alone enjoying any station in the eye of the inhabitants of the earth.

He falsely claimed that he was god, but the inhabitants of both the heaven and the earth are the friends of God's friends and the enemies of God's enemies. His perdition gladdened all the creatures of the heaven and the earth since he had led people astray.

Some exegetes also maintain that by:

“the heaven and the earth”

their inhabitants are being meant since they only weep for believers and the Close Ones (muqarrabin) rather than for wrong doers like the people of Pharaoh. Some also hold that the weeping of the heaven and the earth is real and is reflected by a specific reddening and change besides the permanent reddening at the times of sunrise and sunset.

According to a tradition,

*“When Husayn ibn ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib (as) was martyred, the heaven wept for him and the weeping was reflected in the corners of the sky.”*¹⁴

According to another tradition narrated from Imam Sadiq (as)

“The heaven wept for Yahya ibn Zakariyya (who was martyred by the tyrant ruler of his time very deplorably) and Husayn ibn ‘Ali (as) for forty days and did not weep for anyone else except for the two.”

The narrator inquired:

“How was the weeping of the heaven?”

He replied:

*“An unusual reddening appeared in the sky at sunrise and sunset.”*¹⁵

Surah al-Dukhan – Verses 30 – 31

وَلَقَدْ نَجَّيْنَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ مِنَ الْعَذَابِ الْمُهِينِ

مِنْ فِرْعَوْنَ إِنَّهُ كَانَ عَالِيًا مِنَ الْمُسْرِفِينَ

30. And verily We saved the Children of Israel from the humiliating torment:

31. From Pharaoh [’s torment]; indeed he was arrogant and was from amongst transgressors beyond bounds.

Historical developments are all within Divine Control; however, it is to be noted that man’s perdition lies in his disposition and conduct.

These two Verses are addressed to the Children of Israel saying:

“We drowned Pharaoh and saved the Children of Israel from the torments inflicted by Pharaoh and the Copts who had held them in servitude and humility and killed their sons and forced their women to work for them.”

“From Pharaoh”

is a metaphorical expression denoting torment, i.e., We liberated the Children of Israel from Pharaoh’s torment.

“Indeed he was arrogant and was from amongst transgressors beyond bounds”

makes a reference to Pharaoh’s disobedience, disbelief, arrogance, and rebellion that transgressed beyond bounds such that he falsely claimed divinity.

As a consequence of his transgression and oppressing God’s servants, he suffered Divine Wrath and was drowned in the Nile. That is the chastisement of one in this world and the Hereafter who steps beyond limits, does not obey God, and does wrong to his inferiors.

Surah al-Dukhan - Verses 32 - 33

وَلَقَدْ اخْتَرْنَا هُمْ عَلَىٰ عِلْمٍ عَلَىٰ الْعَالَمِينَ

وَأَتَيْنَاهُمْ مِنَ الْآيَاتِ مَا فِيهِ بَلَاءٌ مُّبِينٌ

32. And We chose them [the Children of Israel] above mankind and jinn [during the time of Moses (as)] because of knowledge.

33. And granted them signs in which there was a plain trial [though it was of no avail].

God’s Ordainments are based on His Omnipotence. He tests His servants by the mundane possessions bestowed them. According to these two blessed Verses, He bestowed merit and dignity to the Children of Israel since He knew that they deserved them.

God Almighty bestowed to the Children of Israel from the Signs of His Omnipotence and many a miracle attested in Qur’anic Verses, e.g. cleaving the sea asunder and the clouds casting their shadows on them (and manna and salwa) at the time of their hardship in the desert.

Such miracles served as tests for them demonstrating that they had to be grateful and patient in afflictions. The Verse indicates that abundance of bounties is a test for them when they are vanquished

by Satan to be preoccupied by the pleasures of the flesh.

The wise are not arrogant in such instances noticing that mundane bounties are transient and they are being tested by them. Such individuals know that they are supposed to enjoy the bounties in the best way in order to obtain Divine Satisfaction. They are expected to be grateful since according to the Holy Qur'an:

“If you give thanks I will give you more, but if you are thankless, indeed My chastisement is severe”¹⁶.

Surah al-Dukhan - Verses 34 - 36

إِنَّ هَؤُلَاءِ لَيَقُولُونَ

إِنَّ هِيَ إِلَّا مَوْتَتُنَا الْأُولَىٰ وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمُنشَرِينَ

فَاتُوا بِآبَائِنَا إِن كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ

34. Indeed these [polytheists] are [always] saying:

35. “There is nothing but our first death and we will not be resurrected.”

36. “Then bring back our [deceased] forefathers if you [prophets] speak the truth.

Belief in Resurrection draws a distinction between faith in Divine Unity and polytheism.

It is worthy of note that polytheists believed in God but did not acknowledge Resurrection:

(“we will not be resurrected”).

According to these three blessed Verses, the Quraysh in reply to believers who said unto them that they would be resurrected after death:

(“Seeing that you were dead and He gave you life. Then He will give you death then again will bring you to life [on the Day of Resurrection]”).

However they were too ignorant or pretended ignorance to acknowledge Resurrection. Any wise person may perceive that the world and its systematicity it not in vain but they bear abundant fruits. All prophets

let humanity know that the Hereafter awaits them and their sayings as well as Divine Guidance bear witness to the truth of their words to the effect that whatever is sown in this life will be reaped in the world to come.

There remains no room for any doubt concerning Resurrection until the dead will be raised to let them know that there is an afterlife and they will be recompensed for their deeds.

In reply to believers who aimed to let them know of the Day of Judgment they said that if they were in the right their forefathers could be raised to inform them of the Judgment so that they could acknowledge the veracity of believers' claims.

However, such ignorant people did not know that the advent of Resurrection would be at the end of this world since it is parallel with this world rather than beginning at the expiry of the mundane world.

It is reported that Abu Jahl asked the Noble Prophet (S) to give life to their forefather, Qusayy ibn Kilab, so that we could ask him about the Hereafter since he was a truthful man and we may believe you upon his acknowledgement.

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1. Surah Fussilat
 2. Majma' al-Bayan, vol. 9, the opening of Surah al-Dukhan (Chapter 44).
 3. Ibid.
 4. Surah al-Shura
 5. Nur al-Thiqalayn [Exegesis], vol. 1, p. 30.
 6. Surah al-Ghafir and Surah Fussilat
 7. Surah al-Qadr
 8. Burhan [Exegesis], vol. 4, p. 160, under the blessed Verse in question.
 9. Tafsir al-Safi, vol. 4, p. 405, under the blessed Verse in question.
 10. Surah al-Shu'ara
 11. See also 7:105; 20:47.
 12. Asr is taken from isra' "move from one location to another by night.
 13. Rahw means open, quiet, and vast road.
 14. Majma' al-Bayan, vol. 9, p. 65, under the Verse in question.
 15. Ibid.
 16. 14:7