

Surah al-Dukhan, Chapter 44, Verses 37- 59

Surah al-Dukhan – Verse 37

أَهُمْ خَيْرٌ أَمْ قَوْمُ تُبَّعٍ وَالَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ أَهْلَكْنَاهُمْ إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا مُجْرِمِينَ

37. Are they better [in terms of opportunities] or the people of Tubba' and those before them? We destroyed them because they were indeed criminals. [Why do you not take a lesson?]

History provides man with the best lessons. The prosperous land of the Yemen, located in the South of the Arabian Peninsula, was the cradle of a great civilization ruled by kings called Tubba' (the plural form is Tababi'a).

The term literally indicates “those whose orders are followed by people” or “those succeeding each other to rule.” The people enjoyed a very powerful state wielding a vast sway.

The blessed Verse, preceded by making mention of Meccan polytheists and their animosity toward the Prophet (S) and their denial of Resurrection, makes a reference to the fate of the sinful and criminal people of Tubba' warns Meccan polytheists against Divine torment in store for them on the Day of Resurrection.

The blessed Verse asks:

“Are they better or the people of Tubba'?” We destroyed them because they were indeed criminals.”

The people of Hijaz were to some extent aware of the fate of the people of Tubba' as a consequence of which no further details are provided in the following Verses concerning them, but It merely suffices to warn Meccan polytheists against a fate in store for them similar to that of other peoples inhabiting the

regions in Sham [viz. Syria, Palestine, East Jordan, Lebanon, and the northwestern parts of the Fertile Crescent] and Egypt.

Put the case that you deny Resurrection, how could you deny Divine torments sent down on these criminal and disobedient peoples?

“Those before them”

alludes to the peoples of Nuh, ‘Ad, Thamud, and the like.

Some exegetes maintain that Tubba’ was a believer and a truth seeking man and the

“people of Tubba”

mentioned in the two Qur’anic Verses bear testimony to the same since not the ruler but his people are censured.

According to a prophetic tradition:

*“Do not slander Tubba’ since he submitted to Divine Will.”*¹

A tradition is narrated from Imam Sadiq (as) saying:

“Tubba’ verily said unto [the tribes of] Aws and Khazraj:

*‘Stay here until this Prophet proclaims his Call. Had I enjoyed the opportunity to be his contemporary, I would have been at his disposal in his Prophetic Call.’”*²

Surah al-Dukhan - Verses 38 - 39

وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا لَاعِبِينَ

مَا خَلَقْنَاهُمَا إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

38. And We created not the heavens and the earth, and all that is between them, for merely play.

39. We created them not except with truth, but most of them [polytheists] know not.

The word **la’b** is used in the sense of “merely play, anything done in vain,” like childish plays. These two blessed Verses serve as a prelude to the following Verses on Resurrection.

It is as if they indicate that if there were no Resurrection, creation would be purposeless, since the world of existence has been created for man and if man becomes non-existent by death, the world of existence would also be in vain.

It is for the same grounds that God Almighty says:

“We created not the heavens and the earth for merely play, but We created them with truth.”

Logical arguments are being produced for proving Resurrection to the effect that any sensible person may use his intellection to perceive that God Almighty created not the heavens and the earth and what is between them in vain but they were created with truth as per Divine Wisdom and Omniscience.

The Verses in question and the following Ones indicate that the purpose behind creating the heavens and the earth is the creation of man and the purpose behind creating man is to raise him up on the Day of Resurrection, or else the creation of the heavens and the earth would be in vain.

Surah al-Dukhan - Verses 40 - 42

إِنَّ يَوْمَ الْفَصْلِ مِيقَاتُهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ

يَوْمَ لَا يُغْنِي مَوْلَىٰ عَنْ مَوْلَىٰ شَيْئًا وَلَا هُمْ يُنصَرُونَ

إِلَّا مَنْ رَحِمَ اللَّهُ إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ

40. Indeed the Day Distinction [between truth and falsehood] is the time appointed for all of them

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41. The Day when a friend avails not a friend [of his] in aught and no help can they receive [from any source],

42. Except him on whom Allah has Mercy. Indeed He is the Omnipotent, the Most Merciful.

Since creation enjoys a true purpose, Resurrection should occur. Since the All-Wise Lord created the world of existence as per truth, He will not abandon His favorite creature following his death. All humanity will gather on the Day of Resurrection, but man will be alone then.

The Day of Distinction (yaw al-fasl), the appointed time when all humanity gather, is one of the

appellations of Resurrection, since truth and falsehood will be distinguished on that Day and the wrong doings of wrong doers will be compensated.

The people of truth and falsehood will clearly see their past deeds and their deeds will be recompensed.

According to the latter two Verses no friend may meet the demands of his friend since no one will be able to extend help to his friends unless one will be granted Divine Mercy and Favor, since Glory, Dignity, and Succor will solely belong to Divine Essence.

He is All-Merciful and All-Gracious toward his creatures. He chastises or forgives whomever He Wills. It is needless to say that His chastisement and forgiving are based on Divine Justice and Wisdom and no wrong will be done to anyone.

Since His Mercy surpasses His Wrath, we are all hopeful to enjoy His Mercy and sinners, no matter to what extent they have transgressed the bounds, should not despair of His Mercy.

It is in the Holy Qur'an that:

“Certainly no one despairs of Allah’s Mercy, except the people who disbelieve”³.

The righteous good doing pious should fear God at all times and not be arrogant for their deeds since they may never know whether their deeds are accepted by God. It is reported from Infallible Imams that believers’ hope and fear should be like the two pans of the balance.

Surah al-Dukhan - Verses 43 - 46

إِنَّ شَجَرَةَ الزَّقُّومِ

طَعَامُ الْأَثِيمِ

كَالْمُهْلِ يَغْلِي فِي الْبُطُونِ

كَغَلِي الْحَمِيمِ

43. Verily, the tree of Zaqqum

44. Will be the food of the sinners.

45. Like boiling oil, it will boil in the bellies.

46. Like the boiling of scalding water.

The word zaqqum indicates a kind of undesirable food served in Hell. Muhl is used in the sense of molten or impure metal or copper. The four Verses concern the torment of sinners, particularly disbelievers.

By

athim (“*sinful*”)

disbelievers may be intended since the preceding Verses were about disbelievers and the general theme of the Verses indicate that one who believes in Divine Unity, Resurrection, the prophethood of the Seal of the Prophets (S), and the imamate of the Infallible Imams (as), even if he happens to be a sinner, he will not be inflicted with such torment.

Based on the above, some exegetes maintain that the Verses in question allude to the cursed Abu Jahl who went to the extreme in disbelief, grudge, and animosity against the Prophet (S). It is reported that once Abu Jahl was eating some dates mingled with butter and was saying mockingly that it was the **Zaqqum** against which Muhammad warned us and we eat our fill of it.

Rejecting his false claim, God Almighty said that the fruit of the tree of **Zaqqum** was the food of sinners rather than what Abu Jahl conceived of it.

Any molten metal, e.g. gold, silver, and copper, is called muhl. Some also hold that by it oil impurities are being meant such that when oil is heated, its impurities settle as sediment or dregs which are also called durdiy al-zit (“oil dregs”).

The fruit of the tree of **Zaqqum** boils in bellies in the manner of boiling scalding water cutting up their intestines. The Almighty (jabbar) and All-Subjugating (qahhar) Sovereign addresses the myrmidons, i.e., the angels who thrust the damned into Hell (zabaniya) wrathfully.

Surah al-Dukhan – Verses 47 – 50

خُذُوهُ فَاعْتَلُوهُ إِلَىٰ سَوَاءِ الْجَحِيمِ

ثُمَّ صَبُّوا فَوْقَ رَأْسِهِ مِنْ عَذَابِ الْحَمِيمِ

ذُقْ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَزِيزُ الْكَرِيمُ

إِنَّ هَذَا مَا كُنْتُمْ بِهِ تَمْتَرُونَ

47. [It will be said] “Seize him and drag him into the midst of blazing Fire,

48. Then pour over his head the torment of boiling water.

49. Taste you [this]! Indeed, you were [were pretending to be] the mighty, the generous.

50. Indeed, this is that whereof you used to doubt!”

The torments of the Resurrection Day are both physical and non-physical. The former include the use of boiling material and the latter include hearing of humiliation and derision saying who you were who falsely claimed to be mighty and generous in your mundane life?

The blessed Verse 47 asks the angels to seize the unbeliever and drag him forcefully into the midst of Hell surrounded by fire.

The next Verse reads:

Then pour over his head boiling water such that **Zaqqum** cuts them into pieces inwardly and burns them with it outwardly.

Regarding the third Verse exegetes maintain that Abu Jahl would say unto the Messenger of God (S):

“O Muhammad! I enjoy power and I am held in esteem in Mecca but neither you nor your God may ever inflict any harm unto me.”

As a consequence of his boastful remarks, he will be held in contempt on the Resurrection Day and it will be said unto him derisively:

“Then taste the torments since you are mighty and you are held in esteem.”

Verse 50 reads that when disbelievers taste the torments, it will be said unto them that this is the torment warned against by the prophets but you held them in doubt and slandered them.

Surah al-Dukhan - Verses 51 - 53

إِنَّ الْمُتَّقِينَ فِي مَقَامٍ أَمِينٍ

فِي جَنَّاتٍ وَعَيْونٍ

يَلْبَسُونَ مِنْ سُندُسٍ وَإِسْتَبْرَقٍ مُتَقَابِلِينَ

51. Verily, the pious will be in place of security.

52. Among gardens and springs.

53. Dressed in fine silk and in thick silk, facing each other.

Sundus and istabraq indicate fine and thick silk fabric respectively. The word hur is the plural form of huriyya which is used in the sense of women with black eyes and white complexion.

The word **'ayn** the pluralized form of which is 'ayna' indicates "having wide, lovely eyes." The pious are certainly placed in place of security, enjoying the bounties of Paradise and secure from the torments of Hell.

God Almighty says:

"Verily, the pious will be in the midst of gardens and rivers in a seat of truth, near the Omnipotent King"⁴.

"Place of security"⁵

and

"seat of truth"⁶

are reserved for those who are ranked third among the pious.

They are the people whose hearts are secure through having faith and their hearts are free from all existent beings besides God. They have struggled against the hosts of estimative, irascible, and concupiscent powers and have succeeded in subjugating them.

They have detached themselves from the attractions of the mundane world and have blocked the way in this world through which powers of darkness used to frequent their hearts; as a consequence of which their hearts are frequented by angels of Mercy. They have stepped out of the abyss of illusions and vain desires so that their hearts have turned into the Threshold of Divine Mercy.

According to a Prophetic tradition,

"The believer's heart is the Threshold of the All-Merciful."

In short, the blessed Verse refers to those whose hearts are secure in this world through faith. They are placed in the place of security. They are secure in their worldly life from concupiscent and satanic desires enjoying the protection of God Almighty. They will also be secure from any affliction in proximity to God in the Hereafter.

The following Verse says that such person derives pleasure from perceiving spiritual and Divine bounties as well those of physical pleasures of Paradise since in the same manner that man is essentially composed of soul and body, his pleasures are to be consistent with his corporeality and spirituality.

The Verse apparently makes a reference to both dimensions since the place of security is consistent with spiritual states attained by human soul upon attainment to perfection. Thus, through perceiving corporeal knowledge, man acquires the knowledge of the spiritual realm of the Hereafter through which he attains to the place of security.

Verse 53 is concerned with the ranks of the corporeal bounties of the pious whose clothes are made in Paradise from sundus and istabraq (fine and thick silk respectively).

Some exegets also maintain that istabraq indicates the carpets prepared for them and the word:

mutaqabilin (“*facing each other*”)

refers to the couches in Paradise facing each other so that they enjoy meeting each other.

Surah al-Dukhan – Verse 54

كَذَلِكَ وَزَوَّجْنَاهُمْ بِحُورٍ عِينٍ

54. Such [We recompense them]. And We will marry them to fair females with wide, lovely eyes.

In depicting hur al-’ayn exegets say they are fair females wide, lovely eyes and delicate of complexion. ‘Ayn serves as an adjective for the hur of Paradise who are delicate of complexion. Such is the state of the people of Paradise who will enjoy all kinds of bounties and pleasures in Paradise.

Surah al-Dukhan – Verse 55

يَدْعُونَ فِيهَا بِكُلِّ فَاكِهَةٍ آمِنِينَ

55. They will call therein for every kind of fruit [that they wish] in peace and security.

The greatest bounty is security since the

“place of security”

precedes other bounties. It is worthy of note that security in Paradise is all inclusive. There will be no fear of death, foes, the envious, or perdition.

Peace and security in Paradise concerns the

“place of security”

and the foods

(“every kind of fruit”).

Eating some kinds of fruit may at times cause diverse diseases in this world. Piety and fear of God Almighty in this world will lead to peace and security in the Hereafter. The blessed Verse in question says whatever kind of fruit desired will be available to them without incurring and pain, hardship, or displeasure

(“in peace and security”).

Surah al-Dukhan - Verses 56 - 57

لَا يَذُوقُونَ فِيهَا الْمَوْتَ إِلَّا الْمَوْتَةَ الْأُولَىٰ وَوَقَاهُمْ عَذَابَ الْجَحِيمِ

فَضْلًا مِّن رَّبِّكَ ذَٰلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ

56. They will never taste death therein except the first death [of this world] and He will save them from the torment of the blazing Fire.

57. As a bounty from your Lord! That will be the supreme success!

One who protects himself through piety and fear of God in this world, God will save him from Hell in the Hereafter.

Paradise is everlasting and the people of Paradise will be free from being preoccupied with death. God Almighty owes nothing to anyone rather all blessings are granted through Divine bounteousness (fadl) and all the blessings bestowed upon the people of Paradise are through Divine Favor

(“as a bounty from your Lord!”).

According to Verse 56, the highest bounty bestowed upon the people of Paradise is their being admitted to Paradise and the worst torment of the people of Hell is that they will be sent to Hell.

According to a tradition, when the people of Paradise and the people of Hell are settled down in Paradise and Hell respectively, a sheep will be brought to them. It will be said unto them that it is death and the sheep will be killed and it will be said unto the people of Paradise and Hell that it was death, but it no longer exists.

The allegory makes a reference to the absence of death in Resurrection. This world is the world of generation and corruption in which death and life follow each other, i.e., each life is followed by death, each pleasure is followed by displeasure, and health is followed by ailment, since this world is the world of corporeality and potentiality.

It is composed of contradictory constituents and the constituents of any composite entity will disintegrate one day.

That is why death is imminent and inevitable for any entity. Nonetheless, the Hereafter is the permanent and unchangeable world, since any potentiality in this world will be actualized in the world to come; as a consequence of which, all creatures inclusive of the jinn, humanity, Paradise, Hell, and their constituent elements are neither transient nor subject to disintegration or annihilation.

Another bounty reserved for the pious and the people of Paradise is that they will be secure from the torments of Hell.

Addressing the Messenger of God (S), the blessed Verse says O Muhammad! Saving them from the torments of Hell is a great Bounty, Mercy, and Success from your Lord bestowed upon them. It is a reference to the Divine Succor of faith and piety as bounties granted upon the pious and the God fearing.

The possessive pronoun –ka whose antecedent is the Messenger of God (S) may indicate that the Bounties and Favors bestowed upon the pious springs from their adherence to the Noble Prophet (S), were guided to the true path, worshipped the One God, and adhered to the Infallible Imams (as).

Surah al-Dukhan – Verses 58 – 59

فَإِنَّمَا يَسَّرْنَا^{هُ} بِلِسَانِكَ^{لَعَلَّهُمْ} يَتَذَكَّرُونَ^{لَعَلَّهُمْ}

فَارْتَقِبْ إِنَّهُمْ مُرْتَقِبُونَ

58. Certainly, We have made this [Qur'an] facile in your tongue so that they may remember.

59. Await then [for your triumph]; indeed, they are also awaiting [their ominous fate].

The purpose behind the revelation of the Holy Qur'an is to make people remember that they are God's servants.

The Holy Qur'an is revealed as the last guidance sent down to people saying unto them that if they fail to acknowledge that It is Divine Revelation they should await Divine Wrath.

The last two Verses says unto man that God Almighty sent down the Holy Qur'an in the Arabic tongue in order that upon noticing Its unsurpassed Eloquence and Inimitability, they perceive that it springs from the springhead of Divine Emanation. Thus, they may remember and believe in the prophethood of the Messenger of God (S).

The blessed Verse addresses the Prophet (S) saying

“O Muhammad! Await their being guided to the true path since disbelievers await your fate.”

The Verse apparently implies that you await their guidance and felicity where as they await your defeat and death.

1. Majma' al-Bayan [Exegesis], under the blessed Verse in question.

2. Ibid.

3. 12:87

4. 54:54–55

5. 44:51

6. 54:55

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