

Surah al-Najm, Chapter 53, Verses 1 – 32

(The Star)

Section (juz'): 27

Number of Verses: 62

General Overview of the Chapter

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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

The Chapter, requiring obligatory prostration, has sixty two Verses and it was revealed in Mecca. The designation of the Chapter derives from the first Verse in which God Almighty swears by the star. Chapter 53 makes reference to the position of Revelation and the manner of its Revelation to the Noble Prophet's (S) heart and like Chapter 17 treats of the Noble Prophet's (S) Ascension to the heavens.

Another part of the Chapter deals with polytheists' superstitious and idolatrous customs and rituals and worshipping angels and the same is condemned herein. It also discusses the states of the virtuous and the evil people the standard of which is remembrance of the Resurrection Day and Divine Reward and Recompense.

Merits of the Recitation of the Chapter

Significant merits have been enumerated in traditions for recitation of the Chapter among which is a tradition narrated from Imam Sadiq (as):

*"One who always recites Surah al-Najm every day and night is recognized amongst people as a meritorious person and God Almighty will forgive his sins and will win popularity amongst people."*¹

Other traditions in this vein are not mentioned for the sake of brevity. Undoubtedly such great rewards are bestowed upon those who recite the Chapter as a means of contemplation and acting upon its Injunctions such that the teachings may shed their light on their lives.

Surah al-Najm – Verses 1-2

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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

وَالنَّجْمِ إِذَا هَوَىٰ

مَا ضَلَّ صَاحِبُكُمْ وَمَا غَوَىٰ

1. By the star when it goes down.

2. Indeed, your companion [Prophet Muhammad (S)] has neither gone astray nor has erred.

The Chapter opens with the word najm "star" by which God Almighty swears

("By the star when it goes down").

Exegetes provide many a view regarding the contextual meaning of the word. Some maintain that it makes a reference to the Holy Qur'an since such connotation is consistent with the following blessed Verses regarding Divine Revelation.

They hold that the expression alludes to the Arab's practice of terming as star what develops in time at different intervals.

Since the Holy Qur'an was revealed to the Noble Prophet (S) in a period of twenty three years at different intervals, it is referred to as 'star' and the expression:

"when it goes down"

makes a reference to its Revelation to the pure heart of the Messenger of Allah (S). However, some other exegetes maintain that it alludes to a star like Pleiades or Jupiter since they are of particular significance.

Some also hold that:

"the star"

refers to meteors through which devils are repelled from the heaven and Arabs term such meteors as najm.

However, no evident argument has been provided for any of the four interpretations, but the blessed Verse, as far as the application of the word,

"the star"

requires, serves as an oath to all the stars reflecting Divine Manifestations of God Almighty, the great mysteries of the world of creation, and the extraordinarily great creatures created by Allah. Swearing by the great creatures of the world of creation like the sun and the moon are attested elsewhere in the Holy Qur'an.

The ascent of the stars are more remarkable, but the emphasis laid on their "going down" is owing to the fact that their descent bears witness to their temporal contingency (huduth) and the negation of star worshippers beliefs.

Thus, God Almighty alludes to both the ascent and descent of stars, since such allusion substantiates their temporal contingency and their being checked by the laws of creation.

It is worthy of note that the inner, rather than the outer, meaning of the Verse as attested in traditions, is taken by some exegetes to allude to the Noble Prophet (S) and accordingly,

"going down"

refers to his descent from the heaven on the night of Ascent.

Now, let us turn toward the reason lying behind the oath.

The blessed second Verse thus expounds that your companion, Prophet Muhammad (S) has never gone astray nor has he been in error,

("Indeed, your companion [Prophet Muhammad (S)] has neither gone astray nor has erred").

He always treads the Path of Truth and the slightest error may not be found in his words and deeds.

The word:

"companion" (sahib)

may indicate that what he says is out of his compassion and love for you.

Many an exegete draw no distinction between the Arabic past tense forms dhalla and ghawa ("go astray; be in error") but regard the twain as laying emphasis on each other. However, some exegetes maintain that there is a difference between the twain such that the former connotes that one may never find the right path toward one's destination but the latter connotes that one proceeds on a path but his path happens not to be straight and free from error.

The former is like "disbelief" and the latter resembles committing sins and transgressing the bounds. It is worthy of note that in his Mufradat under gh-y-y, Raghīb says that the latter signifies "ignorance accompanied by corrupt belief."

Thus, dhalala designates absolute ignorance but ghawaya signifies ignorance accompanied by false belief. However, in this blessed Verse, God Almighty intends to negate any form of error and ignorance from His Messenger (S) thereby repudiating the false accusations ascribed to him by his enemies.

Surah al-Najm - Verses 3-4

وَمَا يَنْطِقُ عَنِ الْهَوَىٰ

إِنَّ هُوَ إِلَّا وَحْيٌ يُوحَىٰ

3. Nor does he speak of concupiscent desire.

4. His word is only a Revelation revealed to him.

The words of the Noble Prophet (S) arise from neither personal desires nor social milieu. Thus, the blessed Verses in question say that the Noble Prophet (S) does not speak of concupiscent desires but he merely imparts Divine Revelation. In this respect, he is different from common people who speak out of their natural inclinations and concupiscent desires, rather his words arise from the Noble Prophet's (S) heart connected to the higher world.

In this vein, a number of traditions will be quoted.

The late scholar, Saduq in his Amali narrates a tradition according to which the Noble Prophet of Islam (S) turned to people after early and late evening prayers saying:

"A star (light) will descend upon the house of one of you at day break and the owner of the house will be my successor."

All people were awaiting the descent at day break. Ibn 'Abbas is quoted as saying that his father, the

Noble Prophet's paternal uncle, was most eager to see upon whose house the star will descend.

However, it descended upon the house of Imam 'Ali (as) and the Noble Prophet (S) said:

"O 'Ali! By Allah Who called me to Prophethood, it is certain that you will be my successor."

Some hypocrites claimed that the Noble Prophet (S) praised his cousin out of concupiscent desires when these blessed Verses were revealed to the Noble Prophet (S).²

Regarding the fact that the satisfaction of all people may not be obtained nor may their tongues be checked, Saduq in his Amali says that some people even attributed entertaining concupiscent desires to the Noble Prophet (S).

Thus, God Almighty defended his Messenger (S) by saying:

"Nor does he speak of concupiscent desire. His word is only a Revelation revealed to him."³

It is narrated that Hamza asked the Noble Prophet (S):

"Why did you blocked all the gates opening to the mosque but left intact that of 'Ali's (as) house?"

The Noble Prophet (S) recited these Verses from Surah al-Najm:

"His word is only a Revelation revealed to him."

Thus, he intended to say that he did so based on Divine Command.⁴

According to the fourth tradition, in response to disbelievers who said that;

"Indeed, this [the Holy Qur'an] is not but the legends of the ancients"

God Almighty decisively says:

"His word is only a Revelation revealed to him."⁵

When Imam 'Ali (as) was assigned as the Imam and successor of the Noble Prophet (S) at the Ghadir Khum, the latter was criticized, but he recited the blessed Verse:

"His word is only a Revelation revealed to him."⁶

Surah al-Najm – Verses 5–9

عَلَّمَهُ شَدِيدُ الْقُوَى

ذُو مِرَّةٍ فَاسْتَوَىٰ

وَهُوَ بِالْأُفُقِ الْأَعْلَىٰ

ثُمَّ دَنَا فَتَدَلَّىٰ

فَكَانَ قَابَ قَوْسَيْنِ أَوْ أَدْنَىٰ

5. He has been taught [Divine Revelation, namely the Holy Qur'an] by the Omnipotent Lord.

6. The Most Powerful Lord Who conquered all.

7. While he was in the higher horizon.

8. Then he approached and came closer,

9. And was at a distance of two bows length or closer.

The majority of Qur'an exegetes maintain that Gabriel, the trustee angel of Revelation who possesses utmost power, is being intended by:

"the one mighty of power" (shadid al-quwa).

Gabriel is so powerful that eradicated the city of the people of Lot (as) and levitated it and turned it awry and also caused the people of Thamud to perish by one horrible cry. "Dhu mirra" is another characteristic of Gabriel which designates that the angel possesses utmost power, intellect, intelligence, and deliberation.

Philosophers maintain that Gabriel is the active intellect and the intellects of all intellectuals of the world are connected to it. The Arabic past tense verbal form fa-'stawa indicates that Gabriel rose and became stable and showed its original form unto the Noble Prophet (S).

According to a number of traditions, the Seal of Prophets (S) was the only Prophet who saw Gabriel in its original form. Once he saw its true form on the eastern side of the earth and another time, he saw it on the Night of Ascent close to Sidrat al-Muntaha, the lote tree of the Outer Boundary in the Seventh Heaven.

"While he was in the higher horizon"

may indicate that though Gabriel is in the metaphysical world,

"he approached and came closer"

to the Noble Prophet (S) while the proximity

"was at a distance of two bows length or closer"

which is seemingly an intellectible simile indicating perceptibility by which spiritual, rather than perceptible, proximity is being intended.

Surah al-Najm – Verses 10-11

فَأَوْحَىٰ إِلَىٰ عَبْدِهِ مَا أَوْحَىٰ

مَا كَذَبَ الْفُؤَادُ مَا رَأَىٰ

10. Therefore, [Allah] revealed unto His servant whatever He revealed.

11. The [Prophet's] heart lied not in what he saw.

"Therefore, Allah revealed unto His servant, Muhammad (S), whatever He revealed."

According to Tafsir Manhaj al-Sadiqin, some Qur'anic exegetes maintain that God Almighty is the antecedent of all pronouns in Verses five to ten and:

"the Most Powerful"

refers to the Omnipotent Lord, as it is also said elsewhere in the Holy Qur'an:

"He is the All-Provider, the Most Powerful, the Constant."

The Proximity of God Almighty to the Noble Prophet (S) reflects the latter's elevated state in the Presence of the One God, the Creator of the world.

"Came closer"

indicates that God Almighty attracted His friend, Muhammad (S) to Him and such interpretation is substantiated by the tradition of Ascent according to which Muhammad (S) came closer toward God Almighty then came so close in terms of spiritual, rather than perceptible, proximity, that the distance

between the two was to the extent of two bows or less.

It is narrated by Hasan ibn Fadhl that Muhammad (S) came close to Divine Throne; then, since he had not put his foot on a footing, he grasped the curtains of the Throne and was levitated in the air and God Almighty revealed Divine Revelation unto him.

The blessed Verse in question is saying that Muhammad's (S) love for and proximity to God Almighty reached such an extent that Divine Satisfaction is his satisfaction and what is accepted by him is accepted by God Almighty.

It is narrated from the Commander of the Faithful, Imam 'Ali (as) that replying to Dha'lab Yamani he said:

*"The outer eyes have never seen Him but hearts through the truth of faith have perceived Him."*⁷

However, it should be borne in mind that inner vision falls into two categories: intellectual vision accrued through reasoning and argumentation and the state of intuition by heart that stands above intellectual perception as a vision beyond perceptible vision. Such state should be termed as the state of intuition rather than that of argumentation.

The point is that perception through heart and inward intuition is a state specific to saints possessing different hierarchies, since inward intuition is of many a hierarchy and degree the perception of its truth is hard for those who have not attained to such state.

Based on the preceding blessed Verses and with due attention to the aforesaid interpretation, it may be stated

that the Noble Prophet of Islam (S) had the state of intuition and during his blessed lifetime he soared so high that he attained to the state of perfect intuition which once occurred in the beginning of his Prophetic Call and the other time it happened at the time of his Ascent.

He proceeded so close toward God Almighty that many a distance and veil were removed and even the closest angel to God Almighty, Gabriel, the Divine trustee, failed to attain to such state of proximity.

Another tradition is also worthy of note in this vein according to which 'Ayyashi narrates from Imam Baqir (as) that upon being asked regarding the Divinely revealed Verse:

"Then He revealed unto His servant what He revealed,"

the Noble Prophet (S) replied:

"It was revealed unto me that 'Ali (as) is the master of the believers, the Imam of the God fearing, the most brilliant of the honorable, and the first successor to the Seal of the Prophets (S)."

Then people said:

"We believe in God and His Messenger (S)." 8

The blessed Verse eleven is saying that in imparting what he had seen of his Lord's Signs, the heart of Prophet Muhammad (S) did not lie.

The blessed Verse reflects that God Almighty, rather than Gabriel, is the antecedent of the preceding Verses, since according to the consensus of Muslim community and consecutively transmitted traditions, upon receiving Divine Revelation through Gabriel, the Noble Prophet (S) was able to see Gabriel with his outward eyes and hear the angel through his outer ears and the blessed Verse in question attributes vision to the heart of the Noble Prophet (S).

The definite article al- in al-fu'ad may connote covenant ('ahd), that is what Prophet Muhammad's (S) saw was not a lie, but it was absolute Truth.

The article may indicate genus in that as a general rule, what man perceives through his heart, inward feeling, and conscience is not exposed to error, since outward senses, like vision and hearing, may err, but error may not penetrate intuitive cognition (wijdaniyyat) and the Noble Prophet (S) attained to such spiritual, rather than perceptible, proximity to God Almighty that inspired knowledge indirectly penetrated his heart.

It is narrated from Ibn 'Abbas (as) that Prophet Muhammad (S) saw God Almighty through his heart rather than outward eyes. Muhammad Hanifa narrates from his noble father (as) that the Noble Prophet (S) perceived his Lord through certitude by sight ('ayn al-yaqin) using crystal clear Signs and attained to such cognition through what he saw, though he was formerly aware of the same.

It is narrated from Abu Sa'id al-Khudri in Manhaj al-Sadiqin that upon being asked about the meaning of the blessed Verse in question, the Noble Prophet (S) said:

"I saw the Light."

It is narrated from the Imam (as) in Tafsir Kanz al-Daqa'iq that the Imam was asked:

"Did the Prophet (S) see his Lord in his Ascent?"

The Imam (as) said:

"Yes, he saw God through his heart."

Then he recited the blessed Verse:

"The [Prophet's] heart lied not in what he saw."

It is narrated from Imam Ridha (as), as quoted by Tafsir Nur under the blessed Verse in question, that he said:

"The Verses

'Indeed he did see of the Greatest Signs of his Lord'⁹

and

"The [Prophet's] heart lied not in what he saw"

reflect that the Noble Prophet (S) saw Divine Signs rather than Divine Essence."

Surah al-Najm - Verses 12-15

أَفْتُمَارُونَهُ عَلَىٰ مَا يَرَىٰ

وَلَقَدْ رَأَاهُ نَزْلَةً أُخْرَىٰ

عِنْدَ سِدْرَةِ الْمُنْتَهَىٰ

عِنْدَهَا جَنَّةُ الْمَأْوَىٰ

12. Will you then dispute with him about what he saw?

13. And indeed he saw him at another descent.

14. Near Sidrat al-Muntaha.

15. Near it is the Paradise of Refuge.

The Arabic verbal form fa-tumarunahu

("will you dispute with him")

is derived from mira' ("dispute accompanied with doubt"). Nazlatan designates "being revealed in whole."

Sidrat al-Muntaha is the name of a place close to the promised Paradise abounding in Divine Favors and according to traditions, none, but the Noble Prophet of Islam (S) was the only one who reached it.

According to traditions, Sidrat al-Muntaha is applied to the last state of the ascent of angels. It is also

reflected in traditions that Sidrat al-Muntaha is the name of a Lote Tree with any one of whose leaves an angel glorifies God Almighty.

Since many people entertained doubts regarding the Ascent of the Noble Prophet (S) and it seemed incredible to them, God Almighty said in Surah al-Isra10:

"Glorified is He Who took His servant for a journey at night from Masjid al-Haram to Masjid al-Aqsa, the neighborhood whereof We have blessed, so that We might show him Our Signs."

The blessed Verse is saying that he is not exposed to error and there is a very exalted cause for Ascent.

"Will you then dispute with him about what he saw?"

Disbelievers indubitably may not believe in the Revelations of the saints of God Almighty and engage pessimistically in disputes with them.

It is worthy of note that Sidrat al-Muntaha is so significant that Paradise with all its greatness stands beside it and there is a state still higher than Paradise.

"Near Sidrat al-Muntaha. Near it is the Paradise of Refuge."

Although God Almighty bestows His Grace upon all people, but He at times provides certain people with further privileges.

"And indeed he saw him at another descent"

indicates that upon His Messenger's (S) Ascent, God Almighty bestowed special privileges upon him in the same manner that God Almighty is with all people;

("and He is with you"),

but His being with His Messenger (S) is certainly different.

"Indeed Allah is with those who fear [Him]."

Divine Grace and being with His servants are at times general and at times particular. He invited His Messenger (S) to the heavens and provided him with special privileges beside Sidrat al-Muntaha and the Promised Paradise.¹¹

Surah al-Najm – Verses 16–18

إِذْ يَغْشَى السِّدْرَةَ مَا يَغْشَى

مَا زَاغَ الْبَصَرُ وَمَا طَغَى

لَقَدْ رَأَى مِنْ آيَاتِ رَبِّهِ الْكُبْرَى

16. When that covered the lote tree which did cover it!

17. The sight turned not aside nor did it transgress beyond the limit.

18. Verily, he did see of the Greatest Signs of his Lord.

"When that covered the lote tree"

reflects that Sidrat al-Muntaha is covered by a halo of light, beauty, and purity such that it is indescribable. It is said that a large number of angels cover the tree. It is narrated from the Noble Prophet that he had seen an angel standing on each leaf of Sidrat al-Muntaha glorifying God Almighty.

The blessed Verse is saying that the Noble Prophet (S) saw Gabriel by its original form on the Night of Ascent when the lote tree was covered by a large number of creatures reflecting Divine Greatness and Magnificence.

The blessed Verse 17 is saying that the Noble Prophet (S) did not gaze at Gabriel but he looked constantly at the angel without being perplexed or erring. His sight did not turn aside nor did it transgress the bounds.

"Verily, he did see"

in the blessed Verse 18 indicates that by God Almighty! Upon his Ascent unto the heaven, the Noble Prophet (S) saw Divine Signs in such manner that the Sign was the Greatest of Them. It was at that time that the wonders of the heavenly spheres were shown unto him. The Arabic partitive preposition min ("of, from") indicates that what the Noble Prophet (S) saw were some of Divine Signs rather than all of Them.

Surah al-Najm – Verses 19-22

أَفَرَأَيْتُمُ اللَّاتَ وَالْعُزَّىٰ

وَمَنَاةَ الثَّالِثَةَ الْأُخْرَىٰ

أَلَكُمُ الذَّكَرُ وَلَهُ الْأُنثَىٰ

تِلْكَ إِذًا قِسْمَةٌ ضِيزَىٰ

19. Have you then considered al-Lat and al-'Uzza¹²

20. And Manat, the other third?

21. Is it for you the males and for Him the females?

22. That indeed is a division most unfair!

The Omnipotent God Who takes man to the highest point of the heavens and shows His Great Signs unto him is far different from useless stone idols. The names of nine idols are attested in the Holy Qur'an: Lat, 'Uzza, and Manat in the blessed Chapter in question, Ya'al in Chapter 37, and Wadd, Ya'suq, Yaghuth, and Nasr in Chapter 71. Lat, 'Uzza, and Manat were three important idols worshipped by Arabs in pre-Islamic times (jahiliyya).

There is consensus amongst Muslims that they were destroyed thanks to the Hashemite Messenger of Allah (S), but Qur'an exegetes are not unanimous on the nature of these idols, though their views are not mentioned herein for the sake of brevity.¹³

In short, since polytheists termed idols and angels the daughters of God, the blessed Verses in question were revealed to rebuke them through asking them rhetorical questions saying that Allah bestowed such exalted state to Prophet Muhammad (S) that He made him pass the lote tree such that the distance between Him and His Prophet (S) was the extent of two bows or less and bestowed Divine Emanation upon the pure soul of the Noble Prophet (S) and showed unto him the world of creation, but your idols may not provide you with such state.

Pagan Arabs are censured in rhetorical questions saying that you imagine that you have male offspring but attribute female offspring to God Almighty since you deem male offspring worthier and female offspring and you falsely claim that angels are daughters of God.

Surah al-Najm – Verse 23

إِنَّ هِيَ إِلَّا أَسْمَاءٌ سَمَّيْتُمُوهَا أَنْتُمْ وَآبَاؤُكُمْ مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ بِهَا مِنْ سُلْطَانٍ إِنْ يَتَّبِعُونَ
إِلَّا الظَّنَّ وَمَا تَهْوَى الْأَنْفُسُ وَلَقَدْ جَاءَهُمْ مِنْ رَبِّهِمُ الْهُدَىٰ

23. They are but names which you have named, you and your fathers, for which Allah has sent down no authority as to their veracity. Polytheists follow but a guess and that which they themselves desire, whereas there has surely come unto them the Guidance from their Lord!

The Qur'anic term sultan designates 'argument' which results in scholarly authority. Idolaters maintained that each and every idol represented a certain issue, e.g. might, knowledge, love, and wrath. The Holy Qur'an says that such pompous titles are devoid of usefulness and these names bear no significance. Thus, the blessed Verse in question is saying that these idols which are your objects of worship to which you give rank and state are nothing but names devoid of significance.

They are inanimate objects devoid of truth. They lack authority and it is out of your ignorance and concupiscent desires that you imagine that they may be of any use and thereby take recourse to worshipping them in order to attain proximity to God Almighty. It is a source of surprise.

How may man who claims to possess intellect and knowledge and regards himself as the most superior creature bows down to an inanimate and manmade object and invokes it to answer his invocations and ascribes an exalted state to it without any proof and regards it as an intermediary between himself and God Almighty?

As it is reflected elsewhere in the Holy Qur'an14:

"We worship them only that they may bring us near to Allah,"

but they were unaware that proximity to God Almighty is not attainable in such manner as one who purifies his heart from natural and moral impurities and obeys Divine Command and Messengers of Allah and fosters His love in his heart will attain to utmost closeness to God Almighty. It is also worthy of note that there is no need to intermediaries in attaining to Divine Favors.

Beliefs are supposed to rest upon arguments since conjecture and imitation are insufficient and error is consequent to fostering concupiscent desires. As it is reflected at the close of the blessed Verse, God Almighty has provided mankind with His Final and Decisive Argument through sending down His Revelation thereafter there remains no room for producing pretexts.

Surah al-Najm – Verses 24-25

أَمْ لِلْإِنْسَانِ مَا تَمَنَّى

فَلِلَّهِ الْآخِرَةُ وَالْأُولَى

24. Or shall man have what he wishes?

25. But to Allah belong the Hereafter and the world.

The twain blessed Verses ask whether polytheists believe that such idols possess power and might to fulfill their wishes and answer their invocations. However, the point is that they are insignificant, essentially transient, and need the Necessary Being and the Absolutely Needless Lord for their survival.

Whether polytheists seek the world or the Hereafter, they have to turn toward the Absolutely Needless Being and invoke Him for His Favors. It may be noted in passing that the Arabic word tamanna designates wish and desire be them possible or impossible, plausible or groundless.

Surah al-Najm – Verse 26

وَكَمْ مِّن مَّلَكٍ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ لَا تُغْنِي شَفَاعَتُهُمْ شَيْئًا إِلَّا مِن بَعْدِ أَنْ يَأْذَنَ اللَّهُ لِمَن
يَشَاءُ وَيَرْضَى

26. And there are many angels in the heavens, whose intercession will avail nothing except after Allah has given leave for whom He wills and is pleased with.

The main emphasis in the blessed Verse in question is laid on the issue of polytheists saying that there are many angels in the heavens whose intercession is of no avail unless God Almighty gives leave for whom He wills and is pleased with.

When the angels of the heavens with their grandeur and greatness may not intercede with God Almighty unless He gives leave, such inanimate and insignificant idols may not be expected to be of any avail. When eagles swift in flight cannot soar that high, such ineffectual mosquitoes may not be expected to be of any use. Would it not be shameful that they say that they worship these idols so that they may intercede at Divine Threshold on our behalf?

The interrogative and exclamatory particle kam ("how many, how much") ad hoc designates generality, that is, none of the angels may intercede with God Almighty on anyone's behalf without His leave.

Surah al-Najm – Verses 27-28

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ لَيُسَمُّونَ الْمَلَائِكَةَ تَسْمِيَةَ الْأُنثَى

وَمَا لَهُمْ بِهِ مِنْ عِلْمٍ إِنْ يَتَّبِعُونَ إِلَّا الظَّنَّ وَإِنَّ الظَّنَّ لَا يُغْنِي مِنَ الْحَقِّ شَيْئًا

27. Indeed, those who believe not in the Hereafter, name the angels with female names.

28. But they have no knowledge thereof. They follow but a conjecture and indeed conjecture may not indubitably render man needless of Truth.

The blessed twain Verses in question resume the discussion on the refutation of polytheists' beliefs, saying that those who do not believe in the Hereafter and name the angels as Allah's daughters.

Such shameful words are solely uttered by those who disbelieve in the Records and Recompense of deeds; otherwise they would not have taken the liberty to utter such words which are not substantiated by the least argument; nonetheless, logical arguments indicate that God Almighty has no offspring nor are angels female.

"Name the angels with female names"

makes a reference to the groundless words mentioned in the preceding blessed Verses such that these names are devoid of significance failing to transcend the bounds of nomenclature, since they are devoid of truth.

The blessed Verse 28 makes a reference to a crystal clear argument invalidating such nomenclature saying that they have neither knowledge nor certitude, but they follow their groundless conjectures. However, conjecture may not render man needless of the Truth and may not lead anyone to the Truth.

A believing and dutiful man never utters a word without knowledge and awareness nor does he ascribe any attribute to anyone without reason. Reliance upon conjecture belongs to Satan and his followers and acknowledgement of superstitions beacons error and insensibility.

Surah al-Najm - Verse 29

فَاعْرِضْ عَنْ مَنْ تَوَلَّىٰ عَنَّا زِكْرًا وَلَمْ يُرِدْ إِلَّا الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا

29. Therefore, withdraw from him who turns away from Our Reminder and desires noting but the life of this world.

Muslims are bidden to withdraw from those who turn away from the religion of God Almighty and do not give ear to Divine Injunctions, since turning away from God Almighty and mammonism are the most obvious tokens of error.

Thus, the blessed Verse in question addressed to the Noble Prophet of Islam (S) bids him to withdraw from those who solely seek mundane life and reinforcement of bestial faculties and refrain from engaging in scholarly arguments and discussions, since their utmost extent of knowledge is to enjoy the pleasures of the flesh and they may not transcend perceptible bounds.

Surah al-Najm - Verse 30

ذَلِكَ مَبْلَغُهُمْ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ ضَلَّ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ اهْتَدَى

30. That is their utmost extent of knowledge and cognition. Indeed, your Lord it is He Who knows best those who have gone astray from His Path and He knows best those who have received Guidance.

This is the utmost extent of the knowledge and efforts of those who have forgotten God Almighty, have turned toward mundane life, and have exchanged their human dignity and honor with mundane possessions. O Prophet Muhammad (S)! God Almighty is Omniscient and knows best those who have gone astray from the Path of Truth and may not receive Guidance and He also knows best those who deserve Guidance.

Your obligation solely rests in guiding all people toward the Path to Guidance so that thereby Divine Final Argument reaches everyone.

Surah al-Najm - Verse 31

وَلِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ لِيَجْزِيَ الَّذِينَ أَسَاءُوا بِمَا عَمِلُوا وَيَجْزِيَ
الَّذِينَ أَحْسَنُوا بِالْحُسْنَى

31. And to Allah belong all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth, that He may requite those who do evil with that which they have done and reward those who do good with what is best.

The blessed Verse in question proceeds with treating of Divine Omniscience as to the astray and the guided, saying that whatever exists in the heavens and the earth belongs to God Almighty. He is the Absolute Possessor and the Absolute Sovereign in the world of existence therefore He solely deserves to be worshipped and He is the only One of Whom man may expect intercession.

The main cause for the creation of the world of being is that man, the superior being in the world of

existence, be guided toward the path of perfection through existential, legislative, and didactic schedules applied by Prophets. Thus, the blessed Verse in question closes with the consequence of such Possession by saying that the creation of the world aims at requiting those who do evil with that which they have done and reward those who do good with what is best.

Surah al-Najm - Verse 32

الَّذِينَ يَجْتَنِبُونَ كَبَائِرَ الْإِثْمِ وَالْفَوَاحِشَ إِلَّا اللَّمَمَ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ وَاسِعُ الْمَغْفِرَةِ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ
بِكُمْ إِذْ أَنْشَأَكُمْ مِنَ الْأَرْضِ وَإِذْ أَنْتُمْ أَجِنَّةٌ فِي بُطُونِ أُمَّهَاتِكُمْ فَلَا تُزَكُّوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ هُوَ
أَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ اتَّقَى

32. Those who avoid great sins and vices except the inadvertently committed sins, indeed your Lord is of Great Forgiveness. He knows you well when He created you from the earth and when you were fetuses in your mothers' wombs. Therefore, ascribe not purity to yourselves. He knows best him who fears Allah.

Following the promise given as to the Recompense and Reward for deeds, the blessed Verse in question is saying that God Almighty bestows further Favors upon those who have refrained from committing grave sins. Abstention from committing grave sins leads to Forgiving their lesser sins. It is worthy of note that persistence in committing lesser sins turns them into grave sins.

The Arabic word kaba'ir is the plural for of kabira

("grave sin")

and fawahish is the pluralized form of fahisha. The latter is applied to a sin whose vice is obvious to everyone, e.g. fornication. The Arabic word ithm originally denotes an act that makes man turn away from doing righteous good deeds. According to Raghib's Mufradat, the word lamam designates coming close to committing sins and the word is applied to lesser sins.

It is worthy of note that different senses have been attested for the Arabic word lamam in Usul Kafi¹⁵ and lexicographic and exegetic sources, including:

An inadvertently committed sin which is not repeated.

An intended but unfulfilled sin.

A sin which is followed by repentance and apology.

A sin for which there is no warning against its Recompense.

A sin without specified bounds.

The point is that disobedience against Divine Commands is something gross but all sins do not rest on the same degree. Some sins, e.g. lying and backbiting, are grosser and entail more severe Recompense. Furthermore, the time, place, intention, knowledge, and ignorance at the time of committing sins and persistence in committing them or failing to do so impact the nature of committed sins.

The issue of grave and lesser sins is recurrently attested in the Holy Qur'an¹⁶.

According to the Holy Qur'an all human deeds are being recorded:

("all lesser and greater [issues] are recorded")

as are all grave and lesser sins and the record of human deeds shall be unrolled on the Day of Resurrection;

("We shall bring out for him a book which he will find wide open,"¹⁷).

It shall be at the time that a cry shall be heard:

("Woe unto us! What is this book in which all our greater and lesser deeds are recorded in it,"¹⁸).

Grave sins are enumerated by Imam Ridha (as) as the following:

1. Murder
2. Fornication
3. Theft
4. Drinking wine
5. Parents' dissatisfaction and curse as to disinheritance ('aq)
6. Consumption of blood
7. Eating pork
8. Eating what is slaughtered in any name other than that of God Almighty
9. Usury
10. Bribery
11. Gambling

12. Dealing in fraud by selling deficiently
13. Accusing chaste women
14. Sodomy
15. Perjury
16. Desperation of Divine Mercy
17. Regarding himself saved from Divine torment
18. Bearing assistance to and reliance on tyrants
19. False oath
20. Mortification of property and rights of others
21. Lying
22. Arrogance
23. Prodigality and extravagance
24. Dissipation and squandering
25. Treason and betrayal
26. Deficiency in performing pilgrimage rites
27. Animosity against friends of God Almighty
28. Engaging in libidinous pleasures
29. Persistence in committing sins.¹⁹

Disbelief, polytheism, and failing to establish prayers are also mentioned as grave sins in a number of traditions. Qur'anic Verses and sound traditions have been mentioned in relevant sources, but they were not mentioned herein for the sake of brevity.²⁰

It is narrated from Imam Baqir (as) that regarding:

"Do not consider yourselves pure"

he said:

"Do not take pride in establishing prayer, paying alms, taking fast, and invoking God Almighty since God

*knows best the God fearing."*²¹

Imam Sadiq (as) was inquired:

"Is it lawful if one praises himself?"

He replied:

"If some emergency arises, there is no problem in doing the same."

It is also narrated that a Jew came unto the Messenger of Allah (S) and bragged about the miracles worked by Prophet Moses (as).

The Noble Prophet said:

"It is unbecoming to praise oneself, but for your information, I say unto you that Prophet Adam (as) for repentance, Prophet Noah (as) for being saved from drowning, Prophet Abraham (as) for deliverance from fire, and Prophet Moses (as) for being saved from God Almighty, swore to God on the right of the family of Muhammad (S).

*O Jew! Had Moses (as) seen me, he would have believed in me. Imam Mahdi (as) is my descendant for whose assistance Jesus (as) descends from the heaven and established prayer behind him."*²²

Following an enumeration of grave sins, the blessed Verse in question treats of Divine Mercy and other Attributes. Addressing His Messenger (S), God Almighty says that His Forgiving is so great that He forgives lesser sins because of abstention from committing grave ones and He forgives the latter by repentance.

His pre-eternal Omniscience encompasses everything. He created man from earth. He knows him best when he is a fetus in his mother's womb. He is All-Aware of man's inner and outer states.

Thus, the blessed Verse says:

"He knows you well when he created you from the earth and when you were fetuses in your mother's wombs. Therefore, ascribe no purity to yourselves. He knows best him who fears Allah and keeps his duty to Him."

There is no need to conceal your defects, pretend to have faith, or be vain, since God Almighty knows best one who fears Him and possesses virtues.

Finally, it is also worthy of note that certain acts lead to turning lesser sins to grave ones, including persistence in committing the former, underestimation of committing sins, being happy when committing them, committing sins out of disobedience, vanity in expectation of Divine respites, committing sins in public, committing sins by prominent figures.

The consequences of committing sins may also be enumerated in passing:

1. Callousness
2. Deprivation of Divine Bounties
3. Rejection of invocations
4. Changes in daily provision and sustenance
5. Deprivation from certain prayers, like night prayer
6. Sudden afflictions
7. Lack of rainfall
8. Destruction of one's house
9. Disgrace and humility
10. Brevity of lifetime
11. Earthquake
12. Grief and ailment
13. Conquest of the villainous.

There are Qur'anic Verses and traditions regarding each of the above. It is also mentioned in traditions that the friend of the Noble Prophet (S) is one who obeys God Almighty even if he is no relation to him and the Noble Prophet's (S) enemy is one who disobeys God Almighty even if he happens to be his relation.²³

1. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 92, p. 305.

2. Tafsir Nur al-Thiqalayn and other Shi'i and Sunni exegetic works.

3. Tafsir Kanz al-Daqa'iq.

4. Tafsir Durr al-Manshur by Suyuti.

5. Tafsir Nur, under the blessed Verse in question.

6. Tafsir Nur al-Thiqalayn and other exegetic works.

7. Nahj al-Balagha, Sermon 179.

8. Tafsir Makhzan al-'Irfan; Tafsir Safi; Tafsir Burhan; Tafsir Atyab al-Bayan under the blessed Verse in question.

9. 53:18

10. 17:1

11. Majma' al-Bayan; Hidayah; Atyab al-Bayan; Safi; Burhan.

12. Tafsir Jami' al-Jawami', vol. 6, p. 62.

13. Tafsir Makhzan al-'Irfan, vol. 6, p. 385.
14. 39:3
15. vol. 2, p. 433
16. e.g. 4:31; 18:49; 42:37:54:53
17. 17: 13
18. 18:43
19. Tafsir Nur al-Thiqalayn, under the blessed Verse in question.
20. Tafsir Nur al-Thiqalayn; Burhan; Safi; Makhzan al-'Irfan; Majma' al-Bayan; Usul Kafi.
21. Tafsir Kanz al-Daqa'iq.
22. Tafsir Nur, vol. 11, p. 325.
23. Wasa'il al-Shi'a, vol. 15., p. 238.

Source URL: <https://www.al-islam.org/sw/node/29752>