

Surah al-Najm, Verses 33 – 62

Surah al-Najm – Verses 33–34

أَفَرَأَيْتَ الَّذِي تَوَلَّى

وَأَعْطَى قَلِيلًا وَأَكْدَى

33. Did you observe him who turned away

34. And gave a little then stopped [giving]?

The Arabic verbal form akda derives from k-d-y ("stint, cease from giving alms") and is a cognate of kady ("hard land").

It is said on the occasion of the Revelation of the twain blessed Verses that a certain man was in the habit of giving alms but he was warned by others that he would be needy later on. He ceased from giving alms and became entangled with niggardliness. A number of Qur'an exegetes maintain that the twain blessed Verses allude to 'Uthman ibn 'Affan who expended lots of his possessions on paying alms.

His foster brother, 'Abd Allah ibn Sa'd said unto him:

"You expend much on paying alms. You may be poor some day."

'Uthman said unto him:

"I have committed many a sin. I pay alms so that I may expiate my sins."

'Abd Allah asked him to give his camel with its accessories unto him and he would pay for his sins. 'Uthman did so and asked witnesses to bear testimony and ceased from paying alms imagining that he was purified of his sins.

It was at the time that the twain blessed Verses were revealed saying O Muhammad! Did you see the man who turned his back on the day of the Battle of Uhud and fled?

He gave a little of his possessions to his foster brother so that the latter may carry the burden of his sins and ceased from expending on alms as a consequence of which he was censured and rebuked. There are also other views as to the occasion of the Revelation of the twain blessed Verses, but they were not mentioned for the sake of brevity.

Surah al-Najm - Verses 35-37

أَعِنْدَهُ عِلْمُ الْغَيْبِ فَهَوْ يَرَى

أَمْ لَمْ يُنَبَّأْ بِمَا فِي صُحُفِ مُوسَى

وَإِبْرَاهِيمَ الَّذِي وَفَّى

35. Is with him the knowledge of the Unseen so that he sees the truths?

36. Or is he not informed about what is in the Torah of Moses (as) about bearing assistance to the deprived?

37. And of Scripture of Abraham (as) who fulfilled all that Allah ordered him.

Prophet Abraham (as) is called God's Friend owing to his obedience to and love for God Almighty. He was so loyal to Allah that he tolerated all hardships. Like unto other Prophets (as) he persevered in his obedience to Divine Lordship and passed all tests, including Nimrod's Fire and readiness to sacrifice his son for Allah. He was so perseverant that he was called God's Friend.

In short, the interrogative particle (hamza) in a-'indahu

("is with him")

and am-lam

("is he not")

in the blessed Verses 36 and 37 beacons the refutation of a false belief as per which he was aware of the Unseen world and he said that he took the responsibility for his sins. The following Verse is saying that it is recorded in the Scriptures of Moses (as) and Abraham (as) that no one may take the responsibility of others and each and every person stands accountable for his own sins.

Surah al-Najm - Verses 38-39

أَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ أُخْرَىٰ

وَأَن لَّيْسَ لِلْإِنْسَانِ إِلَّا مَا سَعَىٰ

38. [It is mentioned in all Scriptures that] that no one shall bear the burden of another.

39. And that man can have nothing but what he strives for.

The Arabic word wizr denotes heavy burden and it connotes sin which is actually a heavy burden. The Arabic word wazir is applied to vizier who shoulders the heavy burden of the administration of the state.

The blessed Verses are saying that God Almighty obliterates vices through committing righteous good deeds, forgives sins because of repentance, or turns vices into good, but never makes anyone bear the burden of sins committed by another.

In this vein, it is reported that the second caliph ordered a pregnant adulteress be stoned.

Imam 'Ali (as) objected saying that the fetus in her womb was not supposed to bear the burden of its mother's sin in which he relied on the blessed Verse:

"No one shall bear the burden of another."

He said:

*"Be patient until the ruling will be executed after delivery."*¹

The Messenger of Allah (S) aid:

"The sins of fornicating parents are not to be borne by the illegitimate children."

Then he recited the Verse:

"No one shall bear the burden of another."²

The blessed Verse 39 reads:

"And that man can have nothing but what he strives for."

The Arabic word sa'y designates "move fast rather than run" but it often connotes "strive, make effort," since upon making efforts, rapid movements are being done whether the same aim at doing righteous good deeds or otherwise.

It would be of interest to note that man reaps the fruit of his efforts rather than fulfillment of something which connotes that it is of significance to strive and make efforts even if one may not attain to his goal; if he intends to do righteous good deeds, God Almighty will grant him his reward, since he seeks good intentions rather than fulfilled tasks.

Surah al-Najm - Verses 40-42

وَأَنَّ سَعْيَهُ سَوْفَ يُرَى

ثُمَّ يُجْزَاهُ الْجَزَاءَ الْأَوْفَى

وَأَنَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ الْمُنْتَهَىٰ

40. And that his deeds will be seen.

41. Then he will be recompensed with a full and the best recompense.

42. And that to your Lord is the return of all.

The blessed Verses 40 and 41 are saying that one who perseveres in the fulfillment of his tasks not only will soon receive the reward of his righteous good deeds in full but also will reap further rewards for the same. It is mentioned in the Holy Qur'an that each and every righteous good deed will accrue tenfold rewards and some believers and the God fearing will receive rewards several times as much.

The blessed Verse 42 says that everything shall indubitably return to your Lord, since He is the Efficient Cause and the Final Cause and the pivot of the world of creation, its beginning, and its end rests on Divine Pure Essence.

Surah al-Najm - Verses 43-44

وَأَنَّهُ هُوَ أَضْحَكَ وَأَبْكَى

وَأَنَّهُ هُوَ أَمَاتَ وَأَحْيَا

43. And that it is He Who makes [whom He wills] laugh and makes [whom He wills] weep.

44. And that it is He Who causes death and gives life.

Although Divine Acts are being done through intermediaries, but in fact He is the Main Cause.

Repetition of the pronoun;

"He"

reflects that He is the only Main Cause. Thus it is said: O Muhammad (S)! Your Lord toward Whom you guide people is the Lord and Fosterer of all things. Creatures in the higher and the lower spheres and the overt and covert attributes and traces of the beings of the world of creation all rest upon His Will.

Even laughing arising from the felicity of the soul and weeping stemming from grief and sorrow as well as life and death as two opposite existential phenomena rest on Divine Will and the Existential Command of the Fosterer of the world of existence.

Surah al-Najm - Verses 45-47

وَأَنَّهُ خَلَقَ الزَّوْجَيْنِ الذَّكَرَ وَالْأُنثَى

مِنْ نُطْفَةٍ إِذَا تُمْنَى

وَأَنَّ عَلَيْهِ النَّشْأَةَ الْآخِرَى

45. And that He creates the pairs, male and female

46. From semen when it is emitted [into the womb].

47. And that upon Him is another creation upon Resurrection.

The law of conjugality in the system of creation is legislated by God Almighty rather than a convention amongst human beings. It is the secret of survival. If removed, life will lose its vitality and will come to an end. The creation of female and female pairs is one of the wonders and the necessities of life.

The blessed Verses are saying that God Almighty creates the twain male and female pairs out of the semen emitted into the womb.

Following an enumeration of attributes regarding Divine Lordship and Fostering, the blessed Verses treat of Resurrection asking:

"Is not man aware that according to formerly revealed Scriptures, it is upon God Almighty to create another world?"

The Arabic word nash'a in the blessed Verse 47 denotes creation and fostering something.

The prepositional phrase:

"upon him"

reflects that as God Almighty created man and made him responsible for fulfilling certain obligations and granted them free will and some people are obedient and some disobedient, some are tyrants and some oppressed and none of them received their recompense and the rewards, it is upon the All-Wise Allah to create another creation so that justice be administered.

Surah al-Najm – Verses 48-49

وَأَنَّهُ هُوَ أَغْنَىٰ وَأَقْنَىٰ

وَأَنَّهُ هُوَ رَبُّ الشَّعْرَىٰ

48. And that it is He Who causes needlessness and need.

49. And that He is the Lord of Sirius.

According to Raghib's Mufradat, the verbal forms aghna and aqna are cognate with Ghana

("needlessness") and quniya ("wealth").

Concerning the interpretation of the blessed Verse 48, Imam 'Ali (as) said:

"God Almighty renders man needless and also makes him satisfied with what he has."

Sirius is the name of a star worshipped by some who imagined that it affected their poverty and needlessness. It is worthy of note that it has been identified by the name of an idol as well. Sirius is the most resplendent star that usually appears in the sky at dawn and it was due to its brilliance that some Arab pagans worshipped it.

The Holy Qur'an is asking:

"Why do you worship Sirius?"

Then the blessed Verse 48 is bidding people to worship the Lord, the Creator.

Surah al-Najm - Verses 50-54

وَأَنَّهُ أَهْلَكَ عَادًا الْأُولَىٰ

وَتَمُودَ فَمَا أَبْقَىٰ

وَقَوْمَ نُوحٍ مِّن قَبْلُ إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا هُمْ أَظْلَمَ وَأَطْغَىٰ

وَالْمُؤْتَفِكَةَ أَهْوَىٰ

فَغَشَّاهَا مَا عَشَّىٰ

50. And that it is He Who destroyed the former 'Ad [people]

51. And Thamud [people]. He spared none of them.

52. And the people of Noah (as) aforetime. Indeed, they were more unjust and more rebellious.

53. And He destroyed the cities of the people of Lot (as).

54. Therefore, He covered them out of His Wrath with that which he covered.

All chastisements will not be in the Hereafter. Some peoples have been destroyed by God Almighty in this world and we should take a lesson. Alluding to the preceding Verses, the blessed Verses in question refer to Divine Omnipotence saying that in the same manner that your Lord created beings and their states, He causes the destruction of tyrants and rebels.

In terms of Grace and Mercy God Almighty is the Most Beneficent and in terms of Wrath, He is Severe of Recompense. He caused the destruction of earlier 'Ad and Thamud peoples without sparing any of them and the people of Noah (as) had been destroyed because they were more tyrant and rebellious.

The earlier 'Ad were Prophet Hod's (as) people and a group of them, called Banu Laqim and later 'Ad, resided in Mecca and were spared. It is also said that they were called earlier 'Ad since they were the first people who were destroyed following the disobedient people of Prophet Noah (as).

The second Verse is saying that your Lord caused the destruction of the people of Thamud who were the people of Prophet Salih such that none of them were spared. The second and the fourth Verses say that Your Lord had caused the destruction of the people of Prophet Noah (as) as the recompense of their tyranny and disobedience before that of 'Ad and Thamud.

The fourth Verse says that the city of Mu'tafaka inhabited by the People of Prophet Lot (as) was levitated by Gabriel and was cast down and some many hard pieces of clay rained upon them that the earth was covered with them. It is also said that Mu'tafaka was applied to four cities: Sawa'im, Adima, 'Amura, and Sodom, and Gomorrah.

Surah al-Najm – Verses 55–56

فَبِأَيِّ آءِ رَبِّكَ تَتَمَارَى

هَذَا نَذِيرٌ مِّنَ النُّذُرِ الْأُولَى

55. Then which of the Graces of your Lord will you doubt?

56. This is a warner of the warners of old.

The main obligation of all Prophets and the main goal of all Scriptures is to warn mankind. Although the

blessed Verse is seemingly addressed to the Noble Prophet (S), but it actually addresses mankind saying that O man! You still entertain doubts despite observing so many tokens of Divine Omnipotence?

It sounds as if the traces of the destruction of the cities of 'Ad and Thamud were still visible at the time of the Revelation of the Holy Qur'an as a reference is made to the same elsewhere³;

("Indeed, you pass by them in the morning and at night; will you not then reflect [upon their disobedience and take a lesson out of the fate of the ancients]?"⁴).

As mentioned in the exegetic work Manhaj al-Sadiqin, it is narrated on the authority of Muhammad ibn Humayd A'mash from Salih from Ibn 'Abbas that when the Noble Prophet (S) was assigned to appoint 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (as) as his successor and impart the same unto people, the Noble Prophet (S) first concealed the same from Quraysh chiefs, since he was aware that they would oppose the same and they would not acknowledge such appointment out of arrogance and envy and they might even harm 'Ali (as).

Then Archangel Gabriel descended and said:

"God Almighty will keep you from their evil deeds"

and revealed the Verse:

"If you fail to do the same, you will not fulfill your Prophetic Call"

unto him. Thus, the Noble Prophet (S) appointed 'Ali (as) as the Imam and made it obligatory for the Muslim community on the Day of Ghadir Khum to obey his Guardianship.

Following the appointment of 'Ali (as) to imamate, the blessed Verse 55;

("Then which of the Graces of your Lord will you doubt?")

was revealed.⁵

In interpreting the blessed Verse 56, Qur'an exegetes maintain that the antecedent of the demonstrative pronoun;

"this" (hadha)

may be the Noble Prophet of Islam (S) who like his predecessors was Divinely appointed to warn people. The antecedent may be the Holy Qur'an that like former Scriptures was revealed for people's Guidance.

Then, it is a source of surprise that you do not believe in God Almighty. Some exegetes hold that the antecedent of the demonstrative pronoun in question is the torment sent down upon former peoples and

the blessed Verse warns people against such torment. God Almighty knows best.

Surah al-Najm – Verses 57-58

أَزِفَتْ الْآزِفَةُ

لَيْسَ لَهَا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ كَاشِفَةٌ

57. The Day of Resurrection draws near.

58. None besides Allah can avert the torments of that Day.

The Arabic feminine present participial form azifa denotes "approaching, drawing near." We are not supposed to imagine that the Day of Resurrection is far away but we should know that all mundane means and possessions may not decrease an iota of the afflictions of that Day;

(*"None besides Allah can avert the torments of that Day"*).

The only Support shall be provided by God Almighty with his All-Encompassing Graciousness and Mercy but none besides Him shall be able to avert the hardships on that Day.

Surah al-Najm – Verses 59-62

أَفَمِنْ هَذَا الْحَدِيثِ تَعْجَبُونَ

وَتَضْحَكُونَ وَلَا تَبْكُونَ

وَأَنْتُمْ سَامِدُونَ

فَاسْجُدُوا لِلَّهِ وَعَبُدُوا

59. Do you then wonder at this Word?

60. And you laugh and weep not,

61. Wasting your lifetime in pastime and amusements.

62. Thus, fall you down in prostration to Allah and worship Him.

According to Tafsir Furqan, it is narrated that following the Revelation of these blessed Verses, the Noble Prophet (S) ceased to laugh to his last day, but he merely smiled. It is narrated from Imam Sadiq (as) that he said that the word hadith in the blessed Verse 59 is the accounts of the ancients.

It is worthy of note that the interrogative particle (hamza) in a-fa-man

("do you then")

is a rhetorical question by which it is asked:

"Are you not surprised at this account of the ancients and the torments and afflictions sent down upon them? Do you deride the news of the Day of Resurrection drawing near? You should be weeping out of awe and grief."

The Arabic plural present participial form samidun in the blessed Verse 61 connotes;

"wasting one's lifetime in pastime and amusements."

The present participle in question derives from s-m-d "to raise one's head arrogantly. The Arabic expression samad al-ba'ir ("the camel erected its neck") connotes raising one's head in arrogance. Disbelievers are ad hoc likened to a camel erecting its neck while moving, since they disobey God Almighty and regard His Word a plaything.

The last blessed Verse addresses all mankind saying that they should fall in prostration before God Almighty, the Creator and Fosterer of their existence and solely worship Him, since He is the only One deserving to be worshipped. Manmade idols, stars, the sun, concupiscent desires do not deserve to be worshipped.

It is worthy of note that:

"fall you down in prostration to Allah and worship Him"

(fa-'sjudu wa 'budu) are both in the imperative mode designating necessity; as a consequence of which, all jurists are unanimous that following the recitation of the blessed Verse 62, it is obligatory to fall in prostration to Allah. It is reported that upon the Revelation of the blessed Verse, the Noble Prophet (S) fell in prostration to Allah and all beings including jinn and mankind did the same.

It should be borne in mind sijda:

("that falling in prostration")

reflects humbleness and 'ibada

("worship")

designates obedience to Allah.

The former falls into two types: those reflected by bodily postures as the same is reflected in prayers and the other type constitutes the permanent and inward prostration and the same is solely possible for one whose heart is subjugated by Divine Grandeur, Greatness, and Glory and whose soul has attained to the exalted state of closeness to God Almighty.

Such person is humble and stands in awe of Divine Greatness inwardly and outwardly at all times. He is the true example of those who inwardly fall in prostration to Allah and worship Him. It is worthy of note that falling in prostration to Allah and worshipping Him may cure man of arrogance and vanity.

O Lord! We invoke you to shed the Light of Your Knowledge upon our hearts so that we worship none but You and we fall in prostration to none but You.

1. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 76, p. 49.

2. Tafsir Rahnama; Durr al-Manthur; and other exegetic works under the blessed Verse in question.

3. 37: 133-139

4. 37: 137-138

5. Tafsir Makhzan al-Asrar; Manhaj al-Sadiqin, under the blessed Verse in question.