

Surah Takathur, Chapter 102

(Vying in Exuberance)

Number of Verses: 8

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بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

In The Name of Allah, The Beneficent, The Merciful

Numerous commentators believe that this Surah has been revealed in Mecca; then the subject mentioned in the Surah about vying and self-glorification is, customarily, referring to the tribes of Quraish who used to boast to each other, in vain, about worthless affairs.

But, some others, such as the late Tabarsi who cited his idea in *Majma'-al-Bayan*, believe that the Surah was revealed in Medina, and what is said is it about vying and boasting in each other's sight refers to the Jews or to two tribes among the 'Ansar'. But, regarding the close similarity that this Surah, being Meccan, has with the Meccan Suras, seems more proper.

The content of the Surah in general is firstly, a scorn on those people who, based on things of no value, boast to each other and secondly, there is a warning about the proposition of the Hereafter and the Hell-fire; and finally, warning that we will be questioned about the bounties in our life.

The name of the Surah is derived from the words in the first verse.

[The Virtue of Studying Surah Takathur](#)

On the virtue of reciting the Surah, a tradition from the Prophet (S) says:

"He who recites it, Allah will not account the bounties he was given in the world and He will award him

such a reward as if he had recited one thousand verses (of the Qur'an). [1](#)

A tradition from Imam Sadiq (as) denotes that

“The recitation of this Surah in the obligatory and optional prayers has a reward similar to Martyrdom.”[2](#)

It is obvious that these total rewards are for the one who recites it, practices it in his daily life and harmonizes his mind and soul with it.

Surah Takathur, Verses 1-8

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

In The Name of Allah, The Beneficent, The Merciful

أَلْهٰكُمُ التَّكٰثُرُ

حَتّٰی زُرْتُمُ الْمَقَابِرَ

كَلَّا سَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ

ثُمَّ كَلَّا سَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ

كَلَّا لَوْ تَعْلَمُونَ عِلْمَ الْیَقِیْنِ

لَتَرَوُنَّ الْجَحِیْمَ

ثُمَّ لَتَرَوُنَّهَا عَیْنَ الْیَقِیْنِ

ثُمَّ لَتَسْأَلَنَّ یَوْمَئِذٍ عَنِ النَّعِیْمِ

1. *“Engageth you (your) vying in exuberance.”*

2. ***“Until you visit the graves.”***
3. ***“Nay! You shall soon know,”***
4. ***“Again, Nay! You shall soon know.”***
5. ***“Nay! Were you to know with the knowledge of certainty, (you would beware!)”***
6. ***“You shall certainly see the blazing fire,”***
7. ***“Again, you will surely see it with certainty of sight!”***
8. ***“Then, on that Day you will surely be questioned about the joy (you indulged in).”***

The Occasion of Revelation

As we mentioned before, commentators believe that this Surah was revealed against the tribes who vied in boasting with one another and prided themselves on increasing their wealth, position, and the number of their adherents so to add to the number of men in each tribe, they even went to the cemetery and counted the tribal graves.

Some believe that the meaning refers to two tribes from the tribes of Quraish in Mecca, while some others think it refers to two tribes from the helpers of the Prophet (S), the Ansar, in Medina; and still, some relate it to the vying of the Jews to others, though to consider the Surah Meccan seems more appropriate.

But, it is certain that whatever these occasions of revelation could be, they never limit the meaning of the verse.

The Affliction of Vying in Exuberance!

In these verses, at first, in a scolding tone, it says:

“Engageth you (your) vying in exuberance”,
“Until you visit the graves”,

To enumerate the graves of your dead.

In commenting on the verse, this probability has also been conveyed that 'vying' has engaged them so much so that it will continuously persist until they enter their graves.

But, the first meaning,

'Until you visit the graves'

considering the occasion of revelation and also the words of Hazrat Ali (as) in Nahj-ul-Balagha, which will be dealt with later, is more fitting.

The term /alhakum/ is based on the root /lahw/ with the meaning of 'amusement, being busy with

unimportant small things and neglectful of great aims and ideas.' Raqib cites in Mufradat: "The word /lahw /means something that amuses one with itself and detains him from his real goals."

The term /takathur/ is derived from, /kithrat/ with the sense of 'vying, glorifying and boasting in each other's sight'.

The term /zurtum/ is based on /ziyarat/ and /zaur/ which originally means 'the upper part of the chest' and later, it has been used in the sense of 'to visit' and 'to face with'.

The term /maqabir/ is the plural form of /maqbirah/ with the meaning of 'the place of the grave of a corpse'; and visiting the graves metaphorically means "death" (according to some commentaries), or it has the meaning of 'going to the graves in order to vie for the number of the dead'.

As it was said earlier, the second meaning seems more proper.

One of the evidences to this idea is the words of Hazrat Ali (as), on this matter, cited in Nahj-ul-Balagha, Sermon, No. 221, that after reciting

***"Engageth you (your) vying in exuberance",
"Until you visit the graves",***

he said:

"How distant (from achievement) is their aim, how neglectful are these visitors and how difficult is the affair. They had not taken lessons from things which are full of lessons, but, they took them from far off places. Do they boast on the dead bodies of their forefathers, or do they regard the number of dead persons as a grounds for feeling boastful of their numbers?"

*They want to revive the bodies that have become spiritless and the moments that have ceased; those which are more entitled to be a source of lesson than a source of pride and those are more suitable for being a source of humility than of honour."*³

In the next verse they are severely threatened:

***"Nay! You shall soon know,"
"Again, Nay! You shall soon know."***

A group of commentators have considered these two verses as a repetition and emphasis on one matter. They, in a general form, inform of the punishments waiting for these vying, proud people.

Some have related the first verse to the chastisement in the graves and purgatory after the death that Man is faced with, and the second to the punishment in the Hereafter.

It is narrated that Amir-al-Mo'mineen Ali (as), in a tradition, said:

"Some of us were in doubt about the chastisement in the grave until the time that Surah Takathur was revealed, (the verse) says:

'Nay! You shall soon know'

which indicated (the punishment) in the grave, and (the verse)

'Again, nay! You shall soon know'

(refers to it) in the Hereafter. "[4](#)

Then, it adds that it is not such as you vying, proud people think.

If you believed in the Hereafter and knew it with the you would never indulge in such vain affairs and vie for foolish things:

"Nay! Were you to know with the knowledge of certainty, (you would beware!)"

Then, for a stronger warning and a more emphatic statement it says:

"You shall certainly see the blazing Fire,"

"Again, you will surely see it with certainty of sight!"

"Then, on that Day you will surely be questioned about the joy (you indulged in)."

On That Day, you must clarify how you enjoyed the bounties of Allah, in your life, and whether you used them in the way of obeying Allah or committing sin and consequently, wasting them.

Explanations

The Source of Vying

It is understood from the above verses that one of the main factors in vying and pride is ignorance of the rewards and punishments given by Allah, for our deeds and the lack of Faith in the Resurrection.

Besides, Man's ignorance of his weaknesses, his creation and his final destiny are among the causes of the existence of this pride and vying. That is why the Holy Qur'an, to break this vying and pride, tells the story of the destruction of some earlier nations in different verses, and how they were simply vanished while they had much power and possibilities. They were destroyed by wind, lightening, earthquake, excessive rain and sometimes, small baked clay carried by little birds.

Yet, What is This Mass of Vying and Pride For?

Another factor for this status is the feeling of weakness and helplessness originating from defects some people have, themselves, and they want to cover them with vying and pride. Concerning this, a tradition from Imam Sadiq (as) says:

"No one is proud or behaves arrogantly except for the disgrace that he finds in himself."⁵

Another tradition from Amir-al-Mo'mineen Ali (as) says:

*"Two things have killed people: the fear of poverty (which forces man to gather wealth by any means and any way), and demanding pride."*⁶

And verily, this very unreasonable fear of poverty and vying between individuals, tribes, and societies are among the greatest causes of greed, lowliness, mammonism, destructive rivalries and many other social vices.

A tradition from the holy Prophet (S) says:

*"I do not fear you for poverty, but I fear you because of lying."*⁷

All it was said before, the term 'Takathur' originally means 'vying', but, it is sometimes applied to the 'act of multiplying' especially in piling up wealth.

We conclude this subject with a meaningful tradition from the Prophet (S) who commenting on the verse

"Engageth you (your) vying in exuberance"

said:

*"Man says 'My wealth, my wealth' but you have not from your wealth save the food you eat, what you wear, and what you spend in the way of Allah."*⁸

This is, of course, a delicate, interesting point that everyone's share from the total wealth he gathers and sometimes does not pay the least attention to whether it is lawful or unlawful, is only the very small portion that he eats, drinks, wears, and spends in the way of Allah; and knows that what he uses, himself, is little, then, it is better to increase his share by spending a part of it in the way of Allah; and the more the better.

Certitude and its Degrees

'Certitude' (yaqin)

is the opposite case to 'doubt' as 'knowledge' contrasts with 'ignorance', and means 'the clarity and positiveness of something'. According to what is understood from the Islamic narrations and traditions, one of the strongest features of Faith is called 'yaqin'.

Imam Baqir (as) said:

"Faith is one degree higher than Islam, and 'Taqwa' virtue, is one degree higher than Faith, and yaqin', certitude, is one degree higher than 'taqwa'."

Then, he added:

"Nothing is divided less among people than certitude (yaqin)".

Then, he (as) was asked what 'yaqin' meant and he replied:

"(It is) trust in Allah, obedience to Allah, well-pleasing with the Will of Allah, and leaving all of (one's) affairs to Allah". [9](#)

This highness of the position of 'yaqin', certitude, to the positions of virtue, Faith, and Islam is somewhat like that which is mentioned and emphasized in other Islamic narrations, too.

From these statements and other evidences we clearly realize that when a person obtains the position of 'certitude' (yaqin) a special calmness and quietness fills his heart and his soul, completely.

In any event, certitude (yaqin) has degrees which are referred to in the verses of the Surah under discussion and in Surah Waq'ah, No. 56, verse 95:

"Verily, this is the very truth and certainty".

Certainty of knowledge (yaqin) has been described as having three stages:

1. Certitude of knowledge or certainty of mind ('Ilm-ul-yaqin) which is the Faith that a person obtains by various means such as the one who sees smoke and believes there is fire there.
- 2 Certainty of Sight ('Iym-ul-yaqin) which is what one sees with one's eyes; for instance, one sees the fire, himself.
3. The absolute truth of assured certainty (Haqq-ul-yaqin) which means the 'realization' or the 'knowledge proper' and is the personal experience as when the one who arrives in the fire oneself and feels the heat of it and takes the attributes of fire into his entity. This very state is the highest degree of 'yaqin'.

In fact, the first stage is general; the second stage is for pious people; and the third stage is for those who are in some way chosen above others.

A tradition from the Holy Prophet (S) denotes that some people asked him about a matter that they had heard about some of the companions of Prophet Jesus (as) who used to walk on water, and he (S) said:

"If their certitude was in a highest position they could walk in the air." [10](#)

The late 'Alamah Tabatabai, after mentioning this tradition, adds that everything pivots on the certitude to Allah, the Glorified, and to know no other means of the effects of this world, but Allah. Therefore, the more the Faith and certainty, in a person, is the absolute power of Allah, the more objects, in this world,

will be obedient to him.

And this is the secret of the relation of certitude (yaqin) and the 'extraordinary interference' in the world of creation.

All Will See Hell

The phrase /lata rawonn-al-jahim/ has two different commentaries. The first is the observation of Hell in the Hereafter, by disbelievers, or generally for all humans and Jinn.

The second meaning is its observation by spiritual intuition in this very world. In this case the phrase is the answer to the conditional proposition.

It says:

"... Were you to know with the knowledge of certainty, (you would beware)"

"You shall certainly see the blazing fire"

in this very life and with the sight of spiritual intuition, because we know that Paradise and Hell are prepared and exist just now.

But, as was said earlier, the first commentary is more fitting with the following verses which refer to the Day of Justice, therefore, this is a decisive proposition, not a conditional one.

What Bounties Are Asked About in the Hereafter?

The last verse, in this Surah, denotes that on Doomsday we will be questioned about the bounties we have incurred. Some have said that it means the bounty of health and mind-security; some others believe it refers to healthiness and security and finally, some have considered all bounties in its meaning.

A tradition from Hazrat Ali (as) says:

"Bounty (na'im)

is a 'ripe date' and 'cold water'".

According to another tradition, Abu Hanifah asked Imam Sadiq (as) about the meaning of this verse, then, he (as) returned the question to him and asked him what he thought

/na'im/ 'bounty'

was, and he replied that it was 'food' and 'cold water'.

Then, the Imam said that if Allah kept him before Him to ask him about every morsel he ate and every

drop of drink he drank, his stay, there, would be very long.

Abu Hanifah asked again about the meaning of /na'im/ and Imam (as) said:

"It refers to us, Ahlul-Bait, for whom Allah has given His servants bounties, and made them united after they were diverse and joined their hearts together in brotherhood after they had been enemies (with each other) and He has guided them to Islam through us and this is the bounty that will not cease, and Allah asks them about the 'right' of the bounty which He has given them and guided them to Islam by us.

Yes,

'bounty'

is the Prophet (S) and his household."[11](#)

The meaning of these apparently different traditions is that the term /na'im / has a very vast sense so that it covers all the divine bounties; from spiritual ones such as religion, Faith, Islam, Qur'an and vicegerency to material ones whether they are personal or social. But, the more important bounties like the bounty of 'Faith and vicegerency' are asked about more from them than if they had fulfilled their complete duty to them or not.

How could it be possible that these bounties would not be asked for when they are great, useful assets endowed to Man and each of which should be appreciated, thanked and used in their appropriate ways.

Supplication

O Lord! Shower upon us, ceaselessly, Your, unlimited bounties especially the bounty of 'Faith and vicegerency'.

O Lord! Give us the success of fulfilling our duties for them as their right is.

O Lord! Please increase these bounties for us and never deprive us from them.

- [1.](#) Majma -al-Bayan, vol. 10, p. 532.
- [2.](#) Ibid.
- [3.](#) Nah-jul-Balagha, Sermon No. 221 (Arabic version).
- [4.](#) Majma'-al-Bayan, vol. 10, p. 534.
- [5.](#) Usul al-Kafi, vol. 2, p. 236, tradition 17.
- [6.](#) Bihar-ul-Anwar, vol, 73, p, 290, tradition 12.
- [7.](#) Durr-ul Manthur, vol, 6, p. 387.
- [8.](#) Sahih-i-Muslim (as Majma'-al-Bayan, vol. 10, p. 534 quotes).
- [9.](#) Bihar-al-Anwar, vol. 70, p. 138, tradition 4.
- [10.](#) Al-Mizan, vol. 6, p. 200.
- [11.](#) Majma'-al-Bayan, vol. 10, p. 535.

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