

## Surah Tariq, Chapter 86

(The Night)

Number of Verses: 17

### Contents of the Surah

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

#### *In The Name of Allah, The Beneficent, The Merciful*

The subjects in this Surah are mainly divided into two groups:

1. Resurrection and
2. The Holy Qur'an and its value.

At the beginning, after some reflective oaths, it points to the existence of some divine protectors of man.

To make manifest the possibility of Resurrection, it refers to the first stage of man's life and his creation from a sperm drop and then it draws a conclusion that the Creator, who is able to create him from such a lowly life-germ, can give life again, to him.

In the following part, it describes the Resurrection and the uniqueness it has. Then, it offers some meaningful oaths to verify the importance of the Holy Qur'an; and finally, it finishes the Surah by mentioning Allah's punishments for the unbelievers in order to give a warning to them.

### The Virtue in Studying this Surah

There is a tradition from the Prophet (S) for the virtue of this Surah which says:

*“For the person who studies this Surah, Allah will reward this action ten times the number of stars in the sky.”<sup>1</sup>*

There is a narration from Imam Sadiq which says:

*“Anyone who recites Surah Tariq in his obligatory prayers will have a high rank with Allah in the Hereafter, and will be the prophets ' close friend and companion in Heaven.”<sup>2</sup>*

Obviously, it is the content of the Surah and acting accordingly which deserves such great rewards; not its mere recitation without following by action.

## **Surah Tariq, Verses 1-10**

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

***In The Name of Allah, The Beneficent, The Merciful***

وَالسَّمَاءِ وَالطَّارِقِ

وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا الطَّارِقُ

النَّجْمُ الثَّاقِبُ

إِنْ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ لَمَّا عَلَيْهَا حَافِظٌ

فَلْيَنْظُرِ الْإِنْسَانُ مِمَّ خُلِقَ

خُلِقَ مِنْ مَّاءٍ دَافِقٍ

يَخْرُجُ مِنْ بَيْنِ الصُّلْبِ وَالتَّرَائِبِ

إِنَّهُ عَلَى رَجْعِهِ لَقَادِرٌ

يَوْمَ تُبْلَى السَّرَائِرُ

فَمَا لَهُ مِنْ قُوَّةٍ وَلَا نَاصِرٍ

1. *"By the Sky and the Night-visitant (therein)"*
2. *"And what will explain to thee what the Night-visitant is?"*
3. *"(It is) the Star of piercing brightness,"*
4. *"There is not a soul but has a protector over it."*
5. *"So let man contemplate on from what he is created!"*
6. *"He is creased from a drop emitted."*
7. *"Proceeding from between the backbone and the ribs:"*
8. *"Surely He is able to bring him back (to life)!"*
9. *"On the Day when hidden things will he made manifest,"*
10. *"man will have no strength, and no helper."*

### **O man! Consider of What You Are Created!**

This Surah, like many other Surahs of the last part of the Holy Qur'an, begins with some beautiful oaths to reflect upon which express a great fact.

*"By the Sky and the Night-visitant (therein)"*

*"And what will explain to thee what the Night-visitant is?"*

*"(It is) the Star of piercing brightness,"*

The term /tariq/ is derived from /tarq/ 'to pound'. And /tariq/ means 'way' because the path is pounded by

the feet of pedestrians. The term /matraqah/ 'a sledge hammer' is used for pounding iron and materials like this.

And since the doors are closed at night when people arrive they have to pound on them to gain permission to enter, then, that which comes at night is called /tariq/ 'the night-visitant'.

Amir-al-Motmineen Ali (as) said about Ash'ath-ibn-i-Qays, the hypocrite, who came to the door of his house at night and thought that he could bribe Hazrat Ali by giving him some honey paste so that he would not judge against him, then Hazrat Ali said:

*"A stranger incident than this is that a man came to us in the night with a closed flask full of honey paste."*<sup>3</sup>

The Qur'an has defined 'tariq', itself, where it says:

***"(It is) the Star of piercing brightness."***

This Night-visitant is the brilliant star that appears very high in the sky as if it almost pierces its depth; and it is so bright that it splits the thick darkness and penetrates to the eyes.

There are many different ideas said about the kind of 'star' mentioned in this verse. Some of them, from the point of its distance and highness, say that it may be 'Pleiades'. Some others, from the point of its brightness, say that it is 'Saturn', or 'Venus', or 'a meteor'. Some ideas say that it can be any star which glitters in the sky.

But, taking note that the modifier 'piercing' mentioned in the verse for the star, shows that the star is not any star, but it is a forceful bright star whose light passes through the darkness of night and penetrates to men's eyes.

Some narrations denote that the 'star' is 'Saturn' which is one of the planets of the solar system and is very bright.

This very idea is also understood from a narration of Imam Sadiq (as) when he was asked by an astronomer regarding what Allah meant by /thaqib/ in that verse and he answered:

*"It is 'Saturn' which appears in the seventh sky. But its light passes the skies and reaches the first sky. That is why Allah has called it 'the star of piercing brightness'."*<sup>4</sup>

It is noteworthy that Saturn is the last and the farthest star to us in the solar system which is visible simply by the naked eye. And from among the planets of the solar system, it is the sixth in distance from the sun, but if we count the moon's circle, it will be the seventh, so Imam Sadiq (as) has considered its circle as the seventh sky in the mentioned narration.

Having some outstanding characteristics, Saturn deserves to be sworn to. It is the farthest visible star in

the solar system and everything which is very high is exemplified in Arabic literature.

Saturn is notable for several concentric bright rings, which revolve around it in the plane of its equator, and are the most amazing celestial phenomena about which meteorologists have delivered various ideas. But, there are still more secrets about it that must be discovered in the future.

Some experts believe that there are ten moons around Saturn eight of which can be seen through ordinary telescopes, but, two of them can only be seen by very great and powerful telescopes.

It is clear that when the Holy Qur'an was revealed no one knew all of these facts and it is after many centuries that we know them now.

Moreover, the commentary of 'the star of piercing brightness' may cover any bright star, and Saturn, being one of its examples, does not contradict the above idea.

'Piercing star' is one of the wonders of the celestial creations and may be one of the examples of the above mentioned commentary.

As in Surah Saffat, No. 37, verse 10 which says:

***“Except such as snatch away something by stealth, and they are pursued by a flaming fire, of piercing brightness.”***

The occasion of revelation recorded in some commentaries for the above mentioned verse, attests to this idea.

Now let us see what these oaths are for.

In the next verse it says:

***“There is not a soul but has a protector over it.”***

This protector is for recording one's acts and retaining them for the Reckoning Day.

It is similar to what Surah Infitar, No. 82, verses 10–12 carry over.

They say:

***“And surely there are Watchers over you,”***

***“Honourable scribes:”***

***“They know (and understand) whatever you do.”***

Thus, you are not alone. Whoever you are, and wherever you are the angels of Allah watch you. This is a subject that can be very useful in training and improving man, if he will only consider it.

It is noteworthy that the

**'protectors'**

are not defined in the verse as to who they are, and what kind of things they protect, but some other verses of the Qur'an clearly certify that they are angels and the things that they protect are 'man's deeds'; irrespective of good or evil.

Some probabilities denote that this protection is the protection of humans from accidents and fatal events. Verily, if Allah did not protect them, there would be few people who would die of natural causes, because the number of terrible accidents is so large that no one can escape from them, particularly young children.

Or, the protection may be the protection of humans against the whispers of Satans, of Jinns and of men. They are so many that if Allah did not protect them, no one would remain safe.

But the first commentary seems the most suitable, because the latter verses talk about Resurrection and Reckoning, though all three commentaries, together, do not seem improbable.

It is praiseworthy that the aforementioned oaths have a close relationship with the protection of angels from the deeds of man; that which the oaths are for.

Since, the stars, rotating in a regular order high in the sky, are as an evidence for the existence of a definite regularity in the universe, then how can man's deeds be left alone without a reckoning and protection from the divine protectors?

Then, to prove the possibility of the Resurrection for those who consider it impossible, it says:

***"So let man contemplate on from what he is created."***

And, thus, the Qur'an asks and advises all mankind to think about that which they were created from in the beginning.

But, immediately after that the Qur'an answers the question, itself, and says:

***"He is creased from a drop emitted."***

A gushing fluid in which his life-germ was floating.

And in another description for 'that water pouring forth' it says:

***"Proceeding from between the backbone and the ribs."***

There are many different ideas for the commentary of the terms

***/sulb/ 'backbone'***

and

***/tara'ib/ 'ribs',***

as mentioned in this verse, where the fluid comes forth from between them. In these ideas the commentators mostly try to comment on these two terms referring to man and woman from which the egg and sperm form the foetus.

But, primarily it should be noted that the verse is speaking only about a man's fluid, because

***'a drop emitted'***

belongs to a man not to a woman since that of a woman does not emit and it says that the gushing fluid is so that:

***"Proceeding from between the backbone and the ribs."***

Then, it is not appropriate to bring woman into this discussion. It is better to say that the Qur'an points to one of the two main parts of the life-germ, viz: a man's seed, which is understandable to all.

And

***'backbone'***

and

***'ribs'***

are a man's back and front; the area between which his fluid comes from.

This is a clear commentary and the meanings of the terms simply conform to what is found in a dictionary. Meanwhile, there may be greater facts hidden in the verse that modern science has not found yet, however, scientists may uncover them in the future.

Then, as a consequence it says that the Creator who created man from a sperm drop:

***"Surely He is able to bring him back (to life)."***

At first it was dust. Then, after some changes, it varied to a sperm drop, and eventually it turned into man, after passing some amazing and complicated stages, of course. So, it will not be difficult for Allah to bring him back to life again.

This fact is similarly mentioned in some other verses of the Qur'an such as in Surah Hajj, No. 22, verse 5

which says:

***"O mankind! if you have a doubt about the Resurrection (consider) that We created you out of dust, then out of sperm..."***

And also in Surah Maryam, No. 19, verse 67 which says:

***"Does not man call to mind that We created him before, when he was nothing?"***

In the next verse it describes the Great Day when it says:

***"On the Day when hidden things will be made manifest."***

The term /tubla/ is based on /balava/ 'to prove by trial or examination' and since the facts will be made manifest upon examination then the term is used, here, in the sense of 'appearing'.

The term /sara'ir/ is the plural form of /sarirah/ 'a secret; or inner thought, case, mood'.

Yes, on that Day, the day of appearing and the day of sorting out, the secrets will be uncovered and everything from good or evil, truth or falsehood, pure or impure will become quite evident. The believing people will be proud, then, and will be honoured by additional rewards, but the unbelieving ones will be ashamed and blamed because of this clear manifestation.

What a painful time he will have who lived a life respectfully, but with hidden evils; then, everything will become obvious to all! Surely he will be completely sorry and regretful on that Day. This may be more painful for him than the flames of fire in Hell.

Surah Rahman, No. 55, verse 41 also says:

***"For the sinners will be known by their Marks..."***

In some other verses of the Qur'an we read that in the Hereafter there are some people whose faces are white and bright, but there are others that have dark and dusty faces<sup>6</sup>.

Verily, similar to the Night-visitant and other stars that appear at night and everyone can see them in the sky, the protectors of man, who record and keep his deeds, will unveil everything there, also.

It is narrated from Ma'ath-ibn-Jabal who asked the Prophet (S) about the interpretation of the term

***/sara'ir/ 'secrets',***

in this verse regarding what secrets there are by which Allah will examine the people in the Hereafter and he answered:

***"Your secrets are your deeds such as prayers, fasting, religious tax, ablution, wet dream ceremonial***

bath, and any other obligatory acts. All of them are hidden, because if a person wills he says he has said his prayers but in fact he has not, he says he has made his ablution, but he has not, and this is the commentary of which Allah says:

**'On the Day when hidden things will be made manifest'".7**

But, the great difficulty is that, on that Day:

**"man will have no strength and no helper."**

He will have no power to hide his evils, and no one to help him to ward off Allah's punishment. Many verses of the Qur'an denote that, on the Day of Judgment, man will have no helper, no use of ransom, no way of returning and no chance of fleeing. The only useful means to make one safe from torments will be pure belief and good deeds.

## **Surah Tariq, Verses 11-17**

وَالسَّمَاءِ ذَاتِ الرَّجْعِ

وَالْأَرْضِ ذَاتِ الصَّدْعِ

إِنَّهُ لَقَوْلٌ فَصْلٌ

وَمَا هُوَ بِالْهَزْلِ

إِنَّهُمْ يَكِيدُونَ كَيْدًا

وَأَكِيدُ كَيْدًا

## فَمَهْلِ الْكَافِرِينَ أَمْهَلُهُمْ رُوَيْدًا

11. ***“By the rain giving heaven, (the returning rain),”***
12. ***“And by the earth splitting (with plants):”***
13. ***“Most surely it (the Qur’an) is a decisive word,”***
14. ***“And it is not a thing for amusement.”***
15. ***“Surely they are plotting a scheme (against the truth),”***
16. ***“And I am (also) planning a scheme (against them),”***
17. ***“Therefore grant a delay to the unbelievers: give respite to them gently (for a while).”***

### **We Destroy the Enemies' Plans**

Their plots will be of no avail, and Allah’s purpose will prevail.

To follow the previous verses which were about the Resurrection and realizing it by taking note of the creation of man from sperm, the following verses continue the same theme, however, for further emphasis and with more evidences.

It says:

***“By the rain giving heaven, (the returning rain),”***  
***“And by the earth splitting (with plants)”***  
***“Most surely it (the Qur’an) is a decisive word,”***

that you will return to life.

***“And it is not a thing for amusement.”***

The term /raj'/ is based on /ruju'/ 'return'. In the Arabic language 'rain' is called /raj'/, because water evaporates from the earth and the seas, rises to form clouds and then once again comes back down as rain; raining intermittently.

The term /sad'/ means 'to split' and together with what was said about /raj'/ 'rain' it means splitting of dry, hard earth after rainfall and, also, the growth of plants.

In fact, these two verses point to dead lands which survive by life-giving rain. This is what the Qur’an has repeatedly mentioned as an evidence for the Resurrection.

For example, in Surah Qaf, No. 50, verse 11 it says:

***“...And We give (new) life therewith to land that is dead: thus will be the Resurrection.”***

So there is an obvious relation between these oaths and what the oaths are taken for. This is one of the wonders of the Qur'an's eloquence, that there is an interesting relationship between the oaths and what the oaths are for.

Surah Hajj, No.22, verse 5, confirming the Resurrection, refers to both evidences of man's creation from sperm and its various stages in the form of foetus, and giving life, again, to dead lands by sending down rain, and in this very Surah, Tariq, it emphasizes on both of them as well.

The phrase

***‘Iqaul-un-fasl/ ‘a decisive word’***,

is a statement that definitely separates Good from Evil. A group of commentators, considering the aforementioned verses, have related the statement to Resurrection while some others believe it means 'the Holy Qur'an' as some narrations of Ahlul-Bayt (as) confirm, too.

Of course, the terms /yaum-ul-fasl/ with the meaning of 'Hereafter' is used and mentioned in several verses of the Qur'an.

It is, also, probable that the terms /qaul-un-fasl/ mean 'the verses of Qur'an' some of which announce the Resurrection. Then, both of the above commentaries can be combined.

A quotation from the Holy Prophet (S) has been said to have been narrated by Hazrat Ali (as), thus:

*“There will be a sedition among you soon, ‘*

the Prophet said.

I asked him what the remedy for it was, and he answered:

*‘Qur'an is the remedy which tells you about the past and the future and your Judgement. It is a statement that separates right from wrong. It is a serious word. It is not in vain. Allah will defeat any oppressor who leaves Qur'an. And the person who seeks divine guidance anywhere save Qur'an will be led astray by Allah’.”*<sup>8</sup>

Then, to console the Prophet (S) and the believers both, on the one hand, and for threatening the enemies of Islam, on the other hand, it says:

***“Surely they are plotting a scheme (against the truth),”***

***“And I am (also) planning a scheme (against them),”***

***“Therefore grant a delay to the unbelievers: give respite to them gently (for a while).”***

Verily, they always plan wicked schemes to oppose you. Sometimes they mock you. Sometimes they lay siege on you, economically. Sometimes they torture the believers. Sometimes they tell others not to

listen to the Qur'anic recitation and make noise in order to be victorious. Sometimes they call you a soothsayer, mad, etc.

Sometimes they believe Islam in the morning, but they disbelieve in the evening on the same day to attract some believers to follow them. Sometimes they tell you that only the poor and miserable people believe you and follow you, then leave them until they (the unbelievers) come to you. Sometimes they ask you to accept some of their gods, at least, until they follow you. And, sometimes they plan a scheme to banish you or kill you.

In short, every moment the unbelievers can try a new plot to disperse your followers and oppress the believers, or abolish you in order to extinguish Allah's' light.

But they should know that Allah will not allow them to do so, and He has taken a decision to spread the light of Islam over the world and then the light of Allah cannot be extinguished with a blow from their mouths.

This bright ever-shining light will not be put out by the plots of these unregenerate men who plan; but Allah, too, plans.

The term

***/kayd/ 'to plot against'***

is applied both to plotting with an evil purpose (which is used more than the other usage), and planning with a good purpose, such as Surah Yusef, No. 12, verse 76 which says:

***"... Thus did We plan for Yusef (Joseph)."***

The meaning of

***"the enemies' plot",***

in this verse, is clear with the above explanation about some of the evils of the unbelievers.

There are many evil plots and wicked plans of this kind, with an evil purpose, mentioned in the Qur'an, but what is the meaning of Allah's plan, in this verse, of having a good purpose? Some commentators believe that 'granting a delay to the unbelievers' which ends with their painful punishment, is its meaning. Some others think that 'the punishment itself' carries the meaning.

It is more suitable to say that it means the same beneficence that the Prophet (S) and the believers got from Allah. They, after respiting the enemies, caused them to be neglectful and rendered their efforts ineffective, then, their plans remained fruitless.

In these verses the Prophet (S) is deliberately ordered to act toward them moderately and give respite to

them and not hurry to destroy them; to let them have the final notes, to wait for a few of them who have a little readiness to come to Islam.

It is noteworthy that, at first, it says:

***“Therefore grant a delay to the unbelievers”,***

and then it emphasizes:

***“...give respite to them gently (for a while)”.***

It says the same matter twice for emphasis, but in a different way and with various words so as not to be taken unpleasantly.

The term /ruwayda/ is based on /rud/ 'to try to do something gently', but, here it means: give respite to them for a while.

Thus, in this short verse three times Allah orders His Prophet to act with them moderately, and this is a good example for all Muslims to be patient and careful in their affairs especially when they are faced with their powerful and dangerous enemies. They should avoid haste and doing things undesigned or at an inappropriate time.

Moreover, it is better for the Prophet (S) to be patient in delivering the Message of Allah in order to respite all those who may believe, and to complete the argument and reason for all of them.

The reason why this respite has been counted short, may be because Islam overcame its enemies in a short time and their plans did not profit them. The first failure was at the battle of Badr. Then, later their plans failed, again, in the battles of Ahzab, Kheybar, Seffin and so on. At the end of the Prophet's life, they were completely weak when the light of Islam spread throughout the Arabian Peninsula; and before the end of one century, it covered most parts of the world at that time.

Or, it may be that the punishment of the Hereafter is near and basically everything which is definite and sure is counted close.

However, this Surah begins with oaths to the sky and stars, and ends with threats to the unbelievers who plot and scheme against the beneficent purpose of Allah. There are also some nice evidences to the Resurrection in some elegant sentences about the angels, who are the protectors of man, and for soothing the believers. These verses are not only short and meaningful, but also beautiful and decisive.

## **Supplication**

*O Lord! The plots and schemes of the enemies are many in our time. Turn them to themselves and make their evil plans invalid.*

*O Lord! On the Day when all the secrets will be made manifest, please put us not to shame.*

*O Lord! We have no power or helper save You. Leave us to no one else, but to Yourself.*

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1. Majma'-al-BayaAn, vol. 10, p. 469:
  2. Thawab-ul-A'mal, according to Nur-uth-Thaqalayn, vol. 5, p. 549.
  3. Nahj-ul-Balaqa, Sermon 224 (Arabic Version), Sermon 228 (English Version),
  4. Nur-uth-Thaqalayn, vol. 5, p. 550, Tradition 4
  5. see also Surah Najm, No.53, verse 46 and Surah Qiyamat, No. 75, verse 37
  6. Surah 'Abasa. No. 80, verses 38-41
  7. Majma'-al-Bayan, vol. 10, p. 472; and a similar meaning is found in Durr-al-manthur, vol. 6, p. 336.
  8. 'Sahih-i-Tarmathi' and 'Sunan-i-Darami' based on the quotation of 'Ruh-al-Ma'ani, The Commentary, vol. 3, p. 100 and 'Tafsir-i-Maraqi, vol. 30, p. 118.

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