

Surah al-Haqqah (69)

سورة الحاقة

'The Definite'

The surah derives its name from the prominence of the word *al-haqqah*, a name for the resurrection from *haqqa*, meaning to be fixed, real, certain. Like the other Makkan surahs it deals with matters of faith, and as the final part of Surah al-Qalam concluded on the theme of the resurrection and the threat to the disbelievers, so this surah opens on the same theme.

By the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

By the name of Allah, ... We begin with the name of the God to whom belongs every particle of existence. His name is noble, the best thing by which to commence all affairs, for He blesses whatever is begun in His name, as is narrated: 'Any matter significance that is not begun by the name Allah – will be fruitless.'

... the Compassionate, the Merciful. He bestows mercy on whoever asks Him and whoever does not ask Him, although those who ask Him are subject to His special grace and favour – in addition to His compassion that embraces all things.

The Definite: (1)

الْحَاقَّةُ ﴿١﴾

The Definite is given for *al-haqqah*, one of the names of the resurrection. The Mustering is given this name on account of it being an hour that will certainly and definitely take place. The word is from *haqqa*, meaning to be fixed, true and definite.

What is the Definite? (2)

مَا الْحَاقَّةُ ﴿٢﴾

The question affords a sense of grand emphasis, meaning 'what is it?' and also 'what is more severe and terrifying than it?'

And what will make thee comprehend what the Definite is? (3)

وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا الْحَاقَّةُ ﴿٣﴾

The address, in the singular, is to the Messenger, or to listener as an individual. It means: 'what is this thing, don't think that you can know its severities without having seen it.' This does not imply a denial of the Messenger's knowledge – assuming the address is to him – rather, it indicates the severities of the event.

The flow of the surah now turns to explain the condition of some former peoples who gave the lie to the resurrection, and subsequently Allah, glory be to Him, destroyed them:

Thamud and 'Ad belied the Shudderer; (4)

كَذَّبَتْ ثَمُودُ وَعَادٌ بِالْقَارِعَةِ ﴿٤﴾

The Thamud were the people of the Messenger *Sālih* peace be upon him. The 'Ad were the people of Hud, peace be upon him. Both tribes called the resurrection a lie. The resurrection is called 'The Shudderer' on account of how it will make things shudder, and will demolish them, and will make the hearts shudder with dread.

So as for Thamud, they were destroyed by the transgressor; (5)

فَأَمَّا ثَمُودُ فَأُهْلِكُوا بِالطَّاغِيَةِ ﴿٥﴾

That is, they were recompensed for their belying by a transgressor (*taḡhiya*) and piercing screech that transgressed into them and tore out their hearts, and destroyed them.

And as for 'Ad, they were destroyed by a wind, icy, furious. (6)

وَأَمَّا عَادٌ فَأُهْلِكُوا بِرِيحٍ صَرْصَرٍ عَاتِيَةٍ ﴿٦﴾

They were recompensed for their belying with destruction, wrought by an icy and exceedingly gusty wind. It was 'insolent' (*utuww*) in that it exceeded its usual limit.

He subordinated it against them for seven nights and eight days uninterrupted, so that thou would have seen the people therein strewn about as if they were stumps of hollow palm-trees. (7)

سَخَّرَهَا عَلَيْهِمْ سَبْعَ لَيَالٍ وَثَمَنِيَةَ أَيَّامٍ حُسُومًا فَتَرَى
الْقَوْمَ فِيهَا صَرَغِي كَأَنَّهُمْ أَحْعَازُ نَخْلٍ خَاوِيَةٍ ﴿٧﴾

He subordinated it against them for seven nights and eight days ... Allah subordinated the wind and sent it in their direction.; its cold and screeching destroyed them.

... uninterruptedly ... It is given for *ḥusuman*; which may also mean *fatally*, in that the wind cut off their progeny, when none of them remained alive.

... so that thou would have seen the tribe therein strewn about as if they were stumps of hollow palm-trees. Throughout that time, during those days and nights, an observer would have seen the ⁶Ad lying dead all around, as if they were the stumps of rotten palm-trees, for with their tall bodies and the duration of their remaining on the ground, that is what they resembled.

So do thou see for them any remaining? (8)

فَهَلْ تَرَى لَهُمْ مِّنْ بَاقِيَةٍ ﴿٨﴾

Is there anyone left from these tribes to continue their line? The question form has an emotive purpose. The meaning is that none of them remained. And such is the end of every people who belie the truth; the day of judgement: they are destroyed without a single survivor.

And Pharaoh, those before him, and the overturned were progressing in error, (9)

وَجَاءَ فِرْعَوْنُ وَمَنْ قَبْلَهُ وَالْمُؤْتَفِكْتُ بِالْخَطِئَةِ ﴿٩﴾

Pharaoh and his people disobeyed Moses, *peace be upon him*. They, and the previous peoples – of Noah, and others like them – and the overturned, meaning the overturned city, the city of (the prophet) Lot, meaning the people of that city, all followed paths of error.

Then they disobeyed the Messenger of their Lord; and so He took them with an excessive taking. (10)

فَعَصَوْا رَسُولَ رَبِّهِمْ فَأَخَذَهُمْ أَخْذَةً رَّابِيَةً ﴿١٠﴾

Then they disobeyed the Messenger of their Lord ... What is meant by ‘the Messenger’ is the genus of Messenger, as previously discussed.

... and so He took them with an excessive seizing. Allah, glory be to Him, seized them in the chastisement of His grip steadily becoming more severe.

In the past, Allah has taken those who belied, while saving those who acknowledged the truth, just as He saved the believers in Noah, who were the fathers of all human beings:

We indeed, when the water transgressed, carried ye in the cruising ark, (11)

إِنَّا لَمَّا طَغَا الْمَاءُ حَمَلْنَاكُمْ فِي الْجَارِيَةِ ﴿١١﴾

The waters ‘transgressed’ – that is, went so far beyond their normal levels that the whole earth was flooded. Allah carried us in the cruising ark in the sense that we are all among the descendents of those whom He carried to safety in that way. ‘The cruising ark’ is given for *al-jariyah*, which is from *jara>* ‘to flow’, and literally means ‘one that flows’; here it means the ship that ran on the floodwaters.

So that We put it to be a reminder for ye, and for the retaining ear to retain it. (12)

لِنَجْعَلَهَا لَكُمْ تَذْكِرَةً وَتَعْيَبَ أُذُنٌ وَأَعْيَتْ ﴿١٢﴾

That is, He placed this event that He did for mankind as a reminder to remember the favours of Allah, glory be to Him. That, and for the ear ready to listen to warningful lessons to take heed, to learn, understand and act.

Having seen the respective fates in the world of those who belie and those who confirm, now comes a consideration of their fates in the hereafter:

So when the trumpet is blown with a single blowing, (13)

فَإِذَا نُفِخَ فِي الصُّورِ نَفْخَةً وَاحِدَةً ﴿١٣﴾

That is, when the angel Israfil blows the trumpet so as to raise the dead, which is his second blast. It is a single blast, as there is no need for it to be repeated, because at this one blast all of mankind will come to life. [Prior to this, Israfil heralds the end of time and life in this world by blowing his first blast, when every living being dies.]

And the earth and the mountains are carried, and the two are demolished at a single demolishing, (14)

وَحُمِلَتِ الْأَرْضُ وَالْجِبَالُ فَدُكَّتَا دَكَّةً وَاحِدَةً ﴿١٤﴾

And the earth and the mountains are carried, ... The meaning of the earth being carried is that its depressions are raised so that everywhere is level and flat. The 'carrying' of the mountains is their being pulverised to dust so that the face of the earth is completely level, with neither upland nor depression, so that it is a plain ready for the resurrection.

... and the two are demolished at a single demolishing, ... The crushing shall encompass the earth and the mountains all at once, and will not be a gradual affair.

So that day, the Occurrence will occur, (15)

فَيَوْمَئِذٍ وَقَعَتِ الْوَاقِعَةُ ﴿١٥﴾

The Occurrence is given for *al-waqifah*, one of the names of the resurrection. It is given this name to portend that it most certainly shall occur.

And the sky rends asunder so that it that day is frail; (16)

وَأَنْشَقَّتِ السَّمَاءُ فَهِيَ يَوْمَئِذٍ وَاهِيَةٌ ﴿١٦﴾

The sky shall be demolished that day and will seem to be in ruins, and man will see it split; in a condition much like that of a ruined wall and suchlike. It shall be weak and frail, for the order of which it is presently a part shall be no more, and the orbits will overlap each other.

And the angels will be at its edges, and eight that day will carry above them the Trellis of thy Lord. (17)

وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ عَلَىٰ أَرْجَائِهَا وَيَحْمِلُ عَرْشَ رَبِّكَ فَوْقَهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ ثَمَنِيَةٌ ﴿١٧﴾

And the angels will be at its edges, ... The angels who descend for the reckoning and the other duties will be first seen at the sky's new edges.

... and eight that day will carry above them the Trellis of thy Lord ... 'Trellis' is the literal meaning of *arsh*. It is the place from which are issued the commands of Allah, glory be to Him. It is termed the *arsh* of Allah in the same way as the Ka'bah is called the house of Allah, and for the same purpose of according it honour. On that day the *arsh* will be carried aloft by eight angels.

All of this is for the purpose of increasing terror, and is in harmony with the human mind that sees greatness and feels fear at such things as these.

That day ye are paraded, none in hiding among ye shall be hidden. (18)

يَوْمَئِذٍ تُعْرَضُونَ لَا تَخْفَىٰ مِنْكُمْ خَافِيَةٌ ﴿١٨﴾

There is no escape from that terrible, dreadful day. Not a soul will be able to hide and be hidden, for there will be nowhere to hide. All mankind will be manifest and able to see one another, along with their actions – if good then good, and if evil then evil. *There the creation will be divided into two groups:*

So as for him who is given his book on his right, he shall say 'Here, read my book; (19)

فَأَمَّا مَنْ أُوتِيَ كِتَابَهُ بِيَمِينِهِ ۖ فَيقُولُ هَٰؤُلَاءِ أَقْرَأُوا ۖ وَكَتَبْتَهُ

His book is the statement of his deeds in which the angels have recorded everything he has done in the world. He will be given it 'on his right'; that is, in his right hand, and this is a sign of his success and salvation. In joy and relief he will address the people of the day of resurrection, and say, 'Here [given for *ha>um*, plural form of *ha>* meaning come and take], read my book, and see the good deeds that are within it.'

'Indeed I anticipated that I would meet my reckoning.' (20)

إِنِّي ظَنَنْتُ أَنِّي مُلْتَقٍ حِسَابِيَّةٍ ﴿٢٠﴾

While in the world he thought he would meet his reckoning in the hereafter, and so he acted righteously until he reached the lofty level of happiness and salvation. 'Anticipated' is given for *dhanantu*; and it seems this word is used to show that the supposition of something being good is enough reason to make a person do that deed, in the same way countering a supposed danger or harm is clearly required by reason.

So he is in a contented life, (21)

فَهُوَ فِي عَيْشَةٍ رَّاضِيَةٍ ﴿٢١﴾

He who is given his book in his right hand shall live 'a contented life' (*'ishatin radlyah*). Saying the life is contented is figurative, for it is the person living that life who is contented.

In a lofty garden, (22)

فِي جَنَّةٍ عَالِيَةٍ ﴿٢٢﴾

The gardens of paradise are lofty in both status and situation.

Its clusters low; (23)

قُطُوفُهَا دَانِيَةٌ ﴿٢٣﴾

The fruits of the gardens are easily accessible; picking them entails no difficulty whatsoever. Simply a person will desire the fruit and a cluster will come near in order to be picked.

And they shall be introduced to the garden in terms of respect and dignity, with the words:

'Eat and drink, sweetly, for what ye sent on in the days gone by.' (24)

كُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا هَنِيئًا بِمَا أَسْلَفْتُمْ فِي الْأَيَّامِ الْخَالِيَةِ ﴿٢٤﴾

'Eat and drink, sweetly ... That is, eat of the fruits of the gardens, and drink of its springs and streams, pleasantly and happily without illness or any necessity to eat and drink.

... for what ye sent on in the days gone by.' And this is on account of the righteous actions sent on beforehand, in those bygone days you spent in the world.

Having seen the condition of the people of paradise, now we must see the condition of the people of the fire:

While as for him who is given his book on his left, he will say, 'O, would that I had not been given my book!' (25)

وَأَمَّا مَنْ أُوتِيَ كِتَابَهُ بِشِمَالِهِ فَيَقُولُ يُبَلِّغْتَنِي لَمْ أُوْتِ

كِتَابِيَّةٍ ﴿٢٥﴾

Those who are for the fire are given the record of their deeds, as recorded by the angels, in their left hands. Each will wish that he had not been given his book, so that he would not have to see the account of his evils to be recompensed.

'And not comprehended my reckoning!' (26)

وَلَمْ أَدْرِ مَا حِسَابِيَّةٍ ﴿٢٦﴾

They will wish that they did not know what their accounts contain.

'O, would that it had been the consummation!' (27)

يُبَلِّغْتَهَا كَأَنَّتِ الْقَاضِيَةَ ﴿٢٧﴾

'O, that it ... That is, the death that he died in the world.

... **had been the consummation.** That is, the end. Such a person will wish that his death in the world had been the end of his life, forever, so that he would not have been raised to see the evil of his deeds and be subjected to disgrace and chastisement

'My wealth has not enriched me!' (28)

مَا أَغْنَىٰ عَنِّي مَالِيَّةٌ ﴿٢٨﴾

That is, his wealth cannot defend him against the chastisement of Allah, glory be to Him, even in the slightest.

'My authority has perished from me!' (29)

هَلَاكَ عَنِّي سُلْطَنِيَّةٌ ﴿٢٩﴾

He will say, 'My authority, my rank and power are no more. Now I have neither property to defend me nor authority to benefit me, though I dedicated my life and all my efforts to them!'

The flow then turns to the words from the Supreme Authority to the angels in charge of such offenders:

'Take him and shackle him, (30)

خُذُوهُ فَغُلُّوهُ ﴿٣٠﴾

'Take him ... That is: 'Take him and hold him...' so that he has no opportunity to escape.

... **and shackle him,** It means that such a person will be bound in irons, so that parts of him are bound and fettered to other parts, and he is unable to escape.

'Thereupon the raging fire: cast him in! (31)

ثُمَّ الرَّجِيمِ صَلْوُهُ ﴿٣١﴾

After being bound, he is to be placed within 'the raging fire' (*al-jahīm*).

'Thereupon in a chain, its length seventy cubits, enchain him!' (32)

ثُمَّ فِي سِلْسِلَةٍ ذَرْعُهَا سَبْعُونَ ذِرَاعًا فَاسْلُكُوهُ ﴿٣٢﴾

'Thereupon in a chain, its length seventy cubits, ... cubits, or forearms, is the distance between fingertip and elbow...

... **enchain him!'** The extreme length of the chain with which he will be bound indicates the severity of the punishment and of the distress it causes. It is said that the chain will enter his throat and come out of his behind.

The flow then turns to explain the cause of this type of punishment:

Indeed he was not believing in Allah, the Magnificent, (33)

إِنَّهُ كَانَ لَا يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ الْعَظِيمِ ﴿٣٣﴾

The offender did not believe in Allah while he was in the world, despite His magnificence, but rather stubbornly refused to believe,

And he urged not the feeding of the destitute; (34)

وَلَا تَحْضُ عَلَىٰ طَعَامِ الْمَسْكِينِ ﴿٣٤﴾

That is, he did not urge and incite people to feed the poor – a failure to perform the duty of commanding to the honourable. Or perhaps what is meant is that he prevented himself, in that one who prevents fails to urge, which would be a case of mentioning the effect while intending the cause. It is essential to urge that the poor be fed, for they are face to face with perdition.

So this day here he has no boon companion, (35)

فَلَيْسَ لَهُ الْيَوْمَ هُنَا حَمِيمٌ ﴿٣٥﴾

That disbeliever on the day of resurrection will have no friend at the gathering to benefit him.

And no food except of pus; (36)

وَلَا طَعَامٌ إِلَّا مِن غَسَلِينِ ﴿٣٦﴾

'Pus' is given for *ghisliā*, meaning the pus of sores (of the folk of hell); or it may mean the water that remains after it is used for washing the pus.

None eat it but the errorful. (37)

لَا يَأْكُلُهُ إِلَّا الْخَاطِئُونَ ﴿٣٧﴾

None eat that *ghisliā* except those who made the mistake while in the world of following disbelief and disobedience.

After these comparisons between the conditions in the hereafter of the believers and the disbelievers, the flow turns to prove the Messengership and deny some fanciful claims made about the Messenger:

So I swear not by what ye observe, (38)

فَلَا أَقْسِمُ بِمَا تُبْصِرُونَ ﴿٣٨﴾

The address is to mankind, in the plural.

And what ye do not observe, (39)

وَمَا لَا تُبْصِرُونَ ﴿٣٩﴾

That is, by what is manifest and what is hidden. The use of 'not' (*la*) is to convey a very subtle point. It conveys that the oath is extremely grave. When a person wishes to make an oath, and to convey that the oath is of outstanding importance, he may say, 'I swear not by your life that such and such...'. Then he has not sworn an oath, while suggesting an oath. Accordingly, the *la* is for negation, and is not superfluous.

He then clarifies the object of the oath, in His word:

Indeed it is truly the word of an honoured messenger, (40)

إِنَّهُ لَقَوْلُ رَسُولٍ كَرِيمٍ ﴿٤٠﴾

That is, this Qur'an is the word entrusted to a Messenger honoured alongside Allah, glory be to Him. And he is from Him, for the Messenger spoke not but from Him, glory be to Him.

And it is not a poet's word; little ye believe! (41)

وَمَا هُوَ بِقَوْلِ شَاعِرٍ قَلِيلًا مَّا تُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٤١﴾

And it is not a poet's word ... The Qur'an is not the word of a poet; for the disbelievers would say that Muhammad was a poet and the Qur'an was poetry.

... little ye believe! It means that their faith was little, or that few of them believed the prophet. The sense affords a censure, meaning: why do you not believe? Why are you this way?

And nor is it the word of a soothsayer; little are ye mindful! (42)

وَلَا بِقَوْلِ كَاهِنٍ قَلِيلًا مَّا تَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٤٢﴾

The Qur'an is not the word of a soothsayer – some of the disbelievers said that the Messenger was a soothsayer, and that the Qur'an was soothsaying. 'Soothsayer' is given for *kāhin*, someone in touch with devils who brings concocted reports in verse or rhymed prose, the truth of which is less than the false.

... little are ye mindful! That is, little do ye remember of the truth placed within the innate human disposition; or it may mean that few are mindful of the truth.

A sending down from the Lord of the worlds: (43)

تَنْزِيلٌ مِّن رَّبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٤٣﴾

The Qur'an is sent down from the Lord of the worlds to the Messenger, *may Allah bless him and his family*.

Had he made say against Us any sayings, (44)

وَلَوْ تَقَوَّلَ عَلَيْنَا بَعْضَ الْأَقَاوِيلِ ﴿٤٤﴾

That is, had the Messenger invented false sayings and attributed them to Him, glory be to Him. 'Made say' is given for *qawwala*, meaning to invent a saying and attribute it falsely.

We truly would have taken from him the right hand; (45)

لَا خَذَنَّا مِنْهُ بِالْيَمِينِ ﴿٤٥﴾

That is, from the Messenger. His hand would be cut off, for the penalty of working corruption in the earth is the loss of the hand. [as indicated in 5:33] It should not be hidden that this passage is a refutation of the disbelievers, for it touches upon the sacred personage of the Messenger. It is in the same category as, '...he took his brother's head and drew it to him...' [7:151] that has been discussed.

Thereupon We truly would have cut his aorta, (46)

ثُمَّ لَقَطَعْنَا مِنْهُ الْوَتِينَ ﴿٤٦﴾

That is, We would have cut the primary blood-passages in and out of the Messenger's heart, indicating the totality of his destruction.

Yes, were he a liar He would have done just that:

And not one of ye would be warding off from him. (47)

فَمَا مِنْكُمْ مِنْ أَحَدٍ عَنْهُ حَاجِزِينَ ﴿٤٧﴾

None among mankind could have assisted the Messenger or come between him and what Allah would intend for him, and stop such a punishment from happening to him.

And indeed it is a reminder to the guardful; (48)

وَإِنَّهُ لَتَذَكَّرٌ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿٤٨﴾

The Qur'an is a reminder of what has been placed man's innate disposition: monotheism and the other principles. The reminder is for the guardful (*al-muttaqin*), who are guardful against sin, as it is only the person who keeps within the limits and fears degradation and dishonour who will be reminded by the Qur'an. That is, the reminder is particularly for them in the sense that it is them who will profit from it.

And indeed We know that among ye are beliers, (49)

وَإِنَّا لَنَعْلَمُ أَنَّ مِنْكُمْ مُكَذِّبِينَ ﴿٤٩﴾

There are those who belie Allah, the Messenger, the Return and the Qur'an as being all lies. This constitutes a warning, in that they will be reckoned with and chastised for their belying the truth.

And indeed it is anguish upon the disbelievers; (50)

وَإِنَّهُ لَحَسْرَةٌ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٥٠﴾

The Qur'an will be the cause of their anguish on the day of resurrection, due to their not implementing it even though it was within their reach.

And indeed it truly is real certainty; (51)

وَإِنَّهُ لَحَقُّ الْيَقِينِ ﴿٥١﴾

There are types of certainty, and the certainty of the Qur'an reaches a high level on account of its concordance with the reality. There is 'known certainty' (*ilm al-yaqin*) which is the certainty known but not experienced; and 'real certainty' (*hqq al-yaqin*), the certainty both known and experienced. In this respect, the example about fire can be given.

So glorify by the name of thy Lord, the Magnificent. (52)

فَسَبِّحْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الْعَظِيمِ ﴿٥٢﴾

It means: glorify thy Lord – declare Him above and untainted by all that is unworthy of association with Him, glory be to Him – by the remembrance of His name. And, implied: give no importance to the disbelievers, and proceed with the task as hand, the mission. Pronounce His glory and acclaim and extol Him by declaring Him free of associates and of the low attributes supposed for Him, glory be to Him, by the disbelievers.