

Surah al-Qiyamah (75)

سورة القيامة

'The Resurrection'

The surah derives its name from the prominence within it of the word *al-qiyamah*, meaning 'the resurrection'. Like the other Makkan surahs it deals with the three principles of faith. As Surah *al-Muddaththir* concluded on matters relating to the resurrection, so this surah opens with the same.

By the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

By the name of Allah, ... Beginning by the name of Allah who is the true Deity. Other than Him there is no deity.

... the Compassionate, the Merciful. He bestows mercy and grace upon His creatures in the world and the hereafter.

I swear not by the day of resurrection. (1)

لَا أُقْسِمُ بِيَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ ﴿١﴾

'Not' is put for *la*, a particle of negation (*nafy*). It has been explained that in such cases it is used to convey a very subtle point: that the speaker wishes to explain and emphasise a matter without swearing, but in a way suggestive of an oath. Thus it might be said 'I swear not by your life, except that the matter is such and such...' when it is not intended to swear an oath, though hinting at an oath so as to affect emphasis.

And I swear not by the scolding soul. (2)

وَلَا أُقْسِمُ بِالنَّفْسِ اللَّوَّامَةِ ﴿٢﴾

'The scolding soul' is given for *al-nafs al-lawwamah*, which is the admonishing soul that scolds and censures its possessor for shortcomings in the service of Allah, glory be to Him, no matter how high one's level of obedience.

It is said that the reason for the negation of these oaths is that the disbelievers did not acknowledge these two matters. Accordingly, it is as if it is said, 'I do not swear by these two as you do not admit them.'

Does the human reckon that We will never gather his bones? (3)

أَلَيْسَ الْإِنْسَانُ أَلَّنْ نَجْمَعُ عِظَامَهُ ﴿٣﴾

Does man think that his bones will not be gathered after death, for him to be raised? That is, does he think there is no resurrection and no afterlife?

People sometimes claim that there is no such gathering, on account of their calculation that Allah has not the power to do this. Therefore the thread turns to reject this false claim, in His word:

Nay, We are able to restore his fingertips. (4)

بَلَىٰ قَدَرِينَا عَلَىٰ أَنْ نُسَوِّيَ بَنَانَهُ ﴿٤﴾

That is, nay, on the contrary, We shall gather his bones, for indeed We are able to reshape the tips of his fingers. This is a sign of the extent of His power, for the patterns on the fingertips of people are all different, no matter how many people there are. So, He who is able to make and restore the most precise element of the human being is clearly able to restore the other parts of his being.

It has been said that the most wondrous parts of the human being are four: the difference in voices; in faces; the fingerprints; and the individuality of handwriting, so that no two person's handwriting are the same, though the differences are only discernible with the help of a microscope and modern equipments.

Indeed man does not disbelieve in the return on account of him denying in his heart the power of Allah, glory be to Him, and His ability to raise us:

Nay, the human wishes to be brazen onwards.
(5)

بَلْ يُرِيدُ الْإِنْسَانُ لِيَفْجُرَ أَمَامَهُ ﴿٥﴾

'Nay' is given for *bal*. It means that the human does not necessarily disbelieve the resurrection because he in his heart actually denies the ability of Allah to bring back the dead, but this is on account of his desire to be brazen and disobedient during the remainder of his life. Since to acknowledge the hereafter prevents a person from his brazenness, he denies it so as to keep open the path of his brazenness. And when a person warns him of the hereafter, he denies it so as to silence him.

He asks, "When is the day of resurrection?" (6)

يَسْأَلُ أَيَّانَ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ ﴿٦﴾

The denier asks when the resurrection will come, meaning that it will not come. Otherwise, when is it?

Here the thread turns to explain the timing of the day of resurrection:

Then when the sight flashes, (7)

فَإِذَا بَرِقَ الْبَصَرُ ﴿٧﴾

That is, the eyes will glaze over on seeing the terrors, and are confounded to the extent that they will not see properly.

And the moon is eclipsed, (8)

وَحَسَفَ الْقَمَرُ ﴿٨﴾

That day it will be a dull mass without light.

And the sun and the moon are gathered, (9)

وَجُمِعَ الشَّمْسُ وَالْقَمَرُ ﴿٩﴾

The planetary system of which they are a part will be overturned, and each will be beside the other.

The human that day says 'Where to flee?' (10)

يَقُولُ الْإِنْسَانُ يَوْمَئِذٍ أَيْنَ الْمَفْرُ ﴿١٠﴾

Those who say that the day of resurrection is false will on that day say where is the place of flight from these terrors. His self-questioning indicates that he knows there is no place to flee; it is a sigh of regret at his realisation that there is no possibility of escape.

Nay, there is no stronghold; (11)

كَلَّا لَا وَزَرَ ﴿١١﴾

Nay, there is no possibility of escape; stronghold is given for *wazar*, meaning what a person fortifies himself by, such as mountains and so on. There is no sanctuary or asylum to flee to.

Unto your Lord that day is the settlement;
(12)

إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ يَوْمَئِذٍ الْمُسْتَقَرُّ ﴿١٢﴾

On that day the final destination of all is towards your Lord, that is towards His reckoning – the virtuous will settle in His Garden, the wicked in His fire.

The human is informed that day of what he sent ahead and what he sent later. (13)

يُنَبِّئُ الْإِنْسَانُ يَوْمَئِذٍ بِمَا قَدَّمَ وَأَخَّرَ ﴿١٣﴾

On the day of resurrection an individual will be informed by Allah, glory be to Him, through the medium of the Prophets and the witnesses, of what he sent ahead to the hereafter while he was alive, in the way of virtuous deeds, and of what he arranged to be dispatched after his death, such as establishing a trust that gives charity after his death. He is informed of this for the requital and the recompense, for whether righteous or wicked he will be read what he did and then requited.

And though the human may offer various excuses, they will not be accepted from him:

Nay, rather the human is an observer over himself, (14)

بَلِ الْإِنْسَانُ عَلَىٰ نَفْسِهِ بَصِيرَةٌ ﴿١٤﴾

‘An observer (*bas}rah*); it means one who is acutely aware. Or it may mean a perspicuous proof. For the limbs and parts of the body will testify as to what he has done.

Though he cast his excuses. (15)

وَلَوْ أَلْفَىٰ مَعَاذِيرَهُ ﴿١٥﴾

If he gives excuses they will not be accepted from him. Or he knows what he did even though he offers excuses with his manifest speech.

Here the flow turns to direct the Messenger, may Allah bless him and his family, about how to bear the Qur’an, as it had been revealed to him. Perhaps the connection is the relation between the Qur’an and the actions that the Qur’an throws light on.

From Ibn ‘Abbas it is narrated that the Messenger, while the Qur’an was being revealed to him, would hasten by moving his tongue, out of his fondness for it and desirous of remembering it, and fearing that he might forget it. Others have narrated what is similar. Perhaps, then, this happened during this surah, occasioning the directive to come here:

Animate not thy tongue with it to hasten it; (16)

لَا تُحْرِكْ بِهِ لِسَانَكَ لِتَعْجَلَ بِهِ ﴿١٦﴾

The Messenger was not to put his tongue into motion with the Qur’an, in reciting it word by word as the archangel Gabriel recited it to him, before the revelation was complete. The implication is that he would do this in order to grasp it and not forget it.¹

Indeed upon Us is its gathering and its reciting. (17)

إِنَّ عَلَيْنَا جَمْعَهُ وَقُرْءَانَهُ ﴿١٧﴾

The composition and compilation of the Qur’an and its recitation to the Messenger was a matter for Allah, glory be to Him.

So when We recite it, follow its recital; (18)

فَإِذَا قَرَأْتَهُ فَاتَّبِعْ قُرْءَانَهُ ﴿١٨﴾

That is, when Gabriel recites it to thee, follow or concentrate on that recital.

Thereupon, on Us is its clarification. (19)

ثُمَّ إِنَّ عَلَيْنَا بَيَانَهُ ﴿١٩﴾

That is, it was for Allah to ensure the elucidation and clarification of the Qur’an’s areas of brevity and conciseness, and of its metaphors, just like its compilation and recital. The concern of the Messenger was the messengership and the conveyance. And it really is a thing of amazement that were it not for the nature of prophethood, how would it be possible for a person to remember such a large volume of scripture without repeating the recital from a book. Do you not see how even the most eloquent of speakers, with the best of memories, ascend the pulpit and even if they speak the amount of just two pages, afterwards they cannot recite the same thing a second time exactly like they did at first? The promise of Allah, glory be to Him, to the Messenger in His word, ‘We shall set thee to recite so thou shall not forget’ [87: 6], was what enabled the Messenger to remember it at a single reading from Gabriel. And were the Messenger not truthful in his claim, as the disbelievers maintained, how would it have been possible for him to have had such a marvellous memory?

The current then turns to its former topic, in His word.

¹ The allusion of this animation of the tongue and the haste in reciting the verses of the holy Qur’an is that the holy prophet is indicating his passion to learn the holy Qur’an, and as such he is setting an example for the faithful to endeavour to learn the holy Qur’an. For otherwise the Prophet Muhammad, *may Allah bless him and his family*, is *ma’sum* and thus immune from forgetfulness.

Nay, but ye are fond of the hasty, (20)

كَلَّا بَلْ تُحِبُّونَ الْعَاجِلَةَ ﴿٢٠﴾

Nay, ... The disbelievers (the pronoun is plural) do not reflect on the Qur'an, and do not deliberate on the resurrection, wishing instead to be brazen onwards. ... **but ...** Instead of that:

... **ye are fond of the hasty.** They love the hasty; that is, the transient, material world.

And ye leave aside the hereafter (21)

وَتَذَرُونَ الْآخِرَةَ ﴿٢١﴾

They forsake the hereafter and do not act for its account.

But know this: he who acts here for the hereafter will there be in goodness; whereas he who fails to act will be in a vile condition:

Faces that day are radiant, (22)

وُجُوهُهُمُ يَوْمَئِذٍ نَّاصِرَةٌ ﴿٢٢﴾

On the day of resurrection some faces will be bright, radiant in their joy; they are the faces of the believers.

Towards their Lord looking forward; (23)

إِلَىٰ رَبِّهَا نَاظِرَةٌ ﴿٢٣﴾

'looking forward' is used for *naadhira*, looking as in *intidha* which means awaiting. They looking forward towards His mercy, profusion and grace, glory be to Him.

And faces that day are scowling, (24)

وُجُوهُهُمُ يَوْمَئِذٍ بِسِيرَةٍ ﴿٢٤﴾

Some faces on the day of resurrection will be overcast with an intense frown, for an effect of sorrow and fear is that the face frowns. These are the faces of the disbelievers and of the disobedient.

Supposing that a backbreaking calamity will be done to them. (25)

تَظُنُّنَّ أَنَّ يَنْفَعَنَّهَا فَاقرَةٌ ﴿٢٥﴾

The people behind those faces will suppose this. Attributing the verb to the faces themselves is metaphorical. 'Calamity' is given for *faqira*, meaning a calamity that breaks the spine in the back, so severe is it. 'Suppose' is given for *dhann*, which is used on account of how the human, on seeing that the chastisement is near, does not admit that it will descend on him, for he hopes that it will be diverted. And so he supposes he will be punished, but is not sure.

Nay, when it reaches the collarbone, (26)

كَلَّا إِذَا بَلَغَتِ التَّرَاقِيَ ﴿٢٦﴾

Nay, ... That is, the affair is not as the disbelievers presently suppose, that there is a world but no hereafter.

... **when it reaches the collarbone,** The fallacy of their claim will become clear to them when it reaches the collarbone; that is, when the soul reaches the collarbone, a way of indicating the approach of death.

And it is said, 'Who is the ascender?' (27)

وَقِيلَ مَنْ رَاقٍ ﴿٢٧﴾

The angels will ask of each other which of them is to take the soul of the person forward: the angels of mercy or the angels of the chastisement.

And he will suppose that it is the separation, (28)

وَيَظُنُّ أَنَّهُ الْفِرَاقُ ﴿٢٨﴾

That is, the person dying or those around him will suppose that it is his separation from the world and his loved ones.

And one leg is twisted around the other, (29)

وَالْتَفَتِ السَّاقُ بِالسَّاقِ ﴿٢٩﴾

The term indicates the impossibility of returning to the world, and of recovering from death, for the person whose legs are bound, one to the other, has no possibility of flight and escape from what is disagreeable.

To thy Lord that day is the herding. (30)

إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ يَوْمَئِذٍ الْمَسَاقُ ﴿٣٠﴾

On the day of death a person's soul is herded and driven. He has no choice. His life in the world is over.

So, he did not confirm and he did not pray, (31)

فَلَا صَدَقَ وَلَا صَلَّىٰ ﴿٣١﴾

So, ...That is, so did the disbeliever perform the deeds that would save him there? Nay!

... he did not confirm ... He did not confirm what it was obligatory for him to confirm, e.g. belief in Allah, His Messengers, Resurrection, etc.

... and he did not pray. He did not perform his obligatory prayers to Allah, glory be to Him.

But rather he belied and turned back; (32)

وَلَكِنَّ كَذَّبَ وَتَوَلَّىٰ ﴿٣٢﴾

Instead, he belied Allah and what else he needed to believe. And he turned away from the truth.

Moreover, he went to his folk strutting. (33)

ثُمَّ ذَهَبَ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهِ يَتَمَطَّىٰ ﴿٣٣﴾

That is, he returned to his family proud and conceited at his having belied. 'Strutting' is put for *yatamat* ﴿٣٣﴾. The meaning is that his calling lies to the truth led him to strut pompously and arrogantly back to his people, stretching his body upwards. Perhaps he is cited as behaving this way on returning to this folk on account of how it is only on returning to them from outside the house that his arrogance and haughtiness really becomes clear to them.

Worthier for thee, worthier! (34)

أَوْلَىٰ لَكَ فَأَوْلَىٰ ﴿٣٤﴾

The pronoun is singular. The address now turns to the disbeliever directly; that "the state you are in is worthier for you than that of faith and obedience". The wicked condition of the arrogant and the belier of the truth was more appropriate for him than the beauty to which the Messenger called him. The repetition is to emphasise the transgressor's lack of receptivity to faith and guidance.

Moreover, worthier for thee, worthier! (35)

ثُمَّ أَوْلَىٰ لَكَ فَأَوْلَىٰ ﴿٣٥﴾

This repetition is for emphasis.

It is narrated that the Messenger of Allah once took Abu Jahl by the hand and said to him, 'Worthier for thee, worthier! Moreover, worthier for thee, worthier!'

'With what do you threaten me? Neither you nor your Lord are able to do anything to me; as I am the most powerful of the people of this valley (i.e. the City of Makkah, which is surrounded by mountains)!' Abu Jahl replied. And so Allah, glory be to Him, revealed the ayah. [End of narration]

Of course the Messenger and his Lord, the Most High, were able to have done everything to Abu Jahl. And Abu Jahl was killed at Badr, whereupon he entered into the inferno.

The term 'worthier for thee' (*awla lak*) is a warning, [given the stature and position of the Abu Jahl in the then community, who was the chief of Quraysh], meaning: 'You shall soon see the consequences of the deviated path you have chosen.'

Does the human reckon that he will be aimlessly forsaken? (36)

أَلْحَسَبُ الْإِنْسَانُ أَنْ يُتْرَكَ سُدًى ﴿٣٦﴾

Does he think that his life is in vain, with no commands, no prohibitions, no reckoning and no requital?

Was he not a drop of ejaculated sperm? (37)

أَلَمْ يَكُ نُطْفَةً مِنْ مَنِيٍّ يُمْنَىٰ ﴿٣٧﴾

Does he not deduce from this and from his various transformations that Allah is able to return him?

Then he was a blood-clot; So He created and then fashioned, (38)

ثُمَّ كَانَ عَلَقَةً فَخَلَقَ فَسَوَّىٰ ﴿٣٨﴾

The sperm become a blood-clot; then Allah created from it a human being. He then fashioned him, giving him all limbs, faculties, and endowments.

And from him put the two genders, male and female (39)

فَجَعَلَ مِنْهُ الذَّكَرَ وَالْأُنثَىٰ ﴿٣٩﴾

Who can be seen to have done all this, other than Allah, glory be to Him?

Is That not powerful enough to give life to the dead? (40)

أَلَيْسَ ذَٰلِكَ بِقَدِيرٍ عَلَىٰ أَنْ تُحْيِيَ الْمَوْتَىٰ ﴿٤٠﴾

Is That ... 'That' (*dhalika*) means Allah, glory be to Him.

... not powerful enough to give life to the dead? He who is able to create is able to recreate. How then does the disbeliever deny His capability, glory be to Him, of the bringing about of the rising and the resurrection?