

Surah al-Inshiqaq (84)

سورة الإنشاق

'The Rending Asunder'

This surah owes its name to the prominence within it of a verb form derived from the infinitive *inshiqaq*, meaning to crumble. Like the other Makkan surahs it deals with articles of faith. As Surah *al-Mutaffifin* concluded on the theme of the resurrection, this surah opens on the subject of its terrors.

By the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

By the name of Allah ... We seek help from the name of Allah, glory be to Him, that He be assistance for us in our affairs.

... the Compassionate, the Merciful. He who in His mercy graces all things, just as He says, 'My mercy embraces all things,' in the sense that He does for a thing whatever brings it from deficiency to perfection.

When the sky rends asunder, (1)

إِذَا السَّمَاءُ أَنْشَقَّتْ ﴿١﴾

That is, the sky shall tear apart and cleave asunder, like a dilapidated wall, and the marks of the sky's cleavage will become apparent to the eye. The stars will be scattered on account of the breakdown of the celestial order.

And listens to its Lord; and rightly so, (2)

وَأَذِنَتْ لِرَبِّهَا وَحُقَّتْ ﴿٢﴾

The sky listens, obeys, to its Lord, its Creator. And what is meant is that it is obedient to Allah, glory be to Him. 'and rightly so' is given for *huqqat*, meaning that it is justified and appropriate for the sky to listen to its Lord and obey Him, in that it was created with the quality of obedience to its Lord's directives.

And when the earth is stretched, (3)

وَإِذَا الْأَرْضُ مُدَّتْ ﴿٣﴾

The mountains shall be crushed and the earth made level and smooth, with no unevenness.

And casts forth what is in it and becomes empty, (4)

وَأَلْقَتْ مَا فِيهَا وَتَخَلَّتْ ﴿٤﴾

What is within the earth will be cast out: its treasures, its minerals and the dead bodies buried within it. Nothing will remain within it and it shall be quite empty.

And listens to its Lord; and rightly so; (5)

وَأَذِنَتْ لِرَبِّهَا وَحُقَّتْ ﴿٥﴾

The earth too obeys its Lord, who is Allah, glory be to Him, and it is right that it listens and obeys. The consequent of these vows is not explicitly given, for it is implicit. It is: mankind shall be divided into two groups, those who are saved and those for perdition. This is clear from the opening words of the eighth verse, 'So as for him ...'

The thread of the surah here directs itself to the human being, that he might prepare for that dreadful day:

O thou humankind, indeed thou are striving towards thy Lord, striving, so thou shall meet Him: (6)

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الْاِنْسٰنُ اِنَّكَ كَادِحٌ اِلٰى رَبِّكَ كَدًا فَمَلِقِيْهِ ﴿٦﴾

'Strive' is given for *kad-h}* meaning to strive intensely. The striving is towards the Lord, that is, towards His reckoning and recompense, and it is hard and laborious. Man is continually engaged in a struggle in the earth that is dire and severe, for the world is a place of toil and drudgery, until

it all ends with the account of Allah, glory be to Him. Our labours then meet Him, meaning that our actions and efforts will be recompensed, when we reach our Lord's reckoning.

So as for whosoever is given his book on his right, (7)

فَأَمَّا مَنْ أُوتِيَ كِتَابَهُ بِيَمِينِهِ ﴿٧﴾

The book is the record written by the angels in which his deeds are registered. 'On his right' means in his right hand, which will be a sign of salvation and bliss.

He shall then be reckoned with, an easy reckoning, (8)

فَسَوْفَ تَحْسَبُ حِسَابًا يَسِيرًا ﴿٨﴾

His reckoning will be easy and present him no trouble. It seems the interval between being given the book and the reckoning is a lengthy one, as indicated by the word *sawfa*, given as 'then'.

And he will return to his folk joyfully; (9)

وَيَنْقَلِبُ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهِ مَسْرُورًا ﴿٩﴾

He will return from the place of the reckoning to his folk (*ahl*), meaning those who have faced the reckoning before him and are awaiting his return. Or the meaning is the houries - beauties of paradise (*hūr al-ʿayn*) who have been prepared for him.

But as for whosoever is given his book behind his back, (10)

وَأَمَّا مَنْ أُوتِيَ كِتَابَهُ وَرَاءَ ظَهْرِهِ ﴿١٠﴾

That is, the angels will grab his left hand and pull it behind him and in that position will give him his book, to add to his extreme embarrassment and disgrace and to signify that he is for the fire and the chastisement.

He shall then cry for calamity, (11)

فَسَوْفَ يَدْعُوا ثُبُورًا ﴿١١﴾

After he reads his book he will realise he is perished and will call for the fire to approach, for its time will have come.

And shall enter a blaze. (12)

وَيَصَلِّي سَعِيرًا ﴿١٢﴾

That is, he enters the flaming, raging fire, and stays there.

Indeed among his folk he was joyful, (13)

إِنَّهُ كَانَ فِي أَهْلِهِ مَسْرُورًا ﴿١٣﴾

The sinner amongst his own people in the world was joyful at the worldly bounties he enjoyed and gave no importance to the afterlife. This is in contrast to him who gives importance to the hereafter, who is sad on account of not knowing what will be done with him and what will be his final end.

Indeed he supposed he would never return; (14)

إِنَّهُ ظَنَّ أَنْ لَنْ يَحُورَ ﴿١٤﴾

While in the world he thought he would not return to life after death.

Nay! Indeed his Lord is over him an observer. (15)

بَلَىٰ إِنَّ رَبَّهُ كَانَ بِهِ بَصِيرًا ﴿١٥﴾

But no, he shall return. His Lord is watching his every action and will requite him for them, and He does not leave him vainly unregarded.

So I swear not by the evening redness, (16)

فَلَا أَقْسِمُ بِاللُّشْفِقِ ﴿١٦﴾

The evening redness is the red afterglow of sunset. The oath is intended and hinted at but not sworn, to show the severity of the situation, as discussed previously.

And the night and what it gathers, (17)

وَاللَّيْلِ وَمَا وَسَقَ ﴿١٧﴾

That is, by the night and what it gathers. Nightfall gathers creatures and people together when during the day they are dispersed.

And the moon when it is complete, (18)

وَالْقَمَرِ إِذَا اتَّسَقَ ﴿١٨﴾

That is, when it is full and its radiance is complete.

Ye shall definitely mount state after state. (19)

لَتَرْكَبُنَّ طَبَقًا عَنْ طَبَقٍ ﴿١٩﴾

That is, you shall witness and enter condition after condition. 'after' is given for 'an, which denotes transition, in that man mounts one condition after passing through a previous condition. The verse means that man passes through his various stages and conditions until finally he arrives at the day of resurrection, as mentioned at the beginning of the surah, "indeed thou are striving towards thy Lord". It is the consequent of the quasi-oath 'So I swear not by ...', and it seems that these *ayaat* are to show the vicissitudes of conditions in the world, so that humans are not deceived by the pleasant conditions in the world and forget the hereafter, thus losing both the world and the hereafter.

So what is with them that they believe not? (20)

فَمَا هُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٢٠﴾

As the world is temporal and finite, and as its conditions are not permanent, why do the disbelievers not believe in Allah so as to be saved from the chastisement of the hereafter, which is eternal? What is stopping them?

And when the Qur'an is recited to them, they prostrate not? (21)

وَإِذَا قُرِئَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقُرْآنُ لَا يَسْجُدُونَ ﴿٢١﴾

That is, why is it they do not humble themselves before God after His signs are recited to them and the evidence is completed for them with the recitation of the Qur'an?

Rather those who disbelieve belie, (22)

بَلِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا يَكْذِبُونَ ﴿٢٢﴾

Instead of humbling themselves, the disbelievers call Allah and the Prophet and the day of resurrection false.

And Allah is more aware of what they harbour; (23)

وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا يُوعُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾

Allah knows better than anyone, even themselves, the evil intentions they hide away in their breasts.

So give them glad tidings of a painful chastisement; (24)

فَبَشِّرْهُمْ بِعَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ ﴿٢٤﴾

The address is to the Prophet. 'Glad tidings' is given for *bishara*, which is used here in mockery.

Save those who believe and do the virtuous deeds, theirs is a wage without end. (25)

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ هُمْ أَجْرٌ غَيْرُ مَمْنُونٍ ﴿٢٥﴾

﴿٢٥﴾

Those who believe in Allah, the Prophet and the hereafter and do good works, theirs is a reward that will not come to an end, for the blessings of the hereafter are permanent and without end.