

Title: Explaining Sūrah al-Takwīr

Original Title: تفسير جزء عمّ

Original Author: Muḥammad Ibn Ṣāliḥ al-'Uthaymīn

E X P L A I N I N G S Ū R A H
aI-Takwīr

BY:

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S Ū R A H A L - T A K W Ī R
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بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

In the name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Bestower of all mercy.

1	When the sun is wrapped up	﴿ إِذَا الشَّمْسُ كُوِّرَتْ ﴾
2	And when the stars fall	﴿ وَإِذَا النُّجُومُ انكَدَرَتْ ﴾
3	And when the mountains pass away	﴿ وَإِذَا الْجِبَالُ سُيِّرَتْ ﴾
4	And when pregnant camels are neglected	﴿ وَإِذَا الْعِشَارُ عُطِّلَتْ ﴾
5	And when wild beasts are gathered together	﴿ وَإِذَا الْوُحُوشُ حُشِرَتْ ﴾
6	And when the seas are filled with fire	﴿ وَإِذَا الْبِحَارُ سُجِّرَتْ ﴾
7	And when the souls are grouped	﴿ وَإِذَا النُّفُوسُ زُوِّجَتْ ﴾
8	And when the infant girl buried alive is asked	﴿ وَإِذَا الْمَوْءُودَةُ سُئِلَتْ ﴾
9	For what sin she was killed	﴿ يَايُّ ذَنْبٍ قُتِلَتْ ﴾
10	And when the pages are distributed	﴿ وَإِذَا الصُّحُفُ نُشِرَتْ ﴾
11	And when the sky is stripped away	﴿ وَإِذَا السَّمَاءُ كُشِطَتْ ﴾
12	And when Hell is set ablaze	﴿ وَإِذَا الْجَحِيمُ سُعِّرَتْ ﴾
13	And when Paradise is brought near	﴿ وَإِذَا الْجَنَّةُ أُزْلِفَتْ ﴾
14	Every soul will (then) know what it has brought (with it of deeds) ¹	﴿ عَلِمَتْ نَفْسٌ مَّا أَحْضَرَتْ ﴾

¹ The Quran, Sūrah al-Takwīr, 81:1-14

EXPLAINING SŪRAH AL-TAKWĪR

Verses 1 - 14

Verse 1: ﴿إِذَا الشَّمْسُ كُوِّرَتْ﴾

﴿When the sun is wrapped up﴾ This will happen on the Day of Resurrection. The name of the Sūrah التَّكْوِيرِ (*al-Takwīr*) comes from the Arabic verb used in this verse which means to roll or wrap something... Despite the sun's great expansiveness, its enormous size and mass, Allah, the Mighty, will wrap it up on the Day of Resurrection, rolling it upon itself until its light is lost.² He will then throw it into the fire, angering those who used to worship the sun instead of Allah, as clear evidence of the senselessness of their worship. He says:

﴿إِنَّكُمْ وَمَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ حَصَبُ جَهَنَّمَ أَنْتُمْ لَهَا وَارِدُونَ﴾

Indeed, you (disbelievers) and what you worship other than Allah are fuel for Hell.³

However, Allah excludes from this his righteous worshippers whom others may wrongly worship; he later says in the same Sūrah:

² To further explain this, the prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said in a ḥadīth collected in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*:

« الشَّمْسُ وَالْقَمَرُ مُكَوَّرَانِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ »

The sun and moon will both be wrapped up on the Day of Resurrection.

³ Sūrah al-Anbiyā, 21:98

﴿ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ سَبَقَتْ لَهُمْ مِنَّا الْحُسْنَىٰ أُولَٰئِكَ عَنْهَا مُبْعَدُونَ ﴿ لَا يَسْمَعُونَ حَسِيسَهَا ۗ وَهُمْ فِي مَا اشْتَهَتْ أَنفُسُهُمْ خَالِدُونَ ﴾

Surely (as for) those for whom the good has already gone forth from us, they will be kept far from it (Hell). They will not hear even the slightest sound of it, while they are living forever in that which their souls desire.⁴

Verse 2: ﴿ وَإِذَا النُّجُومُ انْكَدَرَتْ ﴾

﴿ **And when the stars fall** ﴾ The stars will fall from their places just as another verse explains:

﴿ وَإِذَا الْكَوَاكِبُ انْتَثَرَتْ ﴾

And when the stars fall, scattering.⁵

On the Day of Resurrection, the stars will become scattered, falling from their places.

Verse 3: ﴿ وَإِذَا الْجِبَالُ سُيِّرَتْ ﴾

﴿ **And when the mountains pass away** ﴾ These huge, solid, lofty mountains will become dust on the Day of Resurrection and disappear as Allah (تعالی) says:

﴿ وَسَيَّرَ الْجِبَالَ فَكَانَتْ سَرَابًا ﴾

And the mountains will be removed as if they were a mirage.⁶

⁴ Sūrah al-Anbiyā, 21:101-102

⁵ Sūrah al-Infiṭār, 82:2

⁶ Sūrah al-Naba, 78:20

Verse 4: ﴿وَإِذَا الْعِشَارُ عُطِّلَتْ﴾

﴿And when pregnant camels are neglected﴾ This describes pregnant camels that have reached ten months in their pregnancies. These used to be some of the most precious possessions to the Arabs. They used to keep close watch over them, caring for them, providing shelter for them, and keeping them well-groomed due to their value. Yet in the hereafter, people will neither be concerned with them, nor even care to glance at them because people will be in such extreme, terrible circumstances. They will be so uncomfortable, they will forget everything and everyone else as Allah (تبارك وتعالى) says:

﴿يَوْمَ يَفِرُّ الْمَرْءُ مِنْ أَخِيهِ * وَأُمِّهِ وَأَبِيهِ * وَصَاحِبَتِهِ وَبَنِيهِ * لِكُلِّ امْرِئٍ مِنْهُمْ
يَوْمَئِذٍ شَأْنٌ يُغْنِيهِ﴾

The day on which a man will run away from his brother, from his mother and father, and from his wife and children. Every man that day will have enough to make him careless of others.⁷

Verse 5: ﴿وَإِذَا الْوُحُوشُ حُشِرَتْ﴾

﴿And when wild beasts are gathered together﴾ The word used here describes wild animals, but all animals, whether tame or wild, will be gathered based on the statement of Allah (تعالى):

⁷ Sūrah 'Abasa, 80:34-37

﴿ وَمَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا طَائِرٍ يَطِيرُ بِجَنَاحَيْهِ إِلَّا أُمَمٌ أَمْثَالُكُمْ ۚ مَا فَرَّطْنَا فِي الْكِتَابِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ ۚ ثُمَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ يُحْشَرُونَ ﴾

There is no creature on earth, nothing that flies with two wings, but lives in communities like you. We have neglected nothing in the book. Then to their Lord they will be gathered.⁸

Animals, wild and tame, will be gathered together on the Day of Resurrection and people will witness the establishment of justice and fairness for what occurred in life even among animals such that a ram with no horns will be given its rights taken by one with horns.⁹ When justice is settled between animals, Allah will command them to become dust.¹⁰ He (سبحانه وتعالى) settles the affairs even among animals because of his perfect justice and fairness toward his creation.

Verse 6: ﴿ وَإِذَا الْبِحَارُ سُجِّرَتْ ﴾

⁸ Sūrah al-An'ām, 6:38

⁹ The prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said in a ḥadīth collected in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*:

« لَتُؤَدَّنَ الْحُقُوقَ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهَا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ حَتَّىٰ يُقَادَ لِلشَّاةِ الْجَلْحَاءِ مِنَ الشَّاةِ الْقَرْنَاءِ »

The rights of justice will be established among those who deserve them on the Day of Resurrection so much so that a ram without horns will be given its rights taken from it by a ram with horns.

¹⁰ The prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said in a ḥadīth determined to be authentic by al-Albānī in *al-Silsilah al-Ṣaḥīḥah* (no. 1966):

« يَقْضِي اللهُ بَيْنَ خَلْقِهِ الْجِنِّ وَالْإِنْسِ وَالْبَهَائِمِ ، وَإِنَّهُ لَيَقْبِدُ يَوْمَئِذٍ الْجَمَاءَ مِنَ الْقَرْنَاءِ ، حَتَّىٰ إِذَا لَمْ يَبْقَ تَبَعَةٌ عِنْدَ وَاحِدَةٍ لِأُخْرَى ، قَالَ اللهُ : كُونُوا تُرَابًا ، فَعِنْدَ ذَلِكَ يَقُولُ الْكَافِرُ : ﴿ يَا لَيْتَنِي كُنْتُ تُرَابًا ﴾ »

Allah will judge between his creation – jinn, humans and animals. On that day the affair will be settled between the hornless and the horned until there are no affairs left to be settled between any of them. Allah will then say (to animals), “Be dust!” At that point the disbeliever will say, ﴿ “Oh, I wish I were dust!” ﴾ [Sūrah al-Naba, 78:40].

﴿And when the seas are filled with fire﴾ The seas of the earth are mentioned together here because of their significance and the sheer volume they collectively make up. The world's seas and oceans make up about three-fourths of the entire earth or perhaps more. These magnificent oceans on the Day of Resurrection will be ignited, set ablaze becoming an enormous, raging fire. At that time, the earth will dry up, leaving no water remaining on it because its seas will have turned to fiery flames.

Verse 7: ﴿وَإِذَا النُّفُوسُ زُوِّجَتْ﴾

﴿And when the souls are grouped﴾ The ﴿souls﴾ here represent all mankind. They will be grouped together, each type of soul with others like it. The Arabic verb used here, from which the word زَوْج (zawj) comes, is similar to that used in the following verse, showing that grouping into types or kinds is one of its meanings:

﴿وَكُنْتُمْ أَزْوَاجًا ثَلَاثَةً﴾

And you will become (of) three kinds.¹¹

The meaning is similar in the following verses in which Allah uses wordings from the same root form:

﴿وَأَخْرَجْنَا مِنْ شَكْلِهِ أَزْوَاجٌ﴾

And other similar (punishments) of its kind.¹²

¹¹ Sūrah al-Wāqī'ah, 56:7

¹² Sūrah Ṣād, 38:58

﴿ احشُرُوا الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا وَأَزْوَاجَهُمْ ﴾

Gather those who committed wrong, together with their kinds.¹³

So the meaning is that all souls will be grouped together with those similar to them – the righteous people with others of righteousness, the evil people with the people of evil.

Also, each religious nation will be assembled with others of the same nation:

﴿ وَتَرَى كُلَّ أُمَّةٍ جَاثِيَةً ۚ كُلُّ أُمَّةٍ تُدْعَىٰ إِلَىٰ كِتَابِهَا الْيَوْمَ تُجْزَوْنَ مَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴾

And you will see each nation kneeling (from fear). Every nation will be called to its book: today you shall be rewarded for what you did.¹⁴

So ﴿**And when the souls are grouped**﴾ means that every person will be gathered with those like him, each kind together, each religious nation together.

Verse 8: ﴿ وَإِذَا الْمَوْءُودَةُ سُئِلَتْ ﴾

﴿**And when the infant girl buried alive is asked**﴾ In the period of ignorance before Islam, newborn baby girls were buried alive. The Arabs before Islam used to do such a thing out of their ignorance and their evil assumption they used to believe about Allah (that the birth of a girl was something unfortunate). They used to criticize and dishonor those among them when they had a girl. If one of them received news of a newborn girl,

¹³ Sūrah al-Ṣāffāt, 37:22

¹⁴ Sūrah al-Jāthiyah, 45:28

his face would darken with gloom and he would become distressed, filled with worry and grief:

﴿يَتَوَارَى مِنَ الْقَوْمِ مِنْ سُوءِ مَا بُشِّرَ بِهِ ۚ أَيُمْسِكُهُ عَلَىٰ هُونٍ أَمْ يَدُسُّهُ فِي
التُّرَابِ ۗ أَلَا سَاءَ مَا يَحْكُمُونَ﴾

He hides himself from the people because of the (assumed) evil that is announced to him. Should he keep it in humiliation or bury it in the ground? Unquestionably, evil is what they decide.¹⁵

If a man among the former times was told, “Congratulations, Allah has given you a girl. You have a daughter!” he becomes depressed. He then begins contemplating his options: should he keep his daughter in shame and disgrace, or should he bury her in the ground and become relieved of his dilemma? Some among them chose the former, some the latter.

They would actually bury their own daughters alive, some before they are cognizant and aware, others afterwards. It has even been reported that one person, before Islam, was digging a hole for his daughter when some dirt got in his beard. His young daughter reached to wipe the dirt away while he was digging her grave to bury her. He had no mercy in his heart for her.

This shows that the state of ignorance before Islam in such lands was completely despicable and wicked. Even wild animals care for their young, yet some people do not

¹⁵ Sūrah al-Naḥl, 16:59

like their own children. Allah says: ﴿ **And when the infant girl buried alive is asked** ﴾.

On the Day of Resurrection, she will be asked:

Verse 9: ﴿ يَا أَيُّ دَنْبٍ قُتِلَتْ ﴾

﴿ **For what sin she was killed** ﴾ Has she actually committed any sin at all? Some may ask: Why would she be questioned when she was utterly oppressed, buried alive? Some were buried without even reaching a young age of being aware, having not even come close to the age of responsibility when a person's deeds are recorded. So how could she be questioned about any sin?

The girl buried alive will be asked only as a way of reprehension and blaming the one who buried her. She will be asked in front of him, "For what sin were you murdered?" An example of such questioning is if someone attacks another person in this life and the victim comes to the authorities or his case is brought forth, he may be asked, "Why were you beaten by this man?" Even if the authorities know the man was the aggressor who attacked the victim without right, the question may still be asked as a way of accusing, establishing liability against the aggressor.

So the infant girl will be asked what sin she was killed for only as a way of establishing liability against her oppressor and murderer who buried her alive. We ask Allah's protection (from such evil).

Verse 10: ﴿ وَإِذَا الصُّحُفُ نُشِرَتْ ﴾

﴿And when the pages are distributed﴾ The ﴿pages﴾ meant here are those on which people's deeds are written. Know that every single deed you do, whether statement or action, is written down, recorded in these pages. On your right and left are angels:

﴿ كَرَامًا كَاتِبِينَ * يَعْلَمُونَ مَا تَفْعَلُونَ ﴾

Honorable recorders, knowing whatever you do.¹⁶

They are constantly recording everything you do until, on the Day of Resurrection, you are presented with your book. Allah (سبحانه وتعالى) says:

﴿ وَكُلَّ إِنْسَانٍ أَلْزَمْنَاهُ طَائِرَهُ فِي عُنُقِهِ ۗ وَنُخْرِجُ لَهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ كِتَابًا يَلْقَاهُ مَنشُورًا * اقْرَأْ كِتَابَكَ كَفَىٰ بِنَفْسِكَ الْيَوْمَ عَلَيْكَ حَسِيبًا ﴾

And we have fastened every man's deeds to his neck, and on the Day of Resurrection, we will bring out for him a book which he will find wide open. "Read your book. You yourself are sufficient as a reckoner against you today."¹⁷

The words we are now saying, they are being written as we speak, the words you say to each other are being written, every single word spoken is written.

﴿ مَا يَلْفِظُ مِنْ قَوْلٍ إِلَّا لَدَيْهِ رَقِيبٌ عَتِيدٌ ﴾

¹⁶ Sūrah al-Infīṭār, 82:11-12

¹⁷ Sūrah al-Isrā, 17:13-14

Not a word does he (or she) utter, but there is a watcher by him ready (to record it).¹⁸

For this reason, the prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said:

« مِنْ حُسْنِ إِسْلَامِ الْمَرْءِ تَرْكُهُ مَا لَا يَعْنِيهِ »

From the perfection of a man's Islam is that he leaves whatever does not concern him.¹⁹

And he (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said:

« مَنْ كَانَ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ فَلْيَقُلْ خَيْرًا أَوْ لِيَصْمُتْ »

Whoever believes in Allah and the last day, he should speak only good or remain silent.²⁰

Everything a person says and does is written against him. Naturally, whoever speaks much will say more things he may later regret. So guard your tongue because these **pages** will certainly be filled with whatever you say, and they will certainly be spread open for you on the Day of Resurrection.

Verse 11: ﴿ وَإِذَا السَّمَاءُ كُشِطَتْ ﴾

¹⁸ Sūrah Qāf, 50:18

¹⁹ Collected by al-Tirmidhī and Ibn Mājah, and al-Albānī says it is authentic in *Ṣaḥīḥ Sunan al-Tirmidhī* (no. 1886).

²⁰ Collected by al-Bukhārī and Muslim

﴿ **And when the sky is stripped away** ﴾ The sky above us is now like a strong, sturdy, preserved ceiling. Allah (تعالی) says:

﴿ وَالسَّمَاءَ بَنَيْنَاهَا بِأَيْدٍ ﴾

And the sky we have constructed with strength.²¹

And he (تعالی) says:

﴿ وَبَنَيْنَا فَوْقَكُمْ سَبْعًا شِدَادًا ﴾

And we have built above you seven strong (heavens).²²

Yet on the Day of Resurrection, the skies will be stripped away, pulled from their places similarly to how skin is pulled from flesh when skinning an animal, for example. Allah, the Mighty, will strip the heavens away, rolling them up and grasping them with his right hand as he says:

﴿ وَالْأَرْضُ جَمِيعًا قَبْضَتُهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَالسَّمَاوَاتُ مَطْوِيَّاتٌ بِيَمِينِهِ ﴾

**And the earth entirely will be (within) his grip on the Day of Resurrection,
and the heavens will be rolled up in his right hand.**²³

﴿ يَوْمَ نَطْوِي السَّمَاءَ كَطَيِّ السِّجِلِّ لِلْكُتُبِ ﴾

²¹ Sūrah al-Dhāriyāt, 51:47

²² Sūrah al-Naba, 78:12

²³ Sūrah al-Zumar, 39:67

On the day when we will roll up the heaven like the rolling up of a writing scroll.²⁴

When a writer used to finish with his writings on a scroll or parchment, he would roll it up to protect his work from being torn or the words rubbed away. So the heavens will be stripped away on the Day of Resurrection and only space would be left but Allah says:

﴿وَأَنشَقَّتِ السَّمَاءُ فَهِيَ يَوْمَئِذٍ وَاهِيَةٌ وَالْمَلَكُ عَلَى أَرْجَائِهَا وَيَحْمِلُ عَرْشَ رَبِّكَ فَوْقَهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ ثَمَانِيَةٌ﴾

And the sky will be split open, for on that day it will be frail. And the angels will be on its sides. And eight angels will, that day, bear the throne of your Lord above them.²⁵

The sky that is now above us will be removed, replaced with the throne. The heavens will be rolled up in Allah's right hand and likewise the earth will be in his grip. He will shake them and say:

«أَنَا الْمَلِكُ، أَيْنَ مُلُوكِ الْأَرْضِ»

I am the king. Where are the kings of the earth?²⁶

Verse 12: ﴿وَإِذَا الْجَحِيمُ سُعِّرَتْ﴾

²⁴ Sūrah al-Anbiyā, 21:104

²⁵ Sūrah al-Hāqqah, 69:17

²⁶ Collected by al-Bukhārī and Muslim

﴿ **And when Hell is set ablaze** ﴾ The fire of Hell will be ignited, but with what fuel will it be set ablaze? Allah says about it:

﴿ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا قُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَأَهْلِيكُمْ نَارًا وَقُودُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَ ﴾

Oh you who believe, save yourselves and your families from a fire whose fuel is men and stones.²⁷

Instead of wood or paper like the fire we know, this fire will burn people for fuel – those who disbelieved in Allah. The stones are huge stones of fire, burning fiercely and of scorching heat. This will be the blaze of Hell.

Verse 13: ﴿ وَإِذَا الْجَنَّةُ أُزْلِفَتْ ﴾

﴿ **And when Paradise is brought near** ﴾ Paradise is the home of the righteous. Prepared there is what no eye has ever seen, no ear has ever heard of, and what has never been imagined by a human heart.²⁸ It will be ﴿ **brought near** ﴾ and adorned, the very sight of it made pleasing. Compare Paradise to Hell as it is briefly presented here: the final home of the disbelievers will be set ablaze and fueled while the final home of the righteous will be brought near and beautified for them.²⁹

²⁷ Sūrah al-Tahrim, 66:6

²⁸ In a ḥadīth collected by al-Bukhārī and Muslim, the prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said:

« قَالَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى : أَعَدَدْتُ لِعِبَادِي الصَّالِحِينَ مَا لَا عَيْنٌ رَأَتْ ، وَلَا أُذُنٌ سَمِعَتْ ، وَلَا خَطَرَ عَلَى قَلْبِ بَشَرٍ ، وَأَقْرَبُوا
إِنْ شِئْتُمْ : ﴿ فَلَا تَعْلَمُ نَفْسٌ مَّا أُخْفِيَ لَهُمْ مِّن قُرَّةِ أَعْيُنٍ جَزَاءً بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴾ »

Allah (تعالى) said, "I have prepared for my righteous servants what no eye has ever seen, no ear has ever heard of, and what has never been imagine by a human heart." Recite if you like: ﴿ **And no soul knows what has been hidden for them of delight for eyes as reward for what they used to do.** ﴾ [Sūrah al-Sajdah, 32:17]

²⁹ For a quick comparison between the two, read the following ḥadīth of the messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم):

When we read these verses we've just covered: ﴿When the sun is wrapped up, and when the stars fall, and when the mountains pass away, and when pregnant camels are neglected, and when wild beasts are gathered together, and when the seas are filled with fire, and when the souls are grouped, and when the infant girl buried alive is asked for what sin she was killed, and when the pages are distributed, and when the sky is stripped away, and when Hell is set ablaze, and when Paradise is brought near﴾ These thirteen (adverbial) clauses until now have not been connected with the independent clause that it modifies; each clause establishes a dependent relationship with information that has not yet come. ﴿When the sun is wrapped up...﴾ – then what? What will happen when these conditions are fulfilled and these events take place? Until now, the answer has not yet come in this Surah. Then Allah tells us:

Verse 14: ﴿عَلِمَتْ نَفْسٌ مَّا أَحْضَرَتْ﴾

﴿Every soul will (then) know what it has brought (with it of deeds)﴾ Whatever good or bad every soul did in life will be present with it.

« إِذَا دَخَلَ أَهْلُ الْجَنَّةِ الْجَنَّةَ يُنَادِي مُنَادٍ: إِنَّ لَكُمْ أَنْ تَحْيَوْا ، فَلَا تَمُوتُوا أَبَدًا ، إِنَّ لَكُمْ أَنْ تَصِحُّوا ، فَلَا تَسْقَمُوا أَبَدًا ، وَإِنَّ لَكُمْ أَنْ تَشَبُّوا فَلَا تَهْرَمُوا أَبَدًا ، وَإِنَّ لَكُمْ أَنْ تَنْعَمُوا ، فَلَا تَبْأَسُوا أَبَدًا »

When the people of Paradise have entered Paradise, a caller will call out, "You will live forever and never die again. You will be healthy forever and never be sick again. You will be young forever and never grow old again. And you will be happy forever and never be sad again." [Collected by Muslim]

« أُرِيتُ النَّارَ فَلَمْ أَرَ مِنْظَرًا كَالْيَوْمِ قَطُّ أَفْظَعَ »

I was shown the fire, and until today, I had never seen a sight so horrible.
[Collected by al-Bukhārī and Muslim]

﴿يَوْمَ تَجِدُ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّا عَمِلَتْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ مُّحْضَرًا وَمَا عَمِلَتْ مِنْ سُوءٍ﴾

The day every soul will find what it has done of good present (before it) and what it has done of evil.³⁰

Everyone will have brought their evil deeds along with them on the Day of Resurrection.

﴿تَوَدُّ لَوْ أَنَّ بَيْنَهَا وَبَيْنَهُ أَمَدًا بَعِيدًا ۗ وَيُحَذِّرُكُمُ اللَّهُ نَفْسَهُ﴾

It (a soul) will wish that between itself and that (evil) was a great distance.

And Allah warns you of himself.³¹

On that day, every soul will know and recognize all good and bad deeds (beliefs, statements, actions) it has brought. During our lives, we know what good and bad things we do, but how quick we are to forget. We forget so many things we do, deeds of obedience to Allah and our sins. But are they lost when we forget them? No, by Allah they remain with us. On the Day of Judgment, you yourself will bring them with you, present them, and confess that it was indeed you that did all of it. This is the time about which Allah (تعالى) says: ﴿**Every soul will (then) know what it has brought**﴾.

Every person must think carefully about these amazing yet frightening verses and genuinely take the intended lesson and warning from them. We have to believe in these events as if we see and witness them now. In fact, anything Allah informs us about, we should have more certainty regarding such events than those we may witness with our own eyes or hear with our ears. This is because any information that comes from Allah

³⁰ Sūrah Āli 'Imrān, 3:30

³¹ Sūrah Āli 'Imrān, 3:30

never contains lies or inaccuracies; it is always the absolute truth. However, many times we see or hear things about which we are uncertain or from which we get false impressions.

You may see something far away and imagine it to be something when in reality it turns out to be something else. Similarly, you could hear a sound, imagine it to be something specific, yet it is actually something different. Such things are only dependent on the strength of our (created) senses. Yet information that comes from Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ), if we understand its meaning and significance, can never be denied or imagined to be something other than what Allah explains. Rather, such news is the complete truth and should instill within us total confidence and acceptance.

The events which Allah has mentioned in these verses are real events that will actually occur as he described them. Therefore, we must believe in them as if we see them happening in front of us. After believing in them, we must then act according to the lessons and warnings contained within the verses, doing whatever Allah has instructed us to do and avoiding anything he has forbidden. Only then will we become people of the Quran – those who read it as it is meant to be read.



S Ū R A H A L - T A K W Ī R
V e r s e s 1 5 - 2 5

15	So I swear by the retreating stars	﴿ فَلَا أُقْسِمُ بِالْخُنُوسِ ﴾
16	That run (their courses) then disappear	﴿ الْجَوَارِ الْكُنُوسِ ﴾
17	And by the night as it approaches	﴿ وَاللَّيْلِ إِذَا عَسْعَسَ ﴾
18	And by the dawn as it brightens	﴿ وَالصُّبْحِ إِذَا تَنَفَّسَ ﴾
19	It is indeed the word of a noble messenger	﴿ إِنَّهُ لَقَوْلُ رَسُولٍ كَرِيمٍ ﴾
20	Owner of power and, with the owner of the throne, a high rank	﴿ ذِي قُوَّةٍ عِنْدَ ذِي الْعَرْشِ مَكِينٍ ﴾
21	Obeded there (in the heavens) and trustworthy	﴿ مُطَاعٍ ثَمَّ أَمِينٍ ﴾
22	And your companion is not at all mad	﴿ وَمَا صَاحِبُكُمْ بِمَجْنُونٍ ﴾
23	And he (Muhammad) certainly saw him in the clear horizon	﴿ وَلَقَدْ رَأَاهُ بِالْأُفُقِ الْمُبِينِ ﴾
24	And he does not withhold knowledge of the unseen	﴿ وَمَا هُوَ عَلَى الْغَيْبِ بِضَنِينٍ ﴾
25	And it is not the word of a cursed Satan ³²	﴿ وَمَا هُوَ بِقَوْلِ شَيْطَانٍ رَجِيمٍ ﴾

³² Sūrah al-Takwīr, 81:15-25

EXPLAINING SŪRAH AL-TAKWĪR

Verses 15 - 25

Verse 15: ﴿فَلَا أُقْسِمُ بِالْخُنُوسِ﴾

﴿So I swear by the retreating stars﴾ Although Allah's statement ﴿So I swear﴾ contains the Arabic word لا (*lā*), it is not as some people think that this carries the meaning of negation as the same word does in other instances. Rather, this is an Arabic grammar form to place emphasis on an oath. As for ﴿the retreating stars﴾, these are the stars that return from where they came. For instance, you may see them at the highest part of the horizon then later they return back to the farthest part. And this is because—and Allah knows best—these particular stars are higher and farther away. So the stars beneath them appear to the eye as if they move faster.

Verse 16: ﴿الْجَوَارِ الْكُنُوسِ﴾

﴿That run (their courses) then disappear﴾ Still describing the stars, ﴿disappear﴾ here refers to when the stars “set.” Allah swears by these stars then he swears by the night and day:

Verse 17: ﴿وَاللَّيْلِ إِذَا عَسْعَسَ﴾

﴿And by the night as it approaches﴾ The word عَسْعَسَ (*a's-a's*) means to approach, and it has been said that it can also mean “depart” instead. In Arabic, this word (like other words) could be correctly understood to have two different, even contradictory, meanings depending on the context and usage. But what seems more correct is that it

means “approaches” here to match the context of the oath that follows it which is his statement:

Verse 18: ﴿ وَالصُّبْحِ إِذَا تَنَفَّسَ ﴾

﴿ **And by the dawn as it brightens** ﴾ So Allah swears by the night during its approach and by the day during its approach. He swears by these two aspects of creation because of how astonishing these incidents (sunset and daybreak) are and because they are two of Allah’s greatest and clearest signs. Who is able to bring forth the day when night has fallen? Who has the power to bring the night during the day? Allah (عزّ وجلّ) says:

﴿ قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ جَعَلَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكُمُ اللَّيْلَ سَرْمَدًا إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ مَنْ إِلَهُ غَيْرُ اللَّهِ يَأْتِيكُمْ بِضِيَاءٍ ۖ أَفَلَا تَسْمَعُونَ * قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ جَعَلَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكُمُ النَّهَارَ سَرْمَدًا إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ مَنْ إِلَهُ غَيْرُ اللَّهِ يَأْتِيكُمْ بِاللَّيْلِ تَسْكُنُونَ فِيهِ ۖ أَفَلَا تُبْصِرُونَ * وَمِنْ رَحْمَتِهِ جَعَلَ لَكُمُ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ لِتَسْكُنُوا فِيهِ وَلِتَبْتَغُوا مِنْ فَضْلِهِ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ ﴾

Say: Have you considered that if Allah should make the night continuous upon you until the Day of Resurrection, what god other than Allah could bring you light? Then will you not hear? Say: Have you considered that if Allah should make the day continuous upon you until the Day of Resurrection, what god other than Allah could bring you night in which you could rest? Then will you not see? And it is from his mercy that he made

for you (both) the night and the day that you may rest therein and (by day) seek from his bounty and that perhaps you will be grateful.³³

Allah swears by these magnificent creations, the night and day, due to the significance of the point he is making with his oath, and that is:

Verse 19: ﴿ إِنَّهُ لَقَوْلُ رَسُولٍ كَرِيمٍ ﴾

﴿It is indeed the word of a noble messenger﴾ ﴿It﴾ refers to the Quran. As for ﴿the word of a noble messenger﴾, this messenger is the angel Jibrīl (Gabriel) (عليه السلام). He is the messenger of Allah to all the human messengers, bringing them the revelation given to him by Allah. Allah describes Jibrīl as being noble and with magnificence in appearance as Allah said in another verse:

﴿ دُو مِرَّةٍ فَاسْتَوَى ﴾

The owner of absolute splendor. And he rose to (his) true form.³⁴

The scholars explain ﴿absolute splendor﴾ to mean magnificent form and glorious appearance. So Angel Jibrīl (عليه السلام) is described as such and also as being ﴿noble﴾.

Verse 20: ﴿ ذِي قُوَّةٍ عِنْدَ ذِي الْعَرْشِ مَكِينٍ ﴾

³³ Sūrah al-Qaṣaṣ, 28:71-73

³⁴ Sūrah al-Najm, 53:6

﴿Owner of power and, with the owner of the throne, a high rank﴾ By ﴿Owner of power﴾, Allah continues to describe Jibrīl as having amazing power. The prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) once saw Jibrīl in his true form in which Allah created him. He had six hundred wings and filled the entire horizon due to his enormity and grandeur (عليه الصلاة والسلام).³⁵ ﴿and, with the owner of the throne﴾ The ﴿owner of the throne﴾ is Allah (جلّ وعلا). The throne is above everything and above the throne is the Lord of all creations (عزّ وجلّ).³⁶ Allah also says, describing himself with a similar title:

³⁵ About the descriptions of Angel Jibrīl, al-Bukhārī collected several narrations, among them:

The prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said:

« ثُمَّ فَتَرَ عَنِّي الْوَحْيَ فِتْرَةً ، فَبَيْنَا أَنَا أَمْشِي سَمِعْتُ صَوْتًا مِنَ السَّمَاءِ ، فَرَفَعْتُ بَصْرِي قِبَلَ السَّمَاءِ فَإِذَا الْمَلَكُ الَّذِي جَاءَنِي بِحِرَاءِ قَاعِدٍ عَلَى كُرْسِيِّ بَيْنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ ، فَجِئْتُ مِنْهُ حَتَّى هَوَيْتُ إِلَى الْأَرْضِ ، فَجِئْتُ أَهْلِي فَقُلْتُ زَمُّونِي زَمُّونِي »

Revelation ceased for some time. Then, while I was walking, I heard a voice from the sky. So I looked up and saw the same angel that had come to me at (the Cave of) Ḥirā. He was sitting on a chair which filled the entire space between the sky and earth. I fled from him until I fell to the ground. I came to my family and said, "Cover me, cover me!"

- 'Abdullah Ibn Mas'ūd (رضي الله عنه) said, "He saw a green screen (or wing fluttering) covering the entire horizon."
- Ibn Mas'ūd (رضي الله عنه) also said, "He saw Jibrīl having six hundred wings."
- 'Āishah (رضي الله عنها) said, "Whoever says Muhammad saw his Lord has spoken a great lie. However, he did see Jibrīl in his real form and creation; he filled the entire horizon."

³⁶ Describing Allah's throne, the prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said in a ḥadīth collected by Ibn Abī Shaybah, al-Bayhaqī, and verified to be authentic by al-Albānī in *al-Silsilah al-Ṣaḥīḥah* (no. 109):

« مَا السَّمَاوَاتُ السَّبْعُ فِي الْكُرْسِيِّ إِلَّا كَحَلَقَةٍ بِأَرْضِ فَلَاةٍ ، وَفَضْلُ الْعَرْشِ عَلَى الْكُرْسِيِّ كَفَضْلِ الْفَلَاةِ عَلَى تِلْكَ الْحَلَقَةِ »

The seven heavens compared to the footstool is like a ring in a desert, and the throne compared to the footstool is like the desert compared to that ring.

﴿رَفِيعُ الدَّرَجَاتِ ذُو الْعَرْشِ يُلْقِي الرُّوحَ مِنْ أَمْرِهِ عَلَى مَنْ يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ
لِيُنذِرَ يَوْمَ التَّلَاقِ﴾

(He is) the exalted above (all) degrees, owner of the throne. He sends the inspiration by his command to whom he wills of his servants to warn of the day of meeting.³⁷

So Allah is the ﴿owner of the throne﴾. ﴿a high rank﴾ means a high status, prestige, and standing. Jibrīl occupies a position of dignity and honor with Allah. For this reason, Allah specifically chose him, making him responsible for the greatest blessing ever given to mankind – revelation.

If we consider the blessings Allah has sent down, we find they are of two types. The first type of blessing is not specific to people. Rather animals share in this type. It is the favors Allah provides to people and animals with which they maintain or enjoy themselves. These are the physical blessings of the body: food, drink, marriage and spouses (or mates), and shelter. These types of things both people and other creatures benefit from, and people especially enjoy them. Humans naturally find enjoyment in their food, their drink, their spouses and homes. Animals too enjoy these things.

There is a second type of blessing specific to people. It is the revealed, legislated beliefs and rules Allah sent down to his messengers to correct the lives of his creation. People's lives cannot be set right, and especially not truly become peaceful and pleasant, without such divine legislation.

³⁷ Sūrah Ghāfir, 53:15

﴿ مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا مِّنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنْثَىٰ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَلَنُحْيِيَنَّهٗ حَيَاةً طَيِّبَةً ۖ^ط
وَلَنَجْزِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْرَهُمْ بِأَحْسَنِ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴾

Whoever does good whether male or female while he is a believer, we will certainly make him live a happy life, and we will surely give them their reward for the best of what they did.³⁸

A believer who does righteous deeds is the one who will achieve a pleasant life in this world and will be rewarded plentifully in the hereafter. By Allah, if we could examine the lives of kings, sons of kings, ministers and their sons, princes and their sons, the rich and powerful, and we compared their lives (those who are not true believers among them) with someone who truly believes in Allah and does righteous deeds, we would discover that the believer still has a more pleasant life, a clearer, more relaxed mind, and he is more reassured, less-stressed. This is because only Allah holds the keys to control the heavens and earth, and he is sufficient and responsible for the well-being of his worshippers. **﴿Whoever does good whether male or female while he is a believer, we will certainly make him live a happy life﴾.**

You will find the true believer who works righteousness with a content heart, comforting and often in high spirits, satisfied with whatever Allah has decreed for him. When anything good in life happens to him, he is thankful to Allah; when anything else happens to him, he is patient. He then apologizes to Allah, knowing full well that

³⁸ Sūrah al-Naḥl, 16:97

anything that afflicts him may be because of his own sins, so he returns back to Allah (عزّ وجلّ). The prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said:

« عَجَبًا لِأَمْرِ الْمُؤْمِنِ ، إِنَّ أَمْرَهُ كُلَّهُ خَيْرٌ وَلَيْسَ دَاكٍ لِأَحَدٍ إِلَّا لِلْمُؤْمِنِ ، إِنَّ أَصَابَتْهُ سَرَاءٌ شَكَرَ فَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَهُ ، وَإِنْ أَصَابَتْهُ ضَرَاءٌ صَبَرَ فَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَهُ »

The affairs of a believer are amazing. All of his circumstances are good and that is for no one but a true believer. If something of prosperity happens to him, he is thankful and that is good for him. And if something of hardship happens to him, he is patient and that is also good for him.³⁹

The prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) has certainly spoken truthfully here.

Therefore, the greatest blessing Allah has given to creation is that of this religion by which people's lives are supported in this world and the next. However, the real life is the life of the hereafter,⁴⁰ and this is indicated by a verse in Sūrah al-Fajr:

﴿ يَوْمَئِذٍ يَتَذَكَّرُ الْإِنْسَانُ وَأَنَّى لَهُ الذُّكْرَى ۖ يَقُولُ يَا لَيْتَنِي قَدَّمْتُ لِحَيَاتِي ﴾

On that day, man will remember, but how will that remembrance help him?

He will say, "Oh, I wish I had sent forth (some good) for my life."⁴¹

³⁹ Collected by Muslim

⁴⁰ In a ḥadīth collected by al-Bukhārī, the prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said similarly:

« اللَّهُمَّ لَا عَيْشَ إِلَّا عَيْشُ الْآخِرَةِ »

Oh Allah, there is no life but the life of the hereafter.

⁴¹ Sūrah al-Fajr, 16:23-24

This worldly life is nothing; the real, true life is the hereafter. Still, whoever works for the next life will also be given a good life in this world. So a true believer who constantly does good is one who gains the best of both worlds, this life and the life of the hereafter. As for a disbeliever in Allah, he loses this life and the next:

﴿ فَاعْبُدُوا مَا شِئْتُمْ مِنْ دُونِهِ ۗ قُلْ إِنَّ الْخَاسِرِينَ الَّذِينَ خَسِرُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ
وَأَهْلِيهِمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ ۗ أَلَا ذَلِكَ هُوَ الْخُسْرَانُ الْمُبِينُ ﴾

So worship what you want besides him. Say: The losers are surely those who will lose themselves and their families on the Day of Resurrection. Unquestionably, that is the clear loss.⁴²

Verse 21: ﴿ مُطَاعٍ ثَمَّ أَمِينٍ ﴾

﴿ **Obeyed there (in the heavens) and trustworthy** ﴾ Still describing Jibrīl, Allah says he is ﴿ **trustworthy** ﴾, dependable and unfailing in whatever commands he is given. If Jibrīl is ﴿ **Obeyed** ﴾ then who obeys him? Scholars say it is the other angels who obey him because Jibrīl is the one who descends with the commands of Allah. He then instructs the other angels who obey Jibrīl.⁴³ So Jibrīl has authority and a position of

⁴² Sūrah al-Zumar, 39:15

⁴³ As an example of this chain of command, the prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said in a ḥadīth collected by al-Bukhārī:

« إِنَّ اللَّهَ إِذَا أَحَبَّ عَبْدًا دَعَا جِبْرِيلَ فَقَالَ: إِنِّي أَحِبُّ فَلَانًا فَحَبِّهْ، قَالَ: فَيَحِبُّهُ جِبْرِيلُ، ثُمَّ يَنَادِي فِي السَّمَاءِ، فَيَقُولُ: إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ فَلَانًا فَحَبِّبُوهُ، فَيَحِبُّهُ أَهْلُ السَّمَاءِ، قَالَ: ثُمَّ يُوضَعُ لَهُ الْقَبُولُ فِي الْأَرْضِ، وَإِذَا أَبْغَضَ عَبْدًا دَعَا جِبْرِيلَ فَيَقُولُ: إِنِّي أَبْغِضُ فَلَانًا فَابْغِضُوهُ، قَالَ: فَيَبْغِضُهُ جِبْرِيلُ، ثُمَّ يَنَادِي فِي أَهْلِ السَّمَاءِ: إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَبْغِضُ فَلَانًا فَابْغِضُوهُ، قَالَ: فَيَبْغِضُونَهُ، ثُمَّ تُوضَعُ لَهُ الْبَغْضَاءُ فِي الْأَرْضِ »

When Allah loves a servant, he calls Jibrīl and says, "I love so-and-so therefore you love him." Jibrīl then loves that person. Jibrīl then calls out in heaven, saying, "Allah loves so-and-so therefore love him." The inhabitants of heaven then love him. Then acceptance of that person is established on earth.

leadership among all the other angels. Similarly, the messengers among people, those to whom Jibrīl brings revelation, they too have a position of authority and leadership among all other people.

﴿ وَأَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَاحْذَرُوا ۚ فَإِن تَوَلَّيْتُمْ فَأَعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا عَلَىٰ
رَسُولِنَا الْبَلَاغُ الْمُبِينُ ﴾

And obey Allah and obey the messenger and be cautious. If you turn away, then know that upon our messenger is only (the responsibility for) clear deliverance (of the message).⁴⁴

In these verses: ﴿ **It is indeed the word of a noble messenger, owner of power and, with the owner of the throne, a high rank** ﴾, Allah (عزّ وجلّ) swears that this Quran is the speech of such a noble messenger, the angel Jibrīl (عليه الصلاة والسلام). Yet in another verse in Sūrah al-Hāqqah, Allah (سبحانه وتعالى) swears that the Quran is the speech of a noble messenger among mankind. He says:

﴿ فَلَا أُقْسِمُ بِمَا تُبْصِرُونَ ۚ وَمَا لَا تُبْصِرُونَ ۚ إِنَّهُ لَقَوْلُ رَسُولٍ كَرِيمٍ ۚ وَمَا هُوَ
بِقَوْلِ شَاعِرٍ ﴾

So I swear by what you see and what you do not see. Most certainly, it is the word of a noble messenger, and it is not the speech of a poet.⁴⁵

And if he (Allah) dislikes a servant, he calls Jibrīl, saying, "I dislike so-and-so therefore dislike him." So Jibrīl dislikes that person. He then calls out to the inhabitants of heaven, "Allah dislikes so-and-so therefore dislike him." So they (the angels) dislike him, and hatred for that person is established on earth.

⁴⁴ Sūrah al-Māidah, 5:92

⁴⁵ Sūrah al-Hāqqah, 69:38-40

The messenger mentioned in Sūrah al-Takwīr is the messenger among angels, Jibrīl (عليه الصلاة والسلام). And the messenger mentioned here in Sūrah al-Ḥāqqah is the messenger among men, Muhammad (عليه الصلاة والسلام), and this is clear based on the contexts.

For example, when Allah says, **﴿It is indeed the word of a noble messenger, owner of power and, with the owner of the throne, a high rank﴾**, these are descriptions of Jibrīl because he is the one with Allah. As for Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم), he is in the earth.

Similarly, in Sūrah al-Ḥāqqah, Allah says, **﴿So I swear by what you see and what you do not see. Most certainly, it is the word of a noble messenger, and it is not the speech of a poet﴾**, refuting the disbelievers who accused the prophet of being nothing more than a poet or a fortune-teller.

Which oath is greater: **﴿I swear by the retreating stars that run (their courses) then disappear. And by the night as it approaches. And by the dawn as it brightens. It is indeed the word of a noble messenger, owner of power and, with the owner of the throne, a high rank﴾** or: **﴿I swear by what you see and what you do not see. Most certainly, it is the word of a noble messenger﴾**?

The second oath (from Sūrah al-Ḥāqqah) is certainly greater as there is nothing more general and comprehensive than **﴿I swear by what you see and what you do not see﴾** – everything we see and cannot see. Here Allah is swearing by everything.

As for his oath in Sūrah al-Takwīr, ﴿I swear by the retreating stars that run (their courses) then disappear. And by the night as it approaches. And by the dawn as it brightens﴾ – here Allah swears by heavenly signs, the celestial objects which more closely befit the messenger Allah swears about, Angel Jibrīl, because he is the angel with Allah.

Here is a question: Why does Allah describe the Quran as being the speech of a human messenger or one from the angels? He is certainly an excellent messenger among angels who conveys it to the messenger among men who then conveys it to the human world. The Quran is described as being their speech by way of conveyance or representation. Still, it surely remains the speech of Allah, the original speaker (عزّ وجلّ). The point is that the Quran is the actual, spoken speech of Allah, yet it can be described as Jibrīl's speech when he conveys it to Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم), and the prophet's speech as he delivers it to mankind.

Verse 22: ﴿وَمَا صَاحِبِكُمْ يَمَجُنُونَ﴾

﴿And your companion is not at all mad﴾ Here, ﴿your companion﴾ refers to Allah's messenger, Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم). Consider how Allah says ﴿your companion﴾ meaning, your companion whom you all know very well. He has always been among you. He spent forty years with you in Mecca before his prophethood. You know him; you know his honesty, his loyalty, even nicknaming him "The Trustworthy."

﴿your companion is not at all mad﴾ He is not crazy or insane. Rather, he is the most intelligent, reasonable, and wisest man among you. He is the most complete in intellect, the clearest in insight of you all.

Verse 23: ﴿وَلَقَدْ رَأَهُ بِالْأَفُقِ الْمُبِينِ﴾

﴿And he (Muhammad) certainly saw him in the clear horizon﴾ ﴿he (Muhammad) certainly saw him﴾ Meaning: The prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) saw the angel Jibrīl ﴿in the clear horizon﴾, actually seeing him in his natural form high up in the sky.

The messenger (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) saw Jibrīl in his natural form twice: once at the Cave of Ḥirā and once in the seventh heaven during his ascension into the heavens.⁴⁶ This verse, however, is regarding the sighting at the Cave of Ḥirā because it says ﴿in the clear horizon﴾, meaning Muhammad (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) was on earth.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ About these two sightings, Allah (سبحانه وتعالى) says in Sūrah al-Najm, 53:5-9 and 13-15:

﴿عَلَّمَهُ شَدِيدُ الْقُوَى ﴿٥﴾ ذُو مِرَّةٍ فَاسْتَوَى ﴿٦﴾ وَهُوَ بِالْأَفُقِ الْأَعْلَى ﴿٧﴾ ثُمَّ دَنَا فَتَدَلَّى ﴿٨﴾ فَكَانَ قَابَ قَوْسَيْنِ أَوْ أَدْنَى ﴿٩﴾﴾

He has been taught by one mighty in power (Jibrīl), the owner of absolute splendor. And he rose to (his) true form while he was in the highest part of the horizon. Then he approached and descended and he was at a distance of two bow lengths or closer.

﴿وَلَقَدْ رَأَهُ نَزَلَةً أُخْرَى ﴿١٣﴾ عِنْدَ سِدْرَةِ الْمُنْتَهَى ﴿١٤﴾ عِنْدَهَا جَنَّةُ الْمَأْوَى ﴿١٥﴾﴾

And he surely saw him (Jibrīl) another time, at the lote tree of the utmost boundary. Near it is the Paradise of abode.

In a narration collected by al-Bukhārī, Āishah (رضي الله عنه) also confirms these two sightings, saying, “He saw Jibrīl (عليه السلام) in his natural form twice.”

⁴⁷ In a ḥadīth collected by al-Bukhārī and Muslim, the prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said about his sighting at the cave:

« جَاوَزْتُ بِجِرَاءِ شَهْرًا فَلَمَّا قَضَيْتُ جَوَارِي نَزَلْتُ فَاسْتَبَطَنْتُ بَطْنَ الْوَادِي ، فَنُوْدِيْتُ ، فَنَظَرْتُ أَمَامِي وَخَلْفِي وَعَنْ يَمِينِي وَعَنْ شِمَالِي فَلَمْ أَرِ أَحَدًا ، ثُمَّ نُودِيْتُ ، فَنَظَرْتُ فَلَمْ أَرِ أَحَدًا ، ثُمَّ نُودِيْتُ ، فَرَفَعْتُ رَأْسِي فَإِذَا هُوَ عَلَيَّ

Verse 24: ﴿ وَمَا هُوَ عَلَى الْغَيْبِ بِضَنِينٍ ﴾

﴿And he does not withhold knowledge of the unseen﴾ Here, ﴿And he﴾ refers to Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم) and ﴿knowledge of the unseen﴾ refers to the revelation that has come to him from Allah. He (صلى الله عليه وسلم) could never be justly accused of any form of deceit regarding the revelation; he neither changed nor withheld any part of it. Rather, he was the most loyal, unwavering person of all mankind in sharing what was revealed to him. He took every opportunity to teach it to people according to what suited the circumstances. The prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) was the farthest from any form of dishonesty or treachery due to his complete truthfulness.

Verse 25: ﴿ وَمَا هُوَ يَقُولُ شَيْطَانٍ رَّجِيمٍ ﴾

﴿And it is not the word of a cursed Satan﴾ It contains no speech of any despised devils, human or Jinn, such as fortune-tellers who may be inspired by Jinn devils who mix inspiration with lies. These fortune-tellers then deceive people into thinking they speak the truth.



الْعَرْشِ فِي الْهَوَاءِ - يَعْنِي جِبْرِيلَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ - فَأَخَذْتَنِي رَجْفَةً شَدِيدَةً ، فَأَتَيْتُ خَدِيجَةَ فَقُلْتُ : دَثْرُونِي فَدَثْرُونِي فَصَبُّوا عَلَيَّ مَاءً ، فَأَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ ﴿ يَا أَيُّهَا الْمُدَّثِّرُ ﴿ قُمْ فَأَنْذِرْ ﴿ وَرَبِّكَ فَكَبِّرُ ﴾

I stayed secluded in Hīrā for a month and when my stay was completed, I come down and went into the middle of the valley. Somebody then called out to me. I looked in front of me, behind me, on my right and on my left, but I did not see anyone. I was again called and I looked but saw nothing. I was called again so I raised my head, and there he was on the throne in the open sky – meaning Jibrīl (عليه السلام). I began to tremble severely (from fear). I came to Khadijah and said, “Wrap me up.” They wrapped me up and poured water on me. Allah (عز وجل) then revealed: ﴿Oh you covered, arise and warn. And glorify your Lord.﴾
[Sūrah al-Muddaththir, 74:1-3]

SŪRAH AL-TAKWĪR
Verses 26-29

26	So where are you going?	﴿ فَأَيْنَ تَذْهَبُونَ ﴾
27	It is only a reminder to the worlds	﴿ إِنَّهُ هُوَ إِلَّا ذِكْرٌ لِلْعَالَمِينَ ﴾
28	For whoever wills among you to take the straight path	﴿ لِمَنْ شَاءَ مِنْكُمْ أَنْ يَسْتَقِيمَ ﴾
29	And you do not will unless Allah wills, the Lord of the worlds.⁴⁸	﴿ وَمَا تَشَاءُونَ إِلَّا أَنْ يَشَاءَ اللَّهُ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴾

⁴⁸ Sūrah al-Takwīr, 81:26-29

EXPLAINING SŪRAH AL-TAKWĪR

Verses 26-29

Verse 26-27: ﴿فَإَيْنَ تَذْهَبُونَ ﴿٢٦﴾ إِنَّ هُوَ إِلَّا ذِكْرٌ لِّلْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٢٧﴾﴾

﴿So where are you going? It is only a reminder to the worlds﴾ ﴿It﴾ here refers to the Quran that Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم) came with and that was brought down to his heart by Jibrīl. ﴿It is only a reminder﴾ The Arabic word ذِكْرٌ (*dhikr*) here means both a reminder and something to remember. It is a reminder to the worlds and something worthy for them to remember. So people should remember it and take the intended lessons from it of which they are reminded. As for ﴿the worlds﴾, the Arabic word عَالَمِينَ (*‘ālamīn*) includes anyone to whom Allah’s messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم) was sent as Allah says in other verses (using the same Arabic word):

﴿وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ﴾

And we have not sent you except as a mercy to the worlds.⁴⁹

And:

﴿تَبَارَكَ الَّذِي نَزَّلَ الْفُرْقَانَ عَلَى عَبْدِهِ لِيَكُونَ لِلْعَالَمِينَ نَذِيرًا﴾

Blessed is he who sent down the criterion upon his servant that he may be
to the worlds a warner.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Sūrah al-Anbiyā, 21:107

⁵⁰ Sūrah al-Furqān, 25:1

So ﴿the worlds﴾ is anyone to whom Muhammad (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) was sent (i.e. all mankind and Jinn from his time until the Day of Resurrection).

Verse 28: ﴿لِمَنْ شَاءَ مِنْكُمْ أَنْ يَسْتَقِيمَ﴾

﴿For whoever wills among you to take the straight path﴾ ﴿For whoever wills﴾ is connected to what came before it, ﴿It is only a reminder to the worlds, for whoever among you wills to take the straight path﴾. As for those who choose not to take the straight path, they neither accept the reminder, nor do they gain any benefit from it. Allah says about those who do accept the reminder:

﴿إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَذِكْرٍ لِمَنْ كَانَ لَهُ قَلْبٌ أَوْ أَلْقَى السَّمْعَ وَهُوَ شَهِيدٌ﴾

In that is surely a reminder for whoever has a heart or listens while he is heedful.⁵¹

For anyone who does not want to take this straight path, there is no way to benefit such a person with this Quran.

The Issue of Freewill

Here is a question: Do people actually have freewill to do as they choose? Yes, people have the freedom to choose as they will. Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ) has allowed each person the freedom of choice and freewill; if he wants, he does something, if not he does not do it. If this were not the case—if people had no freewill—then anyone to whom the

⁵¹ Sūrah Qāf, 50:37

messengers were sent would have an excuse against Allah to plead (because they disbelieved): “We had no choice in the matter.”

So yes, people certainly have the freedom to act on their choices. Each individual knows that if he decides, for example, to visit Mecca, Medina, or some other place, it is by his choice. Anytime a person makes a choice, it is by his own decision. He neither feels others force his choice on him or force him to prefer one thing over another.

Similarly, if an individual chooses to obey Allah, it is by his own choice. And should someone choose to commit a sin, it is also by his own choice. So people do have freewill yet we know with total certainty that people will never “will,” or actually make something happen (including his own actions), unless Allah has willed it to happen before it happens. For this reason, after ﴿For whoever wills among you to take the straight path﴾ Allah then clarifies: ﴿And you do not will unless Allah wills﴾.

We do not will for anything to happen unless Allah has already allowed it to happen. So when anything happens, we know Allah has obviously allowed it to take place. If Allah had not allowed it to happen, we could not have willed it to occur ourselves as Allah (تعالی) says:

﴿وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مَا اقْتَتَلَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَتْهُمْ الْبَيِّنَاتُ وَلَكِنْ اِخْتَلَفُوا فَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ آمَنَ وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ كَفَرَ ۚ وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مَا اقْتَتَلُوا﴾

If Allah had willed, those (generations) succeeding them would not have fought each other after the clear proofs had come to them. But they

differed, so some of them believed and some of them disbelieved. And if Allah had willed, they would not have fought each other.⁵²

So after we have done anything, we know we chose to do it based on our will and choice, but we also know that this occurred by the will of Allah (عزّ وجلّ). If he had not willed it, we would not have accomplished it.

Now we come to another question: Based on the points above, we then have an excuse to commit sins because whatever happens, Allah allows it and has willed it. We say no, we have no justification for sinning because we have no way of knowing whether Allah has willed something or not until after we have done the deed – after we have chosen to do it. We cannot say, “Allah has willed this for me,” until the sin has already taken place. So once the sin does take place, once it is committed, why was it committed? Because of our freewill and our choice to do it. Therefore, sinners have no justification or excuse before Allah. He nullifies this claim by saying:

﴿سَيَقُولُ الَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا لَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مَا أَشْرَكْنَا وَلَا آبَاؤُنَا وَلَا حَرَمْنَا مِنْ شَيْءٍ
كَذَلِكَ كَذَّبَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ حَتَّى ذَاقُوا بَأْسَنَا﴾

Those who associated others (in worship) with Allah will say, “If Allah had willed, we would not have associated partners with him, nor would our fathers, and we would not have forbidden anything (against his will).” Likewise, those before them denied until they tasted our punishment.⁵³

⁵² Sūrah al-Baqarah, 2:253

⁵³ Sūrah al-An'ām, 6:148

If they had any justification for making their *Shirk* (worshipping others with Allah), then they would not have been punished by Allah; they would have been spared the punishment. But they had no right or excuse to worship others, so they were punished.

As another example, consider that if someone were informed about a land, safe and peaceful, with sufficient provision and affluence for everyone, everywhere and with successful commerce and a strong economy not found in another land. At the same time, the person is also told of a land where people constantly fear for their lives, live in chaos, having no reliable economy, no law and order, no guaranteed safety for anyone. To which land would he choose to travel? Of course, he travels to the first land and he does not imagine someone, somewhere has forced him to make his decision. He chose the first land based on his own determination and freewill.

We have before us now a similar choice: a path to good and a path leading to evil. Allah has already clearly simplified the two for us: this is the path to Paradise, this one to Hell. In addition, he explained some of what is waiting for us in Paradise of blessings and enjoyment and some punishments that await us in the fire. Which path do we take? Clearly, we would choose the path to Paradise just like we would choose to move to the peaceful land over the land in turmoil. Had we chosen the path to the fire, we alone would have justifiably been to blame. We would have made the worst, most foolish choice just as if we had decided to move to the land of fear and instability. Everyone would understandably hold us responsible for our own choice.

Therefore, in Allah's statement ﴿**For whoever wills among you**﴾, he confirms that each individual has the choice and will to decide his actions; he has freewill. Still, we

know that even before we do or will anything, once it has happened, we know full well that Allah willed it to happen. Otherwise, it would not have occurred.

Many times, people become determined to do something, yet at the last minute they find themselves unable to do it for whatever reason. This is because Allah did not will such an action to take place. For example, we may decide to go to the mosque to attend a lecture, yet on our way there, we may then remember we have some other obligations which prevent us from attending.

As a final example, it is said that a common Bedouin, knowing little about the details of religion, was asked, "How do you know you have a Lord?" he answered, "By unfulfilled determination and changes in plans." In other words, a person may be fully determined to do something, completely resolved and able to do it. Yet, something totally contradictory to his intentions occurs. Who changed his resolve? He does not think someone made him prefer something over his original decision. Instead, Allah simply did not will it to happen.

Similarly, a person may plan to do something and sets out to accomplish his plans, but he then finds within himself some reason not to carry out his plans. It may be something physically preventing him or simply a change of mind; he decides to do something else instead. All of this is from Allah (عزَّ وجلَّ).

To conclude the issue, Allah says: ﴿**For whoever wills among you to take the straight path**﴾. Here, the Arabic noun for the verb used is اِسْتِقَامَةٌ (*istiqāmah*) which means "moderation." And there is nothing more moderate or just than the justice found

within Allah's legislated religion. Previous legislations were suitable for earlier nations, appropriate for their time, place, and circumstances. Likewise, after the mission of the messenger Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم), the legislation he brought is suitable and applicable to those to whom he was sent – everyone from the beginning of his mission until the end of this world.

There is a well-known saying in our religion: The religion of Islam is suitable and ensures the well-being of every time, place, and circumstance. When people stick to it, Allah corrects the affairs of creation.

Consider that a person is instructed to pray standing. If he is unable to stand, then sitting, and if unable to sit, he may pray lying down. In this way, the religion is suitable and easily applied—and progressive—according to the circumstances of each individual. This religion is appropriate for every time, place, and condition. Similarly, someone who washes for prayer may use water if he is able or has it. Otherwise, he may use clean sand or even pray without washing at all. This is because Allah's religious legislation, all of it, is based on moderation and justice. There is no unfairness, discrimination, oppression, strictness or hardship in it. For this reason, Allah refers to it as **﴿the straight path﴾**.

The opposite of this *istiqāmah*, this moderation or “straightness,” is deviation – deviation to the side of extremism and intolerance or deviation to the side of negligence and slackness. So people follow three different paths regarding the religion of Allah: 1) the path of extremism, intolerance, or extravagance; 2) the path of negligence and carelessness, and 3) the path of moderation between the two extremes. This third path

is the ﴿the straight path﴾, the praiseworthy manner of following the religion of Allah. As for the first and second paths, extremism and negligence, both lead to destruction. They destroy their followers with excessiveness or negligence. For example, the prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) forbade people from going to the extreme of intolerance and harshness; he said:

« هَلَكَ الْمُتَنَطِّعُونَ ، هَلَكَ الْمُتَنَطِّعُونَ ، هَلَكَ الْمُتَنَطِّعُونَ »

The harsh ones are destroyed, the harsh ones are destroyed, the harsh ones are destroyed.⁵⁴

Harshness brings about hardship and causes people to leave the religion of Allah (عزّ وجلّ). The other extreme, that of negligence and carelessness, has also been criticized. Allah says, describing the hypocrites:

﴿وَإِذَا قَامُوا إِلَى الصَّلَاةِ قَامُوا كُسَالَى يُرَاءُونَ النَّاسَ وَلَا يَذْكُرُونَ اللَّهَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا﴾

And when they stand up for prayer, they stand with laziness and (only) to be seen of men, and they do not remember Allah but little.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Collected by Muslim. Imam al-Nawawī, in his explanation of *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, explained the Arabic word in the ḥadīth الْمُتَنَطِّعُونَ (*al-Mutanaṭṭi'ūn*), to mean, "The extremists who go beyond the limits in their statements and actions." In another ḥadīth collected by Muslim, the prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said:

« إِنَّ اللَّهَ رَفِيقٌ يُحِبُّ الرَّفْقَ ، وَيُعْطِي عَلَى الرَّفْقِ مَا لَا يُعْطِي عَلَى الْعُنْفِ »

Indeed, Allah is gentle and loves gentleness. He gives due to gentleness that which he does not give due to harshness.

⁵⁵ Sūrah al-Nisā, 4:142

The religion of Allah is one of moderation, between extremism and negligence, and this is why Allah says: ﴿**For whoever wills among you to take the straight path**﴾. Whoever wills to take this path, let him not deviate right or left. He should constantly remain straight on his religion.

As for this “straightness” as it relates to behaving with the creator—which is to worship him alone—it also relates to one’s behavior with his creation. So your character toward people should be between these two extremes. Neither be harsh, intolerant, and overly strict; nor be careless, or behave as inferior or feeble. Rather, behave with seriousness though with leniency toward others.

Some scholars used to advise judges to be lenient yet without weakness, strong yet without harshness. One’s leniency and gentleness should not lead him to become weak, yet one’s strength should not lead him to behave harshly with others. Instead, a person should be lenient but not weak, strong without harshness so that he achieves moderation in all his affairs. You find some people always acting rough, inflexible, or confrontational as if he is above everyone else. This is wrong. Others you see them among people as if they were worthless, so humble that they belittle themselves. They behave totally indifferent or as if they have no dignity. This is also wrong.

People should be between the two extremes as was the guidance and character of the prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم). He was tough in situations which called for that, gentle when gentleness was appropriate. So we should try to behave with others with seriousness and determination yet also with leniency and mercy.

Verse 29: ﴿ وَمَا تَشَاءُونَ إِلَّا أَنْ يَشَاءَ اللَّهُ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴾

﴿ **And you do not will unless Allah wills, the Lord of the worlds** ﴾ It is impossible for people to will anything to happen against the will of Allah (عَزَّ وَجَلَّ). If you were to set out to do anything that Allah has not already decided to allow, you would not be able to accomplish it. You would find some obstacles preventing you from whatever you were determined to do if he had not willed it.

﴿ **the Lord of the worlds** ﴾ implies the comprehensive lordship of Allah. But although Allah's lordship is all-encompassing, we must know that the Arabic word here, عَالَمِينَ ('ālamīn), does not carry the exact meaning as it did in the previous verse: ﴿ **It is only a reminder to the worlds** ﴾. As we mentioned, in ﴿ **It is only a reminder to the worlds** ﴾, "the worlds" refers only to those to whom the messenger was sent. As for "the worlds" in ﴿ **the Lord of the worlds** ﴾, the meaning is everything besides Allah. Everything in existence other than Allah is part of this 'ālamīn because there is only a Lord and everything else under his lordship.

So whenever we read ﴿ **the Lord of the worlds** ﴾, we should understand that it refers to anything and everything in existence other than Allah. It is as Muḥammad Ibn 'Abdul-Wahhāb said, explaining the word 'ālamīn (which is plural of عَالَمٍ – 'ālam) in his book *Thalāthah al-Uṣūl*, "Everything other than Allah is part of this 'ālam and I am one of the 'ālam."⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Ibn al-'Uthaymīn, in his explanation of *Thalāthah al-Uṣūl*, says:

The ālam includes everything other than Allah. It is named this because anything other than Allah is a "sign" (Arabic: عَالَمٍ 'ālam) that (because it is in existence and because it is not Allah) proves the existence of its creator, its owner, and its controller. So within everything there is a sign of Allah, indicating he is one.

Title: Explaining Sūrah al-Takwīr

Original Title: تفسير جزء عمّ

Original Author: Muḥammad Ibn Ṣāliḥ al-'Uthaymīn

To conclude, this is an amazing yet frightening chapter. In it is a reminder and lesson and every believer must read it while carefully contemplating its lessons. Similarly, one must contemplate the rest of the Quran's chapters and verses so that he or she may receive the intended lessons contain therein and gain benefit from the book.

We ask Allah to make us and you learn the intended lessons from his book, from the *Sunnah* of his messenger (صلى الله عليه وسلم), and from his universal signs, for surely Allah is capable of anything.

