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THE
HOLY QURAN

ENGLISH TAFSEER

CHAPTER 102

SURAH AT-TAKATHUR

COMMENTARY & EXPLANATORY

By

ABDULLAH YUSUF ALI

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SURAH AT-TAKATHUR

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Introduction and Summary

This probably early Makkan Surah gives a warning against acquisitiveness, i.e. the passion for piling up quantities or numbers, whether in the good things of this world, or in manpower or in other forms of megalomania, which leave no time or opportunity for pursuing the higher things of life.

C.282 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

*Be not engrossed in things ephemeral,
To the neglect of higher things in life.*

Life is but short, and Death will soon claim you.

Oh that men would only learn,

Before it is too late, the serious

Issues of the higher life! They must

Taste the consequences of their neglect..

For every good enjoyed they must

In the Hereafter give a strict account..

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

أَلِهَاتُكُمْ النَّكَائِرُ (١)

1. **The mutual rivalry for piling up** (the good things of this world) **diverts you** (from the more serious things),

C6257. Acquisitiveness, that is, the passion for seeking an increase in wealth, position, the number of adherents or followers or supporters, mass production and mass organisation, may affect an individual as such, or it may affect whole societies or nations. Other people's example or rivalry in such things may aggravate the situation.

Up to a certain point it may be good and necessary. But when it becomes inordinate and monopolises attention, it leaves no time for higher things in life, and a clear warning is here sounded from a moral point of view.

Man may be engrossed in these things till death approaches, and he looks back on a wasted life, as far as the higher things are concerned.

حَتَّىٰ زُرْتُمُ الْمَقَابِرَ (٢)

2. **Until ye visit the graves.**

C6258. That is, until the time comes when you must lie down in the graves and leave and pomp and circumstance of an empty life.

The true Reality will then appear before you. Why not try to strive for a little understanding of that Reality in this very life?

كَلَّا سَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ (٣)

3. But nay, ye soon shall know (the reality).

ثُمَّ كَلَّا سَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ (٤)

4. Again, ye soon shall know!

كَلَّا لَوْ تَعْلَمُونَ عِلْمَ الْيَقِينِ (٥)

5. Nay, were ye to know **with certainty of mind**, (Ye would beware!)

C6259. Three kinds of **yaqin** (certainty of knowledge) are described in n. 5673 to 69:51.

The first is certainty of mind or inference mentioned here: we hear from someone, or we infer from something we know: this refers to our own state of mind.

If we instruct our minds in this way, we should value the deeper things of life better, and not waste all our time in ephemeral things. But if we do not use our reasoning faculties now, we shall yet see with our own eyes, the Penalty for our sins. It will be certainty of sight. We shall see Hell. See next verse.

But the absolute certainty of assured Truth is that described in 69:51. That is not liable to any human error or psychological defects.

لَتَرَوُنَّ الْجَحِيمَ (٦)

6. Ye shall certainly see Hellfire!

C6260. See 19:71-72, and n. 2518.

ثُمَّ لَتَرَوُنَّهَا عَيْنَ الْيَقِينِ (٧)

7. Again, ye shall see it with certainty of sight!

ثُمَّ لِنُسْأَلُنَّ يَوْمَئِذٍ عَنِ النَّعِيمِ (٨)

8. Then, shall ye be Questioned that Day about the joy (ye indulged in)!

C6261. We shall be questioned, i.e., we shall be held responsible for every kind of joy we indulge in-whether it was false pride or delight in things of no value, or things evil, or the enjoyment of things legitimate,-the last, to see whether we kept this within reasonable bounds.