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THE  
HOLY QURAN

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ENGLISH TAFSEER  
CHAPTER 79  
SURAH AN-NAZI'AT

COMMENTARY & EXPLANATORY

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By  
ABDULLAH YUSUF ALI

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**HOLY QURAN**

**CHAPTER**

**079**

**SURAH AN-NAZI'AT**

*ABDULLAH YUSUF ALI*

**Introduction and Summary**

This is also an early Makkan Surah, of about the same date as the last, and deals with the theme of Judgement from the point of view of Pride and its Fall. The parable of Pharaoh occupies a central place in the argument; for he said "I am your Lord Most High". and perished with his followers.

**C.259 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)**

*Never can Evil escape Allah's order  
And law: His angels are ever present  
To bring the wicked to their bearings  
And they ever strive and press forward to bring  
Comfort, succour, and Allah's Mercy to those  
Who seek it. Then will come the Day  
When the proud shall be humbled, though they  
Deny the coming Judgement. What happened  
To Pharaoh? He flouted Allah's Message specially  
Sent to Him, and arrogantly proclaimed:  
"I am your Lord Most High!" He perished  
In this life and will answer for his deeds in the next.*

\*\*\*\*\*

*But can ye not see, O men, the mighty  
Works of Allah in the heavens and earth?---  
The darksome splendour of the Night with its Stars  
And the daylight splendour of the Sun?---  
How the earth, with its spacious expanse and its mountains,  
Yields moisture and pasture, and feeds and sustains  
Men and cattle, through Allah's wise Providence?  
Ah! transgress not all bounds and earn not the Fire  
Or Punishment, but fear Allah and His Judgement,  
And prepare for the Garden of Perpetual Bliss.  
Delay not! The Judgement is sure, and it's nigh!*

وَالنَّازِعَاتِ ...

1. By the (angels) who tear out (the souls of the wicked) ...

**C5916.** The beginning of this Surah may be compared with the beginning of Surah 77.

A translator's task in such passages is extremely difficult. He has to contend, again and again, with verities of a realm beyond man's normal range of experience expressed in elliptical language and he has to Tender them in another language with words of precision intelligible to readers. It is therefore necessary for him to put in part of the Commentary in the Translation in such cases.

The evidence of five things is here invoked in verses 1-5, in order to lead to the conclusion in verse 6 and those following.

Or, if we treat verses 3-5 as three stages of the same thing, there are three things to be considered in five stages.

What are they?

And what is the conclusion?

See the following notes.

... غَرَقًا (۱)

... with violence;

**C5917.** 'There is much difference of opinion among the Commentators as to the five things or beings mentioned in these verses. I follow the general opinion in my interpretation, which is that angels are referred to as the agency which in their dealings with mankind show clearly Allah's Justice, Power, and Mercy, which again point to the Judgment to come, as a certainty which none can evade.

- The first point, referred to in this verse, is that the souls of the wicked are loath to part with their material body at death, but their will will not count: their souls will be wrenched out into another world. Who will then deny Resurrection and Judgment?

### وَالنَّاسِطَاتِ نَسِطًا (٢)

2. By those who gently draw out (the souls of the blessed);

#### **C5918.**

- The second point is that in contrast with the wicked, the souls of the blessed will be drawn out gently to their new life. They will be ready for it. In fact death for them will be a release from the grosser incidents of bodily sense. To them the approach of Judgment will be welcome.

### وَالسَّابِحَاتِ سَبْحًا (٣)

3. And by those who glide along (on errands of mercy),

**C5919.** At all times there are errands of mercy and blessing and errands of justice, which the angels are prompt to execute by order of Allah. There are three features of this, thus giving the third, fourth, and fifth points.

- Their movement is compared to that of gliding or swimming (*sabhan*). In 21:33 this verb is applied to the motion of the celestial bodies: they all "swim along, each in its rounded course".

Cf. Shakespeare, Merchant of Venice:

"There's not an orb which thou beholdist,  
But in his motion like an angel sings, Still  
quiring to the young-eyed cherubims-.

- In hurrying on their errands the angels press forth as in a race.
- And thus they promptly execute the orders of their Lord.

فَالسَّابِقَاتِ سَبَقًا (٤)

4. Then press forward as in a race,

فَالْمُدْبِرَاتِ أَمْرًا (٥)

5. Then arrange to do (the commands of their Lord) --

يَوْمَ تَرْجُفُ الرَّاجِفَةُ (٦)

6. One Day everything that can be in commotion will be in violent commotion,

**C5920.** The evidence of the wonderful working of the angels having been invoked in the first five verses, the conclusion is now drawn and stated.

It is certain that one great Day, the whole world as we now see it in our lower life will be in violent revolution. It will be like an earthquake destroying all land-marks. But that will affect only things subject to change: they will suffer violent convulsions as a preliminary to their disappearance.

But Allah and His divine order will not change: His "Face" **abideth** for ever, full of Majesty, Bounty, and Honour (55:27).

تَتَّبِعُهَا الرَّادِفَةُ (٧)

7. Followed by oft-repeated (commotions):

**C5922.** All hearts will be in agitation:

those of the blessed ones to see the beginning of the fulfilment of their Lord's Promise;

those of the Rejecters of Allah for fear of His just Judgement.

قُلُوبٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ وَاجِفَةٌ (٨)

8. Hearts that Day will be in agitation;

**C5922.** All hearts will be in agitation: those of the blessed ones to see the beginning of the fulfilment of their Lord's Promise; those of the Rejecters of Allah for fear of His just Judgement.

أَبْصَارُهَا خَاشِعَةً (٩)

9. **Cast down will be** (their owners') eyes.

**C5923.** Similarly all eyes will be cast down: those of the blessed ones in humble modesty, and those of the Rejecters of Allah, in utter humiliation, sorrow, and shame, for their arrogance and insolence in their probationary life.

يَقُولُونَ أَإِنَّا لَمَرُدُّونَ فِي الْحَافِرَةِ (١٠)

10. They say (now):

"What! shall we indeed be returned to (our) former state?" --

**C5924.** The Unbelievers say now, in their arrogance, insolence, and mocking defiance: "Surely death here is the end of all things! When we are dead and buried, and our bones are rotten, how can we be restored again?"

They add, "If that were so, then we should indeed be in a turn of dreadful luck! Instead of gaining by the Resurrection, we should be in terrible loss (with our rotten bones)!"

They mean this in biting mockery. But there will indeed be an Account taken, and they will indeed be in a terrible loss, for they will go to perdition!

أَيُّدًا كُنَّا عِظَامًا تَخِرَّةً (١١)

11. "What! --

when we shall have become rotten bones?"

قَالُوا تِلْكَ إِذَا كَرَّهَ خَاسِرَةٌ (١٢)

12. They say:

"It would, in that case, be a return with loss!"

فَأَيُّهَا هِيَ زَجْرَةٌ وَاحِدَةٌ (١٣)

13. But verily, it will be but a single (compelling) Cry.

**C5925.** Judgment will be inaugurated with a single compelling Cry.

Cf. 37:19.

See also 36:29 and 36:49, where the single mighty Blast seems to refer to the sinners being cut off in this life and plunged into the other world where they will be further judged, and 36:53, where the final Judgment is referred to.

فَإِذَا هُمْ بِالسَّاهِرَةِ (١٤)

14. When, behold, they will be in the (full) awakening (to Judgment).

**C5926.** They will have been more or less dormant before the Great Judgment, as contrasted with the Lesser Judgment (n. 5914 to 78:40, and n. 5822 to 75:22).

When the resurrection comes, they will come fully into the new world, the old heaven and earth having then completely passed away, not only for them but absolutely.

هَلْ أَتَاكَ حَدِيثُ مُوسَى (١٥)

15. Has the story of Moses reached thee?

**C5927.** This is just a reference to the story of Moses told more fully in Surah 20:9-76.

The lessons drawn are:

1. That even to an arrogant blasphemer and rebel against Allah's Law, like Pharaoh, Allah's grace was offered through a major Prophet Moses;
2. that this rejection brought about his signal downfall even in this world; and
3. that his humiliation and punishment will be completed in the Hereafter at Judgment.

إِذْ نَادَاهُ رَبُّهُ بِالْوَادِ الْمُقَدَّسِ طُوًى (١٦)

16. Behold, thy Lord did call to him in the sacred valley to Tuwa --

**C5928.** Cf. 20:12.



أَذْهَبُ إِلَىٰ فِرْعَوْنَ إِنَّهُ طَغَىٰ (١٧)

17. "Go thou to Pharaoh, for he has indeed transgressed all bounds.

**C5929.** Cf. 20:24.

فَقُلْ هَلْ لَكَ إِلَىٰ أَنْ تَزَكَّىٰ (١٨)

18. "And say to him,

'Wouldst thou that thou shouldst be purified (from sin)? -

وَأَهْدِيكَ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ فَتَخْشَىٰ (١٩)

19. "'And that I guide thee to thy Lord, **so thou** shouldst fear Him?" "

**C5930.** Even for such a one as Pharaoh, intoxicated with his own power and greatness, guidance and grace were offered through Moses.

فَأَرَاهُ الْآيَةَ الْكُبْرَىٰ (٢٠)

20. Then did (Moses) show him the Great Sign.

**C5931.** What was the Great Sign?

Some Commentators understand by it the "White Shinning Hand": see n. 2550 to 20:22-23.

Others think it was the miracle of the rod that became a "snake active in motion": see 20:20,

These were among the Greater Signs: 20:23.

In 17:101 there is a reference to nine Clear Signs given to Moses, and these are specified in detail in n. 1091 to 7:133.

The fact is, there were many Signs given, "openly self-explained," but Pharaoh and his men "were steeped in arrogance,-a people given to sin" (7:133).

The preeminently Great Sign was therefore the fact of Moses being sent to Pharaoh, which subsequently converted the magicians and the more learned Egyptians to the true God (20:70-73), though Pharaoh and his Chiefs resisted and suffered for their sins.

فَكَذَّبَ وَعَصَىٰ (٢١)

21. But (Pharaoh) rejected it and disobeyed (guidance);

ثُمَّ أَدْبَرَ يَسْعَى (٢٢)

22. Further, he turned his back, striving hard (against Allah).

فَحَشَرَ فَنَادَى (٢٣)

23. Then he collected (his men) and made a proclamation,

فَقَالَ أَنَا رَبُّكُمُ الْأَعْلَى (٢٤)

24. Saying, "I am your Lord, Most High."

فَأَخَذَهُ اللَّهُ نَكَالَ الْآخِرَةِ وَالْأُولَى (٢٥)

25. But Allah did punish him, (and made an) example of him -- in the Hereafter, as in this life.

**C5932.** See 20:78-79, also 7:135-137.

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَعِبْرَةً لِّمَن يَحْشَى (٢٦)

26. Verily in this is an instructive warning for whosoever feareth (Allah):

**C5933.** Cf. 24:44.

## Section 2

أَأَنْتُمْ أَشَدُّ خَلْقًا أَمِ السَّمَاءَ ...

27. What! are ye the more difficult to create of the heaven (above)?

**C5934.** If man grows arrogant or forgets his accountability to Allah, in his ignorance or thoughtlessness, he is reminded that he is only an insignificant speck in Allah's spacious Creation. All the excellence that man acquires is the gift of Allah. Who has bestowed on him a high Destiny if he fulfils the purpose of his creation: 2:30-39. Then follows a nature passage, pointing to the glory of the heavens and the earth, and how they are both made to subserve the life of man.

... بَنَاهَا (٢٧)

(Allah) hath constructed it:

رَفَعَ سَمَكَهَا فَسَوَّاهَا (٢٨)

28. On high hath He raised its canopy, and He hath given it order and perfection.

**C5935.** Cf. 2:29.

The mystery of the heavens with their countless stars and the planets obeying the laws of motion, and the sun and moon influencing the temperature and climates of the earth from thousands or millions of miles, illustrate the order and perfection which Allah has given to His Creation.

Can man then remain exempt from his responsibility for his deeds, endowed as he is with a will, or deny the Day of Sorting Out, which is the Day of Judgment?

وَأَغْطَشَ لَيْلَهَا وَأَخْرَجَ ضُحَاهَا (٢٩)

29. Its night doth He endow with darkness, and its splendor doth He bring out (with light).

**C5936.** Its of course refers to the starry heaven.

Both the Night and the Day have each its own beauty and its utility for man, as has been frequently pointed out in the Quran. The night is a period of darkness, but it has also its splendours of light in the moon, or the planets Jupiter or Venus, or stars like Sirius or the Milky Way.

These countless lights of night have their own beauty, and by day there is the splendour of the sun for us, which in Creation as a whole, is just one of countless stars.

وَالْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ ...

30. And the earth, moreover;

**C5937. Moreover:** or, more literally, after that.

See n. 4475 to 41:11.

... ذَلِكَ دَحَاهَا (٣٠)

... hath He extended (to a wide expanse):

أَخْرَجَ مِنْهَا مَاءَهَا وَمَرْعَاهَا (٣١)

31. He draweth out therefrom its moisture and its pasture;

**C5938.** The underground springs and wells of water as well as rivers and glaciers in northern climates are due to the different levels of highlands not lowlands. They spread the moisture evenly as wanted, and give corn, fruits, and vegetables to man, and pastures and feeding grounds to beasts of the fields.

For the wonderful circuit or cycle of water between heaven and earth, see notes 3106 (25:49) and 3111 (25:53).

وَالْجِبَالَ أَرْسَاهَا (٣٢)

32. And the mountains hath He firmly fixed --

**C5939.** See n. 2038 to 16:15, the "eternal hills" are the main reservoirs for the storage and gradual distribution of water, the very basis of the life of man and beast.

مَنَاعًا ...

33. For use and convenience ...

**C5940.** This clause I construe to apply to verses 30, 31, and 32 above.

Everything on earth has, by Allah's bountiful providence, been arranged to sub serve the use and convenience of man and the lower life which depends upon him.

The intermediary between Allah's providence and the actual use made of Allah's other gifts is man's own intelligence and initiative, which are also gifts of Allah.

... لَكُمْ وَلِأَنْعَامِكُمْ (٣٣)

... to you and your cattle.

فَإِذَا جَاءَتِ الطَّامَةُ الْكُبْرَى (٣٤)

34. Therefore, when there comes the great, overwhelming (Event) --

**C5941.** The Judgment, the time for sorting out all things according to their true, intrinsic, and eternal values.

يَوْمَ يَتَذَكَّرُ الْإِنْسَانُ مَا سَعَى (٣٥)

35. The Day when Man shall remember (all) that he strove for,

**C5942.** The Judgment will be not only for his acts but for his motives, "all he strove for". In this life he may forget his ill-deeds, but in the new conditions he will not only remember them, but the Fire of Punishment will be plainly visible to him, and not only to him, but it will be "for all to see". This will add to the sinner's humiliation.

وَبُرِّزَتِ الْجَحِيمُ ...

36. And Hell-Fire shall be placed in full view ....

**C5943.** Cf. 26:91.

... لِمَنْ يَرَى (٣٦)

... for (all) to see --

فَأَمَّا مَنْ طَغَى (٣٧)

37. Then, for such as had transgressed all bounds,

وَأَتَرَ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا (٣٨)

38. And had preferred the life of this world,

**C5944.** The abiding Punishment will be for those who had willfully and persistently rebelled against Allah, "transgressing all bounds", and had given themselves up to the vanities and lusts of this lower life.

This Punishment will not touch those who had repented and been forgiven, nor those guilty, through human frailty, of minor sin, whose deeds will be weighed in the balance against their good deeds: 101:6-9.

فَإِنَّ الْجَحِيمَ هِيَ الْمَأْوَى (٣٩)

39. The Abode will be Hell-Fire;

وَأَمَّا مَنْ خَافَ مَقَامَ رَبِّهِ ...

40. And for such as had entertained the fear of standing before their Lord's (tribunal) ...

**C5945.** The contrast is complete and parallel:

- the persistent rebels against Allah's Law, who preferred the lower life, are to dwell in the Fire of Punishment,
- while those who humbly feared the punishment of sin and believing in their Lord's warnings restrained their lower desires, will dwell in the Garden.

See last note.

... وَنَهَى النَّفْسَ عَنِ الْهَوَىٰ (٤٠)

... and had restrained (their) soul from lower Desires,

فَإِنَّ الْجَنَّةَ هِيَ الْمَأْوَىٰ (٤١)

41. Their abode will be the Garden.

يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ السَّاعَةِ أَيَّانَ مُرْسَاهَا (٤٢)

42. They ask thee about the Hour --  
'When will be its appointed time?'

**C5946.** Cf. 7:187 and n. 1159.

Only Allah can reveal it. But were it known, "heavy were its burden through the heavens and the earth".

فِيمَ أَنْتَ مِنْ ذِكْرَاهَا (٤٣)

43. Wherein art thou (concerned) with the declaration thereof?

إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ مُنْتَهَاهَا (٤٤)

44. With thy Lord is the Limit fixed therefor.

**C5947.** Our time has no sort of comparison with the timeless state in the new spiritual World in which the final Judgment will take place.

Nor can its limits-how long it will last-be set except in the Will of Almighty Allah. Lord of Supreme Wisdom, Justice, and Goodness: 11:107-108.

But it is near, in the sense explained in n. 5914 to 78:40.

إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ مُنذِرٌ مِّنْ يَّخْشَاهَا (٤٥)

45. Thou art but a Warner for such as fear it.

**C5948.** The warning is only effective for those who believe in Allah and in the Final Account. Such men immediately turn in repentance to Allah, and it is to lead such men and help them, that Prophets are sent.

كَأَنَّهُمْ يَوْمَ يَرَوْنَهَا لَمْ يَلْبَثُوا إِلَّا عَشِيَّةً أَوْ ضُحَاهَا (٤٦)

46. The Day they see it, (it will be) as if they had tarried but a single evening, or (at most till) the following morn!

**C5949.** Cf. 10:45, where the expression used is:

"it will be as if they had tarried but an hour of a day." Here the metaphor used is "a single evening, or, at most, till the following mom".

Death is like sleep, and may be compared to the evening of life. In sleep we do not know how the time passes. When we wake up from the sleep of Death at the Resurrection, we shall not know whether it was the following moment or the following hour after we slept, but we shall feel that it is morning, for we shall be conscious of all that goes on, as one awakened in the morning.