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THE
HOLY QURAN

ENGLISH TAFSEER
CHAPTER 82
SURAH AL-INFITAR

COMMENTARY & EXPLANATORY

By
ABDULLAH YUSUF ALI

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HOLY QURAN

CHAPTER

082

SURAH AL-INFITAR

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Introduction and Summary

In subject matter this Surah is cognate to the last, though the best authorities consider it a good deal later in chronology in the early Makkan Period.

Its argument is subject to the threefold interpretation mentioned in n. 5982 to 81:13, viz, as referring:

1. to the final Day of Judgement,
2. to the lesser Judgement, on an individual's death, and

3. to the awakening of the Inner Light in the soul at any time, that being considered as Death to the Falsities of this life and a Rebirth to the true spiritual Reality.

C.262 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

*How fixed is the order holding together
This material universe above and below us?
Yet it must give way before the vast
Unfathomed Truth in which man will see
His past and his future in true perspective,
To Allah he owes his life and all
Its blessings; will he not see
That the Future depends on Right and Justice?
Righteousness must come to its own,
And so must Discord and Rebellion.
The Day must come when Discord
Must finally cease, and the Peace of Allah
And His Command are all-in-all.*

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

إِذَا السَّمَاءُ انْفَطَرَتْ (١)

1. When the Sky is cleft asunder;

C5997. Cf. the passage 81:1-14 and notes.

For the three parallel interpretations, see the Introduction to the Sura.

There are four conditional clauses here, and the substantive clause is in verse 5.

In S. 81, there were 12 conditional clauses, and the conclusion was, similar, but not expressed in precisely the same terms. See 82:5. [n. 6002](#) below.

The physical world as we see it now will be destroyed before the final Day of Judgment, establishing the true Reality. In the following four clauses we have a reference to the Lesser Judgment, the individual dawn of the true Reality at Death. (R).

C5998. Cf. 73:17, n. 5769.

The beautiful blue sky overhead, which we take for granted in sunshine and storm, will be shattered to pieces before the New World is established. The partition which seems at present to divide things divine from this phenomenal world has to be shattered before each soul knows the reality about itself. (R).

وَإِذَا الْكَوَاكِبُ انْتَثَرَتْ (٢)

2. When the Stars are scattered

C5999. Cf. 81:2, where the word for "stars" (Nujum) is different, and the verb is different. **Najm** has reference to brightness, and the verb "losing their lustre" was appropriate there, to show the opposite, **Kaukab** (used here) has more the meaning of a star as fixed in a constellation; and the opposite of a fixed and definite order is "scattered", the verb used here. In fact, throughout this passage, the dominating idea is the disturbance of order and symmetry.

The metaphor behind the scattering of the constellations is that in the present order of things we see many things associated together, e.g., rank with honour, wealth with comfort, etc. In the New World this will be seen to have merely fortuitous. (R).

وَإِذَا الْبِحَارُ فُجِّرَتْ (٣)

3. When the Oceans are suffered to burst forth;

C6000. Cf. 81:6, "when the oceans boil over with a swell".

Here, "are suffered to burst forth" expresses the end of the present order of things. This may be in two ways,

- the barrier which keeps within their respective bounds the various streams of salt and fresh water (55:19, n. 5185) will be removed;
- the Ocean will overwhelm the whole Globe. (R).

وَإِذَا الْقُبُورُ بُعْثِرَتْ (٤)

4. And when the Graves are turned upside down --

C6001. This item is not mentioned in 81:1-14.

Here it is introduced to show that the whole order of things will be so reversed that even Death will not be Death. We think there is tranquility in Death: but there will be no tranquility. Literally, and figuratively, Death will be the beginning of a new Life. What we think to be Death will bring forth Life.

عَلِمَتْ نَفْسٌ مَّا قَدَّمَتْ وَأَخَّرَتْ (٥)

5. (Then) shall each soul know what it hath sent forward and (what it hath) kept back.

C6002. Sent Forward and kept back: may mean:

the deeds of commission and omission in this life. Or

the Arabic words may also be translated: sent forward and left behind: i.e., the spiritual possibilities which it sent forward for its other life, and the physical things on which it prided itself in this life, but which it had to leave behind in this life. Or

else, the things it put first and the things it put last in importance may change places in the new world of Reality. "The first shall be last and the last shall be first".

يَا أَيُّهَا الْإِنْسَانُ مَا غَرَّبَكَ رَبِّكَ الْكَرِيمَ (٦)

6. O man! what has seduced thee from thy Lord Most Beneficent? -

الَّذِي خَلَقَكَ فَسَوَّاكَ ...

7. Him Who created thee. Fashioned thee in due proportion,

C6003. Cf. Cf. 15:29.

Allah not only created man, but fashioned him in due proportions, giving him extraordinary capacities, and the means wherewith he can fulfil his high destiny.

... فَعَدَّلَكَ (٧)

and gave thee a just bias;

C6004. See n. 834 to 6:1.

Having given a limited free-will, He gave us a just bias through our reason and our spiritual faculties. If we err, it is our will that is at fault.

فِي أَيِّ صُورَةٍ مَّا شَاءَ رَكَّبَكَ (٨)

8. In whatever Form He wills, does He put thee together.

C6005. By "Form" (**Surah**) here I understand the general shape of things in which any given personality is placed, including his physical and social environments, his gifts of mind and spirit, and all that goes to make up his outer and inner life.

The Grace of Allah is shown in all these things, for His Will is formed from perfect knowledge wisdom, and goodness.

كَلَّا بَلْ تُكَذِّبُونَ بِالذِّينِ (٩)

9. Nay! but ye do Reject Right and Judgment!

C6006. The goodness and mercies of Allah, and His constant watchful care of all His creatures should make men grateful, instead of which they turn away from the Right and deny the Day of Sorting Out, the Day when every action performed here will find its fulfilment in just reward or punishment.

وَإِنَّ عَلَيْكُمْ ...

10. But verily over you (are appointed angels) ...

C6007. Besides the faculties given to man to guide him, and the Form and Personality through which he can rise by stages to the Presence of Allah, there are spiritual agencies around him to help and protect him, and to note down his Record, so that perfect justice may be done to him at the end.

For these Guardian Angels, see 50:17-18, and n. 4954.

... لِحَافِظِينَ (١٠)

... to protect you --

كِرَامًا كَاتِبِينَ (١١)

11. Kind and honorable, writing down (your deeds)

يَعْلَمُونَ مَا تَفْعَلُونَ (١٢)

12. They know (and understand) all that ye do.

إِنَّ الْأَبْرَارَ لَفِي نَعِيمٍ (١٣)

13. As for the Righteous, they will be in Bliss;

وَأِنَّ الْفُجَّارَ لَفِي جَحِيمٍ (١٤)

14. And the Wicked -- they will be in the Fire,

يَصَلُّونَهَا يَوْمَ الدِّينِ (١٥)

15. Which they will enter on the Day of Judgment.

C6008. I understand this relative clause to govern "the Fire", i.e., the Punishment. It will be postponed as long as possible, to give the Sinner every chance of repentance and amendment. But once the period of probation is past, it will be irrevocable. There will be no going back from it. By inference, the Righteous may individually reach some stage of Bliss at once, possibly in this life, possibly after death, though the Final Judgment will be the general and complete cessation of this fleeting world and the creation of the world of Eternity.

وَمَا هُمْ عَنْهَا بِغَائِبِينَ (١٦)

16. And they will not be Able to keep away therefrom.

وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا يَوْمُ الدِّينِ (١٧)

17. And what will explain to thee what the Day of Judgment is?

ثُمَّ مَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا يَوْمُ الدِّينِ (١٨)

18. Again, what will explain to thee what the Day of Judgment is?

C6009. We can speak of Rewards and Punishments, the Fruits of Actions, the Resurrection and the Tribunal, the Restoration of True Values, the Elimination of all Wrong, and a hundred other phrases. They might serve to introduce our minds vaguely to a new World, of which they cannot possibly form any adequate conception under present conditions. The question is repeated in verses 17-18 to emphasize this difficulty, and a simple answer is suggested, as explained in the next note.

يَوْمَ لَا تَمْلِكُ نَفْسٌ لِّنَفْسٍ شَيْئًا ...

19. (It will be) the Day when no soul shall have power (to do) aught for another:

C6010. The answer is suggested by a negative proposition:

'No soul shall have power to do aught for another'.

This is full of meaning. Personal responsibility will be fully enforced.

In this world we all depend on one another proximately, though our ultimate dependence is always on Allah, now and for ever. But here a father helps a son forward; husband and wife influence each other's destinies; human laws and institutions may hold large masses of mankind under their grip; falsehood and evil may seem to flourish for a time, because a certain amount of limited free-will has been granted to man. This period will be all over then.

The good and the pure will have been separated from the evil and the rebellious; the latter will have been rendered inert, and the former will have been so perfected that their wills will be in complete consonance with Allah's Universal Will. The Command, thence forward, will be wholly with Allah.

... وَالْأَمْرُ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِلَّهِ (١٩)

for the Command, that Day, will be (wholly) with Allah.