

SPREAD KNOWLEDGE

THE
HOLY QURAN

ENGLISH TAFSEER
CHAPTER 86
SURAH AT-TARIQ

COMMENTARY & EXPLANATORY

By
ABDULLAH YUSUF ALI

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HOLY QURAN

CHAPTER

086

SURAH AT-TARIQ

ABDULLAH YUSUF ALI

Introduction and Summary

This Surah also belongs to the early Makkan period, perhaps not far removed from the last Surah.

Its subject matter is the protection afforded to every soul in the darkest period of its spiritual history. The physical nature of man may be insignificant, but the soul given to him by Allah must win a glorious Future in the end.

C.266 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

*Through the darkest night comes the penetrating light
Of a glorious Star. Such is the power
Of Revelation: it projects and guides the erring.
For what is man? But a creature of flesh
And bones! But Allah by His Power doth raise
Man's state to a Life Beyond!---when lo!
All things hidden will be made plain.
Man's help will then be but the Word
Of Allah, which none can thwart. So wait
With gentle patience---for His Decision.*

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

وَالسَّمَاءِ ...

1. By the Sky...

C6067. The appeal here is to single Sign, viz.: the Sky with its Night. Visitant; and the substantive proposition is in verse 4: "There is no soul but has a protector over it".

In the last Sura we considered the persecution of Allah's votaries, and how Allah protects them. Here the same theme is presented in another aspect. In the darkest sky shines out most brilliantly the light of the most brilliant star. So in the night of spiritual darkness- whether through ignorance or distress shines the glorious star of Allah's revelation. By the same token the man of Faith and Truth has nothing to fear. Allah will protect His own.

... وَالطَّارِقِ (١)

...and the Night-Visitant (therein) --

C6068. This is explained in verse 3 below. The "Star of piercing brightness" is understood by some to be the

Morning Star, by others to be the planet Saturn, by others again to be Sirius, or the Pleiades or shooting stars.

I think it is best to take the "Star" in the collective or generic sense, for stars shine on every night in the year, and their piercing brightness is most noticeable on the darkest night.

وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا الطَّارِقُ (٢)

2. And what will explain to thee what the Night-Visitor is?

--

النَّجْمُ النَّاقِبُ (٣)

3. (It is) the Star of piercing brightness --

إِنْ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ لَّمَّا عَلَيْهَا حَافِظٌ (٤)

4. There is no soul but has a protector over it.

C6069. If man has a true spiritual understanding, he has nothing to be afraid of. He is protected by Allah in many ways that he does not even know. He may be an insignificant creature as a mere animal, but his soul raises him to a dignity above other creation. And all sorts of divine forces guard and protect him.

فَلْيَنْظُرِ الْإِنْسَانُ مِمَّ خُلِقَ (٥)

5. Now let man but think from what he is created!

خُلِقَ مِنْ مَّاءٍ دَافِقٍ (٦)

6. He is created from a drop emitted --

C6070. See n. 5832 to 76:2.

See also last note.

يَخْرُجُ مِنْ بَيْنِ الصُّلْبِ وَالتَّرَائِبِ (٧)

7. Proceeding from between the backbone and the ribs:

C6071. A man's seed is the quintessence of his body. It proceeds from his loins, i.e., from his back between the hip-bones and his ribs. His back-bone is the source and symbol of his strength and personality. In the spinal cord and in the brain is the directive energy of the central nervous system, and this directs all action, organic and psychic. The spinal cord is continuous with the Medulla Oblongata in the brain.

إِنَّهُ عَلَىٰ رَجْعِهِ لَقَادِرٌ (٨)

8. Surely (Allah) is able to bring him back (to life)!

C6072. The Creator who can mingle the forces of psychic and physical muscular action in the creation of man, as explained in the last note, can surely give a new life after physical death here, and restore man's personality in the new world that will open out in the Hereafter.

يَوْمَ تُبْلَى السَّرَائِرُ (٩)

9. The Day that (all) things secret will be tested.

فَمَا لَهُ مِنْ قُوَّةٍ وَلَا نَاصِرٍ (١٠)

10. (Man) will have no power, and no helper.

C6073. In that new world, all our actions, motives, thoughts, and imaginings of this life, however secret, will be brought into the open, and tested by the standards of absolute Truth, and not by false standards of custom, prejudice, or partiality. In that severe test, any adventitious advantages of this life will have no strength or force whatever, and cannot help in any way.

وَالسَّمَاءِ ...

11. By the Firmament...

C6074. The Firmament above is always the same, and yet it performs its diurnal round, smoothly and punctually. So does Allah's Revelation show forth the Truth, which like a circle is ever true to its centre,-which

is ever the same, though it revolves through the changing circumstances of our present life.

... ذَاتِ الرَّجْعِ (١١)

...which returns (in its round) --

وَالْأَرْضِ ذَاتِ الصَّدْعِ (١٢)

12. And by the Earth which opens out (for the gushing of springs or the sprouting of vegetation) --

C6075. The earth seems hard, but springs can gush forth and vegetables sprout through it and make it green and soft. So is Truth: hard perhaps to mortals, but through the fertilising agency of Revelation, it allows our inner personality to sprout and blossom forth.

إِنَّهُ لَقَوْلٌ فَصْلٌ (١٣)

13. Behold this is the Word that distinguishes (Good from Evil):

C6076. See the last two notes.

Revelation-Allah's Truth-can pierce through the hardest crusts, and ever lead us back to the centre and goal of our life: for it separates Good from Evil definitely. It is not mere play or amusement, any more than the Sky or the Earth is. It helps us in the highest issues of our life.

وَمَا هُوَ بِالْهَزْلِ (١٤)

14. It is not a thing for amusement.

إِنَّهُمْ ...

15. As for them,

C6077. Though Allah in His Mercy has provided a piercing light to penetrate our spiritual darkness, and made our beings responsive to the growth of spiritual understanding, just as the hard earth is responsive to the sprouting of a seed or the gushing of a stream, yet there are evil, unregenerate men who plot and scheme

against the beneficent purpose of Allah. But their plots will be of no avail, and Allah's Purpose will prevail. It happened so with the Quraish who wanted to thwart the growth of Islam. It will be so in all ages.

... يَكِيدُونَ كَيْدًا (١٥)

they are but plotting a scheme,

وَأَكِيدُ كَيْدًا (١٦)

16. And I am planning a scheme,

C6078. Cf. 3:54.

فَمَهِّلَ الْكَافِرِينَ أَمْهَلُهُمْ رُوَيْدًا (١٧)

17. Therefore grant a delay to the unbelievers:

Give respite to them gently (for a while).

C6079. Gentle forbearance with Evil shows our trust in Allah and Allah's Plan: for it can never be frustrated. This does not mean that we should assist or compromise with evil, or fail to put it down where we have the power. It means patience and humility where we have no visible power to prevent Evil.