

SPREAD KNOWLEDGE

THE
HOLY QURAN

ENGLISH TAFSEER
CHAPTER 93
SURAH AD-DUHAA

COMMENTARY & EXPLANATORY

By
ABDULLAH YUSUF ALI

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HOLY QURAN

CHAPTER

093

SURAH AD-DUHAA

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Introduction and Summary

This Surah is close in date to Surah 89 and Surah 92, and the imagery drawn from the contrast of Night and Day is common to all three. In this Surah the vicissitude of human life are referred to, and a message of hope and consolation is given to man's soul from Allah's past mercies, and he is bidden to pursue the path of goodness and proclaim the bounties of Allah. This is the general meaning.

In particular, the Surah seems to have been revealed in a dark period in the outer life of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him), when a man of less resolute will might have been discouraged.

But the Prophet (peace be upon him) is told to hold the present of less account than the glorious Hereafter which awaited him like the glorious morning after a night of stillness and gloom. The Hereafter was, not only in the Future Life, but his later life on this earth, full of victory and satisfaction.

C.273 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

*What an example we have in the Prophet's life!
When moments of inspiration were still,
His soul yet felt the power of that stillness,
Like one who prays by night and waits
For the dawn, knowing how the light grows brighter
Every hour till noon, and well content
That night and morn and the hours succeeding
Are but steps to the plenary splendour of noon.
He was content and consoled in the thought that Allah
Had bestowed His loving care on him,
In the past, and so the future was sure.
He followed the Light Divine---to help
The helpless, to attend with patience to the call
Of those in need, and to rehearse and proclaim
And share the boundless Bounties of Allah!*

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

وَالضُّحَىٰ (۱)

1. By the Glorious Morning Light.

C6175. The full morning light of the sun, when his splendour shines forth in contrast with the night which has passed.

Cf. 91:1.

The growing hours of morning light, from sunrise to noon, are the true type of the growth of spiritual life and work, while the stillness of the night is, to those who know, only a preparation for it. We are not to imagine that the stillness or quiescence of the night is wasted, or means stagnation in our spiritual life. The stillness may seem lonely, but we are not alone, nor forsaken by Allah. Nor is such preparation, without immediate visible results, a sign of Allah's displeasure.

وَاللَّيْلِ إِذَا سَجَىٰ (٢)

2. And by the Night when it is still --

C6176. Cf. 92:1-2. There Night is mentioned first, and Day second, to enforce the lesson of contrasts: the veil of the night naturally comes first before the splendour of daylight is revealed.

Here the argument is different: the growing hours of morning light are the main things and are mentioned first; while the hours of preparation and quiescence, which are subordinate, come second.

مَا وَدَّعَكَ رَبُّكَ ...

3. The guardian-Lord Hath not forsaken thee,

C6177. As usual, there is the particular assurance to the Holy Prophet, and the general assurance to mankind: see the Introduction to this Surah.

The early years of the Prophet's ministry might well have seemed blank. After inspiration there were days and periods of waiting. A sense of loneliness might well have weighed on his mind. His own tribe of the Quraysh jeered at him, taunted and threatened him, and slandered and persecuted him as well as those who believe in him. But his faith was never shaken, not even to the extent of that cry of agony of Jesus: "My God! why hast Thou forsaken me?": (Mark, 15:34).

Much less did it enter the Prophet's mind to think that Allah was angry with him, as the taunts of his enemies suggested.

... وَمَا قُلَى (٣)

Nor is He displeased.

C6178. See last note.

The more general meaning is similar.

To the man who prepares for spiritual work and spiritual growth the chief thing is typified by the growing hours of the morning. He should not be discouraged, nor overcome with a sense of loneliness in his early struggles or difficulties. The end will crown his work.

Allah's care is always around him. If unsympathetic or hostile critics laugh at him or taunt him with being, "mad" or "old-fashioned" or "ploughing his lonely furrow", his steady faith will uphold him. He will never believe that his earnest and sincere devotion to Allah, whatever be its results in this world, can be anything but pleasing to Allah.

وَلِلْآخِرَةِ خَيْرٌ لَّكَ مِنَ الْأُولَى (٤)

4. And verily the hereafter will be better for thee than the present.

C6179. To the truly devout man, each succeeding moment is better than the one preceding it.

In this sense the "hereafter" refers not only to the Future Life after death, but also to "the soul of goodness in things" in this very life. For even though some outward trappings of this shadow-world may be wanting, his soul is filled with more and more satisfaction as he goes on.

وَلَسَوْفَ يُعْطِيكَ رَبُّكَ فَتَرْضَى (٥)

5. And soon will thy Guardian-Lord give thee (that wherewith) thou shalt be well-pleased.

C6180. Allah's good pleasure is sure when we serve Him. But we are assured that even our feelings of doubt and suffering will vanish, and we shall have a sense of complete satisfaction, contentment, and active pleasure when our will is identified with the Will of Allah.

أَلَمْ يَجِدْكَ ...

6. Did He not find thee...

C6181. Judge the future from the past. Allah has been good to you in your past experience: trust to His goodness in the future also. Again, there is a particular and a general meaning.

Three facts are taken from the holy Prophet's outer life by way of illustration. Metaphorically they also apply to us. And further, the outer facts are themselves types for the spiritual life.

See notes below.

... يَتِيمًا فَآوَى (٦)

... an orphan and give thee shelter (and care)?

C6182.

1. There is the case of the orphan, literally and figuratively.

Our holy Prophet was himself an orphan. His father Abdullah died young before the child was born, leaving a little property. The Prophet's mother Amina was in ailing health, and he was chiefly brought up by his nurse Halima, His mother herself died when he was only six years old. His aged grandfather Abd al Muttalib treated him as his own son, but died two years later. Therefore his uncle Abu Talib treated him as his own son.

He was thus an orphan in more senses than one, and yet the love he received from each one of these persons was greater than ordinary parental love.

Each one of us is an orphan in some sense or another, and yet someone's love and shelter come to us by the grace of Allah.

In the spiritual world there is no father or mother: our very first sustenance and shelter must come from the grace of Allah.

وَوَجَدَكَ ضَالًّا فَهَدَىٰ (٧)

7. And He found thee wandering, and He gave thee guidance.

C6183.

2. The holy Prophet was born in the midst of the idolatry and polytheism of Makkah, in a family which was the custodian of this false worship. He wandered in quest of Unity and found it by the guidance of Allah.

There is no implication whatever of sin or error on his part. But we may err and find ourselves wandering in mazes of error, in thought, motive, or understanding: we must pray for Allah's grace ever to give us guidance.

The Arabic root **dalla** has various shades of meaning.

- In 1:7, I have translated it by the verb "stray".
- In 53:2 the Prophet is defended from the charge of being "astray" or straying in mind.
- In 12:8 and 12:95 Jacob's sons use the word for their aged father, to suggest that he was senile and wandering in mind.
- In 32:10 it is used of the dead, and I have translated "hidden and lost" (in the earth).

وَوَجَدَكَ عَائِلًا فَأَغْنَىٰ (٨)

8. And He found thee in need, and made thee independent.

C6184.

3. The holy Prophet inherited not much wealth and was poor. The true, pure, and sincere love of Khadija not only raised him above want, but made him independent of worldly needs in his later life, enabling him to devote his whole time to the service of Allah.

So do we all find ourselves in some want or another, which, if we work whole- heartedly and sincerely is supplied to us by the grace of Allah.

When we have found the Way, it is a laborious task to climb up in our poverty of spiritual equipment: Allah will give us spiritual riches in love and knowledge.

فَأَمَّا الْيَتِيمَ فَلَا تَهْجُرْ (٩)

9. Therefore, treat not the orphan with harshness,

C6185. Verses 9-11 carry on, to a step further, the triple argument of verses 6-8, as explained in the preceding notes.

The Prophet treated all orphans with tender affection and respect, setting an example to his contemporaries, who frequently took advantage of the helpless position of orphans, and in any case looked upon them as subordinate creatures to be repressed and kept in their place.

Such an attitude is common in all ages. Helpless creatures ought, on the contrary, to be treated as sacred trusts, whether they are orphans, or dependants, or creatures of any kind unable to assert themselves, either through age, sex, social rank, artificial conditions, or any cause whatever.

وَأَمَّا السَّائِلَ فَلَا تَنْهَرْ (١٠)

10. Nor repulse the petitioner (Unheard);

C6186. Then there are the people who come with petitions,-who have to ask for something. They may be genuine beggars asking for financial help, or ignorant people asking for knowledge, or timid people asking for some lead or encouragement. The common attitude is to scorn them or repulse them. The scorn may be shown even when aims or assistance is given to them. Such an attitude is wrong.

Charity is of no moral value without sympathy and love. Nor is it charity to give to idle sturdy professional beggars, for show or to get rid of them. They are mere parasites on society. Every petition should be examined and judged on its merits.

وَأَمَّا بِنِعْمَةِ رَبِّكَ فَحَدِّثْ (۱۱)

11. But the Bounty of thy Lord Rehearse and proclaim!

C6187. Besides the petitioners, who ask for help, there is the case of those who do not ask but are nevertheless poor-poor but contented in worldly goods, or poor in knowledge or resources and not even knowing that they are poor.

If you are bountifully endowed by Allah, your duty is to make that Bounty spread far and wide. Proclaim it and share it, as the holy Prophet always did.

We all receive Allah's grace and guidance in some degree or other. We all owe it as a duty to our fellow-men to be kind and helpful to those less endowed in any respect than ourselves.