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HOLY QURAN

ENGLISH TAFSEER

CHAPTER 99

SURAH AZ-ZALZALAH

COMMENTARY & EXPLANATORY

By

ABDULLAH YUSUF ALI

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HOLY QURAN

CHAPTER

099

SURAH AZ-ZALZALAH

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Introduction and Summary

This Surah is close in date to the last: it is generally referred to the early Madinah period, though it may possibly be of the late Makkan period.

It refers to the tremendous convulsion and uprooting which will take place when the present order of the world is dissolved and the new spiritual world of Justice and Truth takes its place. The symbol used is that of an earthquake which will shake our present material and phenomenal world to its very foundations. The mystic words in which the earthquake is described are

remarkable for both power and graphic aptness. With the shaking all hidden mysteries will be brought to light.

C.279 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

*The Hour of Judgement must needs be heralded
By a mighty Convulsion: the Earth will give up
Her secrets and tell her tale of all
Man's doings: men will march in companies
And clearly see the inwardness
Of all their Deeds: not an atom of Good
Or Evil done, but will be shown
In the final Account of men convinced.*

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

إِذَا زُلْزِلَتِ الْأَرْضُ زُلْزَالَهَا (١)

1. When the Earth is shaken to her (utmost) convulsion,

C6235. To the ordinary human observer a violent earthquake is a terrifying phenomenon, in its suddenness, in its origin, and in its power to destroy and uproot the strongest buildings and to bring up strange materials from the bowels of the earth.

The Overwhelming Event (Surah 88) which ushers in the Judgment will be a bigger and more far-reaching convulsion than any earthquakes that we know. And yet the incidents of earthquakes may give us some idea of that supreme world-shaking Event.

وَأَخْرَجَتِ الْأَرْضُ أَثْقَالَهَا (٢)

2. And the Earth throws up her burden (from within),

C6236. An earthquake, if accompanied by a volcanic eruption, throws up enormous boulders and lava from beneath the crust of the earth. They are thrown up as if they were a burden to the Earth personified. They may be all kinds of minerals, or treasures buried for secrecy.

So in the great and final Convulsion, the dead who had been buried and forgotten will rise; and will be brought to the light of day, and justice will be done in the full glare of absolute Truth.

وَقَالَ الْإِنْسَانُ مَا لَهَا (٣)

3. And man cries (distressed): 'What is the matter with her?' --

C6237. The puzzled agony suffered by the victims of violent earthquakes is as nothing compared to the experience of the new and wonderful world which will then open out of the gaze of man.

يَوْمَئِذٍ تُحَدِّثُ أَخْبَارَهَا (٤)

4. On that Day will she declare her tidings:

بِأَنَّ رَبَّكَ أَوْحَىٰ لَهَا (٥)

5. For that thy Lord will have given her inspiration.

C6238. The present order may be personified as the earth. It will pass away, but the Deeds done therein, even the most secret, will be brought to the full light of day. And this will be because Allah will give the Command, the inspiration or Word, by which alone all events do proceed.

The "**inspiration**" is the Command or direction conveyed by instruction breathed into the Earth personified: she is directed to tell the whole story of what she knows.

Cf. 16:68, n. 2097.

يَوْمَئِذٍ يَصُدُّرُ النَّاسُ أَشْتَاتًا لِيُرَوْا أَعْمَالَهُمْ (٦)

6. On that Day will men proceed in companies **sorted out**, to be shown the Deeds that they (had done).

C6239. In this world good and evil are mixed together. But then they will be sorted out, and each grade of good and evil will be sorted out. So they will proceed in companies to receive judgment. And they will be shown the exact import of everything that they had thought, said, or done, in this life of probation, however they may have concealed or misinterpreted it in this life.

Everything will be considered in taking the account, and the account will convince the persons concerned themselves.

فَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ خَيْرًا يَرَهُ (٧)

7. Then shall anyone who has done **an atom's weight** of good, see it!

C6240. Dharrah: the weight of an atom, the smallest living weight an ordinary man can think of.

Figuratively the subtlest form of good and evil will then be brought to account, and it will be done openly and convincingly: he "shall see it".

وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ شَرًّا يَرَهُ (٨)

8. And anyone who has done **an atom's weight** of evil, shall see it.