

CHAPTER 79

Al-Nāzi'āt: Those Who Yearn

(REVEALED AT MAKKAH: 2 sections; 46 verses)

This chapter is entitled *al-Nāzi'āt*, which word occurs in the first verse as being a description of the groups or parties of the faithful who were destined to bring about a transformation in the world. Their chief characteristics are mentioned in the first four verses as being those who yearned ardently after God, and who went forth cheerfully braving all opposition, then ran swiftly in the cause of Truth, and went ahead of all such communities who had a similar yearning in the past and regulated affairs; and these verses are followed by predicting the great revolution which would be brought about by their exertions. It is an early Makkan revelation.

SECTION 1: The Great Commotion

In the name of Allāh, the Beneficent,
the Merciful.

- 1 By those yearning vehemently!
- 2 And those going forth cheerfully!
- 3 And those running swiftly!
- 4 And those that are foremost
going ahead!
- 5 And those regulating the Affair!^a

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
 وَالتُّرَعَاتِ عَرَقًا ۝
 وَالنَّشِيطِ نَشْطًا ۝
 وَالسَّيِّحِ سَبْحًا ۝
 فَالسَّيْفِ سَبْقًا ۝
 فَالْمُدَبِّرِ أَمْرًا ۝

5a. *Nāzi'āt* is the plural of *nāzi'*, which is derived from *naza'a*, signifying *he yearned for* or *after* a thing, and *naza'a fi-l-qaus* means *he drew the bow* (LL). *Gharq* means originally *sinking* in water, but it is sometimes used in the sense of *ighrāq*, and is so used here, meaning, when used in connection with a bow, *he drew the bow to the full* or *vehemently* (LL). *Nashaḥa* signifies *he was brisk or lively or pleased or happy or cheerful* (LL). The commentators generally think that different kinds of angels are spoken of here, but see 37:1a, where it is shown that this is a description of the believers. The commencement of the early Makkan chapters very often refers prophetically to later Madinan events, the occurrence of which served as a proof of the truth of the statement made.

- 6 The day when the quaking one shall quake^a — يَوْمَ تَرْجُفُ الرَّاجِفَةُ ۝٦
- 7 The consequence will follow it.^a تَتَّبِعُهَا الرَّادِفَةُ ۝٧
- 8 Hearts that day will palpitate, قُلُوبٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ وَاجِفَةٌ ۝٨
- 9 Their eyes downcast. أَبْصَارٌ هَا خَاشِعَةٌ ۝٩
- 10 They say: Shall we indeed be restored to (our) first state?^a يَقُولُونَ ءَأِنَّا كُنتُمْ بَدُونَ فِي الْحَافِرَةِ ۝١٠
- 11 What! After we are rotten bones? ءَأَذَا كُنَّا عِظَامًا تَّخِرَةً ۝١١
- 12 They say: That would then be a return with loss. قَالُوا تِلْكَ إِذًا كَرَّةٌ خَاسِرَةٌ ۝١٢
- 13 It is only a single cry, فَإِنَّمَا هِيَ زَجْرَةٌ وَاحِدَةٌ ۝١٣
- 14 When lo! they will be awakened.^a فَإِذَا هُمْ بِالنَّاهِرَةِ ۝١٤

Though the words may also apply to the later wars, I prefer the significance that they give a description of the spiritual characteristics of the faithful. There was undoubtedly a vehement yearning in the hearts of the believers for their Maker (v. 1), and it was this ardent desire that made them go forth in the way of God cheerfully in spite of the severest opposition (v. 2); they ran swiftly (v. 3), so that they traversed eastern and western lands in an incredibly short time; they were thus ahead of all those who ever carried the message of Truth to their fellow-man (v. 4); and lastly, they regulated the affair of the spread of Truth in the world (v. 5), so that the farthest east (China) and farthest west (Morocco and Spain) were lit with the light of Islām within a hundred years. Compare 32:5 where the regulating of the Affair is also spoken of, and see 32:5a. Taking the words in a general sense, we may interpret them as indicating the various stages through which an affair is brought to a successful issue. The first stage is that of an ardent desire or yearning for it; the second is that of going forth cheerfully to accomplish it; the third is that of running swiftly for its accomplishment, or adopting the line of least resistance; the fourth is that of going ahead of others; and the fifth that of regulating it in the best possible way.

6a. *Rajafa* signifies *it was in a state of commotion, agitation, or convulsion* (LL).

The quaking of the earth is often spoken of as an indication of a great revolution. The word *rajafa* in relation to a people — *rajafa al-qamu* — signifies that *the people prepared themselves for war*.

What is meant is therefore that the efforts of the faithful spoken of in the first five verses will bring about a great commotion or a great revolution in the world, indicating the transformation which was to be brought about through them.

7a. *Al-rādifah* means literally *what must happen afterwards*, from *radifa*, meaning *he or it followed or came after it or him* (LL). Thus *rādifah* is really *the consequence of an affair*, a significance given under the word *ridf* by the lexicologists (LL). The consequence of great commotions is the ultimate triumph of Truth. But the triumph of Truth is also the destruction of the opponents of Truth; hence the mention of *palpitating hearts* and *downcast eyes* in the next two verses.

10a. It is the opponents who are referred to in *they say*.

14a. The spiritual awakening — the great transformation to be brought about by the Prophet — is spoken of here in clear words. This awakening was first to be brought about in Arabia and then in the whole world.

15 Has not there come to thee the story of Moses,

هَلْ أَتَاكَ حَدِيثُ مُوسَى ﴿٥﴾

16 When his Lord called him in the holy valley, Ṭuwā?

إِذْ نَادَاهُ رَبُّهُ بِالْوَادِ الْمُقَدَّسِ طُوًى ﴿٦﴾

17 Go to Pharaoh, surely he has rebelled.

إِذْ هَبُّ إِلَى فِرْعَوْنَ إِنَّهُ طَغَى ﴿٧﴾

18 And say: Wilt thou purify thyself?

فَقُلْ هَلْ لَكَ إِلَى أَنْ تَزَكَّى ﴿٨﴾

19 And I will guide thee to thy Lord so that thou fear (Him).

وَ أَهْدِيكَ إِلَى رَبِّكَ فَتَخْشَى ﴿٩﴾

20 So he showed him the mighty sign;

فَأَرَاهُ الْآيَةَ الْكُبْرَى ﴿١٠﴾

21 But he denied and disobeyed.

فَكَذَّبَ وَعَصَى ﴿١١﴾

22 Then he went back hastily,

ثُمَّ أَدْبَرَ يَسْعَى ﴿١٢﴾

23 So he gathered and called out.

فَجَسَّسَ فَنَادَى ﴿١٣﴾

24 Then he said: I am your Lord, the most High.

فَقَالَ أَنَا رَبُّكُمُ الْأَعْلَى ﴿١٤﴾

25 So Allāh seized him with the punishment of the Hereafter and of this life.^a

فَأَخَذَهُ اللَّهُ نَكَالَ الْآخِرَةِ وَالْأُولَى ﴿١٥﴾

26 Surely there is in this a lesson for him who fears.

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَعِبْرَةً لِمَنْ يَخْشَى ﴿١٦﴾

SECTION 2: The Great Calamity

27 Are you the stronger in creation or the heaven? He made it.

ءَأَنْتُمْ أَشَدُّ خَلْقًا أَمْ السَّمَاءُ ﴿١٧﴾

28 He raised high its height,^a and made it perfect,

بَنَاهَا ﴿١٨﴾

رَفَعَ سَعْوَهَا فَسَوَّاهَا ﴿١٩﴾

29 And He made dark its night and brought out its light.

وَ أَعْطَشَ لَيْلَهَا وَأَخْرَجَ ضُحَاهَا ﴿٢٠﴾

25a. The nature of the punishment in store for the opponents is made clear by citing the example of Pharaoh, whose punishment was the punishment of the Hereafter as well as of this life. Even such was to be the punishment of the Prophet's opponents, abasement in this life and chastisement in the next.

28a. The raising high of the height is, says Rz, an allusion to its extremely great height. There is a reference here to the great distances of the heavenly bodies, which stagger human imagination.

30 And the earth, He cast it after that.^a

وَالْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ دَحَاهَا ۝

31 He brought forth from it its water and its pasture.

أَخْرَجَ مِنْهَا مَاءَهَا وَمَرْعَاهَا ۝

32 And the mountains, He made them firm,

وَالجِبَالَ أَرْسَاهَا ۝

33 A provision for you and for your cattle.^a

مَتَاعًا لَكُمْ وَلِأَنْعَامِكُمْ ۝

34 So when the great Calamity^a comes;

فَإِذَا جَاءَتِ الطَّامَّةُ الْكُبْرَى ۝

35 The day when man remembers all that he strove for,

يَوْمَ يَتَذَكَّرُ الْإِنْسَانُ مَا سَعَى ۝

36 And hell is made manifest to him who sees.

وَبُورَّتِ الْجَحِيمُ لِمَن يَرَى ۝

37 Then as for him who is inordinate,

فَأَمَّا مَنْ ظَلَمَ ۝

38 And prefers the life of this world,

وَاشْرَى الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا ۝

39 Hell is surely the abode.

فَإِنَّ الْجَحِيمَ هِيَ الْمَأْوَى ۝

40 And as for him who fears to stand before his Lord and restrains himself from low desires,^a

وَأَمَّا مَنْ خَافَ مَقَامَ رَبِّهِ وَنَهَى

النَّفْسَ عَنِ الْهَوَى ۝

41 The Garden is surely the abode.

فَإِنَّ الْجَنَّةَ هِيَ الْمَأْوَى ۝

30a. The word *dahā* is ordinarily translated as *spread* or *expanded*, but it also means *he threw or cast* and *impelled, propelled* or *removed from its place* a stone with his hand (T, LL). Two things are made clear in this brief statement: (1) The earth was brought into existence after the heaven, or the starry creation; and (2) It was cast away, as a stone is cast away, from a bigger creation.

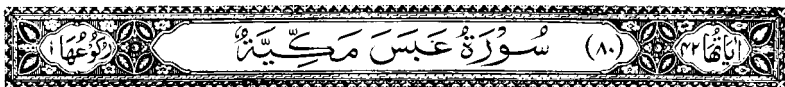
33a. How the earth was made fit for living on is next made clear. Its water, which is the source of all its life, was brought forth from it, and water made possible the growth of vegetation. The mountains, we are further told, were raised so that they might serve as a *provision for you* and *your cattle*. The mountains are the sources of rivers and through these all living things on earth are provided with sustenance.

34a. *Tāmmah* signifies a calamity that predominates over others or a *great* or *formidable thing* (LL). By the *tāmmah* is generally understood only the *Resurrection*, but the words of v. 25 make it clear that the reference is as much to the calamity of this life as to the Resurrection. The making of hell manifest to him *who sees* in v. 36 is a clear indication of the same; the hell of the next life is spoken of in v. 39.

40a. Refraining from low desires is the chief source from which grows a paradise. This further shows that the description given in the first five verses is really a description of the spiritual advancement of the faithful.

- 42 They ask thee about the Hour, يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ السَّاعَةِ أَيَّانَ مُرْسَاهَا ۗ
When will that take place,
- 43 About which thou remindest? فِيْمَ أَنْتَ مِنْ ذِكْرِهَا ۗ
- 44 To thy Lord is the goal of it.^a إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ مُنْتَهَاهَا ۗ
- 45 Thou art only a warner to him
who fears it. إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ مُنذِرٌ مَّنْ يَخْشَاهَا ۗ
- 46 On the day when they see it, it
will be as if they had but tarried for
an evening or a morning. كَأَنَّهُمْ يَوْمَ يَرَوْنَهَا لَمْ يَلْبَثُوا
إِلَّا عَشِيَّةً أَوْ ضُحَاهَا ۗ

44a. The Hour is in itself a manifestation of Divine purpose. The destruction or punishment of the disbelievers is not an end in itself. The great goal of this punishment is the Lord — *Rabb* — Who brings everything to perfection, and the real goal of human life is thus the Lord or the meeting with the Lord.



CHAPTER 80

‘Abasa: He Frowned

(REVEALED AT MAKKAH: 42 verses)

Opening with a touching incident as to how a blind man interrupted the Holy Prophet’s conversation with some of the chiefs of the Quraish, and how the Prophet *frowned* at this interruption, this chapter, to which the incident gives its title, really states that the poor and the humble who accepted the Truth would be raised to eminence, and therefore the Prophet should not be anxious if eminent men did not listen to his message. The chapter thus speaks of the greatness to which the Qur’ān would raise its followers, and of its conquests in the far future. It is admittedly one of the very early revelations.

In the name of Allāh, the Beneficent,
the Merciful.

- 1 He frowned and turned away,
- 2 Because the blind man came to him.^a

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
عَبَسَ وَتَوَلَّى ۖ
أَنْ جَاءَهُ الْأَعْمَى ۖ

2a. The blind man was Ibn Umm Maktūm (‘Abd Allāh, son of Shuraih), who came to the Holy Prophet while he was explaining the doctrines of Islām to an assembly of the leaders of the Quraish and, interrupting, asked to be taught what Allāh had revealed to him. The Holy Prophet took this untimely interruption ill — *he frowned* and did not pay any attention to his question; on which he received this revelation (Tr. 44:80). This incident shows that the source of the Holy Prophet’s revelation was other than his own mind. In the first place there was no ill-treatment for which the Holy Prophet should have repented, as Rodwell supposes him to have done. The Prophet’s inattention to an intruder, while he had not yet finished his conversation, was quite natural. Again, he did not chide the intruder for his interruption, but only disliked it and gave him no answer, as the words of the Qur’ān plainly show. Secondly, even if he may be supposed to have repented for not having given an answer to the blind man, it would have been sufficient to have recalled him and treated him more gently. At any rate, if it were left to the option of an individual, he himself would be the last person to give permanence to a reproof for his own act. Hence the source from which the Holy Prophet received his revelation was outside his own heart or his own inclinations.

It may be noted that the chief trait of the Holy Prophet’s character was his great regard for the poor. There are numerous incidents on record showing how he would do an old

3 And what would make thee know
that he might purify himself,

وَمَا يُدْرِيكَ لَعَلَّهٗ يَزْكِي ۝٣

4 Or be mindful, so the Reminder
should profit him?

أَوْ يَذَّكَّرُ فَتَنْفَعَهُ الذِّكْرَى ۝٤

5 As for him who considers himself
free from need

أَمَّا مَنِ اسْتَغْنَى ۝٥

6 To him thou dost attend.

فَأَنْتَ لَهُ تَصَدَّى ۝٦

7 And no blame is on thee, if he puri-
fy himself not.^a

وَمَا عَلَيْكَ أَلَّا يَزْكِي ۝٧

8 And as to him who comes to thee
striving hard,

وَأَمَّا مَنْ جَاءَكَ يَسْعَى ۝٨

9 And he fears —

وَهُوَ يَخْشَى ۝٩

10 To him thou payest no regard.

فَأَنْتَ عَنْهُ تَلَهَّى ۝١٠

11 Nay, surely it is a Reminder.

كَلَّا إِنَّهَا تَذْكِرَةٌ ۝١١

12 So let him, who will, mind it.

فَمَنْ شَاءَ ذَكَرْهُ ۝١٢

13 In honoured books,

فِي صُحُفٍ مُّكَرَّمَةٍ ۝١٣

14 Exalted, purified,

مَّرْفُوعَةٍ مُّطَهَّرَةٍ ۝١٤

15 In the hands of scribes,

بِأَيْدِي سَفَرَةٍ ۝١٥

16 Noble, virtuous.^a

كَرَامٍ بَرَسَةٍ ۝١٦

woman's work for her, and how he, even when the head of a State at Madinah, would carry the load for one too weak to bear it. His wife Khādījah thus describes this trait of his character: "Never, never will Allāh bring thee to disgrace, for thou art true to ties of relationship, and honourest thy guest and earnest for the indigent and helpst all in real distress" (B 1:1). He not only loved the poor from his youth to his old age, from the time that he was an ordinary citizen to the time that he became the ruler of the whole of Arabia, but he himself chose to be classed among the poor in his life as well as in his death. Even when the wealth of Arabia lay at his feet, and his wives claimed share in that wealth, he showed his readiness to sacrifice every comfort, but not the honour of remaining a *poor man*.

7a. If the Quraish leaders would not come out of the impurities of sin, the Prophet was not to blame for it, so that on their account he should neglect the poor who came to him earnestly desirous to be delivered from the bondage of sin.

16a. The six verses from 11 to 16 are really a comfort to the Holy Prophet for the hint contained in the first ten is that the leaders would not mind his warning or accept his message, and that therefore he must apply himself to the poor, who would be raised to eminence by the Qur'ān. These verses tell him that the Qur'ān is a *taḍhīkirah*, a reminder, a source of eminence (7:2b). Vv. 15 and 16 clearly state that the scribes of the Qur'ān will be virtuous men, who will be honoured in the world. Not only was this true of men like Abū Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthmān and 'Alī, who were among the first scribes of the Holy Qur'ān, but even in its later history great rulers of empires earned their livelihood by writing copies of the Holy Qur'ān. Hence the prophecy was given as a comfort to the Holy

- 17 Woe to man! How ungrateful is he!
 18 Of what thing did He create him?
 19 Of a small life-germ. He creates him, then proportions him,^a
 20 Then makes the way easy for him,
 21 Then He causes him to die, then assigns to him a grave,
 22 Then, when He will, He raises him to life again.
 23 Nay, but he does not what He commands him.
 24 Then let man look at his food —
 25 How We pour down abundant water,
 26 Then cleave the earth, cleaving (it) asunder,
 27 Then cause the grain to grow therein,
 28 And grapes and clover,
 29 And the olive and the palm,
 30 And thick gardens,
 31 And fruits and herbage —
 32 A provision for you and your cattle.
 33 But when the deafening cry comes,^a
- فَتِلَّ الْإِنْسَانُ مَا أَكْفَرَهُ ۗ
 مِنْ أَرْبَى شَيْءٍ خَلَقَهُ ۗ
 مِنْ نُطْفَةٍ خَلَقَهُ فَقَدَّرَهُ ۗ
 ثُمَّ السَّبِيلَ يَسَّرَهُ ۗ
 ثُمَّ أَمَاتَهُ فَأَقْبَرَهُ ۗ
 ثُمَّ إِذَا شَاءَ أَنشَرَهُ ۗ
 كَلَّا لَئِنَّمَا يَفْقِضَ مَا أَمَرَهُ ۗ
 فَلْيَنْظُرِ الْإِنْسَانُ إِلَى طَعَامِهِ ۗ
 أَنَّا صَبَبْنَا الْمَاءَ صَبًّا ۗ
 ثُمَّ شَقَقْنَا الْأَرْضَ شَقًّا ۗ
 فَأَنْبَتْنَا فِيهَا حَبًّا ۗ
 وَعِنَبًا وَقَضْبًا ۗ
 وَزَيْتُونًا وَنَخْلًا ۗ
 وَحَدَائِقَ غُلْبًا ۗ
 وَفَاكِهَةً وَأَبًّا ۗ
 مَتَاعًا لَكُمْ وَلِأَنْعَامِكُمْ ۗ
 فَإِذَا جَاءَتِ الصَّاحَّةُ ۗ

Prophet that he should not be grieved because the rich and the leaders did not accept him, for the poor who accepted him would be raised to eminence through the Holy Qur’ān.

19a. *Qaddara* (inf. *taqdīr*) ordinarily signifies *he made a thing according to a measure*, or *proportioned it*, the significance being that God has allotted to man a certain sphere in which he can make progress. But it sometimes carries the same significance as *aqdara*, viz., *he empowered him*, *enabled him*, *rendered him able* (LL), and the meaning in this case would be that Allāh has not only created man, but he has also given him power and ability, so that he can make progress, if he likes.

33a. *Ṣākhkhah* literally signifies *a cry that deafens by its vehemence* (LL). Hence it is made to apply to the day of Resurrection; but it also means any calamity or misfortune, or *a severe calamity* (LL).

34 The day when a man flees from
his brother,

يَوْمَ يَفِرُّ الْمَرْءُ مِنْ أَخِيهِ ۝

35 And his mother and his father,

وَأُمِّهِ وَأَبِيهِ ۝

36 And his spouse and his sons.

وَصَاحِبَتِهِ وَبَنِيهِ ۝

37 Every man of them, that day, will
have concern enough to make him
indifferent to others.

لِكُلِّ امْرِئٍ مِنْهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ شَأْنٌ يُغْنِيهِ ۝

38 Faces on that day will be bright,

وُجُوهٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ مُسْفِرَةٌ ۝

39 Laughing, joyous.

صَاحِكَةٌ مُسْتَبْشِرَةٌ ۝

40 And faces on that day will have
dust on them,

وُجُوهٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ عَلَيْهَا غَبَرَةٌ ۝

41 Darkness covering them.^a

تَرَهَقَهَا قَتَرَةٌ ۝

42 Those are the disbelievers, the
wicked.

أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْكَافِرَةُ الْفَجَرَةُ ۝

41a. The brightness of the faces spoken of here indicates their *joy*; their being covered by darkness indicates *sorrow* or *gloom*.