



CHAPTER 81

Al-Takwīr: The Folding Up

(REVEALED AT MAKKAH: 29 verses)

This chapter is entitled *Al-Takwīr* or *The Folding up* from the mention of the folding up of the sun in the first verse. The significance of the folding up of the sun is that it will lose its light or that the entire solar system will be destroyed. It may thus indicate the end of things so far as this life is concerned and may thus stand for the new order, which is called the Resurrection. It may, however, be also a metaphorical expression for the distresses and misfortunes of a people, as if the sun of their fortune became dark.

That the chapter speaks of the final triumph of Truth is made clear in the latter part of this chapter: “Surely it is the word of a bountiful Messenger, the possessor of strength, established in the presence of the Lord of the Throne of Power, one to be obeyed” (vv. 19–21); and again: “And truly he saw himself on the clear horizon” (v. 23). The opening verses of the chapter from the 3rd onwards speak prophetically of certain events relating to the distant future and of certain portents of the overthrow of opposition and prevalence of Truth, and thus throw further light on the fact that the ultimate triumph of Truth is really the subject-matter of this chapter. Its revelation belongs to the very early Makkan period.

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

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

1 When the sun is folded up,^a

إِذَا الشَّمْسُ كُوِّرَتْ ۝

2 And when the stars are dust-
coloured,^a

وَإِذَا النُّجُومُ انْكَدَرَتْ ۝

1a. For the significance of the *folding up* of the sun, see the introductory note. The first thirteen verses of this chapter speak of twelve signs, some of which undoubtedly relate to this life and the rest may therefore also be taken as referring metaphorically to this life. As I have so often shown, the Resurrection of the dead in another life may often contain a deeper reference to the spiritual resurrection which was to be brought about by the Prophet in this very life, and hence the combination of the real with the metaphorical, as here.

2a. The darkening of the stars indicates complete darkness, for when the sun is set the light of the stars helps man. We are told that not only would the light of the day disappear, but even the smaller lights, to which the traveller looks in the darkness of the night, would become dark, and so the opponents of Truth would be left in utter darkness.

3 And when the mountains are made to pass away,^a

وَإِذَا الْجِبَالُ سُيِّرَتْ ۖ

4 And when the camels are abandoned,^a

وَإِذَا الْعِشَارُ عُطِّلَتْ ۖ

5 And when the wild animals are gathered together,^a

وَإِذَا الْوُحُوشُ حُشِرَتْ ۖ

6 And when the cities are made to swell,^a

وَإِذَا الْبِحَارُ سُجِّرَتْ ۖ

7 And when men are united,^a

وَإِذَا النَّفُوسُ كُرُّجِتْ ۖ

8 And when the one buried alive is asked

وَإِذَا الْمَوْءِدَةُ سُئِلَتْ ۖ

3a. The passing away of the mountains signifies the passing away of the greatest obstacles to the spread of Truth; see 20:105a.

4a. *'Ishār* is plural of *'usharā'* (from the root *'ashr* meaning *ten*), meaning a *she-camel that has been ten months pregnant*, and she is called *'usharā'* until she has brought forth and also after she has brought forth (LL). "Farazdaq applies this term to camels that are milked" (LL). Such camels are undoubtedly the most precious, and their being abandoned may stand for the abandonment of camels generally. Bearing on this subject is a *ḥadīth* of the Prophet: "The camels will be abandoned so that they will not be used for going swiftly (from one place to another)" (Msh. 26:5). The reference in this *ḥadīth* is clearly to a time when *swifter* modes of going from one place to another will come into existence, so that the camels will no more be needed.

5a. The gathering together (*ḥaṣhr*) of wild animals seems also to be a prophecy relating to the distant future, when the wild animals were to be gathered together from all corners of the world into big towns. The word *wuḥūsh* is the plural of *waḥsh* which means a wild animal, such as *is not tame or beasts of the desert* (LL); and may be metaphorically applied to barbarous or uncivilized people — a shy girl is called *waḥsh* — so that the reference may be to the gathering together of barbarous or uncivilized people in the centres of civilization. Note also that the word *ḥaṣhr* signifies not only *going forth from one place to another*, but also in particular *causing people to go down to cities or towns* (LL).

6a. I make a departure here from the ordinary translation. *Biḥār* is plural of *baḥr*, which means *sea or river*, and if that significance be adopted, the reference would be to the destruction of the opponents, for the *swollen sea* (52:6) is plainly spoken of as a means of the destruction of those who would extirpate Truth. But the word *biḥār* is the plural of *baḥrah* as well as of *baḥr* (T, LL), and *baḥrah* is synonymous with *balдах* or a town "and the plural *biḥār* they apply to cities as well as towns or villages" (T, LL). According to N, the Arabs call the cities and the towns *al-biḥār*. The words *baḥrah* (singular of *biḥār*) and *buḥairah* (diminutive of *baḥrah*) are also applied to Madinah (N). This would leave no doubt that *cities* is as literal a significance of the word *biḥār* as *seas*. The swelling of cities is a clear indication that the advancing civilization of man will result in men gathering more and more in cities. The words of the next verse corroborate this significance, as it speaks in clear words of the *uniting of men*.

7a. The uniting of men is one of the greatest achievements of modern civilization. The time is not far distant indeed when the whole world will be united and may become as a single nation.

9 For what sin she was killed,^a

بِأَيِّ ذَنْبٍ قُتِلَتْ ۙ

10 And when the books are spread,^a

وَإِذَا الصُّحُفُ نُشِرَتْ ۙ

11 And when the heaven has its covering removed,^a

وَإِذَا السَّمَاءُ كُشِطَتْ ۙ

12 And when hell is kindled,^a

وَإِذَا الْجَحِيمُ سُعِرَتْ ۙ

13 And when the Garden is brought nigh^a —

وَإِذَا الْجَنَّةُ أُنزِلَتْ ۙ

14 Every soul will know what it has prepared.^a

عَلِمَتْ نَفْسٌ مَّا أَحْضَرَتْ ۙ

9a. The reference here is to the burying alive of daughters, a practice common among the pre-Islamic Arabs who, either for fear of hunger or disgrace, buried alive their female children. The questioning refers to the time when, with the predominance of Islām in Arabia, this barbarous practice was to be abolished. But the *one buried alive* may stand generally for the female sex, and the reference here may, therefore, be to the general tyranny of the male over the female, who has been kept in ignorance. See 17:31a, where it is shown that the keeping ignorant of one's children is equivalent to killing them.

10a. *Ṣuḥuf* is the plural of *ṣaḥīfah*, which means *a written piece of paper or of skin*. This may also be a prophetic reference to the distant future, with the circulation of books and papers to an almost incredible extent. The Muslim world did immense service to the cause of the circulation of literature in the days of its prosperity, and it is recognized on all hands that the revival of learning in Europe, which has brought about the great circulation of books and papers, was itself a direct result of the impetus which Islām gave to the study of letters.

11a. The removal of the covering of the heaven signifies the unveiling of the mysteries relating to the heavens, which is one of the great achievements of modern science. Compare 99:2 where the earth is spoken of as yielding her treasures.

12a. It should be noted that apart from the hell of the next life, the Holy Qur'ān very often speaks of a hell in this life. Compare 79:36, and see 79:34a. Just as the righteous are promised heaven in this very life, the wicked are told that hell would be kindled for them even here, if they had only the eyes to see it. And indeed there has been a veritable hell raging in this life since the Second World War. The forces of materialism have already engulfed the world in a burning hell, and another World War would only make its flames appear the more hideous.

13a. While the previous verses give us a picture of the material civilization of the world, v. 12 drawing attention to its culmination in the form of bringing about a hell in this life owing to the utter neglect of all spiritual values, this verse gives the good news of the Garden being brought nigh. In the Hereafter, the Garden would be a sure reality and the righteous will find themselves in it, enjoying its bliss, but here it is only spoken of as being brought nigh. The evident conclusion is that God has not doomed this world to utter destruction, but that, when it has tasted somewhat of the evil consequences of its own doings, Divine mercy will take it by the hand and bring the Garden of bliss near to it by bringing about a spiritual awakening. Thus the solace of mind which man can attain to through realization of the Divine in him is here described as the bringing nigh of the Garden.

14a. Man will then become conscious that there is a higher life, which is his real goal, and he will know what to do to attain that goal.

- 15 Nay, I call to witness the stars, فَلَا أُقْسِمُ بِالْحُسُبِ ۖ
- 16 Running their course, (and) setting,^a الْجَوَارِ الْكُنَّسِ ۖ
- 17 And the night when it departs, وَاللَّيْلِ إِذَا عَسْعَسَ ۖ
- 18 And the morning when it brightens,^a وَالصُّبْحِ إِذَا تَنَفَّسَ ۖ
- 19 Surely it is the word of a bountiful Messenger, إِنَّهُ لَقَوْلُ رَسُولٍ كَرِيمٍ ۖ
- 20 The possessor of strength, established in the presence of the Lord of the Throne, ذِي قُوَّةٍ عِنْدَ ذِي الْعَرْشِ مَكِينٍ ۖ
- 21 One (to be) obeyed, and faithful.^a مُطَاعٍ ثَمَّ أَمِينٍ ۖ
- 22 And your companion is not mad. وَمَا صَاحِبُكُمْ بِمَجْنُونٍ ۖ
- 23 And truly he saw himself on the clear horizon.^a وَلَقَدْ رَآهُ بِالْأُفُقِ الْمُبِينِ ۖ
- 24 Nor is he niggardly of the unseen.^a وَمَا هُوَ عَلَى الْغَيْبِ بِضَنِينٍ ۖ

16a. *Khunnas* (v. 15) is the plural of *khānis* (from *khanasa*, *he went back*), meaning *going backward*, and signifies *the stars* in general, because they retire or hide themselves at setting, or because they become concealed in the day-time, or the planets (Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Venus and Mercury), because of their retrogression (LL). *Kunnas* (“setting”) is the plural of *kāni* (from *kanasa*, *he, an antelope, entered his kinās*, i.e., *his hiding-place*), meaning *an antelope, entering his hiding-place*, and signifies *the stars that hide themselves in their places of setting, or the planets*, for a similar reason (LL). The calling to witness of *the stars that run their course and set* also draws attention to the disasters that awaited the opponents of the Truth; see 53:1a.

18a. The departing of the night and the rise of the bright morning is clearly the disappearance of the darkness of ignorance, giving place to the bright light of the sun of Islām.

21a. The commentators generally suppose the angel Gabriel to be referred to in vv. 19–21, but the reference is to the Holy Prophet himself, who is undoubtedly *Rasūl karīm*, the *bountiful Messenger*, by which name he is generally known in the whole Muslim world. Again, he is clearly spoken of as *your companion* in v. 22, while Gabriel could not be called *your companion*. The negation of his being mad, spoken of in that verse and so often referred to in these chapters, also shows him to be the Prophet himself. Moreover, v. 21 speaks of him as being *faithful*, clearly referring to his past reputation in the whole of Arabia as *al-Amin* or *the Faithful*. His being a *muṭā‘*, or *one to be obeyed*, is also spoken of elsewhere in the Holy Qur’ān: “And We sent no messenger but that he should be obeyed by Allāh’s command” (4:64). His being *possessor of strength* prophetically refers to his future career and to his ultimate triumph over his enemies.

23a. *Ufuq* is the *horizon* or the *remote side*, and the Prophet’s seeing himself on *ufuq* means that his light would shine in the remotest corners of the world. See also 53:7, 7a.

24a, see next page.

- 25 Nor is it the word of an accursed devil^a — وَمَا هُوَ بِقَوْلِ شَيْطَانٍ رَّجِئٍ ۝
- 26 Whither then are you going?^a فَأَيَّنَ تَذْهَبُونَ ۝
- 27 It is naught but a Reminder for the nations,^a إِنَّ هُوَ إِلَّا ذِكْرٌ لِلْعَالَمِينَ ۝
- 28 For him among you who will go straight.^a لِمَنْ شَاءَ مِنْكُمْ أَنْ يَسْتَقِيمَ ۝
- 29 And you will not, except Allāh please, the Lord of the worlds. وَمَا تَشَاءُونَ إِلَّا أَنْ يَشَاءَ اللَّهُ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ ۝

24a. The Prophet (not Gabriel) is here declared to be not niggardly of *the unseen*, showing that there are some great prophecies relating to the future in what has gone before. And in fact, as I have shown, the chapter opens with prophecies of the triumphant career of Islām and certain portents relating to the distant future, while the latter part of the chapter speaks plainly of the ultimate triumph of Truth.

25a. It is not the word of the devil, i.e., these are not the conjectures of a soothsayer — the prophecies of the Qur’ān will be duly fulfilled. Sale’s comment is worthy of note: “The verse is an answer to a calumny of the infidels, who said the Qur’ān was only a piece of divination or magic; for the Arabs suppose the soothsayer or magician receives his intelligence from those evil spirits who are continually listening to learn what they can from the inhabitants of heaven”. It should be borne in mind that where the Qur’ān speaks of the listening by stealth of the devils, it is in reference to this old Arab belief. It nowhere refers to this belief in words which would show that it upholds this old Arab belief; on the other hand, there are ample indications that it rejects this belief.

26a. Wonder is expressed that notwithstanding the clearest evidence of Truth, humanity has been so slow to accept it. They were invited to the Truth which gave them peace, but they were not coming to it. Even such is the case today.

27a. In the words — *a Reminder for the nations* — it is shown that it is not meant for the Arabs alone but for all nations. This being one of the earliest revelations, clearly shows that the foundations of the universality of the message of Islām were laid on the very first day.

28a. How beautifully clear are the words of the Qur’ān! It is a source of eminence for all the nations of the world, but only if people will follow its directions; hence it adds the words, *For him among you who will go straight*. (For *dhikr* meaning eminence see 2:152a, 21:10a, 38:1b, 43:5a.) See further 76:30a for what is said in the verse that follows: “You will not, except Allāh please”.



CHAPTER 82

Al-Infithār: The Cleaving

(REVEALED AT MAKKAH: 19 verses)

This chapter, which receives its title from a statement made in its opening verse as to heaven being *cleft asunder*, is, as it were, a counterpart of the one preceding it; for while that chapter, after mentioning certain signs, draws the conclusion of the final triumph of Islām, this refers to that triumph in its opening verses, and speaks also of the utter helplessness in which the opponents would find themselves as a result of that triumph. Its date of revelation is the same as that of the preceding chapter.

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

1 When the heaven is cleft asunder,

2 And when the stars become dis-
persed,

3 And when the rivers are made to
flow forth,

4 And when the graves are laid
open^a —

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

إِذَا السَّمَاءُ انْفَطَرَتْ

وَإِذَا الْكَوَاكِبُ انْتَشَرَتْ

وَإِذَا الْبِحَارُ فُجِّرَتْ

وَإِذَا الْقُبُورُ بُعْثِرَتْ

4a. Taken metaphorically the first four verses tell us how a great spiritual rising would be brought about. The cleaving asunder of the heaven would mean that the doors of heaven will open and Divine help will come to the Prophet. The *dispersing of the stars* signifies the spreading abroad of the bearers of the message of Truth, who are likened to stars, as the Prophet said: “My companions are as stars” (Msh. 27:13). The indication is that a time would come when the teachers of Truth would disperse themselves in Arabia, and then throughout the world. The *flowing forth of the rivers* is in accordance with what is stated elsewhere in the Holy Qur’ān in a parable: “He sends down water from the clouds, then watercourses flow according to their measure, ... Thus does Allāh set forth parables” (13:17). The rivers of Divine knowledge were made to reach the dry lands within and without Arabia. The laying open of the graves signifies the spiritual resurrection which was to be brought about by the Holy Prophet, for the reprobate are clearly spoken of as being in the graves (35:22). Thus all these four verses speak of the great change

- 5 Every soul will know what it has sent before and what it has held back.^a عَلِمَتْ نَفْسٌ مَّا قَدَّمَتْ وَأَخَّرَتْ ۖ ط
- 6 O man, what beguiles thee from thy Lord, the Gracious? يَا أَيُّهَا الْإِنْسَانُ مَا غَرَّبَكَ بِرَبِّكَ الْكَرِيمِ ۖ
- 7 Who created thee, then made thee complete, then made thee in a right good state — الَّذِي خَلَقَكَ فَسَوَّاكَ فَعَدَلَكَ ۖ
- 8 Into whatever form He pleases He casts thee. فِي أَيِّ صُورَةٍ مَّا شَاءَ رَكَّبَكَ ۖ
- 9 Nay, but you give the lie to the Judgment, كَلَّا بَلْ تُكْذِبُونَ بِالَّذِينَ ۖ
- 10 And surely there are keepers over you, وَإِنَّ عَلَيْكُمْ لَحَافِظِينَ ۖ
- 11 Honourable recorders, كِرَامًا كَاتِبِينَ ۖ
- 12 They know what you do.^a يَعْلَمُونَ مَا تَفْعَلُونَ ۖ
- 13 Surely the righteous are in bliss, إِنَّ الْأَبْرَارَ لَفِي نَعِيمٍ ۖ
- 14 And the wicked are truly in burning Fire — وَإِنَّ الْفُجَّارَ لَفِي جَحِيمٍ ۖ
- 15 They will enter it on the day of Judgment. يَصُورُنَّهَا يَوْمَ الدِّينِ ۖ
- 16 And will not be absent from it. وَمَا هُمْ عَنْهَا بِغَائِبِينَ ۖ
- 17 And what will make thee realize what the day of Judgment is? وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا يَوْمَ الدِّينِ ۖ

that was to be brought about in the world by the preaching of the Prophet. According to Farrā, the significance of the laying open of graves is *their throwing out gold and silver (mineral wealth), which lies buried in them, and the coming out of the dead will be after this, and it is one of the signs of the Hour that the earth should throw out its mineral wealth (LA)*. Or, what is meant is that *the mysteries hidden from the human eye will be revealed (R)*. Taken literally, the words speak of the Resurrection.

5a. This verse supports what is said in the previous note. Qaffāl holds that the knowledge spoken of here will accrue before the day of Resurrection (Rz). A greater manifestation of the same will, however, take place in the life after death.

12a. That every action of man is recorded and bears fruit is one of the principal doctrines of the religion of Islām. Of course, it is not meant that angels are sitting with pens in their hands and inkstands before them, at desks, like copyists, noting down that at such and such a time such a one did such a good or such a bad deed. That would be a distortion of the teaching of the Qurʾān. For what that record is, see the next chapter, where both the record of the righteous and the record of the wicked is spoken of. See also 17:13, 14.

18 Again, what will make thee realize what the day of Judgment is?

ثُمَّ مَا أَذْرَاكَ مَا يَوْمَ الدِّينِ ١٨ ط

19 The day when no soul controls aught for another soul. And the command on that day is Allāh's.

يَوْمَ لَا تَمْلِكُ نَفْسٌ لِنَفْسٍ شَيْئًا ط
وَالْأَمْرُ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِلَّهِ ١٩ ع



CHAPTER 83

Al-Taṭfif: Default in Duty

(REVEALED AT MAKKAH: 36 verses)

This chapter condemns those *who give short measure or short weight* and thus *cheat others* or *make a default in any of their duties*; hence the name. At the same time we are told that those who fulfil their duties are exalted. It continues the subject-matter of the preceding chapter and explains the nature of the two records, the record of the wicked and the record of the righteous. Why do the righteous prosper? Because they fulfil their duties and are true to their obligations. Why do the guilty suffer and perish? Because they defraud and cheat others and are not true to their responsibilities. It teaches the utmost rectitude in one's dealings. Its revelation belongs to the early Makkan period.

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

1 Woe to the cheaters!^a

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

وَيْلٌ لِّلْمُطَفِّفِیْنَ ۝۱

2 Who, when they take the measure
(of their dues) from men, take it fully,

الَّذِیْنَ اِذَا كَتَبُوْا عَلٰی النَّاسِ

یَسْتَوْفُوْنَ ۝۲

3 And when they measure out to
others or weigh out for them, they
give less than is due.

وَ اِذَا كَالُوْهُمْ اَوْ وَّزَنُوْهُمْ یُخْسِرُوْنَ ۝۳

1a. *Muṭaffif* is one who gives short measure and short weight, thus cheating his companion (LL). *Ṭaffafa* (inf. n. *taṭfif*, which is the title of this chapter) means *he made defective or deficient* in a general sense, and you say *ṭaffafa al-mikyāl* or *al-mizān* to indicate that *he gave short measure or short weight* (LL). But the word is used in a wider sense. A man did not attend the prayer in time, and being questioned by 'Umar, offered some excuse, to which 'Umar replied, *ṭaffafta*, which is explained as meaning *naqaṣta*, i.e., *thou hast made a default* (N). Hence the *muṭaffifin* are not only *those who cheat others by giving them less than what is their due*, but also *those who made a default in any of their duties*. The taking of the measure and the measuring out, in the next two verses, must also be read in a general sense.

4 Do they not think that they will be raised again,

أَلَا يَظُنُّ أُولَئِكَ أَنَّهُمْ مَبْعُوثُونَ ۝٤

5 To a mighty day? —

لِيَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ ۝٥

6 The day when men will stand before the Lord of the worlds.

يَوْمَ يَقُومُ النَّاسُ لِرَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ۝٦

7 Nay, surely the record of the wicked is in the prison.^a

كَلَّا إِنَّ كِتَابَ الْفُجَّارِ لَفِي سِجِّينٍ ۝٧

8 And what will make thee know what the prison is?

وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا سِجِّينٌ ۝٨

9 It is a written book.

كِتَابٌ مَّرْقُومٌ ۝٩

10 Woe on that day to the rejectors!

وَيْلٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِلْمُكَذِّبِينَ ۝١٠

11 Who give the lie to the day of Judgment.

الَّذِينَ يُكَذِّبُونَ يَوْمَ الدِّينِ ۝١١

12 And none gives the lie to it but every exceeeder of limits, every sinful one;

وَمَا يَكْذِبُ بِهِ إِلَّا كُلُّ مُعْتَدٍ أَثِيمٍ ۝١٢

13 When Our messages are recited to him, he says: Stories of those of yore!

إِذَا نُتِلَىٰ عَلَيْهِ الْإِنشَاءُ قَالَ آسَاطِيرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ ۝١٣

14 Nay, rather, what they earned is rust upon their hearts.

كَلَّا بَلْ سَنَآءَ رَانَ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِمْ مَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ ۝١٤

15 Nay, surely they are that day debarred from their Lord.^a

كَلَّا إِنَّهُمْ عَنْ رَبِّهِمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ لَمَحْجُورُونَ ۝١٥

16 Then they will surely enter the burning Fire.

ثُمَّ إِنَّهُمْ لَصَالُوا الْجَحِيمِ ۝١٦

7a. *Sijjin* is supposed by some to be the name of a place of a most degraded nature, but LA gives *sijjin* as the equivalent of *sjin*, meaning a *prison*; this is also the interpretation preferred by Zj, A'Ub and Mubarrad (Rz). But this *prison* should not be taken as signifying a *gaol*, for in the verses that follow the Qur'an itself explains what this prison is. In v. 9, it is spoken of as a *written book*. This *written book* or *record*, which preserves the deeds of the evildoers, is called a *prison* because it keeps their faculties for the doing of good shut up as within a prison, and the very consequences of their evil deeds hamper their progress. See vv. 14 and 15, where the actions of the evildoers are spoken of as being *rust* on their hearts, and they are further referred to as being *debarred* from their Lord.

15a. The punishment of the wicked is here described as their being *debarred from their Lord*. They have no consciousness of the Higher Presence and, being thus debarred from their Lord in this life, enter the burning Fire in the next, as plainly stated in the verse that follows.

- 17 Then it will be said: This is what you gave the lie to. ثُمَّ يُقَالُ هَذَا الَّذِي كُنْتُمْ بِهِ
تُكْذِبُونَ ۝
- 18 Nay, surely the record of the righteous is in the highest places.^a كَلَّا إِنَّ كِتَابَ الْإِبْرَارِ لَفِي عِلِّيِّينَ ۝
وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا عِلِّيُونَ ۝
كِتَابٌ مَرْقُومٌ ۝
يَشْهَدُهُ الْمُقَرَّبُونَ ۝
إِنَّ الْإِبْرَارَ لَفِي نَعِيمٍ ۝
عَلَى الْأَسْرَائِكِ يُنظَرُونَ ۝
تَعْرِفُونَ فِي وُجُوهِهِمْ نَضْرَةَ النَّعِيمِ ۝
يُسْقَوْنَ مِنْ سَرْحٍ مَحْمُومٍ ۝
خِشْمُهُمْ مَسْكٌ وَفِي ذَلِكَ فَلْيَتَنَافَسِ
الْمُتَنَافِسُونَ ۝
وَمَزَاجُهُمْ مِنْ تَسْنِيمٍ ۝
عَيْنًا يَشْرَبُ بِهَا الْمُقَرَّبُونَ ۝
إِنَّ الَّذِينَ أَجْرَمُوا كَانُوا مِنَ
الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا يَضْحَكُونَ ۝
وَإِذَا مَرُّوا بِهِمْ يَتَغَامَرُونَ ۝
- 19 And what will make thee know what the highest places are?
- 20 It is a written book.
- 21 Those drawn near (to Allāh) witness it.
- 22 Surely the righteous are in bliss,
- 23 On raised couches, gazing —
- 24 Thou recognizest in their faces the brightness of bliss.
- 25 They are given to drink of a pure drink, sealed.
- 26 The sealing of it is (with) musk. And for that let the aspirers aspire.
- 27 And it is tempered with water coming from above^a —
- 28 A fountain from which drink those drawn near (to Allāh).
- 29 Surely they who are guilty used to laugh at those who believe.
- 30 And when they passed by them, they winked at one another,

18a. *‘Illiyūn* is said by some to be the plural of *‘illi* and by others to be that of *‘illiyah*, while still others hold that it has no singular (LL). Like *sijjīn*, some would make it a proper name, but others rightly consider it to mean (from *‘alā*, meaning *it was high*) the highest of places and the most exalted of grades and the one (bringing a man) nearest to Allāh in the latter abode (N). But note that, like *sijjīn*, it is not the name of a place but that of a record (v. 20); Q and Az give similar explanations. The *highest places* are thus the records of the best deeds, which enable a man to soar high and cut off the chains which bind him to low desires.

27a. *Tasnīm* is generally taken to be a proper name, but bearing in mind what has been said regarding *sijjīn* and *‘illiyūn*, Zj’s interpretation, *a water coming upon them from above* (LL), is preferable. The water coming from above signifies spiritually *the knowledge of Allāh* (Rz), because it is from this source that those who are drawn nigh to Allāh (v. 28) are made to drink.

31 And when they returned to their people, they returned exulting.

وَإِذَا انْقَلَبُوا إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهِمْ انْقَلَبُوا
فَكِهِينَ ﴿٣١﴾

32 And when they saw them, they said: Surely these are in error —

وَإِذَا سَأَوْهُمْ قَالُوا إِنَّ هَٰؤُلَاءِ لَقٰصِتُونَ ﴿٣٢﴾

33 And they were not sent as keepers over them.

وَمَا أُرْسِلُوا عَلَيْهِمْ حٰفِظِينَ ﴿٣٣﴾

34 So this day those who believe laugh at the disbelievers^a —

فَالْيَوْمَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنَ الْكٰفِرِ

35 On raised couches, gazing.

يَضْحَكُونَ ﴿٣٤﴾

36 Surely the disbelievers are rewarded as they did.

عَلَىٰ الْأَرَآئِكِ يُنظَرُونَ ﴿٣٥﴾

هَلْ تُؤْتَبُ الْكٰفِرُ مَا كَانُوا يَفْعَلُونَ ﴿٣٦﴾

34a. The laughing of the believers is not to be taken literally. The word *dahikah*, which literally means *laughing*, also occurs elsewhere regarding the faces of the righteous (80:39), and signifies only *the brightness of hope in their faces*. The laughing in this case simply expresses a condition of joy which should make one laugh. The reversal of the condition of the believers and the disbelievers is all that is meant.



CHAPTER 84

Al-Inshiqāq: The Bursting Asunder

(REVEALED AT MAKKAH: 25 verses)

This chapter receives its title from the statement made in the opening verse as to the *bursting asunder* of the cloud. The subject-matter is similar to that of the previous chapter. It is one of the earliest revelations.

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

- 1 When the heaven bursts asunder,^a
- 2 And listens to its Lord and is made fit;^a
- 3 And when the earth is stretched,^a

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
 إِذَا السَّمَاءُ انشَقَّتْ ۝
 وَأَذِنَتْ لِرَبِّهَا وَحُقَّتْ ۝
 وَإِذَا الْأَرْضُ مُدَّتْ ۝

1a. The first five verses of this chapter speak of an ordinary phenomenon of nature, viz., the coming down of rain and the growth of vegetation, as a reference to the transformation which was to be brought about by the Divine revelation. The bursting asunder of heaven here stands for the coming down of rain; compare 25:25: “And on the day when the heaven bursts asunder with clouds”.

2a. *Adhīna la-hū* signifies *he listened to him* (LL). By the cloud or heaven listening to its Lord here, and the earth listening to its Lord in v. 5, is meant their obedience to His commandment. To both phrases is added the word *huqqat*, signifying that they are made suitable or fit for listening to and obeying the Divine commandments, i.e., it is their very nature to be entirely submissive to the Divine commandments.

3a. *Madda-hū* signifies *he pulled it, strained it, extended it by drawing or pulling, stretched it, extended it* (LL). The *stretching* of the earth signifies the same as its *stirring* and *swelling* in 22:5 and 41:39. “And of His signs is this, that thou seest the earth still, but when We send down water thereon, it stirs and swells” (41:39); see 41:39a, where the meaning is explained to be the *producing of herbage*, the expression here, as there, signifying metaphorically that Divine revelation gives spiritual life to man. The meaning of the earth being stretched is explained in the next verse: *it casts forth what is in it and becomes empty*, i.e., the treasures of life latent within it are brought to light by the coming down of rain.

4 And casts forth what is in it and becomes empty,

وَأَلْقَتْ مَا فِيهَا وَتَخَلَّتْ ۝

5 And listens to its Lord and is made fit.

وَأَذِنَتْ لِرَبِّهَا وَحُقَّتْ ۝

6 O man, thou must strive a hard striving (to attain) to thy Lord, until thou meet Him.^a

يَا أَيُّهَا الْإِنْسَانُ إِنَّكَ كَادِحٌ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ
كَدْحًا فَلَمْلِقِيهِ ۝

7 Then as to him who is given his book in his right hand,

فَأَمَّا مَنْ أُوتِيَ كِتَابَهُ بِيَمِينِهِ ۝

8 His account will be taken by an easy reckoning,

فَسَوْفَ يَحَاسِبُ حِسَابًا يَّسِيرًا ۝

9 And he will go back to his people rejoicing.

وَيَنْقَلِبُ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهِ مَسْرُورًا ۝

10 And as to him who is given his book behind his back,

وَأَمَّا مَنْ أُوتِيَ كِتَابَهُ وَرَاءَ ظَهْرِهِ ۝

11 He will call for perdition.

فَسَوْفَ يَدْعُوا ثُبُورًا ۝

12 And enter into burning Fire.

وَيَصْلَىٰ سَعِيرًا ۝

13 Surely he was (erstwhile) joyful among his people.

إِنَّهُ كَانَ فِي أَهْلِهِ مَسْرُورًا ۝

14 Surely he thought that he would never return (to Allāh) —

إِنَّهُ ظَنَّ أَنْ لَنْ يَّجُورَ ۝

15 Yea, surely his Lord is ever Seer of him.

بَلَىٰ ۚ إِنَّ رَبَّهُ كَانَ بِهِ بَصِيرًا ۝

16 But nay, I call to witness the sunset redness,

فَلَا أُفْسِرُ بِالشَّفَقِ ۝

17 And the night and that which it drives on,

وَاللَّيْلِ وَمَا وَسَقَ ۝

18 And the moon when it grows full,^a

وَالْقَمَرِ إِذَا اتَّسَقَ ۝

6a. This is the conclusion to which a consideration of the first five verses leads. Man must strive hard to attain to his Lord. Those who do this are ultimately joyful (v. 9), but those who give themselves up to the pleasures of this life (v. 13) shall afterwards be in a sad plight (v. 11).

18a. Verses 16–18 draw attention to another phenomenon of nature, thereby indicating the departure of the power of the opponents of Truth. The *shafaq*, or the *sunset redness*, stands here for the disappearing sun of the power of the opponents, the night of adversity, which was now to overtake them, driving before it what vestige of light had

19 That you shall certainly ascend to one state after another.^a

لَتَرْكَبُنَّ طَبَقًا عَنْ طَبَقٍ ۗ ﴿١٩﴾

20 But what is the matter with them that they believe not?

فَمَا لَهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٢٠﴾

21 And, when the Qur'ān is recited to them, they adore (Him) not?^a

Prostration

وَإِذَا قُرِئَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقُرْآنُ لَا يَسْجُدُونَ ﴿٢١﴾

22 Nay, those who disbelieve give the lie —

بَلِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا يَكْتُمُونَ ﴿٢٢﴾

23 And Allāh knows best what they hide.

وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا يُوعُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾

24 So announce to them a painful chastisement,

فَبَشِّرْهُمْ بِعَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ ﴿٢٤﴾

25 Except those who believe and do good — for them is a reward that shall never be cut off.

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَهُمْ أَجْرٌ غَيْرُ مَمْنُونٍ ﴿٢٥﴾

remained. But they were not to remain submerged in darkness forever, for the moon (the Holy Prophet) had already made its appearance and would soon grow full, when the Arab nation was to march forth to conquer the world, the moon being a symbol of the power of the Arabs. For an alternative significance, see next note.

19a. According to I'Ab, this verse speaks of the advancement of the cause of the Prophet (B. 65: lxxxiv, 2). The people addressed here are thus the Muslims, who are told that they will go on making progress in the world, but it will be a gradual progress, and there may be set-backs. But the ultimate state would be one of triumph. In this case the night spoken of in the previous verse would mean the adversities which Islām itself will have to face, and the full moon would indicate its final triumph. The commentators also explain this verse as being a prophecy of the ultimate triumph of Islām (Rz).

21a. An actual prostration follows the recital of this verse; see 7:206a.



CHAPTER 85

Al-Burūj: The Stars

(REVEALED AT MAKKAH: 22 verses)

This chapter takes its title from the mention in the first verse of the heaven full of *stars*, as referring to the prosperity of the Arab nation after it accepted the Prophet's message. The Prophet himself spoke of his companions as stars (Msh. 27:13). A reference to past history is introduced to show that, if they rejected the Prophet's message and opposed it, their end would be the same as the end of the previous opponents of Truth. The chapter is one of the very early revelations.

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

- 1 By the heaven full of stars!
- 2 And the Promised day!
- 3 And the bearer of witness and that
to which witness is borne!^a
- 4 Destruction overtake the compan-
ions of the trench!^a —

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
وَالسَّمَاءِ ذَاتِ الْبُرُوجِ ۝
وَالْيَوْمِ الْمَوْعُودِ ۝
وَشَاهِدٍ وَمَشْهُودٍ ۝
قَتِيلٍ أَصْحَابِ الْأُخْدُودِ ۝

3a. *Burūj* is the plural of *burj* which means a tower or fortress or a sign of the Zodiac or a star or constellation or asterism (LL). It is derived from *baraja* meaning it became manifest or high, and hence the various significations. As in 82:2 (see 82:4a), the stars stand for the lesser lights, in comparison with the sun to which the Prophet himself is likened (33:46), for companions of the Prophet or for the bearers of the message of Truth to people. In *the heaven full of stars* there is thus a reference to the preachers of Truth, who will scatter far and wide. Hence the mention of the promised day in the next verse, the day of the triumph of Truth. *Shāhid* (bearer of witness) and *shahid* both signify the Prophet (see 4:41, etc.) and by that to which witness is borne is meant the message of Truth. Or, the *mashhūd* are those against whom the Prophet bears witness, i.e., the opponents of Truth.

4a. The commentators give three different versions of the story supposed to be referred to in this verse, the best-known being that the reference is to the persecution of

5 The fire fed with fuel —

النَّارِ ذَاتِ الْوُجُودِ ۝

6 When they sit by it,

إِذْ هُمْ عَلَيْهَا قُعُودٌ ۝

7 And they are witnesses of what they do with the believers.

وَهُمْ عَلَىٰ مَا يَفْعَلُونَ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ

8 And they punished them for naught but that they believed in Allāh, the Mighty, the Praised,

شُهُودٌ ۝

وَمَا تَقَمُوا مِنْهُمْ إِلَّا أَنْ يُؤْمِنُوا

9 Whose is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth. And Allāh is Witness of all things.

بِاللَّهِ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَمِيدِ ۝

الَّذِي لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۝

10 Those who persecute believing men and believing women, then repent not, theirs is the chastisement of hell, and theirs the chastisement of burning.

وَاللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيدٌ ۝

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ فَتَنُوا الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ

ثُمَّ لَمْ يَتُوبُوا فَلَهُمْ عَذَابُ جَهَنَّمَ

وَلَهُمْ عَذَابُ الْحَرِيقِ ۝

11 Those who believe and do good, theirs are Gardens wherein flow rivers. That is the great achievement.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ

لَهُمْ جَنَّاتُ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ

ذَلِكَ الْقَوْمُ الْكَافِرُ ۝

12 Surely the grip of thy Lord is severe.

إِنَّ بَطْشَ رَبِّكَ لَشَدِيدٌ ۝

13 Surely He it is Who creates first and reproduces;

14 And He is the Forgiving, the Loving,

إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْبَدِيُّ وَيُعِيدُ ۝

وَهُوَ الْغَفُورُ الْوَدُودُ ۝

15 Lord of the Throne of Power, the Glorious,

ذُو الْعَرْشِ الْمَجِيدُ ۝

16 Doer of what He intends.

فَقَالَ لِمَا يُرِيدُ ۝

17 Has not there come to thee the story of the hosts,

هَلْ آتَاكَ حَدِيثُ الْجُنُودِ ۝

some Christians by Dhū Nawās, a king of Yaman, who was of the Jewish religion (Rz). But Baghwi thinks that the reference is to Nebuchadnezzar's casting Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego into the fiery furnace (Dan. 3:19–21). I think there may, as well, be a prophetic reference here to the great Arab army against which the Muslims were compelled to defend themselves by means of a trench, in what is called the battle of the Allies or the battle of the Ditch; see 33:9a. The words of v. 7, and particularly of v. 10, clearly show that the reference here is to the enemies of the Holy Prophet, who persecuted the believing men and the believing women. Or, it is a prophetic reference to the still more distant future, the trench being a feature of modern warfare. The *fire* kept burning with the fuel need not be taken literally, for *fire* stands for war.

18 Of Pharaoh and Thamūd?

فِرْعَوْنَ وَثَمُودَ ﴿١٨﴾

19 Nay, those who disbelieve give the lie —

بَلِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فِي تَكْذِيبٍ ﴿١٩﴾

20 And Allāh encompasses them on all sides.

وَاللَّهُ مِنْ وَرَائِهِمْ مُحِيطٌ ﴿٢٠﴾

21 Nay, it is a glorious Qur'ān,

بَلْ هُوَ قُرْآنٌ مَجِيدٌ ﴿٢١﴾

22 In a guarded tablet.^a

فِي كُتُبٍ مَحْفُوظَةٍ ﴿٢٢﴾

22a. The *lauḥ*, or *tablet*, occurring here, is the same as the *alwāḥ* (singular, *lauḥ*), or *tablets*, occurring regarding the book given to Moses (7:145, 150, 154). The Qur'ān is here spoken of as being in a *guarded tablet*. The significance of these words is simply this, that the Holy Qur'ān is guarded against corruption and against the attacks of its opponents; compare 15:9: "Surely We have revealed the Reminder and surely We are its Guardian". There is no mention here or anywhere else in the Qur'ān of the *lauḥ mahfūz*, on which the decrees of God are written; but even if the reference here be to it, the significance is still the same, viz., that the Qur'ān shall be fully guarded — *This is a glorious Qur'ān, protected against change and alteration* (Rz).