



كَلَّا إِنَّهَا تَذِكِرَةٌ فَمَنْ شَاءَ ذَكَرْهُ



By no means (should it be so)! For it is indeed a Message of instruction: Therefore let who will, keep it in remembrance.

Quran English Translation & Commentary

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عَبَسَ

Introduction and Summary

This is an early Makkan Surah, and is concerned with an incident which reflects the highest honour on the Prophet's sincerity in the Revelations that were vouchsafed to him even if they seemed to reprove him for some natural and human zeal that led him to a false step in his mission according to his own high standards.

He was once deeply and earnestly engaged in trying to explain the Holy Quran to Pagan Quraysh leaders, when he was

interrupted by a blind man. 'Abd Allah ibn Umm Maktum, one who was also poor, so that no one took any notice of him. He wanted to learn the Quran. The Holy Prophet naturally disliked the interruption and showed impatience. Perhaps the poor man's feelings were hurt. But he whose gentle heart ever sympathized with the poor and the afflicted, which forms part of the sacred scripture of Islam, as described in verse 13-16. And the Prophet always afterwards held the man in high honour.

The incident was only a passing incident, but after explaining the eternal principles of revelation, the Surah recapitulates the Mercies of Allah to man, and the consequences of a good or a wicked life here, as seen in the spiritual world to come, in the Hereafter.

C.260 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

*Men not blest with the good things of this life
May yet be earnest seekers of Truth
And Purity, and deserve as much attention as those
Who seem to wield some influence, yet who
In their pride are self-sufficient. Allah's Message
Is universal: all have a right
To hear it. Held high in honour, kept
Pure and holy, it should be writ
By none but good and Honourable men.*

*Allah's Grace is showered on man not less
For his inner growth than in his outward
Life. There must be a final Reckoning,
When each soul must stand on its own past Record:
The faces, then, of the Blest will beam
With joy and Light, while the Doers of Iniquity
Will hide in Dust and Shame and Darkness.*

عَبَسَ وَتَوَلَّى (١)

1. The (Prophet) frowned and turned away.

C5950. See the [Introduction](#) to this Surah for the incident to which this refers.

The lesson is that neither spiritual worth nor the prospect of effective spiritual guidance is to be measured by a man's position in life. The poor, or the blind, the halt, or the maimed, may be more susceptible to the teaching of Allah's Word than men who are apparently gifted, but who suffer from arrogance and self-sufficiency.

أَنْ جَاءَهُ الْأَعْمَى (٢)

2. Because there came to him the blind man (interrupting).

وَمَا يُدْرِيكَ لَعَلَّهُ يَزَكَّى (٣)

3. But what could tell thee but that perchance he might Grow (in spiritual understanding)? --

أَوْ يَذَّكَّرُ فَتَنْفَعَهُ الذِّكْرَى (٤)

4. Or that he might receive admonition, and the teaching might profit him?

C5951. It may be that the poor blind man might, on account of his will to learn, be more likely to grow in his own spiritual development or to profit by any lessons taught to him even in report than a self-sufficient leader. In fact it was so. For the blind man became a true and sincere Muslim and lived to become a governor of Madinah.

أَمَّا مَنْ اسْتَعْنَى (٥)

5. As to one who regards himself as self-sufficient,

C5952. Such a one would be a Pagan Quraish leader, whom the holy Prophet was anxious to get into his fold, in order that the work of preaching Allah's Message

might be facilitated. But such a Message works first amongst the simple and lowly, the poor and despised folk, and the mighty ones of the earth only come in when the stream rushes in with irresistible force.

فَأَنْتَ لَهُ تُصَدِّى (٦)

6. To him dost thou attend;

وَمَا عَلَيْكَ أَلَّا يَزَّكَّى (٧)

7. Though it is no blame to thee if he grow not (in spiritual understanding).

C5953. Allah's Message is for all, but if the great ones arrogantly keep back from it, it is no fault of the preacher, so long as he has proclaimed the Message. He should attend to all, and specially to the humble and lowly.

وَأَمَّا مَنْ جَاءَكَ يَسْعَى (٨)

8. But as to him who came to thee striving earnestly,

C5954. The fear in the blind man's heart may have been two-fold.

- He was humble and God-fearing, not arrogant and self-sufficient;
- being poor and blind, he feared to intrude; yet his earnest desire to learn the Quran made him bold, and he came, perhaps unseasonably, but was yet worthy of encouragement, because of the purity of his heart.

وَهُوَ يَخْشَى (٩)

9. And with fear (in his heart),

فَأَنْتَ عَنْهُ تَلَهَّى (١٠)

10. Of him wast thou unmindful.

كَلَّا إِنَّهَا تَذْكِرَةٌ (١١)

11. By no means (should it be so)! For it is indeed a Message of instruction:

C5955. Allah's Message is a universal Message, from which no one is to be excluded, rich or poor, old or young, great or lowly, learned or ignorant. If anyone had the spiritual craving that needed satisfaction, he was to be given precedence if there was to be any question of precedence at all.

فَمَنْ شَاءَ ذَكَرْهُ (١٢)

12. Therefore let who will, keep it in remembrance.

فِي صُحُفٍ مُّكْرَمَةٍ (١٣)

13. (It is) in Books held (greatly) in honor.

C5956. At the time this Surah was revealed, there were perhaps only about 42 or 45 Surahs in the hands of the Muslims. But it was a sufficient body of Revelation of high spiritual value, to which the description given here could be applied. It was held in the highest honor; its place in the hearts of Muslims was more exalted than that of anything else; as Allah's Word, it was pure and sacred; and those who transcribed it were men who were honorable, just and pious.

The legend that the early Surahs were not carefully written down and preserved in books is a pure invention. The recensions made later in the time of the first and the third Khalifahs were merely to preserve the purity and safeguard the arrangement of the text at a time when the expansion of Islam among non-Arabic-speaking people made such precautions necessary.

مَرْفُوعَةٍ مُّطَهَّرَةٍ (١٤)

14. Exalted (in dignity), kept pure and holy,

بِأَيْدِي سَفَرَةٍ (١٥)

15. (Written) by the hands of scribes --

كِرَامٍ بَرَرَةٍ (١٦)

16. Honorable and Pious and Just.

قَبِيلَ الْإِنْسَانُ مَا أَكْفَرَهُ (١٧)

17. Woe to man!

what hath made him reject Allah?

مِنْ أَيِّ شَيْءٍ خَلَقَهُ (١٨)

18. From what stuff Hath He created him?

مِنْ نُطْقَةٍ ...

19. From a sperm-drop:

C5957. Cf. 76:2, and n. 5832.

The origin of man as an animal is lowly indeed. But what further faculties and capacities has not Allah granted to man? Besides his animal body, in which also he shares in all the blessings which Allah has bestowed on the rest of His Creation, man has been granted divine gifts which entitle him to be called the Vicegerent on earth: [2:30](#).

- He has a will;
- he has spiritual perception;
- he is capable of divine love;
- he can control nature within certain limits, and subject nature's forces to his own use.
- And he has been given the power of judgment, so that he can avoid excess and defect, and follow the middle path. And that path, as well as all that is necessary for his life in its manifold aspects, has been made easy for him.

... خَلَقَهُ فَفَعَّرَهُ (١٩)

He hath created him, and then mouldeth him in due proportions;

ثُمَّ السَّبِيلَ يَسَّرَهُ (٢٠)

20. Then doth He make His path smooth for him;

ثُمَّ أَمَاتَهُ فَأَقْبَرَهُ (٢١)

21. Then He causeth him to die, and putteth him in his Grave;

C5958. Cf. 20:55.

Death is an inevitable event after the brief life on this earth, but it is also in a sense a blessing, a release from the imperfections of this world, a close of the probationary period, after which will dawn the full Reality. "The Grave" may be understood to be the period between physical death and immortal Life, whatever may be the mode of disposal of the dead body. This intermediate period is the Barzakh or Partition: see n. 2940 to 23:100.

ثُمَّ إِذَا شَاءَ أَنْشَرَهُ (٢٢)

22. Then, when it is His will, He will raise him up (again).

كَلَّا لَمَّا يَقْضِ مَا أَمَرَهُ (٢٣)

23. By no means hath he fulfilled what Allah Hath commanded him.

C5959. Though all these blessings and stages have been provided by Allah's Grace for the good of man, yet unregenerate man fails in carrying out the purpose of his creation and life.

فَلْيَنْظُرِ الْإِنْسَانُ إِلَى طَعَامِهِ (٢٤)

24. Then let man look at his Food, (and how We provide it):

C5960. After a reference to man's inner history, there is now a reference to just one item in his daily outer life, his food: and it is shown how the forces of heaven and earth unite by Allah's Command to serve man and his dependants. "A provision for you and your cattle" ([verse 32 below](#)). If that is the case with just one item, food, how much more comprehensive is Allah's beneficence when the whole of man's needs are considered!

أَنَا صَبَّبْنَا الْمَاءَ صَبًّا (٢٥)

25. For that We pour forth water in abundance,

ثُمَّ شَقَقْنَا الْأَرْضَ شَقًّا (٢٦)

26. And We split the earth in fragments,

C5961. The water comes from the clouds in plentiful abundance; the earth is ploughed, and the soil is broken up in fragments, and yields an abundant harvest of cereals (Corn), trellised fruit (Grapes), and vegetable food (nutritious Plants), as well as fruit that can keep for long periods and serve many uses, like olives and dates.

فَأَنْبَتْنَا فِيهَا حَبًّا (٢٧)

27. And produce **therein** Corn,

C5962. Therein: i.e., from within the earth or the soil.

وَعِنَبًا وَقَضْبًا (٢٨)

28. And Grapes and nutritious Plants.

وَزَيْتُونًا وَنَخْلًا (٢٩)

29. And Olives and Dates,

وَحَدَائِقَ ...

30. And enclosed Gardens,

C5963. We not only get field crops such as were mentioned in n. 5961 above, but we have the more highly cultivated garden crops, both in the way of lofty trees, and in the way of carefully tended fruits like the fig; and then we have grass and all kinds of fodder.

... غُلْبًا (٣٠)

dense with lofty trees,

وَقَاكِهَةَ وَأَبًّا (٣١)

31. And Fruits and Fodder --

مَتَاعًا لَكُمْ وَلِأَنْعَامِكُمْ (٣٢)

32. For use and convenience to you and your cattle.

C5964. The same verse occurs at 79:33, where n. 5940 explains the wider meaning in that context.

فَإِذَا جَاءَتِ الصَّاحَّةُ (٣٣)

33. At length, when there comes the Deafening Noise --

C5965. Preliminary to the establishment of the Final Judgment.

يَوْمَ يَفِرُّ الْمَرْءُ مِنْ أَخِيهِ (٣٤)

34. That Day shall a man flee from his own brother.

وَأُمِّهِ وَأَبِيهِ (٣٥)

35. And from his mother, and his father.

وَصَاحِبَتِهِ وَبَنِيهِ (٣٦)

36. And from his wife and his children.

C5966. Even those who were nearest and dearest in this life will not be able or willing to help each other on that awful Day.

On the contrary, if they have to receive a sentence for their sins, they will be anxious to avoid even sharing each other's sorrows or witnessing each other's humiliation; for each will have enough of his own troubles to occupy him.

On the other hand, the Righteous will be united with their righteous families: 52:21; and their faces will be "beaming, laughing, rejoicing" (80:38-39).

لِكُلِّ امْرئٍ مِنْهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ شَأْنٌ يُغْنِيهِ (٣٧)

37. Each one of them, that Day, will have enough concern (of his own) to make him indifferent to the others.

C5967. Cf. 70:10-14.

Nor friend will ask after a friend that Day. On the contrary the sinner will desire to save himself at the expense even of his own family and benefactors.

وَجُوهٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ مُّسْفِرَةٌ (٣٨)

38. Some Faces that Day will be beaming.

ضَاحِكَةٌ مُسْتَبْشِرَةٌ (٣٩)

39. Laughing, rejoicing.

وَوُجُوهُ يَوْمَئِذٍ عَلَيْهَا غَبَرَةٌ (٤٠)

40. And other faces that Day will be dust-stained;

C5968. The dust on the faces of the sinners will be in contrast to the beaming light on the faces of the righteous; and the blackness in contrast to the "laughing, rejoicing" faces of the righteous.

But the dust also suggests that being Rejecters of Allah, their faces and eyes and faculties were choked in dust, and the blackness suggests that being Doers of Iniquity they had no part or lot in Purity or Light. Another contrast may possibly be deduced: the humble and lowly may be "in the dust" in this life, and the arrogant sinners in sunshine, but the roles will be reversed at Judgment.

تَرَاهُمْ مَقْبَرَةً (٤١)

41. Blackness will cover them:

أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْكَافِرَةُ الْفَجْرَةُ (٤٢)

42. Such will be the Rejecters of Allah, the Doers of Iniquity.



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