The Tafsīr of Sūrah Sabbiḥ (Chapter - 87)

Which was revealed in Makkah

The Virtues of Sūrat Al-A'lā

This Sūrah was revealed in Makkah before the migration to Al-Madīnah. The proof of this is what Al-Bukhāri recorded from Al-Barā' bin 'Āzib, that he said, "The first people to come to us (in Al-Madīnah) from the Companions of the Prophet were Muṣ'ab bin 'Umayr and Ibn Umm Maktūm, who taught us the Qur'ān; then 'Ammār, Bilāl and Sa'd came. Then 'Umar bin Al-Khaṭṭāb came with a group of twenty people, after which the Prophet came. I have not seen the people of Al-Madīnah happier with anything more than their happiness with his coming (to Al-Madīnah). This was reached to such an extent that I saw the children and little ones saying, 'This is the Messenger of Allāh who has come.' Thus, he came, but he did not come until after I had already recited (i.e., learned how to recite)

Glorify the Name of your Lord, the Most High. (87:1) as well as other *Sūrahs* similar to it." (2)

It has been confirmed in the Two Ṣaḥīḥs that the Messenger of Allāh & said to Mu'ādh,

aWhy didn't you recite "Glorify the Name of your Lord, the Most High,"; "By the sun and its brightness," and "By the night when it envelopes." [3]

^[1] This Sûrah is more commonly called Sûrat Al-A'lâ.

^[2] Fatḥ Al-Bāri 8:569.

^[3] Fath Al-Bari 2:234, and Muslim 1:340.

Imām Aḥmad recorded from An-Nu'mān bin Bashīr that the Messenger of Allāh 鑑 recited

Surat Al-A'lā (chapter 87) and Surat Al-Gḥāshiyh (chapter 88) in the two 'Īd prayers. If the 'Īd prayer fell on Friday, he would recite them in both prayers ('Īd and Ṣalāt Al-Jumu'ah). [1] Muslim also recorded this in his Ṣaḥīḥ, as well as Abu Dāwud, At-Tirmidhi, An-Nasā'ī and Ibn Mājah. The wording of Muslim and the Sunan compilers says, "He used to recite

Surat Al-A'lā (chapter 87) and Surat Al-Gḥāshiyh (chapter 88) for the two 'lds and Jumu'ah. If they occurred on the same day, he would recite them in both of them."

In his *Musnad*, Imām Aḥmad recorded on the authority of Ubayy bin Ka'b, Abdullāh bin 'Abbās, 'Abdur-Raḥmān bin Abzā, and the Mother of the believers, 'Ā'ishah, that the Messenger of Allāh 裳 used to recite

(Glorify the Name of your Lord, the Most High.) and (Say: 'O you who disbelieve.') and (Say: 'He is Allāh, the One.') 'Ā'ishah added in her version that he would also recite the Mu'awwidhatayn (Al-Falaq and An-Nās). [2]

In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

€1. Glorify the Name of your Lord, the Most High.

^[1] Aḥmad 4:271.

^[2] Aḥmad from Ubayy 5:123, from Ibn 'Abbās 1:299, Ibn Abzā 3:406, and 'Ā'ishah 6:227.

- **♦2.** Who has created, and then proportioned it.**♦**
- \$3. And Who has measured; and then guided.
- 4. And Who brings out the pasturage,
- €5. And then makes it dark stubble.
- 6. We shall make you recite, so you shall not forget,
- €7. Except what Allāh may will. He knows what is apparent and what is hidden.
- 48. And We shall make easy for you the easy.
- 49. Therefore remind in case the reminder profits.
- €10. The reminder will be received by him who fears, >
- €11. But it will be avoided by the wretched, ▶
- €12. Who will enter the great Fire.
- €13. There he will neither die nor live.

The Command to pronounce Tasbīḥ and its Response

Imām Aḥmad recorded from Ibn 'Abbās that whenever the Messenger of Allāh 鑑 would recite

⟨Glorify the Name of your Lord, the Most High.⟩
he would say,

Glory to my Lord, the Most High. [1]

Ibn Jarīr recorded from Ibn Isḥāq Al-Hamdāni that whenever Ibn 'Abbās would recite

(Glorify the Name of your Lord, the Most High.)
he would say, "Glory to my Lord, the Most High," and whenever he would recite

♦I swear by the Day of Resurrection. ▶ (75:1)

^[1] Aḥmad 1:232, Abu Dāwud no. 883.

and then reach the end of it

⟨Is not He able to give life to the dead?⟩ (75:40)
he would say, "Glory to You, of course."

Qatādah said,

(Glorify the Name of your Lord, the Most High.)

"It has been mentioned to us that whenever the Prophet of Allāh & used to recite it he would say,

aGlory to my Lord, the Most High. "12]

The Creation, the Decree, and the bringing forth of Vegetation

Alläh says,

♦Who has created, and then proportioned it. ▶

meaning, He created that which has been created, and He fashioned every creation in the best of forms. Then Allāh says,

♦And Who has measured; and then guided. Mujāhid said, "He guided man to distress and happiness, and he guided the cattle to their pastures." This Āyah is similar to what Allāh has said about Mūsā's statement to Fir'awn,

Our Lord is He Who gave to each thing its form and nature, then guided it aright. (20:50)

meaning, He decreed a set measure and guided the creation to it. This is just as is confirmed in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim on the

^[1] Aţ-Ţabari 24:367.

^[2] Aṭ-Ṭabari 24:368. This is based upon the narration of Ibn 'Abbās above.

^[3] Aţ-Ţabari 24:369.

authority of 'Abdullāh bin 'Amr that the Messenger of Allāh 🕸 said,

«Verily, Allāh ordained the measure of all creation fifty thousand years before He created the heavens and the earth, and His Throne was over the water.» [1]

Concerning Allāh's statement,

♦And Who brings out the pasturage, meaning, all types of vegetation and crops.

♦And then makes it dark stubble. Ibn 'Abbās said, "Dried up and altered." It has been narrated that Mujāhid, Qatādah and Ibn Zayd, all made similar statements. [3]

The Prophet si does not forget the Revelation Allāh says,

(We shall make you to recite,) meaning, 'O Muhammad.'

♦so you shall not forget (it), This is Allāh informing and promising him (the Prophet ﷺ) that He will teach him a recitation that he will not forget.

⟨Except what Allāh may will.⟩ Qatādah said, "The Prophet ﷺ did
not forget anything except what Allāh willed." It has been said
that the meaning of Allāh's statement,

^[1] Muslim 4:2044.

^[2] Aţ-Ţabari 24:369.

^[3] Aț-Țabari 24:369, 370.

♦so you shall not forget, is, "do not forget" and that which would
be abrogated, is merely an exception to this. Meaning, 'do not
forget what We teach you to recite, except what Allâh wills,
which He removes and there is no sin on your leaving it off (not
retaining it).' Concerning Allâh's statement,

He knows what is apparent and what is hidden. meaning, He knows what the creatures do openly and what they hide, whether it be statements or deeds. None of that is hidden from Him.

Then Allah says,

♦And We shall make easy for you the easy. meaning, We will make good deeds and statements easy for you, and We will legislate such Law for you that is easy, tolerant, straight and just, with no crookedness, difficulty or hardship in it.'

The Command to remind

Allāh then says,

♦Therefore remind in case the reminder profits. ▶ meaning, remind where reminding is beneficial.

From here we get the etiquette of spreading knowledge, that it should not be wasted upon those who are not suitable or worthy of it. The Commander of the believers, 'Ali said, "You do not tell people any statement that their intellects do not grasp except that it will be a *Fitnah* (trial) for some of them." He also said, "Tell people that which they know. Would you like for Allāh and His Messenger to be rejected?"

Allāh said:

∢The reminder will be received by him who fears, ▶

meaning, 'he whose heart fears Allāh and who knows that he is going to meet Him, will receive admonition from what you convey to him, O Muḥammad.'

⟨But it will be avoided by the wretched, who will enter the great Fire. There he will neither die nor live.⟩

meaning, he will not die and thus be allowed to rest, nor will he live a life that is beneficial to him. Instead, his life will be harmful to him, because it will be the cause of his feeling of the pain of torment and various types of punishments what he is being punished with.

Imām Aḥmad recorded from Abu Saʿīd that the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said,

«أمَّا أَهْلُ النَّارِ الَّذِينَ هُمْ أَهْلُهَا لَا يَمُوتُونَ وَلَا يَحْيَوْنَ، وَأَمَّا أُنَاسٌ يُرِيدُ اللهُ بِهِمُ
 الرَّحْمَةَ فَيُمِيتُهُمْ فِي النَّارِ فَيَدْخُلُ عَلَيْهِمُ الشَّفَعَاءُ فَيَأْخُذُ الرَّجُلُ الضِّبَارَةَ فَيَنْبِتُهُمْ - أو
 قال: يَبْبُونَ فِي نَهْرِ الْحَيَا، أو قال: الْحَيَاةِ، أو قال: الْحَيَوَانِ أو قال: نَهْرِ الْجَنَّةِ
 - فَيَنْبُتُونَ نَبَاتَ الْحِبَّةِ فِي حَمِيلِ السَّيْلِ⁹

"Concerning the people of the Fire who are deserving of it, they will not die nor will they live. Regarding the people that Allāh wants mercy for, He will cause them to die in the Fire. Then He will allow the intercessors to come to them, and a man will take his groups of supporters and plant them (or he said they will be planted) in the River of Al-Ḥayā (or he said Al-Ḥayāh, or Al-Ḥayawān, or Nahr Al-Jannah). Then they will sprout up like the sprouting of the seed on the moist bank of a flowing stream."

Then the Prophet 鑑 said,

"Haven't you all seen the tree that is green, then it turns yellow, then it turns green (again)?"

Abu Said then said that some of those present said, "It is as if the Prophet in used to live in the desert wilderness (i.e., due to his parables of nature)." |

Aḥmad also recorded from Abu Sa'īd that the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said,

المَّا أَهْلُ النَّارِ الَّذِينَ هُمْ أَهْلُهَا فَإِنَّهُمْ لَا يَمُوتُونَ فِيهَا وَلَا يَحْبَوْنَ، وَلَٰكِنْ أُنَاسٌ أو كما قال - تُصِيبُهُمُ النَّارُ بِذُنُوبِهِمْ - أو قال: بِخَطَايَاهُمْ - فَيُمِيتُهُمْ إِمَاتَةً حَتْى إِذَا

^[1] Aḥmad 3:5.

صَارُوا فَحْمًا أَذِنَ فِي الشَّفَاعَةِ، فَجِيءَ بِهِمْ ضَبَائِرَ ضَبَائِرَ فَبُثُوا عَلَىٰ أَنْهَارِ الْجَنَّةِ فَيُقَالُ: يَا أَهْلَ الْجَنَّةِ أَفِيضُوا عَلَيْهِمْ، فَيَنْبُنُونَ نَبَاتَ الْحِبَّةِ تَكُونُ فِي حَمِيلِ السَّيْلِ[،]

"Concerning the people of the Fire who will be dwellers of it, they will not die in it nor will they live. However, there will be a group of people - or as he said - whom the Fire will burn due to their sins - or he said - their wrongdoings. So, He will cause them to die until they become burnt coal. Then the intercession will be allowed and they will be brought group after group, and they will be scattered over the rivers of Paradise. Then it will be said: "O people of Paradise! Pour down upon them." Then they will sprout like the growing of the seed that is upon the moist bank of the flowing stream."

Then, a man from among the people present said, "It is as if the Messenger of Allāh is used to live in the desert wilderness." Muslim also recorded this *Ḥadīth*.[2]

- €14. Indeed whosoever purifies himself shall achieve success.
- ♦15. And remembers the Name of his Lord, and performs
 Ṣalāh.
 ▶
- €16. Rather you prefer the life of this world.
- 417. Although the Hereafter is better and more lasting.
- €18. Verily, this is in the former Scriptures
- €19. The Scriptures of Ibrāhīm and Mūsā.

A Statement concerning the People of Success Allāh says,

♦Indeed whosoever purifies himself shall achieve success.

meaning, he purifies himself from despised characteristics and he follows what Allāh has revealed to the Messenger ﷺ.

^[1] Aḥmad 3:11.

^[2] Muslim 1:172.

﴿وَلَّكُرُ أَسْمَ رَبِّهِ. فَصَلَّى ﴿ ﴾

«And remembers the Name of his Lord, and performs Ṣalāh.»

meaning, he establishes the prayer in its appointed time, seeking the pleasure of Allāh, obedience to His command, and implementation of His Law. We have already reported from the Commander of the believers, 'Umar bin 'Abdul-'Azīz, that he used to command the people to give the Ṣadaqat Al-Fiṭr, [1] and he would recite this Āyah:

Indeed whosoever purifies himself shall achieve success. And remembers the Name of his Lord, and performs Salāh.

Abu Al-Aḥwaṣ said, "If someone comes to any of you begging, and he wants to pray, then he should give charity (Zakāh) before he prays. For verily, Allāh the Exalted says,

⟨Indeed whosoever purifies himself shall achieve success. And remembers the Name of his Lord, and performs Ṣalāh.⟩^{n[2]}
Qatādah said concerning this Āyah,

♦Indeed whosoever purifies himself shall achieve success. And remembers the Name of his Lord, and performs Ṣalāh (Fasallā).▶

"He purifies his wealth and pleases his Creator." [3]

This World is Worthless in Comparison to the Hereafter Then Allāh says,

∢Rather you prefer the life of this world.≽

meaning, 'you give it precedence over the matter of the Hereafter, and you prefer it because of what it contains of

 $^{^{[1]}}$ The prescribed charity at the end of the month of Ramaḍān.

^[2] At-Tabari 24:374.

^[3] Aţ-Ţabari 24:374.

usefulness and benefit for you in livelihood, and your returns (i.e., income, profitable gain).'

♦Although the Hereafter is better and more lasting.

meaning, the reward of the final abode is better than the worldly life, and it is more lasting. For indeed, this worldly life is lowly and temporal, whereas the Hereafter is noble and eternal. Thus, how can an intelligent person prefer that which is short-lived over that which is eternal. How can he give importance to that which will soon pass away from him, while ignoring the importance of the abode of eternity and infinity.

Imām Aḥmad recorded from Abu Mūsā Al-Ash'ari that the Messenger of Allāh 蜒 said,

aWhoever loves his worldly life, will suffer in his Hereafter, and whoever loves his Hereafter, will suffer in his worldly life. Therefore, chose that which is everlasting over that which is temporal.

Aḥmad was alone in recording this Ḥadīth.[1]

The Scriptures of Ibrāhīm and Mūsā

Allāh then says,

♦ Verily, this is in the former Scriptures – the Scriptures of Ibrāhīm and Mūsā. ▶

This Ayah is similar to Allah's statement in Sūrat An-Najm,

•Or is he not informed with what is in the Scriptures of Mūsā.

^[1] Aḥmad 4:412. This Ḥadīth has a deficiency in the chain of narration.

And of Ibrāhīm who fulfilled (or conveyed) all that (Allāh ordered him to do or convey): that no burdened person (with sins) shall bear the burden (sins) of another. And that man can have nothing but what he does. And that his deeds will be seen. Then he will be recompensed with a full and the best recompense. And that to your Lord is the End (Return of everything). (53:36-42)

And so forth, until the end of these $\bar{A}y\bar{a}t$. Abu ' \bar{A} liyah said, "The story of this $S\bar{u}rah$ is in the earlier Scriptures." Ibn Jarīr preferred the view that the meaning of Allāh's statement,

(Verily, this) is referring to His previous statement,

♦Indeed whosoever purifies himself shall achieve success. And remembers the Name of his Lord, and offers Ṣalāh. Rather you prefer the life of this world. Although the Hereafter is better and more lasting.

Then Allah says,

♦ Verily, this > meaning, the content of this discussion,

(in the former Scriptures, the Scriptures of Ibrāhīm and $M\bar{u}s\bar{a}$.)

This view that he (Aṭ-Ṭabari) has chosen is good and strong. Similar to it has been reported from Qatādah and Ibn Zayd. [3] And Allāh knows best.

This is the end of the *Tafsīr* of *Sūrat Al-A'lā* (*Sabbiḥ*). All praise and blessings are due to Allāh, and He is the Giver of success and protection from error.

^[1] At-Tabari 24:376.

^[2] At-Tabari 24:377.

^[3] At-Tabari 24:376.