

INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY: SŪRAT *An-Nāzi‘āt* 79.

This is also an early Makkan Sūra, of about the same date as the last, and deals with the theme of Judgment from the point of view of Pride and its Fall. The parable of Pharaoh occupies a central place in the argument: for he said, “I am your Lord Most High”, and perished with his followers.

An-Nāzi'āt, or Those Who Tear Out.

*In the name of Allah, Most Gracious,
Most Merciful.*

1. By the (angels)⁵⁹¹⁶
Who tear out
(The souls of the wicked)
With violence;⁵⁹¹⁷
2. By those who gently
Draw out (the souls
Of the blessed),⁵⁹¹⁸



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

وَالنَّازِعَاتِ غَرْاقًا

وَالنَّشِطَاتِ نَشْطًا

5916. The beginning of this Sūra may be compared with the beginning of S. lxxvii. A translator's task in such passages is extremely difficult. He has to contend, again and again, with verities of a realm beyond man's normal range of experience expressed in elliptical language and he has to render them in another language with words of precision intelligible to readers. It is therefore necessary for him to put in part of the Commentary in the Translation in such cases.

The evidence of five things is here invoked in verses 1-5, in order to lead to the conclusion in verse 6 and those following. Or, if we treat verses 3-5 as three stages of the same thing, there are three things to be considered in five stages. What are they? And what is the conclusion? See the following notes.

5917. There is much difference of opinion among the Commentators as to the five things or beings mentioned in these verses. I follow the general opinion in my interpretation, which is that angels are referred to as the agency which in their dealings with mankind show clearly Allah's Justice, Power, and Mercy, which again point to the Judgment to come, as a certainty which none can evade. The first point, referred to in this verse, is that the souls of the wicked are loath to part with their material body at death, but their will will not count: their souls will be wrenched out into another world. Who will then deny Resurrection and Judgment?

5918. The second point is that in contrast with the wicked, the souls of the blessed will be drawn out gently to their new life. They will be ready for it. In fact death for them will be a release from the grosser incidents of bodily sense. To them the approach of Judgment will be welcome.

3. And by those who glide
Along (on errands of mercy),⁵⁹¹⁹
4. Then press forward
As in a race,
5. Then arrange to do
(The Commands of their Lord),-
6. The Day everything that
Can be in commotion will
Be in violent commotion,⁵⁹²⁰
7. Followed by oft-repeated
(Commotions):⁵⁹²¹
8. Hearts that Day⁵⁹²²
Will be in agitation;
9. Cast down will be⁵⁹²³
(Their owners') eyes.

وَالسَّيِّحَاتِ سَبْعًا ﴿٢﴾

فَالسَّيِّقَاتِ سَبْقًا ﴿٤﴾

فَالْمُدِيرَاتِ أَمْرًا ﴿٥﴾

يَوْمَ تَرْجُفُ الرَّالِجَةُ ﴿٦﴾

تَتَّبِعُهَا الرَّادِفَةُ ﴿٧﴾

قُلُوبٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ وَاجِفَةٌ ﴿٨﴾

أَبْصُرُهَا خَشِيعَةً ﴿٩﴾

5919. At all times there are errands of mercy and blessing and errands of justice, which the angels are prompt to execute by order of Allah. There are three features of this, thus giving the third, fourth, and fifth points. (3) Their movement is compared to that of gliding or swimming (*sabhan*). In xxi. 33 this verb is applied to the motion of the celestial bodies: they all "swim along, each in its rounded course". Cf. Shakespeare, *Merchant of Venice*: "There's not an orb which thou behold'st, But in his motion like an angel sings, Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubims". (4) In hurrying on their errands the angels press forth as in a race. (5) And thus they promptly execute the orders of their Lord.

5920. The evidence of the wonderful working of the angels having been invoked in the first five verses, the conclusion is now drawn and stated. It is certain that one great Day, the whole world as we now see it in our lower life will be in violent revolution. It will be like an earthquake destroying all land-marks. But that will affect only things subject to change: they will suffer violent convulsions as a preliminary to their disappearance. But Allah and His divine order will not change: His "Face" abideth for ever, full of Majesty, Bounty, and Honour (lv. 27).

5921. The Commotion will be repeated again and again in the transitory world, to make way for the new world that will then come into being.

5922. All hearts will be in agitation: those of the blessed ones to see the beginning of the fulfilment of their Lord's Promise; those of the Rejecters of Allah for fear of His just Judgment.

5923. Similarly all eyes will be cast down: those of the blessed ones in humble modesty, and those of the Rejecters of Allah, in utter humiliation, sorrow, and shame, for their arrogance and insolence in their probationary life.

10. They say (now): "What!
Shall we indeed be⁵⁹²⁴
Returned to (our) former state?—
11. "What!—when we shall
Have become rotten bones?"
12. They say: "It would,
In that case, be
A return with loss!"
13. But verily, it will
Be but a single
(Compelling) Cry,⁵⁹²⁵
14. When, behold, they
Will be brought out
To the open.⁵⁹²⁶
15. Has the story⁵⁹²⁷
Of Moses reached thee?

يَقُولُونَ أَيَّ نَا لَمَرْدُودُونَ فِي الْحَافِرَةِ ﴿١٠﴾

أَيَّ ذَا كُنَّا عِظْمًا نَخْرَةً ﴿١١﴾

قَالُوا نَتْلُكَ إِذَا كَرَّ حَاسِرَةً ﴿١٢﴾

فَإِنَّمَا هِيَ زَجْرَةٌ وَاحِدَةٌ ﴿١٣﴾

فَإِذَا هُمْ بِالسَّاهِرَةِ ﴿١٤﴾

هَلْ أَتَاكَ حَدِيثُ مُوسَى ﴿١٥﴾

5924. The Unbelievers say now, in their arrogance, insolence, and mocking defiance: "Surely death here is the end of all things! When we are dead and buried, and our bones are rotten, how can we be restored again?" They add, "If that were so, then we should indeed be in a turn of dreadful luck! Instead of gaining by the Resurrection, we should be in terrible loss (with our rotten bones)!" They mean this in biting mockery. But there will indeed be an Account taken, and they will indeed be in a terrible loss, for they will go to perdition!

5925. Judgment will be insurged with a single compelling Cry. Cf. xxxvii. 19. See also xxxvi. 29 and 49, where the single mighty Blast seems to refer to the sinners being cut off in this life and plunged into the other world where they will be further judged, and xxxvi. 53, where the final Judgment is referred to.

5926. They will have been more or less dormant before the Great Judgment, as contrasted with the Lesser Judgment (n. 5914 to lxxviii. 40, and n. 5822 to lxxv. 22). When the resurrection comes, they will come fully into the new world, the old heaven and earth having then completely passed away, not only for them but absolutely.

5927. This is just a reference to the story of Moses told more fully in S. xx. 9-76. The lessons drawn are: (1) That even to an arrogant blasphemer and rebel against Allah's Law, like Pharaoh, Allah's grace was offered through a major Prophet Moses; (2) that this rejection brought about his signal downfall even in this world; and (3) that his humiliation and punishment will be completed in the Hereafter at Judgment.

16. Behold, thy Lord did call
To him in the sacred valley
Of Tuwā:—⁵⁹²⁸

إِذْ نَادَاهُ رَبُّهُ بِالْوَادِ الْمُقَدَّسِ طُوًى ﴿١٦﴾

17. "Go thou to Pharaoh,
For he has indeed
Transgressed all bounds:—⁵⁹²⁹

أَذْهَبَ إِلَىٰ فِرْعَوْنَ إِنَّهُ طَغَىٰ ﴿١٧﴾

18. "And say to him,
'Wouldst thou that thou
Shouldst be purified
(From sin)?—

فَقُلْ هَلْ لَكَ إِلَٰهٌ إِلَّا أَن تَرْكَىٰ ﴿١٨﴾

19. " 'And that I guide thee
To thy Lord, so thou⁵⁹³⁰
Shouldst fear him?' "

وَأَهْدِيكَ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ فَتَخْشَىٰ ﴿١٩﴾

20. Then did (Moses) show him
The Great Sign.⁵⁹³¹

فَأَرَاهُ الْآيَةَ الْكُبْرَىٰ ﴿٢٠﴾

21. But (Pharaoh) rejected it
And disobeyed (guidance);

فَكَذَّبَ وَعَصَىٰ ﴿٢١﴾

22. Further, he turned his back,
Striving hard (against Allah).

ثُمَّ أَذْبَرَ سَعْيَ ﴿٢٢﴾

23. Then he collected (his men)
And made a proclamation,

فَحَشَرَ فَنَادَىٰ ﴿٢٣﴾

24. Saying, "I am your Lord,
Most High".

قَالَ أَنَا رَبُّكُمُ الْأَعْلَىٰ ﴿٢٤﴾

5928. Cf. xx. 12.

5929. Cf. xx. 24.

5930. Even for such a one as Pharaoh, intoxicated with his own power and greatness, guidance and grace were offered through Moses.

5931. What was the Great Sign? Some Commentators understand by it the "White Shinning Hand": see n. 2550 to xx. 22-23. Others think it was the miracle of the rod that became a "snake active in motion": see xx. 20, n. 2549. These were among the Greater Signs: xx. 23. In xvii. 101 there is a reference to nine Clear Signs given to Moses, and these are specified in detail in n. 1091 to vii. 133. The fact is, there were many Signs given, "openly self-explained," but Pharaoh and his men "were steeped in arrogance,—a people given to sin" (vii. 133). The pre-eminently Great Sign was therefore the fact of Moses being sent to Pharaoh, which subsequently converted the magicians and the more learned Egyptians to the true God (xx. 70-73), though Pharaoh and his Chiefs resisted and suffered for their sins.

25. But Allah did punish him,
(And made an) example
Of him,—in the Hereafter,
As in this life.⁵⁹³²

فَأَخَذَهُ اللَّهُ تَكَاَلًا لِّلْآخِرَةِ وَالْأُولَىٰ ﴿٢٥﴾

26. Verily in this is
A lesson⁵⁹³³
For whosoever feareth (Allah).

إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَعِبْرَةً لِّمَن يَخْشَىٰ ﴿٢٦﴾

SECTION 2.

27. What! Are ye the more
Difficult to create
Or the heaven (above)?⁵⁹³⁴
(Allah) hath constructed it:

مَآ أَنْتُمْ أَشَدُّ خَلْقًا أَمَّا السَّمَاءُ بَنَيْنَاهَا ﴿٢٧﴾

28. On high hath He raised
Its canopy, and He hath
Given it order and perfection.⁵⁹³⁵

رَفَعَ سَمَكَهَا فَسَوَّيْنَاهَا ﴿٢٨﴾

29. Its night doth He
Endow with darkness,
And its splendour doth He
Bring out (with light).⁵⁹³⁶

وَأَغْطَشَ لَيْلَهَا وَأَخْرَجَ ضُحَاهَا ﴿٢٩﴾

5932. See xx. 78-79, also vii. 135-137.

5933. Cf. xxiv. 44.

5934. If man grows arrogant or forgets his accountability to Allah, in his ignorance or thoughtlessness, he is reminded that he is only an insignificant speck in Allah's spacious Creation. All the excellence that man acquires is the gift of Allah. Who has bestowed on him a high Destiny if he fulfils the purpose of his creation: ii. 30-39. Then follows a nature passage, pointing to the glory of the heavens and the earth, and how they are both made to subserve the life of man.

5935. Cf. ii. 29. The mystery of the heavens with their countless stars and the planets obeying the laws of motion, and the sun and moon influencing the temperature and climates of the earth from thousands or millions of miles, illustrate the order and perfection which Allah has given to His Creation. Can man then remain exempt from his responsibility for his deeds, endowed as he is with a will, or deny the Day of Sorting Out, which is the Day of Judgment?

5936. *Its* of course refers to the starry heaven. Both the Night and the Day have each its own beauty and its utility for man, as has been frequently pointed out in the Qur-ān. The night is a period of darkness, but it has also its splendours of light in the moon, or the planets Jupiter or Venus, or stars like Sirius or the Milky Way. These =

30. And the earth, moreover,⁵⁹³⁷

Hath He extended
(To a wide expanse);

وَالْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ دَحَاهَا ﴿٣٠﴾

31. He draweth out

Therefrom its water
And its pasture,⁵⁹³⁸

أَخْرَجَ مِنْهَا مَاءَهَا وَمَرْعَاهَا ﴿٣١﴾

32. And the mountains

Hath He firmly fixed;⁵⁹³⁹

وَالْجِبَالَ أَرْسَاهَا ﴿٣٢﴾

33. A provision⁵⁹⁴⁰

For you and your cattle.

مَتَاعًا لَّكُمْ وَلِأَنْعَامِكُمْ ﴿٣٣﴾

34. Therefore, when there comes

The great, overwhelming

فَإِذَا جَاءَ بِالسَّاعَةِ الْكُبْرَى ﴿٣٤﴾

(Event),⁵⁹⁴¹

35. The Day when Man

Shall remember (all)

That he strove for,⁵⁹⁴²

يَوْمَ يَتَذَكَّرُ الْإِنْسَانُ مَا سَعَى ﴿٣٥﴾

= countless lights of night have their own beauty, and by day there is the splendour of the sun for us, which in Creation as a whole, is just one of countless stars.

5937. *Moreover:* or, more literally, *after that*. See n. 4475 to xli. 11.

5938. The underground springs and wells of water as well as rivers and glaciers in northern climates are due to the different levels of highlands not lowlands. They spread the moisture evenly as wanted, and give corn, fruits, and vegetables to man, and pastures and feeding grounds to beasts of the fields. For the wonderful circuit or cycle of water between heaven and earth, see notes 3106 (xxv. 49) and 3111 (xxv. 53).

5939. See n. 2038 to xvi. 15. The "eternal hills" are the main reservoirs for the storage and gradual distribution of water, the very basis of the life of man and beast.

5940. This clause I construe to apply to verses 30, 31, and 32 above. Everything on earth has, by Allah's bountiful providence, been arranged to subserve the use and convenience of man and the lower life which depends upon him. The intermediary between Allah's providence and the actual use made of Allah's other gifts is man's own intelligence and initiative, which are also gifts of Allah.

5941. The Judgment, the time for sorting out all things according to their true, intrinsic, and eternal values.

5942. The Judgment will be not only for his acts but for his motives, "all he strove for". In this life he may forget his ill-deeds, but in the new conditions he will not only remember them, but the Fire of Punishment will be plainly visible to him, and not only to him, but it will be "for all to see". This will add to the sinner's humiliation.

36. And Hell-Fire shall be
Placed in full view⁵⁹⁴³
For him who sees.-
37. Then, for such as had
Transgressed all bounds,
38. And had preferred⁵⁹⁴⁴
The life of this world,
39. The Abode will be
Hell-Fire;
40. And for such as had
Entertained the fear
Of standing before⁵⁹⁴⁵
Their Lord's (tribunal)
And had restrained
(Their) soul from lower Desires,
41. Their Abode will be
The Garden.
42. They ask thee⁵⁹⁴⁶
About the Hour,-'When
Will be its appointed time?'
43. Wherein art thou (concerned)
With the declaration thereof?

وَبُرِّزَتِ الْجَحِيمُ لِمَنْ يَرَىٰ ﴿٣٦﴾

فَأَمَّا مَنْ طَغَىٰ ﴿٣٧﴾

وَأَنزَلَ الْخُلُوفَ الدُّنْيَا ﴿٣٨﴾

فَإِنَّ الْجَحِيمَ هِيَ الْمَأْوَىٰ ﴿٣٩﴾

وَأَمَّا مَنْ خَافَ مَقَامَ رَبِّهِ وَنَهَى النَّفْسَ عَنِ الْهَوَىٰ ﴿٤٠﴾

فَإِنَّ الْجَنَّةَ هِيَ الْمَأْوَىٰ ﴿٤١﴾

يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ السَّاعَةِ أَيَّانَ مُرْسَاهَا ﴿٤٢﴾

فِيمَ أَنْتَ مِنْ ذِكْرِهَا ﴿٤٣﴾

5943. Cf. xxvi. 91.

5944. The abiding Punishment will be for those who had wilfully and persistently rebelled against Allah, "transgressing all bounds", and had given themselves up to the vanities and lusts of this lower life. This Punishment will not touch those who had repented and been forgiven, nor those guilty, through human frailty, of minor sins, whose deeds will be weighed in the balance against their good deeds: ci. 6-9.

5945. The contrast is complete and parallel: the persistent rebels against Allah's Law, who preferred the lower life, are to dwell in the Fire of Punishment, while those who humbly feared the punishment of sin and believing in their Lord's warnings restrained their lower desires, will dwell in the Garden. See last note.

5946. Cf. vii. 187 and n. 1159. Only Allah can reveal it. But were it known, "heavy were its burden through the heavens and the earth".

44. With thy Lord is
The final end of it.⁵⁹⁴⁷
45. Thou art but a Warner
For such as fear it.⁵⁹⁴⁸
46. The Day they see it,
(It will be) as if they
Had tarried but a single
Evening, or (at most till)
The following morn!⁵⁹⁴⁹

إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ مُنْهَلَا ﴿٤٤﴾

إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ مُذَكِّرٌ مِّنْ يَّخْشَاهَا ﴿٤٥﴾

كَأَنَّهُمْ يَوْمَ يَرَوْنَهَا لَمْ يَلْبِسُوا إِلَّا عَشِيَّةً أَوْ ضُحَاهَا ﴿٤٦﴾

5947. Our time has no sort of comparison with the timeless state in the new spiritual World in which the final Judgment will take place. Nor can its limits—how long it will last—be set except in the Will of Almighty Allah. Lord of Supreme Wisdom, Justice, and Goodness: xi. 107-108. But it is near, in the sense explained in n. 5914 to lxxviii. 40.

5948. The warning is only effective for those who believe in Allah and in the Final Account. Such men immediately turn in repentance to Allah, and it is to lead such men and help them, that Prophets are sent.

5949. Cf. x. 45, where the expression used is: "it will be as if they had tarried but an hour of a day." Here the metaphor used is "a single evening, or, at most, till the following morn". Death is like sleep, and may be compared to the evening of life. In sleep we do not know how the time passes. When we wake up from the sleep of Death at the Resurrection, we shall not know whether it was the following moment or the following hour after we slept, but we shall feel that it is morning, for we shall be conscious of all that goes on, as one awakened in the morning.