

SUMMER IMMERSION

TAFSIR OF SURAH NAJM



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Introduction

- When Imam al-Ghazali would start teaching tafsir, he would explain that the Qur'an is not only for spiritual growth but intellectual growth as well.
- The Qur'an gives us the ability to navigate through life, it allows our minds to connect with the realities of life and it allows light to enter into our lives.
- The light of the Qur'an however is not only spiritually for the heart to grow, but intellectually for the mind to grow.
- Contrary to what the disbelievers claim, the Prophet (ﷺ) never learned from pious people nor did he receive any form of education prior to the knowledge of the Qur'an. Allah dispels this notion in a few verses of the Qur'an.
- Every aspect of the Prophet's life (in his characteristics, his dealings with people etc.) was based on the Qur'an.
- While the Qur'an is our guide to becoming a good Muslim; it contains knowledge of worship, commandments and rulings etc., it is not its sole purpose.
- The Qur'an was revealed for us to understand how to live our lives in the best way and for us to develop a mindset that makes us good human beings.

- We need intellectual insight to grow, and as Muslims, we must be able to make decisions in life based upon the paradigms of the Qur'an.
- According to Imam al-Ghazali, every thought of an action stems from the heart, and when the heart accepts it, it will try to convince the mind.
- The inward relates to the outward; and the outward relates to the inward. Nothing comes to the heart unless it is from a thought. This is why Shaytan's goal is to affect our hearts.
- The primary beneficiary of the Qur'an is our heart, but we should also cultivate our mind through it.
- What we know in this world is based upon our knowledge, intellect and revelation.
- Once we gain knowledge, intellect supplements our knowledge. Both these elements are what allows us to accept divine revelation (wahy).
- If in the presence of wahy, a person limits themselves to knowledge and intellect, it is seen as a sign of immaturity.
- Wahy which is what is revealed in the Qur'an, is the most superior and complete way of learning – it supports reason.
- It is important to understand this concept as Surah an-Najm focuses on revelation – its source, its impact on humanity etc.

Background of the Surah

- Surah an-Najm is a Makki surah which was said to be revealed in the fifth year of the Prophet's Prophethood.
- In the first two years of his Prophethood, da'wah was done in secrecy. While in the third year, Allah commanded for the da'wah to go public – and open persecution began.

- In the fifth year, Islam was solidified by the conversion of Hamza RA and Umar RA. When Umar RA became Muslim, the open da'wah grew to the extent that it took place in the center of the community, at the ka'aba.
- Ibn Mas'ud indicated that this is the first surah of the Qur'an which the Prophet (ﷺ) had publicly recited before an assembly of the Quraysh in front of the ka'aba, in which both the believers and the disbelievers were present.
- At the end, when the Prophet (ﷺ) recited the verse requiring the sajdah, he fell down in prostration. The whole assembly also fell down in prostration with him, including the chiefs of the mushrikun.

◦ Narrated Ibn `Abbas:

أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ سَجَدَ بِالنَّجْمِ وَسَجَدَ مَعَهُ الْمُسْلِمُونَ وَالْمُشْرِكُونَ وَالْجِنْ وَالإِنْسُنُ.

I prostrated while reciting An-Najm and with him prostrated (ﷺ) The Prophet (the Muslims, the pagans, the jinns, and all human beings. (Sahih al-Bukhari

- Later the mushrikun felt great remorse at their weakness for falling down in prostration along with the Prophet (ﷺ).
- They invented a story claiming, "After he had recited afara'ait-ul Lata wal Uzza wa Manat ath-thalitha-al ukhra, we heard from Muhammad the words: tilk al-gharaniqa- tal-'ula, wa anna shafa'at-u-hunna latarja: 'They are exalted goddesses: indeed, their intercession may be expected.' From this we understood that Muhammad had returned to our faith."
- Until this day, if anyone hears this surah, their hearts and minds will be touched by it because it was the first surah in which both believers and disbelievers fell in sajdah the first time it was revealed.

- Imam al-Suyuti opined that in a gathering between Muslims and non-Muslims, it is good to recite Surah an-Najm due to the impact that it has on everyone.

Sequence of the Surah

- In the Qur'an, the order of the surahs are not arranged based upon the timing of revelation, but based upon the order of the placement that was given by Allah to the Prophet (ﷺ).
- Surah an-Najm is the 53rd chapter in the Qur'an and it is from the 27th juz. Surah at-Tur is the previous surah before it, and prior to that is Surah adh-Dhariyat and Surah Qaf.
- The sequences of these surahs are not coincidental, but rather, they are interconnected and have links between them.
- There are some correlations between the former and latter surah to Surah an-Najm.

The First Sequence: Qur'an

- In Surah Qaf, Allah swears by the Qur'an and its honor. Then, He affirms in Surah adh-Dhariyat that the Qur'an is the truth.
- In Surah at-Tur, He goes over all the claims that the disbelievers make about the Qur'an – saying it is the word of a magician, poet, it is made up etc. So, in Surah an-Najm, Allah clarifies that it is a revelation from Him.
- Following His clarification, in Surah Qamar, Allah censures them for still thinking that it is magic.
- Subsequently, in Surah ar-Rahman, He introduces Himself as the Most Merciful and tells us that the greatest sign of His mercy is that He has allowed us to accept the Qur'an. Those who have earned His mercy are those that have accepted the Qur'an.

The Second Sequence: Creation

- In Surah at-Tur, Allah speaks about the mountain, followed by a star in Surah an-Najm and the moon in Surah Qamar. Allah then speaks about all these creations in Surah ar-Rahman.
- To form this connection in the Qur'an, it is important to do tadabbur (contemplate) and reflect upon the verses when we recite them.
- The repetition of verses in the Qur'an are for us to derive lessons from. Each lesson will be different when we listen to it, make sense of it, and ponder upon it at different times.
- When learning Deen, it is important to receive it as if it is our first-time learning or reciting it. There will always be new things we discover and new connections that we can form.

The Third Sequence: Ending and Beginning

- In the ending of Surah at-Tur, Allah says:

وَمَنْ أَلْيَلِ فَسَبِّحْهُ وَإِذْبَرَ الْنُّجُومَ

And in a part of the night exalt Him and after [the setting of] the star (52:49)

- Allah begins the next surah, Surah an-Najm, by speaking about the same star:

وَالنَّجْمُ إِذَا هَوَى

By the star when it descends

- There is a flow between the ending and beginning of these surahs, and it is a continuation because the Qur'an is one book.
- Allah is telling us that we should worship Him and not the star. While we identify the star as His creation, we should praise Him and not the star, because He gave it to us and it is His blessing.
- Even the stars fade and lose their light, but Allah is not of that nature – He is Ever-present and Everlasting.

Themes of the Surah

- The general theme of Makki surahs: it contains the speech about akhirah, the stories of the previous prophets and the discussion of faith. Surah an-Najm will revolve around these themes.
- There are three themes in this surah:
 - First theme: The final revelation – the Qur'an and its beginning
 - Second theme: Seeking salvation – distinguishing truth versus falsehood
 - Third theme: The outcome – the discussion of the Day of Judgment
- The following surah will continue with the discussion of Jannah and Jahannam.
- Allah has given us senses in which we have the ability to see, touch and feel (i.e the mountain, the stars, the moon etc.).
- Imam al-Razi says, the reason why Allah uses such examples is to explain to us that in the same way we believe in the existence of what we can see, touch and feel, we should believe in what Allah tells us through divine revelation.

Ayah 1

- There are varying opinions about this verse.
- First opinion:
 - In the last verse of the previous surah, Allah ended it by telling us about the star. While in this surah, Allah begins by speaking about a specific star.
 - This star refers to the Pleiades which is known by the Arabs as al-Thurayya.
 - It is the star in which the sorcerers or fortune tellers supposedly seek information or guidance from.

- Allah is denying the claims that were made to discredit the Prophet (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) in Surah at-Tur by telling the naysayers that he did not obtain information from the star.
- Second opinion:
 - The star that descends refers to the shooting star.
 - These shooting stars are Shayateen that attempt to eavesdrop on the conversation Allah is having with the angels.
 - When the angels see them doing so, they attack them with meteors to repel them.
 - 'Abdullah. Ibn 'Abbas reported:

أَخْبَرَنِي رَجُلٌ، مِنْ أَصْحَابِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ مِنَ الْأَنْصَارِ أَنَّهُمْ بَيْنَمَا هُمْ جُلُوسُ لَيْلَةً مَعَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ رُؤْمِيَ بِنَجْمٍ فَأَسْتَأْنَارَ فَقَالَ لَهُمْ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ "مَاذَا كُنْتُمْ تَقُولُونَ فِي الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ إِذَا رُؤْمِيَ بِمَثْلِ هَذَا" . قَالُوا اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ أَعْلَمُ كُنَّا نَقُولُ وَلِدَ اللَّيْلَةِ رَجُلٌ عَظِيمٌ وَمَاتَ رَجُلٌ عَظِيمٌ فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ "فَإِنَّهَا لَا يُرْمَنِي بِهَا لِمَوْتِ أَحَدٍ وَلَا لِحَيَاةِهِ وَلَكِنْ رَبُّنَا تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى اسْمُهُ إِذَا قَضَى أَمْرًا سَبَّحَ حَمْلَةُ الْعَرْشِ ثُمَّ سَبَّحَ أَهْلُ السَّمَاءِ الَّذِينَ يَلُونَهُمْ حَتَّى يَلْبَغَ التَّسْبِيحُ أَهْلَ هَذِهِ السَّمَاءِ الَّذِينَ تُمَّ قَالَ الَّذِينَ يَلُونَ حَمْلَةَ الْعَرْشِ لِحَمْلَةِ الْعَرْشِ مَاذَا قَالَ رَبُّكُمْ فَيُخْبِرُنَّهُمْ مَاذَا قَالَ - قَالَ - فَيَسْتَخِبِرُ بَعْضُ أَهْلِ السَّمَوَاتِ بَعْضًا حَتَّى يَلْبَغَ الْخَبْرُ هَذِهِ السَّمَاءِ الَّذِيَا فَتَخْطُفُ الْجِنُّ السَّمْعَ فَيَقْذِفُونَ إِلَى أُولَئِكَهُمْ وَيُرْمَوْنَ بِهِ فَمَا جَاءُوا بِهِ عَلَى وَجْهِهِ فَهُوَ حَقٌّ وَلَكِنَّهُمْ يَقْرِفُونَ فِيهِ وَيَزِيدُونَ"

A person from the Ansar who was amongst the Companions of Allah's Messenger (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) reported to me: As we were sitting during the night with Allah's Messenger (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ), a meteor shot gave a dazzling light. Allah's Messenger (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said: What did you say in the pre-Islamic days when there was such a shot (of meteor)? They said: Allah and His Messenger know best (the actual position), but we, however, used to say that that very night a great man had been born and a great man had died, whereupon Allah's Messenger (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said: (These meteors) are shot neither at the death of anyone nor on the birth of anyone. Allah, the Exalted and Glorious, issues Command when He decides to do a thing. Then (the Angels) supporting the Throne sing His glory, then sing the dwellers of heaven who are near to them until this glory of God reaches them who are in the heaven of this world. Then those who are near the supporters of the Throne ask these supporters of the Throne: What your Lord has said? And they accordingly inform them what He says. Then the dwellers of heaven seek information from them until this information reaches the heaven of the world. In this process of transmission (the jinn snatches) what he manages to overhear and he carries it to his friends. And when the Angels see the jinn they attack them with meteors. If they narrate only which they manage to snatch that is correct but they alloy it with lies and make additions to it. (Sahih Muslim)

- Until this day, people are told to make a wish when they see a shooting star.
- This idea was established because the sorcerers and fortune tellers would get some information from the devils – even though most of the time they are inaccurate.
- The Prophet (ﷺ) however, did not get information by simply looking at the star. Nature is a creation of Allah and it does not give us any information.
- Third opinion:
 - It refers to any star. No star can give us any information and no one can simply make anything up based on it.
 - هَوْى – Means lowly desire/inclination
 - Therefore, any person who has fallen for their desires has misguided and degraded themselves.
 - Those who made the stars their god are similar to those who made their desires their god.
 - We should not follow the stars and our desires because both of them cannot tell us the truth.

Ayah 2

- Allah refers to the Prophet (ﷺ) as a companion because he is amongst them and considered to be a companion of the Quraysh.
- The difference between ضَلَّ (stray) and غَوَى (err):
 - ضَلَّ is the opposite of hidayah. It means having a destination but not getting there (i.e. taking a wrong turn).
 - غَوَى is the opposite of rushd. It means not having a destination (i.e. not knowing where you are going).
 - The Prophet was clear with what he relayed and he has a purpose for saying it.

- In another opinion, **ضلّ** is when a person messes up in their actions. While **غوى** is when a person makes a mistake in their speech.
- This means that the Prophet (ﷺ) has not done anything wrong nor said anything wrong.

Ayah 3

- The Prophet (ﷺ) did not speak from his desires nor for himself. He only spoke of the truth and the truth never changes.
- Similarly, Nuh AS was the first prophet that was sent to a disbelieving nation. Yet, after 950 years, he never pivoted from his response: "Worship Allah". This is how we should respond to naysayers.
- This reminds us when giving da'wah, our response should never change and we should reference the Qur'an as our source, or a person with knowledge of the Qur'an if we are unsure.
- While another opinion is that the Prophet (ﷺ) has not spoken from the falling star that they swear by.
- Eloquent speech does not lack substance and is not conflicting in its meanings – all of these verses support one another.
- **كلام** is speech that can be understood and has meaning, while **نُطُقٌ** is defined as any form of utterance (i.e a child babbling).
- Hence, Allah is affirming that the Prophet (ﷺ) is not uttering anything from his desires or the star. This proves to us that everything he said was part of shariah.
- We cannot understand the Qur'an without the sunnah and seerah of the Prophet (ﷺ).

Ayah 4

- Everything the Prophet (ﷺ) uttered came from revelation that was given by Allah.
- Allah refutes the naysayers' claim in Surah at-Tur saying that the Qur'an came from these different sources.