

Tafseer Surah at-Teen (التين)

Notes on Nouman Ali Khan's Concise Commentary of the Quran

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Introduction

- I. The legacies of prophets and believers are summarized in this surah
- II. It can be divided into five parts:
 - A. First part mentions Allah's wisdom descending in the form of different revelations through various prophets
 - B. Second part discusses how man was made for greatness
 - C. Third part mentions the tragedy that man reduced himself to the very lowest
 - D. Fourth part discusses how man can rise back into greatness
 - E. Fifth part is about the legacy of revelation
- III. There are two schools of thought on what it means when Allah swears by something:
 - A. Those who say He does so to highlight its importance, magnificence, or its blessing
 - B. Those who say it is related to the subject that is coming later after the swearing. It is being used to make an argument and to draw the listener's attention to the upcoming subject
 1. Ust. Nouman Ali Khan finds this view more convincing because it is more consistent with the structure of the Quran

Tafseer of the Verses

1. By the fig and the olive

- a. Some scholars said this is in reference to locations which are known to have lots of figs and olives. They differed over what those locations may be. The following are some views:
 - i. The 'fig' is in reference to the mountain on which Prophet Nuh landed with his ship. It was a land known for figs
 - ii. The 'olives' is in reference to Jerusalem because Prophet Eesa spoke on the mount of olives
 - iii. The 'fig' and 'olive' both are in reference to Jerusalem only
 1. Ust. Nouman Ali Khan finds this view more convincing
 2. It could be in reference to both Prophet Ibrahim and Eesa

2. And [by] Mount Sinai

- a. This is in reference to the mountain on which Prophet Musa spoke with Allah

3. And [by] this secure city

- a. This is in reference to Mecca

- i. It could be related to the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) or Prophet Ibrahim or both. If we accept the 'fig' as a reference to Nuh, then this would cover the five greatest prophets sent to mankind (Nuh, Ibrahim, Musa, Eesa, and Muhammad)
- b. It is as if Allah is referencing all of the lands where various prophets were sent to deliver the greatest of His revelations like the Injeel, Tawraat, etc. It ends with Mecca because that is where the last one, the Quran, was sent

4. We have certainly created man in the best of stature

- a. The Arabic word *taqweem* (stature)
 - i. Comes from a word meaning something standing firm and tall. It also refers to something that is upright
 - 1. As human beings, we have emotions as well as intellect and we try to balance between them. We also have various types of needs and responsibilities that we try to balance
- b. Some scholars said that this is in reference to human beings given ability to physically walk on two feet and stand upright
 - i. They said it means that man was created in the best form and are the most upright of creation (*Mukhtasar fee tafseer*)
- c. What does this have to do with the verses before it related to the prophets?
 - i. Allah is saying that these prophets are proof that human beings have the ability to reach amazing heights and what they are capable of in terms of goodness

5. Then We return him to the lowest of the low

- a. Meaning that even though Allah made us upright and balanced, He allows us to deteriorate and fall apart
 - i. Grammatically, it can have two meanings:
 - 1. Of all the creatures that are low, human beings are the lowest
 - a. In other words, we become worse than animals through our lowly behavior
 - 2. He allows humans to deteriorate to a lower place because they want to be low
 - a. Meaning we ourselves behave in a lowly manner, so He just lets us go deeper down that path
 - i. If we want to go higher, Allah will allow us to do so. If we want to go lower, He will also allow us to do so. We have to make the effort to be better
 - ii. So even though Allah created us for great uprightness, we allow ourselves to become low
- b. Some said it means that Allah returns man in old age to a weakened state so that his body is no longer of benefit to him as it once was, similarly, it is of no benefit to man when he corrupts his *fitrah* (natural disposition) and becomes among the people of the fire (*Mukhtasar fee tafseer*)

6. Except for those who believe and do righteous deeds, for they will have a reward uninterrupted

- a. This can be looked at in one of two ways:

- i. Meaning only those who had faith and did righteous deeds saved themselves from falling to the lowest of the low and fulfilled their humanity
- ii. Meaning some among those who had fallen to the lowest of the low raised themselves again after believing and doing good deeds
 - 1. Ex: They were in the depths of darkness and then converted to Islam and changed their life for the better
- b. The essence of belief is to be at peace with yourself and offer it to others
 - i. In this state, you have accepted peacefully what Allah wants from you and you are at peace with yourself
- c. The Arabic word used for 'righteous' in the verse is a word derived from the Arabic word *sulh*, which means to rectify or correct something, so it means they do good things to correct the wrongs that were done in the past
 - i. Meaning, they are constantly trying to become better versions of themselves
- d. These 'righteous deeds' are not a lot but a small amount of actions that Allah has requested of them to either do or abstain from
 - i. Basically all the things that we are either commanded or forbidden to do are considered 'righteous deeds'
- e. These people balance their wrong actions with right ones and live up to their full potential
- f. The Arabic word *mamnoon* (interrupted)
 - i. It has two meanings:
 - 1. Something that is imposed on others
 - a. Meaning they will have a reward and will not be constantly reminded about it in a way to make them feel bad about it. Rather, the people of paradise will be honored and dignified
 - 2. Something that has a tendency of falling apart and not lasting
 - a. Ust. Nouman Ali Khan prefers this one
 - b. Meaning they will have a reward that will never be cut off from them, rather, they will be continuously rewarded
 - i. When we pass along good deeds to future generations, then our reward lives on through them even if we do not

7. So what yet causes you to deny the Recompense?

- a. Three possible interpretations:
 - i. It is speaking to the Prophet (pbuh) and asking who still considers you a liar after everything that has been said?
 - 1. It's a rhetorical question
 - ii. Allah is asking man the question: what makes you lie against the judgement now?
 - 1. Lie against yourself and the judgement that is coming on the Day of Judgement despite you being an upright creation with the ability to grasp this reality
 - iii. It is asking us: what argument do you have left now that empowers you to consider the judgement and verdict of Allah a lie after all that has been said?

1. The judgement being here to raise ourselves and live up to the humanity that we were given and not fall so low

8. Is not Allah the Most Just of judges?

- a. The Arabic word *hakam* (just)
 - i. It can have a literal or figurative meaning
 1. Literally, it refers to something tied up or tight. It also refers to something tightly and neatly woven together
 2. Figurative meanings
 - a. The word *hikmah* (wisdom), because wisdom is an argument that is well stitched together. It is information that is beneficial, coherent, and organized
 - b. It also carries the meaning of judgement
 - i. This is why one of the words used for a judge is *haakim* in Arabic because he judges based on coherent arguments, judgements, and wisdom
 - c. The Quran is also called *hakeem* because it carries wisdom, judgements, and is well stitched together
- b. Meaning, are you questioning Allah, the Most Just of all judges?
- c. Some said it means did Allah not create the Day of Judgement as a day for reward or punishment to be conducted by the most Just of all judges? Does man think that Allah would just leave His slaves in vain without ultimately judging between them?!
(*Al-Mukhtasar fee tafseer*)