

Tafseer Surah al-Layl (الليل)

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

By Rameez Abid

Introduction

- I. This surah articulates the tension between two things:
 - A. Divine Will (Will of Allah)
 - B. Human effort
- II. This is a Meccan surah
- III. Some said that there is a reference to Abu Bakr in this surah while others said it is general

Tafseer of the Verses

1. By the night when it covers

- a. Night covers everything up with darkness

2. And [by] the day when it appears

- a. Day makes everything clear and obvious because of the light

3. And [by] He who created the male and female

- a. The previous two verses of night and day are being compared to a male and female
 - i. They are complete opposites yet need each other for life to continue
- b. The Arabic word *al-dhakar* (male)
 - i. It is used for a sword because it is tough, hard, unbending, rigid
 - ii. It is also used to refer to put the metal on top of an ax
 1. So there is the association with toughness, strength, hardness, muscle
 - iii. It is also used to refer to intense rain because it is very hard on the body when it falls on it
 - iv. It is also used to refer to something that is so hard that it can attack something else
 - v. All of the above show that men by nature are physically and emotionally tougher and rigid
 1. They also are less emotionally intelligent than women
- c. The Arabic word *al-unsaa* (female)
 - i. It refers to the fat on the thighs of a horse
 - ii. It also refers to a patch of land that is soft, easy to work with, and navigate
 1. Meaning it is not rigid and is ripe for growth and life
 2. This shows that by nature women are soft

4. Indeed, your efforts are diverse

- a. Meaning the effort and work people put in this life are going in two different directions
 - i. And they are different as night and day or as man and woman

- b. Next few verses explain what these efforts which are going in opposite directions consist of
 - i. The first description is of those whose efforts are going in the right direction
 - ii. The second description is of those whose efforts are going in the wrong direction

5. As for he who gives and fears Allah

- a. This verse can be broken up into two parts:
 - i. First part means the person gives as much as he can
 - 1. Allah does not define what the person actually gives so it could be anything
 - a. Ex: money, food, help, smile, advice, etc.
 - 2. So the idea here is that the person is charitable towards his fellow man
 - ii. Second part is in reference to our relationship with Allah
 - 1. Means the person is good towards Allah by abiding to His commands
- b. The lesson to draw from this verse is that being humanitarians alone without following Allah's commands is not sufficient

6. And believes in the best [reward]

- a. The Arabic word *sidq* (believes) also means the unchanging and uncompromising truth
 - i. You accept it as truth whether it is comfortable or easy to accept it or not
 - 1. Meaning when the truth is presented to the person, he/she accepts it immediately without hesitation or thought of consequences
 - a. This is why some said this was in reference to Abu Bakr
- b. Some said it means that he believes in the *kalimah*, whatever denotes from it, and whatever ensues from it of reward (*al-Tafseer al-Muyassar*)

7. We will ease him toward ease

- a. Meaning those who do the three things mentioned in the last two verses, Allah will facilitate a path for them to the ultimate ease, which is paradise
 - i. Allah will give such people the preparation and strength to make it all the way to paradise
- b. It could also mean that those who engage in the previous three qualities, then those very actions themselves are the ease that He has provided them and will eventually lead them to paradise
 - i. They are gifts from Allah by which He has empowered them to do what will lead them to paradise, the ultimate ease
- c. The future tense "We will" shows us that as long as we keep doing the three things, Allah will keep making this path easier for us
- d. It could also be said that those who consist of the three qualities are being prepared for paradise by Allah
- e. We can say there are three steps towards paradise:
 - i. To give
 - ii. To have *taqwa*
 - iii. To accept the truth

8. But as for he who withholds and considers himself free of need

- a. Now we are entering discussion of those whose efforts are going in the wrong direction

- b. Meaning those who are cheap and feel they have no need of anything
 - i. These are opposite qualities of those mentioned in verse 5 above
 - ii. Those who consider themselves free of need often display an attitude of not caring

9. And denies the best [reward]

- a. This is the opposite quality of those mentioned in verse 6 above
- b. Meaning when the truth comes to them, they deny it
- c. Some said it means that he denies the *kalimah*, whatever denotes from it, and whatever ensues from it of reward (*al-Tafseer al-Muyassar*)

10. We will ease him toward difficulty

- a. Meaning the path to Hell is made easy for them due to such behavior
- b. Some said it means that their life will only get more difficult by sticking to such behavior
- c. We can say there are three steps to Hell
 - i. To not give
 - ii. To believe oneself to be sufficient, thus, not care
 - iii. To reject the truth

11. And what will his wealth avail him when he falls?

- a. Meaning the one who does not give out of miserliness thinks that his wealth will protect him and make him independent, but it certainly does not
- b. The use of the Arabic word *taraddaa* (falls) in the Quran is used to indicate those falling into Hell
 - i. In the context of this verse, it means that his money will not save him as he is falling into Hell
- c. The verses from 5-11 are just an explanation of verse 4

12. Indeed, [incumbent] upon Us is guidance

- a. Meaning guidance only comes from Allah and no one else
 - i. When we take a step towards the right direction, Allah comes along with us and guides us
- b. Another lesson from this surah is that we need both: put in our efforts towards right direction and Allah's guidance
 - i. We have to put in the effort to get Allah's guidance

13. And indeed, to Us belongs the Hereafter and the first [life]

- a. Meaning to Allah exclusively belongs the dominion of both this worldly life and the next one, thus, He does what He wants (*Mukhtasar fee al-tafseer*)

14. So I have warned you of a Fire which is blazing

- a. Some said this is a special extra burning part of Hell
 - i. Ust. Nouman Ali Khan disagrees and believes it is in reference to Hell in general
- b. The blazing is in reference to the intensity of its heat
- c. Where is this warning in the surah that this verse is referring to?
 - i. It is in reference to verse 11

15. None will [enter to] burn therein except the most wretched one

- a. Meaning other than the most wretched no one will be entering Hell

- i. This is why some said that it is in reference to a special part of Hell for the most wretched, because we know that others will enter Hell too for various crimes and not necessarily for just being the most wretched
- b. Who are the worst types of people?
 - i. Those who rejected the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) in his lifetime

16. Who had denied and turned away

- a. This is defining the most wretched mentioned in the previous verse
- b. Meaning the one who rejected the truth and turned arrogantly away from it
- c. Some said it means to deny whatever the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) came with and turn away from conforming to Allah's commands (*Mukhtasar fee al-tafseer*)

17. But the most righteous one will be spared from it

- a. Meaning they will be kept away from Hell
- b. Allah did not say that only the most righteous will be spared from it, because those who are not the most righteous but of lower levels of righteousness could also be spared from it
 - i. This is unlike what He said in verse 15 for those who will enter Hell
 - ii. It is a form of mercy from Him
- c. The next few verses define the qualities of this most righteous group of people

18. [He] who gives [from] his wealth to purify himself

- a. Meaning those who give in charity in order to get close to Allah and as a means to cleanse themselves from sins
 - i. The people of most giving are described as those with the most *taqwa*

19. Not in return for someone's favors

- a. Meaning they do not give with strings attached, rather, it is only for their own benefit and to purify themselves

20. But only seeking the pleasure of his Lord, Most High

- a. Meaning all they want through their giving is to see the Face of their Lord (on the Day of Judgement) and seek His pleasure

21. And he is going to be satisfied

- a. Meaning very soon such people will be satisfied and content when they meet Allah
 - i. This is a reference to their reward for their deeds. They will be greatly satisfied with what Allah will give them