

Tafseer Surah ash-Shams (الشمس)

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

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Introduction

- I. Messages in this surah (*Al-Mukhtasar fee al-tafseer*):
 - A. Concentration on the apparent signs of Allah and His blessings in the horizon and in ourselves
 - B. Purification of the soul
 - C. Discouragement from sins

Tafseer of the Verses

1. **By the sun and its brightness**
 - a. When the sun is high up enough that its light becomes undeniable and reaches everywhere
2. **And [by] the moon when it follows it**
 - a. Meaning the moon follows the sun
 - i. Today we know that the sun is the dominant gravitational player
3. **And [by] the day when it displays it**
 - a. Meaning the daytime brings out the brilliance and glory of the sun
 - i. It highlights it
4. **And [by] the night when it covers it**
 - a. Meaning the night eventually covers the sun
 - i. This is not a scientific statement but it is just highlighting from the viewer's perspective. When we look at the sky at night, it does seem to us as if a blanket of darkness has covered the sky and hid the sun
 1. This is the use of imagery in the Quran
5. **And [by] the sky and He who constructed it**
 - a. In Arabic, anything that is above you is called *samaa'* (sky)
 - i. So the meaning of the word in this verse is everything that He built above us (sky, moon, planets, stars, etc.)
 - b. It is also in reference to how high He raised it up
6. **And [by] the earth and He who spread it**
 - a. Meaning He made it even and smoothed it out
7. **And [by] the soul and He who proportioned it**
 - a. Meaning He put finishing touches on every individual and balanced them
8. **Then with 'the knowledge of' right and wrong inspired it**
 - a. Meaning Allah put something inside of us that was not there

- i. It is one of the things that distinguishes us from animals
- ii. What is it?
 - 1. It is the inspiration that Allah has placed into our souls that define for us the path of evil and righteousness
- b. The soul is a gift from Allah and it connects us to Him
- c. This is connected with the mention of day and night discussed earlier. Just as the night and day struggle against each other, so do our souls between good and evil
 - i. During the night, the moon is still out so there is still some light. This means human beings always have some sort of goodness in them even when they become engulfed in evil
- d. It is also connected with the mention of sky and earth mentioned earlier. Part of us comes from the sky (soul) and the other part comes from the earth (body)

9. He has succeeded who purifies it

- a. This and the verse after it are the main point of all the previous verses
- b. Purifying it means ridding one's soul of vices and adorning it with virtues (*Al-Mukhtasar fee al-tafseer*)
 - i. This is a constant lifelong struggle. We are constantly in need of improving ourselves and becoming better
 - 1. We will continue to make mistakes but must always strive to become better

10. And doomed is the one who corrupts it

- a. Our *nafs* (soul) is like the earth, with a seed of goodness inside it, but this seed cannot grow without water. The Word of Allah is the water it needs to make it grow
- b. Meaning here is that if we do not take care of our *nafs* and protect it from corruption, then it will become corrupted leading to our doom
 - i. The corruption are the various types of vices that hurt it: envy, greed, arrogance, disbelief, sins, etc.
 - ii. This is a lifetime struggle

11. Thamud denied [their prophet] by reason of their transgression

- a. Now the subject has switched to the story of one of the nations that corrupted themselves by giving into their lower selves
 - i. So Allah is giving attention to their story as an example of a people who did not take care of their *nafs*
- b. They transgressed by their exceeding the limits set by Allah and committing sins (*Al-Mukhtasar fee al-tafseer*)

12. When the most wretched of them was sent forth

- a. This is in reference to a man named Qudar ibn Saalif, who was one of the worst people among the Thamud. He used to do all sorts of crimes proudly and openly. He was also quite politically powerful in their society
- b. Allah sent Thamud Prophet Salih
 - i. In order to prove to them that he was truly a messenger of Allah, a boulder cracked open and a she-camel came out of it. Since this was an explicit sign and

proof against them, Allah told Salih to tell them that this miraculous camel will have its own day to drink from the river and no one will share with it on its day

1. The camel used to drink all of it up so the people became annoyed by it and encouraged Qudar ibn Saalif to go and kill it

- a. We also learn from this that when people create an environment of hate and bigotry, then it is only a matter of time when one of them does something extreme. In a way, they all are responsible for it

13. And the messenger of Allah [Salih] said to them, "[Do not harm] the she-camel of Allah or [prevent her from] her drink"

- a. Salih used to persuade them away from it and warn them against hurting it or preventing its drink, because it will lead to Allah's anger and His punishment will ensue due to the fact that they will be rejecting an explicit miraculous proof from Allah that they witnessed with their own eyes

14. But they denied him and hamstrung her. So their Lord brought down upon them destruction for their sin and levelled them [to the ground]

- a. After constant warnings, they eventually stopped taking Salih seriously and wanted the camel dead. This is when they sent Qudar to do the job, however, Allah uses the plural "they" to gather them all into the crime because they were all in on it

- i. They did not just kill it but made a mockery out of it through hamstringing it

1. Hamstringing is a method of crippling a person or animal so that they cannot walk properly by severing the hamstring tendons in the thigh of the victim. It is used as a method of torture, or to incapacitate the victim (Wikipedia)

- b. As a punishment, Allah crushed them down into the earth

- i. When a person gives into their lower selves, they put their *nafs* into the dirt and here a whole nation was put into dirt because they put their *nafs* into the dirt

- ii. The punishment was so severe that the land became flat and it was like there were never any people in the place

1. Their bodies were smashed deeply into the ground

- c. The word used for sin is *dhanb*, which means an act that is shameful and the person is embarrassed by it

- i. Meaning they should have been embarrassed by this shameful act but they actually did it proudly without shame

15. And He has no fear of consequences

- a. Meaning when Allah destroys a nation(s), He does not think twice about it. He is not afraid of any consequences following an action. This is something exclusive to Allah