

# Tafseer Surah ash-Sharh (الشرح)

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

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## Introduction

- I. This is one of only four surahs in the Quran where Allah exclusively addresses the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). In a message of hope and consolation, Allah promises that there will always be ease within every difficulty he will face ahead
- II. The surah requests the Prophet (pbuh) to focus on Allah through worship after he is done with his worldly affairs
- III. This surah begins with gratitude, then mentions hope, and finally ends with focusing on worship
  - A. What we learn is that our relationship with Allah is just hope and gratitude. We should always have these two things with us. Hope is for the future while gratitude is for what is in the past

## Tafseer of the Verses

### 1. Did We not expand for you, [O Muhammad], your breast?

- a. Most of the commentators of the Quran took this verse to mean that it is in reference to the two times that the angel Jibraeel came to the Prophet (pbuh) to open up his chest and wash his heart
  - i. The first one was during his childhood
  - ii. The second one was during the Night Journey to the heavens (*Al-Israa wa Al-Mi'raaj*)
- b. Other commentators disagreed with the above interpretation
- c. We are being told that the way Allah expanded his Prophet's (pbuh) chest is exclusive to him and no one else has been given this blessing among his creation
  - i. It makes sense because he was a vessel through which the Quran was delivered and the Quran is a heavy Word of Allah. His chest had to be expanded so it could bear it
- d. The Arabic word *sharh* (expand)
  - i. It means to take something held together and stretch it out until it becomes soft and gentle
- e. Some said it is a continuation of the points from the previous surah about Allah's favors upon him, because the grammatical language is very similar
  - i. It is as if Allah is saying that didn't He ease his chest through the previous surah by reminding the Prophet (pbuh) of His favors upon him?

- f. Another meaning could be that Allah is telling him that the Prophet's (pbuh) chest is settled and at ease. There is no doubt left in it whether the Quran is true or not

## **2. And We removed from you your burden**

- a. Some said the 'burden' may be in reference to the concern the Prophet (pbuh) had for his society's wrongdoings with regards to worship of false deities and injustice towards others
- b. The Arabic word *wizr* (burden)
  - i. The origin of the word is used to refer to an impossible to move mountain. So something that is of an impossible weight
  - ii. It also was used in reference to a man who used to carry products for sale on his back going town to town to sell them. That bag of products on his back used to be called *wizr*
  - iii. In the context of this verse, Allah is saying to the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) that He removed his overwhelming burden from him
    - 1. That burden could be in reference to the gap of revelation

## **3. Which had weighed upon your back**

- a. Meaning that weight on your back had reached a point where you could not bear it anymore
  - i. The signs of him collapsing were already showing up
    - 1. He was on the verge of it when relief finally came through the revelation of the Quran

## **4. And raised high for you your mention**

- a. Meaning whenever Allah is mentioned, the Prophet's (pbuh) name will be mentioned along with Him as well
  - i. Ex: the *kalimah*, the *adhaan*, etc.
- b. Some said since it is in the past tense, it means that there will never be a moment when the Prophet's (pbuh) name will not be mentioned due to the call to prayer (*adhaan*) being given in some part of the world before the prayer
- c. This surah came down when the Prophet (pbuh) was being called names and the Muslims were weak in Mecca yet Allah still said He elevated his name. We should draw from this that no matter what they do even today to poke fun at our Prophet (pbuh), they cannot touch his status. It's like spitting at the sun. It has no effect on who he is and what his rank and status are with Allah
  - i. As long as Allah, angels, and the believers speak good of you, who cares what the haters say?
- d. Some said it is in reference to the Day of Judgement when the Prophet (pbuh) will be the only one given permission to speak and no one else. This is a high honor
  - i. This is in reference to the great intercession that will take place on the Day of Judgement. The details of it are [mentioned](#) in the hadith literature

## **5. For indeed, with hardship [will be] ease**

- a. Meaning if we want ease, then we have to go through a trial/hardship to get to it

- i. Ease is not the state of life in this world. We are created this way that we will go through difficulty in this life to get to the ease of the afterlife. This is why some interpreted the word 'ease' in this surah to mean the afterlife
- ii. It could also mean that with every hardship, Allah opens a door to ease. They both go together hand in hand. Allah sends them together
- b. Some said it means that at the end of the Prophet's (pbuh) mission there will be ease
  - i. Meaning his mission will be difficult but there will be ease at the end of it. He is being prepared emotionally and mentally to the tougher challenges coming ahead of him

## 6. Indeed, with hardship [will be] ease

- a. The Arabic word *al-'usr* (hardship)
  - i. In its original meaning, it refers to something stuck in the stomach (food poisoning, constipation, etc.)
  - ii. It was also used to refer to a she-camel that was young but could not deliver a child
  - iii. It is also referred to a deep internal problem
  - iv. The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was feeling stuck because no one was accepting Islam during the Meccan period. There were only a few people that converted
- b. The Arabic word *al-yusr* (ease)
  - i. It is opposite of the word *al-'usr* (hardship)
  - ii. Refers to something moving and passing smoothly
- c. Allah repeated the statement to show that it will happen over and over again. There will be difficulty and then ease over and over
- d. The repetition could be in order to comfort the Prophet (pbuh):
  - i. We need to remember that the Quran is a speech and Allah is using this surah to comfort the Prophet (pbuh). Even in our own speech today, when we want to comfort someone, we repeat the same sentence over and over again
    - 1. Ex: when we say to someone who is hurting, "Don't worry it's going to be okay, don't worry it's going to be okay"

## 7. So when you have finished [your duties], then stand up [for worship]

- a. Meaning when you are finally relieved from your day's efforts, then stand and worship Allah
  - i. Dealing with the people and hearing their insults adds to the Prophet's (pbuh) burden but standing in prayer relieves it. It is as if standing in prayer refuels the Prophet (pbuh) to be able to go another day dealing with the people and calling them to Islam
- b. The Arabic word *nasb* (stand up)
  - i. Literally means to set up a tent or when you have something firmly planted onto the ground and it is standing on top of it
    - 1. Ex: tent, flag, etc.
  - ii. It is also used to refer to exhaustion and being overwhelmed
  - iii. In the context of this verse, it is in reference to standing for prayer

## 8. And to your Lord direct [your] longing

- a. Meaning in your Master alone replenish yourself
- b. The Arabic word *raghib* (longing)
  - i. It refers to when someone really enjoys eating something and fills their stomach with what they enjoy eating. We can also say it means when someone has a big appetite
  - ii. In the context of this verse, it is as if Allah is saying to His prophet (pbuh) that He knows what the Messenger (pbuh) really desires is just standing in prayer and that he may do that once his mission is complete. After the mission, he can stand in prayer to his heart's desire
- c. Some said it means to make your desire and goal towards Allah alone (*Mukhtasar fee tafseer*)