

# Tafseer Surah al-Balad (البلد)

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

By Rameez Abid

## Introduction

- I. Unlike other *surahs* in *juzz 'amma*, Surah Al-Balad does not evoke Paradise and Hellfire to get people to change their ways. Instead it reminds them of how badly they violated the sanctity of Allah's chosen land and its messenger Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)
- II. It is broken up into three parts
  - A. Current state of affairs in Mecca
    1. The persecution of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and the realization that he has to bear it
    2. The Quraysh feel there are no consequences for their actions
  - B. Call to change state
    1. A call to use the faculties Allah has given us to believe in His message and take the right path
  - C. Future state
    1. Following the right path, which is the way of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)
    2. The punishment of those who feel there are no consequences for their actions

## Tafseer of the Verses

### 1. I swear by this city

- a. The city is in reference to Mecca
  - i. This city in particular is being emphasized because it is a sacred land. It is to bring attention to the people of Mecca that they are not a people of just any city but the best of cities. This should drive them to be the first to believe but yet that is not the case

### 2. And you, [O Muhammad], are free of restriction in this city

- a. This has been interpreted in three ways
  - i. That eventually Muhammad (pbuh) is going to have free reign in Mecca
    1. Meaning Allah is telling his prophet (pbuh) that even though he is currently oppressed in the land, he will eventually be on top
    2. The present tense is used as a form of stylistic expression
  - ii. That it is permitted for you to be in the city so why are these people treating you so differently as if you do not belong in it
  - iii. That it is in reference to the abuse the people of Mecca afflicting on Muhammad (pbuh)

1. Meaning they are freely doing with him as they please without any regard or respect
  2. Ustaadh Nouman is convinced of this view
- 3. And [by] the father and that which was born [of him]**
- a. Some said that the father is in reference to Prophet Adam (pbuh) and “that which was born” is in reference to his progeny. However, others are of the opinion that the father is in reference to Prophet Ibrahim (pbuh) and “that which was born” is in reference to Muhammad (pbuh)
    - i. Ustaadh Nouman follows the second interpretation
- 4. We have certainly created man into hardship**
- a. Meaning human beings will have to suffer in this life one way or another. We cannot escape from it
    - i. This is true for both the believers and the disbelievers
  - b. It’s as if the Prophet Muhammd (pbuh) is being told that the suffering and pain that he is going through at the hands of the Quraysh is part of the struggles of man
    - i. Mankind goes through various types of pain and suffering throughout their lives
- 5. Does he think that never will anyone overcome him?**
- a. Meaning does man think that there is no one watching Him nor will anyone hold him accountable?
  - b. Some said it means, does mankind think that just because he has accumulated wealth that Allah will never overpower Him? (*Tafseer al-Muyassar*)
- 6. He says, "I have wasted wealth in abundance."**
- a. This is in reference to the gambling that the People of Mecca used to do during the season of *Hajj*
    - i. They would gamble a lot and the loser would pay his losses by giving it away in charity during *Hajj* season. Then he would boast about how much he’s given away in charity
      1. So Allah is saying that even their religiosity is insincere
- 7. Does he think that no one has seen him?**
- a. Some said it means that does he not know that Allah sees him?
  - b. Others said it means that does he not realize that people see right through him?
    - i. Meaning they know that he is not really charitable and that he only did it because he lost the gamble
- 8. Have We not made for him two eyes?**
- a. Meaning the people of Mecca have two eyes with which they can see what’s happening before them so why are they not using them?
    - i. Meaning seeing the truthfulness of the Prophet (pbuh) and the Qur’an
- 9. And a tongue and two lips?**
- a. Meaning why do they not have a response to the Qur’an?
    - i. The Arabs prided themselves in eloquence and speech so why can they not respond to the final revelation of Allah?
    - ii. The reason was because they did not have a response
- 10. And have shown him the two ways?**

- a. Meaning Allah showed and informed us which destination the good and the bad paths lead to
  - i. He then lets us choose whichever path we want to take
- b. The Arabic word *najd*
  - i. Elevated land other than a mountain
  - ii. Idea here is that we wind down as we get older and come closer to death

**11. But he has not broken through the difficult pass**

- a. The Arabic word *'aqabah*
  - i. It is a difficult and treacherous path
- b. Meaning that the people find the Islamic path, which is the correct path, difficult to follow so not many get on it
  - i. They prefer to follow their desires instead which is easier for them

**12. And what can make you know what is [breaking through] the difficult pass?**

- a. Now Allah defines for us what this difficult path is which such people avoid to follow

**13. It is the freeing of a slave**

- a. Meaning they find this difficult to do
- b. The meaning could be extended to other forms of “slavery”, such as, freeing someone from debt, freeing someone from trafficking, etc.

**14. Or feeding on a day of severe hunger**

- a. Meaning such people would not even feed hungry individuals on a hard day
  - i. This day could be due to the economy being bad so the people are less charitable
  - ii. This difficult road is traveled by those who think of others first even during financial hardship

**15. An orphan of near relationship**

- a. There is an emphasis here for supporting an orphan of a close family member
  - i. Meaning such people find it difficult to care for such orphans in their family due to miserliness, greed, etc.
  - ii. Orphans in the family are emphasized but could be applied to orphans in general especially those in the neighborhood who are in need

**16. Or a needy person in misery**

- a. This is someone who does not own anything (*Mukhtasar fee al-tafseer*)
  - i. Again the meaning is that such a person finds it difficult to assist the needy due to miserliness or greed

**17. And then being among those who believed and advised one another to patience and advised one another to compassion**

- a. When our heart becomes soft towards humanity, it also does so for accepting the teachings of Allah. This will result in becoming among those who believe in Allah
- b. It also shows that being a humanitarian alone is not sufficient. We must also have faith
- c. It also encourages us to be among those who urge others to be patient and compassionate
  - i. It is sort of like a support system to help each other on this difficult path that leads to paradise

- ii. We do not give up on each other but keep pushing each other to be better slaves of Allah and to be more compassionate towards His creation

**18. Those are the companions of the right**

- a. The Arabic word *maymanah* (right)
  - i. It could mean honor or blessings
- b. Meaning those who take on this difficult path will be honored and blessed
- c. They will be taken towards the right to paradise [*al-Tafseer al-Muyassar*]

**19. But they who disbelieved in Our signs - those are the companions of the left**

- a. The 'signs' in this verse is in reference to the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), Qur'an, poor, orphans, needy, etc.
  - i. It is referring back to the verses before it and that those who deny the indicators mentioned by Allah in them will be miserable
- b. They will be taken towards the left to Hellfire [*al-Tafseer al-Muyassar*]

**20. Over them will be fire closed in**

- a. The meaning here is that there is a fire that has been closed in on them like a lid
  - i. This is done to keep the heat contained so that it does not escape. This is punishment for their crimes in the Hellfire