

Tafseer Surah al-Mutaffifin (المطففين)

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

By Rameez Abid

Introduction

- I. The first part of the *surah* is dedicated to those who deny Judgment Day, not in their beliefs, but in their behavior by cheating people. Allah, who created everything with balance, is enraged when injustice is committed among any human beings
 - A. Then Allah transitions from a chilling description of Hellfire to an uplifting depiction of the *abrar* in paradise who live alongside the most exalted angels. Surrounded by Allah's endless gifts, they laugh as they look down on those who mocked them on earth
- II. There is a debate over when exactly this *surah* was revealed
 - A. Some said it was the last *surah* to be revealed in Mecca
 - B. Some said it was the first *surah* to be revealed in Medina
 1. When the Prophet (pbuh) first came to Medina, the residents were one of the worst in cheating business practices, thus, this *surah* was revealed to warn them
 - C. Some said part of it was revealed in Mecca and part of it in Medina
 - D. Ustaadh Nouman feels it was revealed in Mecca and the bad business practices within it are in reference to the Meccans. This makes more sense, in his view, because Mecca was mainly business and trade oriented while Medina was more farm oriented

Tafseer of the Verses

1. Woe to the defrauders!

- a. The Arabic word *wayl* (woe)
 - i. It is used when someone is extremely upset or angry at another
 - ii. It means that may the person be cursed or afflicted with sadness
- b. Who are the *Mutaffifeen* (defrauders)?
 - i. The root of it comes from a word which means the extra on the top
 1. Ex: when you fill a bag of rice to the top and some of the extra on top falls out due to overfill
 2. It could also mean to take a little extra or give a little extra
 - ii. The meaning intended here is to steal from customers so little that they do not realize you stole from them
 1. Ex: a seller of rice takes a little from the actual quantity while pouring them into a bag. It's small enough to not notice. In some places, they add small magnets under the scale so that it makes it heavier and allows the seller to give less to the customers than what they pay

iii. It could also be applied to buyers who bully sellers into paying them less than they deserve

1. This is especially true when the seller is poor and in need

c. We could extend the meaning today to contractors who are paid by the hour and purposely waste time so that they can get more money. This is a form of cheating

d. Other forms of it

i. When sellers do not deliver what they promise

2. Those who take full measure 'when they buy' from people

a. Meaning such fraudulent sellers are being hypocritical because when it comes to receiving, they make sure to get their money's worth without any sort of cheating

i. So even though they cheat others, they make sure that they are not cheated themselves

3. But give less when they measure or weigh for buyers

a. Meaning when they measure or weigh items for their customers, they give them less than they are owed. They cheat them with it in some way

b. The meaning could also include those who take advantage of people's ignorance about a commodity and overcharge them

i. Ex: when a car mechanic invents problems in the car just so he could overcharge you because he realizes you are ignorant about cars

c. Their causing loss to not just the one they are cheating but to the society as a whole because it eventually becomes the norm in that society

4. Do they not think that they will be resurrected

a. Meaning such defrauders only behave this way because there is something fundamental missing in their faith

i. In other words, does it not cross the mind of those who behave like defrauders that they will one day be resurrected before Allah for judgement of their deeds?

b. Faith in three things Allah repeats over and over again in the Qur'an:

i. Allah

ii. Revelation

iii. Afterlife

c. The root of all corruption is a lack of faith in one of the above three things

5. For a tremendous Day

a. Meaning that horrifying day of accountability and retribution which will be full of horrors and adversities (*Al-Mukhtasar fee al-tafseer*)

b. It's as if it is a date in court that we all have to attend

6. The Day when mankind will stand before the Lord of the worlds?

a. The customers that were cheated and the defrauder will be standing before their Lord

b. They are standing and not sitting because they are about to be sentenced

i. Even here in human courts we are made to stand during sentencing

7. No! Indeed, the record of the wicked is in *sijjeen*

a. The word *sijjeen* could refer to:

i. A terrible prison

ii. A grand prison

- iii. An inescapable prison
- b. The Arabic word *fujjaar* (the wicked)
 - i. It is someone who is out of control
 - ii. Those defrauders are being called wicked because they thought their misdeeds were small but they are actually major to Allah
- c. The present tense is used because their record is already there

8. And what can make you know what is *sijjeen*?

- a. Some said *sijjeen* is a name of a place in Hell
- b. Some said *sijjeen* is their book of record itself

9. It is [their destination recorded in] a register inscribed

- a. Meaning it is a record that cannot be erased nor altered
 - i. It is permanent and can never be lost
- b. It is as if the writing in the record is stitched on to it so that it can never be erased

10. Woe, that Day, to the deniers

- a. Meaning those who deny the Day of Judgement are going to be sorry
- b. There are some who deny the Day of Judgement through belief and there are others who deny it through their actions
 - i. This verse is in reference to both

11. Who deny the Day of Recompense

- a. Meaning those who deny the day in which Allah will recompense His slaves for their deeds in this world (*al-Mukhtasar fee al-tafseer*)

12. And none deny it except every sinful transgressor

- a. Transgressor (*mu'tad*): this is someone who continuously crosses the boundaries set by Allah and commits aggression against other people
- b. Sinful (*atheem*): someone who continuously sins a lot

13. When Our verses are recited to him, he says, "Legends of the former peoples"

- a. When someone reaches the point of the one in the previous verse, then reminders do not help them and they begin to ridicule by saying things like "these warnings in the Qur'an about what happened to the previous people are just fictional stories"

14. No! Rather, the stain has covered their hearts of that which they were earning

- a. Meaning the issue is not like what these deniers perceive it to be (i.e. legends of the former peoples), rather, their hearts have rusted due to the sin of cheating others
 - i. When the heart reaches this level, then it does not feel shame or guilt. It then also does not take heed from reminders
- b. Some said it means that their sins overcame and covered their intellects so they do not see the truth with their hearts (*al-Mukhtasar fee al-tafseer*)

15. No! Indeed, from their Lord, that Day, they will be partitioned

- a. Meaning they will be prevented from seeing Allah on Day of Judgement
- b. This verse is an evidence to the fact that the believers will see Allah

16. Then indeed, they will [enter and] burn in Hellfire

- a. The fire of Hell will soften them while they used to be so tough in this life
- b. They will be made to enter the Hellfire suffering in its intense heat

17. Then it will be said [to them], "This is what you used to deny"

- a. Meaning it will be said to them with reprimand, “This is the punishment you used to deny in the worldly life that your messenger used to warn you about”
- b. This is the end of the first section of the *surah*. The focus was on the disbeliever denying the Day of Judgement through his actions
 - i. We also learn from the verses that when human beings engage in injustice towards other human beings, it angers Allah

18.No! Indeed, the record of the righteous is in 'illiyun

- a. The Arabic word *'illiyun*
 - i. It comes from a word that means ‘height’
 - ii. It could mean that their record is in the company of the highest (i.e. angels)
 - 1. Meaning they possess the book of good deeds of the righteous. It is as if this record is already with them even now

19.And what can make you know what is 'illiyun?

- a. Meaning what will give you any clue what the *'illiyun* is?

20.It is [their destination recorded in] a register inscribed

- a. Meaning it is a record that cannot be erased nor altered
 - i. It is permanent and can never be lost
- b. It is as if the writing in the record is stitched on to it so that it can never be erased

21.Which is witnessed by those brought near [to Allah]

- a. These witnesses are the angels in all of the heavens
 - i. Meaning is that the angels in the heavens become acquainted with the book of good deeds of the righteous [*al-Tafseer al-Muyassar*]

22.Indeed, the righteous will be in pleasure

- a. Now we are delving into the description of paradise
- b. Meaning the obedient slaves of Allah will be surrounded with blessings in paradise
 - i. Wherever they will look, there will be something there to be amazed about

23.On adorned couches, observing

- a. Meaning they will be leaning back on decorated couches staring at the beautiful blessings around them
- b. Some said it means that they will be on decorated couches looking at their Lord and whatever rejoices and pleases them [*al-Mukhtasar fee al-tafseer*]

24.You will recognize in their faces the radiance of pleasure

- a. Meaning you can see in their faces a freshness because their faces are lit up with excitement due to all of the blessings that surround them
 - i. It is as if they cannot hide their happiness and pleasure

25.They will be given to drink [pure] wine [which was] sealed

- a. Meaning they will be served such drinks without even needing to get up
- b. The wine of heaven is very different than the one in this world
 - i. It neither gives you a hangover nor causes you to become drunk
 - ii. These bottles of wine were sealed for a long time waiting for the people of paradise
 - 1. Some even said that each person’s name is on it as well

26.The last of it is musk. So for this let the competitors compete

- a. Meaning the wine's seal is the scent of musk itself. The person will smell this fragrance even before having drunk it
 - i. Some said it means that the wine is mixed with musk so when someone drinks it, the person will emanate the fragrance of musk (*al-Tafseer al-Waadih al-Muyassar*)
- b. The second part of the verse means let the people compete with each other to obtain such pleasures of paradise
 - i. In other words, we are encouraged to compete in doing good deeds

27. And its mixture is of *Tasneem*

- a. The Arabic word *tasneem*
 - i. It comes from a word that means 'a very high place'
 - 1. So it means that the wine that they will drink will be mixed with something called *tasneem*, a spring or waterfall in a very high place in paradise

28. A spring from which those near [to Allah] drink

- a. Meaning this *tasneem* is a spring in a high place in paradise that only those close to Allah drink from. Those people are called the *Muqarraboon*
 - i. Those lower in rank than them only get it mixed in their wine and cannot drink directly from the spring of *tasneem* like the *Muqarraboon*
 - 1. This should make us want to strive to be [among the *Muqarraboon*](#)

29. Indeed, those who committed crimes used to laugh at those who believed

- a. Meaning the disbelievers used to ridicule and make fun of the believers in this world

30. Wink at one another whenever they passed by

- a. Meaning whenever the believers would walk by, these disbelievers would nudge and wink at each other

31. And when they returned to their people, they would return jesting

- a. Meaning when these disbelievers returned home to their families, they used to be happy with themselves in how they ridiculed the believers
 - i. They may even have proudly told their families about their actions

32. And when they saw them, they would say, "Indeed, those are truly lost"

- a. Meaning when these disbelievers witnessed the believers, they used to say, "These people lost the true path when they abandoned the religion of their forefathers" [*al-Mukhtasar fee al-tafseer*]

33. But they had not been sent as guardians over them

- a. There are two interpretations of this verse:
 - i. It is in reference to Allah that He did not make the disbelievers guardians over the believers' actions that they should make such claims of them being lost
 - 1. Meaning who made these disbelievers guardians over the believers? Who made them the judge over the believers? Nobody!
 - ii. It is in reference to the disbelievers saying, "Who made these Muslims guardians over us? They were not sent to look after the society!"
 - 1. In other words, why are these believers telling us what to do?!

34. So Today those who believed are laughing at the disbelievers

- a. Meaning on the Day of Judgement the situation will be reversed. It will be the believers that will be laughing at the disbelievers just as the latter used to do to the former in this world

35. On adorned couches, observing

- a. Meaning the believers will be sitting in adorned couches staring and laughing at the disbelievers while they get registered in the prisons of Hell
 - i. This is a fitting punishment for the disbelievers because they used to do the same to them in this world

36. Have the disbelievers [not] been rewarded [this Day] for what they used to do?

- a. This is a rhetorical question
 - i. Meaning have these disbelievers been paid in full for their evil deeds?
- b. It is also a comfort for the believers and asking them to be patient because these disbelievers, who ridicule them due to their religion, will get what's coming to them
 - i. They will fully pay for their evil deeds