

# Tafseer Surah 'Abasa (عبس)

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

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## Introduction

- I. This was revealed in Mecca
- II. Background of the *surah*
  - A. Abdullah ibn Umm Maktum went to see the Prophet, Allah bless him and give him peace, while the latter was meeting 'Utbah ibn Rabi'ah, Abu Jahl ibn Hisham, 'Abbas ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib, and Ubayy and Umayyah the sons of Khalaf. He was calling them to Allah, hoping that they might embrace Islam. Ibn Umm Maktum stood up and said: "O Messenger of Allah, teach me of that which Allah has taught you". He kept on requesting him and repeating his request, not knowing that he was busy and dealing with someone else. Signs of annoyance appeared on the face of the Messenger of Allah, Allah bless him and give him peace, because of being repeatedly interrupted. He said in himself: "These chiefs will say: his followers consist of only the blind, lowly people and slaves!" The Messenger of Allah, Allah bless him and give him peace, frowned and turned away from him, and faced toward the people he was addressing. Allah, exalted is He, then revealed these verses. After this, the Messenger of Allah, Allah bless him and give him peace, used to honour him, and would say, whenever he saw him: "Welcome to the one about whom my Lord has rebuked me!"
    1. Prophet (pbuh) was going after the elite because they have influence and if they convert, then many others will follow
    2. Ibn Umm Maktum was related to the Prophet's (pbuh) wife Khadija

## Tafseer of the Verses

- 1. The Prophet frowned and turned away**
  - a. This is in reference to the Prophet (pbuh) frowning and turning away from Ibn Umm Maktum because he was busy preaching to the elite of the Quraysh
- 2. Because there came to him the blind man, [interrupting]**
  - a. Despite being blind, Ibn Umm Maktum made more of an effort to seek out the Prophet (pbuh) for guidance
  - b. We learn that we should make more accommodations for those who are physically disabled yet still strive for guidance
    - i. They usually require more effort than a healthy person
- 3. You never know 'O Prophet', perhaps he may be purified**

- a. Meaning this blind man that the Prophet (pbuh) is ignoring may have wanted to purify himself from sins and become a better person based on what he hears from the Prophet (pbuh)

**4. Or be reminded and the remembrance would benefit him?**

- a. Meaning this blind man may learn from what he hears from the Prophet (pbuh), thereby, benefitting from it
  - i. He may learn something immediately and apply it or he may think about it later and then benefit from it
- b. Reminders carry benefit whether we can see it or not
  - i. This is why we must be keen on giving them regardless of how people react towards them

**5. As for he who thinks himself without need**

- a. Meaning those who consider themselves self-sufficient due to wealth and do not feel a need for guidance
- b. We have three types of needs:
  - i. Physical
  - ii. Emotional
  - iii. Spiritual
- c. All three above needs are connected and can influence each other

**6. To him you give attention**

- a. Meaning the type of person mentioned in the previous verse
  - i. The Prophet (pbuh) is being told not to try so hard to get this type of person's attention

**7. And not upon you [is any blame] if he will not be purified**

- a. Meaning the Prophet (pbuh) will not be held responsible if the type of person mentioned in verse 5 does not purify himself by responding to the Prophet's (pbuh) call
- b. Allah is also passing a verdict on the type of person mentioned in verse 5 and saying he will never believe

**8. But as for he who came to you striving [for knowledge]**

- a. This is in reference to Ibn Umm Maktum
- b. Meaning Ibn Umm Maktum made an effort to pursue good and this is why he came to the Prophet (pbuh)

**9. While he fears [Allah]**

- a. This shows us that to Allah the people of value are those who have fear of Him in their hearts
  - i. The Prophet's (pbuh) role is to serve the fearful one who in this case is the blind man, Ibn Umm Maktum

**10. From him you are distracted**

- a. After this *surah*, the Prophet (pbuh) never became distracted from Ibn Umm Maktum and gave him VIP treatment
- b. The above verses should make us think how we treat those folks in our community who sincerely make an effort to search for guidance but may not have high statuses
  - i. Such people should not be dismissed

### **11. No! Indeed, these verses are a reminder**

- a. Meaning the Prophet (pbuh) is not selling something which will allow him to haggle with its message with the disbelievers. It is a take it or leave it deal
- b. This Qur'an is only a reminder for those who accept it

### **12. So whoever wills may remember it**

- a. Meaning then whoever wants to remember Allah, then let him be reminded by the Qur'an and be admonished by it and follow its instructions [*al-Mukhtasar fee al-tafseer*]

### **13. In honored scrolls**

- a. Meaning this Qur'an is written in honorable scrolls with the angels [*al-Mukhtasar fee al-tafseer*]

### **14. Exalted and purified**

- a. Meaning this Qur'an is raised to a high place where no filth or dirt can afflict it

### **15. [Carried] by the hands of messenger-angels**

- a. Meaning the Qur'an in the heavens, the original copy, is in the hands of specific trusted angels

### **16. Honorable and virtuous**

- a. Meaning these angels that deliver the Qur'an are noble and righteous
- b. The Arabic words *bararah* and *abraar* both mean good but the former is used for angels while the latter is used for people
  - i. *Bararah* is used for angels because it means many good ones
    1. All angels are good
  - ii. *Abraar* is used for people because it means few good ones
    1. Not all people are good but just a few
- c. This is in reference to the angels that accompanied Angel Jibraeel during revelation of the Qur'an

### **17. Cursed is man; how disbelieving is he**

- a. Meaning how incredibly ungrateful and arrogant can man be!
  - i. How severe is his disbelief in Allah!

### **18. From what substance did He create him?**

- a. This is to remind man of his origin and to humble him
  - i. From what great thing did Allah create man that makes him so arrogant and disbelieving?

### **19. From a sperm-drop and ordained his development**

- a. Meaning Allah created man from an origin which people find repulsive
  - i. This is to humble us and remind us of our origin and that we do not have any right to be arrogant
- b. The second part is in reference to our overall development through various stages. Allah precisely measured everything in our creation
  - i. Ex: number of our bones, color of our eyes, our bone structure, where we will die, where we will live, when we will die, etc.
    1. All this is done while we are still in the womb

### **20. Then He eased the way for him**

- a. This is in reference to the baby coming out of the uterus

- i. Meaning after the stages of development, Allah eases for us to come out of our mothers' stomach
- b. This shows the powerlessness of man and how weak he truly is

**21. Then He causes his death and provides a grave for him**

- a. Allah here immediately goes to our death, which is another form of weakness in us
  - i. It is as if we are coming out of one belly and going into another (i.e. earth)

**22. Then when He wills, He will resurrect him**

- a. Meaning then when Allah wills, He will resurrect us all again for judgement

**23. No! Man has not yet accomplished what He commanded him**

- a. Meaning in this short life span that man has been given, he has not done what he is supposed to do, which is abide by Allah's commands
- b. The first "No!" could also mean that the disbeliever erroneously thinks that he has indeed fulfilled the right of his Lord, however, this is completely false [*al-Mukhtasar fee al-tafseer*]

**24. Then let mankind look at his food**

- a. Here we are being asked to reflect over our food and how it came to be
- b. The next few verses (25-32) describe the origin of food on our table

**25. How We poured down water in torrents**

- a. The origin of food is the powerful rain that comes from the sky in abundance

**26. Then We broke open the earth, splitting [it with sprouts]**

- a. That rain then tore the earth open and caused the seed within it to sprout

**27. And caused to grow within it grain**

- a. That sprouting led to the growth of various types of grains, such as, wheat and corn

**28. And grapes and greens**

- a. The sprouting of the seed also led to grapes and all types of vegetables

**29. And olive and palm trees**

- a. These are more examples of what other types of things come out of the earth for us to eat as a result of the rain

**30. And dense gardens**

- a. Meaning these gardens are overshadowing and overwhelm us with their greenery

**31. And fruit and grass**

- a. Meaning fruits that bring us joy and grass are also a result of that rain
  - i. The grass is mentioned because it is used for the pasture of cattle [*al-Mukhtasar fee al-tafseer*]

**32. [As] enjoyment for you and your grazing livestock**

- a. Meaning both mankind and animals enjoy the blessings mentioned above
- b. Allah does not just give us the above from a seed to feed on as a necessary nutrient for life but also beautifies them for us and makes them taste good

**33. But when there comes the Deafening Blast**

- a. This is in reference to the second blast that will resurrect the dead
  - i. It will be heard by the ears and would be so loud and intense in its sound that it will appear to deafen the person

1. Think of those bomb blasts in movies that appear to deafen those around them. This blast on the Day of Judgement will be much louder

**34. On the Day a man will flee from his brother**

- a. Meaning on the Day of Judgement people will flee from each other in terror
  - i. This is because they will be afraid of being held accountable for wronging each other. They will also fear that the wronged person might request their good deeds

**35. And his mother and his father**

- a. The same reasoning as that in the previous verse applies here

**36. And his wife and his children**

- a. The same reasoning as that in the previous verse applies here

**37. For then everyone will have enough concern of their own**

- a. Meaning on the Day of Judgement there will be a preoccupation on every single individual's mind that will not make the person care about anything else except himself/herself
  - i. It will be so important that it will free the person from all other concerns
  - ii. This shows the severity of the anguish of that Day among the resurrected

**38. [Some] faces, that Day, will be bright**

- a. Meaning their faces will be lit up

**39. Laughing, rejoicing at good news**

- a. Meaning they will be laughing and feeling congratulated
- b. They will be full of joy due to what Allah has prepared for them from His Mercy  
*[al-Mukhtasar fee al-tafseer]*

**40. And [other] faces, that Day, will have upon them dust**

- a. This is in reference to the opposite of those mentioned in verse 38

**41. Blackness will cover them**

- a. Some have argued that the blackness on their face is due to the smoke that comes out of Hell
  - i. Even in this world when smoke hits our skin, it blackens it
- b. The idea here is that everyone will be able to tell who are the doomed
- c. Some said Allah will not want to see them nor does He want them to see Him, so He surrounds them with dark smoke

**42. Those are the disbelievers, the wicked ones**

- a. Meaning those doomed being referred to in the previous two verses were the disbelievers, who wanted to do whatever they desired in this life without any amount of concern for their hereafter
- b. So they not only had disbelief but also combined it with immoral deeds *[al-Mukhtasar fee al-tafseer]*