

Tafseer Surah Nuh (نوح)

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

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Introduction

- I. Purpose of the *surah*
 - A. Patience of those who call to Allah and their struggle in doing *da'wah* to others, through the story of Prophet Nuh (pbuh), as an assurance for the believers and threat for the disbelievers [*Al-Mukhtasar fee al-Tafseer*]

Tafseer of the Verses

1. **Indeed, We sent Nuh to his people saying to him, "Warn your people before a painful punishment comes to them."**
 - a. The language used shows that Nuh felt an obligation to invite his people to Allah
 - b. The people of Nuh were the first to associate partners with Allah among the children of Adam. Before them, everyone worshipped One God. There were 10 centuries (i.e. 1000 years) between Adam and Nuh as stated by Ibn Abbas [Sabuni]
 - i. Allah sent Nuh to his people so that he may warn them of a painful punishment coming their way if they do not stop worshiping idols [Sabuni]
2. **Nuh proclaimed, "O my people! I am truly sent to you with a clear warning:**
 - a. We see here that Nuh is being very kind towards his people by calling them to Allah in a gentle manner so that they do not drive him out. He is not being rough with them nor insulting their beliefs. He genuinely wants good for them and wants to rescue them from misguidance [Sabuni]
 - b. Meaning I am a warner to you and am here alerting you of a punishment awaiting you if you do not repent to Allah [*Al-Mukhtasar fee al-Tafseer*]
 - i. In return, Nuh neither wants wealth nor leadership. He is genuinely frightened of a punishment that may inflict them [Sabuni]
3. **Worship Allah alone, fear Him, and obey me**
 - a. This summarizes the legacy of all the prophets. All of the following three are connected:
 - i. We're all slaves of Allah and are here on earth to serve Him
 - ii. We are required to abide by Allah's commands because He is our Master
 1. This means doing whatever He commanded and keeping away from whatever He prohibited
 - iii. We follow Allah's commands through obeying His chosen sent prophets
 1. This is the only way we know *how* to worship Him and what He wants from us

- 4. He will forgive some of your sins, and delay your end until the appointed time. Indeed, when the time set by Allah comes, it cannot be delayed, if only you knew!”**
- a. This is the result of the previous verse that Allah will forgive some of their sins due to their worship of Allah alone and following His commands
 - i. The ‘some’ is in reference to those sins that violate the rights of Allah. As for those sins which violate the rights of fellow humans, then they are not included in this statement [*Al-Mukhtasar fee al-Tafseer*]
 1. Examples of sins against fellow human beings: backbiting, cheating, bribing, oppressing, etc. For such types of sins, the person has to make amends with the victim by asking forgiveness and trying to undo the harm that he/she caused
 - b. The language used suggests as if Nuh has already lost hope in his people and is considering the punishment inevitable due to his people’s stubbornness
 - i. We know from other parts of the Qur’an that Nuh spent 950 years with them inviting them to Allah but they continued to ridicule him and persist in disobedience [Sabuni]
 - c. The ‘delay your end’ is in reference to delaying the punishment over them in this world. It is not in reference to their life because life term is already fixed and must come to an end at the ‘appointed time’. Nuh mentions that when their designated time of death comes, it cannot be delayed even for a moment. Nuh mentioned this with hopes of rushing them to accepting faith and repentance before they miss the opportunity [Sabuni]
- 5. He cried, “My Lord! I have surely called my people night and day**
- a. Meaning he did it continuously all the time without any effect. He mentions night first because that it’s an unusual time. He’s basically saying that he lost sleep over it because that is how dedicated he was to giving them *da’wah*
 - i. He even even tried giving *da’wah* secretly and openly without success [Sabuni]
- 6. But my calls only made them run farther away**
- a. Meaning it made them even more devoted to their misguidance, ignoring his advice, and turning away from the truth [Sabuni]
- 7. And whenever I invite them to be forgiven by You, they press their fingers into their ears, cover themselves with their clothes, persist ‘in denial’, and act very arrogantly**
- a. Here we learn that Nuh is only calling them to Allah not for his own benefit but their benefit so that they may be forgiven by Allah
 - i. He was inviting them to worship Allah alone and to obey Him and His messenger [*Al-Mukhtasar fee al-Tafseer*]
 - b. In order to avoid Nuh, they used to cover their ears when he spoke and cover their faces with their clothes to avoid looking at him. They also used to behave extremely arrogant towards him and persisted in their disobedience
 - i. The situation had gotten so bad that they actually hated Nuh and his advice [Sabuni]
- 8. Then I certainly called them openly**

- a. Meaning they would not listen to him when he went to them individually so he would address them all collectively in open spaces like the street

9. Then I surely preached to them publicly and privately

- a. He even tried preaching to them from specific pulpits designed for addressing the public
 - i. After addressing them publicly, he would try again by going to them privately and asking them to think about what he said
- b. Nuh in these last few verses is basically confessing all the different ways he tried to the best of his ability, whichever way he felt would be most suitable in various situations, to call them to the truth but they just would not listen to him and persisted in their arrogance and misguidance [Sabuni]

10. Saying, 'Seek your Lord's forgiveness, 'for' He is truly Most Forgiving

- a. This is part of the advice that Nuh gave them. He told them to seek Allah's forgiveness because He forgives sins and accepts repentance of those who turn back to Him [Sabuni]

11. He will shower you with abundant rain

- a. This verse and the one following it are a result of those who ask Allah's forgiveness. This shows us that asking forgiveness leads to Allah opening the doors of sustenance for us [Sabuni]
- b. In this verse, they are being told that seeking forgiveness of Allah would lead them to have continuous rain whenever they need it so that they will not be afflicted with drought [Al-Mukhtasar fee al-Tafseer]
 - i. This is a bit ironic because it was rain that destroyed them as well. Too much rain can be harmful but just the right amount on a continuous basis is beneficial

12. Supply you with wealth and children, and give you gardens as well as rivers

- a. These are some of the other blessings that Nuh is mentioning to them, which will be a result of them seeking forgiveness from Allah
- b. Meaning Allah will increase them in wealth, children, spacious and flourishing gardens full of trees and fruits, and rivers which will be flowing through them. Nuh is enticing them through these blessings with the understanding that it will only come about if they believe in Allah and obey Him [Sabuni]

13. What is the matter with you that you are not in awe of the Majesty of Allah

- a. Here Nuh tries to stir their souls and deflect them towards faith as another strategy with marvelous eloquence [Sabuni]
- b. Meaning do you all not fear the greatness and might of Allah when you disobey Him without any care?! [Al-Mukhtasar fee al-Tafseer]

14. When He truly created you in stages 'of development'?

- a. This is in reference to the stages of life from embryo, baby, child, youth, adult, and then finally growing old
 - i. Meaning the One who is able to create you in this manner alone is deserving of being worshiped alone without any partners [Sa'di]
- b. There is also in this verse affirmation of resurrection because the One who can create them from nothing is also able to resurrect them after their deaths [Sa'di]

15. Do you not see how Allah created seven heavens, one above the other

- a. In this verse and the one after it, Nuh is now turning his people's attention to the natural scenery around them that they can see with their eyes, which, upon deep reflection, is indicative of Allah's Oneness and the perfection of His power [Sabuni]
 - i. The sky, which is built one on top of the other with great precision, shows the peak of originality and skill [Sabuni]

16. Placing the moon within them as a 'reflected' light, and the sun as a 'radiant' lamp?

- a. Meaning Allah made the moon luminous on top of the earth at night and the sun a radiant lamp that removes the darkness of the night. This is so the people may see what is around them during the day just like when people light a lamp in their house to see things [Sabuni]
 - i. Allah called the moon a 'light' and the sun a 'lamp' because the former does not have its own light, rather, it is reflected from the latter, however, the sun produces its own light and is literally [behaves] like a lamp [Sabuni]

17. Allah 'alone' caused you to grow from the earth like a plant

- a. Nuh is now reminding his people about the origin of their creation that they all came from Adam (pbuh) who was created from the dust of the earth [Sabuni and *Al-Mukhtasar fee al-Tafseer*]
- b. Why is Nuh making a comparison between mankind and plants?
 - i. Because there are basic factors which are quite similar between the two. If we reflect deeply, we will find that we have much in common with plants [Sabuni]:
 1. Our father Adam was created from earth's dirt
 - a. Plants also come from earth
 2. We grow
 - a. Plants also grow
 3. We die and return back to the earth
 - a. It is as if the earth is our mother. We come from it and will return back to it
 - b. Plants also die and go back to the earth

18. Then He will return you to it, and then simply bring you forth 'again'

- a. We are created from earth, will return to it after our death, and then be resurrected from it on the Day of Judgement for accountability [Sabuni]

19. And Allah 'alone' spread out the earth for you

- a. Nuh is now turning his people's attention to one of the blessings of Allah. He is telling them that Allah made the earth expansive and paved it for them. It is like a carpet or a mattress. The people grow food on it, build on it, sleep on it, and move about on it [Sabuni]
 - i. The objective is to point out that Allah made it comfortable for mankind

20. To walk along its spacious pathways.'"

- a. Meaning the earth was made this way so that the people can walk along its numerous pathways and move around from place to place using them [Sabuni]

- i. The 'moving around' could either be due to travel, migration, or work. The very spaciousness of it makes it easy for us

21. 'Eventually,' Nuh cried, "My Lord! They have certainly persisted in disobeying me, and followed 'instead' those 'elite' whose 'abundant' wealth and children only increase them in loss

- a. After trying every possible way that Nuh could think of to try and change his people's mind for over 900 years, he continued to be unsuccessful. Finally, he turned to Allah to complain against these rebellious tyrants [Sabuni]
- b. He is complaining that they have continued to disobey him by not worshiping Allah alone and instead chosen to follow their misguided wealthy leaders. The abundant wealth and children which Allah blessed these leaders with only made them arrogant and increase them in their misguidance [*Al-Mukhtasar fee al-Tafseer* and Sabuni]

22. And who have devised a tremendous plot

- a. Their leaders plotted to instigate their followers against Nuh and oppose the truth [*Al-Mukhtasar fee al-Tafseer* and Sa'di]
- b. Their plot exceeded all bounds in making their disbelief, falsehood, and idol worship look good [Sabuni]
 - i. Their leaders made their followers feel they would be traitors if they were to follow Nuh and abandoning the legacy of their forefathers

23. Urging 'their followers', 'Do not abandon your idols—especially Wadd, Suwâ', Yaghûth, Ya'ûq, and Nasr'

- a. They started making a counter *da'wah* against Nuh's message. They used their idols' names as an added effect to make people feel fanatic about abandoning them
 - i. The five idol names mentioned in the verse are the names of their main idols. Initially, these idols had been erected to commemorate some righteous people before the time of Nuh. After many generations, however, the idols were taken as objects of worship [Sa'di]

24. Those 'elite' have already led many astray. So 'O Lord', only allow the wrongdoers to stray farther away"

- a. Their counter *da'wah* worked and they misguided by it many people
- b. In the second half of the verse, Nuh is supplicating to Allah to increase these wrongdoers further into misguidance now because of their insisting to remain on disbelief and sin [*Al-Mukhtasar fee al-Tafseer*]
 - i. He was fed up with their arrogant behavior

25. So because of their sins, they were drowned, then admitted into the Fire. And they found none to help them against Allah

- a. They were first tortured with water in this life and then with Fire in the afterlife
 - i. They were punished this way due to the hideous nature of their crimes and there was nobody that could assist them. They entered the formidable Fire immediately after drowning [Sabuni]
- b. This verse also proves that the punishment of the grave is real because we are told that they were admitted into the Fire right after being drowned. Whether a person is

swallowed by a whale, eaten by a lion, or drowned in an ocean, their place of death becomes their grave and they are afflicted in the same manner as they would be in a grave. Allah has the capability to do all things [Sabuni]

26. Nuh had prayed, “My Lord! Do not leave a single disbeliever on earth

- a. When Allah informed Nuh that nobody else will believe except those who have already done so, Nuh made this supplication [*Al-Mukhtasar fee al-Tafseer*]

27. For if You spare ‘any of’ them, they will certainly mislead Your servants, and give birth only to ‘wicked’ sinners, staunch disbelievers

- a. Imagine how much of Nuh’s patience was tested by his people to reach this point where he is asking Allah to destroy them all
- b. Here Nuh is giving the reason for requesting this supplication [Sa’di]
 - i. He understood the nature of his people and knew that if they were left alive, they would only misguide their children away from faith and worshipping Allah alone. One of them used to come to Nuh with his son and tell him, “My son, beware of this man because he is a liar! My father advised me the same when I was your age!” [Sabuni]
- c. Nuh is indicating here that they would only produce children who would grow up to be disobedient and ungrateful to Allah [*Al-Mukhtasar fee al-Tafseer*]

28. My Lord! Forgive me, my parents, and whoever enters my house in faith, and ‘all’ believing men and women. And increase the wrongdoers only in destruction”

- a. Nuh starts off by supplicating for himself first, then his parents, and then extends to the remaining of the believers. His supplication includes all believers until the Day of Judgement [Sabuni]
- b. The wrongdoers for whom he is supplicating for destruction brought it on themselves by [insisting] on their disbelief and sins [*Al-Mukhtasar fee al-Tafseer*]
 - i. Prophets have two sets of enemies: those among human and those among *jinns*
 1. Their job is to undermine the mission and message of the prophets