

Tafseer Surah Al-Qalam (القلم)

Notes on Nouman Ali Khan's Concise Commentary of the Qur'an
(Additional Sources Used as Well)

By Rameez Abid

Introduction

- I. The purpose of this chapter is to make apparent the knowledge of the Prophet (pbuh) and his character to support him after the disbelievers of Mecca were behaving condescending towards him [*al-Mukhtasar fee al-tafseer*]
- II. Some scholars hold the opinion that the first seven verses of this chapter was the second time the revelation came down after the incident in the cave
- III. This is the last chapter which begins with one of the disjointed letters

Tafseer of the Verses

1. Nūn. By the pen and what they write!

- a. Who is 'they' referring to?
 - i. Some said the angels who write down our deeds
 - ii. Some said the angels when they write down the Qur'an from the Preserved Tablet (*lawh al-mahfoodh*) to be given to the Prophet (pbuh)
 - iii. Some said it refers to the scholars of the Children of Israel who used to write down the Torah
- b. The pen is a blessed tool with which beneficial and various sciences are written down. Both angels and mankind write things [*al-Tafseer al-Muyassar*]

2. By the grace of your Lord, you 'O Prophet' are not insane

- a. Different opinions on what this means:
 - i. Some said it means that what the scholars of the Children of Israel wrote down is a proof that Muhammad (pbuh) is a prophet and not insane because he is mentioned in their scriptures
 - ii. Some said it means that in the future so much literature will be produced in service of this religion and would be a proof that the Prophet (pbuh) is not insane at all
 - iii. Some said it means that because it is the angels that are writing down this revelation from the Preserved Tablet, it is sufficient as a proof that the Prophet (pbuh) is not insane
- b. Some said it means that the blessing of prophethood which has been given to the Prophet (pbuh) does not make him insane, rather, he is free of this false charge given to him by the idol worshipers of Mecca [*al-Mukhtasar fee al-tafseer*]

3. You will certainly have a never-ending reward

- a. The Prophet (pbuh) has a high standing with Allah and will be rewarded in a way that we cannot even imagine
 - i. In addition, every single Muslim that does any good deed in Islam, the Prophet (pbuh) shares in that reward as *sadaqah jaariyah* (ongoing charity) because it is he who taught it to us

4. And you are truly 'a man' of outstanding character

- a. This verse is proof that Allah approved the character of the Prophet (pbuh) even before he became a prophet
 - i. Character is primarily based on how we treat others. The Prophet (pbuh) had an incredible way of treating others even before prophethood
- b. Indirectly, there is also evidence in this verse for relying on *hadiths* because that is where the characteristics and behaviors of the Prophet (pbuh) are preserved

5. Soon you and the pagans will see

- a. Meaning the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and the disbelieving pagans will soon see [*al-Mukhtasar fee al-tafseer*]

6. Which of you is mad

- a. Meaning when the truth becomes evident, it will become clear who was truly the insane one [*al-Mukhtasar fee al-tafseer*]

7. Surely your Lord 'alone' knows best who has strayed from His Way and who is 'rightly' guided

- a. Since Allah is most knowing of these details, He knows that the disbelievers are the ones who have strayed from His Way and that the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) is the one rightly guided and calling them to it [*al-Mukhtasar fee al-tafseer*]

8. So do not give in to the deniers

- a. The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) is being told to not obey the disbelievers with whatever offers they come with [*al-Mukhtasar fee al-tafseer*]
 - i. They were trying to get him to stop preaching or modify the message to their liking

9. They wish you would compromise so they would yield 'to you'

- a. This is in reference to when the leaders of Mecca were trying to negotiate with the Prophet (pbuh) to compromise and be lenient in some parts of the religion so that they can get along with him, however, the Prophet (pbuh) refused to do so

10. And do not obey the despicable, vain oath-taker

- a. This is in reference to a sinful person that constantly takes false oaths
- b. Some said this verse along with the next few ones are in reference to Waleed ibn Mugheerah, who was one of the leaders of Quraysh and a staunch enemy of Islam

11. Slanderer, gossip-monger

- a. Meaning such a person spreads bad things about people in order to cause separation between them

12. Withholder of good, transgressor, evildoer

- a. Meaning such a person crosses the limit in all things and frequently discourages good from taking place
- b. The effects of such a person's sins spread to others as well and are not restricted to him/her

13. Brute, and—on top of all that—an illegitimate child

- a. Meaning such a person [i.e. Waleed ibn Mugheerah] is not likable and very rude
 - i. He was an extremely mean person and would neither show leniency nor mercy. He was also born out of wedlock, therefore, his lineage was invalid [Sabuni]

14. Now, 'simply' because he has been blessed with 'abundant' wealth and children

- a. Meaning does the person with the previously mentioned qualities arrogantly think that he is untouchable just because he has been blessed with wealth and children?!
 - i. Waleed had 10 sons whom he was very proud of

15. Whenever Our revelations are recited to him, he says, "Ancient fables!"

- a. Meaning he considers the Qur'an just stories and not true at all

16. We will soon mark his snout

- a. The nose is referenced because it represents arrogance. People who are arrogant stick their noses up
- b. Meaning a sign will be placed over his nose, like a decoration, until the end of his life. This became true during the battle of Badr when his nose was injured during the fighting and its effect remained with him until his death [Sabuni]

17. Indeed, We have tested those 'Meccans' as We tested the owners of the garden—when they swore they would surely harvest 'all' its fruit in the early morning

- a. Allah tested the people of Mecca with drought and hunger. Then He compares their situation of being tested to a group of people from the past who owned a large garden with various types of foods growing in it. They were certain that they would collect all of the harvest early in the morning so that they would not have to give anything from it to the poor, who would not be up that early in the morning to ask them for charity [Sabuni]

18. Leaving no exception

- a. There are two interpretations as to what this means [Sabuni]:
 - i. They did not leave any share for the poor
 - ii. They did not say *insha'Allah* (if Allah Wills)

19. Then it was struck by a torment from your Lord while they slept

- a. Allah sent a fire the night before to their garden while they were asleep. There is nothing they could have done to defend against it [*al-Mukhtasar fee al-tafseer*]

20. So it was reduced to ashes

- a. Meaning their garden was completely destroyed by the punishment

21. Then by daybreak they called out to each other

- a. The following morning, they had no idea what had happened to their garden. They were completely oblivious about it

22. 'Saying,' "Go early to your harvest, if you want to pick 'all' the fruit"

- a. Meaning they encouraged each other to go early to collect all of the harvest before the poor come begging [*al-Mukhtasar fee al-tafseer*]

23. So they went off, whispering to one another

- a. Meaning they were heading to their garden excited to collect their harvest and whispering to each other, because they did not want any poor person to hear them going to the garden for fear that they will beg them for charity

24. “Do not let any poor person enter your garden today”

- a. Meaning they do not want to share their harvest with any poor person

25. And they proceeded early, totally fixated on their purpose

- a. Meaning they hurried early in the morning and were determined to not share their harvest with the poor [*al-Mukhtasar fee al-tafseer*]
 - i. They were convinced that they had complete ability over their intent not knowing what Allah had done to their garden [Sabuni]

26. But when they saw it ‘devastated’, they cried, “We must have lost ‘our’ way!

- a. Meaning when they witnessed what had taken place, they thought they arrived at the wrong address because they could not recognize what they were seeing with their eyes

27. In fact, we have been deprived ‘of our livelihood’”

- a. It finally settled in that it was indeed their garden and they felt helpless
- b. They realized it happened because they were determined to deprive the poor a share from their harvest [*al-Mukhtasar fee al-tafseer*]

28. The most sensible of them said, “Did I not say to you, ‘Why do you not exalt [Allah]?’”

- a. Meaning one of them reminded them that he had told them to repent to Allah from such a despicable and evil intention of not giving a share to the poor, however, they had refused to take his advice [Sabuni]
- b. We can take from this that whenever we get paid, we should give part of it to charity, thank Him, and make remembrance of Allah by doing *tasbeeh* and praising Him

29. They replied, “Glory be to our Lord! We have truly been wrongdoers”

- a. They realized that they were wrong for determining to prevent the poor from taking a share from their garden [*al-Mukhtasar fee al-tafseer*]
 - i. Sometimes Allah teaches people a lesson by taking everything away from them

30. Then they turned on each other, throwing blame

- a. Meaning they began arguing with each other

31. They said, “Woe to us! We have certainly been transgressors

- a. They said this out of regret because they realized that they were depriving the poor of their right [*al-Mukhtasar fee al-tafseer*]

32. We trust our Lord will give us a better garden than this, ‘for’ we are indeed turning to our Lord with hope”

- a. They still had reliance on Allah and had realized their error, thus, they hoped that He will give them something better in return
 - i. They repented from their error [*al-Mukhtasar fee al-tafseer*]

33. That is the ‘way of Our’ punishment ‘in this world’. But the punishment of the Hereafter is certainly far worse, if only they knew

- a. Meaning this is how Allah cuts off the sustenance of those who disobey Him as a form of punishment, but the punishment that is in the afterlife is far more severe and lasting [*al-Mukhtasar fee al-tafseer*]

34. Indeed, the righteous will have the Gardens of Bliss with their Lord

- a. There will never be a time in paradise when there will be a downtime for them. It is a place of everlasting bliss
- b. The ‘righteous’ are those who comply with Allah’s commands and abstain from His prohibitions [*al-Mukhtasar fee al-tafseer*]

35. Should We then treat those who have submitted like the wicked?

- a. Meaning would Allah treat the Muslims like the disbelievers in terms of reward as the disbelievers of Mecca claimed?! [*al-Mukhtasar fee al-tafseer*]

36. What is the matter with you? How do you judge?

- a. Meaning to do such a thing would be crooked and unjust! [*al-Mukhtasar fee al-tafseer*]

37. Or do you have a scripture, in which you read

- a. Meaning do you have a revealed book from the sky in which you read that Allah will give you [i.e. disbelievers] in the afterlife?! [Sabuni]

38. That you will have whatever you choose?

- a. Meaning does this book state that you [i.e. disbelievers] will be given whatever you desire?! [Sabuni]
 - i. This is a reprimand against them because the disbelievers of Mecca used to say, “If there is resurrection and paradise, then Allah will give us better than He will give to the believers just as He has done so in this world!” [Sabuni]

39. Or do you have oaths binding on Us until the Day of Judgment that you will have whatever you decide?

- a. Meaning do you have some sort of security and promise from Allah that He will not punish you and will let you judge yourselves?!

40. Ask them ‘O Prophet’ which of them can guarantee all that

- a. Meaning ask those who make such claims, which of them can fully guarantee that? [*al-Mukhtasar fee al-tafseer*]

41. Or do they have associate-gods ‘supporting this claim’? Then let them bring forth their associate-gods, if what they say is true

- a. Meaning do they have partners other than Allah who will equate for them their rewards with that of the believers? If so, then let them bring their partners forth [*al-Mukhtasar fee al-tafseer*]

42. ‘Beware of’ the Day the Shin will be bared, and the wicked will be asked to prostrate, but they will not be able to do so

- a. Like the Face and the Hands, the Shin is believed by many to be one of the Attributes of Allah, in a way befitting His Majesty and Greatness
- b. Since baring the shin in the Arab culture is associated with the heat of battle, some interpret the verse metaphorically, so the meaning would be: “‘Beware of’ the Day when horror sets in”

- c. On the Day of Judgment, the people will be asked to prostrate. The believers will be able to do so but the disbelievers and the hypocrites will be unable to do so
[*al-Mukhtasar fee al-tafseer*]

43. With eyes downcast, totally covered with disgrace. For they were 'always' called to prostrate 'in the world' when they were fully capable 'but they chose not to'

- a. Meaning their eyes will be submissive, their heads lowered, and humiliation and degradation will cover them. They used to be called to prostrate to the Lord of the worlds while in this life when they were healthy, however, they refused and were arrogant [Sabuni]

44. So leave to Me 'O Prophet' those who reject this message. We will gradually draw them to destruction in ways they cannot comprehend

- a. This is a severe threat to the disbelievers for their disbelief and disobedience
- b. Meaning leave Me and those who deny this Qur'an alone. I will lead them to the punishment in levels in a way that they will not realize [*al-Mukhtasar fee al-tafseer*]
 - i. Some said that the levels are as follows: delay in punishment and give them more respite -> destruction -> exemplary punishment [Sabuni]

45. I 'only' delay their end for a while, but My planning is flawless

- a. Meaning they are given delay so that they may continue to sin and Allah's planning against the people of disbelief and denial is strong. They will neither be missed by His punishment nor be safe from it [*al-Mukhtasar fee al-tafseer*]

46. Or are you asking them for a reward 'for the message' so that they are overburdened by debt?

- a. Meaning is the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) requesting some sort of payment for calling them to Islam for which reason they are turning away from him because its price is a burden?! No, that is not the case at all, so what is preventing them from following him?!
[*al-Mukhtasar fee al-tafseer*]

47. Or do they have access to 'the Record in' the unseen, so they copy it 'for all to see'?

- a. Meaning do they have knowledge of the unseen from which they copy and write stating that Allah will neither punish them for their crimes nor blame them for their denial of the leader of creation (pbuh)? [Sabuni]

48. So be patient with your Lord's decree, and do not be like 'Prophet Yunus,' the Man of the Whale, who cried out 'to Allah', in total distress

- a. This is in reference to when Prophet Yunus was swallowed by a whale in which he made supplication to Allah in total darkness of the sea and belly of the whale
- b. Meaning be patient over the ruling of Allah who has given them respite and not be like Prophet Yunus (pbuh) who became angry with his people when they did not respond to his call [*al-Mukhtasar fee al-tafseer*]

49. Had he not been shown grace by his Lord, he would have certainly been cast onto the open 'shore', still blameworthy

- a. Meaning if it was not for Allah's favor on Prophet Yunus (pbuh), he would have been thrown onto a land by the whale in which there was neither food nor drink

50. Then his Lord chose him, making him one of the righteous

- a. Meaning Allah chose Yunus (pbuh) and made him among the righteous. This is his status with Allah. He should not be discounted in status just because he left his people without Allah's permission after becoming angry with them for not accepting Allah's message [Sabuni]

51. The disbelievers would almost cut you down with their eyes when they hear 'you recite' the Reminder, and say, "He is certainly a madman"

- a. Meaning the disbelievers, due to the intensity of their hatred towards the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and hostility towards Islam, strike him down with their eyes and [wish to] destroy him with their deadly poisoned looks whenever they hear the Qur'an being recited. Then they say in their hatred and envy, "He is insane!" [Sabuni]
- b. There is evidence in this verse for the evil eye and that it is true [Sabuni]

52. But it is simply a reminder to the whole world

- a. Meaning this Qur'an was only sent down on the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) as a reminder for mankind and jinn so how can he be described as insane?! [Sabuni]