

Al-Rum [The Romans]

Makkan Period

In the name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate

[1] *Alif. Lam. Mim.*

[2] The Romans have been defeated

[3] in the neighbouring land; but after their defeat they shall gain victory in a few years.¹

[4] All power belongs to Allah both before and after. On that day will the believers rejoice²

[5] at the victory granted by Allah. He grants victory to whomsoever He pleases. He is the Most Mighty, the Most Compassionate.

[6] This is Allah's promise and He does not go back on His promise. But most people do not know.

[7] People simply know the outward aspect of the worldly life but are utterly heedless of the Hereafter.

1. This alludes to the war that was then taking place between the Byzantine and Sassanid Empires. The Byzantine forces had been so badly beaten by their adversaries that no one could have imagined that they would recover and rise again. In this verse, however, God prophesied that the Byzantines would emerge victorious within the next few years.

2. This was another prediction. Its meaning was only grasped by people later on. It was grasped first of all when the Muslims gained the upper hand in the Battle of Badr, and thereafter when the Byzantines prevailed over the Sassanids.

[8] Do they not reflect on themselves? Allah created the heavens and the earth and whatever lies between them in Truth and for an appointed term. Yet many people deny that they will meet their Lord.³

[9] Have they not travelled through the earth that they may observe what was the end of their predecessors who were far mightier and tilled the land and built upon it more than these have ever built? And Allah's Messengers came to them with Clear Signs. It was not Allah Who wronged them, but it is they who wronged themselves.

[10] Evil was the end of those evil-doers, for they gave the lie to Allah's Signs and scoffed at them.

[11] Allah creates in the first instance and will later repeat it. Thereafter it is to Him that you shall be sent back.

[12] On that Day when the Hour will come to pass, the criminals shall be dumbfounded.⁴

[13] None whom they had associated with Allah in His Divinity will intercede on their behalf; rather, they will disown those whom they had set up as Allah's associates in His Divinity.⁵

3. If one reflects over the order of the universe, two things stand out as quite evident. First, that the creation of the universe is not the work of someone given to play and frolic; instead, it displays purposiveness. Second, that the order of the universe is not eternal and everlasting; some day at an appointed time, it is bound to come to an end. Both these are pointers to the fact that the Hereafter is bound to come about. Nevertheless, many people deny it.

4. The word mublisun in the verse, which is derived from the verbal form iblas, means to be dumbfounded by feelings of utter despair and shock.

5. Those who associate others with God in His Divinity will admit in the Next Life that they were mistaken in taking others as His associates.

[14] On that Day when the Hour will come to pass, people will be split into groups.

[15] Then those who believed and acted righteously will be placed in a Garden and will be happy and jubilant.

[16] As for those who disbelieved and gave the lie to Our Signs and to the encounter of the Hereafter, they will be arraigned for chastisement.

[17] So glorify Allah in the evening and the morning.

[18] His is all praise in the heavens and in the earth; (and glorify Him) in the afternoon and when the sun begins to decline.⁶

[19] He brings forth the living from the dead and brings forth the dead from the living, and revives the earth after it is dead. Likewise will you be raised to life (after you die).

[20] And of His Signs is that He created you from dust and behold, you became human beings, and are multiplying around (the earth).

[21] And of His Signs is that He has created mates for you from your own kind that you may find peace in them and He has set between you love and mercy. Surely there are Signs in this for those who reflect.

[22] And of His Signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth and the diversity of your tongues and colours. Indeed there are Signs in this for the wise.

6. Vv. 17-18 clearly indicate the following four times of Prayer: Fajr (morning), Maghrib (evening), 'Asr (afternoon), Zuhr (early afternoon when the sun begins to decline). If these verses are read in conjunction with Hud 11:114, Bani Isra'il 17:78 and 'Ta' Ha' 20:130, all the five times of daily Prayer become evident.

[23] And of His Signs is your sleeping at night and your seeking His Bounty during the day. Indeed there are Signs in this for those who hearken.

[24] And of His Signs is that He shows you lightning, arousing both fear and hope, and sends down water from the sky and revives the earth after it is dead. Indeed there are Signs in this for those who use their reason.

[25] And of His Signs is that the sky and the earth stand firm by His command. Then no sooner than He summons you out of the earth you will come forth.

[26] To Him belong all who are in the heavens and all who are on the earth. All are in obedience to Him.

[27] It is He Who creates in the first instance and it is He Who will repeat the creation, and that is easier for Him. His is the loftiest attribute in the heavens and the earth. He is the Most Mighty, the Most Wise.

[28] He sets forth for you a parable from your own lives. Do you have among your slaves some who share with you the sustenance that We have bestowed on you so that you become equals in it, all being alike, and then you would hold them in fear as you fear each other?⁷ Thus do We make plain the Signs for those who use reason.

[29] But the Wrong-doers follow their desires without any knowledge. Who, then, can show the way to him whom Allah lets go astray? Such shall have no helpers.

7. The verse substantially says the same as was said in surah al-Nahl 16:62. The argument at both places is as follows: "When people are disinclined to make their slaves partners in their properties, how can they bring themselves to believe that God will make His own creatures partners in His Godhead?"

[30] (O Prophet and his followers), turn your face single- mindedly to the true Faith and adhere to the true nature on which Allah has created human beings. The mould fashioned by Allah cannot be altered.⁸ That is the True, Straight Faith, although most people do not know.

[31] (Adhere to the True Faith and) turn to Him, and hold Him in awe, and establish Prayer, and do not be of those who associate others with Allah in His Divinity,

[32] those who have split up their religion and have become divided into sects, each party exulting in what they have.

[33] (Such are human beings) that when any misfortune befalls them, they cry to their Lord, penitently turning to Him. But no sooner that He lets them have a taste of His Mercy than some of them begin associating others with their Lord in His Divinity

[34] so that they may show ingratitude to Us for the favours We had bestowed upon them. So, enjoy yourselves a while; but then you shall soon come to know.

[35] Have We sent down any sanction which provides support to their associating others with Allah in His Divinity?

8. *God has designated man to be His servant and has created him for the sole purpose of serving Him. No one, howsoever hard he might try, can alter this natural pattern on which man was created. Neither can man become anything else than God's servant, nor can anyone become his God even if he chose that person to be so. Man may make for himself as many gods as he pleases, but the fact remains that he is the servant of none but the One True God. This verse can also be translated as follows: "Do not alter the mould on which man has been fashioned." That is, it is not proper for anyone to try to alter man's natural mould, let alone corrupt and distort it.*

[36] When We make people have a taste of Our Mercy, they exult in it; and when any misfortune befalls them in consequence of their deeds, then lo and behold, they despair.

[37] Do they not see that Allah enlarges and straitens the sustenance of those whom He pleases? There are Signs in this for those who believe.

[38] So give his due to the near of kin, and to the needy, and to the wayfarer.⁹ That is better for those who desire to please Allah. It is they who will prosper.

[39] Whatever you pay as interest so that it may increase the wealth of people does not increase in the sight of Allah.¹⁰ As for the *Zakah* that you give, seeking with it Allah's good pleasure, that is multiplied manifold.

[40] It is Allah Who created you, then bestowed upon you your sustenance, and He will cause you to die and then will bring you back to life. Can any of those whom you associate with Allah in His Divinity! do any such thing? Glory be to Him and exalted be He above whatever they associate with Allah in His Divinity.

[41] Evil has become rife on the land and at sea¹¹ because of men's deeds; this in order that He may cause them to have a taste of some of their deeds; perhaps they will turn back (from evil).

9. *It is significant that man is not directed in this verse to give charity to his near of kin, and to the needy and the wayfarer. Instead, he has been asked to give them what is their due; to render them the right that they have against him.*

10. *This is the first verse revealed in the Qur'an expressing disapproval of interest. For the injunctions on the subject revealed later, see Al 'Imran 3:130 and al-Baqarah 2:275-281.*

11. *This is an allusion to the war that was then taking place between the two great powers of the time, the Byzantines and the Sassanids.*

[42] (O Prophet), say: "Traverse in the earth and see what was the end of those who went before you: most of them associated others with Allah in His Divinity."

[43] So turn your face exclusively towards the True Faith before there comes the Day whose coming from Allah cannot be averted, the Day when people will split into groups.

[44] He who disbelieves will suffer the consequence of it and he who acts righteously, they will pave the way for their own good

[45] so that Allah may out of His Bounty, reward those who believe and act righteously. Verily He does not love the unbelievers.

[46] And of His Signs is that He sends winds to herald good tidings and that He may give you a taste of His Mercy and that ships may sail at His bidding and you may seek His Bounty and give thanks to Him.

[47] We sent Messengers before you to their respective nations, and they brought Clear Signs to them. Then We took vengeance upon those who acted wickedly. It was incumbent on Us to come to the aid of the believers.

[48] Allah sends the winds that stir up clouds and then He spreads them in the sky as He pleases and splits them into different fragments, whereafter you see drops of rain pouring down from them. He then causes the rain to fall on whomsoever of His servants He pleases, and lo, they rejoice at it,

[49] although before that they were given to despair.

[50] See, then, the tokens of Allah's Mercy: how He revives the earth after it is dead. Verily He is the One Who will revive the dead. He has power over everything.

[51] But if We were to send a wind and then their tilth has become yellow, they would never cease to disbelieve.¹²

[52] (O Prophet), you cannot make the dead hear,¹³ nor can you make the deaf hear your call when they turn back in retreat,

[53] nor can you guide the blind out of their error. You can make none hear (your call) except those who believe in Our Signs and have surrendered themselves (to Him).

[54] It is Allah Who created you in a state of weakness; then after weakness He gave you strength, then after strength He made you weak and old. He creates what He pleases. He is All-Knowing, All-Powerful.

[55] On that Day when the Hour will come to pass¹⁴ the wicked shall swear that they had stayed (in the world) no more than an hour. Thus they used to be deceived in the life of the world.

[56] But those who had been endowed with knowledge and faith shall say: "According to Allah's Record you have stayed till the Day of Resurrection. Now, this is the Day of Resurrection. But you did not know."

[57] So that will be the Day when the excuses of the wrong-doers will not avail them, nor will they be asked to make amends.¹⁵

12. *The fact is that the preponderance of evil in the world is due to man's own evil conduct. Ironically, people tend to blame their misfortunes on God even though He always lavishes His favours on them. It is even more strange that when people receive God's bounties in full measure they still fail to be thankful to Him.*

13. *This refers to those whose conscience has become extinct.*

14. *This refers to the Resurrection about whose occurrence they are being informed.*

15. *This could also be translated as follows: "... nor will they be asked to please their Lord."*

[58] In the Qur'an We have explained things to people in myriad ways. But no matter what Sign you bring to them, those who are resolved upon denying the Truth will say: "You are given to falsehood."

[59] Thus does Allah seal the hearts of those who have no knowledge.

[60] Therefore, (O Prophet), have patience. Surely Allah's promise is true. Let those who lack certainty not cause you to be unsteady.¹⁶

16. *The believers should remain firm and steadfast in their attitude. Their enemies should not find them faint-hearted, overpowered by their empty hue and cry, cowed down by their slander campaigns, demoralised by their taunts and ridicules, intimidated by their threats, show of strength and persecution, nor seduced by their allurements.*