

Al-Balad [The City] **Makkan Period**

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

[1] Nay! ¹ I swear by this city

[2] -this city wherein you have been rendered violable²-

[3] and I swear by the parent and his offspring:

[4] Verily We have created man into toil and hardship.³

[5] Does he think that no one can overpower him?

[6] He says: "I have squandered enormous wealth,"

[7] Does he believe that none has seen him? ⁴

[8] Did We not grant him two eyes,

1. The word "nay" is used here to stress that the unbelievers' ideas were altogether devoid of reality.

2. The irony was that in Makkah even animals, let alone human beings, were inviolable and enjoyed security. Astonishingly, in that very city, every kind of wrong and injustice was perpetrated against the Prophet (peace be on him) as though it were lawful to do so only in this particular case.

3. That is, this world is essentially not a place of fun and frolic; instead, here one has to pass through the rigours of toil and hardship, something which no human being can escape.

4. There are people who boastfully flaunt that they are great squanderers of wealth. Are such people too foolish to take any note of the fact that there is, after all, God above them Who takes note of how they had acquired wealth and the purposes on which they spent it?

[9] and a tongue and two lips?⁵

[10] And did We not show him the two highroads (of good and evil)?

[11] But he did not venture to scale the difficult steep.

[12] And what do you know what that difficult steep is?

[13] It is freeing someone's neck from slavery;

[14] or giving food on a day of hunger

[15] to an orphan near of kin;

[16] or to a destitute lying in dust;

[17] and, then besides this, he be one of those who believed, and enjoined upon one another steadfastness and enjoined upon one another compassion.

[18] These are the People of the Right Hand.

[19] As for those who rejected our Signs, they are the People of the Left Hand.⁶

[20] Upon them shall be a Fire that will hem them in.

5. The purpose of this query is to impress upon us that God has endowed man with the means to acquire knowledge and wisdom.

*6. To comprehend what is meant by "the People of the Right Hand" and "the People of the Left Hand," see **al-Waqi'ah** 56: 8, 9, 27-40 and 41-56.*