

56. This is a Warner,(5123) of the (series of) Warners of old!

5123 The Prophet before Quraysh (and before us) continues the line of messengers of Allah who have come to teach mankind and lead men into unity and righteousness. Shall we not listen to his voice? Every day that passes, the Judgement approaches nearer and nearer. But Allah alone can say at what precise hour it will come to any of us. It is certain, and yet it is a mystery, which Allah alone can lay bare.

57. The (Judgment) ever approaching draws nigh:

58. No (soul) but Allah can lay it bare.

59. Do ye then wonder(5124) at this recital?

5124 Mere wondering will not do, even if it is the wonder of admiration. Each soul must strive and act, and Allah's Mercy will take it under its wings.

60. And will ye laugh(5125) and not weep,-

5125 The higher issues of Life and the Hereafter are serious, and therefore all that we do in this life is serious and important. We must shun inanities and frivolities. It is no laughing time. If we only realised our own shortcomings, we should weep, with our good angels who weep for us. But weeping by itself will not help. We must try and understand Allah and adore Him. Thus shall we be able to understand ourselves and our fellow-men.

61. Wasting your time in vanities?

62. But fall ye down in prostration to Allah, and adore (Him)!(5126)

5126 And so we are invited to prostrate ourselves and adore Him. For this is the true end of Revelation and the true attitude when we understand the world, Nature, History and the working of Allah's Plan.



54. Al Qamar (The Moon)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. The Hour (of Judgment)(5127) is nigh, and the moon is cleft asunder.(5128)

5127 See paragraph 2 of the Introduction to S. 53. The idea of the judgement being nigh at the beginning of this Surah connects it with the same idea at the end of the last Surah (verse 57), though the actual words used in the two cases are different.

5128 Three explanations are given in the *Mufradat*, and perhaps all three apply here: (1) that the moon once appeared cleft asunder in the valley of Makkah within sight of the Prophet, his Companions, and some Unbelievers; (2) that the prophetic past tense indicates the future, the cleaving asunder of the moon being a Sign of the Judgement approaching; and (3) that the phrase is metaphorical, meaning that the matter has become clear as the moon. That the first was noticed by contemporaries, including Unbelievers, is clear from verse 2. The second is an incident of the disruption of the solar system at the New Creation: *CF* 75:8-9. And the third might well be implied as in eastern allegory, based on the other two.

2. But if they see a Sign, they turn away, and say, "This is (but) transient magic."(5129)

5129 *Mustamir*: transient, or powerful: either meaning will apply. The Unbelievers acknowledge the unusual appearance, but call it magic. They do not therefore profit by the spiritual lesson.

3. They reject (the warning) and follow their (own) lusts but every matter has(5130) its appointed time.

5130 The prevalence of sin and the persecution of truth may have its day, but it must end at last.

4. There have already come to them Recitals wherein(5131) there is (enough) to check (them),

5131 The stories of the sins of past generations having been visited with exemplary punishments were already in their possession, and should, if they had been wise, have opened their eyes and checked them in their mad career of sin. Five of these stories are again referred to later in this Surah by way of illustration.

5. Mature wisdom;- but (the preaching of) Warners profits them not.

6. Therefore, (O Prophet)(5132) turn away from them. The Day that the Caller(5133) will call (them) to a terrible affair,

5132 For a time godlessness seems to triumph, but the triumph is short-lived. And in any case there is the great Reckoning of the Day of Judgement.

5133 The angel whose voice will call at the Resurrection and direct all souls. *CF* 20:108-111.

7. They will come forth,- their eyes humbled - from (their) graves, (torpid)(5134) like locusts scattered abroad,

5134 At one stage in the invasion of locust swarms, the locusts are torpid and are scattered abroad all over the ground. I have seen them on railway tracks in 'Iraq', crushed to death in hundreds by passing trains. The simile is apt for the stunned beings who will rise up in swarms from their graves and say, 'Ah! woe unto us! who had raised us up?' (36:52).

8. Hastening, with eyes transfixed, towards the Caller!-"Hard is this Day!", the Unbelievers will say.

9. Before them the People of Noah rejected (their messenger): they rejected Our servant,(5135) and said, "Here is one possessed!", and he was driven out.

5135 The story of Noah and the Flood is frequently referred to in the Qur'an. The passage which best illustrates this passage will be found in 11:25-48. Note in that passage how they first insult and abuse him arrogantly; how he humbly argues with them; how they laugh him to scorn, as much as to say that he was a madman possessed of some evil spirit; and how the Flood comes and he is saved in the Ark, and the wicked are doomed to destruction.

10. Then he called on his Lord: "I am one overcome: do Thou then help (me)!"(5136)

5136 He did not call down punishment. He merely asked for help in his mission, as he felt himself overpowered by brute force and cast out, which prevented the fulfilment of his mission. But the wicked generation were past all repentance, and they were wiped out.

11. So We opened the gates of heaven, with water pouring forth.

12. And We caused the earth to gush forth with springs, so the waters met (and rose)(5137) to the extent decreed.

5137 The torrents of rain from above combined with the gush of waters from underground springs, and caused a huge Flood which inundated the country (*CF* 11:40 and 23:27).

13. But We bore him on an (Ark) made of broad planks and caulked(5138) with palm- fibre:

5138 *Dusur*, plural of *disar*, which means the palm fibre with which boats are caulked: from *dasara*, to ram in, to spear. A derived meaning is "nails", (which are driven into planks): this latter meaning also applies, and is preferred by translators not familiar with the construction of simple boats.

14. She floats under our eyes (and care): a recompense(5139) to one who had been rejected (with scorn)!

5139 As usual, Allah's Mercy in saving His faithful servants takes precedence of His Wrath and Penalty. And He helps and rewards those whom the world rejects and despises!

15. And We have left this as a Sign(5140) (for all time): then is there any that will receive admonition?(5141)

5140 *CF* 29:15, where the Ark (with the salvation it brought to the righteous) is mentioned as a Sign for all Peoples. So also in 25:37 and 26:121, it is a Sign for men. Similarly the saving of Lot, with the destruction of the wicked Cities of the Plain, is mentioned as a Sign left for those who would understand: 29:35 and 51:37.

5141 A refrain that occurs six times in this Surah: see Introduction.

16. But how (terrible) was(5142) My Penalty and My Warning?

5142 While the Mercy of Allah is always prominently mentioned, we must not forget or minimise the existence of Evil, and the terrible Penalty it incurs if the Grace of Allah and His Warning are deliberately rejected.

17. And We have indeed made the Qur'an easy(5143) to understand and remember: then is there any that will receive admonition?

5143 While the Qur'an sums up the highest philosophy of the inner life, its simple directions for conduct are plain and easy to understand and act upon. Is this not in itself a part of the Grace of Allah? And what excuse is there for anyone to fail in receiving admonition?

18. The 'Ad (people) (too) rejected (Truth): then how terrible was My Penalty and My Warning?

19. For We sent against them(5144) a furious wind, on a Day of violent Disaster,

5144 *CF* 41:16. How graphic is the description of the tornado that uprooted them! It must indeed be a dreadful tornado that plucks up the palm trees by their tap-roots. The "Day" is an indefinite period of time. The wind that destroyed the 'Ad people lasted seven nights and eight days: 69:7.

20. Plucking out men as if they were roots of palm-trees torn up (from the ground).

21. Yea, how (terrible) was My Penalty and My Warning!(5145)

5145 Repeated from verse 18 to heighten the description of the sin, the penalty, and the criminal negligence of the sinners in refusing the warnings on account of their self-complacent confidence in their own strength and stability! It is repeated again as a secondary refrain in 54:30 and (with slight modification) in 54:37 and 39.

22. But We have indeed made the Qur'an easy to understand and remember: then is there any that will receive admonition?

23. The Thamud (also) rejected (their) Warners.

24. For they said: "What!(5146) a man! a Solitary one from among ourselves! shall we follow such a one?(5147) Truly should we then be straying in mind, and mad!

5146 The psychology of Thamud is more searchingly analysed here than in 41:17, to show up the contrast between shallow men's ideas about Revelation, and the real sanity, humanism, social value, and truth of Revelation. To them the Revelation was brought by Salih.

5147 Because the Preacher is one among so many, and different from them, although brought up among themselves, it is made a cause of reproach against him, when it should have been an index leading to a searching of their hearts and an examination of their ways.

25. "Is it that the Message is sent to him, of all people amongst us? Nay, he is a liar, an insolent one!"(5148)

5148 Pure abuse, as a contrast to Salih's expostulation! See 26:141-158, and notes.

26. Ah! they will know on the morrow, which is the liar, the insolent one!

27. For We will send the she-camel(5149) by way of trial for them. So watch them, (O Salih), and possess thyself in patience!

5149 See n. 1044 to 7:73, for the she-camel as a trial or test among selfish people who tried to monopolise water and pasture as against the poor.

28. And tell them that the water is to be divided between them:(5150) Each one's right to drink being brought forward (by suitable turns).

5150 See 26:155-156. All were to have water in due turn. It was to be no one's monopoly. And certainly the gates were not to be shut against the poor or their cattle.

29. But they called to their companion, and he took a sword in hand, and hamstrung (her).

30. Ah! how (terrible) was My Penalty and My Warning!

31. For We sent against them(5151) a single Mighty Blast, and they became like the dry stubble used by one who pens cattle.(5152)

5151 See n. 1047 to 7:78, and *CF* the same phrase "single Blast" used for the signal for the Resurrection in 36:53. In the case of Thamud, the destruction seems to have been by a severe earthquake accompanied with a terrible rumbling noise.

5152 They became like dry sticks such as are used by herdsmen in making pens or enclosures for their cattle.

32. And We have indeed made the Qur'an easy to understand and remember: then is there any that will receive admonition?

33. The people of Lut(5153) rejected (his) warning.

5153 The story of Lot (Lut) and the Cities of the Plain has been frequently referred to. See 11:74-83.

34. We sent against them a violent Tornado with showers of stones,(5154) (which destroyed them), except Lut's household: them We delivered by early Dawn,-

5154 *Hasib*: a violent tornado bringing a shower of stones. The word occurs here; in 17:68 (without reference to any particular place); in 29:40 (where it seems to

refer to Lot's Cities, see n. 3462); and in 67:17 (where again there is no reference to a particular place). In Lot's Cities the shower was of brimstone: see 11:82.

35. As a Grace from Us: thus do We reward those who give thanks.(5155)

5155 'Giving thanks' to Allah in Quranic phrase is to obey Allah's Law, to do His Will, to practise righteousness, to use all gifts in His service.

36. And (Lut) did warn them(5156) of Our Punishment, but they disputed about the Warning.

5156 Cf. 11:78-79.

37. And they even sought to snatch away his guests(5157) from him, but We blinded their eyes. (They heard:) "Now taste ye My Wrath and My Warning."

5157 Lot had been preaching to them some time against their iniquities. The crisis of their fate came when the two angels came to Lot in the guise of handsome young men. The men of the whole City came in an uproar, assaulted his house, and tried to snatch away the two handsome men. Lot tried to prevent them, but was powerless. Darkness fell on their eyes, as the first stage in their punishment, and before next morning the wicked cities were buried under a shower of brimstone. Lot and his believing household were saved.

38. Early on the morrow an abiding Punishment seized them:

39. "So taste ye My Wrath and My Warning."

40. And We have indeed made the Qur'an easy to understand and remember: then is there any that will receive admonition?

41. To the People(5158) of Pharaoh, too, aforesaid, came Warners (from Allah..

5158 The Egyptian people of old are the last people mentioned in this Surah as an example of iniquity meeting with punishment. And the moral is driven home to the Pagan Quraysh, to warn them of their fate if they persisted in their evil lives. The Egyptians had many Signs given them. They were gifted people and had made much progress in the sciences and the arts. They could have learnt from history that when the highest virtues disappear, the nation must fall. Moses was brought up among them and commissioned to give Allah's Message to them. But they were arrogant; they were unjust to Allah's creatures; they followed debasing forms of worship; they mocked at Truth; and were at last punished with destruction in the Red Sea for their arrogant leaders and army. See 10:75-90 for a narrative.

42. The (people) rejected all Our Signs; but We seized them with such Penalty (as comes) from One Exalted in Power, able to carry out His Will.

43. Are your Unbelievers, (O Quraish), better than they?(5159) Or have ye an immunity in the Sacred Books?

5159 If the Egyptians with all their power and science were unable to resist the punishment of their sins, the Pagan Quraysh are asked: how will you fare when you come to a trial of strength against Allah's Truth? You are not specially favoured so as to be immune from Allah's Law. And if you rely on your numbers, they will be a broken reed when the trial comes, as indeed happened at the Battle of Badr.

44. Or do they say: "We acting together can defend ourselves"?

45. Soon will their multitude be put to flight, and they will show their backs.

46. Nay, the Hour (of Judgment) is the time promised them (for their full recompense):(5160) And that Hour will be most grievous and most bitter.

5160 The calculations of unjust men—on their science, their resources, their numbers, etc.—will in many cases be falsified even in this world, as stated in the last two verses, but their real Punishment will come with Judgement, *i.e.* when they find their real place in the spiritual world at the restoration of true values. It will then be a most grievous and bitter experience for them, throwing into the shade any calamities they may suffer in this life.

47. Truly those in sin are the ones straying in mind, and mad.(5161)

5161 Cf. 54:24 above. Note how the tables are turned in the argument by the repetition. The unjust think that the godly are wandering in mind and mad. They will find that it is really they who were wandering in mind and mad, even when they were in the plenitude of their power and in the enjoyment of all the good things of this life. These minor echoes heighten the effect of the major refrain mentioned in the Introduction.

48. The Day they will be dragged through the Fire on their faces,(5162) (they will hear:) "Taste ye the touch of Hell!"

5162 *On their faces:* the Face is the symbol of Personality. Their whole Personality will be subverted and degraded—in the midst of the Fire of Suffering.

49. Verily, all things have We created in proportion and measure.(5163)

5163 Allah's Creation is not haphazard. Everything goes by law, proportion, and measure. Everything has its appointed time, place, and occasion, as also its definite limitation. Nothing happens but according to His Plan, and every deed, word, and thought of man has its fullest consequences, except insofar as the Grace and Mercy of Allah intervenes, and that is according to law and plan. (Cf. 2:117).

50. And Our Command is but a single (Act),-(5164) like the twinkling of an eye.

5164 While in the life of created things there is "proportion and measure", and a lag of time or distance or circumstance, in Allah's Command, the Design, the Word, the Execution, and the Consequences are but a single Act. The simile given is that of the twinkling of an eye, which is the shortest time that a simple man can think of: the cause which occasions the twinkling, the movement of the muscles connected with it, the closing of the eyelids, and their reopening, are all almost like a simultaneous act. By way of contrast take an illustration like that of a man writing a book. He must form the design in his mind; he must prepare himself by research, collection of knowledge, or of personal experience; he must use or acquire the art of writing; he must collect the material for writing, *viz.*, paper, ink, pen, etc., and this will connect with a chain of manufacturing processes in which he is dependent upon other people's work and experience; then his book may have to be printed or lithographed or bound, and sold, or taken to a library, or presented to a friend, which will bring into play numerous other chains of processes, and dependence upon other people's work or skill; and the lag of Time, Space, and Circumstance will occur at numerous stages. In Allah's Command, the word "Be" (*kun*) includes everything, without the intervention, or dependence upon any other being or thing whatever. And this is also another phase of the philosophy of Unity.

51. And (oft) in the past, have We destroyed gangs(5165) like unto you: then is there any that will receive admonition?(5166)

5165 *Ashya 'akum:* 'gangs or parties or collection of men like you'—addressed to wicked men who arrogantly rely upon their own strength or combination, neither of which can stand for a moment against the Will of Allah.

5166 The cases of Pharaoh's men of old and the Pagan Quraysh are considered as parallel, and an appeal is addressed to the latter from the experience of the former: 'will ye not learn and repent?'

52. All that they do is noted in (their) Books (of Deeds):(5167)

5167 The point is that nothing which men do is lost—good or evil. Everything gives rise to an inevitable chain of consequences, from which a release is only obtained by the intervention of Allah's Grace acting on an act, a striving of the human will to repent and turn to Allah. (R).

53. Every matter, small and great, is on record.

54. As to the Righteous, they will be in the midst of Gardens and Rivers,(5168)

5168 The record, in the case of those who dishonoured and violated Truth, will lead to their undoing; but in the case of those who honoured the Truth and adopted it so as to shine in their righteous lives, the result is expressed by four metaphors, in an ascending degree of sublimity: (1) they will be in the midst of Gardens where rivers flow; (2) they will be in an Assembly of Truth; (3) in the Presence of Allah; (4) Whose sovereignty is omnipotent. " *Gardens " with Rivers (flowing beneath)*: this has been explained more than once already: *Cf.* n. 4668 to 43:70. The Garden suggests all the Bliss we can imagine through our senses. (R).

55. In an Assembly of Truth,(5169) in the Presence of(5170) a Sovereign Omnipotent.(5171)

5169 While we possess our bodily senses, the best conceptions we can form are through our sense-perceptions, and the Garden is a good symbol from that point

of view. The next higher understanding of spiritual truth is through our intellect and social satisfaction. This is best symbolised by the Assembly of Truth—the gathering in which we sit with our fellows and enjoy the realisation of Truth and the dissipation of falsehoods and half-truths.

5170 But there is a higher conception still, something so intensely spiritual that it can only be expressed by reference to the Presence of Allah. (R).

5171 *Muqtadir*, which is translated Omnipotent, implies something more: the eighth-declension form denotes not only complete mastery, but the further idea that the mastery arises from Allah's own nature, and depends on nothing else whatever. (R).



55. Al Rahman (The Most Gracious)

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

1. (Allah) Most Gracious!

2. It is He Who has(5172) taught the Qur'an.

5172 The Revelation comes from Allah Most Gracious, and it is one of the greatest Signs of His grace and favour. He is the source of all Light, and His light is diffused throughout the universe.

3. He has created man:

4. He has taught him speech(5173) (and intelligence).

5173 *Bayan*: intelligent speech: power of expression: capacity to understand clearly the relation of things and to explain them. Allah has given this to man, and besides this revelation in man's own heart, has aided him with revelation in nature and revelation through prophets and messengers.

5. The sun and the moon follow courses (exactly) computed;(5174)

5174 In the great astronomical universe there are exact mathematical laws, which bear witness to Allah's Wisdom and also to His favours to His creatures; for we all profit by the heat and light, the seasons, and the numerous changes in the tides and the atmosphere, on which the constitution of our globe and the maintenance of life depend.

6. And the herbs(5175) and the trees - both (alike) bow in adoration.(5176)

5175 *Najm*: may mean stars collectively, or herbs collectively; perhaps both meanings are implied.

5176 All nature adores Allah. *Cf.* 22:18 , and n. 2790; 13:15 ; and 16:48-49.

7. And the Firmament has He raised high, and He has set up the Balance (of Justice),(5177)

5177 The "balance of justice" in this verse is connected with "the Balance" in the next two verses, that men may act justly to each other and observe due balance in all their actions, following the golden mean and not transgressing due bounds in anything. But the Balance is also connected figuratively with the heavens above in three symbols: (1) Justice is a heavenly virtue; (2) the heavens themselves are sustained by mathematical balance; and (3) the constellation Libra (the Balance) is entered by the sun at the middle of the zodiacal year.

8. In order that ye may not transgress (due) balance.

9. So establish weight with justice(5178) and fall not short in the balance.

5178 To be taken both literally and figuratively. A man should be honest and straight in every daily matter, such as weighing out things which he is selling; and he should be straight, just and honest, in all the highest dealings, not only with other people, but with himself and in his obedience to Allah's Law. Not many do either the one or the other when they have an opportunity of deceit. Justice is the central virtue, and the avoidance of both excess and defect in conduct keeps the human world balanced just as the heavenly world is kept balanced by mathematical order.

10. It is He Who has spread out the earth(5179) for (His) creatures:

5179 How can Allah's favours be counted? Look at the earth alone. Life and the conditions here are mutually balanced for Allah's creatures. The vegetable world produces fruit of various kinds and corn or grain of various kinds for human food. The grain harvest yields with it fodder for animals in the shape of leaves and straw, as well as food for men in the shape of grain. The plants not only supply food but sweet-smelling herbs and flowers. *Rayhan* is the sweet basil, but is here used in the generic sense, for agreeable produce in the vegetable world, to match the useful produce already mentioned.

11. Therein is fruit and date-palms, producing spathes (enclosing dates);

12. Also corn, with (its) leaves and stalk for fodder, and sweet-smelling plants.

13. Then which of the favours(5180) of your Lord will ye deny?

5180 Both the pronoun "your" and the verb "will ye deny" are in the Arabic in the Dual Number. The whole Surah is a symphony of Duality, which leads up to Unity, as explained in the Introduction. All creation is in pairs: 51:49, and notes 5025-26; 36:36, n. 3981. Justice is the conciliation of two opposites to unity, the settlement of the unending feud between Right and Wrong. The things and concepts mentioned in this Surah are in pairs: man and outer nature; sun and moon; herbs and trees; heavens and earth; fruit and corn; human food and fodder for cattle; things nourishing and things sweet-smelling; and so on throughout the Surah. Then there is man and Jinn, for which see n. 5182 below. *Will ye deny?* that is, fail to acknowledge either in word or thought or in your conduct. If you misuse Allah's gifts or ignore them, that is equivalent to ingratitude or denial or refusal to profit by Allah's infinite Grace.