



LXXXVIII

AL-GHĀSHIYA

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INTRODUCTION

Name

The Sūrah takes its name from the word *al-ghāshiyah* in the first verse.

Period of Revelation

The whole subject-matter of the Sūrah indicates that this too is one of the earliest Sūrahs to be revealed; but this was the period when the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) had started preaching his message publicly, and the people of Makkah were hearing it and ignoring it carelessly and thoughtlessly.

Theme and Subject-Matter

To understand the subject-matter well one should keep in view the fact that in the initial stage the preaching of the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) mostly centered around two points which he wanted to instil in the people's minds: *Tauhid* and the Hereafter; and the people of Makkah were repudiating both. Let us now consider the subject-matter and the style of the Sūrah.

At the outset, in order to arouse the people from their heedlessness, they have been plainly asked: "Do you have any knowledge of the time when an over-whelming calamity will descend?" immediately after is details of the impending calamity are given as to how the people will be divided into two separate groups and will meet separate ends. One group of the people will go to Hell and they will suffer punishments; the second group will go to the sublime Paradise and will be provided with blessings.

After thus arousing the people the theme suddenly changes and the question is asked: Do not these people, who frown and scorn the teaching of *Tauhid* and news of the Hereafter being given by the Qur'ān, observe the common things which they experience daily in their lives? Do they never consider how the camels, on whom their whole life activity in the Arabian desert depends, came into being, endowed precisely with the same characteristics as were required for the beast needed in their desert life? When they go on their journeys, they see the sky, the mountains, or the earth. Let them ponder over these three phenomena and consider as to how the sky was stretched above them, how the mountains were erected and how the earth was spread beneath them? Has all this come about without the skill and craftsmanship of an All-Powerful, All-Wise Designer? If they acknowledge that a Creator has created all this with great wisdom and power and that no one else is an associate with Him in their creation, why then do they refuse to accept Him alone as their Lord and Sustainer? And if they acknowledge that that God had the power to create all this, then on what rational ground do they hesitate to acknowledge that that God also has the power to bring about Resurrection, to recreate man, and to make Hell and Heaven?

After making the truth plain by this concise and rational argument, the address turns from the disbelievers to the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) and he is told: "If these people do not acknowledge the truth, they may not; you have not been empowered to act with authority over them, so that you should coerce them into believing: your only task is to exhort, so exhort them. Ultimately they have to return to Us; then We shall call them to full account and shall inflict a heavy punishment on those who do not believe."



هَلْ أَتَاكَ حَدِيثُ الْغَاشِيَةِ ۝ وَجُوهٌُ يُومِدُ ۝ نَاشِئَةً ۝ لَا عَامِلَةٌ
 تَأْصِبُهُ ۝ تَصَلَّى نَارًا حَامِيَةً ۝ تُسْفَى مِنْ عَيْنِ أُنْيَةٍ ۝ لَيْسَ لَهُمْ
 طَعَامٌ إِلَّا مِنْ صَرِيمٍ ۝ لَا يُشْبَهُنَّ وَلَا يُغْنِي عَنْ جُوعٍ ۝ وَجُوهٌُ يُومِدُ
 تَائِعَةً ۝ لَسَعِيهَا رَاضِيَةٌ ۝ فِي جَنَّةٍ عَالِيَةٍ ۝ لَا تَسْمَعُ فِيهَا لَافِيَةً ۝
 فِيهَا عَيْنٌ جَارِيَةٌ ۝ فِيهَا سُرُرٌ مَرْفُوعَةٌ ۝ وَأَكْوَابٌ مَوْضُوعَةٌ ۝ وَتَنَارِقُ
 مَصْفُوقَةٌ ۝ وَزَرَابِيُّ مَبْثُوقَةٌ ۝ أَفَلَا يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَى الْإِبِلِ كَيْفَ خُلِقَتْ ۝
 وَإِلَى السَّمَاءِ كَيْفَ رُفِعَتْ ۝ وَإِلَى الْجِبَالِ كَيْفَ نُصِبَتْ ۝ وَإِلَى الْأَرْضِ
 كَيْفَ سُطِحَتْ ۝ فَذَكِّرْ ۝ إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ مُذَكِّرٌ ۝ لَسْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِمُصَيِّرٍ ۝
 إِلَّا مَنْ تَوَلَّى وَكَفَرَ ۝ فَيَعَذِّبُهُ اللَّهُ الْعَذَابَ الْأَلِيمَ ۝ إِنَّ إِلَيْنَا
 إِيَابَهُمْ ۝ ثُمَّ إِنَّ عَلَيْنَا حِسَابَهُمْ ۝

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Verses: 26

Revealed at Makkah

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

Has the news of the over-shadowing calamity (of Resurrection) 1-16
reached you?¹ Some faces² on that Day shall be downcast, labouring
hard, feeling weary, scorching in the blazing fire. They will be given to
drink from a boiling fountain, and their only food will be thorny, dry
grass,³ which will neither fatten nor satisfy hunger. Some faces on that
Day shall be joyful, well-pleased with their endeavours,⁴ in a lofty
Garden; there they shall hear no idle talk.⁵ In it there will be running
springs; in it there will be raised couches; goblets set forth;⁶ cushions
ranged in rows and fine carpets spread out.

(They do not believe:) but, do they not look at the camels, how 17-20
they were created? And at the heaven, how it was raised high? And at
the mountains, how they were firmly set? And at the earth, how it was
spread out?

Well, (O Prophet,) go on admonishing them, for you are only 21-26
an admonisher: you are not there to coerce them.⁸ But on him who
turns away and disbelieves, Allah will inflict a heavy punishment. To
Us they have to return; then it is for Us to call them to account.

1. "The over-shadowing calamity": the Resurrection which will over-
shadow the whole world. One should know that here the Hereafter as a whole is
being depicted, which comprehends all the stages from the upsetting of the present
system to the resurrection of all human beings and the dispensation of rewards and
punishments from the Divine Court.

2. Some faces : some persons, so said for the face is the most conspicuous
part of the human body by which man's personality is judged and which reflects
the good or bad states through which man passes.

3. At some places in the Qur'ān it has been stated that the dwellers of Hell will be given *zaqqūm* to eat; at another place it has been said that they will have no other food but *ghislīn* (washing from wounds), and here that "their only food will be thorny, dry grass." There is, in fact, no contradiction between these statements. This may as well mean that Hell will have many different compartments in which different categories of the criminals will be lodged according to their crimes, and subjected to different punishments. This may also mean that if they try to avoid *zaqqūm* they will be given *ghislīn*, and if they try to avoid even that, they will only get thorny grass. In short, they would get nothing to suit their taste.

4. That is, they will be overjoyed to see the best results in the Hereafter of their endeavours and deeds in the world; they will be satisfied to see that they had, in fact, made a profitable bargain in that they had adopted a life of faith, virtue and piety, by sacrificing the desires of the flesh, undergone hardships in carrying out their obligations, endured afflictions in obeying the Divine Commands, incurred losses and suffered deprivation of benefits and pleasures while trying to avoid sins and acts of disobedience.

5. This thing has been mentioned at several places in the Qur'ān as a major blessing of Paradise. (For explanation, see E.N. 38 of Maryam, E.N. 18 of At-Tūr, E.N. 13 of Al-Wāqī'ah, E.N. 21 of An-Nabā).

6. That is, filled goblets already supplied so that they do not have to ask for them.

7. That is, "If they deny the possibility of the Hereafter, have they never looked around themselves and considered how the camels were created, how the heaven was raised high, how the mountains were firmly set and how the earth was spread out? When all these things could be created, and exist before them in their finished form, why can the Resurrection not take place? Why cannot a new world come about, and why cannot Hell and Heaven be possible? Only a foolish and thoughtless person would think that the coming into existing of only those things which he has found existing on opening his eyes in the world, is possible, because they already exist. As for the things, which he has not yet observed and experienced, he should thoughtlessly pass the judgement that their coming into being is impossible. If he has any common sense, he should think as to how he things which already exist, came into being? How did the camel possessing precisely the same characteristics as needed for the beast required by the desert dwellers of Arabia come into being? How did the sky whose atmosphere is filled with air to breathe in, whose clouds bring rain, whose sun provides light and warmth in the day, whose moon and stars shine at night, come into being? How did the earth spread out on which man lives and passes his life, whose products fulfil all his needs and requirements on whose springs and wells his life depends ?

How did the mountains rise up from the surface of the earth, which stand fixed with earth and stones of different colours and a variety of minerals in them? Has all this happened without the artistic skill of an All-Powerful, Al-Wise Designer? No thinking and intelligent mind can answer this question in the negative. Unless it is stubborn and obstinate, it will have to acknowledge that each one of these things was impossible, had an Omnipotent, Wise Being not made it possible. And when an All-Powerful, Wise Being created these things, there is no reason why the Hereafter should be regarded as remote from reason and impossible."

8. That is, "If a person does not listen to reason, he may not. You have not been appointed to force the will of the deniers: your only task is to distinguish the right from the wrong for the people and warn them of the consequences of following the wrong way; so this is the task you should continue to perform."