

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
 لَا أَقْسِمُ بِهَذَا الْبَلَدِ ۖ وَأَنْتَ حِلٌّ بِهَذَا الْبَلَدِ ۖ
 لَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ فِي كَبَدٍ ۗ وَالِدٍ وَ مَا وَلَدٍ ۗ

In the name of Allaah, the Beneficent, the Most Merciful

1. *I swear by this city...*
2. *...and you shall be free (of restrictions) in this city.*
3. *(I swear) by the father and offspring!*
4. *We have certainly created man in toil.*

أَيَحْسَبُ أَنْ لَنْ يَقْدِرَ عَلَيْهِ أَحَدٌ ۖ يَقُولُ أَهْلَكْتُ مَالًا لُبَدًا ۖ

أَيَحْسَبُ أَنْ لَمْ يَرَهُ أَحَدٌ ۖ

الَمْ نَجْعَلْ لَهُ عَيْنَيْنِ ۖ وَلِسَانًا وَ شَفَتَيْنِ ۖ وَ هَدَيْنَاهُ النَّجْدَيْنِ ۗ

5. *Does man think that none shall ever have power over him?*
6. *He says, "I have wasted wealth in abundance."*
7. *Does he think that none sees him?*
8. *Have We not given him two eyes...*
9. *...a tongue, two lips...*
10. *...and showed him the two paths?*

Allaah Ta'aala swears oaths by the city of Makkah and **"by the father** [Hadhrat Aadam (A.S)] **and** (his) **offspring** (mankind)!" These oaths are taken to emphasise that **"We have certainly created man in toil."** When this Surah was revealed, Rasulullaah (sallallaahu-alayhi-wa-sallam) was still living in Makkah. At that time, he was still suffering the persecution of the Mushrikeen.

Even the Mushrikeen regarded Makkah to be a sacred place in which no fighting and killing should take place. By taking an oath by Makkah, Allaah honours its sanctity. Between the two oaths, Allaah tells Rasulullaah (sallallaahu-alayhi-wa-sallam), **"and you shall be free (of restrictions) in this city** (Makkah)." This verse foretold that a

time will come when Rasulullaah (sallallaahu-alayhi-wa-sallam) would enter Makkah as a conqueror and that Allaah would free him from the restrictions of the city by permitting him to execute certain people. Consequently, when Rasulullaah (sallallaahu-alayhi-wa-sallam) marched with the Sahabah (R.A) into Makkah during the 8th year after Hijrah, amnesty was granted to a large number of Mushrikeen who had perpetrated atrocities against the Muslims. However, there were some people whom the Sahabah (R.A) were commanded to execute. Rasulullaah (sallallaahu-alayhi-wa-sallam) then said, "Verily, Allaah made Makkah a Haram (sacred, i.e. a place where no killing should take place) the day He created the heavens and the earth. None was given freedom (to execute) before me and none shall ever have this freedom after me. This freedom was granted to me for only a portion of the day. It will now remain sacred by the decree of Allaah until Qiyaamah i.e. killing will not be permitted in Makkah until Qiyaamah." ["Mishkaat" Pg. 237]¹

Allaah says, **"We have certainly created man in toil."** Man is the best of Allaah's creation. Together with granting him honour, Allaah also tests man with many trials and hardships. Together with tending to his many needs and necessities, man faces many other difficulties in his life. Man has to ensure that he makes an effort to feed and clothe himself and his family. In addition to this, illnesses and calamities afflict him. Despite this, he has to continue earning a living and tending to his many responsibilities.

To feed himself, man has to till the land, plant the seeds and still ensure that the fields receive sufficient water and care. After caring for

¹Of the approximately 9 to 16 people whom the Sahabah (R.A) were ordered to execute, only four were executed. Rasulullaah (sallallaahu-alayhi-wa-sallam) granted amnesty to the rest even though they included a person who attempted to assassinate him, another who fatally wounded his daughter Hadhrat Zaynab (R.A) and people who mutilated the body of his uncle Hadhrat Hamza (R.A) and chewed his liver. Among those executed was Ibn Khatal, who had accepted Islaam. When Rasulullaah (sallallaahu-alayhi-wa-sallam) dispatched him with an Ansaari and a slave to collect zakaah, he killed the slave only because the slave had delayed in preparing meals. He then renounced Islaam, took the zakaah animals with him and joined the Mushrikeen in Makkah. He then began saying satirical poems ridiculing Rasulullaah (sallallaahu-alayhi-wa-sallam) and employed slave girls who sang such poetry in gatherings of the Mushrikeen. Another person who was executed was Miqyas bin Sababa, who was also an apostate. When his brother was accidentally killed by an Ansaari who mistook him for one of the enemy in battle, Rasulullaah (sallallaahu-alayhi-wa-sallam) ordered that the blood money be paid. However, Miqyas took the blood money and killed the Ansaari. He then renounced Islaam and joined the Mushrikeen in Makkah. Further details can be found in the detailed books of Seerah and Islamic history. [Translator]

his crops and guarding them against pestilence, the crops are finally ready for harvesting. However, man's work does not end here. He still has to harvest the crop, thresh it (if it is a grain), store it and grind it into flour. Thereafter, the flour has to be prepared and baked into bread before he can eat it. After eating the food, the waste has to be excreted. If he is suffering from constipation, he will have to seek medical assistance so that his stomach works. On the other hand, if he is suffering from diarrhoea, he will also need to have it treated.

If a person does not marry, he will have difficulty. If he does marry, he will have to exert himself to provide for his wife and children. He will have to worry about raising the children properly and he will have to share all their pains and experiences. The above are just a few of the myriad of difficulties that a person faces in his life. If one ponders about it, one will be able to enumerate many more. Besides these difficulties, there are numerous tasks that the Shari'ah demands from a person. One has to forsake one's sleep and occupation for salaah, endure hunger and thirst to fast, give a portion of one's wealth in zakaah and spend one's wealth to perform Hajj. These are responsibilities that man is entrusted with and from which the other creation are exempt.

If one fulfils all these responsibilities and endures all the difficulties of life to please Allaah, one will be greatly rewarded in the Hereafter. However, the person who does all of this for worldly motives will have no share of rewards in the Hereafter. In addition to this, if one commits sins, one will have to face punishment there.

When afflicted with difficulties, man's attitude should be that everything is from Allaah. He should continue being obedient to Allaah and he should turn to Allaah all the time. This is accomplished by making du'aa to Allaah and engaging in acts of Ibaadah. However, the opposite usually takes place. Instead of turning to Allaah, people violate His commands and seem to have no fear of reckoning. Referring to this attitude, Allaah asks, **"Does man think that none shall ever have power over him?"** Man appears to think that he is free to do as he pleases without fearing that he is being watched and that Allaah has the power to take him to task for his deeds. He fails to realise that Allaah gave him the power he wields and that Allaah has power over everything.

In this manner, man becomes haughty and extravagant and even has the audacity to boast, **"I have wasted wealth in abundance."**

He does not realise that he spent his wealth in avenues that are displeasing to Allaah. It appears as if he thinks that none is watching him. Therefore, Allaah asks, **“Does he think that none sees him?”** Allaah is watching man all the time. The Tafseer “Jalaalayn” reveals that one of the Kuffaar spent a great amount of wealth to oppose Islaam and boasted about this saying, **“I have wasted wealth in abundance.”** Allaah warns such people that He is ever Watchful over them and He will take them to task for the wrong they do.

Allaah continues, **“Have We not given him two eyes, a tongue, two lips and showed him the two paths (of good and evil)?”** Allaah has given man his limbs and other physical qualities, all of which are invaluable aids for him and they also add to his beauty. Man ought to express gratitude for all of this by using these limbs to carry out deeds pleasing to Allaah. In this manner, he will be securing his success in the Akhirah. Allaah has shown man the way to attain salvation as well as the path to destruction. The choice is man’s. The intelligent man will opt for the path of salvation by fulfilling Allaah’s commands and the teachings of the Ambiya (A.S). He will accept Allaah’s authority, invest all he has for the Hereafter and ensure that he treats Allaah’s creation well.

فَلَا اقْتَرَمَ الْعَمَلُ أَنْ يَأْتِيَنَّكَ أَدْرَاكُ مَا الْعَقَبَةُ ۗ ط
 فَكُ رَقَبَةً ۗ أَوْ إِطْعَمٌ فِي يَوْمٍ ذِي مَسْغَبَةٍ ۗ ط
 بَيْتِيمًا ذَا مَقْرَبَةٍ ۗ أَوْ مِسْكِينًا ذَا مَتْرَبَةٍ ۗ ط

11. *For what reason does man not emerge from the abyss?*
12. *What will inform you what (emerging from) the abyss entails?*
13. *It is the emancipation of slaves...*
14. *...or, on a day of hunger, feeding...*
15. *...an orphaned relative...*
16. *...or a dust-covered destitute.*

ثُمَّ كَانَ مِنَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالصِّدْقِ وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالْمَرْحَمَةِ ۗ ط
 أُولَئِكَ أَصْحَابُ الْمَيْمَنَةِ ۗ ط
 وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بَايَعْنَا هُمْ أَصْحَابُ الْمَشْأَمَةِ ۗ ط عَلَيْهِمْ نَارٌ مُّؤَصَّدَةٌ ۗ ط

17. Man will then become of those who believe, those who enjoin each other to be patient and those who enjoin each other to be compassionate.

18. These are the people of the right.

19. Those who reject Our verses are certainly the people of the left.

20. The Fire will be shut over them.

A Mu'min has many responsibilities. While some of these are voluntary, others are obligatory. Referring to these, Allaah asks, **"For what reason does man not emerge from the abyss?"** i.e. why does man not spend his wealth to emerge from the abyss in which he is constantly fighting his Nafs and Shaytaan. This unending struggle of man in which he strives to fulfil Allaah's commands is compared to a deep abyss from which one struggles to emerge. Allaah then asks, **"What will inform you (O listener) what (emerging from) the abyss entails?"** Allaah Ta'aala then presents three examples of deeds that will remove him from the abyss so that he can win the battle against his Nafs and Shaytaan.

The first is **"the emancipation of slaves"**. This entails setting slaves free irrespective of whether the act is done voluntarily or because one is compelled to as in the case of Kaffaara². Also included in the ambit of freeing slaves are "Kitaabah" and "Tadbeer"³. Rasulullaah (sallallaahu-alayhi-wa-sallam) said that when a person frees a slave, every limb of the person that corresponds with a limb of the slave will be freed from the fire of Jahannam.

Hadhrat Baraa bin Aazib (R.A) reports that a villager once came to Rasulullaah (sallallaahu-alayhi-wa-sallam) and asked what deed could admit him into Jannah. Rasulullaah (sallallaahu-alayhi-wa-sallam) said, "Free a soul and emancipate a slave." "But are the two not the same thing?" enquired the man. Rasulullaah (sallallaahu-alayhi-wa-sallam) replied, "No. Freeing a soul means that you free a slave all by yourself and emancipating a slave means that you assist in paying his price (e.g. helping a Mukaatab slave pay his price for freedom). Also among

² Many forms of Kaffaara (expiation) entail freeing a slave, such as the Kaffaara for manslaughter and breaking one's oath. The details of this can be found in the detailed books perform Islamic jurisprudence.

³ Further details of these contracts can be found in the detailed books of Islamic jurisprudence or by consulting and Aalim. Refer to the commentary of verse 33 of Surah Noor (Surah 24) for a brief explanation of "Kitaabah".

the deeds that will admit you into Jannah is that you give someone an animal that gives a lot of milk or that you behave politely with a cruel relative. If you cannot do this, then feed the hungry, give water to the thirsty, enjoin good and prevent evil. If you cannot do this even, then use your tongue for nothing except good words." ["Mishkaat" Pg. 294]

The second and third deeds to remove one from the **"abyss"** is **"on a day of hunger, feeding an orphaned relative"** and feeding **"a dust-covered destitute"**. The destitute person referred to in the verse is someone who has absolutely nothing and has to sleep on the bare ground, causing his body to be covered in dust.

Allaah states further that when man will do this, **"Man will then become of those who believe, those who enjoin each other to be patient and those who enjoin each other to be compassionate."** Imaan (belief) is the most important deed because no good deed is accepted without it. Allaah adds that enjoining each other to be patient is an essential trait of Imaan. The word "sabr" (translated above as **"patience"**) refers to remaining steadfast in performing good deeds, refraining from sin as well as exercising patience when afflicted with any difficulty. As explained in other verses (such as verse 153 of Surah Baqara), the word "sabr" entails all these three meanings. Another requirement of Imaan is that a person encourages others to show compassion towards the rest of creation.

About such people Allaah declares, **"These are the people of the right"** i.e. the people who will receive their record of deeds in their right hands and who are promised Jannah. (Verses 27 to 38 of Surah Waaqi'ah (Surah 56) detail the bounties that **"the people of the right"** will receive in Jannah). On the other hand, **"Those who reject Our verses are certainly the people of the left. The Fire will be shut over them."** These people will receive their records of deeds in their left hands and will be doomed to Jahannam. When entered into Jahannam, the doors of Jahannam will be shut and they will be unable to escape. (Verses 41 to 56 of Surah Waaqi'ah describe the **"the people of the left"**).

