

SŪRAH 113

Al-Falaq

(The Daybreak)

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the Name of God, the Lord of Grace, the Ever Merciful.

Say: I seek refuge in the Lord of the Daybreak,
(1)

from the evil of anything that He has created; (2)

from the evil of darkness when it gathers; (3)

from the evil of the conjuring witches; (4)

from the evil of the envious when he envies. (5)

قُلْ أَعُوذُ بِرَبِّ الْفَلَقِ ﴿١﴾

مِنْ شَرِّ مَا خَلَقَ ﴿٢﴾

وَمِنْ شَرِّ غَاسِقٍ إِذَا وَقَبَ ﴿٣﴾

وَمِنْ شَرِّ النَّفَّاثَاتِ فِي الْعُقَدِ ﴿٤﴾

وَمِنْ شَرِّ حَاسِدٍ إِذَا حَسَدَ ﴿٥﴾

Overview

This *sūrah*, along with the following one, Mankind, contains a directive from God primarily to His Prophet and secondly to the believers at large, to take refuge in Him and seek His protection in the face of any source of fear, subtle or apparent, known or unknown. It is as if God – limitless is He in His glory – is unfolding His world of care, and embracing the believers in His guard. He is kindly and affectionately calling on them to resort to His care through which they will feel safe and at peace. It is as if He is saying to them: I know that you are helpless and surrounded by foes and fears. Come to Me for safety, contentment and peace. Hence, the two *sūrahs* start with, “Say: I seek refuge in the Lord of the Daybreak,” and, “Say: I seek refuge in the Lord of

mankind."

Several accounts have been handed down concerning the revelation and popularity of these two *sūrahs*. They all fit in neatly with the above interpretation that God, the Most Merciful, offers His care and shelter to His faithful servants. God's Messenger loved these two *sūrahs* profoundly, as is clearly apparent in his traditions.

ʿUqba ibn ʿĀmir, a Companion of the Prophet, reports that the Prophet said to him: "Have you not heard the unique verses that were revealed last night, "Say: 'I seek refuge in the Lord of the Daybreak,' and 'Say: I seek refuge in the Lord of mankind.'" [Related by Mālik, Muslim, al-Tirmidhī, Abū Dāwūd and al-Nasā'ī.]

Jābir, the Prophet's Companion, said: "God's Messenger said to me once, 'Jābir! Recite!' and I asked, 'What shall I recite?' He replied, 'Recite, 'Say: I seek refuge in the Lord of the Daybreak,' and ' Say: I seek refuge in the Lord of mankind.' So I recited them and he commented, 'Recite them [as often as you can] for you shall never recite anything equivalent to them.'" [Related by al-Nasā'ī.]

Dharr ibn Ḥubaysh said that he had inquired from Ubayy ibn Ka`b, the Prophet's Companion, about *al-Mu`awwadhatayn*, a name that refers to these two *sūrahs* together, saying, "Abū al-Mundhir! Your brother, Ibn Mas`ūd says so and so. (For some time Ibn Mas`ūd was under the false impression that these two *sūrahs* were not part of the Qur`ān, but he later admitted his mistake.) What do you think of that?" He replied, "I asked God's Messenger about this and he told me that he had been instructed to say the text of these *sūrahs* and he had carried out the instruction. We surely say the same as God's Messenger had said." [Related by al-Bukhārī.] All these reports throw powerful light on that underlying factor of God's kindness and love to which the two *sūrahs* draw attention.

Protection against Evil

God – limitless is He in His glory – refers to Himself in this *sūrah* as the Lord of the daybreak. The Arabic term, *falaq*, simply means 'daybreak', but it could be taken to mean 'the whole phenomenon of creation,' with reference to everything springing forth into life. This interpretation is supported by God's saying in *Sūrah* 6, Cattle: "It is God who splits (*fāliq*) the grain and the fruit- stone. He brings forth the living out of that which is dead ... He is the One who causes the day to break (*fāliq*). He has made the night to be [a source of] stillness, and the sun and the moon for reckoning." (6: 95-96) If the meaning 'daybreak' is adopted, refuge is being sought from the unseen and the mysterious with the Lord of the daybreak, who bestows safety as He kindles the light of day. If, however, *fāliq* is taken to mean 'creation', then refuge from the evil of some creature is being sought with the Lord of all creation. In both cases, harmony with the theme of the *sūrah* is maintained.

"From the evil of anything that He has created." (Verse 2) The phrase contains no exceptions or specifications. Mutual contact between various creatures, though no doubt advantageous, brings about some evil. Refuge from it is sought with God by the believers in order to encourage the goodness such a contact produces. For He who created those creatures is surely able to provide the right circumstances that lead them on a course where only the bright side of their contact prevails.

"From the evil of darkness [i.e. ghāsiq] when it gathers [i.e. waqab]." (Verse 3) From a linguistic point of view, *ghāsiq*, means 'substantially pouring out' and *waqb* is the name given to a little hole in a mountain through which water issues forth, while *waqab* is the verb denoting such an action. What is probably meant here is the night, with all that accompanies it when it rapidly engulfs the world. This is terrifying in itself. In addition it fills our hearts with the possibility of an unknown, unexpected discomfort caused by a savage beast, an unscrupulous villain, a striking enemy or a hissing poisonous creature, as well as anxieties and worries [which may lead to depression and uneasiness], evil thoughts and passions that are liable to revive in the dark, during one's state of solitude at night. This is the evil against which the believer needs God's protection.

"From the evil of conjuring witches," (Verse 4) refers to various types of magic, whether by deceiving people's physical senses or by influencing their will-power and projecting ideas onto their emotions and minds. The verse specially refers to a form of witchcraft carried out by women in Arabia at the time who tied knots in cords and blew upon them with an imprecation.

Magic is the production of illusions, subject to a magician's designs, and it does not offer any kind of new facts or alter the nature of things. This is how the Qur'ān describes magic when relating the story of Moses in *Sūrah* 20, Ṭā Hā: *"They [Pharaoh's magicians] said, Moses, Will you throw down your gear first or shall we be the first to throw?" He said: 'Throw down yours.' And by the power of their magic, their cords and staffs appeared to him as though they were running. Moses conceived a secret fear within him. But We said: Fear not! You shall have the upper hand. Throw that which is in your right hand! It will swallow up that which they have made. That which they have made is but the deceitful show of witchcraft. Come where he may, a magician shall never be successful."* (20: 65-69). Thus, their cords and staffs did not actually turn into snakes but it seemed so to the onlookers, Moses included, to the point where he felt uneasy inside. He was restrained by the transformation of his own stick into a real snake, by God's doing, to destroy the phoney ones.

This is the nature of magic as we ought to conceive it. Through it a magician is capable of influencing other people's minds, causing them to think and act according to his own suggestions. We refrain from going any further with this. It is indeed an evil from which God's protection needs to be sought.

A few unsupported reports, some of which have been quoted by authentic sources, allege that after the Prophet had settled in Madinah, Labīd ibn al-A`ṣam, a Jew, put a magic spell on him that affected the Prophet for several days or months so that, according to some versions, he felt he was having marital relations with his wives when he was not; or, according to others, thought of having done something when he had not. According to these reports, by reciting this *sūrah* and the next one, Mankind, he was released from such a state.

But surely these stories contradict the very idea of the Prophet's infallibility in word and deed and do not agree with the belief that all his actions are indicative of the Islamic way of life for all Muslims. Above all, they conflict with the Qur'ānic statements emphatically denying his being influenced by any kind of magic whatsoever, as claimed by some opponents of Islam. Hence, we dismiss such stories, on the grounds that the Qur'ān is the ultimate arbiter, and that singularly narrated traditions are left out in matters concerning faith. These stories have not had proper backing, which is an essential qualification for a tradition to be accepted as authentic. What weakens such stories even further is that the two *sūrahs* were revealed in Makkah while these stories relate the incident as having occurred some years later, in Madinah!

"And from the evil of the envious when he envies." (Verse 5) Envy is the evil, begrudging reaction one feels towards another who has received some favour from God. It is also accompanied by a very strong desire for the end to such favours. It is also possible that some harm to the envied may result from such a baseless grudge. This may either be the outcome of direct physical action by the envier, or from suppressed feelings alone.

We should not be uneasy to learn that there are countless inexplicable mysteries in life. There are several phenomena for which no account has been offered up till now. Telepathy and hypnosis are two such examples.

We should not try to deny the psychological effects of envy on the envied person just because we cannot ascertain how this takes place by scientific means and methods. Very little is known about the mysteries of envy and the little that is known has often been uncovered by chance and coincidence. In any case, there is in envy an evil from which the refuge and protection of God must be sought. For He, the Most Generous, Most Merciful, who knows all things, has directed the Prophet and his followers to seek His refuge from such evil. It is unanimously agreed by all Islamic schools of thought that God will always protect His servants from such evils, should they seek His protection as He has directed them to do.

Al-Bukhārī relates that `Ā'ishah said: "The Prophet would blow into both hands when getting into bed to sleep, and recite: 'Say: He is God, the One...' and, 'Say: I seek

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refuge in the Lord of the Daybreak...' and, 'Say: I seek refuge in the Lord of mankind,' and, starting with his head, he would run his palms over his face and the front part of his body, before running them over the rest of his body. He did this three times." [Also related by Abū Dāwūd, al-Tirmidhī and al-Nasā'ī.]