

SŪRAH 102

Al-Takāthur

(Rivalry for Worldly Gain)

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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

You are preoccupied by greed for more and more,
(1)

أَلْهَنُكُمْ التَّكَاثُرُ ﴿١﴾

until you go down to your graves. (2)

حَتَّىٰ زُرْتُمُ الْمَقَابِرَ ﴿٢﴾

Nay, in time you will come to know! (3)

كَلَّا سَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٣﴾

Again, in time you will come to know! (4)

ثُمَّ كَلَّا سَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٤﴾

Indeed, were you to know [the truth] with certainty... (5)

كَلَّا لَوْ تَعْلَمُونَ عِلْمَ الْيَقِينِ ﴿٥﴾

You would, most certainly, see the fire of hell. (6)

لَتَرَوُنَّ الْجَحِيمَ ﴿٦﴾

Again, you will, most certainly, see it with your very eyes. (7)

ثُمَّ لَتَرَوُنَّهَا عَيْنَ الْيَقِينِ ﴿٧﴾

Then on that day you will certainly be questioned about your joys and comforts. (8)

ثُمَّ لَتُسْأَلُنَّ يَوْمَئِذٍ عَنِ النَّعِيمِ ﴿٨﴾

Greedy Preoccupations

This *sūrah* has a rhythm that is both majestic and awe-inspiring; as if it were the voice of a warner standing on a high place, projecting his voice as it rings out in weighty emphasis. He calls out to people who are drowsy, drunken, confused. They approach a precipice with their eyes closed and their feelings numbed. So the warner increases the volume of his voice to the limit: *"You are preoccupied by greed for more and more, until you go down to your graves."* (Verses 1-2)

You drunken and confused lot! You who take delight and indulge in rivalry for wealth, children and the pleasures of this life, from which you are sure to depart! You who are absorbed with what you have, unaware of what comes afterwards! You who will leave the object of this rivalry, and what you seek pride in, and go to a narrow hole where there is no rivalry or pride! Wake up and look around, all of you! For indeed, *"you are preoccupied by greed for more and more, until you go down to your graves."* (Verses 1-2)

With a deep and grave rhythm the *sūrah* then strikes their hearts with the terror awaiting them after they are left in their graves: *"Nay, in time you will come to know."* (Verse 3) Then it repeats the same note, employing the same words and the same firm and terrifying rhythm: *"Again, in time you will come to know!"* (Verse 4) Then it adds to the depth and awe of this assurance, and hints at the grave prospect that lies beyond, the terrifying essence of which they do not recognize in their flush of intoxication and rivalry for worldly riches: *"Indeed, were you to know [the truth] with certainty..."* (Verse 5)

The conditional sentence is not completed in the text. This is acceptable as a refined form of Arabic. It adds to the feeling of awe generated by the *sūrah*. The inference here is that had they known what they should know for certain, they would not have indulged in such rivalry for petty gain. The *sūrah* then discloses the fearful fact which has been withheld: *"You would, most certainly, see the fire of hell."* (Verse 6)

It then emphasizes this fact and enhances its impact on people's hearts: *"Again, you will, most certainly, see it with your very eyes."* (Verse 7)

Finally, it puts the last statement which makes the drunkard sober, the lethargic conscious, the confused attentive and the self-indulgent tremble and feel apprehension at his indulgence in comfort and pleasure: *"Then on that day you will certainly be questioned about your joys and comforts."* (Verse 8) You will be questioned concerning all this: How did you get it? How did you dispense with it? Was it obtained from a lawful source and dispensed with lawfully? Or was it gained unlawfully and used in a sinful manner? Have you praised and thanked God for it? Have you given the poor their due? Have you spent some of it on others? Or monopolized it all for your selves? *"You will be questioned"* about your rivalry in

gathering and amassing wealth and about what you take pride in. It is a burden which you, in your preoccupation and enjoyment, think little of. But beyond it lie heavy responsibilities.

This is a self-expressing *sūrah*. It leaves its impact on us by its meaning and rhythm. It leaves the heart occupied, burdened with the problem of the hereafter, inattentive to the trivialities of this worldly life and its petty concerns.

It portrays the life of this world as a fleeting wink in the long span of existence: "*You are preoccupied by greed for more and more, until you go down to your graves.*" (Verses 1-2) The wink of this life is over and its small leaf is turned. Thereafter time stretches on and the burdens become heavier. The style of the *sūrah* presents this inference, achieving harmony between the actual reality and its manner of expression.

Whenever we read this awe-inspiring and majestic *sūrah*, we feel its rhythm travelling upwards in space at the beginning and downwards to the deep, deep level at the end. We feel the burden of this wink of a life on our shoulders as we walk heavily along the road. Then we start questioning ourselves about the smallest and most trivial of our deeds.