

Sura 95: Al-Tin (The Fig)

In the name of God, the Lord of Mercy, the Giver of Mercy

Verses 1 to 8:

1. *By the fig and the olive,*
2. *And the Mount of Sinai,*
3. *And this secure city,*
4. *We have indeed created humankind in the best stature,*
5. *Then We abased him (to be) the lowest of the low,*
6. *Except those who believe and do good deeds, for they will have an unfailing reward.*
7. *So why do you still deny the Judgment?*
8. *Is not God the Wisest of judges?*

This Sura presents a fundamental fact about the nature of the initial natural disposition that God instilled in humankind. The initial natural disposition which God instilled in humankind is upright and in complete harmony with the essence of faith. Together they will allow humankind to reach the perfection which God decreed for him but if the initial natural disposition becomes crooked and deviates from the straight path of faith he will sink to the lowest of the low. God makes an oath on this fact by the fig, olive, the mount of Sinai, and the secure city. The oath usually forms the framework for the verses that come after it.

It is on the mount of Sinai that God talked to Moses (PBUH). Mecca is the secure city. Both the mount and the city have close connection to Islam. But what is the relationship between the fig and olive to matters of faith? It has been narrated that Adam and Eve used the leaves of the fig tree to cover their shame before they were sent to live on earth. It was also narrated that fig grows on the mount on which Noah's (PBUH) Ark has settled. The olive may be a reference to Jerusalem or it may be a reference to the olive branch that the pigeon which Noah (PBUH) sent to discover land brought back to him. Some other narrations suggest that the fig and the olive mentioned in this Sura are simply the fig and olive that we eat.

We have no way of ascertaining the meaning of the reference to the fig and olive in this Sura. What we could say based on our understanding of the style of Qur'an is that they must refer to places or memories that are connected with faith somehow.

However, the main fact which this Sura presents is, "*We have indeed created man in the best stature, then We abased him (to be) the lowest of the low, except those who believe and do good deeds, for they will have an unfailing reward.*" This shows the care that God took in creating humankind. God created him in the perfect form. This has been mentioned in several verses in different places in the Qur'an. God has bestowed His care on this creature in spite of the weaknesses that this creature exhibits which cause him to swerve away for the straight path. Humankind must be important in the sight of God; this may be because of the role that God has assigned to humankind. God's care in creating humankind is apparent in many ways; the complex body structure, the unique mental capacity, and the amazing psychological makeup.

The emphasis in this Sura is on the spiritual characteristics of humankind. These characteristics can sink to the lowest of the low when his initial natural disposition becomes crooked and he strays away from the straight path of faith. It is obvious that his physical form does not suffer any changes when he strays away from the straight path. The same characteristics can raise humankind to a very high rank if he follows guidance and purifies his soul. However, if humankind chooses to go astray from the straight path then he will sink to the lowest of the low. Except the believers who do good deeds; those who keep their initial natural disposition upright and complement it with faith until they achieve the perfection that God has decreed for them. They will receive an unfailing reward in the life of perfection which they will lead in the abode of perfection.

In the light of this fact, God addressed humankind, “*So why do you still deny the Judgment? Is not God the Wisest of judges?*” Why after knowing all these facts they still deny the judgment? They deny the resurrection and the accountability. Why are they not guided by the light? Is not God the most fair of the fair judges?

It has been narrated by Abo Hurairah (RA), that when one recites Surat At-Tin and comes to the last verse, “*Is not God the Wisest of judges?*” One should say, “*Yes, and I bear witness to this.*”