

Sura 50: Qaf (The letter Qaf)

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

Verses 1 to 45:

1. *Qaf. By the Glorious Quran.*
2. *But they wonder that there has come to them a warner from among themselves. So the disbelievers say, "This is an amazing thing.*
3. *When we are dead and have become dust (shall we be brought back again)? That would be a farfetched return."*
4. *We already know how much the earth takes of them, and with Us is a recording book.*
5. *But they denied the truth when it came to them; so they are in a confused state.*
6. *Have they not observed the sky above them, how We have constructed it and beautified it, and how there are no rifts therein?*
7. *And the earth have We spread it out, and set upon it mountains standing firm, and produced therein every kind of beautiful plant;*
8. *Giving insight and a reminder for every servant turning (to God).*
9. *And We send down from the sky blessed water whereby We give growth to gardens and the grain of crops,*
10. *And lofty date-palms with ranged clusters,*
11. *Provision (made) for the servants; and by it We gave life to a dead land. This is how the dead will be resurrected.*
12. *The people of Noah denied (the truth) before them, and (so did) the dwellers at Ar-Rass and (the tribe of) Thamud,*
13. *And (the tribe of) A'ad, and Pharaoh, and the brethren of Lot;*
14. *And the companions of the thicket, and the people of Tubba'; every one denied their messengers; therefore, My threat was justly fulfilled.*
15. *Were We then weary with the first creation, that they should be in confused doubt about a new creation?*
16. *It was We who created humankind, and We know what his soul whispers to him; and We are nearer to him than (his) jugular vein.*
17. *When the two receivers receive (him), seated on the right hand and on the left;*
18. *Not a word does he utter but there is with him an observer ready.*
19. *And the stupor of death will bring truth (before his eyes). (It will be said,) "This is what you were trying to escape."*
20. *And the trumpet shall be blown. This is the threatened Day.*
21. *And every soul shall come, along with it a driver and a witness.*
22. *(It will be said,) "You were heedless of this; now We have removed your veil, and your sight will be sharp this Day."*
23. *And his companion will say, "Here is (his Record) ready with me."*
24. *(And it will be said,) "Do cast into Hell every ungrateful, rebellious one,*
25. *Hinderer of good, transgressor, and doubter;*
26. *Who set up another god beside God. Throw him into the severe torment."*
27. *His companion will say, "Our Lord, I did not make him transgress, but he was (himself) far astray."*
28. *He will say, "Do not dispute with each other in My presence. I had already in advance sent you warning.*

29. *The sentence that comes from Me cannot be changed, and I do not treat the servants unjustly.*"
30. *On the day when We say to Hell, "Have you been filled? and it will say, "Are there any more to come?"*
31. *And the Garden will be brought near to those who are God conscious, not far away.*
32. *(And it will be said), "This is what you were promised. (It is) for every penitent and heedful one,*
33. *Who feared the Lord of Mercy in secret and comes with a contrite heart?*
34. *Enter it in peace; this is the Day of immortality."*
35. *They have therein what they desire, and there is more with Us.*
36. *But how many generations before them did We destroy, who were mightier than these in prowess so that they overran the lands. Had they any place of escape?*
37. *Verily in this is a message for any that has a heart and understanding or who gives ear and earnestly witnesses (the truth).*
38. *And verily We created the heavens and the earth, and all that is in between them, in six days, and no fatigue touched Us.*
39. *Therefore (Muhammad) persevere in enduring what they say, and glorify your Lord before the rising and before the setting of the sun;*
40. *And in the night-time glorify Him, and after the (prescribed) prostrations.*
41. *And listen on the Day when the Caller will call out from a place quiet near,*
42. *The Day when they will hear a (mighty) cry in truth. That is the Day of coming forth (from the graves).*
43. *Verily it is We who give life and death; and to Us is the final destination.*
44. *The Day when the earth will be rent asunder for them to hurry out. That will be an easy gathering for Us.*
45. *We know best what they say, and you (Muhammad) are not a tyrant over them; therefore, remind by the Quran whoever fears My threat. (50: 1 – 45)*

The Sura starts with an oath made by God, "*Qaf. By the Glorious Quran.*" The oath uses the letter Qaf, which is a letter of the Arabic alphabet, and at the same time it is the first letter of the word Quran. The verses do not specify the subject of the oath. The oath is mentioned to alert the listener to a grave matter. The verses continue to address the attitude of the idolaters of Mecca towards the Messenger of God (PBUH), "*But they wonder that there has come to them a warner from among themselves. So the disbelievers say, 'This is an amazing thing. When we are dead and have become dust (shall we be brought back again)? That would be a farfetched return.'*" The idolaters expressed their astonishment that God sent a man from among them as a messenger. The fact that the Messenger (PBUH) told them that there will be resurrection after death was another source of their astonishment. The concept of resurrection is an integral part of the Islamic doctrine. Muslims are required to devote all their lives working for the sake of God. The reward for their deeds may not be given fully in their lifetime; it may be delayed till the Day of Judgment. Resurrection is essential so that the reward or punishment should be fulfilled. The principle of accountability has no sense if there were no resurrection. The idolater's attention was focused on one aspect of the problem, how can life return after the body has disintegrated and become dust? The Quran responds to this question, "*We already know how much the earth takes of them, and with Us is a recording book.*" God knows exactly what their bodies disintegrated into. A meticulous record is kept which keeps track of each and every atom of their bodies.

The Quran confronted them with the real problem, *“But they denied the truth when it came to them; so they are in a confused state.”* Their confusion is not the result of the difficulty of the resurrection. Their doubt has originated from the fact that they denied the truth. Those who deny the truth are always in a state of doubt. The Quran continued to bring to their attention the signs of God that surround them. These signs are miracles similar to the miracle of resurrection, *“Have they not observed the sky above them, how We have constructed it and beautified it, and how there are no rifts therein? And the earth have We spread it out, and set upon it mountains standing firm, and produced therein every kind of beautiful plant.”* These signs reflect the stability of the universe which has been created with the truth. These signs should lead the one who reflects to the straight path, *“Giving insight and a reminder for every servant turning (to God).”* Reflecting on these signs connects one to the whole universe. The universe is the book of truth that can be seen and read in all languages. The divine project considers the scientific method a legitimate means to discover and explain the individual scientific universal phenomena. However, only through the divine project can an integrated and consistent framework of these phenomena be achieved. The framework integrates the phenomena together and links them to the human heart. And when this framework is linked to the human heart, the abstract rules and laws are transformed into feelings and emotions that fill the heart with awe.

Another sign for those who reflect, *“And We send down from the sky blessed water whereby We give growth to gardens and the grain of crops, and lofty date-palms with ranged clusters, provision (made) for the servants; and by it We gave life to a dead land. This is how the dead will be resurrected.”* The water that comes down from the sky is a sign that brings life to the dead heart before it brings life to the dead land. Rain is a blessing from God. It descends on the land and produces all kinds of vegetation. This vegetation provides food for people, for which they should be grateful to God. The verses draw the parallel between the resurrection of people, which is part of the unseen, and the revival of the dead earth, which people observe every day. The following verses review very briefly and quickly the stories of the previous peoples who rejected guidance. The aim of the review is to emphasize the inevitable consequence of the rejection of guidance, *“The people of Noah denied (the truth) before them, and (so did) the dwellers at Ar-Rass and (the tribe of) Thamud, and (the tribe of) A'ad, and Pharaoh, and the brethren of Lot; and the companions of the thicket, and the people of Tubba’; every one denied their messengers; therefore My threat was justly fulfilled.”* The verses have two messages. The first is that God sent messengers to guide people to the straight path; all messengers were asked to deliver the same message. The second is that the consequence of rejecting guidance is doom.

The following rhetorical question is posed as an answer to the rejection of the idea of resurrection, *“Were We then weary with the first creation, that they should be in confused doubt about a new creation?”* God who created humankind in the first place will be able to recreate them again. The Creator knows everything about His creation, their composition, their thoughts, and their secrets, *“It was We who created humankind, and We know what his soul whispers to him; and We are nearer to him than (his) jugular vein.”* God is very close to the human being, closer even than his own veins. This expression is enough to fill the human heart with caution and awe. When humankind knows that he cannot keep a secret from God, that even his own inner thoughts are exposed, he should be careful not to utter a word or do a deed that displeases God. God knows everything, and the deeds of each human being are also recorded in a meticulous record, *“When the two receivers receive (him), seated on the right hand and on the*

left, not a word does he utter but there is with him an observer ready.” We do not know how the recording is done and we are not going to speculate about it. The important thing is that it is being done and we should take that into consideration each time we speak or act during our lives before death overcomes us, *“And the stupor of death will bring truth (before his eyes). (It will be said,) ‘This is what you were trying to escape.’”* Every human being wishes he could avoid death, but death is inevitable. When it comes, it will bring the truth closer to us, and suddenly we will be able to realize the truth.

The verses then move from the scene of death to the scene of the Day of Resurrection, *“And the trumpet shall be blown. This is the threatened Day. And every soul shall come, along with it a driver and a witness.”* Each soul will be led by a driver and will be accompanied by a witness. The souls will then stand up for the reckoning. It will be said, *“You were heedless of this; now We have removed your veil, and your sight will be sharp this Day. And his companion will say, ‘Here is (his Record) ready with me.’”* The verses skip the details of the reckoning and move directly to the conclusion and the verdict that will be issued, *“Do cast into Hell every ungrateful, rebellious one, hinderer of good, transgressor, and doubter, who set up another god beside God. Throw him into the severe torment.”* We notice the long list of the bad attributes which the verse uses to describe the evildoers. This is a way to express God’s wrath for their transgression. The evil companion who was accused of seducing him will then try to absolve himself of the responsibility, *“His companion will say, ‘Our Lord, I did not make him transgress, but he was (himself) far astray.’”* But it is too late and the decree has been issued already, *“He will say, “Do not dispute with each other in My presence. I had already in advance sent you warning. The sentence that comes from Me cannot be changed, and I do not treat the servants unjustly.”*

This Sura was composed in a dialogue style. This style continues to describe the scenes of Hell, *“On the day when We say to Hell, ‘Have you been filled?’ and it will say, ‘Are there any more to come?’”* Juxtaposed with this is the scene of paradise, *“And the Garden will be brought near to those who are God conscious, not far away. (And it will be said), ‘This is what you were promised. (It is) for every penitent and heedful one, who feared the Lord of Mercy in secret and comes with a contrite heart. Enter it in peace; this is the Day of immortality.’”* Each word carries a sentiment of honor. Instead of walking towards the garden, the garden will be brought to them. They will be welcomed with the blessings of peace and fulfillment. Good attributes will be bestowed on them. They will be blessed with everything they wish for and God will have more for them, *“They have therein what they desire, and there is more with Us.”*

Then the Sura is concluded again by the memory of those who lost their way and were punished, *“But how many generations before them did We destroy, who were mightier than these in prowess so that they overran the lands. Had they any place of escape?”* These memories should be sufficient to wake up people from their heedlessness, but only those who have hearts that yearn for the truth are able to heed the lesson. The other hearts are dead and are unable to witness the truth, *“Verily in this is a message for any that has a heart and understanding or who gives ear and earnestly witnesses (the truth).”*

Other lessons can be gleaned from the signs of God all around us, *“And verily We created the heavens and the earth, and all that is in between them, in six days, and no fatigue touched Us.”* The process of the first creation was easy for God. He never suffered any fatigue. Resurrecting people will be as easy.

The Messenger (PBUH) was then commanded to be patient and to remember God at certain times during the day. These are all times that are related to the cosmic phenomena of heavens

and earth, *“Therefore (Muhammad) persevere in enduring what they say, and glorify your Lord before the rising and before the setting of the sun; and in the night-time glorify Him, and after the (prescribed) prostrations.”* Be patient, glorify God and prostrate yourself to Him but also wait for the big event, *“And listen on the Day when the Caller will call out from a place quiet near, The Day when they will hear a (mighty) cry in truth. That is the Day of coming forth (from the graves).”* On that Day the graves will open up and people will come out to the gathering. This is an easy task for God, just as the creation was easy, *“Verily it is We who give life and death; and to Us is the final destination; the Day when the earth will be rent asunder for them to hurry out. That will be an easy gathering for Us.”* The Messenger (PBUH) was again comforted and his task was emphasized, *“We know best what they say, and you (Muhammad) are not a tyrant over them; therefore, remind by the Quran whoever fears My threat.”*