

\Sura 51: Al-Dhariyat (The Dispersers)

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

Verses 1 to 24:

1. *By the (Winds) that disperse.*
2. *And those that bear the burden (of the rain.)*
3. *And those that glide with ease.*
4. *And those who distribute (blessings) as commanded.*
5. *Verily, that which you are promised is true;*
6. *And verily the judgment must indeed come to pass.*
7. *By the sky with (its) numerous paths;*
8. *Most surely you are at variance with each other in what you say;*
9. *Through which are deluded (away from the truth) those who are deluded.*
10. *Accursed are the conjecturers;*
11. *Those who are heedless in ignorance.*
12. *They ask, "When will be the Day of Judgment?"*
13. *(It is) the day when they will be tormented at the Fire;*
14. *(And it will be said to them), "Taste your torment. This is what you sought to hasten."*
15. *Those who remain conscious of God shall be in gardens and fountains.*
16. *Taking that which their Lord gives them; for they were doers of good;*
17. *They used to sleep but little of the night,*
18. *And in the hour of early dawn, they used to pray for forgiveness;*
19. *And in their wealth, there was a share for the beggar and the deprived.*
20. *And on earth are signs for those who have certitude.*
21. *As also in your own selves; will you not then see?*
22. *And in the heaven is your sustenance, as (also) that which you are promised.*
23. *Then, by the Lord of the heaven and earth, this is the very truth, as much as the fact that you can speak intelligently to each other. (51: 1 -23)*

This Sura has a special atmosphere. It starts with the mention of four of the forces of God. The expressions are somewhat vague which conveys the impression that there are more than meets the eye of these forces. The Sura starts with four oaths made by God, "*By the (Winds) that disperse. And those that bear the burden (of the rain.) And those that glide with ease. And those who distribute (blessings) as commanded.*" These four words: the dispersers, the bearers, the gliders, and the distributors are not commonly used words; their meanings are not readily known to people. The oath seems to be implicitly referring to the forces of the unseen. It seems that the main objective of the Sura is to connect the human heart with the unseen. Several people from the earlier Muslim generations asked about the meanings of these verses. It has been narrated that Ali ibn Abi Taleb (RA) gave the following explanations: the dispersers refer to the wind; those that bear the burden refers to the clouds; those that glide with ease are the ships; and those who distribute (blessings) as commanded are the angels. The wind, the clouds, the ships, and the angels are tools created by God to perform certain tasks according to His command. The oath is meant to attract the attention of people to the importance of God's creation. People should also reflect on the function of each of these tools and how they affect their lives; especially their

effect on the provision of people. Peoples' provision is one of the issues that the Sura deals with. So, what is the oath about, "*Verily that which you are promised is true; and verily the judgment must indeed come to pass.*" God's promise will certainly be fulfilled. God promised to reward people according to their deeds. If they do not get their reward in this life, they will certainly receive it in the Hereafter. Similarly, the judgment will come to pass. One of the promises that God made is that He will provide for us and His promise will be fulfilled as well.

Then God makes an oath with the well-organized sky emphasizing that the idolaters were confused in what they say, "*By the sky with (its) numerous paths; most surely you are at variance with each other in what you say; through which are deluded (away from the truth) those who are deluded.*" Confusion is a salient feature of falsehood, while truth is stable, firm, and well organized as the well-organized sky. They are deluded in their falsehood and they will be doomed on the Day of Judgment, "*Accursed are the conjecturers; those who are heedless in ignorance. They ask, 'When will be the Day of Judgment?' (It is) the Day when they will be tormented at the Fire, (and it will be said to them), 'Taste your torment. This is what you sought to hasten.'*" They were basing their decisions on conjecture which led them to heedlessness and ignorance. They were asking, "*When will be the Day of Judgment?*" not because they wanted to know but because they thought it is farfetched. The verse showed them a scene of the Day of Judgment as an answer to their question.

On the other hand, there is another scene for those who were secure in their faith. They spent their life serving God and seeking His forgiveness, "*Those who remain conscious of God shall be in gardens and fountains. Taking that which their Lord gives them; for they were doers of good; they used to sleep but little of the night and in the hour of early dawn, they used to pray for forgiveness; and in their wealth, there was a share for the beggar and the deprived.*" They will be rewarded by a place in Paradise. They will receive God's bounty as a reward for what they used to do in the worldly life. They used to spend most of the night praying. They designated part of their wealth to the needy who ask and the needy who were too proud to ask. This was a voluntary charity but they made it a duty on themselves.

Then the verses direct the attention to the signs of God, "*And on the earth are signs for those who have certitude. As also in your own selves; will you not then see.*" God's signs are all around us but they cannot be seen except by those who are secure in their faith, those who are able to reflect on the creation of God. The security in faith sets the heart alive and frees it to understand the secrets of the signs. Those who do not have secure faith see the same signs with their eyes but they do not touch their hearts. Their hearts remain dead unable to see or reflect. There are also signs within ourselves. The human body is one of the greatest signs of God. The human body has many systems that work in amazing ways that we still do not understand. The systems work together without conscious interference from us. What about the secrets of the soul and its hidden power? How can we see, understand, and remember? What about that amazing information retrieval system that we have?

The previous verses alluded to the signs of God in the universe, then the signs of God in the human body, and here it refers to the unseen and how the livelihood of people is part of this unseen decided by God, "*And in heaven is your sustenance, as (also) that which you are*

promised.” The human being works hard and uses the material means to earn his livelihood, but that is not enough because the livelihood that the individual will be able to attain is decided by God. The believer understands the meaning of this message. It does not mean that we neglect the hard work and the pursuit of the material means for earning our livelihood; but we should realize that hard work and the pursuit of the material means is not sufficient to attain the objective. The ultimate decision regarding our attainment is made by God. God decrees the amount and type of provision to be granted to every living creature. This frees the heart from being obsessed by the material means and it allows the heart to fly high up in the sky seeking and understanding God’s signs. The human being has been created to stand firmly on earth but to try to reach to the sky with his heart and soul. The believer considers the material means for earning his livelihood to be signs that lead to the Creator of the means. This is certainly true, *“Then, by the Lord of heaven and earth, this is the very truth, as much as the fact that you can speak intelligently to each other.”*

Verses 24 to 60:

24. *Has the story of Abraham's honored guests reached you (Muhammad)?*
25. *When they entered upon him and said, "Peace," he answered, "Peace. You are people unknown (to me)".*
26. *Then he turned quickly to his household and brought out a fat calf;*
27. *And placed it before them. He said, "Will you not eat?"*
28. *(When they did not eat), He became fearful of them. They said, "Fear not," and they gave him glad tidings of a son endowed with knowledge.*
29. *Then his wife came crying; she struck her face and said, "An old barren woman."*
30. *They said, "Thus says your Lord; indeed, He is the Wise, the Omniscient."*
31. *(Abraham) said, "Messengers, what you are here for?"*
32. *They said, "We have been sent to a guilty people;*
33. *That we may send upon them stones of clay,*
34. *Marked by your Lord for (the destruction of) those who were given to excesses.*
35. *Then We evacuated all the believers who were there,*
36. *But We found there only one house of those who submitted (to God).*
37. *And We left behind therein a sign for those who fear the painful torment.*
38. *And in Moses (was another sign). We sent him to Pharaoh, with clear authority.*
39. *But (Pharaoh) turned back with his chiefs, and said, "A magician, or a mad man."*
40. *So We took him and his forces, and threw them into the sea; and his was the blame.*
41. *And in (the tribe of) 'Ad (there is a sign) when we sent the destructive wind against them.*
42. *It spared nothing it came upon, but made it (all) as dust.*
43. *And in (the tribe of) Thamud (there is a sign) when it was told to them: enjoy yourselves for a while.*
44. *But they insolently defied the command of their Lord. So the thunderbolt overtook them while they gazed;*
45. *Then they could not even stand (on their feet), nor could they help themselves.*
46. *And the people of Noah before, surely they were a transgressing people.*
47. *We have built the heaven with might, and indeed, We are expanding it.*
48. *And the earth We have spread out, how gracious is the spreader.*

49. *And of everything We have created pairs; that you may be mindful.*
50. *Therefore, flee unto God; I am a plain warner to you from Him.*
51. *And do not take another deity with God; I am a plain warner to you from Him.*
52. *Similarly, no messenger came to the people before them, but they said (of him), "A magician, or a mad man."*
53. *Is this the legacy they have transmitted, one to another? They are themselves a transgressing people.*
54. *So turn away from them, you are not to be blamed.*
55. *And continue to remind, for surely the reminder benefits the believers.*
56. *I have only created jinn and humankind to worship Me.*
57. *I seek no livelihood from them, nor do I ask that they should feed Me.*
58. *God is He Who gives sustenance. God is indeed, the Provider, the Possessor of strength, the Firm.*
59. *Indeed, for the wrongdoers, their portion of torment like the portion of their fellows (of earlier generations). Then let them not ask Me to hasten (that portion).*
60. *And woe to those who disbelieve, from their day which they are promised. (51: 24 – 60)*

The second part of this Sura deals with synopsis of the stories of Prophet Abraham (PBUH), Prophet Lot (PBUH), and Prophet Moses (PBUH), the tribes of ‘Ad and Thamud, and finally the people of Prophet Noah (PBUH). This section is closely connected with the previous section as well as the next section, *“Has the story of Abraham's honored guests reached you (Muhammad)? When they entered upon him and said, ‘Peace,’ he answered, ‘Peace. You are people unknown (to me)’. Then he turned quickly to his household and brought out a fat calf; and placed it before them. He said, ‘Will you not eat?’ (When they did not eat), He became fearful of them. They said, ‘Fear not,’ and they gave him glad tidings of a son endowed with knowledge. Then his wife came crying; she struck her face and said, ‘An old barren woman.’ They said, ‘Thus says your Lord; indeed, He is the Wise, the Omniscient.’”*

This story refers to the signs of God in sending messengers to guide people to the straight path. The story starts with a question to the Prophet (PBUH), *“did he hear about the story of Prophet Abraham (PBUH) and his honored guests?”* Then it continues to illustrate the generosity of Prophet Abraham (PBUH). When the angels came to visit him, he went in a hurry to bring them food, before even knowing who they were or why they came. He came back with a fat calf. However, they did not eat and that made him apprehensive because that may have been a sign that they harbored an evil intention to harm him. But they immediately reassured him, telling him who they were and they gave him the glad tidings of a son. This would be Prophet Isaac (PBUH). When his wife heard this she was stunned by the surprise. How can she, an old barren woman, give birth? She forgot that they were angels so they reminded her of the unlimited power of God. He says, “Be,” and it is.

Abraham (PBUH) asked them what else they came to accomplish, *“(Abraham) said, ‘Messengers, what you are here for?’”* They told him about their mission to destroy the people of Prophet Lot (PBUH), *“They said, ‘We have been sent to a guilty people; that we may send upon them stones of clay, Marked by your Lord for (the destruction of) the transgressors.’”* They saved the believers, but it was only one household in the whole city which believed in the message brought by Prophet Lot (PBUH), *“Then We evacuated all the believers who were there,*

but We found there only one house of those who submitted (to God). And We left behind therein a sign for those who fear the painful torment.”

Another sign of God, the story of Prophet Moses (PBUH), *“And in Moses (was another sign). We sent him to Pharaoh, with clear authority. But (Pharaoh) turned back with his chiefs, and said, ‘A magician, or a mad man.’”* God sent Moses (PBUH) with strong evidence and clear proof to support the message that he brought Pharaoh. God also bestowed an air of reverence on Moses (PBUH). But Pharaoh turned away from him and he refused to listen to the truth. This shows that miracles alone cannot guide certain hearts to the truth. These are the sealed hearts that are not able to receive the truth. The story ends by narrating the fate of Pharaoh, *“So We took him and his forces, and threw them into the sea; and his was the blame.”* The verse indicates that the punishment was inflicted by God directly, which emphasizes the intended purpose of telling the story: God’s promises will certainly be fulfilled.

Yet another sign in the story of the tribe of ‘Ad, *“And in (the tribe of) ‘Ad (there is a sign) when we sent the destructive wind against them. It spared nothing it came upon, but made it (all) as dust.”* The Arabic word used to describe the wind is, “barren,” indicating that it was a wind that did not bring any rain but was mainly meant for destruction.

Then the story of the tribe of Thamud, *“And in (the tribe of) Thamud (there is a sign) when it was told to them: enjoy yourselves for a while. But they insolently defied the command of their Lord. So the thunderbolt overtook them while they gazed; then they could not even stand (on their feet), nor could they help themselves.”* This was another sign of the signs of God. This was followed by a reference to the people of Prophet Noah (PBUH), *“And the people of Noah before, surely they were a transgressing people.”*

The verses then turned to the cosmic signs of God, *“We have built the heaven with might, and indeed, We are expanding it. And the earth We have spread out, how gracious is the spreader.”* The creation of the heavens needed a great amount of power. The verses also refer to the expanding nature of the universe. This is a scientific fact that was only discovered recently. This may be also a reference to the expanding stores of provision that God has for people. Another sign is the land which God has spread for us, so that we can travel on it with ease.

The following verse states an amazing principle, *“And of everything We have created pairs; that you may be mindful.”* This is a fact that was not known fourteen hundreds years ago. Then a warning was issued, *“Therefore flee unto God; I am a plain warner to you from Him. And do not take another deity with God; I am a plain warner to you from Him.”* The warning is repeated twice to emphasize the seriousness of the matter.

The stories of the prophets are then concluded by a comment, *“Similarly, no messenger came to the people before them, but they said (of him), ‘A magician, or a mad man.’ Is this the legacy they have transmitted, one to another? They are themselves a transgressing people. So turn away from them, you are not to be blamed. And continue to remind, for surely the reminder benefits the believers.”* All those who rejected guidance belong to the same school. They all have the same response. Each group accused its prophet of being either a magician or a mad man. The

Prophet (PBUH) was then comforted. God commanded him not to worry about those who denied him, but he was commanded to continue calling people to Islam and keep reminding them because reminding is beneficial for the believers.

The final conclusion of the Sura explains the meaning of fleeing unto God, *“I have only created jinn and humankind to worship Me. I seek no livelihood from them, nor do I ask that they should feed Me. God is He who gives sustenance. God is indeed, the Provider, the Possessor of strength, the Firm.”* This short verse states a major and fundamental truth, the jinn and the humans were created for a purpose. Everyone should fulfill the purpose for which he was created otherwise his life becomes useless. The purpose of the creation is to worship God. This shows that the concept of worship is a comprehensive concept that goes beyond performing the rituals. The concept of worship encompasses all the daily activities that God created us to perform. The purpose of life of humankind is to establish a flourishing life on earth. This involves the discovery and study of the available resources and using it to make earth a place for good life. The essence of worship should be manifested in two main beliefs that should reside deep in the heart of the believer:

1. The deep belief that God is the Lord to be worshipped. The relationship between God and humankind is a relationship between the Lord and His servant. The Lord is to be worshipped and the servant’s duty is to worship.
2. The complete dedication of every feeling, emotion, intention, or action to God. This dedication should be pure and free of any hypocrisy or showing off which may cast a doubt on the sincerity of the person.

When these two conditions are fulfilled then we will be able to truly flee unto God. We will be able to play the role that we have been created to perform. This will free us from all the shackles of doubts and insecurity. One of the consequences of this is that the value of human actions is not measured by the results they achieve but rather by the underlying motivation behind them. The reward is based on the actions themselves not on what they achieve. The believer is requested to work hard and use all the available material means however, he should believe that the results are in the hand of God. We should not worry about the results we should worry only about the effort which we spend in pursuing the goal. The Quran tries to inculcate these meanings in the heart of the believer. The emphasis of the human being on securing his sustenance is replaced by the emphasis of the need to please God by performing what he has been created to do, *“Indeed for the wrongdoers, their portion of torment like the portion of their fellows (of earlier generations). Then let them not ask Me to hasten (that portion).”*

A final warning is issued, *“And woe to those who disbelieve, from their day which they are promised.”*