

Sura 55: Al-Rahman (The Lord of Mercy)

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

Verses 1 to 78:

1. *The Lord of Mercy;*
2. *It is He who has taught the Quran.*
3. *He created humankind.*
4. *He taught him clear expression.*
5. *The sun and the moon follow courses (exactly) computed;*
6. *And the stars and the trees - both prostrate.*
7. *And the sky He has uplifted; and He has set the balance;*
8. *In order that you may not transgress in the balance.*
9. *So establish weight with justice and do not fall short in the balance.*
10. *And the earth He set down for His creatures;*
11. *Therein are fruits and sheathed palm-trees,*
12. *Husked grain and scented plants.*
13. *Then which of the favors of your Lord would you deny?*
14. *He created humankind from clay like pottery,*
15. *And He created jinn from smokeless fire.*
16. *Then which of the favors of your Lord would you deny?*
17. *(He is) Lord of the two risings and Lord of the two settings;*
18. *Then which of the favors of your Lord would you deny?*
19. *He merged the two seas, converging together;*
20. *Between them is a barrier which they do not transgress;*
21. *Then which of the favors of your Lord would you deny?*
22. *Out of them come Pearls and Coral.*
23. *Then which of the favors of your Lord would you deny?*
24. *And His are the ships sailing smoothly through the seas, lofty as mountains.*
25. *Then which of the favors of your Lord would you deny?*
26. *All that is on earth will perish.*
27. *Only the Face of your Lord, the Lord of Majesty and Generosity, will remain.*
28. *Then which of the favors of your Lord would you deny?*
29. *All that are in the heavens and the earth entreat Him. Every day He exercises power.*
30. *Then which of the favors of your Lord would you deny?*
31. *We will attend to both of you prominent beings.*
32. *Then which of the favors of your Lord would you deny?*
33. *Jinn and humankind, if you can penetrate the regions of the heavens and the earth, then penetrate (them). You will never penetrate them save with (Our) sanction.*
34. *Then which of the favors of your Lord would you deny?*
35. *There will be sent, against you both, heat of fire and flash of brass, and you will not escape.*
36. *Then which of the favors of your Lord would you deny?*
37. *When the sky is rent asunder, and it becomes rosy like red hide;*
38. *Then which of the favors of your Lord would you deny?*
39. *On that day neither humankind nor jinn will be questioned about his sin.*
40. *Then which of the favors of your Lord would you deny?*

41. *The guilty will be known by their marks, and will be taken by the forelocks and the feet.*
42. *Then which of the favors of your Lord would you deny?*
43. *This is the Hell which the guilty deny.*
44. *They will go circling round between it and fierce, boiling water.*
45. *Then which of the favors of your Lord would you deny?*
46. *But for those who feared the standing before their Lord there are two gardens.*
47. *Then which of the favors of your Lord would you deny?*
48. *With spreading branches.*
49. *Then which of the favors of your Lord would you deny?*
50. *Wherein are two flowing springs.*
51. *Then which of the favors of your Lord would you deny?*
52. *Wherein is every kind of fruit in pairs.*
53. *Then which of the favors of your Lord would you deny?*
54. *Reclining upon couches lined with silk brocade, the fruit of both the gardens shall be within reach.*
55. *Then which of the favors of your Lord would you deny?*
56. *Therein are those of modest gaze, whom neither human nor jinn will have touched before them.*
57. *Then which of the favors of your Lord would you deny?*
58. *Like rubies and coral.*
59. *Then which of the favors of your Lord would you deny?*
60. *Is there any reward for goodness but goodness?*
61. *Then which of the favors of your Lord would you deny?*
62. *And besides these two, there are two other gardens.*
63. *Then which of the favors of your Lord would you deny?*
64. *Dark-green in color.*
65. *Then which of the favors of your Lord would you deny?*
66. *Wherein are two gushing springs.*
67. *Then which of the favors of your Lord would you deny?*
68. *Wherein is fruit, the date-palm and pomegranate.*
69. *Then which of the favors of your Lord would you deny?*
70. *Wherein are good and beautiful women;*
71. *Then which of the favors of your Lord would you deny?*
72. *Fair ones, closely-guarded in pavilions;*
73. *Then which of the favors of your Lord would you deny?*
74. *Whom neither human nor jinn will have touched before them;*
75. *Then which of the favors of your Lord would you deny?*
76. *Reclining on green cushions and beautiful carpets;*
77. *Then which of the favors of your Lord would you deny?*
78. *Blessed be the name of your Lord, the Lord of Majesty and Generosity. (55: 1 -78)*

This is a Meccan Sura. It has a very special style. It presents a general proclamation in the universal court. It enumerates the different signs of God which are reflected on the creation of the universe and humankind. It addresses the two prominent bodies: humankind and jinn challenging them to deny God's blessings and favors.

The Sura starts with a verse of one word, "*The Lord of Mercy*;" a beginning which sets the tone for the whole Sura; a call to each heart to listen; a call that attracts the attention of the whole

universe to the proclamation of God. Then the proclamation follows, *“It is He who has taught the Quran.”* The Quran is the greatest blessing of God. It is an expression of the mercy of God. It embodies the laws that organize the whole universe. It embodies the divine project which organizes the life of people on earth and provides them with a link to the rest of the universe. It provides them with the means to lead comfortable, safe, and secure life.

The Quran opens the eyes of people to see the beauty of the universe. The Quran teaches people the meaning of being vicegerents of God on earth. That is why the verse that deals with the teaching of the Quran precedes the verse that tells of the creation of humankind, *“He created humankind. He taught him clear expression.”* God taught humankind to express himself and to communicate with other beings in the universe. This is a great blessing that we usually take for granted.

The following verses talk about the signs of God in the universe, *“The sun and the moon follow courses (exactly) computed.”* The creation and the control of the universe are a testimony of the accurate planning and design of the universe. The universe is full of stars, many of which are much bigger than the sun. But the sun is the most important star for us, the inhabitants of the earth. The light and heat we get from the sun are essential for our continuous survival. The moon is also important to us. The gravitational attraction of the sun and the moon are accurately calculated to guarantee their equilibrium and stability. In this huge universe, in which there are millions of the stars, every star moves along its orbit with great precision.

The previous verse explained the precision of the creation and the next verse explains the relationship between the created and the Creator, *“And the stars and the trees - both prostrate.”* The existence of the universe is contingent on the sound relationship between the created and the Creator. Every creature in this universe recognizes its Creator and submits to Him.

“And the sky He has uplifted; and He has set the balance; in order that you may not transgress in the balance. So establish weight with justice and do not fall short in the balance.” The reference to the sky aims at attracting the attention of the heedless heart to contemplate the magnificence of God’s creation. It motivates the human being to look high up and reflect on the huge universe that has millions of the stars moving around without colliding with each other. In addition to the majesty of the creation of the vast universe, a reference is made to the establishment of the balance; the balance that weighs with the truth. The balance that sets the standard for everything: people, events and other things. This balance guarantees the stability of life. The balance means that we should use objective judgment not whims and desires in our dealings. This is the balance that God embedded in the initial natural disposition of humankind and is included in the divine project as explained in the Quran. It is thus incumbent on us not to transgress this balance and to maintain justice and fairness in our dealings.

“And the earth He set down for His creatures. Therein are fruits and sheathed palm-trees, husked grain and scented plants.” Having lived on earth for a long time, humankind tends to take things for granted. We do not think of the power that made this earth habitable; the power that made it a secure place for us to live on. We are reminded every now and then of the precarious nature of this place when we suffer the occurrence of an earthquake or the eruption of a volcano. We do not realize that this earth, on which we live, rotates and moves in the universe with vast speeds. In the meantime, the earth provides the appropriate soil for magnificent plants

to grow and sustain our lives. Then which of these blessings would humankind and jinn dispute? *“Then which of the favors of your Lord would you deny?”*

God’s blessings in creating humankind and jinn are then explored, *“He created humankind from clay like pottery, and He created jinn from smokeless fire. Then which of the favors of your Lord would you deny?”* Having been created is a great blessing from God on both jinn and humankind. The creation and existence of both humankind and jinn are miracles beyond comprehension. Humankind was created from clay. We know from science that the elements that constitute the human body are the same elements that constitute the soil. However, scientific knowledge should not be used in interpreting the verses of the Quran. Quranic verses may be alluding to the scientific facts or they may mean something else. We would like to emphasize that we should not consider a single and limited scientific theory as the sole explanation of a Quranic verse. Scientific theories may be proven to be facts and may be proven wrong later on; very often their findings change with time. Scientific theories may be used in the context of providing probable explanations of the verses of the Quran. The creation of jinn from fire is beyond human comprehension; it is part of the unseen.

“(He is) Lord of the two risings and Lord of the two settings. Then which of the favors of your Lord would you deny?” The reference to the two risings and the two settings evokes in the heart the encompassing nature of God. Wherever one goes or looks, one can find God. The risings and settings could be a reference to the risings and settings of the sun and the moon. They could also be a reference to the different risings and settings of the sun in the winter and the summer; or the different risings and setting of the sun in the two hemispheres. What is more important is the significance of the mention of the two risings and the two settings. The verse urges the human being to consider the risings and settings as signs of God to reflect upon.

God created water on earth to be used by people, *“He merged the two seas, converging together; between them is a barrier which they do not transgress. Then which of the favors of your Lord would you deny? Out of them come Pearls and Coral. Then which of the favors of your Lord would you deny? And His are the ships sailing smoothly through the seas, lofty as mountains; then which of the favors of your Lord would you deny?”* One of the two seas is a salt water sea and the other is a fresh water one. The first represents all seas and oceans and the second represents all rivers. God allowed the rivers to converge on the seas but neither one transgresses upon each other. Their waters do not cross the natural barrier between the two. Most rivers end up flowing into seas, but the characteristics of the sea water do not change. The level of the river is usually higher than the level of the sea to which it is connected. So, sea water does not affect the characteristics of the fresh water in the river. Both have wonders of God’s creation. Pearl and coral are harvested from them. Ships sail through rivers and seas. They look like mountains. God created the laws that keep them afloat and allow them to sail through water.

“All that is on earth will perish. Only the Face of your Lord, the Lord of Majesty and Generosity, will remain. Then which of the favors of your Lord would you deny?” Reading this verse, the sounds become quiet and the senses become still. Everything will perish. Only God’s Face will remain. So, which blessing would humankind and the jinn dispute?

“All that are in the heavens and the earth entreat Him. Every day He exercises power. Then which of the favors of your Lord would you deny?” Only God can answer those who ask Him; that is why everyone asks Him. He controls everything, He is the owner of everything and He is

the Provider.

The following verse embodies a horrific warning, *“We will attend to both of you prominent beings. Then which of the favors of your Lord would you deny?”* God the Lord of Majesty, the Mighty, the Strong, the Dominator, the Compeller, the Great, the Most High will attend to the reckoning of the two weak kinds of creatures: humankind and jinn. This is a horrific matter, beyond all imagination. There is nothing that can keep God busy; He does not need to take time off to attend to humankind and jinn. But it is a figure of speech which magnifies the impact of the warning. Could they dispute any of His favors?

Then a challenge is posed. Can jinn and humankind pass beyond the regions of the heavens and the earth, *“Jinn and humankind, if you can penetrate the regions of the heavens and the earth, then penetrate (them). You will never penetrate them save with (Our) sanction. Then which of the favors of your Lord would you deny?”* Only by God’s permission can they penetrate the heavens and earth; otherwise, *“there will be sent, against you both, heat of fire and flash of brass, and you will not escape. Then which of the favors of your Lord would you deny?”*

The rest of the Sura describes some of the scenes of the Day of Judgment, *“When the sky is rent asunder, and it becomes rosy like red hide; then which of the favors of your Lord would you deny?”* The scene of the sky as a red rose like a red hide refers to the catastrophic events which will happen on the Day of Judgment. Many of the verses in the Quran describe the destruction of the planets and the stars which will take place on the Day of Judgment. On that Day no one will be asked. The deeds of everyone will be known. The faces will reflect these deeds, those who did good, will have happy and bright faces but those who did evil will have miserable and darkened faces, *“On that day neither humankind nor jinn will be questioned about his sin. Then which of the favors of your Lord would you deny?”*

The criminals will be known by the marks on their faces. They will be taken by the forelocks and the feet and thrown into Hell fire, *“The guilty will be known by their marks, and will be taken by the forelocks and the feet. Then which of the favors of your Lord would you deny?”* It will be said, *“This is the Hell which the guilty deny. They will go circling round between it and fierce, boiling water. Then which of the favors of your Lord would you deny?”*

The other scene is the scene of bliss, *“But for those who feared the standing before their Lord there are two gardens. Then which of the favors of your Lord would you deny?”* This is the first time in the Quran that two gardens are mentioned. Most probably they are parts of the big garden that has been mentioned frequently in the Quran. The mention of two gardens here may be a reference to their special characteristics. As we can see in Surat Al-Waqiah (Chapter 56), the companions of the garden are two groups: the group of those who will be brought closer to God, and the group who are called the people of the right. It may be that the two gardens mentioned in this verse are meant for those who have higher rank, the group of those who are brought closer to God. The two gardens which will be mentioned later on in this Sura may have been meant for the other group, the group of the people of the right.

The first two gardens have, *“With spreading branches, wherein are two flowing springs, and wherein is every kind of fruit in pairs.”* And those who inhabit them will be, *“reclining upon couches lined with silk brocade, the fruit of both the gardens shall be within reach. Therein are those of modest gaze, whom neither human nor jinn will have touched before them, like rubies*

and coral.” The fundamental standard is then set, *“Is there any reward for goodness but goodness?”*

The group of the people of the right will be admitted to two different gardens. These gardens are slightly lower in rank than the previous two, *“and besides these two, there are two other gardens, dark-green in color. Wherein are two gushing springs.”* Here it is mentioned that the water is gushing in pulses from the two springs while in the previous two gardens, water was flowing continuously from the two springs. But there will be fruits and other good things, *“Wherein is fruit, the date-palm and pomegranate. Then which of the favors of your Lord would you deny? Wherein are good and beautiful women; then which of the favors of your Lord would you deny? Fair ones, closely-guarded in pavilions; then which of the favors of your Lord would you deny? Whom neither human nor jinn will have touched before them; then which of the favors of your Lord would you deny? Reclining on green cushions and beautiful carpets; then which of the favors of your Lord would you deny?”*

The Sura explored the blessings of God on the universe, on His creatures, and in the Hereafter; it thus appropriate to conclude by glorifying God, the Everlasting, *“Blessed be the name of your Lord, the Lord of Majesty and Generosity.”*