

Sura 56: AL-Waqi'ah (The Inevitable Event)

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

Verses 1 to 56:

1. *When the inevitable event occurs,*
2. *There is no denying that it will occur.*
3. *Abasing (some), exalting (others);*
4. *When the earth shall be shaken to its depths,*
5. *And the mountains shall be crumbled to powder,*
6. *Becoming a scattered dust;*
7. *And you shall be sorted out into three kinds:*
8. *Those on the right, what of those on the right?*
9. *And those on the left, what of those on the left?*
10. *And the foremost in the race, the foremost in the race,*
11. *Those are they who will be brought close (to God),*
12. *In gardens of bliss;*
13. *A numerous company of the former generations,*
14. *And a few of the later generations,*
15. *On lined couches,*
16. *Reclining on them, facing each other.*
17. *There will circulate among them immortal youths;*
18. *With cups, pitchers and a cup from a flowing spring;*
19. *Causing them neither headache, nor will they suffer intoxication;*
20. *And fruit that they prefer;*
21. *And flesh of fowl that they desire.*
22. *And (there will be) companions with beautiful, big, and lustrous eyes;*
23. *Like pearls well-guarded;*
24. *A reward for what they used to do.*
25. *They will not hear therein vain or sinful discourse,*
26. *Only the saying, "Peace, Peace."*
27. *And those on the right, what of those on the right?*
28. *(They will be) among Lote-trees without thorns,*
29. *And trees with flowers (or fruits) piled one above another,*
30. *And extended shade,*
31. *And water flowing continuously,*
32. *And fruits in abundance;*
33. *Whose season is not limited, nor (supply) forbidden*
34. *And raised couches.*
35. *We have created (their companions) in a (new) creation.*
36. *And made them virgins,*
37. *Loving, equals in age,*
38. *For those on the right;*
39. *A numerous company of the former generations,*
40. *And a numerous company of the later generations.*
41. *And those on the left, what of those on the left?*
42. *In scorching wind and scalding water,*

43. *And the shadow of black smoke,*
44. *Neither cool nor refreshing.*
45. *Indeed, they were, before that, indulging in affluence;*
46. *And used to persist in the awful sin.*
47. *And they used to say, "When we die and become dust and bones, will we indeed be raised up again?"*
48. *And also our forefathers?*
49. *Say, "Indeed, the former and later generations,*
50. *Will all be brought together to the tryst of an appointed day.*
51. *Then indeed you who have gone astray, the deniers,*
52. *You will surely eat of a tree of Zaqqum,*
53. *And will fill your bellies with it;*
54. *And drinking on top of it boiling water;*
55. *And you will drink the way thirsty camels drink.*
56. *This will be their welcome on the Day of Judgment. (56: 1 -56)*

The inevitable event is the name of the Sura as well as its topic of discussion. The main issue that the Sura addresses is the concept of resurrection. The Sura opens up with a horrific statement that is appropriate to a scene of the scenes of the Day of Judgment, *"When the inevitable event occurs, there is no denying that it will occur. Abasing (some), exalting (others); when the earth shall be shaken to its depths, and the mountains shall be crumbled to powder, becoming a scattered dust."* The verses allude to the events of the Day of Judgment without explicitly detailing what will happen giving the impression that it is so horrific that it could not be mentioned explicitly. The verses emphasize the inevitability of the event. On that Day some people will be in high places while others will be debased. A description of the cosmic disruption on that Day then follows: the earth will be shaken and the mountains will be destroyed becoming dust scattered in the universe.

The following verses explain in more details the earlier statement about raising some people and debasing others. People are divided into three categories, *"And you shall be sorted out into three kinds: those on the right, what of those on the right? And those on the left, what of those on the left? And the foremost in the race, the foremost in the race."* The people of the first category are the people on the right, then the second category includes the people on the left. The people of the third category are the foremost in the race. No details are mentioned about the people of each category. However, the mention of each group is followed by a question: what about them? The verses build up the anticipation of the reader to know more about each category. Then the verses detail the rank of each group in front of God and what will they receive from Him. The verses start with those who are the foremost in the race, *"Those are they who will be brought close (to God), In gardens of bliss; a numerous company of the former generations, and a few of the later generations, on lined couches, reclining on them, facing each other. There will circulate among them immortal youths; with cups, pitchers and a cup from a flowing spring; causing them neither headache, nor will they suffer intoxication; and fruit that they prefer; and flesh of fowl that they desire. And (there will be) companions with beautiful, big, and lustrous eyes; like pearls well-guarded; a reward for what they used to do. They will not hear therein vain or sinful discourse, only the saying, 'Peace, Peace.'"* The verses start with the greatest bliss that this group will enjoy: the bliss of being close to God. The verses describe the composition of the group, *"a numerous company of the former generations, and a few of the later generations."*

Then continue to describe the other bounties of God that they will enjoy. They will be reclining on couches feeling happy and secure. They will be served by young people who will serve them whatever they like of fruits, meat, and drinks. They will have beautiful companions, like well protected pearls. They will live in peace, security, and harmony.

The next group consists of the people on the right, *“And those on the right, what of those on the right? (They will be) among Lote-trees without thorns, and trees with flowers (or fruits) piled one above another, and extended shade, and water flowing continuously, and fruits in abundance; whose season is not limited, nor (supply) forbidden, and raised couches. We have created (their companions) in a (new) creation, and made them virgins, loving, equals in age, for those on the right; a numerous company of the former generations, and a numerous company of the later generations.”* The previous verses describe the details of the bliss that the people on the right will enjoy. They will live in Gardens with thorn-free flowering trees, water will be flowing around them. They will enjoy the shade and the different types of fruits. They will be sitting on high couches and they will have beautiful companions. These companions will be virgins, loving, and of compatible age. Finally, the composition of the group is mentioned, *“a numerous company of the former generations, and a numerous company of the later generations.”*

The third group is the group of those on the left, *“And those on the left, what of those on the left? In scorching wind and scalding water; and the shadow of black smoke, neither cool nor refreshing. Indeed, they were, before that, indulging in affluence; and used to persist in the awful sin.”* The scene is contrasted against the scene of those on the right. They will be in scorching wind drinking boiling water. This is their recompense. They used to enjoy affluent life. They were adamant in breaking the covenant that God took from humankind, the covenant that God instilled in the initial natural disposition of humankind. They used to deny the accountability on the Day of Judgment, *“And they used to say, ‘When we die and become dust and bones, will we indeed be raised up again? And also our forefathers?’”* Their question will be answered, *“Say, ‘Indeed, the former and later generations, will all be brought together to the tryst of an appointed day.’”* Certainly you will be raised, you and your forefathers and you will be held accountable, *“Then indeed you who have gone astray, the deniers, you will surely eat of a tree of Zaqqum, and will fill your bellies with it; and drinking on top of it boiling water; and you will drink the way thirsty camels drink. This will be their welcome on the Day of Judgment.”* They will drink boiling water. Such water neither quenches their thirst, nor does it cool their insides. So, they will keep drinking in the same fashion that sick camels keep drinking.

Verses 57 to 96:

- 57. *We have created you, so why do you not believe?*
- 58. *Have you seen that which you emit?*
- 59. *Is it you who create it, or are We the Creator?*
- 60. *We have decreed death to be your common lot, and We are not to be frustrated.*
- 61. *In order that We may bring in your place the likes of you and make you grow into what you do not know.*
- 62. *And you certainly know already the first creation; why then are you not mindful?*
- 63. *Have you seen that which you sow?*
- 64. *Is it you who make it to grow, or are We the growers?*
- 65. *If We willed, We verily could make it chaff, then you would not cease to lament?*
- 66. *(Saying), "We are indeed left with debts;*

67. *Rather, we are deprived.*
68. *Have you considered the water which you drink?*
69. *Is it you who send it down from the raincloud, or are We the senders?*
70. *If We willed, We verily could make it bitter. Why then, you are not grateful?*
71. *Have you considered the fire which you ignite;*
72. *Was it you who produced its trees, or are We the producers?*
73. *We have made it a reminder and a provision for the travelers.*
74. *Therefore, glorify the name of your Lord, the Tremendous.*
75. *I swear by the positions of the stars.*
76. *That is verily a tremendous oath, if you only knew.*
77. *Most surely it is a noble Quran,*
78. *In a book that is well-protected.*
79. *None shall touch it except the purified ones;*
80. *A revelation from the Lord of the worlds.*
81. *Do you then hold this discourse in contempt?*
82. *And you have made denial (of the truth) your livelihood?*
83. *Then why when (the soul of the dying man) reaches the throat,*
84. *And you are, at that time, looking on;*
85. *But We are nearer to him than you, and yet you do not see.*
86. *Then why do you not, if you are exempt from (future) account,*
87. *Bring it back, if you are truthful?*
88. *If he was of those who are brought near to God,*
89. *Then (for him) happiness and bounty and a garden of bliss.*
90. *If he was of those on the right,*
91. *For him is the salutation, "Peace be to you," from those on the right.*
92. *And if he is one of the rejecters, the erring ones,*
93. *Then the welcome will be boiling water;*
94. *And burning in Hell-Fire.*
95. *Verily, this is the certain truth.*
96. *Therefore, glorify the name of your Lord, the Tremendous. (56: 57 – 96)*

The following section of the Sura deals with the fundamentals of the doctrine. However, the emphasis is placed on the principles of the doctrine that are related to the resurrection. The verses exhibit the characteristics of the style of the Quran in addressing the initial natural disposition of humankind and how it explains the axioms of faith using simple but logical arguments. The Quran turns the familiar settings and the ordinary events in the lives of people into major cosmic phenomenon; through which divine laws are explained. Then these laws are used to form a universal and comprehensive doctrine that controls the whole universe. This doctrine becomes the divine project which organizes the lives of the believers and energizes their hearts and souls.

The way which the Quran uses in addressing the initial natural disposition of humankind provides the proof that the Quran is God's revelation. The methodology used in composing the Quran is exactly the same methodology used in the creation of the universe. Very simple and elementary components were combined together to create the highly complex universe. Similarly, the Quran uses simple and elementary observations which are familiar to people in building up the most sophisticated religious doctrine. Everyone who lives on earth, whether in a city, a village, or a cave, has seen plants growing, babies being born, water flowing, and fires

burning. These are the elements that the Quran uses to build up the doctrine. These elementary observations are also a witness of the most significant cosmic realities and divine secrets.

The verses in this section start with concept of the resurrection, *"We have created you, so why do you not believe? Have you seen that which you emit? Is it you who create it, or are We the Creator?"* People have been created and are continuously being created; no one can deny this fact. The role of the human being in the creation is simply for the male to place his sperm inside the womb of the female. God transforms this tiny drop of water into a fully fashioned human being. We do not know how this happens, but it happens every day in front of our eyes. The end is not less miraculous than the beginning, *"We have decreed death to be your common lot, and We are not to be frustrated. In order that We may bring in your place the likes of you and make you grow into what you do not know. And you certainly know already the first creation; why then are you not mindful?"* Everyone dies. No one will escape death. However, we do not know how it happens. God is capable of replacing us with new people, if He wills.

The second example is the familiar scene of planting seeds, *"Have you seen that which you sow? Is it you who make it to grow, or are We the growers? If We willed, We verily could make it chaff, then you would not cease to lament?"* The seed which is sown by a human being, grows into a tree by the will of God. No one interferes in the process. You hear people say, "We planted." All what they did is sowing the seed. The miracle of the transformation of a tiny seed into a full blown plant is God's work. God is capable of destroying it, if He so willed. If the plant is destroyed somehow, they still do not recognize God's role. Instead, they lament, *"(Saying), 'We are indeed left with debts; rather, we are deprived.'"*

Another familiar scene in our daily life, *"Have you considered the water which you drink? Is it you who send it down from the raincloud, or are We the senders? If We willed, We verily could make it bitter. Why then, you are not grateful?"* Water plays a major role in the continuance of life on earth. What role does the human being play in making this water? It is God who sends down water from the sky. God could have very well made it bitter rather than fresh.

Still another familiar example, *"Have you considered the fire which you ignite; Was it you who produced its trees, or are We the producers? We have made it a reminder and a provision for the travelers."* The discovery of fire was a milestone in the history of humankind. But now we take it for granted. Human beings can light fires, but who created the tree that can be ignited to provide the fire? The fire we deal with in our daily life, is a reminder of the bigger fire of the Day of Judgment. Having presented these signs, it is appropriate to end this section by glorifying God's name who created these miracles, *"Therefore, glorify the name of your Lord, the Tremendous."*

The next section starts with an oath, an oath by the positions of the stars, *"I swear by the positions of the stars; that is verily a tremendous oath, if you only knew; most surely it is a noble Quran, in a book that is well-protected. None shall touch it except the purified ones. A revelation from the Lord of the worlds."* Those who lived at the time during which the Quran was being revealed did not know the significance of the positions of the stars. So, they were told that this is a tremendous oath. Today we know more about this. The scientists of astronomy tell us that the universe has billions of planets and stars. Each one has its own orbit and gravity. It is almost impossible for two stars to collide with each other because they were positioned in the universe with great accuracy and deliberation. This shows how tremendous this oath is. So what is the oath about? The oath emphasizes the authenticity of the Quran. It has not been written by a crazy person or a magician. It is a noble Quran; noble in itself, noble because it came from a noble source, and noble because of the noble directions it sets. This Book is also protected; only to be

touched by those who are pure. The Quran could not be touched by Satan. This statement addressed the claim that the idolaters of Quraish made that the Quran is Satan's revelation to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). This is re-emphasized by the statement, *"A revelation from the Lord of the worlds."*

The last section of the Sura depicts the scene of a person on a deathbed, *"Do you then hold this discourse in contempt? And you have made denial (of the truth) your livelihood? Then why when (the soul of the dying man) reaches the throat, and you are, at that time, looking on, but We are nearer to him than you, and yet you do not see, then why do you not, if you are exempt from (future) account, bring it back, if you are truthful?"* You deny the Quran and you are doubtful of the Hereafter and all that you are going to get from this life is the fact that you rejected the Quran. What will you do then, when a person is on a deathbed? A person is dying and you are watching helplessly unable to bring him back to life. But God is nearer to him than you. So, if you doubt the veracity of the Hereafter, why cannot you bring him back to life?

The following verses depict scenes of the end of members of each of the three categories mentioned earlier in the Sura, *"Thus if he was of those who are brought near to God, then (for him) happiness and bounty and a garden of bliss. And if he was of those on the right, For him is the salutation, 'Peace be to you,' from those on the right. And if he is one of the rejecters, the erring ones, then the welcome will be boiling water; and burning in Hell-Fire."* As the soul leaves the body it sees what is waiting for it. Those who are brought near to God will have happiness and bounty and a garden of bliss. Those who are on the right will be greeted by their companions with a greeting of peace. The ones on the left will reside in Hell fire. This is the certain truth so, *"glorify the name of your Lord, the Tremendous."*