

Sura 69: Al-Haqqah (The Reality)

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

Verses 1 to 52:

1. *The Reality.*
2. *What is the Reality?*
3. *And what will make you realize what the Reality is?*
4. *(The tribes of) Thamud and A'ad denied the Striking Calamity.*
5. *As for Thamud, they were destroyed by the overwhelming blast.*
6. *And as for A'ad, they were destroyed by a fierce roaring wind;*
7. *He made it rage against them seven nights and eight days in succession; so that you could see the people lying dead as if they were hollow trunks of palm-trees.*
8. *Do you see any remnant of them?*
9. *And Pharaoh, and those before him, and the Overturned Cities, committed habitual sin.*
10. *And they disobeyed the messenger of their Lord, therefore He seized them with a tightening grip.*
11. *When the waters overflowed, We carried you on the ship;*
12. *That We might make it a reminder for you, and that attentive ears may take heed.*
13. *And when the trumpet is blown with a single blast;*
14. *And the earth with the mountains shall be lifted up and crushed with a single blow,*
15. *On that day will the Event befall.*
16. *And the sky will be rent asunder, for it will that Day be flimsy,*
17. *And the angels will be on its sides, and eight will, that Day, bear the Throne of your Lord above them.*
18. *On that day you will be exposed; not a secret of you will be hidden.*
19. *Then, as for him who is given his record in his right hand, he will say, "Here, read my book.*
20. *Surely I knew that I should have to meet my reckoning."*
21. *And he will be in a life of bliss,*
22. *In a high garden,*
23. *The fruits of which are near at hand.*
24. *(And it will be said), "Eat and drink at ease for what you did beforehand in the days gone by."*
25. *But as for him who is given his record in his left hand, he will say, "I wish I had not been given my book.*
26. *And never knew what my account was.*
27. *If only it was the end.*
28. *My wealth availed me nothing.*
29. *My power has vanished from me."*
30. *(It will be said), "Take him and put a chain on him,*
31. *And burn him in Hellfire.*
32. *Further, make him march in a chain, the length of which is seventy cubits.*
33. *He used not to believe in God, the Great;*
34. *Nor did he advocate feeding of the poor.*
35. *Therefore, today he has no true friend here,*
36. *Nor any food except scum,*

37. *Which none but the sinners eat.*
38. *Indeed, I swear by what you see,*
39. *And what you do not see,*
40. *That this is verily the speech of a noble messenger;*
41. *And it is not the speech of a poet - little it is you believe;*
42. *Nor it is the speech of a soothsayer - little it is you are mindful.*
43. *It is a revelation from the Lord of the worlds.*
44. *And if he had fabricated against Us some sayings,*
45. *We assuredly would have taken him by the right hand,*
46. *And then severed his life-artery.*
47. *And not one of you could have restrained Us from him.*
48. *But verily this is a Message for the God conscious.*
49. *And We certainly know that there are among you those who reject (it).*
50. *And it is surely a source of grief for the disbelievers.*
51. *But verily it is the truth of assured certainty;*
52. *So glorify the name of your Lord, the Great. (69: 1 – 52)*

This is a great and horrifying Sura. Upon hearing it being recited, one cannot help but shudder. Each verse of the Sura is like a hammer that strikes the psyche of the individual creating a horrifying feeling. The Sura instills in the psyche of the person one message: one should take this religion and its doctrine very seriously. One should not take this Message lightly because it is greater than the Messenger (PBUH) and greater than the whole human race. It is the truth, the truth of assured certainty from the Lord of the worlds.

The Sura starts with the mention of the Day of Resurrection, *“The Reality. What is the Reality? And what will make you realize what the Reality is?”* The word used to describe the Day of Resurrection is “the reality.” The reality is the truth of the matter, it is the judgment that has been decreed, and it is what will certainly happen. All these meanings are plausible explanations for the title of the Sura and the word used to start the Sura. The question was asked but no answer was given because it is beyond human understanding.

The subsequent verses speak of those who rejected guidance, *“(The tribes of) Thamud and A'ad denied the Striking Calamity.”* The expression “*Striking Calamity*,” is another name for the Day of Resurrection. The Striking Calamity is a calamity that strikes the hearts with terrifying fear and strikes the universe with destruction. Thamud and A'ad were punished because they denied the Day of Judgment, *“As for Thamud, they were destroyed by the overwhelming blast.”* The tribe of Thamud used to live in the area between Hijaz and Syria. They were destroyed by an overwhelming blast. The blast that seized the tribe of Thamud was sudden and the destruction happened very quickly. While the tribe of A'ad suffered for a number of days, *“And as for A'ad, they were destroyed by a fierce roaring wind, He made it rage against them, seven nights and eight days in succession; so that you could see the people lying dead as if they were hollow trunks of palm-trees. Do you see any remnant of them?”* They were destroyed by a very cold wind which raged for seven nights and eight days. It left them dead like hollow trunks of palm-trees.

The verses then refer briefly to peoples who rejected guidance earlier and met similar ends, *“And Pharaoh, and those before him, and the Overturned Cities, committed habitual sin. And they disobeyed the messenger of their Lord, therefore He seized them with a tightening grip.”* The

verse refers to Pharaoh of Egypt at the time of Moses (PBUH) and to the people of Lut (PBUH). They all sinned regularly and furthermore they disobeyed the messengers who were sent to them. The verse refers to the different messengers as one, because they all came with the same message.

Then a reference is made to the flood, the drowning of Noah's (PBUH) people who disbelieved, and the rescuing of the believers on the ship, "*When the waters overflowed, We carried you on the ship; that We might make it a reminder for you, and that attentive ears may take heed.*" The scene of the flood with a ship being tossed by huge waves fits appropriately in the overall theme of the Sura; even the words used in the description all rhyme nicely. These stories should be a reminder for anyone who may take heed.

These terrifying images described limited catastrophes in comparison with the big one, the Day of Judgment. First the trumpet will be blown, "*And when the trumpet is blown with a single blast.*" Then this earth, on which we live and dwell securely, will be lifted up together with its huge mountains and then crushed completely, "*And the earth with the mountains shall be lifted up and crushed with a single blow.*" This is the big event that the Sura is talking about, "*On that day will the Event befall.*" The "Event" is another name for the Day of Judgment. It is a unique event that will certainly happen. That is why it is only referred to by the name "the Event." The sky will be split asunder, "*And the sky will be rent asunder, for it will that Day be flimsy.*"

The subsequent verses describe a different scene; a majestic serene scene, where the angels appear carrying the Throne of the Lord, "*And the angels will be on its sides, and eight will, that Day, bear the Throne of your Lord above them.*" Then the reckoning process will start. All secrets will be exposed, "*On that day you will be exposed; not a secret of you will be hidden.*" Nothing will be hidden. Everything will be exposed: bodies, souls, consciences, and deeds.

The scene continues to describe the fate of the different groups of people, "*Then, as for him who is given his record in his right hand, he will say, 'Here, read my book. Surely I knew that I should have to meet my reckoning.'*" The expression, "*given the record in his right hand,*" may also be taken literally, or it could be taken figuratively; since in Arabic the right hand is a symbol of goodness; and the left hand and behind the back are symbols of evil. The scene describes the state of those who attained salvation. They will be overwhelmed with happiness, they will cry out, "*Here, read my book.*" They feared standing up for the reckoning, but they found that they were spared that severe situation, "*I knew that I should have to meet my reckoning.*"

Ibn 'Umar (RA) narrated that he heard the Messenger of God (PBUH) say, "*On the Day of Judgment, the servant is brought in front of his Lord; he will confess all his sins. Then, God will say, 'I did not expose these sins in your life time, and today I forgive you these sins.' Then the servant will be given his book in his right hand. The witnesses will testify against the disbelievers and the hypocrites saying, 'These are ones who fabricated a lie against their Lord.' And they will be cursed.*" The reward for the servants who attained salvation is then described, "*And he will be in a life of bliss, in a high garden, the fruits of which are near at hand. (And it will be said), 'Eat and drink at ease for what you did beforehand in the days gone by.'*"

On the other hand, those who are given their books in their left hand will realize that there is no escape from the punishment, they will lament their situation, "*But as for him who is given his record in his left hand, he will say, 'I wish I had not been given my book. And never knew what*

my account was. If only it was the end. My wealth availed me nothing. My power has vanished from me.'" They will express their regret and reiterate the fact that neither wealth nor power availed them anything. The command is then issued, *"(It will be said), 'Take him and put a chain on him, and burn him in Hellfire. Further, make him march in a chain, the length of which is seventy cubits.'"* It is a horrifying scene. The reasons for their predicament are pronounced, *"He used not to believe in God, the Great; nor did he advocate feeding of the poor."* Their hearts were devoid of the belief in God and had no feelings of mercy towards the needy. These hearts deserve nothing but Hellfire. The rest of the punishment is outlined, *"Therefore, today he has no true friend here nor any food except scum, which none but sinners eat."*

The subsequent verses deal with another theme. They ascertain the truthfulness of the Message, *"Indeed, I swear by what you see, and what you do not see, that this is verily the speech of a noble messenger; and it is not the speech of a poet - little it is you believe; nor it is the speech of a soothsayer - little it is you are mindful. It is a revelation from the Lord of the worlds."* An oath with what you see and what you do not see takes the imagination beyond what we see; indicating the vastness of the universe beyond that which is visible. The idolaters used to accuse the Prophet (PBUH) one time that he was a poet and another that he was a soothsayer. Their accusations were based on their realization of the miraculous nature of the Quran. But the style and content of the Quran are completely different from poetry and magic. The Quran in addition to its linguistic excellence embodies a complete and comprehensive way of life. It is a divine project different from any of the literary works composed by humans. It is God's message that was transmitted by a noble messenger. They only made these claims because they did not believe and they did not take heed.

Then a dire threat is issued against anyone who would contemplate fabricating a lie against God, *"And if he had fabricated against Us some sayings, We assuredly would have taken him by the right hand, and then severed his life-artery, and not one of you could have restrained Us from him."* This statement ascertains beyond any doubt the truthfulness of the Prophet (PBUH). God has indicated His punishment for those who fabricate a lie against Him; and since this punishment was not exercised against the Prophet (PBUH) then he must be truthful in what he says.

The Sura concludes by outlining the nature of the revelation, *"But verily this is a Message for the God conscious. And We certainly know that there are among you those that reject (it). And it is surely a source of grief for the disbelievers. But verily it is the truth of assured certainty."* This Quran reminds the hearts of the God conscious who take heed. The facts that the Quran brought are instilled deep in their psyche. The Quran merely exposes these facts and brings it to the conscious mind. But the disbelievers reject this guidance to their own detriment. But it is certainly the truth of the assured certainty. Therefore, *"Glorify the name of your Lord, the Great."*