

Sura 76: Al-Insan (Humankind)

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

Verses 1 to 31:

1. *Has there come upon humankind a period of time when he was nothing to be mentioned?*
2. *Indeed, We created humankind from a mixture of fluids to test him; and We made him hearing, seeing.*
3. *We have shown him the way, whether he be grateful or disbelieving.*
4. *We have prepared for the disbelievers, chains and shackles and a burning fire.*
5. *The righteous shall drink of a cup whose mixture is camphor;*
6. *A fountain where the servants of God drink, making it gush forth abundantly.*
7. *They fulfill (their) vows, and they fear a day whose evil will be wide-spreading.*
8. *And they feed, for the love of God, the indigent, the orphan, and the captive,*
9. *(saying), "We feed you for the sake of God alone; no reward do we desire from you, nor thanks.*
10. *We dread from our Lord a frowning grim day."*
11. *But God will guard them from the evil of that day, and will shed over them a light of beauty and (blissful) joy.*
12. *And because they were perseverant, He will reward them with a garden and (garments of) silk.*
13. *Reclining in the (garden) on raised couches, they will see neither the sun's (excessive heat) nor excessive cold.*
14. *And the shades of the (garden) will be near above them, and its fruits shall be made to hang lower near (to them), being easy to reach.*
15. *Goblets of silver are brought round for them, and beakers of glass;*
16. *Crystal-clear, made of silver: they will determine the measure thereof (according to their wishes).*
17. *And they will be given to drink there of a cup (of wine) mixed with ginger.*
18. *A fountain there, called Salsabil.*
19. *And round about them will (serve) youths of perpetual (freshness); when you see them, you would think them scattered pearls.*
20. *And when you look, you will see therein bliss and a great kingdom.*
21. *Upon them will be green garments of fine silk and heavy brocade, and they will be adorned with bracelets of silver; and their Lord will give them to drink a pure drink.*
22. *(And it will be said to them), "This is a reward for you. Your striving shall be recompensed.*
23. *It is We who have sent down the Quran to you in stages.*
24. *Therefore, persevere waiting for the command of your Lord, and do not obey neither a guilty nor a disbeliever among them.*
25. *Remember the name of your Lord at morning and evening.*
26. *And worship Him (a part) of the night. And glorify Him through the long night.*
27. *Indeed, these (disbelievers) love the fleeting life, and put behind them (the remembrance of) a grievous day.*
28. *We created them and made firm their make, and when We Please, We can replace them entirely with others of their kind.*
29. *This is an admonition, whosoever wills let him take a (straight) path to his Lord.*

30. *But you will not, except as God wills; for God is Omniscient and Wise.*

31. *He will admit to His Mercy whom He wills; but He has prepared a painful torment for the wrongdoers. (76: 1- 31)*

Most of the scholars are of the opinion that this Sura was revealed in Mecca. However, there are opinions that the Sura was revealed in Medina after Surat al-Rahman. The style of the Sura, the description of the bliss in paradise, the torment that awaits the disbelievers and the command to the Prophet (PBUH) to persevere are all signs that support the opinion that it was revealed in Mecca. The Sura is a sequel to Surat al-Qiyama. Surat al-Qiyama describes the horrendous conditions which the disbelievers will face on the Day of Judgment. In this Sura, the felicity and bliss that the believers will enjoy on the Day of Judgment are described.

Hawwa mentioned that the Sura has different names, of these we mention al-Dahr (Time), al-Abrar (the righteous), and al-Amshaj (Mixture).

The Sura starts with a rhetorical question, *“Has there come upon humankind a period of time when he was nothing to be mentioned?”* The objective of the verse is to remind humankind of the origin of his creation; so that he may reflect on this fact and express his gratitude to the Creator who brought him to this world.

“Indeed, We created humankind from a mixture of fluids to test him; and We made him hearing, seeing.” The mixture of fluids may be a reference to the mixture of the male’s sperm and the female’s egg. Or it may mean the genes that exist in the fertilized egg. God created humankind to be tested. God gave humankind the ability to hear and to see so that he can learn and respond. Then God showed him the way to choose, *“We have shown him the way, whether he be grateful or disbelieving.”* The verses indicate that gratitude is synonymous to belief, because believers are always grateful.

The following verse describes the torment that awaits the disbelievers, *“We have prepared for the disbelievers chains and shackles and a burning fire.”* Then the narrative moves quickly to describe the bliss that the believers will enjoy, *“The righteous shall drink of a cup whose mixture is camphor; a fountain where the servants of God drink, making it gush forth abundantly.”* God calls the believers in one place righteous and in another the servants of God. These are all ways for endearment and honoring them. The narrative then moves to introduce the righteous, *“They fulfill (their) vows, and they fear a day whose evil will be wide-spreading. And they feed, for the love of God, the indigent, the orphan, and the captive, (saying), ‘We feed you for the sake of God alone; no reward do we desire from you, nor thanks. We dread from our Lord a frowning grim day.’”* They fulfill their vows. They take their promises seriously and they fulfill whatever they promised to do. They fear the evil of the Day of Judgment which will afflict the disbelievers, so they endeavor to perform their duties. They feed the needy, the orphan and the captive. They are willing to share their food with those who are in need. But they are not interested in a worldly reward. They do these acts of charity because they want to express their gratitude to God; hoping that these acts will save them from the torment of the gloomy day. The Prophet (PBUH) has been quoted to have said, *“Protect yourself from Hell-fire even with half a date.”* Feeding the needy has dual purpose. It trains the believers to be altruistic and it also satisfies the need of the poor. God responded to them, saved them from the torment of that day, and gave them beauty and happiness, *“But God will guard them from the evil of that day, and will shed over them a light of beauty and (blissful) joy.”*

The verses continue to describe the details of their reward, *“And because they were perseverant, He will reward them with a garden and (garments of) silk. Reclining in the (garden) on raised couches, they will see neither the sun's (excessive heat) nor excessive cold. And the shades of the (garden) will be near above them, and its fruits shall be made to hang lower near (to them), being easy to reach.*

Goblets of silver are brought round for them, and beakers of glass, crystal-clear, made of silver: they will determine the measure thereof (according to their wishes). And they will be given to drink there of a cup (of wine) mixed with ginger; a fountain there, called Salsabil. And round about them will (serve) youths of perpetual (freshness); when you see them, you would think them scattered pearls.”

The scene is summarized in one verse, *“And when you look, you will see therein bliss and a great kingdom.”* But then the details of the kingdom are expounded, *“Upon them will be green garments of fine silk and heavy brocade, and they will be adorned with bracelets of silver; and their Lord will give them to drink a pure drink. (And it will be said to them), ‘This is a reward for you. Your striving shall be recompensed.’”*

The idolaters of Mecca resisted the call to Islam because they wanted to preserve the religion of their forefathers, and because they were afraid of the effect that Islam would have on their economic, political, and social lives. The chiefs of Quraish stood to lose a great deal of power, status, and wealth had they accepted Islam.

The Quran was revealed in stages to provide a continuous source of support to the Prophet (PBUH) during his long struggle to establish the religion of God, *“It is We who have sent down the Quran to you in stages.”* The verse stresses the fact that the Quran was revealed by God; and indicates that it was revealed gradually, in stages, rather than all at once. One of the objectives behind the gradual revelation is to provide a continuous support for the Prophet (PBUH). Then the Prophet's (PBUH) role is explained, *“Therefore, persevere waiting for the command of your Lord, and do not obey neither a guilty nor a disbeliever among them.”* There is no compromise between the truth and falsehood. So, the believers have to continue their struggle and to persevere. However, patience requires an arduous training program. The program is detailed, *“Remember the name of your Lord at morning and evening. And worship Him (a part) of the night. And glorify Him through the long night.”*

The disbelievers were heedless. They loved the pleasures of this transient world and were not aware of the disastrous result that awaited them, *“Indeed, these (disbelievers) love the fleeting life, and put behind them (the remembrance of) a grievous day.”*

God created these people in the first place; if He wills He can always replace them with others, *“We created them and made firm their make, and when We please, We can replace them entirely with others of their kind.”*

The Sura ends by opening a door to the mercy of God, reminding them of the opportunity that they have, *“This is an admonition, whosoever wills let him take a (straight) path to his Lord.”* However, only by God's mercy they can be guided, *“But you will not, except as God wills; for God is Omniscient and Wise.”* God has absolute power to guide whomsoever He wills and to let whomsoever He wills go astray, *“He will admit to His Mercy whom He wills; but He has prepared a painful torment for the wrongdoers.”*