

Sura 17 - The Night Journey

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THE CHAPTER OF THE NIGHT JOURNEY

(XVII. Mecca.)

IN the name of the merciful and compassionate God. Celebrated be the praises of Him who took His servant a journey by night from the Sacred Mosque to the Remote Mosque, the precinct of which we have blessed, to show him of our signs! verily, He both hears and looks.

And we gave Moses the Book and made it a guidance to the children of Israel: 'Take ye to no guardian but me.'

Seed of those we bore with Noah (in the ark)! verily, he was a thankful servant!

And we decreed to the children of Israel in the Book, 'Ye shall verily do evil in the earth twice, and ye shall rise to a great height (of pride).'

And when the threat for the first (sin) of the two came, we sent over them servants of ours, endued with violence, and they searched inside your houses; and it was an accomplished threat. Then we rallied you once more against them, and aided you with wealth and sons, and made you a numerous band. 'If ye do well, ye will do well to your own souls; and if ye do ill, it is against them!'

'And when the threat for the last came- to harm your faces and to enter the mosque as they entered it the first time, and to destroy what they had got the upper-hand over with utter destruction.' It may be that thy Lord will have mercy on you;- if ye return we will return, and we have made hell a prison for the misbelievers. Verily, this Koran guides to the straightest path, and gives the glad tidings to the believers who do aright that for them is a great hire; and that for those who believe not in the hereafter, we have prepared a mighty woe.

Man prays for evil as he prays for good; and man was ever hasty. We made the night and the day two signs; and we blot out the sign of the night and make the sign of the day visible, that ye may seek after plenty from your Lord, and that ye may number the years and the reckoning; and we have detailed everything in detail. And every man's augury have we fastened on his neck; and we will bring forth for him on the resurrection day a book offered to him wide open. 'Read thy book, thou art accountant enough against thyself to-day!'

He who accepts guidance, accepts it only for his own soul: and he who errs, errs only against it; nor shall one burdened soul bear the burden of another.

Nor would we punish until we had sent an apostle. And when we desired to destroy a city we bade the opulent ones thereof; and they wrought abomination therein; and its due sentence was pronounced; and we destroyed it with utter destruction.

How many generations have we destroyed after Noah! but thy Lord of the sins of his servant is well aware, and sees enough. Whoso is desirous of this life that hastens away, we will hasten on for him therein what we please,- for whom we please. Then we will make hell for him to broil in- despised and outcast. But whoso desires the next life, and strives for it and is a believer- these, their

striving shall be gratefully received. To all- these and those- will we extend the gifts of thy Lord; for the gifts of thy Lord are not restricted.

See how we have preferred some of them over others, but in the next life are greater degrees and greater preference. Put not with God other gods, or thou wilt sit despised and forsaken. Thy Lord has decreed that ye shall not serve other than Him; and kindness to one's parents, whether one or both of them reach old age with thee; and say not to them, 'Fie!' and do not grumble at them, but speak to them a generous speech. And lower to them the wing of humility out of compassion, and say, 'O Lord! have compassion on them as they brought me up when I was little!' Your Lord knows best what is in your souls if ye be righteous, and, verily, He is forgiving unto those who come back penitent.

And give thy kinsman his due and the poor and the son of the road; and waste not wastefully, for the wasteful were ever the devil's brothers; and the devil is ever ungrateful to his Lord. But if thou dost turn away from them to seek after mercy from thy Lord, which thou hopest for, then speak to them an easy speech. Make not thy hand fettered to thy neck, nor yet spread it out quite open, lest thou shouldst have to sit down blamed and straitened in means. Verily, thy Lord spreads out provision to whomsoever He will or He does it out. Verily, He is ever well aware of and sees his servants.

And slay not your children for fear of poverty; we will provide for them; beware! for to slay them is ever a great sin! And draw not near to fornication; verily, it is ever an abomination, and evil is the way thereof.

And slay not the soul that God has forbidden you, except for just cause; for he who is slain unjustly we have given his next of kin authority; yet let him not exceed in slaying; verily, he is ever helped.

And draw not near to the wealth of the orphan, save to improve it, until he reaches the age of puberty, and fulfil your compacts; verily, a compact is ever enquired of.

And give full measure when ye measure out, and weigh with a right balance; that is better and a fairer determination. And do not pursue that of which thou hast no knowledge; verily, the hearing, the sight, and the heart, all of these shall be enquired of.

And walk not on the earth proudly; verily, thou canst not cleave the earth, and thou shalt not reach the mountains in height. All this is ever, evil in the sight of your Lord and abhorred. That is something of what thy, Lord has inspired thee with of wisdom; do not then put with God other gods, or thou wilt be thrown into hell reproached and outcast. What! has your Lord chosen to give you sons, and shall He take for Himself females from among the angels? verily, ye are speaking a mighty speech.

Now have we turned it in various ways in this Koran so let them bear in mind; but it will only increase them in aversion. Say, 'Were there with Him other gods, as ye say, then would they seek a way against the Lord of the throne.' Celebrated be His praises, and exalted be He above what they say with a great exaltation!

The seven heavens and the earth celebrate His praises, and all who therein are; nor is there aught but what celebrates His praise: but ye cannot understand

their celebration;- verily, He is clement and forgiving.

And when thou readest the Koran we place between thee and those who believe not in the hereafter a covering veil. And we place covers upon their hearts, lest they should understand, and dulness in their ears.

And when thou dost mention in the Koran thy Lord by Himself they turn their backs in aversion. We know best for what they listen when they listen to thee; and when they whisper apart- when the wrong-doers say, 'Ye only follow a man enchanted.'

Behold, how they strike out for you parables, and err, and cannot find the way!

They say, 'What! when we have become bones and rubbish are we to be raised up a new creature?' Say, 'Be ye stones, or iron, or a creature, the greatest your breasts can conceive-!' Then they shall say, 'Who is to restore us?' Say, 'He who originated you at first;' and they will wag their heads and say, 'When will that be? Say, 'It may, perhaps, be nigh.'

The day when He shall call on you and ye shall answer with praise to Him, and they will think that they have tarried but a little. And say to my servants that they speak in a kind way; verily, Satan makes ill-will between them; verily, Satan was ever unto man an open foe.

Your Lord knows you best; if He please He will have mercy upon you, or if He please He will torment you: but we have not sent thee to take charge of them.

And thy Lord best knows who is in the heavens and the earth; we did prefer some of the prophets over the others, and to David did we give the Psalms.

Say, 'Call on those whom ye pretend other than God;' but they shall not have the power to remove distress from you, nor to turn it off.

Those on whom they call, seek themselves for a means of approaching their Lord, (to see) which of them is nearest: and they hope for His mercy and they fear His torment; verily, the torment of thy Lord is a thing to beware of.

There is no city but we will destroy it before the day of judgment, or torment it with keen torment;- that is in the Book inscribed.

Naught hindered us from sending thee with signs, save that those of yore said they were lies; so we gave Thamud the visible she-camel, but they treated her unjustly for we do not send (any one) with signs save to make men fear.

And when we said to thee, 'Verily, thy Lord encompasses men!' and we made the vision which we showed thee only a cause of sedition unto men, and the cursed tree as well; for we will frighten them, but it will only increase them in great rebellion.

And when we said to the angels, 'Adore Adam;' and they adored, save Iblis, who said, 'Am I to adore one whom Thou hast created out of clay?

Said he, 'Dost thou see now? this one whom Thou hast honoured above me, verily, if Thou shouldst respite me until the resurrection day, I will of a surety utterly destroy his seed except a few.' Said He, 'Begone! and whoso of them follows thee- verily, hell is your recompense, an ample recompense. Entice away whomsoever of them thou canst with thy voice; and bear down upon them with thy horse and with thy foot; and share with them in their wealth and their children; and promise them,- but Satan promises them naught but deceit. Verily, my servants, thou hast no authority over them; thy Lord is guardian enough over them!'

It is your Lord who drives the ships for you in the sea that ye may seek after plenty from Him; verily, He is ever merciful to you. And when distress touches you in the sea, those whom ye call on, except Him, stray away from you; but when He has brought you safe to shore, ye turn away; for man is ever ungrateful. Are ye sure that He will not cleave with you the side of the shore, or send against you a heavy sand-storm? then ye will find no guardian for yourselves.

Or are ye sure that He will not send you back therein another time, and send against you a violent wind, and drown you for your misbelief? then ye will find for yourselves no protector against us. But we have been gracious to the children of Adam, and we have borne them by land and sea, and have provided them with good things, and have preferred them over many that we have created. The day when we will call all men by their high priest; and he whose book is given in his right hand- these shall read their book, nor shall they be wronged a straw. But he who in this life is blind shall be blind in the next too, and err farther from the way. They had well-nigh beguiled thee from what we inspired thee with, that thou shouldst forge against us something else, and then they would have taken thee for a friend; and had it not been that we stablished thee, thou wouldst have well-nigh leant towards them a little then would we have made thee taste of torment both of life and death, then thou wouldst not have found against us any helper. And they well-nigh enticed thee away from the land, to turn thee out therefrom; but then- they should not have tarried after thee except a little.

[This is] the course of those of our prophets whom we have sent before thee; and thou shalt find no change in our course. Be thou steadfast in prayer from the declining of the sun until the dusk of the night, and the reading of the dawn; verily, the reading of the dawn is ever testified to.

And for the night, watch thou therein as an extra service. It may be that thy Lord will raise thee to a laudable station. And say, 'O my Lord! make me enter with a just entry; and make me come forth with a just coming forth; and grant me from Thee authority to aid.'

And say, 'Truth has come, and falsehood has vanished! verily, falsehood is transient.'

And we will send down of the Koran that which is a healing and a mercy to the believers, but it will only increase the wrong-doers in loss.

And when we favour man he turns away and retires aside, but when evil touches him he is ever in despair. Say, 'Every one acts after his own manner, but your Lord knows best who is most guided in the way.' They will ask thee of the spirit. Say, 'The spirit comes at the bidding of my Lord, and ye are given but a little knowledge thereof.' If we had wished we would have taken away that with which we have inspired thee; then thou wouldst have found no guardian against us, unless by a mercy from thy Lord; verily, His grace towards thee is great!

Say, 'If mankind and jinns united together to bring the like of this Koran, they could not bring the like, though they should back each other up!'

We have turned about for men in this Koran every parable; but most men refuse to accept it, save ungratefully.

And they say, 'We will by no means believe in thee, until there gush forth for thee a fountain from the earth; or there be made for thee a garden of palms and grapes, and rivers come gushing out amidst them; or thou make the sky to fall down upon us in pieces; or thou bring us God and the angels before us; or there be made for thee a house of gold; or thou climb up into the heaven; and even then we will not believe in thy climbing there, until thou send down on us a book that we may read!'

Say, 'Celebrated be the praises of my Lord! was I aught but a mortal apostle?' Naught prohibited men from believing when the guidance came to them, save their saying, 'God has sent a mortal for an apostle.' Say, 'Were there angels on the earth walking in quiet, we had surely sent them an angel as an apostle.'

Say, 'God is witness enough between me and you; verily, He is ever of His servants well aware, and sees.'

He whom God guides, he is guided indeed; and he whom God leads astray, thou shalt never find patrons for them beside Him; and we will gather them upon the resurrection day upon their faces, blind, and dumb, and deaf; their resort is hell; whenever it grows dull we will give them another blaze!

That is their reward for that they disbelieved in our signs, and said, 'What! when we are bones and rubbish, shall we then be raised up a new creation?' Could they not see that God who created the heavens heavens and the earth is able to create the like of them, and to set for them an appointed time; there is no doubt therein, yet the wrong-doers refuse to accept it, save ungratefully!

Say, 'Did ye control the treasuries of the mercy of my Lord, then ye would hold them through fear of expending; for man is ever niggardly!' And we did bring Moses nine manifest signs; then ask the children of Israel (about) when he came to them, and Pharaoh said to him, 'Verily, I think thee, O Moses! enchanted.' He said, 'Well didst thou know that none sent down these save the Lord of the heavens and the earth as visible signs; and, verily, I think thee, O Pharaoh! ruined.'

And he desired to drive them out of the land; but we drowned him and those with him, one and all.

And after him we said to the children of Israel, Dwell ye in the land; and when the promise of the hereafter comes to pass, we will bring you in a mixed crowd (to judgment).

'In truth have we sent it down, and in truth has it come down; and we have not sent thee as aught but a herald of glad tidings and a warner.

'And a Koran which we have divided, that thou mayst read it to mankind leisurely, and we sent it down, sending it down.' Say, 'Believe ye therein, or believe not; verily, those who were given the knowledge before it, when it is read to them fall down upon their beards adoring! and they say, "Celebrated be the praises of our Lord! verily, the promise of our Lord is ever fulfilled"- they fall down upon their beards weeping, and it increases their humility.'

Say, 'Call on God, or call on the Merciful One, whichever ye may call on Him by; for His are the best of names.' And do not say thy prayers openly, nor yet murmur them, but seek a way between these.

And say, 'Praise belongs to God, who has not taken to Himself a son, and has

not had a partner in His kingdom, nor had a patron against (such) abasement.'

And magnify Him greatly!

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