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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

**SURAH AL ASAR**

وَالْعَصْرِ<sup>١</sup>

By al Asar.

إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لِفِي خُسْرٍ<sup>٢</sup>

Undoubtedly, the Human is in a great loss.

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ  
وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالْحَقِّ وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالصَّبْرِ<sup>٣</sup>

Except those who believe and undertake pious deeds, and encourage one another to the truth and to patience.



### *Introduction*

This surah is short, but in keeping with the miraculous nature of the Qur’ān, it is very comprehensive in meaning and message. Indeed, its message is so comprehensive that Imām Shāfi’ee claimed:

‘If people only read and understood Surah Asar that would be sufficient for their success.’<sup>1</sup>

Another elder claimed that Surah Al Asar contains all the sciences of the Qur’ān.<sup>2</sup> The Prophet’s ﷺ companions were well aware of its significance<sup>3</sup> and would regularly remind each other of it, such that whenever two companions would meet, they would recite this surah to one another before departing.<sup>4</sup>

### *Brief Synopsis*

This surah reveals that human beings are in great loss, except those who possess four qualities: Imān (faith), pious deeds, encouraging each other to the truth and encouraging each other to be patient. Tibyān ul Qur’ān states that this surah very succinctly summarises these four basic principles of Islam.

It is narrated that this surah was revealed when one of Syeduna Abu Bakr’s ﷺ old friends (Qulla) taunted him, that he used to be a successful trader prior to becoming Muslim, but had suffered a great loss because of his conversion.<sup>5</sup> Syeduna Abu Bakr ﷺ replied, “the pious believer is never in loss.”<sup>6</sup> It was upon this taunt of Qulla that Allah ﷻ revealed this surah to

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<sup>1</sup> Tafseer Ibn Katheer, Ruh ul Bayān, Dhiyā ul Qur’ān and Tibyān ul Qur’ān from Tabarāni’s Owsat and Bayhaqi’s Sho’b ul Imān.

<sup>2</sup> Tafseer Ashrafi

<sup>3</sup> Tafseer Dhiyā ul Qur’ān

<sup>4</sup> Tafseer Ibn Katheer from Tabarāni. Tafseer Qurtubi, Tafseer Ashrafi, and Tibyān ul Qur’ān from Bayhaqi in Sho’b ul Imān.

<sup>5</sup> Tafseer Dhiyā ul Qur’ān: Qulla bin Usayd was a great friend of Syeduna Abu Bakr Siddiq in pre-Islamic days. When he found that Syeduna Abu Bakr had accepted Islam he came to advise him and bring him to his senses! He said to Syeduna Abu Bakr that he was a great trader and his every move was profitable but now he had left the deen of his forefathers (i.e. incurred a great loss). Syeduna Abu Bakr replied ‘whoever accepts the truth and remains steadfast upon the right is not in loss.’ Tafseer Nur ul Irfān explains that he had given up the friendship of the rich for the love of the poor and swapped worshipping a number of gods for the worship of one!

<sup>6</sup> Tafseer Nur ul Irfān

explain that it is not the believers who are in loss but those who do not believe.

The previous surah, At Takāthur, revealed that being embroiled in worldly matters was blameworthy. This surah informs us that a believer should instead busy himself in good deeds and well-wishing the betterment of others.<sup>7</sup>

Most of the Ulema state this Surah was revealed in Makkah.<sup>8</sup>

### *Detailed Explanation*

#### Verse 1



Allah ﷻ takes an oath by Al Asar. In the Qur'ān, whenever Allah ﷻ wished to proclaim a significant fact, He ﷻ took an oath upon something honourable or worthy to emphasise the importance of the message. It is common sense for the item on which an oath is taken to be of significance and worth, for no one takes an oath on an insignificant item. Sometimes such items may not have been considered significant until Allah ﷻ took an oath on it, thus revealing their significance.

### *Interpretation of Al Asar*

A number of interpretations of Al Asar have been mentioned:

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<sup>7</sup> Tafseers Tibyān ul Qur'ān & Ashrafi

<sup>8</sup> Tafseer Dhiyā ul Qur'ān, Tafseer Qurtubi, Tafseer Kabeer,

## Surah Al Feel

According to Ibn Manzoor in Lisān ul Arab, كَيْدٌ (kaid) denotes ‘a plan’, whether it is good or evil.<sup>76</sup> Tibyān ul Qur’ān states that it refers to a plan to harm someone in a secret way.<sup>77</sup> Dhiyā ul Qur’ān states that it should not be translated as a secret or hidden plan because Abraha’s army and its purpose was not hidden from anyone, indeed he had forcibly announced it. Tibyān ul Qur’ān states that the secret refers not to their plan to destroy the Ka’bah but to the fire of envy and hatred for the Ka’bah that was burning in their heart.

تَضَلُّيلٌ Tadleel denotes a plan or scheme that fails.<sup>78</sup> Or something that is invalid or wasted.<sup>79</sup>

Abraha had a firm intention to carry out his plan and to fulfil it he made comprehensive preparations. The population of Makkah was only a few thousand which included the elderly, children and women. Bringing such a large army to this city shows that Abraha wanted to make sure his plan was fulfilled ‘He wanted to extinguish every possibility of failure’ and ‘wanted to fulfil his plan, whatever the cost.’<sup>80</sup>

Verse 3:

وَأَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ طَيْرًا أَبَابِيلَ

Wa Arsala alayhim Tayran abābeel

And He sent upon them legions of birds

As described above, the birds sent by Allah ﷻ were yellow with red feet and were a little smaller than pigeons. According to Atā bin Rabah, the birds arrived in the last part of the night and then waited until the morning, when they threw their stones.<sup>81</sup>

<sup>76</sup> Tafseer Tibyān ul Qur’ān

<sup>77</sup> Tafseer Tibyān ul Qur’ān

<sup>78</sup> Tafseer Dhiyā ul Qur’ān

<sup>79</sup> Tafseer Qurtubi

<sup>80</sup> Tafseer Tibyān ul Qur’ān

<sup>81</sup> Tafseer Qurtubi

Oafi said that Abu Saeed Khudri was asked about the birds and he said, “the pigeons of Makkah are from them.”<sup>82</sup>

When Abdul Muttalib saw the birds, he said they were strange to that area; they were not from Najd, or Hijāz or Tahāma.<sup>83</sup>

أَبَابِيلَ (abābeel) means they came one after the other whilst Mujāhid said it means they came from all directions.

Nihās reconciles these various references by stating that all the meanings are the same – they all mean that there were a great number of birds!<sup>84</sup>

Verse 4:

تَرْمِيهِمْ بِحِجَارَةٍ مِّنْ سِجِّيلٍ

Tarmeehim bi hijāra tim min sijjeel

Who threw upon them stones of Sijjeel

The birds had been sent armed with weapons from the divine armoury. They had very small stones which had been baked in the fire of Hell<sup>85</sup> and were the size of a chickpea.<sup>86</sup> Some accounts state that each stone was inscribed with the name of Allah ﷻ<sup>87</sup> whilst others state each had the name of the soldier that it was to kill.<sup>88</sup> ‘Their potency can be ascertained from the fact that each bird was only allowed to drop three of these ‘bombs.’ The small bombs pierced through the iron armour, wounded and cut through their bodies, then pierced through their animals and sank into the ground.’<sup>89</sup> Ibn Masood states that when the birds dropped the stone, Allah ﷻ sent a wind which increased the intensity of the stone’s effect.<sup>90</sup>

<sup>82</sup> Tafseer Qurtubi

<sup>83</sup> Tafseer Qurtubi

<sup>84</sup> Tafseer Qurtubi

<sup>85</sup> Tafseer Dhiyā ul Qur’ān, Tafseer Qurtubi

<sup>86</sup> Tafseer Dhiyā ul Qur’ān.

<sup>87</sup> Tafseer Jalālayn

<sup>88</sup> Tafseer Ashrafi

<sup>89</sup> Tafseer Dhiyā ul Qur’ān

<sup>90</sup> Tafseer Qurtubi

Surah Al Quraysh was the 29th surah to be revealed<sup>1</sup> and has 17 words, made up of 73 letters.<sup>2</sup> Most scholars agree this surah was revealed in Makkah,<sup>3</sup> soon after Surah Al Feel was revealed; ‘the common subject and relationship between the words in the two surahs supports this view.’<sup>4</sup>

The purpose of this surah is to remind the Quraysh of Allah’s ﷻ great favours upon them, in light of which, they should worship only Him.<sup>5</sup> Tibyān ul Qur’ān states ‘Allah’s ﷻ greatest blessing upon the Quraysh was that He gathered and united them when they were dispersed and disunited and He created amongst them a mutual love for one another. He ﷻ made their city the cradle of peace.’<sup>6</sup> Surah Al Quraysh also reminds the Quraysh that Allah ﷻ blessed them with trade expeditions across Arabia, and made them prosperous merchants.<sup>7</sup>

As outlined later in this chapter, this surah has an extremely close connection with Surah Al Feel.<sup>8</sup> This relationship between the two surahs is so strong that some actually thought they are not two separate surahs but one.<sup>9</sup> Tafseer Mazhari states that the manuscript of Ali bin Kāb has no separation between the two surahs, however the manuscripts prepared by Syeduna Uthmān ؓ have the *Tasmiyya* between them and so they are recognised as two separate surahs.<sup>10</sup> The latter is the consensus of the Ummah.<sup>11</sup>

### *Who were the Quraysh?*

The Quraysh were an Arab tribe and were the custodians of the Ka’bah. The Quraysh were the descendants of Nadr bin Kināna.<sup>12</sup> Tafseer Qurtubi states that only the descendants of Nadr are called the Quraysh. Other descendants of Kināna and Kināna’s ancestors are not known as the Quraysh.

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<sup>1</sup> Tafseer Tibyān ul Qur’ān

<sup>2</sup> Tafseer Dhiyā ul Qur’ān

<sup>3</sup> Tafseer Qurtubi

<sup>4</sup> Tafseer Dhiyā ul Qur’ān

<sup>5</sup> Tafseer Dhiyā ul Qur’ān

<sup>6</sup> Tafseer Tibyān ul Qur’ān

<sup>7</sup> Tafseer Tibyān ul Qur’ān

<sup>8</sup> Tafseer Tibyān ul Qur’ān

<sup>9</sup> Tafseer Dhiyā ul Qur’ān, Tafseer Tibyān ul Qur’ān

<sup>10</sup> Tafseer Dhiyā ul Qur’ān, Tafseer Tibyān ul Qur’ān

<sup>11</sup> Tafseer Ibn Kathir

<sup>12</sup> Tafseer Mazhari, Tafseer Dhiyā ul Qur’ān, Tafseer Qurtubi

## Surah Al Quraysh

In a hadith the Prophet ﷺ said, “Allah ﷻ chose Kināna from the Children of Ismail and from the children of Kināna He ﷻ chose the Quraysh and from the Quraysh He ﷻ chose Hāshim and from the children of Hāshim he chose me.”<sup>13</sup> This shows the Quraysh were only one of the descendants of Kināna.<sup>14</sup> It also shows that the Prophet ﷺ was from the Quraysh tribe.

The Prophet ﷺ also said, “We are the children of Nadr bin Kināna, we do not accuse our mothers nor do we disown our fathers.”<sup>15</sup> In this statement the Prophet ﷺ mentions they are proud of the purity and chastity of their mothers and the honesty and integrity of their fathers.<sup>16</sup>

### *Why were they known as the Quraysh?*

Scholars have suggested a number of reasons behind the name Quraysh:

1. They were named Quraysh because they had gathered together in Makkah.<sup>17</sup> The noun *qarsh* means to join and pull together numerous dispersed pieces. Tafseer Mazhari states the dictionary defines *qarsh* as to gather. In the beginning, the Quraysh tribe lived as dispersed, nomadic groups amongst the Arabs. A descendant of Nadr bin Kināna called Qussai bin Kilāb gathered together and unified the Quraysh clans in Makkah.<sup>18</sup>
2. It refers to their trading as a means of earning a living. The word Quraysh is from the noun *taqarrush* meaning to gather and earn. The Quraysh became prominent traders<sup>19</sup> and would gather goods before taking them for sale.<sup>20</sup>
3. The Quraysh were named after a large and powerful sea animal because they shared certain qualities: Syeduna Ameer Mu’āwiya ؓ once asked Abdullah ibn Abbās ؓ the reason behind the name Quraysh, who explained ‘It was (the name) of a big creature that lived in the water. Whenever it came across another large being, it would eat it up but no one would eat it. It would

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<sup>13</sup> Tafseer Qurtubi. Hadith narrated by Ibn Mājah in Kitāb ul Hudood

<sup>14</sup> Tafseer Qurtubi

<sup>15</sup> Tafseer Qurtubi. Hadith in Sahih Muslim Kitāb ul Fadāil

<sup>16</sup> Tafseer Dhiyā ul Qur’ān

<sup>17</sup> Tafseer Dhiyā ul Qur’ān, Tafseer Qurtubi

<sup>18</sup> Tafseer Dhiyā ul Qur’ān, Tafseer Qurtubi

<sup>19</sup> Tafseer Dhiyā ul Qur’ān, Tafseer Mazhari

<sup>20</sup> Tafseer Mazhari



strive for the dominance of your deen. Also, in contrast to him, your offspring will be great, and of the highest honour and distinction.

*Abtar specifically refers to Abu Lahab*

Ibn Katheer narrates that according to Atā, this verse is for Abu Lahab; when the Prophet's ﷺ son died this unfortunate said to the mushrikeen (polytheists), "Tonight the lineage of Muhammad has been cut."<sup>66</sup>

*Abtar refers to every enemy of the Prophet ﷺ*

This was the view of Ibn Abbās.<sup>67</sup>

*Confirmation that the Prophet's ﷺ Dhikr will continue until the end of time*

Some of the mufasssireen highlight that along with confirming that the Prophet's ﷺ enemy is *abtar*, in so doing it also confirms that the Prophet ﷺ is not! Indeed ﷺ he is the opposite.

Some point to the grammatical construction of this sentence with its use of the Dhameer هُوَ (Huwa), which is *Dhameer ul Fasl*. With *Alif Lām* on the *Khabr* and a *Dhameer ul Fasl* between the *Mubtada* (subject) and *khabr* (predicate) it denotes *hasar* (confinement); meaning that it is *only* your enemy who is *abtar* and consequently not you.<sup>68</sup> In English we would read it as, 'Verily your enemy, it is he who is the abtar.'

Ibn Katheer reinforces this point very eloquently with words that will make your eyes and heart rejoice in the reality of the elevated Dhikr (mention) of our beloved Prophet ﷺ:

'Allah ﷻ will keep his ﷻ name until the remaining world... His ﷻ beloved and pure name is in the heart and on the tongue of every Muslim... May Allah ﷻ keep sending unlimited durood and salām upon him ﷻ, his family, his wives and his companions. Āmeen.'<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Tafseer Ibn Katheer

<sup>67</sup> Tafseer Ibn Katheer

<sup>68</sup> Tafseer Mazhari

<sup>69</sup> Tafseer Ibn Katheer

## Surah An Nasr

Tafseer Mazhari explains ‘Ever since Allah ﷻ created the human and obligated him to follow commands, He ﷻ has been accepting the repentance of the forgiveness-seekers.’

Tafseer Dhiyā ul Qur’ān mentions another interpretation presented by the Shaykh Shah Abdul Aziz Dehlvi ‘With His ﷻ benevolent attention He ﷻ turns towards the deficient people and transforms their deficiency into perfection.’

### *Conclusion*

Ibn Katheer mentions a very interesting narration at the end of his tafseer of this surah from Musnad Ahmad. A neighbour of Jābir bin Abdullah went on a journey and on his return told Jābir of the people’s quarrels, conflicts and innovations. The companion was reduced to tears and cryingly said that he had heard the Prophet ﷺ say armies of people had entered the Deen of Allah ﷻ but soon they will be leaving Islam in their groups. Tafseer Qurtubi also mentions this.



### *Events that led up to the Conquest of Makkah (as related in Tafseer Mazhari)*

At Hdaybia (in the year 6 Hijra) the Prophet ﷺ agreed a 10-year truce with the Quraysh. This meant that during this period the Muslims would be safe from attack and so too would any tribe that became the *haleef* (sworn ally) of the Prophet ﷺ. Conversely, those who became *haleef* of the Quraysh would also be protected (from attack by Muslims and their *haleefs*) under this treaty.

The Banu Bakr tribe became *haleef* of the Quraysh whilst the Banu Khuzā’a came under the Prophet’s ﷺ agreement. (However) there was a longstanding feud between the Banu Bakr<sup>63</sup> and Banu Khuzā’a.

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<sup>63</sup> Could also be Banu Bkr as in some readings

*A short but extremely important surah*

Surah Al Ikhhlās mentions Islam’s most important creed: Allah’s ﷻ Oneness and Him ﷻ having Perfect Attributes.<sup>1</sup>

Although this surah is very short in length, comprising just 15 words and 47 letters,<sup>2</sup> the extent and significance of its meaning has led it to be declared as one third of the Qur’ān.

Syeduna Abu Hurayra ؓ narrates, ‘The Prophet ﷺ ordered the companions to gather around for he was about to recite a third of the Qur’ān. The people gathered and the Prophet ﷺ came out of his house, recited Surah Ikhhlās and went back in. The people remained seated and waiting but then began commenting to one another that they were expecting the Prophet ﷺ to recite a third of the Qur’ān, yet he had only recited Surah Ikhhlās. The Prophet ﷺ then returned and explained, “Know well that Surah Ikhhlās is equivalent to a third of the Qur’ān.”<sup>3</sup>

In another narration of Syeduna Abu Saeed Al Khudri ؓ, the Prophet ﷺ asked the companions, “Is any one of you too weak to recite a third of the Qur’ān each night?” The companions commented, “Who could do such a thing?!” The Prophet ﷺ explained, “Surah Ikhhlās is a third of the Qur’ān.”<sup>4</sup>

It is also narrated by Syeduna Abu Saeed Khudri ؓ, ‘A man overheard his neighbour repeatedly reciting Surah Ikhhlās and complained to the Prophet ﷺ about it the next morning, implying he was being lazy and doing something easy and minor, but the Prophet ﷺ explained, “By the One in whose Hand is my life, this surah is equivalent to a third of the Qur’ān.”<sup>5</sup>

Syeduna Abu Darda ؓ narrates ‘The Prophet ﷺ said that Allah ﷻ made three parts to the Qur’ān and made Surah Ikhhlās one of those three parts.’<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Tafseer Tibyān ul Qur’ān

<sup>2</sup> Tafseer Dhiyā ul Qur’ān

<sup>3</sup> Tafseers Dhiyā ul Qur’ān, Qurtubi, Ibn Katheer and Tibyān ul Qur’ān from Muslim 812, Tirmidhi 2900

<sup>4</sup> Tafseer Dhiyā ul Qur’ān, Tafseer Qurtubi from Jāme Tirmidhi, and Tibyān ul Qur’ān from Syeduna Abu Darda in Muslim 811

<sup>5</sup> Tafseer Ibn Katheer; Tafseer Qurtubi from Sahih Bukhāri, Bāb Fadāil ul Qur’ān.

<sup>6</sup> Tafseer Qurtubi, Tafseer Tibyān ul Qur’ān from Muslim 811