

## Surah al-Thariq (86)

### 'The Nightcomer'

## سورة الطارق

This surah derives its name from the prominence within it of the word *thariq*, meaning 'night-visitor'. Like the other Makkan surahs it deals with matters of faith. And just as Surah al-Buruj concluded with a warning to those who belie the religion, so this surah opens on a similar theme.

***By the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful***

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

***By the name of Allah ...*** Opening in the name of Allah who comprehends all the qualities of perfection. The phrase is a symbol for the Muslim who speaks thus of Him at the outset of all his actions and his repose, so as to take on its hue.

***... the Compassionate, the Merciful.*** It is a statement that He is a merciful God, and not harsh and cruel like some of the gods of the disbelievers, whom they described with the attributes of cruelty and spite.

***By the sky and the nightcomer; (1)***

وَالسَّمَاءِ وَالطَّارِقِ ﴿١﴾

An oath by the sky and by the visitor by night. 'Nightcomer' is given for *al-thariq*, from *tharqa*, meaning to knock, on account of how at night visitors would knock on the door, whereas during the day it was the habit to leave doors open, and the visitor would simply call out and seek permission to enter. Here what is meant is the star that appears at night, as the following *ayah* make clear.

***And what will make thee comprehend what is the nightcomer? (2)***

وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا الطَّارِقُ ﴿٢﴾

This is to give gravity to the issue of stars.

***The piercing star. (3)***

النَّجْمِ الثَّاقِبِ ﴿٣﴾

The star that pierces the darkness of the night sky with its light. And whoever is aware of the greatness of the stars and their vast number and their vast distance, so distant that it takes millions of years for their light to reach the earth, is aware of the importance of this oath. And it would seem that what is meant by the star is the entire class of stars, and not one particular star, while what has been mentioned in some commentaries are examples.

***There is no soul but that over it is a minder. (4)***

إِنْ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ لَّمَّا عَلَيْهَا حَافِظٌ ﴿٤﴾

This is the object of the oath. Over every soul there is a keeper, deputed by Allah, glory be to Him. These are the angels who keep humans from destruction, and record their deeds.

***And if the human being is in doubt about the Divinity, let him consider his origin and growth:***

***So let man reflect; from what he was created: (5)***

فَلْيَنْظُرِ الْإِنْسَانُ مِمَّ خُلِقَ ﴿٥﴾

That is, let him consider and reflect upon how he was created, and the nature of his origin.

***He was created from a spurting liquid, (6)***

خُلِقَ مِنْ مَّاءٍ دَافِقٍ ﴿٦﴾

Spurting is given for *dafiq*, from *dafaqa*, meaning to pour in spurts and with force, which is how semen comes out.

***Issuing from between the loins and the chest: (7)***

يَخْرُجُ مِنْ بَيْنِ الصُّلْبِ وَالتَّرَائِبِ ﴿٧﴾

'Loins' is given for *shilb*, the bone behind which is the centre of male semen. 'Chest' is given for *tara'ib*, the sides of the chest, for that is where the female's effusions are generated.

***Indeed He is capable of his return, (8)***

إِنَّهُ عَلَىٰ رَجْعِهِ لَقَادِرٌ ﴿٨﴾

Verily Allah who created the human in this way is able to bring him back to life after death, just as He is capable of originating man's creation from a thing unmentionable.

***The day the secrets are tried, (9)***

يَوْمَ تُبْلَى السَّرَائِرُ ﴿٩﴾

On the day of resurrection people's secrets and what good and evil they kept hidden will become manifest.

***Then he has no power and no succourer. (10)***

فَمَا لَهُ مِنْ قُوَّةٍ وَلَا نَاصِرٍ ﴿١٠﴾

The human being shall have no power to ward off the chastisement, and no saviour to save him from that terror. So let him fear and beware of opposing Allah, glory be to Him, for should he do so he will be afflicted with the chastisement.

***By the sky, holding the return, (11)***

وَالسَّمَاءِ ذَاتِ الرَّجْعِ ﴿١١﴾

An oath by the sky that has returns, for with each cycle it all returns to its original position. Or what is meant [by return] is the rain, on account of it returning again and again, raining at different intervals. Or on account of the rain returning to the earth after ascending in the vapour form.

***And the earth, holding the split, (12)***

وَالْأَرْضِ ذَاتِ الصَّدْعِ ﴿١٢﴾

An oath by the earth that splits so that plants grow out of it.

***Indeed it is a distinguishing word, (13)***

إِنَّهُ لَقَوْلٌ فَصْلٌ ﴿١٣﴾

The Qur'an, or what has been mentioned concerning man's return after death – which is more in harmony with the previous two portents – the truth from the false.

***And it is no amusement. (14)***

وَمَا هُوَ بِأَهْزَلٍ ﴿١٤﴾

The word is serious and real, and it is not said for amusement.

***Indeed they are plotting a plot, (15)***

إِنَّهُمْ يَكِيدُونَ كَيْدًا ﴿١٥﴾

The disbelievers plotted and schemed to nullify the decisive word, with their plot to have it received as poetry or divination or sorcery and suchlike.

***And I am plotting a plot; (16)***

وَأَكِيدُ كَيْدًا ﴿١٦﴾

Allah intends an affair the opposite of what they intend. His calling His intention a plot is metaphorical.

***So respite the disbelievers, respite them, a while. (17)***

فَمَهِّلِ الْكَافِرِينَ أَمْهَلْهُمْ رُوَيْدًا ﴿١٧﴾

O Messenger, do not concern yourself with them, but put up with them till you see how Allah deals with them.