

Sūrah 81: at-Takweer

Period of Revelation

The subject matter and the style clearly show that it is one of the earliest Sūrahs to be revealed at Makkah.

Theme and Subject Matter

It has two themes: the Hereafter and the institution of Apostleship.

In the first six verses the first stage of the Resurrection has been mentioned when the sun will lose its light, the stars will scatter, the mountains will be uprooted and will disperse, the people will become heedless of their dearest possessions, the beasts of the jungle will be stupefied and will gather together, and the seas will boil up. Then in the next seven verses the second stage has been described when the souls will be reunited with the bodies, the records will be laid open, the people will be called to account for their crimes, the heavens will be unveiled, and Hell and Heaven will be brought into full view. After depicting the Hereafter thus, man has been left to ponder his own self and deeds, saying: "Then each man shall himself know what he has brought with him."

After this the theme of Apostleship has been taken up. In this the people of Makkah have been addressed, as if to say "Whatever Muhammad is presenting before you, is not the bragging of a madman, nor an evil suggestion inspired by Satan, but the word of a noble, exalted and trustworthy messenger sent by God, whom Muhammad has seen with his own eyes in the bright horizon of the clear sky in broad day light. Where then are you going having turned away from this teaching?"

Sūrah 81: at-Takweer¹⁷³⁵

In the Name of God, the Most Compassionate,
the Most Merciful

1. When the sun is wrapped up [in darkness]
2. And when the stars fall, dispersing,
3. And when the mountains are removed
4. And when full-term she-camels¹⁷³⁶ are neglected
5. And when the wild beasts are gathered
6. And when the seas are filled with flame¹⁷³⁷
7. And when the souls are paired¹⁷³⁸
8. And when the girl [who was] buried alive is asked
9. For what sin she was killed
10. And when the pages¹⁷³⁹ are spread [i.e., made public]
11. And when the sky is stripped away
12. And when Hellfire is set ablaze
13. And when Paradise is brought near,
14. A soul will [then] know what it has brought [with it].¹⁷⁴⁰
15. So I swear by the retreating stars -
16. Those that run [their courses] and disappear [i.e., set] -
17. And by the night as it closes in¹⁷⁴¹
18. And by the dawn when it breathes [i.e., stirs]
19. [That] indeed, it [i.e., the Qur'ān] is a word [conveyed by] a noble messenger [i.e., Gabriel]
20. [Who is] possessed of power and with the Owner of the Throne, secure [in position],
21. Obeyed there [in the heavens] and trustworthy.
22. And your companion [i.e., Prophet Muhammad] is not [at all] mad.¹⁷⁴²
23. And he has already seen him [i.e., Gabriel] in the clear horizon.¹⁷⁴³
24. And he [i.e., Muhammad] is not a withhold-er of [knowledge of] the unseen.¹⁷⁴⁴
25. And it [i.e., the Qur'ān] is not the word of a devil, expelled [from the heavens].
26. So where are you going?¹⁷⁴⁵

¹⁷³⁵ *At-Takweer*: The Wrapping.

¹⁷³⁶ Those ten months pregnant and nearing delivery. This verse alludes to distraction from the most valued of possessions.

¹⁷³⁷ Or "when the seas have overflowed [into each other]."

¹⁷³⁸ With another like soul. It can also mean "joined" (with their groups or sects).

¹⁷³⁹ On which are recorded the deeds of all people.

¹⁷⁴⁰ i.e., all of one's deeds from worldly life, which have accompanied the soul to the Hereafter.

¹⁷⁴¹ An alternative meaning is "as it departs."

¹⁷⁴² Literally, "possessed by *jinn*."

¹⁷⁴³ i.e., the eastern horizon, where the sun rises. See footnote to 53:6.

¹⁷⁴⁴ Prophet Muhammad did not withhold that knowledge of the unseen which God had revealed to him in the Qur'ān.

27. It is not except a reminder to the worlds
28. For whoever wills among you to take a right course.
29. And you do not will except that God wills - Lord of the worlds.

¹⁷⁴⁵ In your denial of the Qur'ān and in your accusations against the Prophet. The meaning is essentially "Surely, you have strayed far from God's path."