

Surah 68. Al-Qalam

Asad: Nun. ¹ CONSIDER the pen, and all that they write [therewith]! ²

Malik: Nun. By the pen and what they write.

Mustafa Khattab:

N?n. By the pen and what everyone writes!

Pickthall: Nun. By the pen and that which they write (therewith),

Yusuf Ali: Nun. By the Pen and by the (Record) which (men) write ^{5592 5593}

Transliteration: Noon waalqalami wama yasturoona

Author Comments

1 - Chronologically, this is the first appearance of any of the "disjointed" [i.e., single] letters (al-muqatta'at) which precede a number of the surahs of the Qur'an; for the various theories relating to these letters, see Appendix II. The supposition of some of the early commentators (extensively quoted by Tabari) that the letter n, pronounced nun, represents here an abbreviation of the identically-pronounced noun which signifies both "great fish" and "inkwell" has been convincingly rejected by some of the most outstanding authorities (e.g., Zamakhshari and Razi) on grammatical grounds.

2 - For the meaning of the adjectival particle wa at the beginning of this sentence, see first half of note [23] on [74:32](#). The mention of "the pen" is meant to recall the earliest Qur'anic revelation, namely, the first five verses of surah {96} ("The Germ-Cell"), and thus to stress the fact of Muhammad's prophethood. As regards the symbolic significance of the concept of "the pen", see {96:3-5} and the corresponding note [3].

5592 - Nun is an Abbreviated Letter: see Appendix I at the end of S. ii. Nun may mean a fish, or an ink-holder, or it may be just the Arabic letter of the alphabet, N. In the last case, it may refer to either or both of the other meanings. Note also that the Arabic rhyme in this Sura ends in N. The reference to ink would be an appropriate link with the Pen in verse 1. The reference to the fish would be appropriate with reference to the story of Jonah in verses 48-50. Jonah's title is "the Companion of the Fish", (Zun-Nun, xxi. 87), as

he was, in the story, swallowed by the Fish.

5593 - The Pen and the Record are the symbolical foundations of the Revelation to man. The adjuration by the Pen disposes of the flippant charge that Allah's Messenger was mad or possessed. For he spoke words of power, not incoherent, but full of meaning, and through the Record of the Pen, that meaning unfolds itself, in innumerable aspects to countless generations. Muhammad was the living Grace and Mercy of Allah, and his very nature exalted him above abuse and persecution.

[View Page](#)

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