

Surah 67. Al-Mulk

67.1 HALLOWED be He in whose hand all dominion rests, since He has the power to will anything:

67.2 He who has created death as well as life,¹ so that He might put you to a test [and thus show] which of you is best in conduct, and [make you realize that] He alone is almighty, truly forgiving.

67.3 [Hallowed be] He who has created seven heavens in full harmony with one another:² no fault wilt thou see in the creation of the Most Gracious. And turn thy vision [upon it] once more: canst thou see any flaw?

67.4 Yea, turn thy vision [upon it] again and yet again: [and every time] thy vision will fall back upon thee, dazzled and truly defeated....³

67.5 And, indeed, We have adorned the skies nearest to the earth with lights,⁴ and have made them the object of futile guesses for the evil ones [from among men]:⁵ and for them have We readied suffering through a blazing flame -

67.6 for, suffering in hell awaits all who are [thus] bent on blaspheming against their Sustainer:⁶ and how vile a journey's end!

67.7 When they are cast into that [hell], they will hear its breath indrawing as it boils up,

67.8 well-nigh bursting with fury; [and] every time a host [of such sinners] is flung into it, its keepers will ask them, "Has no warner ever come to you?"

67.9 They will reply: "Yea, a warner did indeed come unto us, but we gave him the lie and said, 'Never has God sent down anything [by way of revelation]! You [self-styled warners] are but lost in a great delusion!'"⁷

67.10 And they will add: "Had we but listened [to those warnings], or [at least] used our own reason, we would not [now] be among those who are destined for the blazing flame!"⁸

67.11 Thus will they come to realize their sins: but [by that time,] remote will have become all good from those who are destined for the blazing flame.

67.12 [As against this,] behold, for those who stand in awe of God although He is beyond the reach of their perception,⁹ there is forgiveness in store and a great reward.

67.13 AND [know, O men, that] whether you keep your beliefs¹⁰ secret or state them openly, He has full knowledge indeed of all that is in [your] hearts.¹¹

67.14 How could it be that He who has created [all] should not know [all]?¹² Yea, He alone is unfathomable [in His wisdom], all-aware!¹³

67.15 He it is who has made the earth easy to live upon:¹⁴ go about, then, in all its regions, and partake of the sustenance which He provides: but [always bear in mind that] unto Him you shall be resurrected.

67.16 Can you ever feel secure that He who is in heaven¹⁵ will not cause the earth to swallow you up when, lo and behold, it begins to quake?

67.17 Or can you ever feel secure that He who is in heaven will not let loose against you a deadly stormwind,¹⁶ whereupon you would come to know how [true] My warning was?

67.18 And, indeed, [many of] those who lived aforetime¹⁷ did give the lie [to My warnings]: and how awesome was My rejection [of them]!

67.19 Have they, then, never beheld the birds above them, spreading their wings and drawing them in? None but the Most Gracious upholds them: for, verily, He keeps all things in His sight.

67.20 [And] is there any, beside the Most Gracious, that could be a shield¹⁸ for you, and succour you [against danger]? They who deny this truth are but lost in self-delusion!

67.21 Or is there any that could provide you with sustenance if He should withhold His provision [from you]? Nay, but they [who are bent on denying the truth] stubbornly persist in their disdain [of God's messages] and in their headlong flight [from Him]!

67.22 But then, is he that goes along with his face close to the ground¹⁹ better guided than he that walks upright on a straight way?

67.23 SAY: "[God is] He who has brought you [all] into being, and has endowed you with hearing, and sight, and hearts:²⁰ [yet] how seldom are you grateful!"

67.24 Say: "It is He who has multiplied you on earth; and it is unto Him that you shall be gathered [on resurrection]."

67.25 But they [only] ask, "When is this promise to be fulfilled? [Answer this, O you who believe in it,] if you are men of truth!"

67.26 Say thou, [O Prophet:] "Knowledge thereof rests with God alone; and I am only a plain warner."

67.27 Yet in the end, when they shall see that [fulfilment] close at hand, the faces of those who were bent on denying the truth will be stricken with grief; and they will be told, "This it is that you were [so derisively] calling for!"

67.28 SAY [O Prophet]: "What do you think? Whether God destroys me and those who follow me, or graces us with His mercy²¹ - is there anyone that could protect [you] deniers of the truth from grievous suffering [in the life to come]?"

67.29 Say: "He is the Most Gracious: we have attained to faith in Him, and in Him have we placed our trust; and in time you will come to know which of us was lost in manifest error."

67.30 Say [unto those who deny the truth]: "What do you think? If of a sudden all your water were to vanish underground, who [but God] could provide you with water from [new] unsullied springs?"²²

Author Comments

1 - Since what is termed "death" is stated here to have been created, it cannot be identical with "non-existence", but obviously must have a positive reality of its own. To my mind, it connotes, firstly, the inanimate state of existence preceding the emergence of life in plants or animated beings; and, secondly, the state of transition from life as we know it in this world to the - as yet to us unimaginable - condition of existence referred to in the Qur'an as "the hereafter" or "the life to come" (al-akhirah).

2 - Or: "conforming [with one another]", this being the primary significance of tibatq (sing. tabaq). For the meaning of the "seven heavens", see surah {2}, note [20].

3 - Sc., in its endeavour to encompass the mysteries of the universe.

4 - Lit., "lamps" - i.e., stars: cf. [37:6](#) "We have adorned the skies nearest to the earth with the beauty of stars".

5 - For the wider meaning of shayatin - a term which in this context points specifically to "the satans from among mankind, that is, the astrologers" (Baydawi) - see surah {15}, note [16]. As regards the term rajm (pl. rujum), which literally denotes the "throwing [of something] like a stone," - i.e., at random - it is often used metaphorically in the sense of "speaking conjecturally" or "making [something] the object of guesswork" (Jawhari, Raghib - the latter connecting this metaphor explicitly with the above verse -, Lisan al-'Arab, Qamus, Taj al-'Arus, etc.). Cf. also {37:6-10}.

6 - I.e., by presuming to know what will happen in the future - a knowledge which rests with God alone. This connects with the statement in verse {4} that man can never truly unravel the mysteries of cosmic space ("the heavens"), which in its turn implies that he should not presume to foretell terrestrial events from the position and the aspects of the stars. Since only God knows "that which is beyond the reach of a created being's perception" (al-ghayb), any such attempt is a blasphemy (kufr).

7 - Lit., "You are in nothing but a great error (dalal)" - thus denying the reality of divine revelation as such.

8 - Reason, properly used, must lead man to a cognition of God's existence and, thus, of the fact that a definite plan underlies all His creation. A logical concomitant of that cognition is the realisation that certain aspects of the divine plan touching upon human life - in particular, the distinction between right and wrong - are being continuously disclosed to man through the medium of the revelation which God bestows on His chosen message-bearers, the prophets. This innate "bond with God" (referred to in [2:27](#) and explained in the corresponding note [19]) may be broken only at the expense of man's spiritual future, with suffering in the life to come as the inevitable alternative.

9 - For this rendering of the expression bi'l-ghayb, see surah {2}, note [3].

10 - While the primary significance of the noun qawl is "a saying" or "an utterance", it is often used tropically in the sense of "a statement", i.e., of a belief, an opinion, a teaching, a doctrine, etc. In the present context it evidently relates to man's beliefs in general, be they affirmative or negative: hence the plural form in my rendering of this term.

11 - I.e., He knows why one person believes in Him and another rejects this belief; hence, He takes man's innermost motivations, abilities and inabilities fully into account.

12 - Lit., "Does He not know, [He] who has created?"

13 - See surah {6}, note [89].

14 - Lit., "who has made the earth submissive (dhalulan) to you": i.e., yielding to the intelligence with which He has endowed man.

15 - This expression is, of course, purely metaphorical since God is limitless in space as well as in time. Its use here is apparently meant to stress the unfathomable quality of His existence and power, which penetrates, and reveals itself in, every aspect of His cosmic creativeness, symbolized in the term "heaven".

16 - Lit., "a stormwind that raises stones".

17 - Lit., "before them" (min qablihim). This personal pronoun relates - as does the whole of the passage beginning with verse {13} - to people of all times, who are herewith reminded of what happened to deniers of the truth in earlier times; hence my rendering of min qablihim as "aforetime".

18 - Lit., "an army".

20 - I.e., with the faculty of feeling as well as of rational thinking.

21 - I.e., "Whether we succeed in spreading God's message or not, what have you unbelievers to gain?"

22 - Apart from a further reminder of God's providential power (thus continuing the argument touched upon in verses {19-21}), the above verse has a parabolic significance as well. Just as water is an indispensable element of all organic life, so is a constant flow of moral consciousness an indispensable prerequisite of all spiritual life and stability: and who but God could enable man to regain that consciousness after all the older ethical stimuli have dried up and "vanished underground"?

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