

**Al Aala**  
**the Most High**

Bismillahir Rahmanir Raheem

1. Sabbihisma Rabbikal a'laa  
*Praise the name of your Lord, the Most High*
2. Allelazii khalaqa fasawwaa  
*He who has created and given order and proportion*
3. Wallazi qadara fahada  
*And who has determined and guides*
4. Wallazi akhrajal mar aa  
*And he who brings forth the pastures*
5. Fajaalahu gusaaa an ahwaa  
*Then turns it into withered grass*
6. Sanuqri uka falaa tansaa  
*We shall teach you to read and you shall not forget*
7. Illah mashaa allah Innahu ya'lamul jahra wa maa yaghfa  
*Except, what ALLAH wills. HE knows what is manifest and what is kept hidden*
8. Wa nuyassiruka lil yusra  
*And we will make it easy for you (to follow) the simple (path)*
9. Fazakkir inna nafa atiz zikra  
*Give warning, therefore, if warning is of use.*
10. Sayazzakaru may yaghsaa  
*He who fears ALLAH will heed it*
11. Wa yatajanna buhal ashqaa  
*But the most wretched will turn away from it*
12. Allazi yaslan naaral kubraa  
*He shall be cast into the greatest fire*
13. Thumma la yamutu fiha wa la yahya  
*In which he shall neither die nor live in it*
14. Qad aflahaa min tazakaa  
*Indeed he (alone) who has purified (himself) shall succeed.*
15. Wa Zakarasma Rabbihi fasala  
*And glorifies the name of his Lord and prays*
16. Bal tu' thirunal hayatad dunya  
*Yet you prefer this present life*
17. Wal akhiratu khayru wa abka  
*While the life in the Hereafter is better and longer lasting*
18. Inna hazaa lafis suhufil ulaa  
*All this is surely written in the earlier scriptures*
19. Suhufi Ibraheema wa Musa  
*The scriptures of Abraham and Moses.*

This surah (chapter) was one of the favourites of the Prophet, because it turns the whole universe into a temple, echoing the praises of the Creator, the Most High. His love for this surah also stems from the fact that;

The task of conveying HIS message and the path of warning people will be made simple and easy

That ALLAH (Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala) has taken the responsibility that he will not forget anything of the Glorious Qur'an

This surah includes the basic Islamic concept of life and existence, the unity of ALLAH (Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala), the reality of divine revelation and the reality of reward and punishment in the life to come.

Let us have a closer look at the various ayat (verses) to pick up the theme and message of this surah. It starts with the Praises of the Lord, the fashioner of everything in creation, to the love of HIS messenger. It also embodies the promise of pleasant news for those who follow the right path, and warns of the painful results for those who turn their backs on this message, the same message that was revealed to Prophets, Ibrahim and Moosa –may peace be upon them.

**1) Sabbihisma Rabbikal a'laa.**

*Praise the name of your Lord, the Most High.*

The opening verse addresses the Prophet and points to the fact that ALLAH is “a’la” –the most high, above any other person or thing that enters the imagination. He is the “Rabb” – Lord, the supreme Power, who tends and nurtures everything in the endless expanse of this universe. In the next 3 ayat we are reminded of a few examples of the power of the Lord, the Most High.

**2) Allelazi khalaqa fasawwaa.**

*He who has created and given order and proportion.*

The term ‘sawwaa’ is based on ‘taswiyah’ which means to determine proportion, fashion, perfecting and making equal. This includes the fashioning, regulating and perfecting all of: the movements of the celestial bodies in space; the creatures on the surface of the earth; forms of plant life above and below the ground; and the simplest of matters such as the grooves on the fingertips of the human being. This ayat also refers to the full fashioning, control, laws and decrees for the development and the guidance of mankind to progress on their way to their final destination.

**3) Wallazi qadara fahada.**

*And who has determined and guides.*

The word qadara (its root, taqdir) is the very proportioning in the whole scheme of development, towards the goal that this entire universe is created for. The point of fahada (its root, hidayat) is the divine guidance in the form of instincts and inner creeds dominant in every creature, to fulfil their assigned role for the perfection of their collective role. The stars, planets, comets and satellites are all well balanced and guided to travel in a set course with unique functions, in order to fulfil their collective role. This well-balanced and perfected guidance is present in the world of plants, insects, birds, animals, human beings and inanimate objects. Besides this divine guidance, there is also the revelation and the example of all the Prophets, which is called religious guidance. Man’s religious guidance complements his divine guidance in all aspects of his life. This guidance is within reach of every man and woman despite the period they are living in and regardless of their standard of education.

**4) Wallazi akhrajal mar aa.**

*And he who brings forth the pastures.*

The word akhraj (its root, ikhraj) conveys the idea that pastures or plant life are hidden inside the ground and HIS Lordship, the Most High has perfected them and brought them out. Each plant species plays its role in providing nutrition for one sort of animal species or

another. We note that this pasturage is provided to fatten the animals which are of benefit to mankind for sustenance to continue their progress in life. ALLAH (Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala) has created this planet and provided on it enough food to nourish every single living creature, which walks, flies or lives beneath the ground.

**5) Fajaalahu gusaaa an ahwaa.**

*Then turns it into withered grass.*

The term 'gusaa' means stubble, light straw and dried plants that float over flood waters and the term 'ahwaa' refers to the colour dark- green or almost- black. Again, we are reminded of the Lord, the Most High, Who has fashioned the pasture to emerge as green, turning into light straw for animal fodder. During the winter months the dried stubble provides man with fuel to keep himself warm and finally that left over is transformed to return to the soil as fertiliser. This pasturage is useful in every phase of its existence and it serves a purpose according to the elaborate planning of the Most High, who creates, proportions, determines and guides.

**6) Sanuqri uka falaa tansaa.**

*We shall teach you to read and you shall not forget.*

Glad tidings were given to the Prophet of sparing him the burden of memorising the Glorious Qur'an. All he needed to do was to listen and repeat the revealed message and ALLAH (Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala) would ensure that he would never forget any part of it in his guidance to mankind. This tidings is also an indication to the believers that the revelation that the Prophet preaches is authentic. It is from ALLAH (Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala) and HE will preserve it.

**7) Illah mashaa allah Innahu ya'lamul jahra wa maa yaghfa.**

*Except, what ALLAH wills. HE knows what is manifest and what is kept hidden.* This Divine will is free of all limitations and restrictions. This promise of not forgetting the Qur'an is dependent on HIS will. Thus, everything is decided according to the wisdom of the Most High, who knows all secrets whether they are exposed or hidden. HE views everything from all perspectives and makes HIS decisions on the basis of HIS knowledge.

**8) Wa nuyassiruka lil yusra.**

*And we will make it easy for you (to follow) the simple (path).*

This short ayat provides a link between the nature of the Prophet, the nature of Islam and that of the whole universe. This is a universe created by ALLAH (Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala) with ease; it follows its appointed way with ease and draws nearer its final objective with ease. The millions of stars move in their orbits with their own gravity in perfect synchronisation without colliding against one another. Similarly, when the Creator makes smooth a persons path, he finds ease in everything in his life. Ease will permeate his whole life and will be evident in his hand, tongue, movement, work, concepts, thoughts and also in the conduct of all his daily affairs. He will find easiness within himself as well as comfort with others, as he is aware of how all creation moves, perfectly synchronised and in perfect symmetry.

When we study the life of the Prophet, we note that his guidance in matters of clothing, food, household furniture and all issues pertaining to day-to-day living, points to a preference for what is *simple*. Perfect harmony exists between the nature of the universe, the message, the Messenger and the believers.

**9) Fazakkir inna nafa atiz zikra.**

*Give warning, therefore, if warning is of use.*

ALLAH (Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala) had taught the Prophet to read and not forget as well as ease his task so that he would be able to discharge his great mission to warn. He needed to fulfil his mission no matter how corrupt the society or how hardened the people were in their ways. Thus the Prophet and the believers have the task to warn and to convey the Creator's message whenever an opportunity arises. Warning is always useful, as in every generation and in every place, there will be those who will take heed of the message.

**10) Sayazzakaru may yaghsaa.**

*He who fears ALLAH will heed it.*

This ayat refers to those who fear or have the consciousness of ALLAH (Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala) in their hearts, and so will heed the message. The believers realise that everyone will be held responsible for their evil actions and be rewarded for their good deeds.

**11) Wa yatajanna buhal ashqaa.**

*But the most wretched will turn away from it.*

The word 'ashqaa' refers to the group who are the enemies of truth. When men turn their backs on the truth they become miserable, pitiful and feel dejected. Such people live in constant worry, striving hard to attain the sensuous pleasures of this world.

**12) Allazi yaslan naaral kubraa.**

*He shall be cast into the greatest fire.*

The ones that turn their backs on the truth will be tossed into the great fire. This 'greatest fire' is endless in its burning, continuous in its intensity, prolonged in its duration and massive in its size.

**13) Thumma la yamutu fiha wa la yahya.**

*In which he shall neither die nor live in it.*

In this fire he neither dies to rest from its torment nor does he live in it. They will always be in the state of swinging between life and death to continuously experience the never ending agony.

**14) Qad aflahaa min tazakaa.**

*Indeed he (alone) who has purified (himself) shall succeed.*

Here reference is made to the purification of the soul from polytheism, cleansing of the heart from impurities, purification of deeds from the prohibited ones, avoidance of the much hated hypocrisy and cleansing the property by giving of charity.

**15) Wa Zakarasma Rabbihi fasala.**

*And glorifies the name of his Lord and prays.*

Here we note that precedence is given to the purification of the heart, soul and our deeds and actions before we declare the name of ALLAH (Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala) and before the commencement of prayer. Thus, it is recommended that one stands for prayer only after he has purified himself and has the fear and consciousness of his Maker embedded in his heart. The daily practice of wudu (ablution) before the 5 daily prayers is a good example, where purification precedes Bismillahir Rahman nir Raheem and the glorification of the Lord in our prayers.

**16) Bal tu' thirunal hayatad dunya.**

*Yet you prefer this present life.*

This ayat emphasis that the main reason for mans' downfall is the preference for the love of this world with its passing, lowly desires. The example quoted in ayat 4 and 5 above, where reference is made to the lush green plants which dry up, are reaped, harvested and eventually returned to the ground as fertilizer, is a reminder of the temporary nature of the present life. Every living being will come to its appointed end and returned to its origin.

**17) Wal akhiratu khayru wa abka.**

*While the life in the Hereafter is better and longer lasting.*

This life is a pasturage which comes to an end when it withers away and blackens, while the life to come is the one which lasts. Life in the Hereafter is better as it is filled with eternal blessings.

**18) Inna hazaa lafis suhufil ulaa.**

*All this is surely written in the earlier scriptures.* Denouncing the sensual pleasures of this world for the more permanent and superior life of the next world, has been the basic teaching of all the past Prophets as it is reflected in all the Divine books. The origin of the message of all the past Prophets is from the same source, the Creator. However the details may differ according to local or temporal needs, but the basics are the same. They are all from ALLAH (Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala) the Most High, Who creates, proportions well, determines and guides.

**19) Suhufi Ibraheema wa Musa.**

*The scriptures of Abraham and Moses.*

Here 'suhufi' refers to the books of Prophets Abraham and Moses –peace be upon them.

**CONCLUSION**

The pursuit of pleasure of this world is the prime origin of all vice. Love of this world takes many forms such as; love of wealth, greed, ambition, sensuality, self-indulgence, vengeance, love of position, love of comfort, and the ego to be heard. Certain human beings on this earth may become so violent, demanding and forceful that they set aside all their knowledge and wisdom and become beasts, governed by greed and followers of the law of the jungle.

In the Islamic tradition and as quoted by the numerous narrations of the scholars and the pious, who have repeatedly pointed out that the love of this world is the source of all sins. When we look around in the world we sadly observe how some of ALLAH'S (Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala) creatures have forsaken their humanity and instead attached themselves to greed and the accumulation of wealth.

The major Divine scriptures which have appeared over time have been continually reinforcing the concept that, 'this world is a probationary place and it is only considered as a means, a passage, a bridge by which we will secure a place in the Hereafter.' The comforts in the world to come are dependent on the behaviour, actions and deeds of its inhabitants in this world.