

1. How gloriously exalted in beneficence over all is He in whose hand alone is Sovereignty; And He has absolute power to do anything.

تَبَرَّكَ الَّذِي بِيَدِهِ الْمُلْكُ وَهُوَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿١﴾

• **Tabaraka**

- verb pattern *tafa'ala* (تفاعل) often denotes reciprocal action
- here it denotes *mubalagha*, being extra powerful; it means Allah's absolute power and sovereignty in everything that is concerned with Him
- the pattern denotes power (*quwwa*) and unrelenting force (*shidda*)
- *shidda* is not just strength, but the power that doesn't let go of its object
- root is *baraka*, plenteous, abundant, and good (*khayr kathir*). It signifies two things:
  - 1) the plentitude of His *khayr and* lavishing benefit (*ihsanihi*): over increase and always flowing blessings (*tazayud barakatuhu*) and He is copiously always pouring out His infinite blessings (*fayd jami' ni'amih*)
  - 2) His lofty ascendancy in unspeakable height in His divine attributes, actions, and His total all-encompassing knowledge far beyond anything remotely ever resembling Him

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- So He deserves to be worshiped for who He is, and all must realise that He is One (*yuwahhad*) and the object of our *tarhid*
- *Baraka* is mentioned in the Quran with reference to people, the sacred Book, and places—even a tree and its oil. All of these Allah has attested to their *baraka* and many other things besides
- *Baraka* associated with the growth and increase of good, especially in closeness to Allah, that lasts, persists, and endures
- Allah begins this *sura* in this way to apprise the idolaters that He alone is the Lord of this entire universe and He alone has power and disposal over everything
- This is the introduction to all of Allah's actions that will be mentioned in this *sura*, including His ability to raise mankind up alive after death. The hardest thing for the *kuffar* and *mushrikin* to believe in was resurrection

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- ***Al-ladhi***

- relative pronoun used to indicate the cause for Allah’s being gloriously exalted over all, namely because in His hand alone this supreme sovereignty lays

- ***Biyadihi al-mulk***

- “hand” is a metaphor for absolute control and dominance (*tamam al-isti’la*); absolute sway and control and power over something; in His grasp and Almighty power alone is absolute mastery (*tasaruf al-kulli*)

- it comes before *mulk* because this means *al-hasr*: in no one else’s control, in no one else’s sovereignty, and in no one else’s hand; exclusively

- the preposition and its object come before to indicate the exclusivity of His absolute sovereign sway and rule. Note that it means that all the sovereignty of all creatures on earth is in comparison to His sovereignty as though meaningless, for He alone puts them where they are, and removes them when He wishes and shall come to judge the living and the dead

- *ba* in *biyadihi* is stronger than *fi* because *ba* denotes *ilsaq*, clinging inseparably, to something that is in contact



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- **The divine wisdom in some people having authority, rank, and status over others**

- the *fuqaha* have confirmed that authority should be respected, other things being equal, because it keeps brigands from despoiling defenceless citizens and provides security that is as essential for human survival as food and water and shelter. Rebellion, even against an unjust ruler, is considered an offence against the public, because the person in authority at least protects against the effects of brigandage and gangs
- there are different degrees so that all may take service and benefit of others above them and beneath them

- ***Wa huwa 'ala kulli shay'in qadir***

- mentioned as a reason for the first part of the verse
- what does it add to the *biyadihi al-mulk*? All sovereignty comprises all things that actually exist, while *wa huwa 'ala kulli shay'in qadir* is more general
- it follows the restricted range of the sovereignty (*mulk*) to existing things by the unrestricted reference range of *wa huwa 'ala kulli shay'in qadir*, to both as yet non-existent things as well as things that shall exist no more

2. Who created death and life  
to try you as to which of you is finest in works;  
And He is the Invincible, the All-forgiving.

الَّذِي خَلَقَ الْمَوْتَ وَالْحَيَاةَ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْغَفُورُ ﴿٢﴾

- Allah mentions death before life because it is more stern in giving warning to human minds. It gives a stronger motive to do spiritual works, as it intensifies the admonition and the reminder of one's fate. It is stronger in rebuke
- The Prophet ﷺ said, “make much remembrance of the thing that shall end all pleasures. No servant ever mentioned it when he was in too few (in good works) except that it increased it for him, and nor did any servant remember it when he was in a multitude (multitude of follies and wasting time) except that it made him do less of it.”
- It is important to remember death

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- ***al-Ladhi khalaqa***

- this “who” is a *badal*, a substantive in apposition: renames a previously mentioned “who”, which is “*tabarak al-ladhi*”; it names the *al-ladhi* of the first verse and also gives another reason for *tabarak*
- this is the beginning of giving the details for some of Allah’s provisions (*ahkam*), which are filled with wisdom and lead to magnificent ends and purposes

- ***al-Mawta***

- here, the term means dying, not the state before one existed, which some people call death. The term signifies *jins al-mawt*, or death in the general sense

- ***Liyabluzakum***

- the *lam* “in order to” is *lam al-ta’lil*, the *lam* for assigning a reason
- Allah is telling us that in man’s being created there is a tribulation (*ibtala*). This is *dar al-ibtala*. *Ibtala*’ means a long trial and dire affliction or test to find what a person is truly made of
- in having to die there is a tribulation

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- ***Ayyukum ahsanu 'amala***

– *ahsanu* denotes the “utmost”; the most superior thing in terms of *husn*; the finest article made of its type

- Allah created us to undergo difficult trials, as though *bala'* is almost so difficult that it wears one out to prove what one is actually religiously made of
- Sa'd Ibn Abi Waqqas asked The Messenger of Allah ﷺ, “Who are the most direly tried?” The Prophet ﷺ replied, “The prophets are of the greatest trial, then the ones next most resembling them, then the ones who next most resemble them. A man is tried according to the measure of his *din*. If his *din* is tough, then his *bala'* is gripping and very unrelenting. But if there is some flimsiness in his *din*, then he will be tried according to the measure of his *din*. The *bala'* does not leave the servant until he is walking on the earth without a single sin left on him.”
- Allah tries us until He sees and knows which of us is the finest



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• **“Li ya lam Allah” constructions**

– often in the Quran we have a construction like, “*li ya lam Allah*” (so that Allah may know). This means *dhuhur*, not that it wasn’t known by Allah before; so that He may manifest it so that other people may also know

• This *sura* is telling us that the whole point is to display who is the finest, for Allah did not include showing who is the worst in His purpose of creating mankind to begin with

• ***al-Aziz***

– here it means that He overcomes and cannot be overcome

– invincible, by which Allah evokes desire for spiritual attainment and at the same time disciplining (*tahdhib*) refining, culturing, and educating us

– He misses nothing. Ignorance is not of His attributes, so He will requite you for everything you do. He is invincible against anyone who sets His commands at defiance



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- ***al-Ghafur***

- the All-forgiving to whoever repents and returns to Him
- *ghaffar* is different than *ghafur*:

*Ghaffar*: He forgives time after time after time

*Ghafur*: the extent; He forgives anything if one repents from it and returns to Him

3. Who created seven heavens in successive encompassing layers:  
You see in the creation of the All-merciful no disparity whatever.  
So return the gaze again: See you any gaps at all?

الَّذِي خَلَقَ سَبْعَ سَمَوَاتٍ طِبَاقًا مَا تَرَى فِي خَلْقِهِ  
الرَّحْمَنِ مِنْ تَفَلُّوتٍ فَأَرْجِعِ الْبَصَرَ هَلْ تَرَى مِنْ فُطُورٍ ﴿٣﴾

- ***al-Ladhi khalqa***

- another apposition (*badal*) giving more reasons (*ta'il*) for *tabarak*

- ***Tibaqan***

- derives from *tabaqa*: something that is layered under something else; as if the *sab' samawat* are one layer above another
- al-Biqā'i draws the conclusion that each *sama'* is minuscule compared to the *sama'* that envelops it, as a ring would be if it were lost in a vast trackless desert. It indicates that the earth is spherical and that each *sama'* is spherical, because otherwise, it would be otherwise impossible for the *tibaq* to be wrapped around things in successive contacting surfaces. Therefore, the earth must be spherical also
- *tibaqan* is a *hal*, a circumstantial, in which there is a hyperbole of layeredness: every single part of the surface of each *sama'* with the next one, which would be impossible unless the earth is spherical

- ***Ma tara***

- a new sentence to clarify the magnificence of this creation
- what one would expect here is, “You see in them no disparity whatsoever,” but Allah rather says, “You see in the creation of the All-merciful...” as an overt expression (*idhhar*) in the place of an expected ellipse (*idmar*) to emphasise the greatness of what He has created and the reason it exists, because it is the creation of the All-merciful and that He has created with His omnipotent power. It is a favour, bounty, and a mercy

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- ***Fi khalq***

- that which has been created
- the verbal noun is used here to give the impact of a verb, as though you see it in the process of its being created
- because of the dynamism of its being created, it is as though you are seeing it as it is being created, so Allah did not say “*fi makhluq al-Rahman*” “that which was created by the All-merciful”

- ***Min tafawut***

- something disparate or surpasses something else (*adam al-tamathul*) so that there is an unevenness, lack of balance and symmetry, or contradiction, as when something surpasses something and doesn't match it
- as though Allah is saying, “you don't see in creation any disharmony or clash or lack of proficiency (*itqan*) or lack of exactitude (*ihkam*) so that creation is balanced and regular”
- *min* is *za'ida*, signifying “any at all” with the indefinite of *tafawut*
- the universe is a mighty well-made creation that has been brought into being as a tremendous blessing upon mankind

- ***Fa irji'***

- another time or again
- *fa* is *fa fasiha*: that being the case, so if you want to be certain, then turn the gaze again
- as if it is the consequence of the preceding information

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- The conditional sentence here that is understood but not overtly expressed by Allah is “if you have doubts about that, then turn the gaze again so the matter is clear to you; so that no slightest doubt remains in you about the balanced symmetry, harmony, and regularity We have told you about in creation.”
- **Hal**
  - the question word is a more forceful interrogative particle than *atara*, but the *hal* is a demand for an answer
- **Min futur**
  - plural of *fatara*: crack, fissure, rend, split
  - the ulama say the meaning here is *khalal*, meaning interstices, ruptures, cracks, defects



4. Then, and yet more, return the gaze to attempt again:  
Your sight shall return to you low and rebuffed,  
too feeble to even stir.

ثُمَّ أَرْجِعِ الْبَصَرَ كَرَّتَيْنِ يَنْقَلِبْ إِلَيْكَ الْبَصَرُ خَاسِئًا وَهُوَ حَسِيرٌ ﴿٤٤﴾

- **Thumma**

- conjunctive adjective denoting disparity in time and rank (*tarakhi zamani wa rutbi*)
- the disparity in time is as though to say: return your gaze again and again and again, long persevering in doing so and reflecting on the matter at length
- disparity in rank means, “and on top of that”

- **Karatayn**

- *karra* is a military term used to describe battles, such as an attack or a charge or ambush or an attempt to take a fortress
- here, the formidable massivity of the perfection and the harmony of Allah’s creation of the universe
- the dual form does not mean just return your sight twice, but rather repeatedly, because one’s sight does not return to one humiliated and rebuffed after just twice

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- ***Yanqalibu***

- indicates being stopped from obtaining what one has set out for

- ***Ilayk***

- casts a humiliated tone, like “in your face” in the English language, as if being thrown back in one’s face

- ***Khasi’an***

- driven, despised away

- has a strong distribution in the Arabic language, as if driving away a dog; thrown off; humiliated

- the meaning here is that your sight shall be returned to you low and rebuffed from trying to find any shortcoming in Allah’s magnificent creation

- emphasises its powerlessness to do anything else besides be humiliated

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- Someone came in and had a long *izar*, which was a symbol of *kibr*. He came to the Prophet ﷺ and sat down. The Prophet ﷺ said, “Lift it up above your ankle bones.” The man said, “My legs are deformed and ugly.” The Prophet ﷺ responded, “Every single thing Allah created is beautiful (*kul khalq Allah hasanun*).”
- We have to accept the creation of Allah
- **Hasir**
  - the exhausted person, too weak to move
  - it is a phrase of circumstantiality (*hal*), as is indicated by *wa huwa*. It tells how one’s sight returns to one after trying and trying to find any gaps in the fabric of the universe
  - origin of the word is *hasar* which means to be divested, stripped or uncovered; as if one’s sight has been completely stripped or divested of strength