

The Two Forms of *Taqwa* in Surat al-Hashr, verse 18

Batool Arastu

ABSTRACT: Verse 18 of the Chapter *al-Hashr* twice refers to *taqwa* (God-wariness). This article works as a reference on the meaning of *taqwa* in this verse. This will include three Shi'a commentaries and six Sunni commentaries. Their views will be analysed to conclude that the word *taqwa* used twice in the verse has two different meanings and is not merely used for emphasis.

Introduction

This article is about the term *taqwa* mentioned twice in verse 18 of the Chapter *al-Hashr* (*The Banishment*). There are differing views from Qur'anic commentaries regarding the meaning of *taqwa* and why it has been used twice. This article covers several Shi'a and Sunni commentaries to explain a) the meaning of *taqwa* in this verse, and b) why it is repeated twice.

This article is divided into three parts:

1. Part 1 includes the six Sunni commentaries of verse 18 on the meaning of *taqwa* and why it is repeated twice. The six commentaries used are: *Anwar al-Tanzil wa Asrar al-Ta'wil* by Baydawi, *al-Kashshaf 'an Haqa'iq-i Gawamid al-Tanzil* by Zamakhshari, *al-Tafseer al-Kabir* by Fakhr al-

Din Razi, *Ruh al-Ma'ani fi Tafseer al-Qur'an al-'Azeem* by Alusi, *Tafsir al-Qur'ani li al-Qur'an* by Khateeb and *Tafseer al-Qur'an al-'Azim* by Ibn Kathir.

2. Part 2 includes three Shi'a commentaries on the same verse for the same reason. The three commentaries used are: *Majma' al-Bayan* by Tabarasi, *Tafsir-e-Nemuneh* by Makarim Shirazi, and *al-Mizan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an* by Allamah Tabataba'i.

3. Part 3 includes an analysis of the above-mentioned views.

Surat al-Hashr, verse 18

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَ لْتَنْظُرْ نَفْسٌ مَا قَدَّمَتْ لِغَدٍ وَ اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ

*O you who have faith! Be wary of Allah, and let every soul consider what it sends ahead for tomorrow, and be wary of Allah. Allah is indeed well aware of what you do.*¹

The meaning of *taqwa*

The word *taqwa* is derived from the root *waqaya*, meaning 'to safeguard' or 'to abstain'.² In the Islamic terminology it is the action of restraining oneself from disobeying the commands of Allah. When Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq was asked to elaborate on the meaning *taqwa*, he replied, "Submit to the command [of Allah] and do not go near the prohibited." It is the

¹ Qarai, Syed Ali Quli, *The Quran with an English Paraphrase*, p779, Surah Hashr, Verse 18

² Qurashi, Ali Akbar, *Qamus e Qur'an*, vol 7, p 236

endeavour to fulfil all the commands of Allah and abstain from the prohibited thoughts and actions.¹

It is important to note that *taqwa* is not merely about performing religious obligations such as prayer and fasting; it is also about living a pious life. A *muttaqi* (a person who has *taqwa*) abandons living an animalistic life and chooses to live a moral one.²

There are differing views of the term *taqwa* in this verse. Some believe it to have been repeated for emphasis while others disagree. For a comparative study of the above verse, a glance at the views presented by various commentators will be offered.

Part 1

Sunni Commentaries

The six Sunni commentaries used in this paper are prominent commentaries in the Sunni world:

- *Anwar al-Tanzil wa Asrar al-Ta'wil* (7th Hijri), which inclines towards the *Ash'ari* school of thought. Most of its content is influenced by the commentary of Zamakhshari and Fakhr al-Din Razi.
- *Al-Kashshaf 'an Haqaiq Gavamid al-Tanzil* (6th hijri).
- *Al-Tafseer al-Kabir* (6th Hijri) based on jurisprudence and theology.

¹<https://www.al-islam.org/greater-sins-volume-1-ayatullah-sayyid-abdul-husayn-dastghaib-shirazi/taqwa>; Dastaghaib, Sayyid Abdul Hussain, *Gunahan e Kabirah*, vol 1, p 13

²<https://www.al-islam.org/message-thaqalayn/vol11-n4-2011/taqwa-part-1-ayatullah-murtadha-mutahhari/taqwa-part-i#term-taqwa>

- *Ruh al-Ma'ani fi Tafseer al-Qur'an al-'Azeem* (13th Hijri), coloured with mysticism and jurisprudence.
- *Tafsir al-Qur'ani li al-Qur'an*
- *Tafseer al-Qur'an al-'Azim*.

Anwar al-Tanzil wa Asrar al-Ta'wil

Regarding the verse, Baydavi says that this world is like today and the hereafter is like tomorrow. The word *غَدَ* (*tomorrow*) has been used as a singular indefinite for magnificence and the word *نَفْسٌ* (*soul*) for independence. That means everyone is responsible for checking his or her deeds accumulated for the hereafter. The phrase “*and be wary of Allah*” has been repeated in the verse for emphasis. The mention of *taqwa* the first time refers to performing the obligatory; the second *taqwa* refers to avoiding the forbidden.¹

Al-Kashshaf 'n Haqaiq Gavamid al-Tanzil

Zamakhshari believes that the word *taqwa* has been repeated for emphasis. The mention of *taqwa* the first time refers to performing the obligatory; the second *taqwa* refers to avoiding sins.

The word *غَدَ* (*tomorrow*) denotes *Qiyamah* (the *Day of Judgment*). It has been called ‘tomorrow’ because of its closeness; in other words, the Day of Judgment is as close as tomorrow. This world and hereafter are like two days: today and tomorrow.

The word *غَدَ* (*tomorrow*) has been used as a singular indefinite for its magnificence and its ambiguity, whereas the word *نَفْسٌ* (*soul*) for its

¹ Baydavi, Abdullah ibn 'Umar, *Anwar al-Tanzil wa Asrar al-Ta'wil*, vol 5, p. 302

independence. This means everyone is responsible in checking the deeds they have accumulated for the hereafter.¹

Al-Tafseer al-Kabir

Fakhr al-Din Razi holds that Allah is advising the believers in this verse. The word **غَدَ** (tomorrow) denotes *Qiyamah* (the *Day of Judgment*) and is called “tomorrow” because it is following today, thus showing how close the two are.

The word “tomorrow” has been used as a singular indefinite for its greatness and ambiguity, whereas the word **نَفْسٌ** (*soul*) for its independence. This means everyone is responsible in checking the deeds they have accumulated for the hereafter.

The word ‘taqwa’ has been repeated for emphasis. The mention of “taqwa” the first time is in relation to performing the obligatory; the second is in relation to avoiding sins.²

Ruh al-Ma‘ani fi Tafseer al-Qur’an al-‘Azeem

Alusi asserts that the word “tomorrow” denotes ‘hereafter’ and today is ‘this world.’ The scenario in the hereafter will be different from this world. Everyone is expected to be vigilant of their deeds as to what they are sending for the morrow or the hereafter.

“Tomorrow” has been used as a singular indefinite for its magnificence and ambiguity, and “soul” for its independence. That means everyone is responsible for checking the deeds they have accumulated for the hereafter.

¹ Zamakhshari, Mahmood, *Al-Kitab un haqaiqe gavamidh ut tanzil*, vol 4, p. 508

² Al Razi, Fakhruddin, *Tafseer Al Kabir/ Mafathih ul Ghaib*, vol 29, p. 511

“Taqwa” has been repeated for emphasis. The mention of ‘taqwa’ the first time is in relation to performing the obligatory; the second ‘taqwa’ is in relation to avoiding the forbidden. The phrase, *“Allah is indeed well aware of what you do”* refers to Allah’s awareness of everyone’s sins.¹

Tafsir al-Qur’ani li al-Qur’an

Khateeb states that this verse was revealed after the verses on the hypocrites. The message this verse has for the believers is the message of taqwa: to be sincere in worship, and to empty the self of hypocrisy. One should be aware of their deeds being sent for tomorrow.

“Taqwa” refers to fear of Allah and avoiding sins. The mention of ‘taqwa’ the first time is to invite people to be vigilant and calculate or double check their deeds. That is why Allah says, *“and let every soul consider what it sends ahead for tomorrow.”* The second mention of ‘taqwa’ is to constantly be in a state of taqwa: to continuously calculate and double-check your deeds. Carnal desires should not control us; rather, we should control it.²

Tafseer al-Qur’an al-‘Azeem

The verse discusses the command to have taqwa and to prepare for the Day of Resurrection:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ

O you who have faith! Be wary of Allah...”

This verse ordains God-wariness that pertains to obeying what He ordered and refraining from what He forbade. Allah also says:

¹ Alusi, Syed Mahmood, *Rooh Al Ma’ani fi Tafsir il Qur’an il Adheem*, vol 14, p 253

² Khateeb, Abdul Kareem, *Tafseer e Qur’ani lil Qur’an*, vol 14, p 877

وَلْتَنْظُرْ نَفْسٌ مَّا قَدَّمَتْ لِغَدٍ

and let every soul consider what it sends ahead for tomorrow,

This means that we are to hold ourselves accountable before we are recompensed, and to contemplate what we have kept for ourselves of good deeds for the Day of our return before Allah:

وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ

And be wary of Allah

Again, ordering *taqwa* for emphasis:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَيْرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ

Allah is indeed well-aware of what you do.

Allah asserts that surely, He knows all our deeds and actions. Nothing that pertains to us escapes neither His observation, nor any matter of ours – whether major or minor – is ever beyond His knowledge.¹

Part 2

Shi'a commentaries

The Shi'a commentaries used in this paper are three of the well-known ones. *Majma' al-Bayan* is known for its eloquence and magnitude. *Al-Mizan* is a masterpiece. *Tafsire Nemuneh* is written in simple language that appeals to larger masses. Each commentary of verse 18 of *al-Hashr* will be studied individually.

Majma' al-Bayan

¹ Ibn Kathir, Dimashqi, Ismail Ibn 'Amr, *Tafseer al-Qur'an al-'Azeem*, vol 8, p. 106; http://www.qtafsir.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1605&Itemid=115

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَلْتَنْظُرْ نَفْسٌ مَا قَدَّمَتْ لِغَدٍ

O you who have faith! Be wary Allah, and let every soul consider what it sends ahead for tomorrow.

Everyone should look at the deeds they stored, whether the deed is worthy of rescuing us, or if it will insult us when we witness them.

Qatadah narrates: “Allah has made the Day of Judgment close to you just as a person stands next to you. Allah ordered you to think and contemplate on the deeds that you stored.”

وَ اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ

and be wary of Allah. Allah is indeed well aware of what you do.

The word ‘taqwa’ has been used twice. The first taqwa is about repenting for your previous sins; the second is related to the sins performed in the future. Some others have the opinion that the second one is emphasizing the first.¹

Tafseer-e Namuneh

The God-wary are precautious with their deeds, ensuring that they are done with sincerity and with the intention for success in the hereafter. “Taqwa” is emphasized in the verse because it is the spirit behind good deeds and encourages a person to avoid sins.

“Tomorrow” has been used as a singular indefinite for its importance, whereas the word “soul” is used for its independence. Everyone is responsible for themselves in checking the deeds accumulated for the

¹ Tabarasi, *Majma ul Bayan fi Tafsir e Quran (Persian Translation)*, vol 5, p. 202, summarized.

hereafter. As long as we are in this world, we should be sending good deeds for our hereafter.¹

Al-Mizan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an

“Taqwa” refers to performing the obligatory and avoiding the forbidden.² Allamah Tabataba'i holds that this verse invites people to God-consciousness. We are responsible to scrutinize our deeds, to see whether they are good or not, and to be aware that they will accompany us to our hereafter. We are expected to delight in the good deeds with its expected reward, and dread immoral deeds that come with the consequences. We are also to make up for our mistakes and use repentance as a way to remove our immoral actions.

This is like a student who after writing her test, checks her paper another time before turning it in. If she finds mistakes, she corrects it; and if she forgot something, she writes it, like a potter closely examining her pot to see if there are any mistakes or if something is forgotten.

This applies to all the believers as all need their deeds in the hereafter. People who check their deeds and take account of them are rare. Why? Because they are busy sorting their day to day lives from a materialistic perspective. That is why the word *نَفْسٌ* has been used as a singular indefinite; denoting that each and everyone is responsible for his or her own deeds. So, the phrase, “*and let every soul consider what it sends ahead for tomorrow*” is addressed to all believers. The verse was addressed in the third person in the singular indefinite form: “*...let every soul*” and

¹ Makarim Shirazi, Naser, *Tafseer Namuneh*, vol 23, p. 539

² Tabatabai, Muhammad Husayn, *Tafsir al-Mizan*, Persian translation, vol. 19, p 375, 376

this shows that this duty is for everybody, and is also reprimanding the believers.

The phrase “*and let every soul consider what it sends ahead for tomorrow*” can be taken as a question or a relative clause. If it is taken as a question, it would be “*what he has sent forth for tomorrow?*” Or if we consider it as a relative clause, it would be “*look to what he has sent forth for tomorrow.*”

“Tomorrow” denotes the Day of Judgment; the day everyone will give an account of their deeds. It is called tomorrow because of its closeness to us. Just as today is closer to tomorrow, tomorrow is close to the Day of Judgment.

To summarize, the meaning would be: Oh you who believe! Obey Allah with piety. Be obedient in all the dos and don'ts. Each one of you should watch your deeds closely and look at what you are sending for the hereafter. Is it a good deed or a bad deed? If it is a good deed do you think it is worthy of being accepted by Allah or not? The next part of the verse reads as follows: “*...and be wary of Allah. Allah is indeed well aware of what you do.*”

The word ‘taqwa’ has been used again. Allah’s awareness of what you do is a proof that the mention of taqwa again is the scrutinizing and accounting of one’s deeds, and not just taqwa while *performing* the deeds.

The first mention of taqwa refers to God-wariness while performing the deed. The deed must be in obedience to Allah’s expectations and must avoid what He forbade.

The second *taqwa* is the examining of one's deeds and taking them into account. The goodness of a deed is proportionate to the intention, and not merely its performance.

Thus, the first *taqwa* is the entirety of the deed, before it was performed; whereas the second is the sincerity of the deed, after it was performed.¹

Part 3: Analysis

Why is *taqwa* repeated in the verse?

Upon looking at the various commentaries both from Shi'a and Sunni sources, we see that there are two main views: the majority agree that "taqwa" has been repeated for emphasis while some do not support that view.

Emphasis

Almost all above-mentioned Sunni scholars accept this view, except for Khateeb. Among the Shi'a scholars, only Ayat. Makarim Shirazi, the author of *Tafsir Nemuneh* accepts this view.

What is the meaning of *taqwa* in the above verse?

According to Sunni scholars

The Sunni scholars' views are divided into four groups:

1. The first "taqwa" is in performing the obligatory; the second "taqwa" is in relation to avoiding sins. The scholars who support this view are Zamakhshari and Razi.

¹Tafsir al-Mizan, Persian translation, vol 19, p377

2. The first “taqwa” is performing the obligatory; the second is avoiding the forbidden. The scholars who support this view are Bedavi and Alusi.
3. Ibn Katheer holds that the first “taqwa” refers to obeying Allah’s commands and avoiding what He forbade; the second “taqwa” is merely for emphasis.
4. Khateeb holds that the first “taqwa” is to be vigilant while self-calculating and double-checking one’s deeds; the second “taqwa” is to constantly be in the state of taqwa.

In my opinion, both above-mentioned groups have the same view although they have chosen different words in describing the second taqwa.

Shi’a scholars

The commentaries examined have differing views:

TABARSI

The word “taqwa” has been used twice. The first is about repenting from the sins that were done and the second is related to the sins that will be performed in the future.

MAKARIM

The word ‘taqwa’ has been repeated for emphasis because it is the spirit behind good deeds and encourages a person to avoid sins.

TABATABAI

The first taqwa pertains to the mass or the body of the deed, whereas the second is the correction and the sincerity of the deed. The first is before the deed is performed, and the second is after performance of the deed.

Personal reflection

I support Tabatabai's view, as it covers some of the views of the other commentators. When he says "the first mention of *taqwa* pertains to the mass or the body of the deed," this means that *taqwa* should be maintained while performing the deed, that is, the deed should be in obedience to Allah's commands. Almost all above-mentioned Sunni commentators supported this view. Moreover, Makarim Shirazi's view was also close to this view.

Regarding the second form of *taqwa*, Tabataba'i says:

The second *taqwa* refers to examining your deeds, and while taking them into account, you should fear Allah. It should not be that your good or bad deed was not done with pure intentions that you take it as a good and pure deed just because you performed it.

This view is also very close to what Khateeb says: "To be in the state of *taqwa* always." Unless you are in the state of *taqwa*, you cannot judge your deed fairly. Tabarsi's interpretation was also closer to this view, where he says one must repent for his sins.

Conclusion

The interpretation of the repeated mention of *taqwa* in the verse as used merely for emphasis is incorrect. The meaning of the first *taqwa* is different from the second one: the first is before the deed is performed and it is the mass and body of the deed so that the deed is accepted by Allah (swt). Allah says in the Qur'an: "*Allah accepts only from the Godwary.*" Hence, the condition of acceptance is *taqwa*.

Moreover, the second taqwa is after the deed is performed and is in relation to self-accounting and the sincerity of the deed because “Allah is indeed well aware of what you do.” For this reason, a person is to constantly be in a state of taqwa.

Thus, taqwa in a broader sense is a requirement for everyone who wants to be a true human being, to live under control of reason, and to follow certain principles. In a religious context, taqwa is the quality of those who protect themselves from all that is considered by religion as wrong and sinful.

Bibliography

- Abduh, Sheikh Mohammad & Rashid Radha. *Tafsir Al Manar*. n.d.
<http://www.islamweb.net/newlibrary/display_book.php?bk_no=65&ID=252&idfrom=530&idto=548&bookid=65&startno=3>.
- Al Khalil ibn Ahmed Al Farahidi, Abu Abdur Rahman. *Al Ain Dictionary*. Qom, Iran: Dar Al Hijrah, 1405 Lunar Calender.
- Al Razi, Fakhruddin. *Tafseer Al Kabir/ Mafathih ul Ghaib*. Beirut: Dar e Ahya At Tarath Al Arabia, 1420 Lunar Calender.
- Alusi, Syed Mahmood. *Rooh Al Ma'ani fi Tafsir il Qur'an il Adheem*. Beirut: Dar ul Ilmiyah, 1415.
- Bahrani, Syed Hashim. *Al Burhan fi Tafsirul Quran*. Tehran: Buniyad Besath, 1416 Lunar Calender.
- Balabaki, Roohi Balbaki & Munir. *Al Mawrid Dictionary*. Berut: Dar el Ilm Lilmalayin, 2005.

- Bano e Isphahani, Syeda Nusrat Amin. *Makhzan ul Irfan dar Tafsir e Quran*. Tehran: Nehzat e Zanan e Musalman, 1361 Persian Solar Calender.
- Bedhavi, Abdullah Ibn Umar. *Anwar al-Tanzil wa Asrar at-Tta'wil*. Berut: Dar Ihya Tarath ul Arabi, 1418 Lunar .
- Dastaghaib, Abdul Hussain. "Greater sins." 1991. *al-islam.org*. 23 6 2016. <<https://www.al-islam.org/greater-sins-volume-1-ayatullah-sayyid-abdul-husayn-dastghaib-shirazi/taqwa>>.
- Dastaghaib, Sayyid Abdul Hussain. *Gunahan e Kabirah*. Qom: Daftar e insharat Islami, 1382 persian solar calendar.
- Ibn Kathir, Damishqi ,Ismail Ibn Amro. *TafseerAlQuran Al Adhim*. Beirut: Dar ul Kutub Al Ilmiyah; Qtafsir.com; , 1419 i Lunar Calender.
- Khateeb, Abdul Kareem. *Tafseer e Qurani lil Qur'an*. Jame tafaseer cd, nd.
- Makarim Shirazi, Naser. *Tafsir e Namuneh*. Tehran: Dar ul Kutub e Islamia, 1374 Persian Solar Calender.
- Ibn Mnzoor, Jamal Uddin Mohammad ibn Mukram, *Lisan Ul Arab*. n.d.
- Mutahhari, Murtada. "Taqwa." 1995. *al-islam*. 23 6 2016. <<https://www.al-islam.org/message-thaqalayn/vol11-n4-2011/taqwa-part-1-ayatullah-murtadha-mutahhari/taqwa-part-i#term-taqwa>>.
- Mutahhari, Mutada. "Taqwa." 1991. *al-islam*. 20 6 2016. <<https://www.al-islam.org/message-thaqalayn/vol11-n4-2011/taqwa-part-1-ayatullah-murtadha-mutahhari/taqwa-part-i#term-taqwa>>.

Qarai, Syed Ali Quli,. *The Quran with an English Paraphrase (English Translation)*. Qom, 2003.

Qurashi, Syed Ali Akbar. *Qamus e Quran* . Tehran : Dar ul Kutub Islamia, 1371 solar.

Tabarasi, Fadl ibn Hasan. *Majma ul Bayan- Persian Translation*. Tehran: Farahani, 1360 Persian Solar Calender.

Tabatabai, S. M. *Tafsir Al Mizan (Persian Translation)*. Qom: Daftar Intesharath e Islamy, 1383 solar persian calender.

Tabatabai, S. M. Hussain. *Tafsir Al Mizan An Exegesis of the Holy Quran*. n.d. <<http://www.shiasource.com/al-mizan/>>.

Zamakhshari, Mahmood,. *Al Kitab un haqaiqe gavamidh ut tanzil*. Beirut: Dar ul Kiatb al Arabi, 1407 Lunar.