

Surah 53. An-Najm

Asad: CONSIDER this unfolding [of God's message], as it comes down from on high!¹

Malik: By the star when it set,

Pickthall: By the Star when it setteth,

Yusuf Ali: By the Star when it goes down ⁵⁰⁸⁵

Transliteration: WaalInnajmi itha hawa

Khatab:

By the stars when they fade away!

Author Comments

1 - Or: "Consider the star when it sets" - an interpretation which for some reason has the preference of the majority of the commentators. However, almost all of them admit that the term najm - derived from the verb najama, "it appeared", "began", "ensued", or "proceeded" denotes also the "unfolding" of something that comes or appears gradually, as if by instalments. Hence, this term has from the very beginning been applied to each of the gradually-revealed parts (nujum) of the Qur'an and, thus, to the process of its gradual revelation, or its "unfolding", as such. This was, in fact, the interpretation of the above verse given by 'Abd Allah ibn'Abbas (as quoted by Tabari); in view of the sequence, this interpretation is regarded as fully justified by Raghīb, Zamakhshari, Razi, Baydawi, Ibn Kathir and other authorities. Raghīb and Ibn Kathir, in particular, point to the phrase mawaqī' an-nujum in [56:75](#), which undoubtedly refers to the step-by-step revelation of the Qur'an. - As regards my rendering of the adjective particle wa as "Consider", see surah {74}, note [23].

5085 - An-Najm is interpreted in various ways. As most commonly accepted, it means either a Star generically, or the close cluster of seven stars known as the Pleiades in the Constellation Taurus, which the sun enters about the 21st of April every year. In mid-April, or a little later, the beautiful cluster would set just after the sun, after having gradually ascended the sky in the winter months. In late May, or a little later, it would rise just before the sun. In its western aspects, it might be considered a spring constellation. To open-air nations (including the Arabs) whose climate usually presents starry skies, this is an object of great interest, and many folklore tales gather round it. When so glorious a cluster is content to bow down in the horizon and merge its light in the greater light created by Allah, it becomes a symbol of humility in beauty and power before the Most High. Whose revelation discloses the summit of beauty, power, and

wisdom. Hawa in the text may mean either "goes down (or sets)" or "rises". Whichever meaning we take, it makes no difference to the interpretation given above.

[View Page](#)

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