

(Note: Wherever the word “you” or “your” is singular and refers to one human being, it is printed with an italic y, as in: you. Wherever such a word refers to God, the letter y is printed in capital, as in: You.)

For Fast 15 – September 5

Chapter 17

- 13 And We have made every human being’s actions to cling to his neck, and We shall bring forth to him on the day of Resurrection a book which he will find wide open.¹
- 14 Read your book. Your own soul is sufficient as a reckoner against you this day.²
- 15 Whoever goes aright, goes aright only for the good of his own soul; and whoever goes astray, goes astray only to its detriment. And no bearer of a burden can bear the burden of another.³ Nor do We punish until We raise a messenger.⁴
- 16 And when We wish to destroy a town, We send commandments to its people who lead easy lives, but they transgress therein; thus the word proves true against it, so We destroy it with utter destruction.⁵

Notes:

- 1 (v. 13) This verse reveals the principle that every action produces an effect which is made to cling to a person, and that this very effect will be met with on the day of Resurrection in the form of a wide open book. It is thus by leaving its effect behind that every action is recorded, and this very effect constitutes the book of a person’s actions. Clinging to the neck indicates the inseparability of one thing from another, thus establishing the law of cause and effect.
- 2 (v. 14) This verse throws a flood of light on the nature of the reckoning on the day of Resurrection, showing clearly that it is nothing but a complete manifestation of the effects of the deeds done in this life.
- Be your own judge** — Each person, Muslim or non-Muslim, will be asked to carry out his or her own reckoning on his or her record. Unlike in this life, the soul will not be able to hide its own reality from itself and will give a true judgment upon itself. How much opportunity a person did or did not have in this life to learn the truth or to practise it, will be known to that person, and each will be his or her own judge, which is the most fair way of judgment.
- 3 (v. 15) This verse strikes at the root of the doctrine of atonement. The burden of the sins of one person cannot be taken away by another, for, as already stated, the effect of each man’s actions clings to himself.
- 4 (v. 15) Here it is stated that guidance is offered to man through a messenger of God, but if he still persists in error and strays from the path, it is to his own detriment. And then it is added that the punishment of the Hereafter is only after man has been warned through a Divine messenger. The law as to punishment in this world is stated in v. 16, which speaks of the destruction of towns, for such punishment is sent when tyranny and transgression assume extraordinary proportions, and punishment is then inflicted on large numbers.

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- 5** (v. 16) Allah does not command people to transgress. The meaning is clear: Allah sends them commandments to do good, pointing out the right way through His prophets, but as they are accustomed to lead easy lives, they transgress those commandments, and are therefore punished.