

# SURAH 86 (AL-TARIQ)

FAITH: Islam | TEXT: The Holy Qur'an | VOLUME: The Meaning of the Holy Quran | AUTHOR: Rashad Khalifa (Translator)

## OVERVIEW

Surah 86, titled 'Al-Tariq' (The Bright Star or The Nightcomer), is a concise chapter from the Meccan period focused on eschatology and divine sovereignty. The text opens with cosmic oaths swearing by the sky and the star to validate the claim that every soul is under divine surveillance. It proceeds to an anthropological argument: if God created human beings from a humble fluid emitted from 'between the spine and the viscera,' He is logically capable of resurrecting them. The central climax of the text is the 'Day all secrets become known,' a time of absolute vulnerability where the human subject has neither power nor a helper. The Surah concludes by affirming the seriousness of the Quranic message ('not to be taken lightly') and assuring the Prophet that while disbelievers plot against the message, God is the superior planner who will deal with them in due time.

## KEY FIGURES

Allah (The Creator/Schemer), The Human (Created/Resurrected), Al-Taareq (The Bright Star), The Disbelievers (Plotters), The Prophet (Recipient of command to wait)

## DOCTRINES ANALYZED

### 1. RESURRECTION VIA CREATION LOGIC

**Assertion:** The ability to create life from biological fluid is proof of the ability to resurrect the dead.

"He was created from ejected liquid... He is certainly able to resurrect him. [086:006-008]"

**Evangelical Comparison:** Evangelical theology affirms the resurrection of the body (1 Corinthians 15). The Quranic argument here uses a 'lesser to greater' logic (creation to resurrection) which is philosophically sound. However, the specific biological claim regarding the origin of the 'ejected liquid' (semen) coming from 'between the spine and the viscera' is unique to Islamic scripture and presents a scientific friction point not found in the biblical creation accounts (Genesis 1-2), which focus on dust and divine breath.

### 2. THE EXPOSURE OF SECRETS

**Assertion:** Judgment Day is defined by the total revelation of hidden thoughts and deeds.

"The day all secrets become known. [086:009]"

**Evangelical Comparison:** Both traditions affirm that God knows and will judge secret sins (Ecclesiastes 12:14, Romans 2:16). The divergence lies in the solution. In this text, the exposure leaves the human with 'no power, nor a helper.' In Evangelical theology, while secrets are known to God, the believer has an Advocate (1 John 2:1) and is covered by the righteousness of Christ, meaning the exposure does not lead to condemnation (Romans 8:1).

### 3. DIVINE SCHEMING (MAKR)

**Assertion:** God actively plots or schemes against those who plot against His message.

"They plot and scheme. But so do I. [086:015-016]"

**Evangelical Comparison:** The Bible affirms that God laughs at the plots of the wicked (Psalm 2:4) and catches the wise in their craftiness (1 Corinthians 3:19). However, the attribute of 'scheming' or 'plotting' (Arabic: makr) is often viewed in Christian theology as incompatible with God's holiness if it implies deception. The Evangelical view emphasizes God's sovereign overruling rather than a counter-plot on the same moral plane.

## COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

**Divergence Status:** Yes

**Theological Gap:** The fundamental gap is Christological and Soteriological. Surah 86 establishes the problem of humanity: we are created, we die, we are resurrected, and our secrets are exposed. It explicitly states the human will have 'no helper' (v. 10). Evangelical Christianity agrees with the diagnosis (judgment is coming) but

provides the cure: Jesus Christ is the 'Helper' (Paraclete) and Advocate. The Quranic text leaves the adherent naked before God's power; the Biblical text clothes the adherent in God's righteousness.

#### Shared Values:

Belief in a Creator God; Belief in the Resurrection of the dead; Belief in a final Judgment Day; Condemnation of plotting against God's truth

#### Friction Points:

1. [Major] Sola Scriptura (Inerrancy) – The text contains a biological inaccuracy regarding the origin of semen (spine/viscera), contradicting the concept of a divinely inerrant author.
2. [Critical] Sola Fide / Solus Christus – The text asserts judgment based on exposed secrets with the explicit denial of a 'helper,' negating the role of Christ as Mediator and Justifier.
3. [Minor] Theology Proper (Attributes of God) – Attributing 'plotting' or 'scheming' to God creates a tension with the biblical view of God's holiness and truthfulness (Titus 1:2).

#### Semantic Warnings:

##### "Helper (Naser)"

**In Text:** An entity that could protect one from God's judgment (denied existence in this text).

**Evangelical:** Jesus Christ (1 John 2:1) or the Holy Spirit (John 14:16), who advocates for and comforts the believer.

**Example:** *In Surah 86:10, the sinner has 'no helper.' In John 14:16, Jesus promises 'another Helper' to be with believers forever.*

## SOTERIOLOGY

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**Salvation Defined:** Implicitly defined as escaping the terror of the day when secrets are exposed.

**How Attained:** Through recognizing the 'serious narration' and presumably submission (Islam), though this specific text focuses on the threat of judgment.

**Basis of Assurance:** None offered in this text; only the certainty of judgment and the lack of a helper.

**Comparison to Sola Fide:** Directly opposes Sola Fide. The text offers a threat of exposure without a promise of grace. Justification is not mentioned; only the capability of God to resurrect and judge.

## MANDATES & REQUIREMENTS

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#### Explicit Commands:

1. Let the human reflect on his creation [086:005]
2. Respite the disbelievers a short respite [086:017]

#### Implicit Obligations:

1. Acknowledge the seriousness of the Quranic revelation
2. Fear the Day of Judgment
3. Recognize God's surveillance over every soul

## EVANGELISM TOOLKIT

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#### Discovery Questions:

1. The Surah says on the Day of Judgment, a person will have 'no power, nor a helper.' How does that make you feel about your secret thoughts being exposed?
2. If God is holy and we have secrets that are shameful, how can we stand before Him without a Helper?
3. Verse 7 mentions creation from fluid between the spine and viscera. How do you interpret this in light of modern biology knowing sperm comes from the testicles?

#### Redemptive Analogies:

1. The Missing Helper – The text identifies the ultimate human problem: nakedness before Judgment. The Gospel provides the missing piece. [Hebrews 7:25 - 'Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.']

2. The Bright Star (Al-Tariq) – Jesus identifies Himself as the true 'Bright Morning Star' who heralds the new day, not just a cosmic object of judgment. [Revelation 22:16 - 'I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star.']

#### **Spiritual Weight:**

1. Fear of Exposure / Isolation [Severe] – The believer lives under the constant surveillance of a Guardian (v. 4) knowing that a day is coming where every secret is exposed and they will be absolutely alone without an advocate. This creates a burden of hidden shame and fear of ultimate abandonment.
2. Intellectual Dissonance [Moderate] – For the modern educated adherent, accepting the literal scientific claim of verse 7 (semen from the spine/ribs) requires suppressing biological knowledge to maintain faith in textual inerrancy.

### **EPISTEMOLOGY**

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**Knowledge Source:** Observation of nature (creation) interpreted through Revelation.

**Verification Method:** Reflection on biological origins ('Let the human reflect') serves as proof for eschatological claims.

**Evangelical Contrast:** While the Bible encourages observing creation to know God's power (Romans 1:20), it posits that specific knowledge of salvation and judgment comes only through the written Word and the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:10-13), not merely logical deduction from biology.

### **TEXTUAL CRITICISM**

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**Dating:** Early Meccan Period (approx. 610-615 AD).

**Authorship:** Attributed to Muhammad via angelic revelation (Gabriel).

**Textual Issues:** Khalifa translates 'tara'ib' as 'viscera.' Standard translations often use 'ribs' or 'chest bones.' The ambiguity of the Arabic term is central to apologetic discussions regarding embryology.